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# CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中國日報 WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 8, 2025

## All-out rescue efforts urged in quake relief

Xi also underscores prevention of secondary disasters, proper resettling of affected people

By **PALDEN NYIMA** in Lhasa and **CHEN MEILING** and **CAO DESHENG** in Beijing

President Xi Jinping ordered all-out rescue efforts to save lives and minimize casualties following a magnitude 6.8 earthquake that struck Dingri county of Shigatse in the Xizang autonomous region on Tuesday.

The earthquake occurred at 9:05 am at a depth of 10 kilometers. It was reported as of press time to have claimed 126 lives and injured 188 people.

In an instruction made on the disaster, Xi, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, urged utmost efforts to carry out search and rescue and provide medical treatment for the injured.

He underlined the need to prevent secondary disasters, properly resettle the affected people and handle the aftermath effectively.

It is essential to strengthen earthquake monitoring and early warning, promptly allocate disaster relief supplies and expedite the repair of damaged infrastructure, he said.

Xi also said that measures must be taken to ensure that the basic needs of residents are met and to guarantee a safe and warm winter for all.

On Tuesday, Premier Li Qiang also made instructions regarding the earthquake response, urging efforts to organize all-out rescue operations. Vice-Premier Zhang Guoqing led a team to the quake site to guide the rescue and relief efforts.

The quake's epicenter was in Tso-go township. Within a 20-kilometer radius of the epicenter, about 6,900 people live in 27 villages, according to Xinhua News Agency.

Tseyang Lhamo, a resident of Yupe, a village in Dramso township of Dingri county, said the houses of all but one of the village's 29 households had collapsed, and that all seven people in her own family were safe.

"When the earthquake occurred, I was about to get up, and my cellphone received an earthquake warning, so I woke up my family

and told them to run quickly," she told China Daily. "Soon our houses all collapsed."

"I felt dizzy and nauseous, and it was difficult to walk" when the quake hit, she said, but she managed to open the door of the sheep and cow pen, so the animals were not injured as the buildings collapsed.

Tseyang Lhamo and her family moved to an open place, where they awaited the arrival of disaster relief workers who were to set up tents and distribute necessities.

"We're emotionally stable, except for my mother, who keeps crying about the loss of property," she said.

She added that an elderly woman who had been trapped had been pulled from the debris by fellow villagers before rescue workers arrived, and that all the other villagers were safe.

Although the village was hit by a power outage, phone signals and networks were stable and transportation infrastructure was mostly intact, so vehicles were able to reach the area, although the ground had cracked a bit, according to Tseyang Lhamo.

Dingri county is along the route to Qomolangma, the world's highest peak, which is known in the West as Mount Everest. The county is also the closest stopping point for tourists heading to the mountain.

The Mount Qomolangma Scenic Area has been closed pending further notice.

A staff member of the scenic area told China Daily that as of 2 pm on Tuesday, no houses had collapsed there but there were reports of some falling rocks.

"It's currently the tourism off-season, with few tourists," so the scenic area was "basically not affected", he said.

Wei Fulin, a receptionist at the Phuntsok Khangsang Qomolangma Base Camp Hotel, which is located in the scenic area, said that about 40 to 50 people who were staying at the hotel on Monday had all left on Tuesday morning.

Wei said the hotel is about 40 km from the base camp and was not seriously affected. "There were no collapses or casualties, just some wall cracks," he said.



Rescue efforts underway on Tuesday at an earthquake-affected area in Dingri county of Shigatse, Southwest China's Xizang autonomous region. The magnitude 6.8 quake brought down scores of buildings, killing at least 126 people and injuring 188 others. There are 27 villages and approximately 6,900 people living within a 20-kilometer radius of the earthquake's epicenter. LIU YOUSHEG / XINHUA

With an average altitude of 4,500 meters and a population of more than 60,000, Dingri is one of the most populous border counties in Xizang. It borders Nepal to the south.

About 3,400 people from various departments including forest firefighters, armed police, public security and the military, along with more than 150 vehicles, had been sent to the front line to carry out

search and rescue operations, according to a news conference about the earthquake that was held in Shigatse on Tuesday afternoon.

See **Quake**, page 3

## Experts: US suppression of Chinese companies unreasonable

By **CHENG YU** chengyu@chinadaily.com.cn

United States authorities' fast and loose moves to blacklist Chinese companies, and then remove them later, shows their growing lack of legitimacy, and will only trigger countermeasures from Chinese counterparts, industry experts said on Tuesday.

They made the comments as the US Department of Defense on Monday added tech company Tencent Holdings and major electric vehicle battery maker Contemporary Amperex Technology Co Ltd to a long list of Chinese companies it has deemed to be "military companies".

Meanwhile, the Pentagon also removed six companies it said no longer met the requirements for the designation, including artificial intelligence company Beijing Megvii Technology, China Railway Construction Corporation, China State Construction Group and China Telecommunications.

In response to the blacklisting, Tencent said on Tuesday that its inclusion is a "mistake", as the company is neither a Chinese military company nor a military-civil fusion contributor to the Chinese defense industrial base. CATL also called the designation a mistake, saying that it "is not engaged in any military-related activities".

Tu Xinquan, dean of the University of International Business and Economics' China Institute for WTO Studies, said that US suppression has become increasingly unreasonable and lacks legitimacy.

"Their goals have been unmasked, that is, to suppress emerging Chinese companies and industries and curb China's technological rise at minimal cost," Tu said.

"However, the more Washington escalates its measures against China, the less effective these measures prove to be, and the more they reveal their underlying fears," he said.

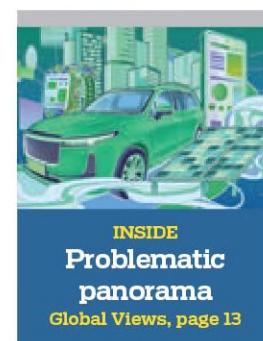
As US threats to China have gone beyond economic competition, Tu said that China is ready to "take necessary countermeasures to safeguard its own security and interests".

These countermeasures include imposing export controls on critical resources like rare earth minerals, which are essential for military and technological applications, he said.

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## EXPRESS DELIVERIES RESHAPE LIVES, CONVENIENCE IN RURAL AREAS

Expansion of e-commerce services increases availability of products

By **LUO WANGSHU** luowangshu@chinadaily.com.cn



Born and raised in Ganjiang, a rural village in Northwest China's Gansu province, Xie Ruiling first encountered online shopping around 2010, when she and her husband were employed as migrant workers in Tianjin, a bustling northern city.

"In Tianjin, everyone around me was buying everything online, so I

decided to give it a try. I ordered some skin care products," Xie recalled. "After I completed the payment, the products arrived at my doorstep in about four days."

The experience was eye-opening. "The platform had so many options,

and the prices were great. With little time to shop in stores while working, online shopping felt like a lifesaver."

What began as a one-time experiment quickly became a habit. Xie spent her free time browsing online stores and placing orders, continuing this routine when she returned to Ganjiang in 2017, pregnant with her second child.

See **Delivery**, page 2

## Foreign minister's visit to Africa spells stability

If it is early January, then there is one certainty in the diplomatic world: China will be sending a delegation to Africa. In fact, when Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi landed in Namibia on Jan 6, the first stop on a four-country visit, it marked the 35th consecutive year that China's foreign minister made Africa the first international trip of the new year.

The foreign minister will also visit the Republic of the Congo, Chad and Nigeria before returning to China on Jan 11. Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said the 2025 trip is important because "President Xi Jinping proposed (last year) that bilateral relations between China and all African countries having diplomatic ties with China be elevated to the level of strategic relations and the overall characterization of China-Africa relations be elevated to an all-weather China-Africa community with a shared future for the new era."

It is important to recognize that the consistency associated with the Chinese foreign minister's annual trip to Africa serves in stark contrast to a chaotic scene playing out in other parts of the world. And in

WORLD WATCH By Anthony Moretti

### Inside

2025, it will be even more noteworthy. Of course, political change is coming to the United States in days, as Donald Trump returns to the White House. What his second presidency will mean for domestic and international affairs remains unclear. What is known is that if he follows through on his campaign promises, then the US' relations with China, Europe and other parts of the world are likely to suffer. International agreements relating to climate change and global health might also be challenged.

But the US is not the lone question mark as 2025 begins: There are likely changes at the top happening in other nations; the effect of those elections on global policy and trade is not yet clear. Meanwhile, domestic unrest continues in South Korea following a disastrous attempt by a now former president to declare martial law.

See **Visit**, page 3

## All things tech

A staff member of KEYI Technology plays with Loona, KEYI's smart robot pet dog, ahead of the CES 2025 in Las Vegas, in the US state of Nevada, on Monday. The tech event kicks off on Wednesday and runs through Saturday.

IAN MAULE / AFP See **story**, page 3



## PAGE TWO

## Delivery: Service empowers rural communities

From page 1

However, life in the village wasn't as convenient. While cities like Tianjin already had 48-hour delivery services, Ganjiang still dealt with delays or "unable to deliver" notices. "Many stores showed messages like 'Area not supported for shipping' or 'Additional shipping charges apply,'" Xie said. "Sometimes, the shipping fee was higher than the price of the product itself."

In Tianjin, Xie was used to receiving her orders in about three days. But in Ganjiang, the wait could stretch to five or six days, and sometimes, she had to drive to town to pick up her packages. "It was frustrating," she added.

But in 2024, everything began to change. "Now, I get free shipping all the time, and if the items are close by, they arrive in two days. If they're farther away, it's at most three or four days. It's so convenient now," Xie said.

Zhao Xiaohong, a fellow villager, noticed the transformation as well. "Express delivery and e-commerce have become essential parts of our lives," Zhao said.

"Whether it's the elderly or children, everyone is either picking up a parcel or heading out to collect one. Packages arrive so often that we sometimes have to queue at the delivery station."

In Ganjiang, the allure of city life has faded. "There are job opportunities right here, and whatever we want to buy online is delivered to our doorstep. We don't envy city living anymore," Zhao added.

What once seemed like a distant luxury has now become part of daily life in Ganjiang. As e-commerce and express delivery networks expand into remote parts of China, they are reshaping how people shop and live. For Xie, Zhao, and others in Ganjiang, receiving everything from daily necessities to special purchases has made rural life feel more connected to the world, bridging both physical and cultural distances.

## Reducing the gap

The expanding parcel delivery network in China has reduced the gap between urban and rural areas, providing rural residents with access to urban commodities and facilitating the flow of agricultural products to cities.

Xie and Zhao's experience mirrors a larger trend across China, driven by the rapid growth of the country's parcel delivery sector. On Nov 17, 2024, China's parcel delivery industry reached a milestone, handling a record 150 billion parcels within a year. This marks the country's economic resilience and the efficiency of its logistics and e-commerce systems.

This surge in parcel deliveries highlights logistics' role in China's economy. In 2024, the average Chinese consumer is expected to receive over 100 parcels annually, with the country's delivery network processing more than 5,400 parcels every second.

"On one hand, China's express delivery industry ensures the well-being of the residents, while on the other, it stimulates production. This virtuous cycle contributes to economic growth and strengthens China's leadership in the global supply chain," said Zhao Guojun, director of the Postal Development Research Center at Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications.

The rapid growth of China's express delivery sector is closely tied to the explosive expansion of its e-commerce market, which continues to drive demand for faster and more efficient delivery services. As the world's largest e-commerce market, China generates massive business for the logistics industry, with online shopping becoming a cornerstone of daily life for many.

According to a report released in 2022 by iResearch, a digital economy consultancy, over 80 percent of domestic express delivery packages in China are e-commerce products. The volume of e-commerce packages is projected to exceed 157.6 billion by 2027, accounting for approximately 81 percent of the total express delivery market, according to a report by ZTO Express last year.



2024  
year in  
Review

On one hand, China's express delivery industry ensures the well-being of the residents, while on the other, it stimulates production."

Zhao Guojun, director of the Postal Development Research Center at Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications

However, the high cost of shipping to remote areas has long been a challenge, especially in western China. This bottleneck has prevented many rural consumers from enjoying fast, affordable deliveries. But by 2024, strides have been made to address this issue.

## Shipping to remote areas

Since 2022, e-commerce platforms and logistics companies have pioneered a new "e-commerce transfer and centralized shipping" model to tackle the cost and logistical challenges of reaching remote areas.

Parcels destined for distant locations are first sent to transfer warehouses, like those in Xi'an of Shaanxi province, where they are sorted and then sent collectively to their final destinations by logistics providers. This collective shipping approach has significantly lowered delivery costs for e-commerce sellers, especially those hesitant to ship to western regions due to expensive logistics fees.

For example, a consumer in Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region will see their items shipped first to the Xi'an warehouse, where they are sorted and relabeled before

being sent collectively to Xinjiang, reducing individual shipping costs. The final "last mile" is then handled by local networks, ensuring parcels reach remote villages.

An online store owner in East China's Anhui province who sells herbal tea across China experienced the difference firsthand. Previously, delivering a package from Anhui to western regions could cost up to 18 yuan (\$2.46) per kg. Under the new system, shipping to Xi'an now costs just 2 yuan per kilogram, with an additional 3 yuan for the final delivery to Xinjiang.

In September 2024, Pinduoduo, one of China's top e-commerce platforms, launched its "Billion-yuan subsidy" initiative. This initiative covers the cost of logistics transfer fees for shipments from the transfer hubs to remote regions like Xizang autonomous region, Gansu, and Ningxia Hui autonomous region, allowing merchants to ship to these areas at costs similar to shipping to eastern China.

For instance, the herbal tea seller in Anhui now only pays 2 yuan per kg from Anhui to Xinjiang.

Consumers in remote regions are noticing the difference.

Xie Ruiling now enjoys free shipping on nearly all her purchases, and delivery times have improved further. "I receive my purchases in two to four days in most cases," she said.

The changes are also beneficial for consumers like Geng Bing in Xizang. He used to pay around 30 yuan to ship a car-top luggage box. Under the new system, his shipping costs were waived.

"By leveraging 'transfer hubs', the initiative has created a ripple effect that benefits three key areas. First, it reduces the additional logistics costs that consumers in remote areas would otherwise incur. Second, it expands the sales reach of e-commerce merchants to western and remote regions. Third, it brings an increase in e-commerce parcels, which further reduces the operational costs of express delivery services," said Xu Yong, vice president of the express logistics branch of the China Transportation Association.

"E-commerce platforms serve as a hub for merchants, product information, financial flow, and logistics, making them highly influential," he said, adding that the initiative has promoted win-win development for consumers, e-commerce platforms, and logistics services in western and remote regions.

## E-commerce boosted in west

China has been investing in infrastructure to strengthen delivery networks in China's western regions, addressing long-standing barriers to e-commerce growth. Distribution centers are expanding, and transportation routes are being optimized to improve operational efficiency.

According to the State Post Bureau of China, since 2024, the regional development of the postal and express delivery industry has become more balanced, with the proportion of express deliveries in the central and western regions continuing to rise. The growth rate of business volume in these areas exceeds the national average.

Thanks to these improvements, products from remote western areas like melons from Changji, Xinjiang, yak meat from Nyingchi in Xizang, and red goji berries from Haixi, Qinghai province, are now delivered to consumers across China, opening up new markets for regional specialties.

This new commerce is stimulating local economies and making it easier for remote-area consumers to access a wider range of products.

Through the new shipping model, e-commerce platforms are reducing logistics costs, improving operational efficiency, and unlocking potential in underserved western and rural markets.

This is bridging the gap between eastern and western China, bringing the benefits of e-commerce and faster delivery to a larger population.

As express delivery continues to evolve, it has become an integral part of daily life in China. With an average of 100 parcels delivered per person annually, the country is experiencing an unprecedented reliance on parcel delivery services. It's no longer just about receiving a package; it's about how people live and shop, connecting rural areas to urban centers and making the world feel smaller.

Beyond the numbers, the personal connections formed between delivery drivers and customers are what truly humanize this booming industry.

On the last day of 2024, He Kaixin, a resident of Zhangzhou in East China's Fujian province, sent an online red envelope containing 50 yuan as a token to the courier who had been serving her for the past year.

She sent the red envelope with a message: "Thank you for delivering my packages to my doorstep all year. The elevator is often broken, and I know it must be tough carrying parcels up. Please take this to just enjoy a cup of milk tea on me."

The deliveryman politely declined, replying, "This is my job, it's what I do."

Though simple, his response reflected the pride workers take in their roles, no matter the challenges.

## In Tibetan village, driverless vans bring fresh prosperity

By LUO WANGSHU

Since last summer, a futuristic service has been changing the lives of rural residents in a Tibetan village in Gansu province — unmanned delivery vehicles.

Lulian village is about 20 kilometers from the Longnan city distribution center. In the past, delivery personnel had to rely on small trucks to transport parcels, but due to the difficult rural road conditions and high transportation costs, efficiency was low.

The unmanned vehicles have kept the delivery time from the distribution center to Lulian to about 50 minutes to an hour, but the vehicles are better equipped to navigate various weather conditions. The arrival time at each parcel delivery station is preset and precise.

"The use of unmanned vehicles has

solved our biggest problem — the 'last mile' of delivery," said Cheng Jie, manager of the ZTO Express Longnan branch. "Not only have they reduced labor costs, but they've also increased delivery efficiency."

The unmanned vehicles resemble small vans with a streamlined exterior. They have large cameras on top, and can travel at speeds up to 40 km/hour.

They require no driver or safety personnel onboard, and the express delivery company simply needs to staff the distribution center and parcel station.

Cheng said the company recognizes the advantages of using unmanned vehicles, and will add more to the six in operation at its Longnan branch.

Driverless cars are changing the way local logistics operate, effectively solving the "last mile" delivery issue in rural areas.

A national campaign launched in 2014 to promote parcel deliveries in rural areas has been instrumental in establishing a nationwide rural delivery network.

"Over the past decade, the country's rural logistics system has rapidly evolved from barely non-existent to increasingly sophisticated, providing millions of rural residents with faster and more accessible delivery services," said Lin Hu, director of the market inspection department of the State Post Bureau of China.

Today, nearly 98 percent of townships across the country are covered by delivery stations, and many rural communities now enjoy direct access to express delivery.

"As of last year, China had 337,800 parcel delivery stations in villages. The 'last mile' issue in rural parcel delivery is being effectively addressed," Lin said.

From 2021 to this year, the State Post Bureau of China focused on further strengthening the rural delivery infrastructure, and accelerating the application of innovative technologies such as unmanned vehicles.

The unmanned vehicle delivery service in Lulian is a shining example of this progress. However, their initial arrival left many villagers feeling a bit apprehensive.

"At first, many people gathered around to watch the vehicles as they started running. It was like watching monkeys at the zoo," Cheng recalled.

However, as residents became more familiar with the unmanned vehicles, their concerns began to ease.

Jayang, who manages the village's parcel delivery station, said that the unmanned cars have not only saved him

time but also improved delivery efficiency. In the past, he had to drive to the distribution center to pick up parcels, often having to wait, especially during peak times. Now, with the unmanned vehicles, deliveries arrive on time, making the entire process much more convenient.

The unmanned vehicles have not only improved delivery efficiency, but also created opportunities for local farmers to expand their market reach.

In the past, many villagers would send local specialties such as homemade cured meats and peppercorns to other regions, but slow delivery times limited their ability to reach wider markets. With the faster delivery times provided by unmanned vehicles, these products can now reach distribution centers the same day, increasing local farmers' incomes.

## TOP NEWS

## China takes lead in global growth of IP

Strategic and emerging industries propel surge in patent applications nationwide

By CAO YIN  
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China's quantity and quality of patent and trademark applications both increased in the past year, with intellectual property protection getting stronger, according to a senior IP regulator.

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Last year, the number of valid domestic invention patents in China exceeded 4.75 million, making it the first country in the world to break the 4-million mark in this sector, Shen Changyu, commissioner of the China National Intellectual Property Administration, said on Tuesday.

Of the total, nearly 1.35 million involve strategic and emerging industries, up 15.7 percent year-on-year, Shen said, while delivering an annual work report to IP sub-bureaus nationwide.

As IP applications grew rapidly at home, China's contribution to global IP filings was unparalleled last year, holding leading positions in the World Intellectual Property Organization's Patent Cooperation Treaty and Madrid and Hague systems for international IP registrations, he added.

With the number of applications continuing to rise, the administration has also set standards for agencies that provide services for registering trademarks and applying for patents to ensure the quality of the applications from the source, Shen said.

Liu Bin, a lawyer at Beijing Zhong Wen Law Firm who specializes in handling IP disputes, said that recent years have witnessed a surge in invention patents applied by domestic enterprises in strategic and emerging fields, including biology, information technology, new materials, green and low-carbon efforts, and high-end equipment manufacturing.

"The growth stems from strong support of the country for scientific and technological innovators, and it's also related to the large

number of enterprises in these fields, which are more dynamic in the market," Liu said.

He applauded the administration's efforts to put quality first in reviewing patent and trademark applications, saying that quality is more conducive to promoting innovation and industrial development.

In addition, the efficiency of the patent application review process was improved in 2024, with the average examination time reduced to 15.5 months, the work report showed. The average period spent reviewing a trademark application remained stable at four months, according to the report.

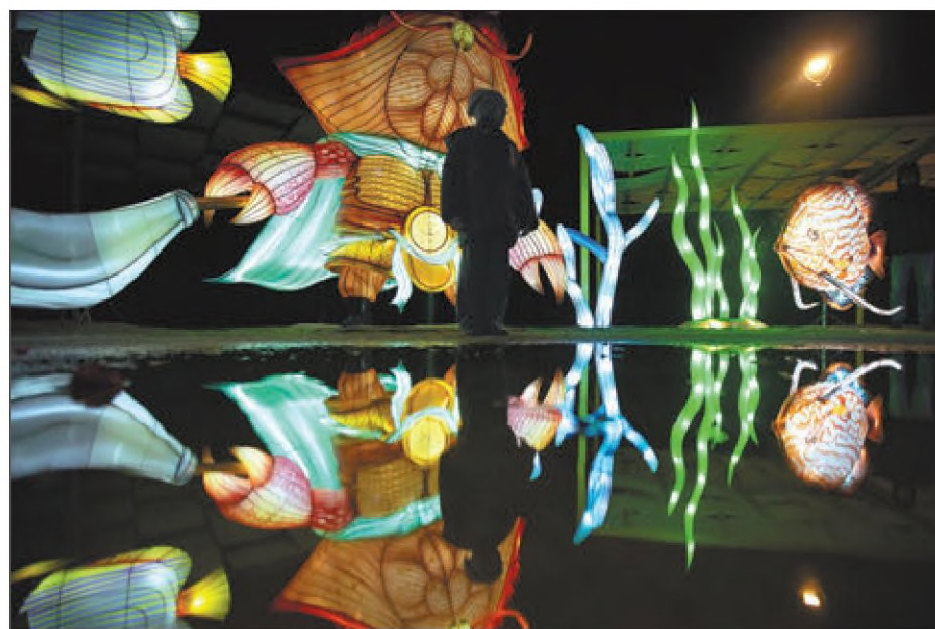
Kang Lixia, a lawyer specializing in handling patent disputes at Beijing's Hanray Law Firm, said the country has provided a quicker channel for reviewing patents related to high-tech and people's livelihoods, as the efficient review process has played a big role in helping patents to be converted into production.

According to the report, China's efforts to protect IP rights have also been further strengthened, with 33 centers newly established across the country last year to help Chinese enterprises tackle IP disputes overseas. This is considered to be important for domestic companies to prevent IP risks and enhance self-protection awareness while going global.

"Enterprises encountering IP problems on the road of overseas development can turn to those centers for help, and they'll receive professional services and solutions," Kang said.

Liu, from Zhong Wen Law Firm, said the centers also offer free IP-related training for enterprises preparing to expand businesses overseas, guiding them on how to protect their own innovations abroad and reminding them not to infringe upon the IP rights of others.

Shen, the commissioner, added that such centers will continue to open this year to ensure that domestic enterprises have stronger and high-quality IP protection.



## Magical illumination

Visitors admire installations at a Chinese lantern festival in Rome, Italy, on Monday. The displays created an enchanting atmosphere, giving visitors a glimpse of Chinese traditions, fairy tales and legends. LI JING / XINHUA

## Chinese brands boost AI drive at major tech event

By RENA LI in Las Vegas  
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At the ongoing CES 2025, the popular annual consumer tech show in Las Vegas, Nevada, a number of Chinese companies have emerged as pioneers in leveraging artificial intelligence and advanced display technologies to redefine home entertainment and smart living.

TCL displayed its innovative QD-Mini LED technology, a result of its collaboration with Google, while Hisense unveiled its groundbreaking TriChroma LED TV and a 136-inch MicroLED Display, which highlighted the shared vision of the industry leaders to integrate innovative AI into everyday living.

During the CES media day event on Monday, TCL unveiled its first enhanced QD-Mini LED TV, engineered to deliver immersive experiences for cinema, sports and gaming enthusiasts.

"Globalization is localization," Li Dongsheng, chairman and CEO of TCL Technology Group Corp, told the gathering, emphasizing TCL's efforts to engage with diverse markets through initiatives like its collaboration with the National Football League and leveraging TCL's data resources to support local sports and cultural development.

Daniel Sun, TCL's chief technology officer, outlined the company's expansive product ecosystem, including smartphones, tablets, TVs, commercial displays and internet of things devices. He highlighted the pivotal role of generative AI and large language models in creating seamless and intuitive smart home environments.

"Generative AI and large language models are integral to the future of smart homes, where connected devices create seamless and intuitive living environments," Sun told China Daily.

Highlighting the collaborations with major tech companies such as Microsoft, Amazon Web Services and Google, Sun stressed the importance of TCL North America complying with local regulations to ensure data protection and the ethical deployment of AI.

"We aim to become a global player by integrating various components and maintaining high standards for data protection and user experience," said Sun, emphasizing the importance of the partnerships.

Hisense, another leading brand in global consumer electronics and home appliances, displayed a bold vision for the future powered by AI, unveiling groundbreaking advances in display technology

with its new products and smart living solutions.

"Many still think of us as just a consumer electronics and home appliances company, but our vision and solutions extend far beyond where we are today," said David Gold, president of Hisense USA.

Artificial intelligence lies at the core of Hisense's strategy to make technology more intuitive and impactful.

"We're not out here making AI moves... When AI is done right, you don't notice the technology — you just experience a better way of living," Gold told audiences at the CES media day news conference.

Hisense's partnerships with global organizations remain central to its strategy. At CES, the company announced its role as the first partner of the FIFA Club World Cup 2025 and unveiled its campaign to inspire fans worldwide.

In North America, Hisense strengthened its presence through collaborations with the National Basketball Association, including partnerships with the Golden State Warriors and NBA All-Star player Anthony Edwards.

In gaming, Hisense showcased its advanced display capabilities through its partnership with the blockbuster Chinese game *Black*

*Myth: Wukong*. The vivid detail and fast-paced action delivered by Hisense's displays contributed to the game's record-breaking sales of 10 million copies within three days.

The narrative of US-China technological collaboration is seen as being embodied in the efforts of companies like TCL and Hisense, with both firms stressing a shared commitment to innovation, sustainability and user-centric solutions.

TCL's partnership with Google brings the power of the Gemini AI model to its smart TVs, incorporating features such as proximity sensors and far-field microphones. The enhancements promise to revolutionize personalized entertainment and smart home management.

"These features will not only redefine entertainment but also serve as hubs for family coordination and smart home management," said Shalini Govil-Pai, vice-president of Google TV.

"Innovation is most impactful when it enhances people's lives in meaningful ways," Gold from Hisense USA said.

"From reimagining home entertainment to creating smarter, more connected living spaces, our commitment to technology is rooted in delivering real value to our consumers."

## Visit: Key pillars of cooperation set to be strengthened

From page 1

Finally, throughout significant parts of the globe, citizens of multiple countries continue to show dissatisfaction with their leaders and the direction their nations are going.

Looking for something that is the polar opposite? Then shift to the annual conversations that take place every January on the African continent with the participation of Chinese officials.

This year's visit comes at an auspicious time. In 2024, China successfully hosted the Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation. As part of that gathering, Chinese President Xi Jinping reminded everyone that the "China-Africa friendship remains robust

and is growing stronger through generations no matter how the world changes". United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres applauded the growing ties between China and Africa, noting "China's partnership with the African continent is the main pillar of South-South cooperation".

While he is on the African continent, Foreign Minister Wang Yi is expected to advance key pillars of that cooperation, which could include strengthening shared governance, knowledge networks and people-to-people exchanges.

Last year, Boston University's Global Development Policy Center examined top issues in the China-Africa relationship. It noted that China can provide important lessons to Africa as it continues to

transition to a more environmentally friendly energy structure. According to the center, currently, 90 percent of Africa's energy consumption comes from fossil fuels.

Economically, trade between China and Africa continues to flourish. One estimate suggests that approximately 20 percent of all African exports go to China and 16 percent of Chinese exports go to Africa. In monetary terms, in 2023, trade between the two sides exceeded \$280 billion. In the same year, trade between the US and China was about \$575 billion. Experts suggest that China has been able to make significant inroads in Africa because it engaged in construction and manufacturing projects. We should also keep in mind that China announced late last year that it

would eliminate tariffs on trade with 33 African countries, a decision that is certain to boost two-way trade in the coming years.

Put all of this together and there ought to be plenty of good news emanating from the capitals of Namibia, the Republic of the Congo, Chad and Nigeria in the coming days. That news should be followed in due time with reports identifying even more robust and diverse trade between China and the African continent.

The author is an associate professor in the Communication and Organizational Leadership Department at Robert Morris University in Pennsylvania, the United States. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

## Hard labor



Afghan workers shovel coal onto a truck bound for Pakistan, at a coal yard on the outskirts of Kabul, Afghanistan, on Monday. WAKIL KOHSAR / AFP

## Quake: Personnel sent to help with search, rescue missions

From page 1

Additionally, about 340 medical workers had been sent to the earthquake-stricken area to treat injured or trapped individuals. Disaster relief supplies such as self-heating rice, bottled water, instant noodles, winter coats, winter shoes, blankets, beds and tents had been sent to the area.

Emergency rescue work was being intensified, including hazard identification in the earthquake-affected areas, the evacuation and resettlement of people, and the repair of damaged facilities.

The China Earthquake Administration sent a work team to the site to assist in local disaster relief efforts.

## 100 million yuan

of central natural disaster relief funds allocated by the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Emergency Management to support the Xizang autonomous region in carrying out earthquake disaster relief work

As of 1 pm on Tuesday, 16 aftershocks of magnitude 3.0 or above had been recorded. In the coming days, there is still a possibility of earthquake activity, according to experts from the China Earthquake Networks Center.

The Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Emergency Management allocated 100 million yuan

(\$13.7 million) of central natural disaster relief funds to support the Xizang autonomous region in carrying out earthquake disaster relief work.

China Railway Qinghai-Tibet Group organized a comprehensive inspection of infrastructural facilities such as railway tracks, bridges, tunnels, culverts, signals, buildings and power supply equipment to ensure the safety of railway operations.

Local authorities will strengthen earthquake monitoring and early warning efforts, and will spare no effort in searching for and rescuing any trapped individuals. They will also provide full support in treating the injured, carry out livelihood assistance, ensure that the basic living needs of those affected by the quake are met, and handle post-disaster tasks, according to the news conference held in Shigatse.

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## List: Nation vows to protect rights, interests

From page 1

Foreign Ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun said at a news conference on Tuesday that China always firmly opposes the US' generalization of the concept of national security, the establishment of various discriminatory lists, the unreasonable suppression of Chinese enterprises and the curbing of China's high-quality development.

The Ministry of Commerce said that such moves undermined the security and stability of global industrial and supply chains, and China will take necessary measures to resolutely safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese entities.

The latest list of Chinese companies, mandated under US law as the "Section 1260H list", designated 134 companies, including chipmaker ChangXin Memory Technologies,

Quetcel Wireless Solutions and drone maker Autel Robotics.

Brian Tycanco, an editor and analyst at Stansberry Research, who follows China, Asia, tech, energy and commodities, posted on social media platform X: "It's turning out that if you're an innovative Chinese business making money, you're likely to be considered a threat to US national security."

Liu Ying, a senior researcher at the Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies at Renmin University of China, said that the US' ungrounded accusations will only trigger comprehensive countermeasures from Chinese companies and industries, especially arbitration and lawsuits.

Tencent said on Tuesday that it will engage in discussions with the Pentagon to resolve any misunderstanding and, if necessary, will "undertake legal proceedings".

In fact, the move came just weeks after the Pentagon removed two companies, including Advanced Micro-Fabrication Equipment Inc China, a leading Chinese chip equipment manufacturer, from the blacklist.

AMEC, which said it has never been involved in military activities, filed a federal lawsuit against the decision in August. The court ruled in December there was "insufficient evidence" to justify the decision.

In 2021, Chinese smartphone maker Xiaomi filed a lawsuit against the US Department of Defense over the same blacklist. Four months later, the Chinese tech company was removed from the list.

According to Liu, the World Trade Organization's website showed that the number of cases in which the US has been the defendant far exceeded that of nearly all European Union economies so far, and the US has lost in most of them.

## CHINA

# Recruiters seek overseas graduates

Stakeholders ramp up efforts to help returnees adapt to domestic job market

By ZHAO YIMENG  
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Employers are actively seeking international talent to fill critical roles, particularly in high-tech, biopharmaceuticals and other innovation-driven industries, as more Chinese overseas graduates return to the evolving domestic job market.

However, challenges such as mismatched expectations for pay, information gaps and recruitment barriers persist, according to the latest reports and employment portal insiders.

The Chinese government, international organizations and education consultancies have ramped up efforts to attract more overseas graduates to return for employment and entrepreneurship while bridging the gap between supply and demand in the job market.

The 2024 Chinese Overseas Graduates Employment Report, released by LinkedIn China, shows that demand for international talent in industrial manufacturing, biopharmaceuticals and new energy has surged by 300 percent over the past 18 months among China's top 2,000 globally active companies. Top employment sectors for returnees include high-tech, financial services, consulting and biotechnology.

LinkedIn China Country Manager Nancy Wang told China Daily that 83 percent of Chinese companies have recruitment needs for overseas graduates, prioritizing technical innovation and global perspectives when hiring returnees. The demand for highly skilled professionals is strongest in research and development, technology and management roles, Wang said.

Nearly half the companies recruiting international talent target R&D positions, aligning with overseas graduates' preference for technical roles. Emerging fields such as artificial intelligence, biomedicine and new materials show a balance between employer demand and graduate expertise, she added.

Wang Wen, founder and CEO of SKYE MED, a biotechnology company focusing on innovative drugs, said the company particularly values language proficiency, diversity and the global perspective of employees with overseas education backgrounds, who account for one-eighth of the team.

"Language skills are critical, especially in industries like biotechnology, where staying on top of international developments and engaging in global collaboration is vital," Wang Wen said.

Meanwhile, a diverse workforce fosters creativity and innovation, he noted.

"Overseas graduates bring unique perspectives that complement local employees and help teams generate more inventive solutions," he said.

Returnees' familiarity with the latest international trends and their networks with industry leaders are valuable for companies seeking to stay competitive globally. Recent high-profile partnerships in the industry, such as China-based LaNova Medicines' \$800 million collaboration with leading biopharmaceutical company Merck, highlight the demand for globally savvy talent capable of driving international deals.

However, the landscape for returnees has shifted, said Wang Wen, who earned a doctorate from the University of Aberdeen in Scotland in 2012.

"Domestic employers now prioritize the cultivation of abilities during academic pursuits over mere academic credentials. They no longer solely rely on degrees for assessment, recognizing that academic qualifications and competencies are equally important," he said.

## Challenges, solutions

The mismatch between employers' expectations and returnees' skills remains a key issue. Nancy

Wang from LinkedIn noted that mismatches persist in functional areas like marketing and sales, as overseas graduates tend to prefer management and data analysis positions.

Additionally, over half of returnees lack insights into domestic employment trends. The information gap is particularly acute among returnees with doctorates, some of whom are concerned about national policies affecting their job prospects, she added.

Though about 70 percent of overseas graduates secure employment within three months of their return, some have expressed difficulties getting work. According to the 2024 Employment Competitiveness Survey Report for Overseas Returnees, jointly released by consultancy EIC Education and recruitment portal 51Job, 23.4 percent of respondents said it is "very hard" to find a job, while 45.6 percent regarded it as "a little challenging".

The top two obstacles identified were high salary expectations and maladaptation to domestic workplace culture and pace, said EIC Vice-President Lee Zhang. Some graduates struggle to meet the demands of highly specialized industries, while others overestimate the value of their degrees, failing to adapt to the evolving domestic job market, according to the survey.

To address these challenges, Zhang said the central government and multiple cities have issued preferential policies to support returnees in employment and entrepreneurship.

In early December, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, along with nine other ministries and departments, issued opinions on further improving services for overseas students returning to China, aiming to attract more talent for work, entrepreneurship and national service.

Key measures outlined include integrating returnees into the national employment policy framework to promote high-quality and sufficient employment. The policies also support entrepreneurship, encourage diverse forms of service to the country, and strengthen infrastructure such as innovation parks and postdoctoral research stations.

Additionally, the guideline calls for streamlining degree and qualification recognition processes, facilitating border entry and exit services, and improving personnel management and social insurance benefits for returnees.

Cities such as Shanghai, Guangzhou in Guangdong province and Nanjing in Jiangsu province have gradually lifted household registration requirements for overseas graduates. Municipal governments, including Hangzhou in Zhejiang province, offer each returnee an annual rental subsidy of 10,000 yuan (\$1,370) for the first three years, while Beijing provides qualified overseas graduates with 100,000 yuan each to start a business, Zhang said.

## Importance of job fairs

Meanwhile, recruitment fairs and events are being organized to help overseas returnees better adapt to the domestic job market.

Leina Shi, director of education at the British Council in China, said annual recruitment fairs in major Chinese cities exclusively for United Kingdom graduates provide direct access to top employers and current market trends. These fairs also offer opportunities for the graduates to showcase their skills and connect with hiring managers.

The Study UK Career Development Roadshow, held each March, partners with UK universities, Chinese companies and human resources experts, she said. Overseas Chinese students are provided with insights into China's job market, industry development trends and employer expectations through keynote speeches and panel discussions.

## Stay positive



A total of 2,000 enthusiasts practice tai chi in Fangxian county in Shiyang, Hubei province, on Tuesday. With coordinated movements, they aim to promote a healthy lifestyle and positive energy, allowing more people to experience the charm of traditional martial arts. ZHANG QILONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

# Documentary exposes former CNPC executives facing corruption charges

By JIANG CHENGLONG  
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Several former executives of China National Petroleum Corporation, one of the world's largest energy companies, have been implicated in corruption scandals involving a "political fraudster", according to a State-produced anti-corruption documentary aired on Monday night.

The documentary, jointly produced by the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, the National Commission of Supervision and China Media Group, detailed the connection between Xu Wenrong, a former senior CNPC leader, and Zhou Xianming, a contractor from Jilin province who falsely claimed to be able to arrange promotions through high-level political contacts.

Xu, who holds a doctorate in management, was shown in the documentary referring to Zhou, who only had a secondary school education, as "Teacher Zhou". The two first met at a dinner in 2008, where Zhou used the opportunity to gain access to CNPC's resources.

Zhou crafted an elaborate persona, presenting himself as a disciple of a "traditional Chinese culture master" and claiming to have insider connections with influential leaders. He exploited this image to win the trust of executives and their families. Zhou's tactics included embellishing gossip and information from social circles, which he strategically shared to strengthen his credibility.

In 2011, when Xu was promoted, Zhou falsely took credit for the move, convincing Xu of his influence. Xu, in turn, introduced Zhou to other CNPC officials, including Wang Yilin, then deputy general manager of the company.

Wang, who later served as CNPC chairman from 2015 to 2020, admitted to consulting Zhou before two significant promotions, believing Zhou's fabricated claims of insider knowledge.

The documentary revealed that Zhou leveraged his relationships to secure contracts for his family's engineering business in Jilin, facilitated through Xu's influence. Zhou also cultivated ties with other CNPC leaders, including Gu Xue-

jin, then deputy director of the company's information management department.

Zhou promised Gu a promotion, which he sought to facilitate through Wang's connections. However, in 2022, reports of Gu's misconduct led to an investigation that uncovered Zhou's fraudulent activities and implicated Xu and Wang. Xu expressed regret in the documentary, stating: "I truly feel remorseful. I shouldn't have attended that dinner, shouldn't have met him and shouldn't have developed such a deep relationship."

Zhou admitted on camera: "I used deception as bait by claiming I knew influential leaders. They had a need for such connections, and I catered to that need, thus deceiving them."

Du Zhongjie, an official from the CCDI and NSC, said in the documentary that the executives' wavering ideals and reliance on connections allowed Zhou to exploit them.

Xu has been sentenced to 14 years in prison for bribery. Wang and Gu are also facing prosecution, authorities said.

# Guidelines on public weight control released

By WANG XIAOYU  
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As more than seven in 10 adults and three in 10 children are predicted to be overweight or obese by 2030, authorities have intensified efforts to raise awareness about weight management and enhance public weight control services.

From 2002 to 2018, the overweight rate among Chinese adults increased by more than 11 percentage points, reaching 34.3 percent, while the obesity rate more than doubled to 16.4 percent, according to a guideline on weight management released by the National Health Commission last week.

Among children and teenagers age 6 to 17, the overweight rate exceeded 11 percent, and the obesity rate reached 8 percent in 2018. Both rates have been steadily increasing.

"Some studies predict that if this upward trend is not effectively curbed, 70.5 percent of Chinese children and adults will be overweight, and 31.8 percent will be obese by 2030," the document stated, adding that weight problems are expected to be more prevalent in rural areas than in urban ones.

Gao Guangming, deputy director of the commission's medical emergency response department, noted that obesity and being overweight are primary risk factors for a range of chronic illnesses, including cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and certain cancers.

"Strengthening weight management is essential for promoting healthy lifestyles, improving residents' health literacy and advancing disease prevention, while better controlling chronic diseases," he said during a news conference on Friday.

In June, the commission and 15 other government departments launched a three-year campaign to boost public awareness and knowledge about preventing and addressing problems that cause obesity and people to become overweight.

The newly released guideline is part of a series of technical documents providing standardized guidance as part of the campaign. It outlines weight classification categories, weight management evaluations, intervention and treatment methods, strategies for maintaining a healthy weight and advice for special groups such as the elderly and children.

For instance, the guideline specifies that the popular ketogenic diet, which is exceptionally high in fat and low in carbohydrates, is suitable only for individuals diagnosed with simple obesity or obesity-related metabolic syndrome. This diet can achieve rapid weight loss in the short term but must be conducted under strict medical supervision to ensure safety.

To maintain a healthy weight, the document recommends 150 minutes of moderate-intensity cardio workouts and two to three resistance training sessions per week. It also suggests choosing healthier cooking methods, such as steaming, boiling, stewing and stir-frying, over deep-frying or grilling.

Gao emphasized the importance of spreading awareness about the dangers of being overweight and promoting scientifically proven ways to stay fit.

"Families play a significant role in weight management. Supervision and encouragement from family members provide critical motivation," he said.

Additionally, Gao mentioned that authorities are working to establish a supportive social environment, such as building community facilities where residents can conveniently measure their weight and blood pressure.



## Made in 10 days

Visitors admire a giant ice dragon sculpture on the frozen surface of the artificial lake at Nanhu Park in Changchun, Jilin province, on Monday. The park invited a professional team who spent over 10 days creating this 30-meter-long ice dragon.

WANG QIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

# Cross-border medical aid saves life of Vietnamese man with critical disease

By ZHANG LI in Nanning  
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A Vietnamese man with a life-threatening heart condition has returned home after successful treatment in southern China, facilitated by a cross-border medical rescue service.

A resident surnamed Pham of northern Vietnam experienced sudden chest pain, shortness of breath and dizziness on Dec 25. Doctors at a local hospital diagnosed him with acute type A aortic dissection, a rapidly progressing cardiovascular condition that can be fatal without immediate intervention.

Pham's case marks the first successful use of the "1369 Life Express" channel for a Vietnamese patient with acute aortic dissection.

Upon receiving a request for help from the Mong Cai City Health Center in Vietnam, Dongxing People's Hospital in China's Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region activated the "1369 Life Express" rescue channel, which provides speedy medical transport for critically ill patients between the two countries.

Pham was transported to Dongxing People's Hospital within 10 minutes. After further assessment, he was transferred to the First Affiliated Hospital of Guangxi Medical University in Nanning for emergency surgery.

The Nanning hospital activated its emergency protocol, and a medical team performed a seven-hour operation. Pham regained consciousness without complications and was moved from intensive

care to a regular ward on Jan 2.

"Remote treatment for acute aortic dissection is a race against time. It requires close collaboration and decisive action from multidisciplinary teams," said Zheng Baoshi, president of the hospital.

Named after the "1369" milestone on the China-Vietnam Friendship Bridge, the rescue channel was launched in 2016 to expedite medical aid for critically ill Vietnamese patients.

Since then, it has facilitated treatment for more than 650 patients, serving as a model for international medical cooperation.

"This service not only saves lives, but also strengthens the bond between the people of China and Vietnam," Zheng said.

## CHINA

# Zebrafish spend record time alive aboard China's space station

Researchers study related impacts of fish that survived 43 days in orbit

By LIU KUN in Wuhan and ZHENG CAIXIONG

The zebrafish that accompanied the Chinese astronauts on last year's Shenzhou XVIII mission set a record for being the longest surviving fish in space, according to the professor researching them.

Sun Yonghua, director of the China Zebrafish Resource Center of the Institute of Hydrobiology at the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Wuhan, Hubei province, said the longevity represents a breakthrough in the cultivation of vertebrates and aquatic plants in space.

"It is the first time that zebrafish have survived for 43 days in such a closed aquatic ecosystem," said Sun, adding that the completely enclosed aquarium enabled unobstructed observation aboard China's Tian-gong space station.

On April 25, two male and two female zebrafish along with hornwort aquatic plants from the institute were taken on the Shenzhou XVIII manned space mission to China's space station.

On Nov 4, the crew returned to Earth with their samples.

At the station, astronauts collected water samples and ensured the zebrafish were fed, and observed abnormal behaviors such as the fish swimming upside down, rotating and circling in the microgravity environment, Sun said.

"Previously, German scientists set a record of 16 days for what they called a closed equilibrated biological aquatic ecosystem, but they conducted experiments using swordtail fish," he added.

Scientists and researchers from institute have been using recovered water samples and other samples from closed aquatic ecosystems to analyze the impact of the space environment on the growth, develop-



Professor Sun Yonghua (front) shows zebrafish disease models to members of his research team in the laboratory at the China Zebrafish Resource Center in Wuhan, Hubei province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

ment and behavior of vertebrates, according to Sun.

"Prior to this, the Chinese space station had already achieved the full life cycle cultivation of plants. And this launch of sending zebrafish into space is the first long-term cultivation of vertebrates in the Chinese space station, laying a scientific foundation for our future research on aquatic biology and life medicine in space, and providing scientific support for long-term human stays in orbit and deep space exploration," Sun said.

Wang Gaohong, a researcher at the institute, said that like humans, fish also face adaptability issues when surviving in a space environment.

"Researchers have worked together to create a comprehensive ecosystem, where aquatic plants produce oxygen through photosyn-

thesis to supply fish respiration, and fish excrement provides nutrients to the aquatic plants," he said, adding that they are both producers and consumers, forming a seemingly small and simple but actually complex scientific experimental system.

Sun said the food that zebrafish eat in space was specially developed by the institute.

"The way zebrafish swim and hunt is very different from that on Earth, so the food is like a toothpaste. And it squeezes out a little bit inside for the zebrafish to eat, trying not to give them extra feed as it may worsen the water quality," he said.

Zebrafish are common ornamental small fish, with body lengths from 3 to 5 centimeters, and are named after the blue stripes covering their bodies. They are lively and active, swimming in groups.

Zebrafish reach sexual maturity

in three months from birth, and can reproduce throughout the year. A pair of healthy zebrafish can lay over 300 eggs at a time.

"When we take zebrafish to space, we are likely to see them produce the next generation," Sun said.

The professor said zebrafish are a promising model animal, describing them as "mice in the water".

Scientists and researchers are looking into how to reproduce zebrafish in space. The genome similarity between zebrafish and humans is as high as 80 percent, making them an important model for research into human diseases, he said. More than 500 laboratories across the country are carrying out zebrafish and related research and studies, Sun said.

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## Exhibition of ancient Greek and Roman art opens in Taiyuan

TAIYUAN — "To the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome." Statues and artifacts representing the mythical beauty in Edgar Allan Poe's famous words started their tour in China on New Year's Day.

Organized by the Shanxi Museum and the National Museums Liverpool, the first stop of the exhibition was launched on Jan 1 in Taiyuan, Shanxi province, with 134 exhibits on display.

Running until May 5, the exhibition features full body statues, busts, marble reliefs and art works, representing well-known mythical figures such as Zeus, Athena and Apollo. Visitors can explore sarcophagus panels and Greek pottery, providing an immersive opportunity to get a glimpse of the ancient Greek and Roman world.

"NML is honored to present this exhibition to the people of China. The exhibition features over 100 classical Roman sculptures and associated objects," said Sandra Penketh, National Museums Liverpool executive director of collections and research.

Penketh said that the sculptures representing the gods of Greek and Roman legends were inspired by classical art not only for their historical value but also

for aesthetic qualities.

The exhibition, with the theme of "Classical and Glory" Ancient Greek and Roman Sculpture Arts, will continue its tour in Sichuan province and Shanghai.

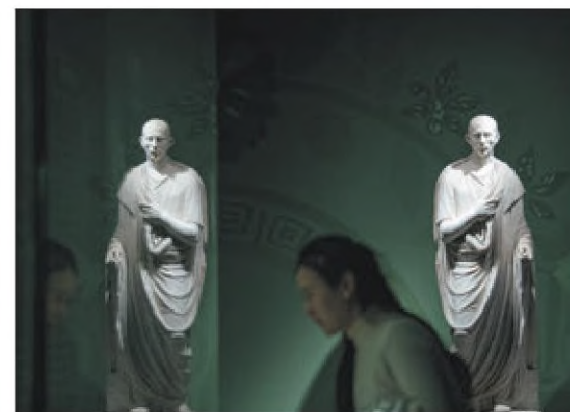
Liu Qiuyi was among over 300 people who visited the exhibition's preview in Taiyuan. She was thrilled by the beauty of the human body as depicted by the sculptures and statues on display.

Among the exhibits, the statue of Apollo from the Roman period was placed under a spotlight. The young Apollo leaned against a tree trunk and stared intently at the lizard he was about to kill.

An Jing, a museum guide, said the statue was created in the style of Praxiteles, a famous Greek sculptor from the 4th century BC, which is an example of a Roman sculpture inspired by ancient Greek works.

World civilizations are vibrant and diverse. Both introducing foreign cultures to domestic audiences and sharing the Chinese civilization with the world help promote exchanges and interaction among global civilizations, said Zhang Huiguang, deputy curator of Shanxi Museum.

XINHUA



A visitor views the "Classical and Glory" Ancient Greek and Roman Sculpture Arts exhibition in Taiyuan, Shanxi province, on Jan 1. WEI LIANG / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

## Farmer turns lens toward the cosmos

By ZOU SHUO in Changsha zoushuo@chinadaily.com.cn

Cao Jun has set up a small observatory at his goat pen where he takes pictures of the universe every night after work.

The 30-year-old from Liuyang, Hunan province, became a fan of astronomy photography in January 2023, after a friend showed him some of the amazing photos of the night sky that can be taken in rural areas.

Cao said he was a photography enthusiast in college, but after he returned to his hometown to raise goat, he did not have much time to take pictures.

In rural areas, because they don't have much light pollution, it's ideal to observe the sky and take pictures of the beauty of the universe with the help of a telescope. He set up a 10-square-meter observatory at his goat pen in March last year.

Cao said astronomy photography is a niche hobby in China, so he had to learn mostly from foreign video tutorials.

After he bought the necessary equipment to set up the observatory, a big hurdle was for him to master the photo-processing software.

He used more software to translate the tutorials and spent almost eight months learning how to use it.

Cao has taken dozens of pictures of the universe and is very proud of several of them.

"Astronomy photography is very intelligent. As long as one sets up the equipment, it can take pictures automatically," he said.

"You cannot see some of the constellations with your eyes, but you can with a telescope. After you make efforts to take pictures of the galaxy, you will be amazed by the



A photo of the Orion Nebula taken by Cao Jun in Liuyang, Hunan province. CAO JUN / FOR CHINA DAILY



Cao Jun works at his goat farm in Liuyang, Hunan province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

beauty of the universe," he added.

Just like astronomy photography, Cao started his full-time job, raising sheep, without any prior knowledge. He majored in Chinese literature at Shaanxi University of Chinese Medicine. After he graduated from college in 2016, he returned to his hometown in Liuyang to raise goats.

In 2017, he went to a goat farm in Huaihua, Hunan, for more than a month to learn how to raise goats. He has also gone to goat farms in Henan and Shandong provinces to learn techniques and invited experts from Jiangsu province to his own farm for guidance.

However, raising goats is more difficult than he imagined and the risks are also bigger, he said. He lost more than 70,000 yuan (\$9,500) during the worst times.

As he accumulates experience from failure, the business of raising goats gradually took off. In 2019, he made more than 400,000 yuan.

Cao now has more than 600 goats and helps fellow villagers raise theirs.

However, he said he is in no hurry to expand the scale of his operation. When the overall economic environment improves and the need for goats grows, he might consider it, he added.

## For designer, art is her mother tongue

HONG KONG — To Chinese fashion designer Guo Pei, there are not as many Fall/Winter or Resort collections as there are "museum collections", like the one she is now presenting in the M+ Museum of visual culture in Hong Kong.

"It is my goal to make clothes that belong in museums," said Guo, sitting meters from *The Yellow Queen*, a silk embroidered yellow gown complete with lavish fox fur trim and a 4-meter train. In 2015, US pop icon Rihanna almost crashed the internet with images and memes of her rocking the dress on the red carpet of the Met Gala.

When Guo completed the dress in 2009, who would be wearing it was not on her mind so much as the desire to express her ideal of timeless beauty, just as she did with the over 40 pieces on display at the *Guo Pei: Fashioning Imagination* exhibition at M+ through April 6.

Born in 1967 in Beijing, Guo went from being a successful mass-market ready-to-wear designer to owner of the atelier Rose Studio in 1997, and presented 10 haute couture shows at Paris Fashion Week at the invitation of the Federation de la Haute Couture et de la Mode, the governing body for the French fashion industry.

Guo looks particularly petite standing next to her works, which exude grandeur through towering structure, intricate craftsmanship, or both. The designs speak of her exuberantly expressive inner world.

"My urge to create is sometimes too strong for my limited skills," Guo said. Many of her gowns are famous for the jaw-dropping number of hours they took to make. Guo said her studio spent 50,000 hours constructing her first couture piece *Da Jin*, or Magnificent Gold, redoing the details time after time to bring her vision perfectly to life.

The strapless gown shaped like an upside-down lotus flower has a



Guo Pei at the M+ Museum in Hong Kong.

metallic gold finish because its entire surface is embroidered with Indian gold threads using traditional Chinese techniques like the couching stitch.

To Guo, Chinese cultural elements are like her mother tongue. "I can't express myself by means other than my mother tongue," she said, seeking to leave her own legacy by rendering the pieces in the best materials.

For *Lanfeng*, or Blue Phoenix, Guo sampled crystals in over 1,000 shades of blue to use for the beading. She constructed the skirt *The Gold Boat* using traditional bamboo-weaving techniques in collaboration with artisans from Anhui province, an area renowned for bamboo production and basketry.



Guo's work, *The Yellow Queen*, is on display at the *Guo Pei: Fashioning Imagination* exhibition at M+ Museum in Hong Kong. PHOTOS BY WANG KUN / XINHUA

XINHUA

WORLD

# China reaffirms support for Africa

Annual visit shows nation remains most trustworthy friend of continent, FM says

By ZHOU JIN  
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For the past 35 years, China's foreign ministers have started each annual round of overseas visits with a trip to Africa, Foreign Minister Wang Yi said on Monday, describing the practice as unwavering and unchanging.

The top Chinese diplomat made the remarks as he met with Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, Namibia's president-elect, during his annual New Year visit. The southern African country was Wang's first stop.

The annual African visit is a fine tradition and a distinctive feature of China's diplomacy, he said.

By upholding the tradition, China hopes to show the world that, despite the changes in the international and regional landscape, it remains Africa's most trustworthy

friend, its most reliable partner in pursuing development and vitalization, and its strongest supporter on the international stage, he said.

Wang noted that China cherishes the friendship with the continent, because the two sides have always understood, trusted, supported, and helped each other in pursuing national independence and liberation, as well as in seeking common development.

China has elevated its relations with all 53 African countries with which it has diplomatic ties to the strategic level, and the overall characterization of China-Africa relations has been elevated to an all-weather community with a shared future for the new era. This highlights the need for China and Africa to firmly stand together and to further deepen cooperation, he said.

Strengthening solidarity and

cooperation and jointly safeguarding the legitimate rights and interests of developing countries serve the common aspiration of the 2.8 billion people from both sides, he added.

In his meeting with Namibian President Nangolo Mbumba in the country's coastal resort town of Swakopmund, Wang said that China is ready to work with Namibia to implement the 10 partnership action plans China proposed at the Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation held in Beijing last year, helping Namibia accelerate its modernization process.

Wang's weeklong Africa trip will also take him to the Republic of the Congo, Chad and Nigeria.

Song Wei, a professor at the School of International Relations and Diplomacy at Beijing Foreign Studies University, said the four countries reflect different aspects of China's cooperation with Africa.

China has broad and in-depth cooperation with Namibia and the Republic of the Congo in areas such

as energy and infrastructure, Song said. And Chad, as one of the least developed countries in West Africa, has benefited significantly from China's assistance, which has contributed to its economic and social development, she added.

Nigeria is the largest economy in West Africa and has considerable influence within the region and the African Union, and strengthening China-Nigeria cooperation is crucial for advancing Africa's development, she added.

He Wenping, a researcher with the Institute of West Asian and African Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said that a key agenda of Wang's visit is to further communicate and coordinate with African nations on how to implement the political consensus and concrete action plans of the Beijing FOCAC summit, especially on how to ensure a solid start for a three-year action plan.

She noted that this year presents numerous opportunities for China-Africa trade cooperation and boost-

ing Africa's economic growth.

China has granted zero-tariff access to its market for products from 33 African countries starting in December, and the implementation of the three-year action plan, which begins this year, covers 10 key areas, including trade and investment, industrial chain cooperation, and green development.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun said on Monday that China always believes that Africa is never "the lost continent," but the land of hope and source of dynamism.

The African Development Bank predicted that Africa's average growth would rise to 3.7 percent in 2024, exceeding the projected global average.

In recent years, Africa's export growth to China has outpaced China's exports to the continent, with an increasing amount of African agricultural products entering the Chinese market. Researcher He Wenping said she believes that bilateral trade will further expand by 2025.

## New envoy to France, Monaco arrives

By MO JINGXI  
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Former Chinese vice-foreign minister Deng Li arrived in Paris on Monday as China's new ambassador to France and Monaco, after his predecessor, Lu Shaye, concluded his term last month.

Deng, 59, had previously served as minister of the Chinese embassy in France, the Chinese ambassador to Türkiye and assistant foreign minister before being appointed vice-foreign minister in October 2021.

Deng and his wife Zhang Hua were welcomed upon their arrival at the airport by an official from the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, as well as key officials of the Chinese embassy in France, according to a news release from the embassy's website.



Deng Li

## European leaders hit back at Musk's posts

By JULIAN SHEA and XING YI  
in London

The leaders of major countries in Europe, including the United Kingdom, France and Germany, have expressed concerns over billionaire Elon Musk's attempts to influence Europe's internal affairs via social media.

With increasing frequency, Musk has been posting his opinions on European politics, including endorsing the far-right Alternative for Germany party, or AfD, and running a poll titled, "America should liberate the people of Britain from their tyrannical government. Yes/No?"

Without naming Musk directly, UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer hit back over the billionaire's comments on Britain's handling of major sex abuse cases a decade ago and the riots fueled by online misinformation last year.

When riots broke out last summer following an incident in which three young girls were killed, and after which misinformation about the attacker's identity was spread on social media, Musk posted that "civil war is inevitable".

Musk has recently called to dissolve the UK Parliament over sexual offenses committed by organized gangs around the country more than a decade ago, when Starmer was director of public prosecutions.

"A line has been crossed," Starmer said on Monday. "Those that are spreading lies and misinformation as far and as wide as possible, they're not interested in victims — they are interested in themselves."

Also on Monday, France's President Emmanuel Macron hinted in a speech that Musk is meddling in European politics and backing a "reactionary movement" across the world.

"Ten years ago, who could have imagined it if we had been told that the owner of one of the largest social networks in the world would support a new international reactionary movement and intervene directly in elections, including in Germany," Macron said in a wide-ranging foreign policy speech at the Elysee Palace.

Norway's Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store also expressed concern about Musk commenting on the internal affairs of countries in Europe.

Store told Norwegian national public broadcaster NRK: "I find it worrying that a man with enormous access to social media and large financial resources is so directly involved in the internal affairs of other countries."

Germany is facing federal elections in February, following the collapse of Chancellor Olaf Scholz's coalition government at the end of last year, with Musk announcing plans for an online discussion with AfD leader Alice Weidel.

Scholz told the weekly publication Stern he had no interest in engaging with Musk.

"I don't believe in courting Mr Musk's favor. I'm happy to leave that to others," he said. "The rule is: don't feed the troll!"

Contact the writers at julian@mail.chinadailyuk.com.

## History remembered



Hun Sen (center), president of the Cambodian People's Party, Heng Samrin (left), honorary president of the party, and Hun Manet (right), Cambodia's prime minister, attend the Victory Day parade in Phnom Penh on Tuesday. Cambodia marked its 46th anniversary of Victory Day, the liberation of Cambodia's citizens from the Khmer Rouge regime in 1979. KITH SEREY / EPA

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**ifaw**  
国际爱护动物基金会

AD

**Between heaven and earth,  
together with other sentient beings, I live.**

— Zhuangzi, philosopher, late fourth century BC

天地与我并生，而万物与我为一

——《庄子·齐物论》

North China leopard

## WORLD

## Trump returns as turbulent year ends

2024 a chapter that made or marred political careers and saw poll wins against all odds

By HENG WEILI in New York  
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In the United States, 2024 was a year that rewrote the political play-book, culminating in the return of Donald Trump to the White House.

The former president and now president-elect survived two assassination attempts and defeated Vice-President Kamala Harris to win a rare nonconsecutive term.

On Monday, Congress formally certified Trump's election victory during a session presided over by Harris.

The quadrennial ritual, clearing the way for Trump's inauguration in two weeks, went like clockwork and stood in sharp contrast to four years ago when a mob of Trump supporters stormed the Capitol in a failed bid to block the certification of then-president Trump's 2020 loss to Democratic President Joe Biden.

Trump's victory appeared to signal a shift in the US electorate, as he won all seven battleground states — Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin — while increasing his support among African American, Asian and Hispanic voters. Meanwhile, the Democratic Party, traditionally supported by US workers, faced a notable decline in backing from that constituency.

The Democrats, led by Harris, who secured her party's nomination on Aug 5 after Biden bowed out of the race in July, chose to run a campaign centered on abortion rights and personal attacks on the 78-year-old Trump.

However, polls consistently showed inflation and border security were top concerns for many citizens.

Trump capitalized on these concerns, promising aggressive action on immigration. He and his pick for border czar, Tom Homan, have vowed mass deportations upon taking office on Jan 20. Meanwhile, the Department of Homeland Security had removed or returned more than 240,000 people to more than 160 countries between June and November — a stark preview of what is to come.

Harris, 60, led an amorphous "joy" campaign and limited her one-on-one interviews. The controversial selection of Minnesota Governor Tim Walz as her running mate — over Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro, who represented a pivotal swing state — further weakened her bid.

During the campaign, Trump continued with his frequent rallies but also appeared on podcasts, such as Joe Rogan's, which is widely followed. Rogan invited Harris to a podcast interview but the two sides never reached an agreement on an appearance.

The year's political turbulence was not limited to the campaign trail.

At a rally in Butler, Pennsylvania, on July 13, Trump narrowly survived an assassination attempt when a bullet grazed his ear. The would-be assassin, 20-year-old Thomas Matthew Crooks, was killed by a law enforcement sniper.

How Crooks managed to access a rooftop not far from where Trump was speaking raised questions about the Secret Service detail.

In the wake of the attack, Kimberly Cheatle, director of the Secret Service, resigned on July 23, a day after she faced intense bipartisan questioning from Congress.

The violence continued on Sept 15 when Ryan Wesley Routh allegedly attempted to assassinate Trump at a golf club in West Palm Beach, Florida. Armed with a rifle, Routh hid in shrubbery near the golf course where Trump was playing. A Secret Service agent fired four shots, forcing Routh to flee before he was later apprehended.

He now faces five federal charges, including attempting to assassinate a presidential candidate. Routh has pleaded not guilty, with his trial scheduled for September. If convicted, he could face a life sentence.

Despite these dramatic events, Trump triumphed in the Nov 5 election, securing 312 electoral votes to Harris' 226, well above the 270 needed for victory. In the popular vote, Trump garnered 77,302,440 votes,



Pro-Palestinian students holding banners demonstrate on May 24 in front of the White House to show solidarity with Palestinians and demand an immediate cease-fire to the Palestine-Israel conflict in the Gaza Strip. CELAL GUNES VIA GETTY IMAGES



Migrants turn themselves in to the US Customs and Border Patrol officers after crossing over a section of the border wall into the country on Sunday in Ruby, Arizona. BRANDON BELL / AFP



Journalists watch a debate between Donald Trump and Joe Biden hosted by CNN, at the Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta on June 27. FRANCIS CHUNG VIA AP

## 2024 year in Review

while Harris received 75,017,312. Republicans also took control of the Senate with a 53-47 majority and maintained a slight advantage in the House of Representatives, 220-215.

Trump's election served as a wake-up call for mainstream media, as most polls had inaccurately predicted a dead heat.

Trump filed a lawsuit against the Des Moines Register newspaper in Iowa and its former top pollster over a poll published three days before the election that showed Harris leading in the traditionally Republican state. Trump ultimately won Iowa with 55.7 percent of votes.

This legal action came shortly after ABC News agreed to settle a defamation case brought by Trump. The network donated \$15 million to his presidential library and publicly apologized for anchor George Stephanopoulos' false claim that Trump had been found liable for rape.

Traditional media outlets continued to lose influence to alternative platforms such as X, owned by billionaire Elon Musk, a vocal Trump supporter, as well as to talk radio and podcasts.

Musk's posts on X even led to the scuttling of a continuing resolution to fund the federal budget. On Dec 20, Congress eventually agreed to fund the government via continuing resolution until March.

Trump has named Musk to co-lead the new Department of Government Efficiency with former Republican presidential candidate Vivek Ramaswamy.

### TikTok saga

TikTok, the immensely popular video-sharing platform, has had an eventful 2024.

In the spring, Congress passed the Protecting Americans from Foreign Adversary Controlled Applica-

tions Act — which Biden signed into law — requiring ByteDance, TikTok's Beijing-based parent company, to divest the platform by Jan 19 or face a ban, citing national security concerns.

However, Trump, a former critic of the platform with 170 million US users, is now seeking a political resolution to allow TikTok to continue operating.

On Dec 27, Trump's legal team filed a brief with the Supreme Court, requesting a pause on the ban until his administration can address the matter politically. The brief said Trump opposes banning TikTok at this time and "seeks the ability to resolve the issues at hand through political means once he takes office".

Days earlier, on Dec 22, Trump indicated he favored allowing TikTok to keep operating in the US for at least "a little while," saying he had received billions of views on the platform during his presidential campaign.

ByteDance has consistently challenged the legislation, arguing it violates free speech rights. TikTok maintains that its recommendation engine and user data are stored on Oracle-operated US servers and that moderation decisions affecting US users are made domestically.

Despite these assurances, a three-judge panel from the US Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit upheld the statute on Dec 6, prompting TikTok to appeal to the Supreme Court, which agreed on Dec 18 to hear the case, with oral arguments scheduled for Friday.

In a significant development, Trump met with TikTok CEO Shou Zi Chew at the former's Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida on Dec 16.

### Presidential pardons

On Dec 23, Biden commuted the sentences of 37 out of 40 federal inmates on death row, converting the terms to life imprisonment without parole.

Unlike executive orders, clemency decisions cannot be reversed by a president's successor.

Trump restarted federal executions during his first term in office from 2017 to 2021 after a nearly 20-year pause.

Biden, who ran for president opposing the death penalty, put federal executions on hold when he took office in January 2021.

In recent weeks, he has faced pressure from congressional Democrats, opponents of capital punishment and religious leaders to commute federal death sentences before he leaves.

"Make no mistake: I condemn these murderers, grieve for the victims of their despicable acts, and ache for all the families who have suffered unimaginable and irreparable loss," Biden said in a statement.

"But guided by my conscience and my experience ... I am more convinced than ever that we must stop the use of the death penalty at the federal level," he said. "In good conscience, I cannot stand back and let a new administration resume executions that I halted."

Trump's spokesman Steven Cheung criticized the commutations. "These are among the worst killers in the world and this abhorrent decision by Biden is a slap in the face to the victims, their families and their loved ones," he said in a statement.

Earlier last month, Biden commuted the sentences of nearly 1,500 people and pardoned 39 more convicted of nonviolent crimes.

He also issued a full and unconditional pardon for his son Hunter on Dec 1, after repeatedly saying he would not do so. Hunter Biden had pleaded guilty to tax violations and was convicted on firearms-related charges.

The year also saw nationwide protests across college campuses over the Palestine-Israel conflict in the Gaza Strip. On April 30, the New York Police Department arrested about 300 pro-Palestinian protesters at Columbia University and the City College of New York after two weeks of demonstrations.

Beyond the political realm, natural disasters brought devastation to many parts of the country.

Hurricane Helene made landfall on Sept 26 in Florida's Gulf Coast as a Category 4 storm with winds of 225 kilometers per hour, causing devastation across 10 US states and killing at least 250 people.

Helene is now the deadliest hurricane to hit the mainland US since Katrina in 2005, in the New Orleans area, according to the National Hurricane Center.

Western North Carolina and the Asheville area were hit especially hard, with flooding that wiped out buildings, roads, utilities and land. Inland areas in parts of Georgia and Tennessee were also washed out.

### Carter remembered

Former US president Jimmy Carter, who established diplomatic relations with China in 1979, died on Dec 29.

A Democrat who served one term after his election in 1976, Carter turned 100 years old on Oct 1, the first US president to reach that age.

Carter and his wife, Rosalynn, founded The Carter Center in Atlanta. The center is committed to advancing US-China relations.

"Today, the Center works to build synergy between China and the United States on issues of global importance, including fostering greater cooperation between them in other nations, providing resources and scholarship, and nurturing the next generation of young leaders who can shape the critical US-China bilateral relationship to be a cornerstone of global peace and prosperity," the center's website said.

Elsewhere, economic pressures and social tensions fueled labor disputes.

On Oct 5, some 45,000 dockworkers at East and Gulf coast ports returned to work after their union reached a deal to suspend a three-day strike.

The International Longshoremen's Association suspended the strike until Jan 15 to provide time to negotiate a new contract. The union and the US Maritime Alliance, which represents ports and shipping companies, said in a joint statement that they have reached a tentative agreement on wages.

Another point of contention is the automation by machines at ports, which the ILA is concerned will cost jobs.

Agencies contributed to this story.

## Nation's anger at insurance 'injustice'



May Zhou  
Reporter's  
Log

Luigi Mangione, 26, an Ivy League graduate from an elite family, has been charged with first-degree murder in the Dec 4 shooting of UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson.

During holiday gatherings, Mangione, healthcare and insurance were often mentioned in the same breath, especially among the young. Some even regard him as a "hero".

On social media, a Luigi Mangione look-alike contest was held recently. In various cities, young people gathered, dressed in dark clothes and mask — mirroring Mangione's attire when captured on security camera.

A widely circulated official photo of Mangione, shown in an orange jumpsuit flanked by armed officers, has drawn comparisons to Heinrich Hoffmann's 1858 painting *Arrest of Christ*.

"If any bar association is hearing me, I do not condone violence," said a law student who chose Rosemary as her pseudo name for privacy. "But at the same time, I think it reflects a lot about how a lot of people are really, really tired of the status quo."

Mangione's glorification "just highlights how messed up our healthcare system is at the moment," she added.

"I think my generation is pretty empathetic to both mental health struggles as well as how much the physical can impact one's mind. Mangione struggled because of a back injury, he also had a bunch of different gripes with the health insurance system as a whole. And this is something that people have been complaining about for a while," Rosemary said.

NT, a business professional from Dallas who wanted to be identified only by her initials, said she was not at all surprised by the news of the shooting.

"In college, I did get my degree in healthcare management. I've always known about America's healthcare system and insurance companies — they screw people over all the time. So, who's surprised that someone doesn't like them, right?" said NT, who received a Mangione doll in orange suit as a Christmas gift. "They had it coming."

In her view, health insurance companies bring nothing good to the table. "They don't provide any good. They're literally just middle-men who exist to take money from hospitals and doctors. They just take everybody's money."

While Mangione is liked by many on the internet, CEO Thompson has received little sympathy. Many call him "the mass murderer" who denied people lifesaving medical treatment.

"Thompson died doing what he loved, not getting healthcare in time" — this comment received many likes.

Rosemary said she herself experienced "not-in-time" healthcare just recently. While traveling home to Houston for the holidays, she forgot her medication and requested an "emergency refill".

However, her insurance company denied the request, citing it as "an early refill and not medically necessary", leaving her to cover the \$1,000 cost out of pocket.

As a result, Rosemary was forced to cut her holiday short and head back to school before the new year, but still missed four days of medication, suffering "the worst migraine of my life".

"My generation has discussed about not just what violence looks like when somebody comes up at you with a gun and shoots you, but more about economic violence. If you're dying at the hands of somebody else according to a company policy, that doesn't make it any less violent," she said.

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## BUSINESS

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## Marine economy lifting energy reserves, trade

By ZHENG XIN  
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China's marine economy has emerged as a key driver in boosting energy reserves, renewable energy, and global trade, according to the Ministry of Natural Resources.

Over 60 percent of China's new crude oil output came from offshore production last year, reinforcing the ocean's role as the backbone of the country's energy expansion. Offshore wind power also reached new milestones, with cumulative installed capacity accounting for more than 50 percent of the global total, latest data released by the ministry showed.

The ocean's contribution extends beyond energy. Desalinated seawater production is expected to exceed 400 million metric tons in 2024, while industrial cooling seawater usage surpassing 180 billion tons. The marine fisheries sector continued its upward trend, securing its position as the world's largest producer for the 35th consecutive year, it said.

"The marine economy has been progressing steadily throughout last year, with marine resources managed effectively and technological innovation achieving notable results," said Feng Lei, deputy director of the marine strategic planning and economy department at the Ministry of Natural Resources.

CNOOC Energy Economics Institute, a think tank that is part of China National Offshore Oil Corp, also believes that offshore oil and gas remain key global investment hot spots in 2024.

China's offshore oil and gas output is set to reach a new high. Offshore crude oil production is forecast at 65.5 million tons in 2024, with new output of 3.3 million tons accounting for over 60 percent of the country's total new crude oil production, said the think tank.

Offshore natural gas output is expected to grow by more than 2 billion cubic meters year-on-year to 26.2 billion cubic meters, it said in the China Marine Energy Development Report 2024 released in December.

Offshore natural gas discovery remains an area of significant untapped potential, said Wang Zhen, head of the CNOOC Energy

Economics Institute.

"As global offshore crude oil contributes over 70 percent of new discoveries, China's offshore resources are set to play an increasingly vital role in energy security," he said.

As global offshore oil and gas technologies are advancing toward higher efficiency and lower carbon emissions, China has achieved system-level breakthroughs in deepwater oil and gas technologies and equipment, with intelligent offshore oilfield operations improving significantly, he added.

China's offshore oil discovery rate has reached 30 percent, exceeding the global average of 24 percent.

CNOOC has been reporting record growth in both crude oil and natural gas output, supported by advanced engineering technologies.

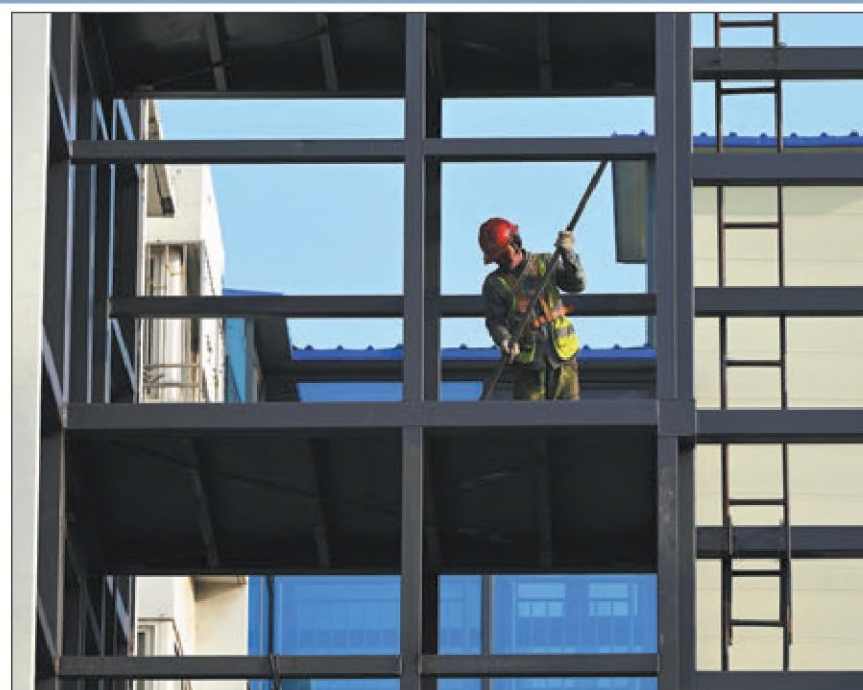
Analysts view China's burgeoning marine economy as a cornerstone of the nation's economic resilience, resource security, and technological leadership, with significant implications for global markets and sustainability.

China's ongoing investment and focus on upstream production will be crucial for ensuring its energy security, said Li Ziyue, an analyst with BloombergNEF.

Lin Boqiang, head of the China Institute for Studies in Energy Policy at Xiamen University, said the fact that over 60 percent of China's new crude oil output in 2024 came from offshore production underscores the strategic importance of marine resources in diversifying energy supplies and bolstering energy security.

Additionally, the scale of offshore wind power, which accounts for over half of global installed capacity, demonstrates China's growing leadership in renewable energy technologies and its ability to scale these projects globally, he said.

According to the ministry, China has also maintained its dominance in marine equipment and shipping. The country holds over 50 percent of the global market share in shipbuilding and offshore engineering equipment. It accounts for more than one-third of global maritime trade volume and container throughput, underscoring its pivotal role in driving global economic growth, said the ministry.



A worker installs an elevator for an aging urban residential building in Yinchuan, Ningxia Hui autonomous region. YUAN HONGYAN / XINHUA

## More steps afoot to boost property sector

Renewal projects to see effective investment shore up domestic demand

By WANG KEJU  
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China will roll out more stimulus measures to push urban renewal projects this year in a bid to scale up effective investment and shore up domestic demand in the face of rising global uncertainties, analysts said.

As the world's second-largest economy has put boosting domestic demand high on its economic work agenda this year, the urban renewal initiatives, which will leverage public funding and private capital, will effectively drive investment — a key component of domestic demand, they added.

The country will accelerate the transformation of aging residential neighborhoods, industrial areas and urban villages, as well as strengthen underlying urban infrastructure, the State Council, the country's Cabinet, said on Friday during the first executive meeting of 2025.

By the end of this year, China aims to complete the renovation of old urban residential communities built before the end of 2000, said the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development in late December during its annual work conference.

The country is also scheduled to complete the renovation of aging gas pipelines that have been identified, and eliminate stagnant bodies of water in county-level cities in 2025, as outlined during the meeting.

Prior to the December meeting, Minister of Housing and Urban-Rural Development Ni Hong said in October that the country plans to renovate an additional 1 million

units in run-down urban villages or properties identified as dilapidated, with measures including providing monetary compensation to residents.

Later in November, the country's policymakers expanded the scope of urban village renewal initiatives. What was once limited to 35 major cities has now been extended to 300 urban areas nationwide.

The renovation of 1 million such units is expected to help clear 200 million square meters of commodity housing inventory through monetary compensation, housing vouchers and government-led acquisitions of existing commercial housing units for resettlement purposes, said Xia Lei, chief analyst at Sealand Securities.

Moreover, by repositioning land in certain urban villages, the government aims to better align redevelopment with evolving market needs, unlocking an estimated 500 billion yuan (\$68.3 billion) in construction investment, Xia said.

Eligible urban village redevelopment initiatives will have access to a range of policy support measures, including local government special bond financing, special-purpose loans from policy banks, as well as relevant tax and fee incentives, according to government authorities.

Earlier last year, the Ministry of Finance announced the first batch of 15 cities selected to receive central government financial support for urban renewal projects to begin in May 2024.

Cities in eastern China will receive up to 800 million yuan in total central government assistance, while those in central and western regions, as well as the

country's four municipalities, will be eligible for up to 1 billion yuan and 1.2 billion yuan, respectively, according to the funding standards.

In addition to government-backed financial support, the State Council also places a high premium on improving market-based financing models to attract greater private sector participation in the country's urban renewal initiatives.

Given the sheer scale, lengthy implementation timelines and complex planning requirements of these urban renewal projects, the traditional model of relying solely on government-driven fiscal support is simply not sustainable over the long run, said Su Jian, director of the National Center for Economic Research at Peking University.

Over the next five years, underground plumbing and wiring alone will require a total investment of around 4 trillion yuan, with an estimated 600,000 kilometers of aging gas, water and heating lines in need of upgrades, said the National Development and Reform Commission in September.

To ensure the viability and scalability of these renewal efforts, it's imperative to focus on mobilizing a diverse array of stakeholders and funding sources, with the government playing a crucial role in unleashing market dynamics, Su said.

The key is the careful selection of urban renewal projects that offer investors clear avenues for reasonable returns. This could include the redevelopment of aging residential compounds, the construction of toll roads, and other initiatives that can generate predictable revenue streams and attractive investment returns, Su added.

## Equipment upgrade subsidy extended

The Ministry of Finance announced on Monday that the government's fiscal interest subsidy policy for bank loans related to equipment upgrades will be extended until the central bank's relending facility quota is fully utilized.

As part of efforts to boost domestic demand and promote high-quality development, the ministry announced the policy in June 2024, following the State Council's launch of an action plan in March 2024 to advance large-scale equipment upgrades and consumer goods trade-in programs.

Under the policy, eligible enterprises could receive an interest subsidy of 1 percentage point on equipment upgrade loans obtained from banks between March 7, 2024 and Dec 31, 2024. The interest subsidy was available for a maximum period of two years.

According to the ministry's latest announcement, enterprises that signed loan and equipment upgrade procurement contracts before March 7, 2024, but whose loans were disbursed after that date, will also qualify for the interest subsidies.

In April 2024, the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, established a special relending facility worth 500 billion yuan (\$68.27 billion) to support sci-tech innovation, technical transformation and equipment renewals.

The relending facility, which provides low-cost funding to banks, is designed to encourage increased credit support for small and medium-sized sci-tech firms in their early or growth stages. It also aims to finance technical transformation and equipment renewal projects, helping key sectors become more digitalized, intelligent, advanced and environmentally sustainable.

XINHUA — CHINA DAILY

## Briefly

## Chinese mainland shares close higher

Chinese stocks closed higher on Tuesday, with the benchmark Shanghai Composite Index rising 0.71 percent to 3,229.64 points. The Shenzhen Component Index closed 1.14 percent higher at 9,998.76 points. The combined turnover covered by these two indexes stood at 1.09 trillion yuan (\$151.64 billion), up from 1.06 trillion yuan on the previous trading day.

## Yuan weakens against greenback

The central parity rate of the Chinese currency renminbi, or the yuan, weakened 3 pips to 7.1879 against the US dollar on Tuesday, 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.

XINHUA — CHINA DAILY



Offshore drilling platforms seen in the Bohai Sea. DU PENGHUI / XINHUA

## Realizing unified national market progress high on agenda

By OUYANG SHIJIA  
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China is accelerating efforts to build a unified national market in a bid to promote efficient allocation of resources, safeguard fair competition, and attract global resources and investors, officials said on Tuesday.

Their comments came as the National Development and Reform Commission, the country's top economic regulator, on Tuesday unveiled trial guidelines for building a unified national market, saying the country will implement a unified market access system and encourage fair competition.

"Building a unified national market and fully leveraging the advantages of China's ultra-large domestic market will provide a solid founda-

tion for resource aggregation, innovation stimulation, industrial upgrading and bolstering growth," said Wang Shancheng, director of the Department of Comprehensive System Reform at the NDRC.

"It will also give us strong confidence to cope with global changes and open up new prospects."

Wang said at a news conference in Beijing on Tuesday that building an efficient, standardized, fair and fully open unified national market is beneficial for promoting the smooth flow and efficient allocation of resources over a larger area, reducing market transaction costs and creating a favorable market environment.

"It is also conducive to boosting demand with high-quality supply," he added.

Looking ahead, Wang said the

country will continue to revise and shorten the negative list for market access and introduce the updated 2025 version in the future.

The NDRC plans to improve the system for managing business entity registration matters and enhance the efficiency of enterprise relocation services. The revision of the tendering and bidding law, government procurement law and related regulations will be accelerated, and it will help speed up the legislative process for the social credit construction law.

The commission will also establish a long-term mechanism to address issues that hinder the building of a unified national market, taking swift action against violations and announcing typical cases. Wang highlighted that building a

unified national market means creating a globally oriented, fully open market — one that ensures all businesses receive fair and equal treatment.

"It is by no means about creating a small, self-contained cycle, nor is it about operating in a closed-off manner," Wang noted. "We are committed to expanding high-standard opening-up, and creating a world-class business environment that is market-oriented, law-based and internationalized."

With smooth domestic economic circulation, he said the country aims to attract global resources and factors, providing a broader development platform for all types of business entities. "This will enable investors from all over the world to share in the development opportunities and achieve

ments of China's modernization."

Wang's views were echoed by Li Weizheng, deputy director of the department of market system construction at the Ministry of Commerce, who said the unified national market is not an inward-looking initiative, but one designed to connect with the global economy.

"The ministry will insist on advancing high-standard opening-up, actively aligning with international high-standard economic and trade rules, promoting reform through openness, driving efficient connectivity between domestic and international markets, and facilitating the construction of a unified national market," Li said.

Miao Dan, deputy director of the planning and finance department at the State Administration for Market

Regulation, said the administration is working with the National Archives Administration to study and formulate a regulation on business entity registration file management to simplify the process for businesses relocating across regions.

Miao said the administration will accelerate the formulation of implementation guidelines for fair competition review regulations as part of its larger drive to end local protectionism and unify the fragmented market.

Looking ahead, Wang Chenwei, director of the Macroeconomy Research Office at the NDRC's Economic System and Management Institute, said the country needs to integrate the transformation of government functions with the innovation of management methods as well as combine the stimulation of market vitality with the improvement of market supervision.

# BUSINESS

## Automakers soaring into future sectors

Domestic players leverage advantages in tech, supply chains to tap next-gen biz

Chinese automakers are rapidly expanding into future industries from humanoid robotics to flying cars, leveraging their technological and supply chain advantages to establish a lead in next-generation technologies.

Auto manufacturer GAC Group recently unveiled GoMate, its third-generation humanoid robot. The full-sized, wheeled robot is capable of climbing stairs, ascending slopes, and overcoming obstacles on one side.

Thanks to GAC's expertise in battery technology, GoMate offers a six-hour battery life, making it applicable in a wide range of fields, including security, healthcare, logistics and education.

Zhang Aimin, head of GAC's robotics research and development team, said the company has a clear production plan, aiming for demonstration applications in various industries in 2025, small-scale production in 2026 and eventually mass production.

GAC Group is not alone in pursuing humanoid robotics.

BYD has made a significant move into this by investing in the startup AgiBot. Chery has partnered with AI firm Aimoga to develop a humanoid robot initially intended for use as a sales assistant in stores. Chang'an Automobile announced plans for humanoid and automotive ecosystem robots with investments of over 50 billion yuan (\$7 billion) within the next five years.

The synergy between intelligent vehicles and humanoid robots regarding underlying software and hardware, supply chain, and production processes is a key reason why many automakers have moved into this new field.

Industry experts noted that the technologies used in autonomous driving, sensors, machine vision, and artificial intelligence overlap

significantly with those required for humanoid robot development. Additionally, auto factories are ideal environments for testing and deploying humanoid robots, creating a closed-loop ecosystem for research, manufacturing, and application.

"Both autonomous driving and humanoid robotics are trillion-yuan markets," said Wang Jinqiao, president of Wuhan AI Research.

Similarly, many automakers are pushing into the low-altitude economy with the development of electric vertical takeoff and landing (eVTOL) aircraft, or vehicles that can ascend and descend vertically like helicopters without the need for runways.

In December, the "Land Aircraft Carrier" — a flying car developed by electric vehicle maker Xpeng — completed its test flight in Lujiazui, Shanghai's central business district. The product received over 3,000 orders at the Airshow China in November.

Analysts said eVTOLs can share up to 80 percent of the supply chain with electric vehicles, further enhancing the prospects for China's flying auto industry.

The expansion of Chinese automakers into future industries demonstrates the game-changing power of AI in the technology sector.

"The competitive advantage in the automobile industry is shifting rapidly toward AI-driven intelligence. Future development must be based on this new competitive landscape," said Zhang Yongwei, vice-chairman and secretary-general of China EV 100, an NEV industry think tank.

Zhang predicts that the automotive sector is entering an era of full AI-driven competition, signaling the start of a new phase of industry transformation.

XINHUA



An employee shows her press-on nails at a production facility in Donghai county, Jiangsu province, in July. GENG YUHE / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Exports of Donghai's press-on nails take off

By CANG WEI in Nanjing  
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Press-on nails made in Donghai county in Lianyungang, Jiangsu province in China, are gaining popularity among international consumers, thanks to their better quality, lower prices and the development of cross-border e-commerce.

Press-on nails are pre-designed artificial nails that adhere to natural nails with adhesive, offering a quick and easy alternative to traditional manicures. They are reusable, easy to use and save both time and money for consumers.

According to Donghai county's press-on nail industry association, sales in the county reached nearly 8 billion yuan (\$1.09 billion) in 2024, an increase of 166.7 percent year-on-year.

Nearly 40 percent of the sales were from overseas markets, with approximately 80 million pairs of original press-on nails crossing borders, bringing the "finger-tip" beauty of China to consumers around the world, the association said.

"We are working on creating a collective trademark for authorized press-on nail manufacturers, aiming to build the Donghai press-on nail brand and expand its global reputation," said Fu Meng, president of Donghai county press-on nail industry association.

"We are working on creating a collective trademark for authorized press-on nail manufacturers, aiming to build the Donghai press-on nail brand and expand its global reputation."

Fu Meng, president of Donghai county press-on nail industry association

In 2024, Donghai county boasted nearly 25,000 press-on nail businesses, with a daily production of 550,000 pairs, said the association.

Among them, there are 12,000 e-commerce businesses, generating annual sales of 4.5 billion yuan, with cross-border e-commerce accounting for around 20 percent. The products are exported to Europe, the United States, Southeast Asia, Japan, South Korea, the Middle East and other regions.

"Thanks to the development of technologies, cross-border e-commerce platforms can help producers sell products to a broader range of markets and reach more diverse

customers, selling larger amounts," said Zhou Mi, a senior research fellow at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation.

To grow exports, the association has managed to ensure fast shipping of small parcels to countries worldwide, Fu said. "Deliveries typically reach Southeast Asia in about three days, and Europe and the US within 10 days," she added.

The inexpensive prices and flexibility to meet high-end customized consumer demand are also reasons for the popularity of Donghai press-on nails in overseas markets, said Fu.

For instance, some of the most popular press-on nail products by Donghai manufacturers include handcrafted designs featuring the application of intricate traditional Chinese painting styles such as Jingtailan.

"We chose to focus on high-end handcrafted press-on nails, offering tailored customization for customers to strengthen brand value through integrating Chinese cultural elements," Fu said.

Bao Shuai, an executive of Furenjia Handicraft Press-on Nails Co, concluded from his experiences in developing overseas markets that sales of press-on nails with distinctive Chinese styles are on the rise.

Thanks to insisting on cultivating the medium and high-end

markets, Jiangsu Tuhua has enjoyed faster growth than many of its fellow 300-odd press-on nail enterprises in Donghai county.

Optimistic about overseas prospects, the press-on nails sector in Donghai is expected to further expand exports to international market.

The association plans to develop industry standards and establish guidelines to ensure quality, thereby promoting the healthy and sustainable growth in the press-on nails sector, said Fu.

In addition, the association plans to establish a professional training school in collaboration with design universities to nurture talent, said Fu. "High-quality press-on nail products can be manufactured locally, with copyright registration," she added.

Press-on nails featuring cultural elements can help wearers gain attraction on social media, which contributes to their popularity, according to Zhou, the senior research fellow at CAITEC.

To bolster their charm to customers as well as promote cultural exchanges, he expects more cultural elements from other regions of the world will be introduced into the design of Donghai press-on nails in the future.

Yin Mingyue contributed to this story.

## Guangdong sets new standards for beef meatball production

By QIU QUANLIN in Guangzhou  
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New local standards for beef-based meatballs in Shantou, Guangdong province, a major manufacturing and sales center for the popular dish, will help provide better technical and quality standard guarantees for producers and promote sales, according to local authorities.

The new standards for the meatballs, which were implemented starting Monday, explicitly require that the product must have a beef content of over 90 percent, or the total content of beef and beef tendons must exceed 90 percent, said Shantou's official WeChat account.

Compared with previous standards, which were issued in 2016, the most significant change in the new standards is its increased applicability, meaning both beef and beef tendon meatballs must adhere to the new standards.

The move will help promote sales of authentic beef-based meatballs and beef tendon balls produced in Shantou, said Xie Chuxia, deputy general manager of Shantou Caixiji Food Co Ltd.

"It is very important to standardize each beef-based meatball manufacturing company to ensure the quality and safety of the products. With the new standards, there will be fewer additives in the meatballs," said Xie.

The company owns several time-honored beef restaurants and sells packaged beef-based meat products — including handmade meatballs — worldwide.

"Some beef-based meatballs are not actually made purely from beef — they are cheaper, harming the entire industry and the rights of consumers," Xie told China Daily.

The revised definition of beef-

based meatballs in Shantou states that they must be made from fresh or frozen segmented beef, with or without beef tendons, as raw materials, with a beef meat content greater than 90 percent, or with the sum of beef meat and beef tendon content exceeding 90 percent.

The meatballs must not include edible by-products of cattle such as organs, fat, blood, bones, skin, head, hooves and tail, according to the new standard.

Production involves adding appropriate amounts of water, salt, starch and other ingredients, using traditional Shantou-based pounding or mechanical methods to grind the meat into a ball-shaped, solidified product with unique local characteristics that is not ready-to-eat.

The labeling of prepackaged products should indicate the names of the product's raw materials and ingredients, beef meat and tendon content, non-ready-to-eat information and cooking instructions.

Bulk products should have the product name, raw materials and ingredient names, beef meat and beef tendon content, production date or batch number and shelf life, as well as the name, address and contact information of the producer on the packaging container and outer packaging.

Traditional beef-based meatballs, famous in Shantou and Chaozhou in eastern Guangdong, are well known Chinese snacks with a history of nearly a century.

The new standards provide better technical standard guarantees for enterprises producing beef-based meatballs, meeting the daily quality supervision requirements of market regulatory authorities for the products and the food safety requirements of consumers, according to the local government.

## LEGO celebrates Chinese culture brick by brick

By WANG ZHUOQIONG  
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Danish toymaker LEGO Group has kicked off a festive event in Shanghai's iconic Yu Garden, showcasing its latest Spring Festival-themed sets and blending traditional Chinese culture with creative play to strengthen local engagement.

The launch marks the seventh consecutive year LEGO has developed Spring Festival products and coincides with the 30th anniversary of the Yu Garden folk art lantern festival.

Running until Feb 12, the event offers an immersive experience for visitors through various interactive zones inspired by the LEGO brand's spring-themed sets. Key highlights include the "Spring Festival Good Fortune" Area which combines traditional Chinese intangible cultural heritage with LEGO creations under dazzling lantern displays.

At the "Lucky Cat" creative ingot area, visitors assemble gold ingots and interact with a giant lucky cat model designed to bring good fortune.

A centerpiece of the event is the giant Lucky Cat model, standing 1.5 meters tall and built by LEGO certified professional Jiang Shenghui and his team.

Crafted using about 181,000 LEGO bricks and taking over 1,180



Visitors gather at Yu Garden in Shanghai, where LEGO holds a Spring Festival-themed event to tap the upcoming consumption peak. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

hours, the model features precision-engineered moving arms and a unique infrared-triggered system that activates animations and sound effects when visitors insert gold ingots.

"Chinese traditional culture is an important source of inspiration for our product design," said Paul Huang, senior vice-president of LEGO Group and general manager of LEGO China. "We hope to create new traditions for families by building LEGO sets together, adding to the festive joy of the season."

Stella Shen, vice-president of marketing at LEGO China, said, "LEGO bricks remain the language through which we connect with our consumers."

In addition to the Yu Garden event, LEGO Group has rolled out exclusive Spring Festival-themed displays across its authorized stores in China.

Lots of new LEGO sets are being launched for the holiday season, including two key products — the "Spring Festival Good Fortune" set and the "Spring Festival Trotting Lantern" set — designed to evoke

the spirit of celebration and family togetherness in collaboration with local folk artists.

Huang emphasized the company's focus on family bonding and cultural learning through play.

"Building LEGO sets together creates precious family moments while introducing traditional cultural elements," he said, adding that these culturally inspired sets have been launched globally, with strong demand in the United States and Asia-Pacific markets from consumers interested in Chinese culture.

LEGO Group has rapidly expanded its footprint in China, operating more than 400 stores in nearly 120 cities. As of end-2024, it had opened five beacon stores focused on enhancing in-store experiences. Looking ahead to 2025, Huang said LEGO Group's key priorities include optimizing its retail layout, strengthening brand influence and upgrading store experiences.

Major initiatives planned for the year include Formula 1-themed activities, International Day of Play celebrations, a collaboration with sportswear brand Nike, and digital enhancements to improve consumer engagement.

"We remain committed to creating innovative and meaningful experiences for our Chinese consumers," Huang added.

# BUSINESSFOCUS

CHINA UP-CLOSE

## Yiwu aiming to carry out dual-cycle model

Zhejiang's 'world's supermarket' eyes increasing imports via opening-up

By CHEN YE in Hangzhou  
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From a "sell global" to a "buy global" mindset, Yiwu, Zhejiang province, is set to launch a new round of international trade reforms, officials and entrepreneurs said.

As a globally renowned hub for small commodities — known as the "world's supermarket" and a key supplier for Chinese cross-border e-commerce platforms — Yiwu maintains trade relationships with 233 countries and regions, attracting nearly 600,000 foreign visitors annually, 15,000 of whom are long-term residents of the city.

As early as 2011, Yiwu was tasked with an overall plan for comprehensive international trade reforms. This round of reforms primarily focused on promoting exports and addressing the challenge of "sell global".

After over a decade of reform practices, Yiwu has established a market procurement trade model, which has been replicated in 39 markets across 22 provincial-level regions nationwide. The Yiwu-Xinjiang-Europe freight train and the "Yiwu-Ningbo-Zhoushan" Grand Open Channel connect over 1,000 overseas cities, driving the development of 2.1 million small and micro enterprises and providing jobs for 32 million.

Benefiting from these reforms, Yiwu has grown from a county-level city into a type-II large city with a permanent population of nearly 2 million. Its export scale has increased from one-thousandth of the national total to one-fiftieth, and its express delivery volume has grown nearly 30 fold in the past decade, accounting for one-twelfth of the national total.

The State Council has approved an overall plan for deepening comprehensive international trade reforms in the city, according to a circular released on Dec 11.

At a news conference on Dec 24, Li Jun, deputy director of the Zhejiang Provincial Development and Reform Commission, said the plan outlines a vision to promote reforms in Yiwu through further opening-up, along with initiatives such as innovating market procurement trade mechanisms, promoting import trade development, enhancing the functionality of comprehensive bonded zones and strengthening cross-border e-commerce regulations.

"The new round of reforms is positioned as 'deepening comprehensive reform of international trade in Yiwu', with the keyword being 'deepening'," Li said. "This indicates that the new round of



Foreign merchants browse goods in Yiwu, Zhejiang province, in November. HU XIAOFEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

reforms builds on the foundation of the previous reforms rather than starting from scratch. Regardless of the phase, the core theme has always been small commodity trade, focusing on serving small and medium-sized business entities."

Li added: "The previous reforms emphasized export trade, addressing the issue of 'sell global'. Yiwu's exports grew from approximately 20 billion yuan (\$2.73 billion) in 2010 to over 500 billion yuan in 2023, an increase of more than 24 fold, contributing significantly to stabilizing foreign trade. However, the import-to-export ratio in Yiwu remains about 1:10, necessitating further reforms in the import sector. This new round of reforms will prioritize imports, focusing on 'buy global' while iterating and deepening 'sell global', ultimately achieving 'buy global and sell global!'"

Promoting Belt and Road cooperation and high-quality development of the China-Europe freight train network, the small commodity hub is slated to further contribute to advancing China's dual circulation strategy, which integrates domestic and global markets and supports efforts to build China into an even stronger trading nation, the circular noted.

The plan explicitly states that cross-border e-commerce rules should better reflect the interests of small businesses and platforms, accelerating alignment with international standards such as the

Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership in areas like data flow, product traceability, electronic signatures, dispute resolution, intellectual property protections and consumer rights safeguards.

"Yiwu receives a large number of foreign traders every year. From January to November 2024, 514,600 foreign traders entered Yiwu, a 55 percent increase compared to the previous year, with a projected total of 570,000 for 2024, marking a new high. To provide convenience for foreign traders in terms of entry, residence, healthcare and payments, we have integrated reforms across multiple departments, including public security, technology, human resources and commerce. This systematic planning aims to facilitate foreign investment and business operations in China," Li said.

Yiwu Party Secretary Wang Jian said that as a preliminary effort to promote imports, Zhejiang China Commodities City Group Co was selected as the sole pilot enterprise. On Dec 25, the first import transaction of items listed on the positive list, such as toys, was completed, marking a breakthrough in accelerating import trade development. The city aims to achieve an import scale of 100 billion yuan by the end of this year and exceed 300 billion yuan by 2030.

The launch ceremony for Yiwu's innovative import trade pilot project and the first trans-



A foreign merchant (right) purchases sporting goods in Yiwu, Zhejiang province, in January. SHI BUFA / FOR CHINA DAILY

action under the positive list was held at Yiwu China Import and Export Commodities Market.

"At the ceremony, a new exhibition hall for the pilot project's goods opened. The entire hall is organized based on the 28 major categories in the positive list, featuring over 160 SKUs (stock keeping units) from the initial trial phase," said Chen Xiang, general manager of Yiwu China Commodity City Import and Export Co.

"Currently, we are considering using Commodity City as a pilot unit to advance digital regulatory platforms and test positive list

imports. Once conditions are mature, more goods will be included on the list," said Li Jun.

"The new pilot's exhibition hall allows both wholesale and retail. According to pilot regulations, our company is the sole import entity. All imported goods must go through the company for Customs declarations and clearance. Once cleared, the goods are distributed at our Imported Commodities Market, where they are sold wholesale and then further distributed by our wholesalers," Chen said.

From January to November 2024,

Zhejiang province achieved 493.14 billion yuan in market procurement exports, a year-on-year increase of 13.2 percent, accounting for nearly 70 percent of the national share and contributing 19.5 percent to Zhejiang's export growth.

At the same time, market procurement exports accounted for more than 80 percent of Yiwu's total exports, serving as the cornerstone of Yiwu's foreign trade and a significant growth driver for the province.

"There are pain points and challenges in traditional imports, such as improving Customs clearance efficiency," Chen said. "Through the pilot project, we have enhanced efficiency and reduced Customs clearance times. Moreover, Yiwu's role as a trade platform helps foreign high-quality imports reach a broader domestic market, smoothing the supply chain."

Wang said: "Yiwu will shoulder the mission of 'testing systems for the nation, building platforms for openness and seeking development for the region'. The focus will be on solving five key issues — the difficulty of importing daily consumer goods, insufficient digital trade capabilities of export enterprises, high costs and weak resilience of logistics channels, inefficiencies in trade settlement and limited space for new business models. By addressing these challenges, we aim to turn more reform results into tangible benefits for market entities and development dividends."

Wang added that innovative pilots like the positive list trial are part of the broader reform strategy to expand imports and enhance domestic circulation.

"By fostering a dual-cycle model, we aim to integrate imported goods into the domestic market more effectively, ultimately stimulating domestic demand and consumption," said Wang.

According to the Yiwu Bureau of Commerce, in recent years, Yiwu has resolutely promoted high-level opening-up. While maintaining high-quality export growth, it has accelerated the development of import platforms such as Yiwu Comprehensive Bonded Zone and the Yiwu-Xinjiang-Europe freight trains. Relying on its market advantages, Yiwu has proactively expanded imports to meet the growing domestic demand for high-quality foreign products. From January to November 2024, the city's imports reached 71.93 billion yuan, a year-on-year increase of 19 percent, accounting for 77.5 percent of Zhejiang's import growth. Yiwu has established five product categories, each exceeding 5 billion yuan in value, including cosmetics, health-related products and nuts. The city was expected to complete imports totaling around 80 billion yuan in 2024.

## Expos serve as gateway for foreign investment into China's vast market

SHENZHEN — The South China metropolis of Shenzhen, Guangdong province, recently hosted a series of exhibitions, attracting numerous overseas executives eager to explore opportunities and expand investment in China's vast market.

The 2024 Shenzhen Global Investment Promotion Conference, held in early December, drew representatives from over 700 companies and institutions across 33 countries and regions, including more than 200 Fortune Global 500 companies.

Over 400 projects were signed at the conference, with a total investment exceeding 900 billion yuan (\$123 billion). Featuring companies like Rockwell Automation, Knorr-Bremse and Dassault Systemes, these projects span key sectors such as low-altitude economy, intelligent connected vehicles and biomedicine.

The success of the conference highlighted Shenzhen's efforts to attract foreign investment and businesses. In 2024, 15 foreign heads of State and government leaders visited Shenzhen, nearly doubling the

number from the previous year. Exhibitions have become a key channel and driving force for China's market opening, boosting global confidence and invigorating the world economy.

The seventh China International Import Expo held in Shanghai in November attracted nearly 3,500 exhibitors and 800 procurement groups, recording \$80.01 billion in intended transactions, up 2 percent from the previous year.

In the same month, the second China International Supply Chain Expo held in Beijing saw the participation of more than 600 companies, up approximately 20 percent from the first edition of CISCE in 2023. The share of overseas exhibitors rose from 26 percent to 32 percent of the total, with participants from nearly 70 countries and regions. US companies took the lead in participation, while involvement from Europe and Japan also saw notable growth.

Similarly, the China International Travel Mart 2024 held in Shanghai welcomed over 1,000 international exhibitors and 600 overseas travel

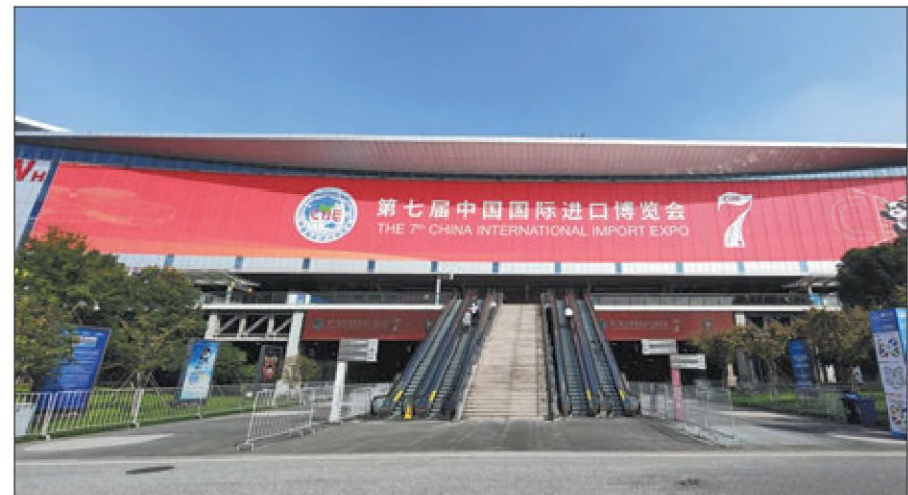
agents from more than 80 countries and regions, hosting over 600 business matchmaking sessions.

Analysts have highlighted China's crucial role in the global supply chain. Shenzhen, for instance, has developed a comprehensive automotive supply chain, covering vehicles, batteries, motors, autonomous driving and smart cabins.

"I am so proud that Apple has an exhibit here with our partners. We could not do what we do without them," said Apple CEO Tim Cook while visiting Apple's booth at the CISCE.

Pharmaceutical giants like Eli Lilly, Pfizer and Bayer have also established new research and development and innovation centers in Beijing, marking key milestones in their business expansion in China.

Last year, China actively built platforms for international exchange and cooperation, demonstrating its commitment to openness through policies designed to streamline these efforts. Notable initiatives include the use of facial recognition for faster Customs clearance, relaxed restrictions on



A view of the main venue for the seventh China International Import Expo in Shanghai in November.

YIN GANG / XINHUA

foreign investments, enhanced cross-border payment systems and extended visa-free stays for eligible foreign travelers.

"China's vast market remains

essential for global businesses and will continue to strengthen its attractiveness to international investors," said Cao Zhongxiang, director of the digital

strategy and economic research center at China Development Institute.

XINHUA

## COMMENT

## Editorials

## Handling relations from 'position of strength' irresponsible resorting to the law of the jungle

In its last annual updating of the Section 1260H list under the Joe Biden administration on Monday, the US Department of Defense designated several big-name Chinese companies, including Tencent, as "Chinese military companies", increasing the number of Chinese entities on the list to 134.

It is apparently a countermeasure against Beijing sanctioning 38 US companies on Thursday — among which 10 were put on Unreliable Entity List and the rest on Export Control List — for selling weapons to Taiwan and causing nuclear proliferation in the Asia-Pacific, as well as a part of the Biden administration's approach to counteract what it sees as Beijing's efforts to seek breakthroughs in high technology.

These Chinese entities' so-called links with the Chinese military are only an excuse for Washington to carry out its long-arm jurisdiction. Just like the excuses the Biden administration has made for the different blacklists of other departments in the fields of commerce, trade and technology, which include Chinese entities' "support for", "cooperation with", "relations with" and "affiliation to" the Communist Party of China, or the Chinese government.

Compared with the prudence and transparency with which Beijing has made its decision to impose sanctions against the US companies, which are based on substantial facts that even the US companies themselves cannot deny and in accordance with relevant law and regulations, as well as international conventions, the murky and baseless manner in which the US side rolled out the latest version of its "Chinese military company" list, like the moves it took before, clearly reveals the hegemonic nature of the practice that has no legitimacy in international law.

No wonder relevant Chinese corporations have unanimously expressed their strong opposition to the Pentagon's arbitrary and erroneous move. The Chinese side has every right to take all necessary means to defend the legal rights and interests of the Chinese entities.

A glance at the 134-entity list of the Pentagon as well as the sanction lists of the Chinese side targeting US entities makes it clear that the Biden administration's intention is to derail China's development, as the targeted Chinese entities represent backbone players in almost all major areas that are indispensable to the country's existence, and its sanction moves are generally based on unsubstantiated "concerns" or imagined "threats". In contrast, Beijing has only targeted a select number of US entities that have a record of seriously violating China's national sovereignty and core interests, and has tried its best to avoid hurting the overall China-US economic and trade cooperation.

That the Biden administration has constantly resorted to sanctions to try and ensure that China doesn't feel "comfortable" simply demonstrates the failure of its China policy.

By increasing the number of Chinese entities on the Trump-era blacklists from dozens to hundreds, the administration has just created trouble for the US companies dealing with China, and subjected US entities to Beijing's rightful, accurate and impactful countermeasures.

That the Sino-US relationship can still maintain its basic stability in the face of the Biden administration's relentless efforts to contain China's development should primarily be attributed to Beijing's consistency in its US policy. It has remained committed to responsibly handling US relations on the basis of mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation while resolutely protecting the nation's core interests. It will never compromise on that stance in exchange for US ties.

Dealing with international relations from "a position of strength", as US Secretary of State Antony Blinken recently said in an interview with the Financial Times, was the aim of the Biden administration's foreign policy. But that is actually to enforce the law of the jungle on the world, which, as has been seen, only leads to conflicts and chaos. The strength of major countries does not mean they should enjoy privilege or strive for unfair self-interest or hegemony but rather they shoulder the responsibility to uphold world peace and common development. In that regard, the Biden administration's China policy highlights its lack of wisdom and foresight.

Before leaving his post, Blinken bragged about the success of the administration's China policy, but, in reality, all it has to show for it is only the long lists of Chinese company names, for each of which the US pays a cost.

## Growing BRICS reflects global transformation

When four new members were welcomed into the BRICS family last year and several countries were invited to be partner countries, Chinese President Xi Jinping pointed out that the group's enlargement was a major milestone in its history, and a landmark event in the evolution of the international situation.

That was reinforced on Monday, when Indonesia, the most populous country and biggest economy in Southeast Asia, became the 10th full member of the cooperation platform that originally comprised just four countries, Brazil, Russia, India and China.

Those founding members of the fledgling group came together to promote dialogue and cooperation among themselves and to serve the common interests of emerging market economies and developing countries. South Africa joined them in 2009 to form BRICS. And five became nine last year when Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates became official members of the platform.

Before Indonesia's formal admission, the Southeast Asian nation had already joined Malaysia, Thailand, Belarus, Bolivia, Cuba, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Uganda as a BRICS partner after the group's summit in Kazan, Russia, last year. The steady enlargement of the group and its obvious appeal to countries of the Global South is testimony to it having become the primary channel for strengthening solidarity and cooperation among the Global South nations and the vanguard for advancing global governance reform.

In the face of the rapidly changing world dynamics and increasing global uncertainties and challenges as a result of the developed countries' efforts to cling to their privileges, developing countries have been drawn together in the shared pursuit of fairer global governance and distribution of development dividends.

The ever-expanding BRICS has thus become a forerunner for reform of the global governance system. BRICS countries, with their large populations, abundant resources, huge development potential, and increasing appeal and international influence, have, by strengthening their solidarity and coordination, made the platform a model of multilateralism and a champion for just global development and security.

In a world that increasingly demands cooperation to address grave and complex common challenges, the expanded BRICS manifests the recognition that common development and sustainable progress require collaboration among nations large and small. The BRICS mechanism thus helps drive home the message that the world cannot carry on as it has.

However, despite the group being motivated to join hands in pursuit of the overarching trend of peace and development, it has to contend with opposition to its aims by the G7 countries, which fear it is moving their cheese.

The developed countries should realize that this is symptomatic of the rising tide of change, as more and more countries, especially those of the Global South, are seeking a fairer, more inclusive global order that is not subject to the United States' will, as channeled through the dollar-dominated system.

It is only natural that the BRICS grouping should be riding that tide to help shape a more fair, just, and multipolar world order for the benefit of people that have been under the Western thumb for too long. In a world convulsed by turbulence and undergoing profound transformation, the members and partners of the group must embrace the vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security; adhere to green and sustainable development paths; and champion true multilateralism characterized by extensive consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits.

Above all, they should seek to make BRICS an exemplar of the spirit of inclusiveness and harmonious coexistence among civilizations and lead the way toward the building of a community with a shared future.

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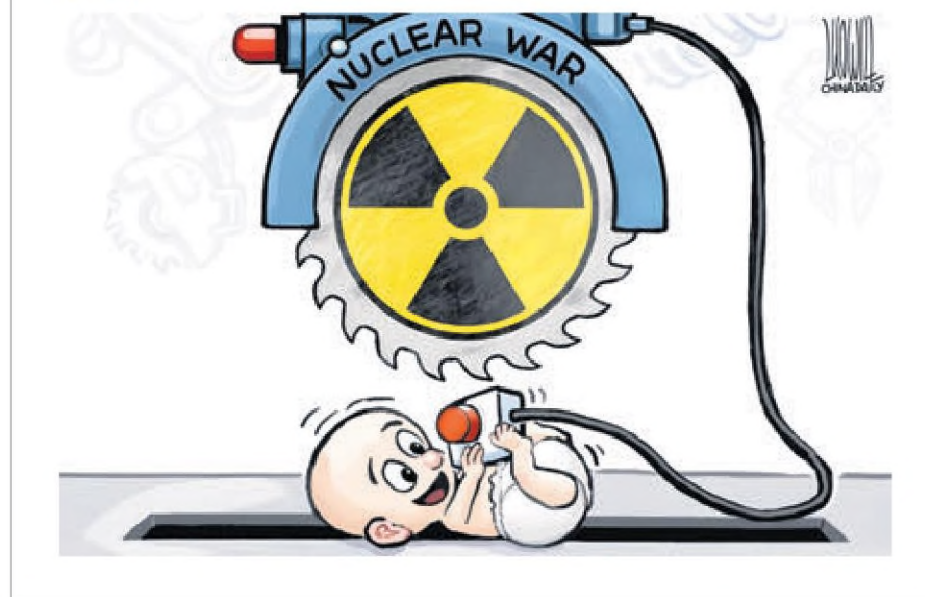
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Luo Jie



## Opinion Line

## Stability of RMB exchange rate guaranteed despite depreciation

After experiencing a downward trend, China's renminbi exchange rate is showing signs of stabilizing.

Given that China and the United States' policies have entered a period of freeze, the market has paid particular attention to the renminbi's latest devaluation, with some attributing the trend to China's exchange rate policy, and a potential tariff conflict between China and the US.

However, the renminbi's recent depreciation was influenced by a strong dollar. The dollar index rose 0.7 percent to reach a maximum of 109.5 on Thursday, hitting a new high since November 2022, increasing the pressure on non-dollar currencies, with the euro and the pound depreciating 0.9 percent and 1.1 percent respectively, and the Asian currency index falling to its lowest level in two decades.

Therefore, the recent decline in the

RMB exchange rate is a result of global currencies coming under pressure from the dollar index, and not because of a change in China's economic fundamentals. The renminbi's depreciation is not stark, but policy uncertainty has put it in the spotlight.

The incoming Donald Trump administration's plan to impose higher tariffs on China's exports has caused concern in the market. As a result, the market is speculating. There is worry that if China's fiscal expansion is not strong enough, its economy will come under pressure, which will affect the RMB exchange rate; and if the country makes sharp cuts to interest rates, it will expand the net interest margin with the US, which will also affect the trend of the RMB exchange rate.

The Central Economic Work Conference last month has set a policy

tone of expanding domestic demand in an all-round way in 2025, and for its smooth implementation more proactive fiscal policies and moderately loose monetary policies have been announced. Expansionary policies will inevitably bring China's economy to a more solid footing. Based on past experience, the market should not be overly concerned about China's capability to adopt flexible policies.

Although China's economy has suffered various shocks, the international competitiveness of Chinese goods has been greatly enhanced. A sufficient toolbox at the disposal of China's central bank, and China's economic fundamentals, import and export momentum, and foreign exchange regime are enough to help maintain the basic stability of the RMB exchange rate.

— 21ST CENTURY BUSINESS HERALD

## Effectively protecting IPR best fodder for SMEs

The share of applications for valid invention patents by small and medium-sized enterprises in the total reached 55.1 percent in 2024, up 3.6 percentage points from the year before, according to data from China National Intellectual Property Administration.

This highlights the innovative vitality of SMEs. An increasing number of SMEs have established intellectual property rights management departments. However, apart from actively increasing R&D investment, companies must also acquire transferred patents from universities and research institutions. Which is especially important considering that more localities are helping enterprises achieve precise docking with uni-

versities and research institutions through policy support. In the first 11 months of 2024, there were 55,000 instances of patent transfer and licensing by national universities and research institutions, representing a year-on-year increase of 19.1 percent.

It's with the encouragement of the government that a number of innovative enterprises that have patented their inventions have emerged. In October 2023, the General Office of the State Council issued a special action plan, prioritizing the growth of SMEs by focusing on industrial patents from 2023 to 2025.

The key is not only about who has stronger patent-related R&D but also who can provide more effective patent protection. In 2024, the propor-

tion of SMEs taking measures to defend their rights after encountering patent infringement was 84 percent, a 1.3 percentage-point increase from 2023. This indicates an improvement in SMEs' ability to protect their intellectual property rights.

The recently released Sixth Five-Year Reform Outline of the People's Courts (2024-28) stresses strengthening judicial protection of intellectual property rights in key core technologies, key areas and emerging industries. Only through the joint efforts of all parties and the enterprises themselves, creating a legal business environment that protects intellectual property rights, can enterprises develop steadily and go far.

— ECONOMIC DAILY

## What They Say

## Lessons of Trudeau's timidity should be heeded

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced on Monday that he would resign as leader of the Liberal Party of Canada and prime minister. He will continue to serve as prime minister for a period of time before the Liberal Party elects a new leader.

Trudeau admitted that he was unable to perform the duties of prime minister while dealing with the internal struggles in the party. After 10 years in power, Canada, under the government of the once-rising star of Western politics, is now facing internal and external troubles.

There is no doubt that Trudeau's weakness in facing the tariff threats of the US president-elect against Canada is the direct cause of his resignation, although migrant issues, inflation and some controversial domestic policies have also fueled doubts about his leadership at home.

Last month, Chrystia Freeland, who served as Canada's deputy prime minister and finance minister for more than four years, suddenly announced her resignation because she believed that Trudeau's weakness

toward the United States would ruin Canada's future.

Polls show that the Liberal Party is 20 percentage points behind the opposition Conservative Party. Trudeau's position as prime minister has long been shaky, and his voluntary resignation can at least save some face. He would never have thought that the US, which he has tried hard to please for a decade, would be his undoing.

During the first term of the Donald Trump administration, the Trudeau government did a lot of dirty jobs for it, including the political kidnapping of Huawei's Chief Financial Officer Meng Wanzhou.

Although the next prime minister of the Liberal Party might not see enough immediate reasons to overhaul the country's China policy that has largely been formed during the Trudeau government's tenure, he or she should realize if Canada resolutely defends its interest in the face of the next US administration's tariff threats, Trudeau's China policy will naturally expire as it was originally made to curry favor with the US,

although it ultimately failed to achieve that end.

And if he or she still chooses to be submissive to the US side, even facing Washington's open slight on Canada's sovereignty as an independent country, it will only be for a short while, as in so doing the Liberal Party will surrender its ruling party status to the Conservatives.

So no matter who of which party becomes prime minister, he or she will have to make a choice, not between China and the US, but between upholding Canada's strategic autonomy or not. Trudeau's failure proves which is the correct choice to best meet Canada's interest.

The US never regards its allies as reliable partners. A lesson Japan has just learned as well after Nippon Steel's bid to purchase US Steel was blocked by the Joe Biden administration on the spurious grounds of national security.

Being an enemy of the US is potentially dangerous, but being its ally is harmful in actuality.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

## COMMENT

David Gosset

## 2025 a crucial year to reflect on history

Each year carries its own significance, but 2025 stands out as especially momentous from a global perspective. It will mark the 80th anniversary of two pivotal events in modern history: the end of World War II and the establishment of the United Nations.

These milestones are more than just historical dates; they represent humankind's resolve to overcome conflict and forge a path toward peace and cooperation. As we commemorate these events, it is imperative that individuals, communities and nations across the globe reflect on the unparalleled value of peace and the urgent need for better global governance.

The world of 1945 was scarred by years of unprecedented destruction and loss. World War II left an indelible mark on every continent, reshaping political borders and altering the trajectory of nations. In its aftermath, the establishment of the United Nations represented a collective acknowledgment that peace could not be taken for granted. It was a commitment to dialogue over war, cooperation over division. While progress has been made since then, the challenges of our era demand renewed dedication to these ideals.

The world has changed dramatically since 1945. Technological advancements have transformed societies, economies and the way nations interact. Yet with progress have come new and complex challenges that threaten the stability of the world order.

One of the most pressing dangers of our time is the deepening entrenchment of the atomic age. Nuclear weapons, developed during World War II, continue to pose an existential threat. Despite treaties and diplomatic efforts to curb proliferation, the risk of their use remains alarmingly high, fueled by geopolitical tensions and the erosion of international norms.

Equally concerning is the weaponization of artificial intelligence. While AI holds immense potential to address some of humankind's greatest challenges, its misuse in warfare and surveillance raises profound ethical and security concerns.

Autonomous weapons systems and cyber warfare could destabilize entire regions, undermining trust between countries and escalating conflicts in unpredictable ways.

Unfortunately, the persistence of inequality reminds us that the promise of a better future remains unfulfilled for many. Economic disparities

between and within countries perpetuate cycles of poverty, instability and social unrest. Climate change, another pressing challenge, disproportionately affects the poorest and most vulnerable, exacerbating inequality and forcing millions of people to flee their homes due to rising seas, droughts and extreme weather events.

Despite these formidable challenges, humankind is not without hope. We possess the tools and knowledge to address these crises. Scientific innovation, international cooperation and a growing awareness of our interconnectedness provide a foundation for progress. However, realizing this potential presupposes two essential conditions: the preservation of peace and the reform of global institutions, particularly the United Nations.

The original architects of the UN envisioned a world where nations would work together to prevent war and foster development. While the institution has made notable contributions, from peacekeeping operations to humanitarian aid, its structure reflects a bygone era. The geopolitical realities of 1945 no longer align with those of 2025. To effectively address contemporary challenges, the UN must evolve, becoming more inclusive, and responsive to the needs of all countries, not just the powerful.

The dangers of nationalism cannot be overstated. In the years leading up to World War II, nationalist fervor fueled territorial

ambitions, economic protectionism and a disregard for international norms. The result was catastrophic. In the post-war years, efforts to promote multilateralism and global cooperation were a direct response to the horrors of nationalism run amok.

Today, however, we see a resurgence of nationalist ideologies in many parts of the world. Isolationist policies, xenophobia and the erosion of multilateral agreements threaten to undermine decades of progress. If we fail to learn from history, we risk repeating its darkest chapters. "World War III" will not be averted through military might alone; it requires a collective commitment to avoid the pitfalls of nationalism and prioritize dialogue and cooperation.

As we enter the year of 2025, we are called not only to remember the past but also to act for the future. Commemorating the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II and the founding of the United Nations is more than a historical exercise; it is a reminder of what is at stake. Peace is not a given — it is a daily effort, a

shared responsibility.

To secure a better future, we must address the root causes of conflict and inequality. This means investing in education, fostering inclusive economic growth, combating climate change, and ensuring that technology serves humankind rather than endangering it. Most importantly, it means strengthening global institutions and recommitting to the principles of cooperation and mutual respect.

The lessons of 1945 remain as relevant today as they were eight decades ago. Our world is interconnected, and our destinies are intertwined. In 2025, let us honor the sacrifices of those who came before us by building a world where peace and progress are not just ideals but realities.

*The author is the founder of the China-Europe-America Global Initiative, editor of China and the World in three volumes and the creator of the Inspiring Series, a collection of books that aims to introduce China to the world. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.*



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

Otton Solis

## US democracy: Two parties, one core ideology

For the West, democracy is a form of government in which supreme power is vested in the people and exercised by them directly or indirectly through a system of representation usually involving periodic free elections, which are contested by more than one party. This, the West believes, helps voters to fulfill their personal and national aspirations, and the political parties, which represent voters based on their ideological and political beliefs, to enact policies to suit their vote banks. In a democratic system, voters of all persuasions find a party that identifies with their core convictions and ideology on the most relevant issues.

But far from being an ideal scenario, in a majority of countries in the West as well as the Global South, the parties with a real chance of forming a government are limited to two or, at best, three in number. During political campaigns, each party uses propaganda to settle scores with the other contenders, and even after one of them wins the election, government policies on some of the most basic issues hardly change.

The US is a good case in point. In the United States, only two political parties have the chance of forming a government or gaining majority in the House of Representatives and the Senate. To be sure, there have been instances in which the two parties have had meaningful differences on substantive issues but such instances have been few and far in between. One example is their approach to slavery: the Republican Party opposed it while the Democrats supported it. But in modern times, their stances on private

property, the role of market forces, military expenditure and global policing, self-bestowed by the US, have been practically identical.

As is customary, the core strategy of the election campaigns of the two parties is to portray the other to be at the far end of the ideological spectrum. In fact, if the just-concluded campaign hyperbole were to be taken seriously, we would have to believe that president-elect Donald Trump's ideology is "totalitarianism" while incumbent Vice-President Kamala Harris' is "socialism". If that were the case, voters would really have different choices and the US would have a true bipartisan system.

But the fact is that regardless of who becomes the new lodger in the Oval Office, the US will continue to be a private sector, market-oriented economy; a defender and practitioner of press freedom and freedom of expression; the strongest military power on the planet; the staunchest ally of Israel; a trigger-happy marauder in world affairs; a leading member of NATO; a key player in world trade and foreign direct investment flows; and tough on migrants and nosy about human rights if violated in countries that it deems as rivals or enemies.

Even on the issue of trade, the protectionist approach of Trump was largely adopted by President Joe Biden. Something similar happened on migration, as even Harris supports the wall along the border with Mexico, a

hallmark of Trump policy.

Of course, the policies that Trump and Harris, during their campaign, proposed on abortion, gun control, immigration, climate action and taxation were different. But at the end of the day, even on these issues, the difference in actual policy outcomes would be little.

Terrified by China's increasing industrial and technological competitiveness, Trump has vowed to impose up to 60 percent extra tariffs on Chinese products. He might even strengthen economic and military alliances against China in Asia and beyond. But to believe the actual policy under a Harris presidency would have been different would be wishful thinking.

Despite the room for ideological diversity granted by democracy, how could the actual outcomes be so homogenous? First, because regardless of press freedom, the US' media outlets, beyond their bombastic posturing, hold an identical position on core issues.

Second, the very visible failures of planned economy and the success of those economies that have created enough space for private initiatives and market forces to operate have been a strong stumping factor for the US' political system.

Third, and most important, money is a key factor in US politics, so much so that political analysts and pundits, when forecasting election results both for the White House and Capitol Hill, accord the greatest importance to corporations' contributions to the two parties' candidates as a deciding factor. The limit on donations was abol-

ished by the US Supreme Court in 2010 through its decision in the Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission case.

Since then millionaires and billionaires have been filling up the two parties' coffers, with the parties splurging the donations on their political campaigns. In fact, it is estimated that in 2024 total spending to elect a US president and members of Congress hit at least \$15.9 billion.

When money plays the key role in election success, the political discourse across parties and candidates becomes homogenized, and revolves around the ideology and the whims of the moneyed class. As such, the expected diversity of thought across the political spectrum has become just a theoretical component of most Western democracies, especially US democracy.

Perhaps it would be far-fetched to say that in the US, mindless of the fact that legally there can be many political parties competing for power, from the point of view of ideology and core policies, money has helped create a de facto one-party system. The path that will be followed by the US under Trump will therefore not be very different to what would have happened should the Democrats have won the presidential election.

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Xiao Lian

## Growth momentum needs financing, housing, consumption

As the world grapples with the changing economic landscape, China is pursuing healthy, high-quality economic development amid rising challenges while trying to maintain stability. The central leadership's vision of "pursuing progress while maintaining stability" has become the guiding principle for economic recovery.

According to economics theory, GDP is the sum of investments, consumption and net exports, and to pursue "progress while maintaining stability", China has to ensure sustained growth in these key areas despite several destabilizing factors, including shrinking investment, underperforming industrial sector, rising local government debt, insufficient consumption, and a sluggish real estate market.

However, the Chinese economy is resilient and can overcome the challenges.

To begin with, China needs to optimize the investment structure to realize stable growth. Measures should be taken to attract more investments to sectors that enhance long-term productivity, particularly those that improve total factor productivity, and greater attention should be paid to public welfare sectors such as health-care, education and infrastructure, as these will help boost consumption.

Supporting private enterprises is also essential for creating more employment opportunities and sustaining overall economic vitality.

Weak consumer spending stems largely from people's concern over economic stability, especially the creation of jobs, availability of affordable housing, access to health-care and social welfare. Once the above public needs are met, savings will reduce and consumption increase. Therefore, policies aimed at stimulating consumption should focus on long-term solutions to alleviate social concerns.

Furthermore, market reforms are needed to address issues such as fraud, unfair trading rules and limited access to short selling tools for retail investors.

From January to November 2024, China's total trade volume grew by 4.9 percent, with exports rising by 6.7 percent. But much of that growth was driven by businesses preemptively shipping products to avoid high tariffs the Joe Biden administration vowed to impose on Chinese goods. Given the risk of renewed trade tensions with the return of Donald Trump to the White House, China should prepare to deal with serious trade disputes by adjusting the fiscal policy, taxation and the overall trade structure.

To address these contradictions, the authorities should adhere to the principles outlined by the central leadership. For example, fiscal policy should focus on balancing local government revenue and expenditure. Local governments account for 86 percent of national spending in 2023, while central government expenditure accounts for only 14 percent of the general public budget.

Therefore, central government spending should be increased to reduce local governments' debt burden and free up fiscal resources, which could be used to address people's livelihood concerns. As for fiscal policy, it should focus on transferring money and offering housing subsidies to middle-income families with stagnant income, addressing structural unemployment, and balancing education and labor market needs.

With 309.71 trillion yuan (\$42.3 trillion) lying idle in banks, the authorities should implement a moderately loose monetary policy, especially reduce interest rates at proper timings, in order to allow idle capital to be used as investment to boost consumption and thus expedite economic recovery.

The real estate market directly impacts investment, fiscal revenue, local government debt and household consumption, as a significant percentage of household wealth is tied to real estate, and more than 4,000 banks are exposed to the real estate and local government debt crisis. With the shift from a seller's market to a buyer's market, investment in new housing should be reduced, so as to reduce excess inventory.

Policies such as the 350 billion yuan special loan for housing delivery, 200 billion yuan housing loan support plan, and 100 billion yuan rental housing loan support plan should be implemented to prevent the abandonment of housing projects and suspension of mortgage payment.

Besides, measures should be taken to ensure the stock market serves the real economy and investors, instead of just helping raise capital for listed companies. For instance, in 2022, the overall delisting rate of A-shares was just 0.91 percent, which is much lower than that of mature markets, where the delisting rates on the NYSE and NASDAQ have consistently exceeded 6 percent. From 2000 to 2021, the US stock market saw 9,391 companies delisted, surpassing the number of IPOs by 6,481. In contrast, A-shares had only 145 delistings, a number significantly lower than the 3,836 IPOs, highlighting the need to further improve the balance between market entries and exits. Therefore, to improve market quality, it is essential to enhance the delisting mechanism, ensuring that companies that no longer meet market standards are effectively removed, fostering a healthier, more dynamic market environment.

There is also significant disparity in the profitability and market value of Chinese and US companies. For instance, the combined market value of just three US companies — NVIDIA, Microsoft and Apple — is more than the total value of China's stock market. The market cannot be stabilized without raising the profitability of listed companies.

Furthermore, market reforms are needed to address issues such as fraud, unfair trading rules and limited access to short selling tools for retail investors. In fact, temporarily suspending short selling tools could help restore market confidence to boost economic growth.

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# GLOBAL VIEWS

JEAN-PAUL VARGAS CÉSPEDES

## Problematic panorama

Reform of the global governance system is vital to prevent a dangerously divisive future

Global governance must reflect the values of its time, hence it needs to focus on solidarity and cooperation among countries worldwide. The concept promoted by China of an equal and orderly multilateralism is the path to cooperation and understanding



between all parties, a difficult, arduous and perhaps slow process for nations that are not accustomed to sincere dialogue and negotiation under the increasing shadow of protectionism and unilateralism.

On Jan 20, Donald Trump will be sworn in as the 47th president of the United States. With his coming to power for the second time, nations are waiting for a series of decisions with global implications that will affect, in one way or another, the global situation, among which are the US' position in regard to the NATO and the future of the Ukraine crisis, as well as the situation in the Middle East.

At the same time, an intensification of trade tensions is anticipated due to the position of the US in considering international trade as part of its apparatus of national security. Trump suggested during his campaign that he could impose tariffs of up to 60 percent on all imports from China, which would have a devastating impact, even on the domestic consumption of the US people, given their great dependence on global imports.

The effects of these declarations have forced the international community to be vigilantly prepared, rather than opting for a direct confrontation, in a context in which the trade in goods and merchandise given by logistical improvements and global connectivity become elements of national security, according to the US policy.

Trump's second term in office heralds in a new deal with US society that is being strained by the interests of an oligarchy that aspires to greater technological monopoly and a model of global governance in which they them-



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selves impose the rules of the game and consolidate themselves as the main winners of international trade.

The domestic society faces a divisive future where competing forces will rally together seeking the preservation and protection of identity, the erection of walls and the prioritizing of their interests.

The increase of tariffs by the US will affect a wide variety of coun-

tries and make them less competitive in the US market. And with the US banning products that use parts or technologies from China, Latin American economies are facing great pressure to decouple from China.

This panorama reiterates the need to promote an urgent dialogue on the reform of world governance to consolidate a community with a shared future. The deglobalization

by the US has identified a set of technologies that it considers to be sensitive for its national security, among them: computing, biotechnologies and the so-called green technologies.

On its part, China is increasingly establishing itself as the superpower of smart innovation and entrepreneurship, with global leadership in the establishing of an ecological civilization, offering solutions capa-

ble of bringing harmony between society, economy and nature with innovations in green technologies.

In 2025, a year of the snake in the Chinese zodiac, we are encouraged to reclaim intelligence, goodwill, imagination and capacity to innovate, which are essential for enhancing global governance. China should call for strengthening international cooperation to collectively address global challenges. It

should also emphasize the importance of creating conditions conducive to stabilizing the global economy and ensuring sustainable growth and development.

China advocates for greater openness to advance trade and investment liberalization and facilitation, fostering a more interconnected and prosperous global market. Integrating the digital economy with the real economy and establishing standards in emerging areas are crucial steps for future progress. Additionally, China underscores the need to adhere to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, promoting comprehensive and effective implementation of green infrastructure, energy, mining, and transport, while also providing support to developing countries within its means.

The ability to reform the global economic governance system will be able to restore a degree of stability to an increasingly tense world, in which geopolitical risks and economic rivalries are intertwined with the processes of automation, technological innovation and the energy transition. Without such reform the decoupling of supply chains and the fragmentation of global industry will gather pace over the next decade.

The question to be clarified is whether, in the midst of the noise, reliable channels can be effectively established to channel disagreements and identify the sources of tension. China is, and will continue to be, a major power, consolidating its leadership in different areas, including innovation, especially green innovation, infrastructure, modernization and global trade, particularly with the Global South, which continues to see China as an illuminating beacon in a world that is convulsed, fragile and volatile.

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WANG LEI

## Hoisted by their own petard

Nations that have chosen to side with the US against China have been left high and dry as it has failed to keep its word

Most Asian countries have sought to maintain their strategic autonomy and avoid taking sides in the competition between China and the United States. However, under pressure from the US, some nations have made notable shifts in their China policies, regional strategies and approaches to handling sensitive issues.

In Northeast Asia, Japan's policy toward China has increasingly leaned toward "aligning with the US to contain China". Militarily, Japan has significantly expanded its defense budget; economically, it is pushing for "de-risking" from China; and in terms of security, it actively supports NATO's expansion into the Asia-Pacific region. Japan's ambition to leverage the US to gain dominance over Asian affairs is becoming more evident in its playing along with the US in stirring tensions in the East China Sea, the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait.

The Republic of Korea's China policy under the current administration has shown a clear tilt toward aligning with the US and distancing from China. Seoul has actively bolstered the US-ROK alliance and advanced trilateral cooperation with Washington and Tokyo. It has adopted a hardline stance toward China on several key issues, including joining the US-led "Chip 4 Alliance", participating in the "Indo-Pacific" Economic Framework for Prosperity, and publicly aligning with the US on matters related to the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea.

In Southeast Asia, some countries have exhibited growing tendencies to "align with the US to counter China", with the Philippi-

nes being particularly prominent. The Ferdinand Marcos Jr. administration not only reopened and expanded US access to military bases in the country but also actively supported multilateral security frameworks, such as the US-Japan-Philippines and US-Philippines-Australia partnerships. As external powers such as the US and Japan increase their involvement in the South China Sea, the Philippines has adopted a much harder line on its maritime dispute with China.

In South Asia, India has drawn closer to the US strategically. The Narendra Modi administration has taken a hard stance on issues such as border disputes and economic frictions with China, continuously provoking tensions. Regionally, India has embraced the Quad (the US, Japan, Australia and India), while distancing itself from the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and BRICS mechanisms. India hopes to leverage US and Western support to replace China as a global manufacturing hub and achieve its goal of rising as a major power.

Clearly, these nations' decisions to align with the US aim to reap four strategic "dividends". First, on security, they hope cooperation with the US will bolster their own defense assurances. Second, economically, they anticipate gaining trade, investment and technological cooperation benefits from the US. Third, geopolitically, they aim to counterbalance China's influence with US support. Last, internationally, they seek to elevate their status through their alignment with the US.

However, the reality has not unfolded as they expected. Countries choosing to side with the US have paid a steep price for doing so. On security, they are pushed to the forefront of confrontation with China, facing increased risks of conflict and military friction. Economically,

they have failed to reap the anticipated dividends, while deteriorating relations with China have caused them to miss opportunities for deeper cooperation. Politically, their diplomatic autonomy has been significantly weakened, leaving little room for policy adjustments and placing them in an increasingly passive position amid China-US competition.

Washington has made numerous promises of financial aid, market access and industrial relocation opportunities to get countries to side with it. However, these promises have largely remained hollow.

For example, while the "Indo-Pacific" Economic Framework for Prosperity has been highly publicized, it lacks substantive measures for market access and trade benefits, falling far short of what the member countries hoped for. The CHIPS Act, ostensibly aimed at building a "secure semiconductor supply chain" with allies, has instead prioritized "America First". Most subsidies have gone to US-based companies, while foreign companies, including those in Japan and the ROK, face strict restrictions when applying for funds.

The "side-choosing" countries have also overestimated their role and influence in China-US competition. They imagined they could "sit on top of the mountain to watch the tigers fight", reaping benefits while the US took the lead in confronting China.

In reality, when conflict risks with China have escalated, the US often "hit the brake", seeking engagement with China to manage risks and prevent escalation. For "side-choosing" countries, however, the US continues to "press the accelerator", pushing them directly to the forefront of confrontation with China — whether through upgrading military alliances with



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

Japan and the Philippines or reinforcing trilateral cooperation with the ROK.

As a result, these countries find themselves not in control of the situation but deeply bound to the US, becoming "proxy conflict actors" in the great power rivalry. More critically, as geopolitical tensions persist, their strategic expectations remain unmet, while Asia's economic cooperation and security environment are dragged into a "high-risk zone". Through swift and precise responses across economic, diplomatic, legal and law enforcement domains, China has significantly raised the strategic costs of pursuing anti-China policies.

What lessons can Asian nations draw from this?

First, in the face of China-US competition, Asian nations should avoid taking sides. Rather than try-

ing to speculate on who will win, they should focus on maintaining their strategic autonomy and balancing relationships to preserve their policy flexibility and diplomatic independence.

Second, Asian countries must reassess US motives for intervening in regional conflicts. Whether in the Taiwan Strait, the South China Sea or the Korean Peninsula, Washington's involvement under the pretext of "peace and stability" has often escalated tensions and created regional divisions. Asian nations must remain highly vigilant.

Third, when addressing disputes with China, Asian nations should prioritize risk management and avoid escalation. Recent efforts by China and India to cool border tensions demonstrate that dialogue and negotiation remain the most effective means for resolving differ-

ences and frictions. Fourth, to mitigate the risks of a new Cold War, Asian countries should influence the trajectory of China-US competition through cooperation and coordination. By building communication platforms, they can promote cooperation and reduce confrontation. Advancing regional integration and maintaining an open and inclusive order will showcase regional unity and strategic autonomy, adding "guardrails" to this competition.

The author is an associate research fellow at the Institute of World Economics and Politics at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

# Z WEEKLY

All about Gen Z

# Z WEEKLY

## Social Media Digest

### Studying in wonderland

Shanghai Disney Resort and the Universal Beijing Resort, once beloved by young people for their enchanting decorations and immersive atmosphere, have now become spiritual oases where many devote themselves to study and work.

It turns out, theme parks actually offer an ideal study environment: they feature cafes, canteens, theaters, and the ambient white noise of park visitors, creating a perfect balance to counter the pressures of study and mundane tasks.

This new trend is embraced primarily by college students with annual theme park passes, who want to make the most of them.

Some may question the effectiveness of studying outside a library, but for these theme park study enthusiasts, there are unique perks. Pulling out their books and laptops from a secluded seat behind a Disney castle feels like a prince or princess studying in their own private garden. Similarly, studying on the *Harry Potter* campus makes one feel like a real Hogwarts student preparing for wizarding exams.

Theme parks also provide an unexpected setting for self-learners to stay active. According to netizens, self-learners can easily achieve part of their fitness goals, often walking over 10,000 steps in a day.

While it may seem contradictory to dedicate oneself to studying in a world of fairy tales and magic, this new trend offers a refreshing break in an era of increasing work pressures.



Many young people consider theme parks to be an ideal place to study. vcg

### Cozy rebellion

This winter, a new fashion trend has emerged among young people in China, as they move away from the pursuit of high-end, fast-fashion brands and instead turn to their parents' wardrobes for practical alternatives.

Items such as worn work jackets and oversized knitted cardigans may not project the sleek sophistication of tight-fitting tops and trench coats, but they offer comfort and durability.

Young people are also discovering that clothing typically found in stores catering to middle-aged or older men and women can offer surprising levels of quality. These pieces are often simple yet well-constructed and made from premium materials such as cashmere and silk, all at a fraction of the price.

This preference for so-called "unattractive" items echoes the "ugly chic" concept coined by Miuccia Prada, the head designer at Prada, in 1996.

"I love it when fashion gets weird and takes us outside trends that make everybody look the same," Australian fashion editor Lucianne Tonti told the Sydney Morning Herald. "Exploration and expressions of individuality push the industry — which can be extremely derivative — forward, and that's always a good thing."

It seems today's youth are more interested in finding a style that nourishes their well-being than chasing fleeting trends — because who needs perfection when you've got comfort and character?

GUO JIATONG



Young people are opting for comfort over fashion by turning to their parents' wardrobes. TUCHONG

# Gen Z podcasters redefine global dialogue

Podcast festival unites young creators worldwide to share ideas and amplify the power of youth voices.



Liu Yukuan (first from left) and Zhang Keting (second from right) pose for a photo with Zhou Ting (first from right), executive director of the Institute of Regional and National Communication at the Communication University of China, during the award ceremony of the first Gen Z International Podcast Festival, held at CUC on Dec 22. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



“Podcasting is still in its early stage in Thailand, while in China, it is already well-developed and produced on a professional level.”

Anurak Kitpaiboonthawee, a Thai translator



“We don't have to be politicians or leaders to be powerful women; we all shine in our own light — no matter how dim it might seem.”

Yu Yujun, a student at Yanching Institute of Technology



“We hope that by providing students with more information, they can make well-rounded decisions and feel encouraged to break free from life's set tracks to embrace broader opportunities.”

Zhang Keting, a student at the University of Nottingham Ningbo China



“We hope to help our audience see things from different perspectives and discover their inner power instead of being trapped in self-doubt.”

Zhang Xinwen, a student at Yanching Institute of Technology

By GUO JIATONG  
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A group of international podcasters demonstrated how young voices are redefining cultural exchange at the first Gen Z International Podcast Festival — one episode at a time.

The event's award ceremony took place on Dec 22 at the Communication University of China (CUC).

Since its launch in July 2023, the initiative received 675 podcast submissions from creators across more than 10 countries and regions, in languages including Chinese, English, Italian, and Thai. Ultimately, 26 entries were recognized with awards.

Among the winners was Liu Yukuan, a 20-year-old student at CUC's School of International Studies, whose podcast "Liudehua FM" (FM for Foreign Students in China) focuses on sharing practical tips and addressing cultural differences for international students in China. It was named one of the best podcasts in the intercultural communication category.

Liu drew inspiration for the podcast from his daily observations. He noticed that international students often face challenges upon arriving in China, such as navigating subway systems using QR codes or finding job application resources before graduation.

"These are hardly problems for Chinese students, but I was surprised to discover that it usually takes a lot of time for international students to find solutions," Liu said.

By collecting questions from international students around him and pro-

viding guidance in both Chinese and English, Liu has continuously received feedback from his foreign friends, which has encouraged him to keep updating his channel.

Yu Yujun and Zhang Xinwen, two 20-year-old students at Yanching Institute of Technology in Langfang, Hebei province, shared Liu's intention to help others.

They created the podcast "Taiyouzhongle! Girl" (Girl, You're Fantastic!), which earned them a prize in the creative topics category.

In the podcast, Yu and Zhang share inspiring stories of prominent women, such as top Chinese tennis player Zheng Qinwen.

They also help their fans address everyday challenges typically faced by women. For example, one listener shared her struggle with finding self-esteem and confidence in romantic relationships, explaining that she had never felt cherished or praised by her parents while growing up.

"We hope to help our audience see things from different perspectives and discover their inner power instead of being trapped in self-doubt," Zhang said. "We want to bring warmth and strength to more women."

Through recording the podcast, Yu and Zhang not only guide their audience through hardships but also gain a deeper understanding of feminine power themselves.

"We don't have to be politicians or leaders to be powerful women; we all shine in our own light — no matter how dim it might seem. Whether in our careers or for our families, women's

power may be tender, but it is firm," Yu said.

Zhang Keting, 20, a student majoring in international communication at the University of Nottingham Ningbo China in Zhejiang province, has been managing the podcast "Kuanyedianbo" (Radio Wave from the Wilderness) since its debut in September 2023.

The podcast targets college students, inviting experienced professors and alumni to share their insights and advice on topics such as job application, future planning, basic money management, and how to develop a life attitude with an international perspective.

"They say, 'Life is not a track but a field.' We hope that by providing students with more information, they can make well-rounded decisions and feel encouraged to break free from life's set tracks to embrace broader opportunities," Zhang said.

### Global insights

At the award ceremony, Zhang was surprised to see many international participants and felt a sense of pride when she discovered that they were telling stories about China through podcasts.

One such participant is Anurak Kitpaiboonthawee from Thailand, who has been exposed to Chinese literature since childhood and has worked as a Chinese-Thai translator for 20 years.

His podcast, "Mitring Point", a term harmonized to mean "exchange of ideas" in Thai, is deeply rooted in his experiences as a translator and his pas-

sion for Chinese culture.

For example, in the first episode, Kitpaiboonthawee discussed *Black Myth: Wukong*, a Chinese game that went viral worldwide last year, including in Thailand.

To help Thai gamers better understand the game, Kitpaiboonthawee introduced the classic Chinese novel *Journey to the West* — the story that inspired the game — drawing on knowledge gained through his translation experience.

Kitpaiboonthawee said he was delighted to attend the award ceremony, where he met many creators and recognized the potential of podcasts.

"Podcasting is still in its early stage in Thailand, while in China, it is already well-developed and produced on a professional level. By exchanging ideas with podcast creators at this event, I see a great future for podcasting in Thailand," he said.

"Although we seem to be living in an era dominated by visuals, audio products have carved out a unique market in recent years, especially among young people," said Zhou Ting, the festival's program director and the executive director of CUC's Institute of Regional and National Communication.

"By bringing young podcasters from around the world together, we aim to help them connect with one another and exchange insights on creativity and production. We also hope to link them with more resources, such as cutting-edge techniques, podcasting networks, and future opportunities," she added.

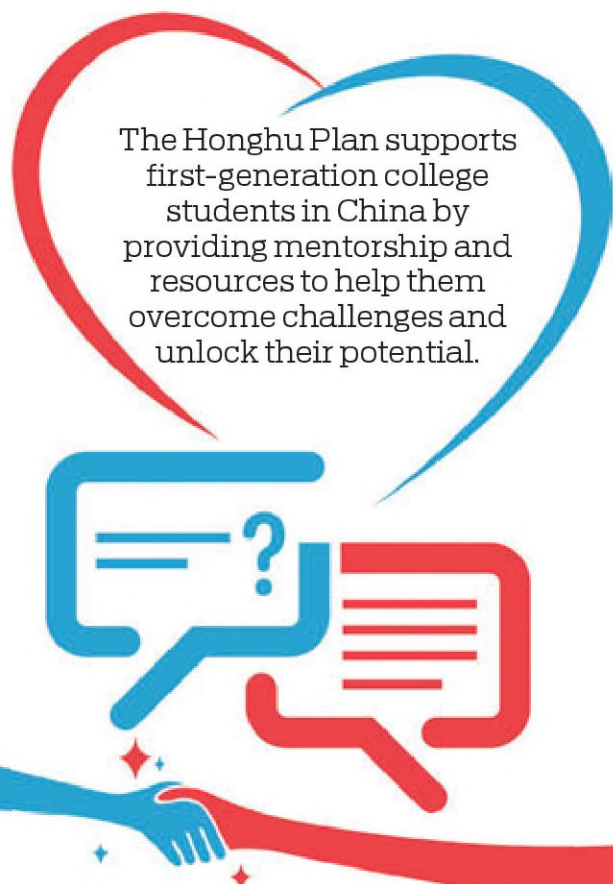
# Z WEEKLY

## Empowering dreams



“It’s akin to venture capital investment — we allocate resources to these individuals with the hope that they will elevate their families and even their communities.”

**Li Shumin**, CEO of Honghu Youth



The Honghu Plan supports first-generation college students in China by providing mentorship and resources to help them overcome challenges and unlock their potential.



“We don’t want to define first-generation college students as poor or weak, but as individuals with high potential. We hope to highlight their strengths and capabilities.”

**Wei Qiqi**, co-founder of Honghu Youth



“The economic support my family could provide was limited, and I missed many learning opportunities, such as paid courses and forum activities.”

**Ye Jiayi**, a student at Zhejiang University

By **GUI QIAN**  
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Born into an ordinary family, Ye Jiayi, a 24-year-old from Wenzhou, Zhejiang province, studied hard to get into university, eager to leave her hometown for a more promising career, a broader life, and the opportunity to contribute more to her family and society.

This is the story of millions of first-generation college students in China.

As the first college student in her family, Ye knew she would face more difficulties in decision-making and personal growth than many of her peers. Due to a lack of understanding about university majors and the absence of mentors to guide her, she only realized after starting university that she did not like her chosen field. Fortunately, she later joined the master’s program in law at Zhejiang University, which she had longed for.

However, after reaching a major crossroads in her career, she once again felt uncertain. But this time, a public welfare project provided her with the guidance she needed.

China Youth of Tomorrow (Honghu Youth), a social enterprise focused on educational equity, established its core talent development project, the Honghu Plan, in 2019.

In Chinese culture, “honghu” is a large swan with lofty aspirations. The Honghu Plan specifically supports first-generation college students in China — those whose immediate family members have not received higher education.

Ye remembers the feelings of inferiority she had growing up.

“The economic support my family could provide was limited, and I missed many learning opportunities, such as paid courses and forum activities,” she said. “Thankfully, after becoming part of the Honghu Plan, I gained access to a wealth of resources.”

Since joining the program at the beginning of 2023, Ye has benefited from seven months of free, systematic guidance, including a series of courses, mentor interactions, and peer community activities.

The courses covered fundamental skills like Office software and email writing, along with job-related topics such as resume writing and career planning.

### Bridging gaps

Ye highlights the guidance from predecessors as the most valuable aspect of the program. Through a two-way



Members of Honghu Youth participate in a peer community activity in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, on June 10, 2023. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

selection and matching process between students and mentors, Ye had in-depth communications with five senior legal practitioners, including lawyers, a social activist, and a member of the local political consultative conference.

Zhao Yingjie, a partner at Lifeng Law Firm in Shanghai, is one of Ye’s mentors. She not only provided Ye with career advice but also shared insights into the challenges women may face in the workplace and life, becoming what Ye describes as her “role model of women’s strength.”

Starting in a small town in Binzhou, Shandong province, Zhao progressed to the East China University of Political Science and Law in Shanghai and later attended Columbia University in the United States.

Referring to herself as a “small-town swot”, Zhao believes the biggest challenge for first-generation college students is the information gap — they often lack family guidance and support beyond academics.

“In many places, before entering university, students only focus on doing homework and taking tests,” Zhao explained. “During that phase, everything adheres to a standard answer with a singular goal in mind. However, once at university, everything changes — there are no fixed answers or standards anymore.”

“For example, how to handle rela-

tionships with classmates, which student societies to join, what certifications to pursue, and what opportunities exist within the school and how to seize them. These all require guidance from experienced individuals or industry insiders,” she added.

Helping idealistic and ambitious first-generation college students in China bridge such gaps and achieve personal growth is exactly the original intention and goal of the Honghu Plan, according to Wei Qiqi, co-founder of Honghu Youth.

While pursuing her master’s degree in law at Harvard University in the US, Wei encountered the concept of “first-generation college students” and heard many inspiring stories of those who, after receiving help, gave back to society. She also noticed that, at the time, there were no organizations in China doing similar work.

According to a research report by Tsinghua University, from 2011 to 2021, the proportion of first-generation college students in undergraduate institutions across China was above 70 percent, compared to 30 to 40 percent in developed countries.

In response, Wei co-founded Honghu Youth and initiated the Honghu Plan.

“We don’t want to define first-generation college students as poor or weak, but as individuals with high potential.

We hope to highlight their strengths and capabilities,” she said.

To date, the Honghu Plan has successfully completed four sessions, benefiting more than 400 students. Building on this foundation, the upgraded fifth session is currently underway, with 330 mentors and 223 students recruited, ensuring each student receives guidance from multiple mentors for comprehensive support.

### Growing impact

Resources are limited, yet more young people are eager to receive such help.

Zhou Jiayi, a 22-year-old from Luoyang, Henan province, faced significant challenges. After failing the graduate school entrance exam twice, she no longer qualified for the Honghu Plan, which is limited to currently enrolled students.

However, her sincerity and perseverance impressed the interviewers, and she was exceptionally accepted as a volunteer for the program — a role usually reserved for past participants.

As a volunteer, Zhou is responsible for coordinating communication between 24 mentors and their students. While dedicating herself to giving and contributing, she also gained a great deal in return.

“The mentors are very kind. They treat both the students and volunteers equally and have given me a lot of

advice and guidance, too,” she said. “This project deserves and needs to be seen by more people.”

Adhering to the philosophy of “running a charity like a startup”, Wei and the other Honghu Youth executives recruited a new CEO in the summer of 2024 to further develop the Honghu Plan.

The new CEO, Li Shumin, hails from Shangqiu, Henan province. Before joining Honghu Youth, she spent 13 years working in operations at various major internet companies, gaining extensive experience in project management.

In her view, the Honghu Plan not only supports the personal dreams of first-generation college students but also offers a possible new approach to poverty alleviation. These students, she noted, are often more likely to give back to their families and society.

“First-generation college students have demonstrated their potential by excelling academically, becoming the educational pinnacle of their families.

By helping them go further and higher, we create a ripple effect,” Li explained. “It’s akin to venture capital investment — we allocate resources to these individuals with the hope that they will elevate their families and even their communities. In this way, the underprivileged can feel hope, and social mobility will improve.”

However, she believes that Honghu Youth’s efforts alone are not enough. One of the organization’s next major tasks is raising social awareness about the importance of supporting first-generation college students.

Honghu Youth has reached out to sociology professors, sharing its collection of case studies and tracking the development and challenges faced by Honghu graduates to encourage comprehensive research.

They have also engaged more companies and individuals to offer students a wider range of courses, including AI literacy and psychological counseling. Additionally, efforts are underway to make some courses available online so that students who are not selected for the Honghu Plan can still access valuable support.

“For the past four or five years, we have focused on doing small yet impactful things. Now, we hope to grow bigger and stronger. This will allow us to help more people and also enhance resource equality among first-generation college students,” she said.

## Z WEEKLY

# Culinary bonds across the Strait

A food content creator uses family-centered videos to foster meaningful connections between Taiwan and the Chinese mainland.



**Above:** Qu Xianping (right) poses with his parents in front of Yanbian University in Jilin. **Above right:** Qu (right) and his father enjoy Lanzhou beef noodles in Lanzhou, Gansu. **Right:** Qu (right) and his father savor stewed goose in an iron pot in Changchun, Jilin. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



By MENG WENJIE  
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Qu Xianping moved from Taiwan to Shanghai in 2004 due to his father's job.

At the time, Taiwan dramas were incredibly popular among young people on the Chinese mainland. As the only Taiwan student at his school, Qu's distinct accent quickly caught the attention of his classmates, sparking friendly curiosity. Pop culture became the first bridge that helped him connect with his new environment.

Now 34 and a food content creator, Qu has uncovered deeper connections between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait through his culinary explorations.

Qu's videos initially focused on his personal food adventures, with his parents occasionally making appearances. However, in 2023, during the Spring Festival, Qu and his parents returned to Taiwan, where they filmed a video of them shopping for groceries and preparing the reunion dinner together. The warm, humorous interactions between the three quickly won over viewers.

This family-centered approach has since become a signature feature of Qu's channel, evident in every video as they explore cuisines across the Chinese mainland.

The combination of delicious food, welcoming locals, and the close-knit family dynamic creates a lively, joyful atmosphere that resonates with many in the audience.

"While traveling across the country, I realized that many dishes in Taiwan are surprisingly similar to those on the mainland," Qu said.

He explained that this is likely because people from various regions of the Chinese mainland

People on the Chinese mainland are incredibly welcoming toward those from Taiwan. I want to capture these genuine moments and share them through my videos."

Qu Xianping, a vlogger from Taiwan

who moved to Taiwan brought their hometown flavors with them. These flavors blended with the local Minnan cuisine, which has its roots in East China's Fujian province, creating unique culinary traditions.

Qu also discovered that in Taiwan, a family's ancestral background significantly shapes its food traditions.

For example, while people in northern China typically eat dumplings on the winter solstice and those in the south prefer *tangyuan* (glutinous rice balls), Taiwan, a southern province of China, doesn't follow this pattern.

Instead, food preferences in Taiwan are influenced more by individual family customs than by regional trends.

"It also depends on who's doing the cooking," Qu joked. In his family, for example, his Taiwan grandmother is the main cook, so they enjoy *tangyuan* for the winter solstice. Meanwhile, their neighbors, with northern Chinese ancestry, celebrate the day with dumplings.

"Food is not just a daily necessity but also a key part of Chinese heritage," Qu said.

For him, culinary exploration goes far beyond trying new dishes or learning about food traditions.

In 2024, one of his most unforgettable experiences took place in Lanzhou, Gansu province. Before this trip, Qu had never visited Northwest China. While he enjoyed the region's famous lamb and beef noodles, the true highlight came when his father reconnected with an old friend after more than a decade.

"My dad's friend reached out after seeing our videos online. Even though we had already moved on to Qinghai province, we made a trip back to Lanzhou to meet him," Qu said. "And, of course, we enjoyed the local dishes again — but sharing them with a long-lost friend made the experience truly special."

## Connections through food

Other than rekindling old friendships, food has also sparked unexpected bonds with strangers.

Some of the most touching moments in Qu's videos happen when restaurant owners or customers recognize his Taiwan accent and greet him warmly.

In one video filmed at a hot pot restaurant in Jilin province, the owner told Qu, "When Taiwan returns to China, I'll definitely open a branch there." Qu smiled and replied, "I'm sure it will be a hit."

"People on the Chinese mainland are incredibly welcoming toward those from Taiwan. I want to capture these genuine moments and share them through my videos," Qu said.

In early 2023, Qu experienced an unexpected connection when a viewer recommended her family's barbecue restaurant in Zibo, Shandong province. Despite being in busi-

ness for over 20 years, the restaurant remained relatively unknown.

Curious about the suggestion, Qu visited the restaurant unannounced, surprising the viewer with his arrival. "It felt like reconnecting with an old friend," Qu recalled.

Shortly after, Zibo became a popular destination for young travelers, and Qu's video featuring the restaurant went viral, significantly boosting the family business. Once a quiet eatery, the restaurant now sees long lines of customers, greatly improving the livelihood of its owners.

Later, when the viewer got married, she invited Qu and his parents to the wedding and even asked him to officiate the ceremony.

"It's incredible how a simple video can lead to such meaningful connections. This has been one of the most rewarding moments of my journey as a content creator," he said.

Qu's videos also provided meaningful encouragement to ordinary viewers.

One viewer, undergoing chemotherapy for leukemia and struggling to eat, reached out to Qu. She shared that watching his videos about his family's heartfelt food journey across the Chinese mainland brought her joy, reignited her appetite, and gave her hope. Today, she is gradually recovering.

"The messages I receive are powerful, and they motivate me to keep creating high-quality videos," Qu said.

With over 1.2 million followers now, Qu and his parents have traveled throughout China, except for the Xizang autonomous region, Hong Kong, and Macao.

"In the new year, I hope to explore even more of the country, discovering unique and authentic foods to share with my audience," Qu said.



Three versions of Tang Dynasty poet Li Bai created by Wu Yaduo in her video. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## A fresh spin on literary classics

By GUI QIAN  
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How can the vitality of classic literary works be sustained in the digital age?

Wu Yaduo, a 17-year-old high school student from Chengdu, Southwest China's Sichuan province, offers her answer.

Using her iPad and expressive brushstrokes, Wu transforms stories from classical literature — *Dream of the Red Chamber*, *Water Margin*, and *The Peony Pavilion* — as well as the lives of renowned poets like Qu Yuan, from the Warring States Period (475-221 BC), and Li Bai, from the Tang Dynasty (618-907), into animated, hand-drawn videos.

Her creations have attracted tens of thousands of followers and millions of views online.

To Wu, these works are timeless because they explore universal human emotions and enduring social themes.

However, she believes it is crucial to bridge the gap between these classics and modern life, making them more relatable and engaging, especially for younger audiences.



Wu Yaduo

Wu decided to start with texts from high school Chinese textbooks after noticing that many students resist these works simply because they are part of the curriculum.

"I want to reinterpret classical works in a modern, trendy way that resonates with young people," she said. "Classics shouldn't be placed on a pedestal; instead, we should bring them closer, integrating them into our daily lives."

Her innovative approach has received enthusiastic support from those around her. Her Chinese teacher not only encourages her creativity but also allows her to showcase her videos in class.

"Many of my classmates told me they really enjoyed the videos. Some even recognized specific scenes or lyrics from the textbook that matched my visuals," Wu said happily.

In her videos, Wu places great emphasis on the interplay between text and auditory elements. For example, her adaptation of *Dream of the Red Chamber* was inspired by a song from a Chinese indie band.

"The tragic and fateful tone of the song immediately reminded me of the blend of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism in the novel," Wu said.

"Especially the line 'one flower, one leaf, one spring tree' made me decide to first draw a flourishing Grand View Garden at its peak, followed by a bleak, dilapidated scene after the family's downfall. I presented both images simultaneously to create a sense of trauma and shock," she added.

## Dynamic creativity

Wu avoids telling stories in a conventional or bland way; she wants her work to be "spicy." This is why her hand-drawn animations often unfold frame by frame, bursting with vivid colors, dramatic tension, and striking visual impact.

"The movies and artworks I like are mostly avant-garde — they have the power to provoke or even unsettle viewers, which I believe encourages deeper thinking," she said. "Over time, this preference has gradually shaped my own style."

Wu chooses to present classic texts through visuals because they deliver a more immediate impact compared to words, even though words linger longer in the mind.

"Nowadays, many people don't have the time to slowly savor literary works, so they might need a more intense way to grasp its essence and charm," Wu said. "Text is the nourishment while visuals act as a pathway — but both ultimately lead to the author's consciousness."

However, Wu still has regrets about her work. She finds it impossible to perfectly translate the vivid images in her mind onto the canvas.

"Every time I draw, I feel frustrated that I can't just copy and paste what's in my head directly onto the iPad. It would be so much more spectacular if I could," she said.

"That's why I'm always looking forward to my next piece."