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# CHINA DAILY

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## EU called on to rectify trade barrier practices

By ZHONG NAN  
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China will urge the European Union to rectify its trade barrier practices through bilateral consultations and other measures, with the aim of creating an open, fair, just, nondiscriminatory and predictable environment for Chinese companies to invest and operate in Europe, the Ministry of Commerce said on Thursday.

The ministry also announced in a statement that China has concluded that the EU's practices in investigating Chinese companies under the EU's Foreign Subsidies Regulation and related rules amount to trade and investment barriers.

He Yadong, a ministry spokesman, said at a news conference in Beijing on Thursday that China's investigation found that there are numerous unreasonable practices in the European Commission's foreign subsidies investigation regarding China.

These practices, which violate the World Trade Organization's core principles, including nondiscrimination, have caused restrictions and obstacles for Chinese companies' products, services and investments entering the EU market, thereby damaging the competitiveness of Chinese businesses and their products, the spokesman said.

The primary companies affected by the EU's investigation are manufacturers in industries such as railway locomotives, photovoltaics, wind power and security inspection equipment.

At the request of the China Chamber of Commerce for Import and Export of Machinery and Electronic Products, and in accordance with relevant laws and regulations, China launched the investigation into the trade and investment barriers arising from the EU's practices in investigating Chinese companies.

Market observers noted that the EU risks facing countermeasures by China, such as additional tariffs, anti-dumping investigations and targeted sanctions.

Cui Fan, a professor at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing, said that through those practices against China, the EU is undermining fundamental principles that are

intended to drive technological innovation within the EU, and has disrupted the normal business operations and economic interests of many Chinese companies in various EU member states.

According to the probe conducted by China, about 93 percent of stakeholders who responded to a questionnaire said they believed that the EU's Foreign Subsidies Regulation investigation has caused restrictions or obstacles for market entry for Chinese companies, products and investments, according to a document that was attached to the Commerce Ministry statement.

The responses indicate that the EU's foreign subsidies investigation has resulted in both direct and indirect economic losses for Chinese companies. Chinese companies were forced to withdraw biddings for projects valued at about 7.6 billion yuan (\$1.04 billion), while other affected projects totaled over 8 billion yuan, according to the document.

As the EU is currently facing a series of economic and social challenges, including inflation, energy shortages and rising prices of raw materials, it has been adopting protectionist measures to shield its increasingly weakened manufacturing industries, said Cui, the UIBE professor.

Similar views were expressed by Chen Huiqing, head of the legal services branch at the China Chamber of Commerce for Import and Export of Machinery and Electronic Products.

"The EU actions targeting China in recent years reflect a shortsighted approach. In the long term, fostering a close cooperative relationship with China, while engaging in healthy competition, remains the most favorable strategy for the sustainable development of European industries," Chen said.

Thomas Roemer, global head of the coatings and adhesives business entity of German chemical group Covestro, said his company firmly supports fair, open and rules-based global trade and investment activities.

"Protectionist measures can have huge negative impacts on business and the broader economic environment," Roemer said.

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## Severe cold spell



A man takes a picture of the Los Indomables statue, covered in ice due to low temperatures of -3 C and a thermal sensation of -12 C, in Juarez in the Mexican state of Chihuahua on Wednesday. Since Monday, cold front No 21 has been moving inland from the Gulf of Mexico, bringing rain and freezing temperatures to the eastern, central and southeastern regions of the country. Two men died of hypothermia on Tuesday and Wednesday in Juarez. Authorities have urged people to seek shelter as the severe cold spell is expected to continue. HERIKA MARTINEZ / AFP

## Xi chairs meeting on quake relief

Top leadership says all-out efforts to save lives and minimize casualties are at a critical stage

By CAO DESHENG  
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Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, presided over a meeting of the nation's top leadership on Thursday to study and arrange concrete steps for quake relief in the Xizang autonomous region.

The meeting of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee came after a magnitude 6.8 earthquake hit Dingri county in Shigatse on Tuesday. The disaster has left 126 people dead and 337 others injured. It also toppled over 3,600 houses.

Shortly after the quake occurred, Xi made instructions on the disaster, ordering all-out rescue efforts to save lives and minimize casualties.

It was noted at the meeting that in the wake of the earthquake, rescue forces, including those from the China National Comprehensive Fire and Rescue Team, the People's Liberation Army, the armed police and centrally

administered enterprises, have overcome the challenges of high altitude and lack of oxygen in the quake-hit region and raced against time to search for and rescue trapped people and minimize the casualties, with the overall earthquake relief efforts proceeding smoothly.

It was emphasized at the meeting that the earthquake relief work is currently at a critical stage and there must be no slackening. More meticulous efforts must be made to win the tough battle of quake relief, according to the meeting.

While underlining the need to proceed with rescue and post-disaster relief work, the meeting's participants said that medical experts should be organized for consultations to spare no effort in treating the injured.

Efforts should be made to ensure that the basic needs are met for the affected people, and makeshift shelters and houses are in place to enable the disaster-hit people to be sheltered from the cold winter, they said.

They highlighted the need to accel-

erate post-disaster recovery and reconstruction efforts, with a focus on repairing infrastructure and restoring normal work and living conditions in the disaster-stricken areas as soon as possible.

The meeting's participants also underscored the importance of releasing authoritative information, enhancing the earthquake resistance of houses and infrastructure in key areas, and improving disaster response capabilities.

Local Party committees and governments are urged to earnestly shoulder their political responsibilities, while officials at all levels must stand at the front line of quake relief, and Party organizations and Party members at grassroots level should fully play their due roles, according to the meeting.

Since the quake occurred, foreign leaders and heads of international organizations have sent condolence messages to Xi, or expressed their sincere sympathy in other ways. They spoke highly of the swift and robust rescue efforts taken by the Chinese government, and expressed their confidence that under the strong leadership of the CPC, the people in the

disaster-stricken areas will surely overcome the calamity and rebuild their homes.

On Thursday, Xi also presided over the annual meeting of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee on hearing work reports from the leading Party members groups of the State institutions — the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, the nation's top legislature; the State Council, China's Cabinet; the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the nation's top political advisory body; the Supreme People's Court and the Supreme People's Procuratorate, as well as a work report from the Secretariat of the CPC Central Committee.

Since the 18th CPC National Congress in 2012, the CPC Central Committee has heard reports annually on the work of these five leading Party members groups, and a work report of the Secretariat of the CPC Central Committee.

This is an important institutional arrangement to uphold and strengthen the Party's overall leadership, and must be upheld in the long term, according to Thursday's meeting.

## DINGRI COPES WITH AFTERMATH THANKS TO RESCUERS

Collective endeavor calms frayed nerves in disaster-affected villages of Xizang autonomous region

By DAQIONG and  
PALDEN NYIMA in Dingri, Xizang,  
and ZOU SHUO



His face covered by dust and sweat, his fingernails bloodied and dirty, police officer Dondrub Tsering dug through the debris of fallen buildings with his bare hands to hunt for survivors after a 6.8 magnitude earthquake hit Dingri county in the

Xizang autonomous region on Tuesday morning. The police officer and his colleagues were at the scene of one of the worst hit villages within half an hour of the quake. By sunset, they had dug out 17 survivors. By 10 am on Wednesday, 407

people had been rescued from the area, local authorities said.

Located at an altitude of 4,500 meters, Dingri hosts the base camp of Qomolangma, the world's highest peak, known as Mount Everest in the West. Home to over 60,000 residents, it is one of the most populous border counties in Xizang.

Hong Li, head of the Xizang Department of Emergency Management, said the earthquake, the

severest in five years, had killed 126 people and injured 337, and destroyed 3,609 houses.

As many as 646 aftershocks were recorded, with the strongest one of 4.4 magnitude occurring approximately 18 kilometers from Lhasa block in the southern part of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, which was the epicenter of the quake.

See **Rescue**, page 2

## Soaring tech



An Xpeng Aeroht helicopter is displayed on Wednesday at the company's booth during CES 2025 in Las Vegas. Nearly 1,500 Chinese enterprises are participating in the tech gala, accounting for more than 30 percent of the total registered exhibitors. ABBIE PARR / AP See **Stories**, page 10

## Illuminating the world with Eastern wisdom

In a world increasingly interwoven by globalization, cultural exchanges and ideological influences flow across borders like never before. Amid these exchanges, the essence of China's five millennia of uninterrupted civilization emerges as both a foundation of national identity and a beacon of wisdom for humanity. Raising the banner of Chinese cultural subjectivity and spreading the Eastern vision of civi-

lization are not only tasks of cultural preservation but also missions to contribute new perspectives to global development and harmony.

Chinese culture, rooted deeply in its ancient traditions, is akin to a mighty river that has nurtured the land and its people for centuries. It is defined by core values such as Confucianism's principles of "benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and faith", Taoism's "harmony between man and

nature", and Buddhism's compassionate ethos of "peace, coexistence and unity". These philosophies, collectively forming the backbone of Chinese civilization, represent a distinctive cultural subjectivity that distinguishes the country on the global stage.

This subjectivity is manifested in China's approach to inclusivity — embracing "harmony without uniformity" and demonstrating the capacity to absorb and integrate

### WORLD WATCH

By Yuktshwar Kumar

diverse cultural elements.

Unlike Western civilizations that have often pursued expansion through conquest, China, along with other Eastern civilizations like India, has historically upheld principles of peace and cultural exchanges. From the 1st century to the 18th century, China and India stood as global economic and cultural powerhouses,

not by wielding swords but through trade and shared cultural heritage. The introduction of Buddhism from India to China epitomizes this peaceful interaction, a hallmark of Eastern civilization that remains deeply relevant in today's pursuit of global stability.

This philosophical and historical grounding challenges the prevailing narratives that prioritize dominance and control, offering instead a model based on mutual respect, coexistence and shared progress.

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**INSIDE**  
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# PAGE TWO



**Left:** Armed police officers sort relief supplies at a warehouse in quake-hit Shigatse, Xizang autonomous region, on Wednesday. TENZIN NYIDA / XINHUA **Middle:** A woman, carrying her child, receives warm clothes from volunteers on Wednesday at Thongley, a village in Dramso township of Dingri county in Shigatse. JIANG FAN / XINHUA **Right:** State Grid technicians check power transmission facilities at Thongley village on Thursday. DA QIONG / CHINA DAILY

## Rescue: Courage, unity shine amid devastation



Villagers move relief materials that they received from the government in Trakchung, a village in Dramso township of Dingri, on Thursday. PALDEN NYIMA / CHINA DAILY

### From page 1

According to Hong Li, the quake hit a high altitude and low temperature area that was economically backward with poor transportation and telecommunication links and power supply.

With temperatures dropping considerably at night, a total of 428,000 urgently needed items such as quilts, blankets, coats, stoves and instant noodles had been shipped to the disaster area, he said.

### Shock and fear

When the earthquake struck, Guru Putri was in her home in a village near the epicenter. Her house fell like a pack of cards, but she and her family were lucky to rush out in time. Some of her neighbors were not so fortunate. And it is that thought of how close she came to death that still frightens her, she told the Southern Weekly.

She said rescuers arrived at the village on Tuesday afternoon and sent the injured to hospital. They also retrieved the body of one of the villagers.

Guru Putri and her family were transferred to the village committee premises, where there is food and water. The wound on her back was attended to and dressed.

Wangyal, 37, said her 76-year-old aunt who lived in a village near the epicenter was killed as she was unable to escape from the second floor of her home on time. Her younger relatives, luckily, managed to cheat death.

The tremor came as a shock to even those who are familiar with the area.

Xi Zhenhua works at the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Mount Qomolangma atmosphere and environment observation station. Having lived in the area for 11 years, Xi is used to earthquakes.

Speaking to Shanghai-based The-Paper.cn, Xi said that he felt a small jolt at 8:12 am on Tuesday and received an alert for a 4.0-magnitude earthquake on his cellphone. He and two of his colleagues chose to ignore the warning and went back to sleep.

At 9:05 am, their living quarters were rocked violently and a phone alert stated the quake magnitude was 6.7. With no time to even put on warm clothes, Xi and his colleagues rushed out of the house covered in their quilts.

Thankfully, winter is not peak season for travel to the Mount Qomolangma base camp. As accommodation services in the scenic area shut in October, only about 500 daily visitors make it to the base camp during this season.

A staffer from the scenic area told The-Paper.cn that there were only a few tourists at the camp when the earthquake struck, forc-

ing the visitors to take shelter in their vehicles. The scenic area was closed temporarily at 10 am on Tuesday.

Local authorities said all 484 tourists in Dingri county, including 13 foreigners, had been transferred to safe places.

### Helping hands

According to the Xizang Emergency Management Department, more than 15,000 emergency response personnel are participating in rescue and disaster relief work.

A total of 581 medical workers and 107 ambulances have been sent to treat the injured. As many as 61,500 people affected by the earthquake have been transferred to the 187 settlement centers that have been set up.

Migmar Tsering and four of his colleagues from Shigatse forest fire and rescue station were among the first batch of professional rescuers to arrive at the epicenter by Tuesday noon.

They used their hands to remove fallen rocks and tiles to rescue a woman in her 40s who was trapped under debris. She was found with multiple fractures, and they transported her to safety on a wooden

stretcher before she was sent to a county hospital for treatment.

Wang Zhiping, head of the Shigatse forest fire and rescue station, said his team arrived at a village in Dingri county at 1:40 pm on Tuesday. Most of the houses in the area were severely damaged, he told China Youth Daily.

The rescuers shifted more than 300 villagers to safer places. However, the rescued villagers were extremely concerned about their livestock, especially yaks, which are considered valuable assets. So the next task was to rescue the trapped animals. By Tuesday afternoon, over a dozen yaks had been saved.

Zheng Long from the Xizang forest fire and rescue station said they had sent 300 firefighters to three townships near the epicenter. He arrived at a local village at 6:20 pm on Tuesday to find around 85 percent of the village's 76 houses had collapsed.

"One of the elderly women was in great distress because all her four yaks were buried under her collapsed house," he said. "Luckily, we could recover the yaks and other necessities."

Wang Tianyou, who works at the State Grid Lhokha Power Supply Co, said he and his col-

leagues arrived at a village near the epicenter of the earthquake at 2:00 am on Wednesday.

They immediately started work on reinstating power supply in the village. In two hours, light bulbs were on in 21 tents, he said. More than 300 tents had been illuminated by Thursday afternoon.

An Zhengfa, an official at Thongley village, said that when the quake struck, he could not stand straight as his house was shaking so badly.

When the tremors stopped, he and his colleagues ran toward the village to check on fellow villagers. "Many houses had collapsed and there was dust everywhere, and I realized that something terrible had happened," he said.

After reporting the situation to township officials, he and his colleagues organized other villagers to carry out rescue efforts.

They managed to pull out a villager buried in the debris in an hour, but sadly he did not survive.

The first batch of 15 professional rescuers arrived at the village by 11:00 am. By 1:00 am, three trapped under the debris had been found dead.

Relief equipment and materials arrived on Tuesday afternoon. The rescuers set up tents so that villagers had shelter for the night. The next day, the rescuers began to pull out buried livestock.

### Expressing gratitude

Phurbu Tsering headed for Thongley village from Lhasa as soon as he learned that the earthquake had struck his hometown.

"I was extremely worried as I did not know how bad it could be," he said.

He arrived at the village at around 6 pm on Tuesday. Even though his family home had collapsed, those in the house were safe.

Rescuers helped them put up tents and brought them food, clothes and quilts.

"I was deeply moved by how quickly the rescuers came to our help," he said.

Lhagpa, 65, who lived in badly hit Dramso village, said her two-story house collapsed and three of her cows were injured.

The good news was that all her seven family members were safe.

"Government officials, rescue teams and medical workers came to our side at the earliest. They transferred us to a safe place and went on searching for people and livestock one household at a time," she said. "I was so deeply moved."

The young rescuers, many of whom are Party members, are fighting on the frontline tirelessly, and they are the true heroes, she added.

### Task ahead

Sun Shihong, a researcher at China Earthquake Networks Center, told Beijing News that a 6.8-magnitude earthquake is not the strongest quake recorded in Xizang autonomous region. There are frequent earthquakes in the area due to the compression from the Indian plate to the Eurasian plate, he said.

Hao Nan, head of Zhuomang Disaster Information Service, a civil disaster relief volunteer group, told China Newsweek the earthquake occurred at 9 am Beijing time, which is about 7 am in Xizang, when many people were still in bed. Moreover, since the epicenter is in a remote area, it took rescuers more time to get to the victims.

Xu Xiwei, a professor at China University of Geosciences Beijing, said Xizang autonomous region is located on a plateau where it is extremely cold with low oxygen levels. It is easy for people living in lower altitude areas to suffer from altitude sickness while participating in rescue efforts. So it was important to engage the local population in rescue efforts, he said.



**Clockwise from top left:** Firefighters arrive in Dingri county soon after the earthquake on Tuesday. TENZIN SHINDEN / FOR CHINA DAILY A firefighter interacts with a child at a resettlement site in Dingri on Wednesday. JIGME DORJE / XINHUA Medical workers tend to injured survivors at Shigatse People's Hospital early on Wednesday morning. TENZIN NYIDA / XINHUA Children play in a resettlement tent on Thursday in Trakchung village. PALDEN NYIMA / CHINA DAILY

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## TOP NEWS

## Respiratory infections trend within expected range

By WANG XIAOYU  
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The number of respiratory infections in China, including cases with the lesser-known but common human metapneumovirus, is within the expected range for winter, with no unusual outbreak patterns reported and the overall level lower than the previous winter, according to global and Chinese health authorities.

In response to heightened international interest over increasing respiratory infections in China, particularly cases of human metapneumovirus, or HMPV, the World Health Organization said in a recent statement that the upward trend falls into the predicted range for winter across the Northern Hemisphere.

It added that Chinese authorities had confirmed to the WHO that its healthcare system is not overwhelmed, and that hospital utilization

is lower than at this time last winter.

"There have been no emergency declarations or responses triggered," said the WHO, adding that Chinese officials have been offering knowledge on prevention to the public.

HMPV is a common respiratory virus that spreads all year round but more seriously in late winter and early spring.

"In China, the proportion of HMPV among all acute respiratory pathogens is relatively low, and the infection usually only causes mild symptoms, though the elderly, children and people with weakened immunity or chronic respiratory illnesses are at risk of developing into severe cases," according to an HMPV diagnosis and treatment guideline released by China's National Health Commission in 2023.

The proportion of HMPV infections among all cases testing positive for acute respiratory pathogens

has been rising, up from 4.8 percent at the beginning of December to 6.2 percent earlier this month, according to data released on Thursday by the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

"From Dec 30 to Jan 5, the positivity rate of HMPV infections has plateaued, and is increasing at a slower pace (compared with past weeks) in northern provinces. The positivity rate among those age 14 and younger has started to decline," said the China CDC.

It added that the majority of infections remained cases involving influenza, which accounted for 35.5 percent for the week ending on Sunday. Cases of rhinovirus, infections by *Mycoplasma pneumoniae* bacteria, respiratory syncytial virus and COVID-19 have also been reported.

Flu cases are expected to start declining later this month, according to the China CDC.

Kan Biao, head of the China CDC's National Institute for Communicable Disease Control and Prevention, said during a recent news conference that the scale and intensity of respiratory illnesses are lower than last season.

Li Tongzeng, a physician at Capital Medical University's Beijing You'an Hospital's infectious disease department, told media that improved testing technologies for HMPV have contributed to a rise in reported infections in the past two years.

The nation has established a comprehensive surveillance network for acute respiratory illnesses, bolstered by information submitted by a number of sentinel hospitals that test and monitor different pathogens.

The WHO also said that China has a surveillance system covering a variety of respiratory pathogens in place and publishes detailed reports weekly on the China CDC website.

## Trafficking of Chinese actor raises concerns

Authorities in Thailand investigate case, step up efforts to restore tourists' confidence

By YANG WANLI in Bangkok  
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Authorities in Thailand are monitoring a recent case of human trafficking to neighboring Myanmar and making coordinated efforts to restore confidence among tourists regarding personal safety, while the involved Chinese actor was said to be making his way home.

Chinese actor Wang Xing went missing at the Thailand-Myanmar border after arriving in Thailand for a supposed film shoot on Jan 3, causing widespread public concern in both China and Thailand.

An anonymous source said that Wang would return to China on Friday after relevant inquiries in line with regulations.

On Tuesday afternoon, Wang was retrieved safely at a border crossing point from Myanmar to Thailand. Thai police said he had fallen victim to a human trafficking gang using Thailand as a gateway. "We are going to do an investigation on the case, such as how the actor came to Bangkok and then traveled to the border area, as well as who brought him here," Police Inspector-General Thatchai Pitaneelaboot said on Thursday.

He stressed that Thailand itself doesn't have a problem with human trafficking. "Thailand is still safe. The only concern for us is that the criminals use Thailand as a transit country," he said, adding that a multisector meeting will be held soon to find ways to help prevent travelers from becoming victims of human trafficking.

As Thailand is expected to welcome another peak tourism season during the upcoming Chinese New Year, Thai tourism authorities have kept monitoring the case and its impact on the tourism industry, and are seeking to maintain confidence in the country's safety among international tourists.

The Tourism Authority of Thailand has coordinated with Thai tourist police to ensure safe travel in Thailand and also assigned its five offices on the Chinese mainland to help coordinate these efforts.

The authority is hoping to welcome at least 8 million Chinese tourists this year and a total of 39 million to 40 million foreign arrivals, after 6.73 million Chinese tourists visited the nation in 2024. During the upcoming Spring Festival

holiday, Thailand is expected to see about 20,000 to 30,000 daily arrivals from China.

Although the recent human trafficking report sparked some concerns over tourism safety, "so far, we have had no reports of any trip cancellations," said Guan Jian, a spokesman for GZL International Travel Service, a major travel agency based in South China's Guangdong province.

He said the company had recently had inquiries from potential customers about safety problems in Southeast Asia, but added that, in this case, the issue of human trafficking is related to those seeking jobs, and movie casting in particular.

Sidivachr Cheewarattanaporn, president of the Association of Thai Travel Agents, said the Thai tourism industry noted an internet buzz on Chinese social media for a few days. "But we forecast that it might not be as severe as feared, as the police were able to help the actor within a few days," he said.

Sidivachr noted that Thailand is not a destination for scammers and the security authorities have measures in place to tackle illegal gangs, which are mostly based in neighboring countries. He said the government and related authorities should act quickly and restore tourism confidence to keep the impact to a minimum.

Apart from Wang, several other Chinese people were recently reported to have lost contact after being deceived into accepting roles in film productions in or near Thailand. On Thursday, it was reported that the family of 25-year-old model Yang Zeqi sought help via social media after he disappeared near the Thailand-Myanmar border on Dec 20. Local authorities in Hebei province have begun an investigation.

The Actors Committee of the China Federation of Radio and Television Associations issued a statement on Tuesday acknowledging concerns about fraudulent activities targeting actors.

Several Chinese actors were reported being misled into traveling abroad under the pretense of filming opportunities, it said, urging actors and entertainment companies to carefully verify any invitations before engaging in cross-border work.

## A female pharaoh's treasures

Archaeologists reassemble unearthed pieces of pottery on Wednesday at a well-preserved section of the Valley Temple's foundations, which served as the main gateway to Queen Hatshepsut's funerary temple, in Luxor, Egypt. Hatshepsut was one of the few and most famous female pharaohs of Egypt. The excavation yielded over 1,000 artifacts, most of them considered rare examples of sculpture from Hatshepsut's reign.

KHALED DESOUKI / AFP



## Civilization: Digital platforms key to cultural dissemination

From page 1

Chinese civilization is not a relic of the past; it is a living and evolving force, offering timeless wisdom to address some of the most pressing challenges of the modern world, such as human relations with nature, international relations, and people's inner well-being.

## Contemporary relevance

At the heart of Chinese thought lies the Taoist concept of "harmony between man and nature". This philosophy stresses the interconnectedness of all living things, advocating for a balance that ensures the sustainability of the planet. As the global community grapples with ecological crises such as climate change, environmental degradation and resource depletion, China's ancient perspective provides an alternative framework for ecological stewardship. Concepts rooted in traditional practices, such as sustainable farming and respect for natural cycles, align seamlessly with contemporary efforts to achieve environmental balance and sustainable development.

When it comes to international relations, the Confucian ideal of "universal harmony" underscores the importance of peaceful coexistence among nations. Through initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative, China demonstrates how this philosophy translates into actionable strategies for fostering global connectivity and cooperation. By promoting infrastructure development, trade and cultural exchanges, these efforts embody a vision of a shared future for mankind. They also stand in stark contrast to zero-sum geopolitical strategies, offering a road map for win-win outcomes and long-term stability.

In an age marked by rapid technological advancements and growing societal pressures, people

across the globe face unprecedented levels of stress and anxiety. Chinese civilization's emphasis on inner harmony — epitomized, for example, in Buddhist mindfulness practices and the Zen philosophy — offers pathways to cultivate peace of mind. These ideas resonate deeply with modern psychological approaches, enriching global dialogues on mental health and providing tools for navigating the complexities of contemporary life.

To amplify the influence of Chinese culture and the Eastern worldview, a multipronged approach is essential — one that harnesses innovative storytelling, cultural exchanges and digital technology.

Storytelling remains one of the most powerful ways to bridge cultural divides. Music, films and other forms of visual arts offer dynamic avenues for sharing the richness of Chinese heritage with global audiences. The success of films such as *Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child*, which reimagines ancient Chinese mythology in a modern context, highlights the potential of creative media to captivate international audiences while preserving cultural authenticity.

Such projects demonstrate that the global appetite for compelling stories knows no boundaries. By drawing from its deep reservoir of folklore, history and philosophy, China has the opportunity to craft narratives that resonate universally while retaining their distinctly Chinese identity.

Cultural diplomacy plays a crucial role in building bridges between nations and communities. Platforms such as the Confucius Institute, international cultural festivals, and programs under the Belt and Road Initiative facilitate meaningful exchanges that promote mutual understanding. These initiatives enable individuals from diverse backgrounds to engage with Chinese culture firsthand, breaking

down stereotypes and fostering a sense of shared humanity.

Moreover, partnerships with other ancient civilizations — such as India, Iran and Greece — could further highlight the commonalities and unique contributions of Eastern cultures and philosophies to global progress.

And in today's interconnected world, digital platforms are indispensable tools for cultural dissemination. Social media, virtual reality and artificial intelligence can make Chinese culture more accessible to global audiences, particularly younger generations. By presenting cultural elements in interactive and engaging formats, these technologies can transcend linguistic and geographical barriers, offering fresh ways to explore and appreciate Chinese traditions.

For example, virtual tours of historical sites, augmented reality depictions of ancient practices, and gamified learning platforms could bring Chinese history and philosophy to life for millions. Such innovations not only ensure the preservation of cultural heritage but also position it as a vital part of the global digital culture.

## Opportunities ahead

While the opportunities for spreading Chinese culture are immense, the journey is not without challenges. Misunderstandings and biases about Chinese history and policies often cloud perceptions. Addressing these requires a commitment to transparency, open dialogue and authenticity in cultural representation. It also calls for collaboration with global scholars, artists and thinkers to cocreate a narrative that is inclusive and reflective of the diverse facets of Chinese civilization.

As globalization continues to blur cultural boundaries, there is a need to strike a balance between cultural preservation and adaptation. While it is essential to protect the integrity of Chinese traditions,

embracing modernity and innovation ensures that these traditions remain relevant and vibrant.

The significance of raising the banner of Chinese cultural subjectivity extends beyond national pride. It is about contributing to the diversity of human civilizations, fostering global understanding, and promoting peace and cooperation. The Eastern vision of civilization, with its emphasis on harmony, compassion and coexistence, offers an invaluable perspective for addressing the complex challenges of the 21st century.

As we navigate an era defined by rapid changes and interconnectedness, the principles embedded in Chinese culture provide a guiding light. They remind us of the importance of balance — between humanity and nature, individuality and community, tradition and innovation. By sharing this wisdom with the rest of the world, China not only enriches its own cultural narrative but also contributes to the collective story of humanity.

Chinese culture and the vision of Eastern civilization are not relics of the past but living treasures that hold profound relevance for the present and future. By embracing openness, creativity and collaboration, we can ensure that the brilliance of Chinese civilization shines brightly on the global stage.

In doing so, we contribute to a world where diversity is celebrated, cultures coexist harmoniously, and wisdom from all corners of the earth guides us toward a more peaceful and prosperous future. The journey of raising the banner of Chinese cultural subjectivity is, ultimately, a journey of shared human progress.

The author is former deputy mayor of the city of Bath, the United Kingdom, and Sinologist attached with the University of Bath, the UK. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

## Ties: Sino-EU trade growing despite external headwinds

From page 1

The company, based in Leverkusen, Germany, is currently building its largest site for thermoplastic polyurethane, a versatile material known for its exceptional properties, in Zhuhai, Guangdong province.

Swiss instrument manufacturer Endress+Hauser Group is also optimistic about the Chinese market, and it is expanding two of its plants in Suzhou, Jiangsu province.

Matthias Altendorf, president of

the company's supervisory board, said these expansion measures, along with a planned investment of 2 billion yuan over the next three to five years, are a key part of the group's long-term strategy in China.

Despite external headwinds, trade between China and the EU grew 1.3 percent year-on-year to 5.09 trillion yuan from January to November last year, accounting for 12.8 percent of China's total foreign trade, according to statistics from the General Administration of Customs.

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## CHINA

# More flights to meet influx of intl tourists

Expanded operations to aid aviation sector's post-pandemic recovery

By LUO WANGSHU  
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China is set to expand its international flight operations this year, supported by new preferential policies such as visa-free transit for overseas tourists. The move aims to enhance sector development and return air traffic to 90 percent of the levels seen before the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the Civil Aviation Administration of China on Thursday.

"We will capitalize on the opportunities provided by new preferential policies, including visa-free travel for tourists in transit, and work to build a more robust international transfer market," said Song Zhiyong, head of the CAAC, during the administration's annual conference in Beijing.

The initiative seeks to increase both passenger and cargo air traffic, strengthen China's global market connectivity and aid the country's post-pandemic recovery in the aviation sector. China is focusing on improving airport services and promoting cultural exchanges to position itself as a more attractive destination for international travelers.

China's civil aviation sector, severely impacted by the pandemic, made a strong recovery last year, returning to profitability and cutting its losses by 20.6 billion yuan (\$2.8 billion) compared to the previous year, according to Song.

In 2024, China operated 6,400 weekly round-trip international passenger flights, 84 percent of its pre-pandemic levels. Air links with nations involved in the Belt and Road Initiative expanded notably, with 19 new destinations added to China's air network last year.

Passenger traffic increased 152.4 percent to destinations in Central Asia, 49.5 percent to West Asia and 25.7 percent to Europe, all above pre-pandemic levels. The bump in traffic created new opportunities for international travel and cross-border commerce.

This year, China's economy is expected to generate fresh momentum, further enhancing prospects for the civil aviation market. According to the International Air Transport Association, global passenger traffic is forecast to exceed 5.2 billion trips in 2025, a 6.7 percent increase year-on-year.

## Recent milestones

China's civil aviation sector has achieved significant milestones in recent years.

Last year, the industry saw a record-high passenger volume of 730 million, and cargo/mail volume of 8.98 million metric tons, representing year-on-year increases of 17.9 percent and 22.1 percent, respectively. Compared to 2019, passenger traffic grew 10.6 percent, while cargo/mail volume rose 19.3 percent.

This year, passenger volume is expected to reach 780 million, with cargo/mail volume projected at 9.5 million tons.

A key driver behind China's expanding aviation sector has been the relaxation of visa policies.

The Chinese government has eased visa requirements for international travelers, particularly those transiting through the country. Major airports such as Beijing Capital International Airport and Beijing Daxing International Airport are spearheading efforts to improve the layover experience, making China an increasingly attractive transit hub.

BCIA, a cornerstone of China's aviation infrastructure, has significantly enhanced its visa-free transit policies and passenger-centric initiatives. Recent upgrades include expanded global connections, streamlined immigration processes and enhanced visa-on-arrival services. For long-haul travelers, these improvements facilitate seamless connections and offer opportunities to explore nearby attractions during extended layovers.

The airport has also invested in showcasing Chinese culture, introducing cultural exhibitions and art displays that celebrate the nation's heritage. For example, its art gallery now features rotating exhibitions of Chinese calligraphy, historical paintings and rare artifacts from ancient dynasties, providing international visitors a glimpse into China's rich cultural legacy.

At Beijing Daxing International Airport, known for its futuristic design, efforts have focused on creating an immersive cultural experience for layover passengers. The recently renovated Ceramic Garden now serves as an interactive display highlighting China's ceramic heritage, enriching the airport experience and deepening international travelers' understanding of Chinese culture.

Looking ahead, China's aviation sector is expected to continue its upward trajectory. With expanding international routes, a growing fleet of modern aircraft and increasingly flexible visa policies, China is well-positioned to remain a key player in the global aviation market.

## Designed for winners



China's Olympic gold medalist in freestyle skiing aerobics Xu Mengtao (left), and compatriot speed skater Ahenaer Adake appear in outfits designed for Chinese winners at the upcoming 9th Asian Winter Games in Harbin, Heilongjiang province, on Thursday. ZHANG TAO / XINHUA

## Former Xinjiang official pleads guilty

By ZHANG YI  
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Li Pengxin, a former senior official of the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous regional government, pleaded guilty to charges of accepting bribes of over 822 million yuan

(\$112 million) on Thursday.

Li, who served as deputy secretary of Xinjiang's regional committee of the Communist Party of China, faced trial at the Intermediate People's Court in Baoji, Shaanxi province, regarding his bribery case. He was charged with misusing

his positions in Qinghai province, the Inner Mongolia autonomous region and Xinjiang from 1999 to 2023 to provide assistance to others in matters such as mineral exploration, business operations and official appointments. It was alleged that he directly or through interme-

## Sharing knowledge



Police officers demonstrate how bomb-sniffing dogs locate explosive devices while promoting safety awareness as travelers watch in the waiting hall of Tianjin Railway Station in Tianjin on Thursday. Similar activities have been held nationwide recently to mark the fifth Chinese People's Police Day, which falls on Jan 10 each year. SUN FANYUE / XINHUA

## China cracks down on smuggling with over 5,700 cases investigated

By WANG QINGYUN  
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Anti-smuggling departments of customs across China carried out a series of special campaigns targeting smuggling in 2024, investigating more than 5,700 cases, the Ministry of Public Security said.

About 64 percent of these cases were criminal and involved tax evasion, according to the ministry. The departments focused on key goods such as refined oil, cigarettes and frozen marine products.

As part of these efforts, customs in Fuzhou, Fujian province, cracked a major case of refined oil smuggling.

According to a statement issued by the General Administration of Customs in November, the case involved multiple organizations that have been smuggling oil at sea since 2021. The anti-smuggling bureau of Fuzhou customs, in collaboration with Fuzhou police and customs and police in neighboring Zhejiang province, captured 34 suspects and seized four boats and with 3.31 million

yuan (\$451,000) in cash. Investigators discovered that 75,000 metric tons of refined oil, worth 690 million yuan, had been smuggled.

China's customs authorities have also ramped up efforts to tackle the reselling of goods purchased under the offshore duty-free shopping policy in the Hainan Free Trade Port, a practice prohibited by the government.

Since 2024, customs have collaborated with police and other authorities to investigate 495 criminal cases where offenders either resold duty-free goods purchased in Hainan province or bought the goods using other people's duty-free shopping quotas.

In one case disclosed in December, the General Administration of Customs reported that customs officers at Haikou Meilan International Airport in Hainan detected 13 departing passengers who had purchased 52 duty-free cellphones worth more than 450,000 yuan. Those involved admitted that the purchases were organized for profit.

Last year, anti-smuggling

authorities also investigated 601 criminal cases involving smuggling through China's pilot free trade zones, with more than 32 billion yuan involved in these cases.

Efforts were also intensified to combat the smuggling of weapons, ammunition, illicit drugs and other prohibited items.

Customs investigated 46 cases of weapon and ammunition smuggling and 772 cases of drug smuggling, seizing 2.09 tons of methamphetamine, cocaine and other drugs during the same period.

Additionally, customs investigated 231 cases involving the smuggling of endangered species and related products, along with 53 cases of smuggling waste.

China has banned the import of solid waste since 2021.

In May 2024, the anti-smuggling bureau of Shanghai customs handled a waste-import case involving 148 containers of waste weighing over 3,000 tons, including 20 containers of domestic garbage. Two suspects were detained in connection with the case.

## Ex-Party chief admits GDP fabrication

By CUI JIA  
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Sun Shutao, former Party chief of Weihai, Shandong province, expressed regret for fabricating the city's GDP figures to pursue political achievements in an anti-corruption documentary aired on Wednesday night.

"To seek promotion and pursue political achievements, I inflated the GDP to an unreasonably high level, which I deeply regret," said Sun, who also served as a senior political adviser in Shandong. He made the remarks in the fourth episode of the documentary, jointly produced by the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, the National Commission of Supervision and the China Media Group.

Languishing in prison, Sun admitted he believed that if Weihai's GDP growth lagged, his personal career prospects would be negatively affected.

"By making the data look good, officials could secure faster promotions. But the money wasn't invested in the city's development

or in areas where people needed it the most," Sun said. "Such actions are truly disgraceful."

Sun, who served as mayor of Weihai from December 2011 to March 2018, was sentenced to life imprisonment for bribery in June 2024.

During the investigation into his case, authorities received tips suggesting that he had encouraged the fabrication of economic data, according to Meng Qiang, an investigator with China's top anti-graft watchdogs.

"When Sun was mayor of Weihai, the city's annual economic growth often topped the charts among Shandong cities. However, after his departure, its ranking dropped sharply. That raised red flags, prompting further investigation," Meng said.

Investigators later found that much of the data reported by medium- and large-sized enterprises from 2013 to 2017 was inaccurate. Some enterprises admitted they were pressured to inflate figures, while others revealed that authorities had fab-

ricated the data on their behalf.

Sun made it clear in various meetings that he wanted Weihai's GDP growth ranking to improve immediately, according to Xu Dongming, former director of the Weihai Development and Reform Commission.

"Although he didn't explicitly instruct officials to falsify data, his intentions were well understood," Xu said. "GDP growth targets had to meet his satisfaction."

Meng noted that Sun pushed for even higher GDP figures, despite them already being unrealistic, as he sought promotion during this critical period in his career between 2015 and 2017.

"Sun exerted pressure on local officials and publicly criticized those who failed to meet economic growth targets," Meng said.

Zhou Ning, the former head of the Weihai Statistics Bureau, said officials were under immense pressure.

"Some asked enterprises to report inflated data, while others simply fabricated figures themselves," Zhou said.

## Scientists to make flag flutter on moon

Chinese scientists are exploring the feasibility of an idea proposed by elementary school students: creating a flag that can wave on the airless moon.

At the Deep Space Exploration Laboratory, researchers from Beijing and Anhui province are collaborating to develop a payload for the Chang'e 7 mission, inspired by the creativity of the students from Changsha, Hunan province, China Central Television reported on Wednesday.

This payload, a scientific outreach project, will accompany the Chang'e 7 probe to the lunar south pole, aiming to use electromagnetic field interactions to make the flag appear to wave on the moon, said Zhang Tianzhu, deputy director of the DSEL's future technology research institute.

"We know on the moon, the absence of an atmosphere creates a vacuum, making it difficult for a flag to wave like it does on Earth," explained Zhang.

"The students proposed that we design a closed-loop wire on the flag's surface, enabling bidirectional currents. The interaction of the electromagnetic fields would allow the flag to wave," he said.

"If successful, this will be the first flag to flutter on the lunar surface," noted Zhang, adding that the scientific outreach payload project is expected to be completed by February.

Zhang said that the initiative could enhance young people's understanding of China's space endeavors and ignite their interest and enthusiasm for future careers in aerospace.

In 2024, China's Chang'e 6 mission successfully completed the world's first-ever sample return mission from the far side of the moon.

This year, the development of the follow-up missions, Chang'e 7 and Chang'e 8, under the fourth phase of China's lunar exploration project, progressed steadily.

The Chang'e 7 mission, scheduled to launch around 2026, aims to search for evidence of water or ice at the moon's south pole.

Additionally, researchers are advancing the validation processes for the subsequent Chang'e 8 mission and the International Lunar Research Station projects.

The Chang'e 8 probe will be launched around 2028 to carry out experiments on lunar resource utilization.

By 2035, Chang'e 7 and Chang'e 8 are expected to constitute the basic model of the ILRS, a hub for engineers, a laboratory for scientists and a cradle for international deep space talents, according to Zhang.

XINHUA

## CHINA

By LUO WANGSHU in Shanghai  
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With the rapid development of modern technology, communication has become almost instantaneous — just a tap of a screen. The once-cherished art of writing letters and affixing stamps seems like a forgotten relic. Yet, for a dedicated community of collectors, stamps are not just valuable artifacts but carriers of deep emotional connections, culture, history and art. Despite the prevalence of digital communication, this unique tradition remains alive, as evidenced by the passionate crowds that gathered at last year's China 2024 Asian International Stamp Exhibition in Shanghai.

On Nov 29, the city witnessed an extraordinary gathering of stamp enthusiasts at the Shanghai Exhibition Center. The event buzzed with excitement as visitors of all ages flocked to the exhibition to celebrate the global art and culture of philately. Among them was 65-year-old Liang Bin, a seasoned philatelist from Taizhou, Zhejiang province. Liang had traveled to Shanghai for what he described as "a grand gathering for philately".

A collector for nearly 50 years, Liang was among the first to arrive, braving the chilly winter morning and standing in a long queue that stretched well beyond the entrance of the exhibition hall.

"It's not just about the stamps, it's about the connections," Liang said as he carefully affixed some stamps to a special envelope designed for the event. He was preparing to send these to fellow philatelists, some of whom he has been corresponding with for decades.

"I've been sending letters to a friend in Taiwan for over 30 years. We've shared our joys and sorrows, from family celebrations to losses, and even sent each other money in the post. We're more than friends, we're like family," he added.

For Liang, the act of writing and sending a letter is far from a simple task — it is a meaningful ritual. The exchange of letters, often adorned with carefully chosen stamps, had become a deeply rooted tradition for many philatelists.

### Global celebration

The exhibition, which ran for five days, saw a remarkable turnout. According to the All-China Philatelic Federation, one of the event's coorganizers, the daily visitor numbers consistently reached capacity. Attendees came from across China and around the world, many of them passionate collectors who viewed the event as an opportunity to connect, learn and expand their collections. While the crowds were predominantly middle-aged and older, younger faces were also visible, underscoring the intergenerational appeal of philately.

"Stamp collecting is an important way for people from all over the world to exchange cultures and ideas," said Liu Wei, China's Transport Minister, at the opening ceremony of the exhibition.

"As a country with a rich philatelic culture, China continues to innovate and expand the influence of philately both domestically and internationally," Liu added.

Philately in China had experienced something of a renaissance, particularly after the 1980 release of



Left: A visitor chats with a French exhibitor at the China 2024 Asian International Stamp Exhibition in Shanghai on Nov 29. FANG ZHE / XINHUA  
Right: A fluorescent stamp by China Post depicts the Shanghai skyline both during the day and at night. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



## Stamps retain seal of approval

Hobbyists keep passion for postage alive in digital age



A worker displays China Post stamps dedicated to the exhibition in Shanghai on Nov 29. LI HE / XINHUA

the famous "Monkey Stamp", which remains highly valued by collectors today. However, experts suggest that the number of active stamp collectors in China has gradually declined in recent years, likely due to the increasing dominance of digital communication.

Prakob Chirakiti, president of the Federation of Inter-Asian Philately, acknowledged that while the volume of physical letters may have decreased, the emotional and cultural significance of handwritten letters and stamps has not diminished.

"It's different when you hold a handwritten letter from your mother, compared to just receiving a text," Chirakiti said.

"Stamps, in a way, serve as ambassadors — they tell stories."

For instance, China uses stamps to showcase its technological and architectural achievements, while Japan highlights its food culture and cartoons.

Chirakiti emphasized that philately remains an important medium of cultural exchange, especially in Asia, where the practice has flourished over the past several decades. Even in an age of digital communication, stamps continued to serve as powerful cultural symbols, connecting people across borders and offering a tangible link to history.

Benjamin Combes, philately development and documentary heritage program manager at the Universal Postal Union, agreed, noting that stamps are an effective vector for communication.

"They are a way to connect all levels of society — from industries to the environment — and they bring happiness and well-being to the people," he said. Combes also noted that philately transcends borders. "It's a universal language, a way of sharing stories and culture across all levels of society. It passes on the same messages, over and over again, bridging cultures and time."

Despite the challenges posed by digital communication, the future of philately appears secure, thanks to the efforts of collectors, designers and postal organizations. Combes noted that the stamp industry continues to evolve, adapting to new technologies like non-fungible tokens and digital stamps.

"We've seen the volume of physi-

cal letters drop in recent years, but the passion for philately remains strong," Combes said. "We are working to bring stamps into the digital age, making them accessible to a new generation of collectors through apps and other platforms."

### Cultural narratives

The artistic and historical value of stamps are also major draws. Designers like Jiang Weijie, one of China's most renowned stamp designers, view stamps as "national calling cards".

"Stamps represent a country's culture, achievements and beauty," Jiang said. "They are much more than just a means of payment; they are windows into a country's identity."

Jiang's approach to designing

stamps is meticulous, with an emphasis on artistic excellence.

"Once a stamp is issued, it can never be retracted. We must ensure that every design is flawless, as it represents not only the nation but also the cultural heritage of the people," he said.

His dedication to cultural representation is evident in the way Chinese stamps often feature landmarks, historical figures and traditional customs — helping to tell the story of China's past and present.

Li Hao, a young stamp designer and engraver, feels fortunate to have found a profession he loves — engraving the steel plates used to make stamps. "There's a sense of fulfillment in turning a simple design into something tangible that will be part of history," Li said.

"It took me about 10 years to truly adapt to the profession," he added.

"After graduating from university, I joined the stamp factory, and when I was tasked with designing a stamp of the Mogao Caves (a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Dunhuang, Gansu province), I felt a deep connection with the Buddha sculptures. It was as if the art came alive as I engraved it, and I applied everything my teacher had taught me."

Yang Zhiying, a senior stamp designer and engraver, spoke of the delicate process involved in stamp engraving.

"A stamp is just 3 cm by 4 cm, but it takes two months for a skillful engraver to complete," Yang said.

"Every stroke must be perfect, and there's no room for error. If I make even a slight mistake, the entire plate is ruined, and we must start again with a new one."

Yang views stamp engraving as an essential cultural art that needs preservation. "We're training the next generation to keep this craft alive because it's not just about creating stamps — it's about preserving a meaningful cultural tradition," she said.

One of the most compelling aspects of philately is its ability to capture and preserve moments in time. Designers like Pan Hu, who has worked on several commemorative stamps, see stamp creation as a form of historical documentation.

"Stamps are like time capsules — they record moments in history. Every stamp is a piece of history," Pan said.

### Connecting generations

Many stamp collectors, like Zheng Wei, a lifelong enthusiast with over 40 years of experience, see the hobby as a way to engage with history in a personal and meaningful way.

"When my brother gave me my first stamp album as a child, I didn't know how much it would shape my life," the 51-year-old recalled. "Now, I'm sharing this passion with my son, who's already started his own collection."

Zheng's experience reflects a broader trend in the philatelic community: many collectors pass their passion down to their children and grandchildren, ensuring the tradition of stamp collecting endures. "Philately brings joy and learning to every age," Zheng said.

"For me, it's not just about collecting; it's about connecting with the past, preserving memories and creating bonds with others."

Zheng Zheng and Wu Wanzhen contributed to this story.

## Young people finding fondness for philately

By LUO WANGSHU

In an era dominated by instant messaging and the ceaseless scroll of social media, it's easy to overlook the old-fashioned joys of letter writing and stamp collecting.

Yet, a surprising trend is emerging among the younger generation: a deep and enduring passion for philately and the exchange of postcards. Two young philatelists, Xu Chenhao and Ni Yichen, are part of the community that is rediscovering the joy of collecting stamps and sending postcards, seamlessly blending nostalgia with modern-day social connections and creative expression.

For Xu, a college student born in 2002, his journey into philately began unexpectedly during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021.

"The pandemic prompted the release of a special set of stamps, commemorating such a unique period in history. They were beautifully designed, and I found them deeply meaningful," he recalled.

"At a time when everyone was struggling, these stamps resonated

with people — it felt like a small but significant way to capture the moment," he said.

Initially, Xu's connection to stamp collecting was more casual. He was drawn to using stamps on postcards during his travels as a way to document his experiences.

"I'd send postcards to myself from different places, and sometimes I'd mail them to my friends just to stay connected," he said. "It was a simple way to share a piece of where I was and keep in touch."

As Xu became more involved in the philatelic community, however, his interest deepened. He began to appreciate the artistic and thematic aspects of stamps and postcards.

For Xu, the appeal of philately lies not just in the collecting but in the social side of the hobby, and its accessibility.

"You can send a postcard for just a few yuan, and there's a sense of camaraderie that comes with connecting to others who share the same passion," he said.

Exchanging postcards, designing new ones and brainstorming creative

ideas with friends have become a regular part of his life. These in-person gatherings, where enthusiasts come together to share and collaborate, have fostered a sense of connection that transcends the digital world.

While older collectors often focus on preserving every stamp in meticulous albums, Xu explained that his generation is more inclined to embrace the creative and social aspects of philately. For them, stamps aren't just for collecting — they're tools for personal expression, especially through the postcards they share.

### Window to wonders

For Ni, a high school student born in 2009, philately began with a chance encounter at the airport in 2021, the year that marked the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China. As he started his summer vacation, Ni came across an advertisement in a newspaper about commemorative stamps issued for the anniversary. Intrigued, he visited a local post office and purchased the beautifully designed stamps, and quickly found himself drawn deeper

into the world of philately.

His passion for stamp collecting was further sparked during a trip that summer to Dunhuang, a city in Northwest China's Gansu province.

"When I visited Dunhuang, I saw stamps and postmarks tied to the local history," Ni recalled. "It wasn't just about collecting anymore; it became about connecting to the stories behind those stamps and understanding their cultural significance."

After the trip, Ni's collection grew rapidly, filling several boxes with stamps from across China. "I probably have two or three boxes now, and it's hard to keep track of all of them," he said.

His favorite themes include history and culture — especially stamps that commemorate landmarks in Pudong district in Shanghai, where he was born and raised. "Each stamp tells a unique story. I love finding stamps that reflect both the history of my hometown and the larger history of China."

### Embracing the digital world

In an age when smartphones and

social media reign supreme, both Xu and Ni have found ways to merge their love for stamps with the digital tools of today. "There are apps that allow you to scan stamps, learn about their history, and see the stories behind their designs," Xu explained.

"It's amazing how technology has made the hobby so much more accessible."

Both young collectors are also active on social media platforms where they showcase their collections and interact with fellow enthusiasts.

"It's a great way to meet people who share the same passion," Xu said. "We share not just our collections, but ideas and experiences."

For both Xu and Ni, postcards have become a new form of personal connection. Xu, for example, loves sending postcards from his travels to friends — especially from remote or culturally significant places. One of his most meaningful experiences was sending a postcard from Guizhou province, with the same stamp and postmark that a friend had once sent him. "It felt like a connection across time," Xu said.

### Keeping the passion alive

Both Xu and Ni are optimistic about the future of philately. They know it may never again be as widespread as it once was, but they believe it still holds a unique charm for those seeking a deeper, more personal connection in an increasingly digital world.

"I think today's young people are looking for ways to tell stories," Xu said.

"Stamps and postcards are a way to express ourselves in a personal, creative way. The key is using stamps not just as collectibles, but as a way of telling a story — whether through a postcard we send or the designs we admire."

For Ni, the thrill lies in learning about China's history, art and culture through the stamps he collects. "It's like a window into different places and times," he said.

These young collectors hope to inspire others to discover the joys of philately — not just as a hobby, but as a way of forming deeper connections in a world that often feels increasingly disconnected. For Xu and Ni, it's about finding joy in small, meaningful moments — whether through a stamp, a postcard or a new friendship.

## CHINA

# Agroforest vital for rare small apes

Skywalker gibbons display unexpected adaptability to environmental changes

By CHEN LIANG  
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In the lush tropical and mountain forests of Southeast Asia reside various species of gibbons — small apes highly sensitive to environmental changes.

Serving as indicator species for forest conservation in many countries, all gibbon species face threats of habitat loss and degradation, with most now classified as endangered or critically endangered.

Similar to other gibbon species, the Skywalker hoolock gibbon (*Hoolock tianxing*) is a quintessential arboreal forest dweller, relying primarily on ripe fruit for sustenance.

Notably, the Skywalker hoolock gibbon is the first ape species named by Chinese scientists.

A 2017 survey estimated that fewer than 200 Skywalker hoolock gibbons inhabit China, primarily in the Gaoligongshan National Nature Reserve in Baoshan, Yunnan province, and parts of Yingjiang and Tengchong counties in the province.

Because the Lisu people harbor a traditional culture of protecting the gibbons, nearly half of China's Skywalker gibbon population inhabit collective forests near Lisu villages in Yingjiang and Tengchong.

The collective forests, about 45 kilometers from the Gaoligongshan nature reserve where the Skywalker hoolock gibbon's southern population lives, serve as habitats for the species and vital income sources for local villagers.

Cultivating Chinese black cardamom (*Amomum tsaoko*), also known as *caoguo*, a shade-loving plant, in these forests has become a significant economic activity for the communities.

In Southeast Asia, Chinese black cardamom cultivation stands as a time-honored and widely embraced agroforestry practice. By 2018, global cardamom cultivation covered nearly 300,000 hectares, with China

accounting for 78 percent, primarily in Yunnan.

To optimize the yield of cardamom, professor Fan Pengfei from the Life Science College of Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, explained that "farmers choose to fell trees and clear portions of the undergrowth in forests."

This practice aims to augment sunlight exposure while maintaining the necessary shade levels conducive to the robust growth of cardamom.

"According to some research, forests hosting *caoguo* cultivation could experience a reduction in canopy coverage ranging from 25 percent to 50 percent," Fan, who named the Skywalker hoolock gibbon, told China Daily. "The overall canopy structure of the forest ecosystem would be changed."

Despite being a relatively less damaging agricultural practice to forest structure, cardamom cultivation may reduce the density of food trees for Skywalker hoolock gibbons and impede their efficient foraging due to the discontinuity in the forest canopy.

In response to this scenario, Fan and his team conducted long-term field observations and comparative studies on the gibbons living in the Gaoligongshan nature reserve's forests where cardamom is grown.

They published their findings in the article "Cardamom (*Amomum tsaoko*) agroforest is important habitat for skywalker hoolock gibbon (*Hoolock tianxing*) in Mt Gaoligong, Yunnan, China", in *Global Ecology and Conservation*, an open access international scientific journal, in October.

## Surprising findings

What they found deepened the understanding of these endangered small apes. "Their adaptability to environmental changes is better than we expected," Fan said.

Their research compared the dai-



Students from Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, observe Skywalker hoolock gibbons in a collective forest with Chinese black cardamom in Baoshan, Yunnan province, on Jan 5.  
FAN PENGFEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

ly behaviors of the gibbons in the black cardamom forests and the nature reserve, focusing on their eating habits in different seasons, time allocation, home range, daily travel distances each month, reproductive patterns and group sizes.

"By analyzing data derived from these parameters, we could understand the gibbons' adaptation to the cardamom forests, evaluate the long-term suitability of these habitats for gibbons and offer tailored conservation strategies," Fan said.

The study revealed differences in food choices between the two populations of Skywalker hoolock gibbons. While the gibbons in the nature reserve primarily consume

fruit, those in forests with black cardamom had to adjust their diet by consuming more leaves, and occasionally nuts during October and November.

"This shift isn't driven by a preference for certain food," Fan explained.

"Rather, it's because they had to broaden their menu to deal with the scarcity of fruit."

Interestingly, he said, the gibbons in the cardamom forests exhibited more active behavior, spending an average of 9.2 hours per day moving within the forests, 0.6 hours more than their counterparts in the nature reserve.

"The gibbons in the *caoguo* for-

ests allocate an additional 0.7 hours to foraging compared to those in the reserve," he said. "After all, compared to such 'energy bombs' as fruit, leaves are just 'low-calorie food'. It naturally takes them more time to eat their fill."

However, despite the challenges of limited resources, both populations maintained similar daily routines — spending most of the time resting after moving and foraging.

"Noteworthy, the gibbons in both habitats spent similar amounts of time in social intercourse — grooming and playing with each other," the zoologist said.

Another finding is that despite some habitat disturbance, the gib-

bons in the black cardamom forests did not expand their home ranges or increase their daily travel in most months compared to those in the nature reserve.

More interestingly, in times of fruit scarcity from June to August, they reduced travel distances and focused on leaf consumption to conserve energy, he said.

In the black cardamom forests, the female gibbons in a study group gave birth in 2008 and 2012 but did not reproduce afterward, possibly due to aging. And the other two groups in the cardamom forests had average reproductive intervals of 6 years and 3 years.

Another group in the reserve had average reproductive intervals of 3 years.

"Between 2017 and 2023, we conducted field surveys on 17 Skywalker gibbon groups, nine of them living in the cardamom forests while the remaining eight inhabited the primary forests," Fan said. "There were no obvious differences in group sizes between the two populations."

Overall, the study indicated that the cardamom forests could support gibbon reproduction and maintain group sizes, with no significant differences compared to those living in the reserve's primary forests.

## Tailored conservation

The impact of black cardamom cultivation on Skywalker hoolock gibbons is multifaceted, Fan said. While it alters forest structure and potentially affects the gibbons' activities and dispersion, it also serves as a protective measure against more destructive land-use practices such as slash-and-burn agriculture or logging.

"We long for improved habitats for the gibbons, while also wishing for the local people to have sustainable livelihoods," Fan said.

"So I think we should treat the *caoguo* forests with a more optimistic mindset. They are not perfect, but they still provide the opportunity for a harmonious coexistence between the gibbons and humans."

As a result, the researcher suggests that compared to felled forests for farming lands, agroforestry practices in secondary forests should be encouraged to minimize impacts on forest structure and protect the integrity of collective forests, providing a sustainable habitat for the gibbons and other forest animals.

"In the collective forests, we suggest preserving or planting tree species preferred by the gibbons to support their foraging habits," he said.

Additionally, he suggested raising conservation awareness among local residents through environmental education, making them active participants in ecological preservation.



From left: Chinese black cardamom grows rampant in a patch of collective forest in Baoshan. FAN PENGFEI / FOR CHINA DAILY Two Skywalker hoolock gibbons rest on the canopy of a collective forest in Baoshan. ZHU CHANGYUE / FOR CHINA DAILY Professor Fan Pengfei (second from left) poses with his students during a field survey in Baoshan last week. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



SHIJIAZHUANG — Visitors to the Jinshanling section of the Great Wall of China can hardly ignore the stunning pictures of the UNESCO Heritage Site exhibited along the trail toward the exit. Many of the photos are credited to Duan Jijun.

Through Duan's lens, visitors can enjoy magnificent views of the Great Wall against backdrops including spring blossoms, drifting clouds, winter snow, starry skies and even double rainbows.

His work gives the impression of a professional photographer who has made frequent visits to the area. But in fact, Duan, 56, is a local from Hualougou village at the foot of Jinshanling Great Wall who put aside his plow and picked up a camera over 20 years ago.

Located about 150 kilometers north of Beijing in Hebei province, Jinshanling is one of the most well-preserved sections of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) structure and an ideal spot for photography lovers due to its perfect integration with the landscape.

In the late 1980s, when tourism

## Local photographer preserves beauty of Great Wall

began to grow in the local area, Duan saw an opportunity to make some additional income for his family by opening a rural guesthouse.

In 2003, a photographer named Wang Jianwu stayed in Duan's guesthouse for more than a year. Duan was so captivated by Wang's work that he hung the pictures on the walls of the building.

"With these photos and the stories behind them, it wasn't just an ordinary farmhouse anymore — it became a place with cultural elements," Duan said.

Before leaving, Wang told Duan: "Keep shooting. The photos on the walls will be your own in a few years." Encouraged by these words, Duan started with a borrowed camera and soon began to delve into the art of photography.

With camera in hand, Duan's fascination grew into a passion. Despite doubts from some villagers, he invested in better equipment and

spent countless hours learning photography techniques.

With his photography improving, Duan began to garner attention. His photos of the Great Wall, often showcasing its awe-inspiring beauty, started to win awards and drew more tourists to the area, helping Duan's family business to thrive.

But photography offered Duan more than just economic gains. Soon other photography enthusiasts sought him out for guidance, impressed by his deep knowledge of the area.

"One day, when a photographer called out 'Teacher Duan, I didn't think he was referring to me, and I looked around at the others,'" said Duan, who is now a member of the China Photographers Association and China Great Wall Society.

"It gives me a feeling of joy and accomplishment, too," he said with a gentle smile.

Duan's success has inspired others in Hualougou village. Among them is Zhou Baoquan, who used to be a truck driver and had other jobs away from his hometown. Following in Duan's footsteps, he returned home to run a farmhouse and later also became a Great Wall photographer.

Since he bought his first camera in 2011, Zhou has come to the Great Wall whenever he has found time.

"The Great Wall was our playground during childhood," Zhou said. "More than 10 years after I returned home, it still gives me comfort and strength."

"You can read history from it," Zhou added.

"After all these years, you still find many details, including inscriptions and decorations on the walls. So the ancient soldiers didn't just build it for defense; they also had their ways of expressing their feelings and desire for better lives."

What started as a small group has grown into a community of farmer-photographers who have turned the village into a veritable "photography village", with its photographer association boasting over 50 members.

Once mostly reliant on farming, the villagers have now turned their homes into guesthouses, providing accommodations for the many photographers and tourists visiting from around China and the world.

In 2014, the village formed a rural tourism cooperative, which has broken down barriers between individual business owners and allowed them to promote Hualougou as a collective.

Hualougou is now home to more than 100 guesthouses, which together host over 100,000 visitors annually. Some of the popular ones can generate over 1 million yuan (\$139,000) in annual revenue.

This influx of tourism has created jobs for more than 700 local residents, helping to lift the rural community out of poverty and into a new phase of pursuing revitalization. Such an undertaking is also ongoing in many other rural areas since China declared the eradication of extreme poverty in 2021.

The village has proposed that its revitalization should be on the premise of preserving the Great Wall's culture, Zhou said.

For these farmers, photography has become an act of preservation. They view their images not only as a source of income but also as a way to protect the Great Wall's legacy.

"When tourists visit, they ask many questions about the Great Wall, so I learn about the Great Wall from books and pass that knowledge on to others," Duan said.

"I don't see us just as photographers. We are guardians and ambassadors of the Great Wall's culture," he said.

XINHUA

# GLOBAL LENS

## MARINE MAGIC

Flourishing underwater garden of Colombo Port City reflects China's green footprint in Sri Lanka

Tourists at a beach of Colombo Port City in Sri Lanka on Nov 28. WU YUE / XINHUA



**T**he 3.7-kilometer breakwater of Sri Lanka's Colombo Port City, stretching out like an arm to embrace the coastal area from high above, also resembles a flourishing garden teeming with corals and fish when viewed from underwater.

Piyal de Silva, a 60-year-old former commander of the Sri Lankan Navy, runs a diving school called "Coral Wall" inside the port city. A diving enthusiast from young, Piyal first discovered the thriving marine ecosystem in 2019.

Back then, as a major project under the Belt and Road Initiative, the Colombo Port City just completed its land reclamation. Diving nearby one day, Piyal discovered that coral was spreading and growing on the blocks of the breakwater.

He said Sri Lanka's coral reefs had been significantly affected by ecological degradation, making it rare for him to encounter such a large coral reef in the area in recent years.

"I felt surprised and excited to discover the coral, and I was sure a large and beautiful coral reef would grow here in a few years," he said.

After Piyal told the port city about his discovery and coral nursery plan, the authorities gave immediate support by providing all the needed materials. They also invited experts from the Chinese Academy of Sciences to conduct underwater surveys and guide coral cultivation.

In June 2023, experts from the South China Sea Institute of Oceanology, Chinese Academy of Sciences, and international academic institutions such as Sri Lanka's University of Ruhuna, conducted a joint workshop and field survey of the coral reefs.

The results showed that the breakwater area contained 73 coral species, with an average coverage of 24.36 percent and a maximum coverage of 60 percent in some areas. A total of 114 fish species, including endangered ones like the humphead wrasse, were also found in the area.

Corals have specific ecological requirements and the project under the China-proposed BRI has created favorable conditions for their growth in Sri Lanka, according to experts.

They believe that the breakwater's unique design, improved through Chinese technology, provides an ideal surface for coral attachment. Its stepped structure creates varying water depths, allowing corals to thrive under suitable conditions of depth and light.

After multiple studies using digital and physical models, the design of the port city can achieve a complete renewal of the internal and external water areas every 10 days. The flow of water can draw in nutrients and oxygen, preventing the long-term accumulation of pollutants at high concentrations.

Since 2024, Colombo Port City has collaborated with Chinese and Sri Lankan research institutions to further enhance the underwater garden, including adding 68 coral nursery groups, cultivating over 5,000 coral plants, and organizing open days and marine conservation volunteer activities to continuously enhance the research and conservation efforts for coral ecosystems in Sri Lanka.

It has been a decade since construction began on Colombo Port City, which is now evolving into a vibrant new town. The development spans an area about the size of 377 standard soccer fields reclaimed from the sea, featuring landmarks such as the marina, pedestrian pathways, and the marina footbridge, which have all become popular entertainment destinations for the people of Colombo.

Local children often spot Piyal, who feeds fish every morning and gathers the young residents in front of his "Coral Wall" to share stories about the underwater garden.

Zhao Lei, general manager of the project management department in the CHEC Port City Colombo (Private) Limited, said that the port city's design phase established the overall goals of environmental protection, energy conservation, material savings and emission reduction. Through third-party professional institutions' full-process environmental assessment, it has recorded "zero pollution and zero accidents".

"The port city will continue to actively assume ecological responsibility for underwater afforestation and build a smart, livable, and environmentally friendly city of the future," Zhao said.

"I have always been a practitioner of building a maritime community with a shared future. Thanks to the Chinese standards, technologies and solutions adopted by the port city project, outstanding contributions have been made to the protection of Sri Lanka's marine biodiversity and ecological environment," Piyal said.



From left: Corals and fishes under sea in the breakwater area of Sri Lanka's Colombo Port City in November. PHOTOS BY COLOMBO PORT CITY VIA XINHUA



An aerial view of Colombo Port City in Sri Lanka, on Oct 26. COLOMBO PORT CITY VIA XINHUA



From left: Tourists at a beach of Colombo Port City in Sri Lanka on Nov 28. Workers carry out greening work at Colombo Port City in Sri Lanka on Nov 28. PHOTOS BY CHEN DONGSHU / XINHUA A food court in the Colombo Port City, Sri Lanka, on March 27, 2024. XU QIN / XINHUA

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## BUSINESS

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# Tepid prices spur call for demand uptick

CPI growth last month falls on increased supply, high comparison base

By OUYANG SHIJIA  
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China's consumer inflation slowed further in December, reflecting persistently lackluster demand and reinforcing calls by economists for stepped-up countercyclical adjustments to boost domestic demand and stimulate consumption.

Economists anticipate China's consumer prices to rise modestly in 2025, driven by targeted measures aimed at spurring consumption and a package of incremental policies taking effect gradually. Meanwhile, they still expect the largest single-year rate cut since 2015 this year, which will help consolidate the ongoing recovery in demand.

Data from the National Bureau of Statistics showed on Thursday that the country's consumer price index, a main gauge of inflation, rose by 0.1 percent year-on-year in December after a 0.2 percent rise in November.

Wang Qing, chief macroeconomic analyst at Golden Credit Rating International, attributed the slower CPI growth to factors including increased supply, falling food prices as well as a high comparison base in the previous year.

"Fueled by government policies such as the trade-in deals for consumer goods, prices of nonfood items remained stable, with their year-on-year growth rate showing a slight increase compared to the previous month," he added.

NBS data showed nonfood prices posted a 0.2 percent rise compared with a year earlier in December, contributing to a 0.14 percentage point increase in annual CPI growth.

Meanwhile, China's producer price index, which gauges factory-gate prices, dropped by 2.3 percent from a year earlier in December, narrowing from a 2.5 percent fall in November.

"December marked the 27th consecutive month with the PPI in negative territory," Wang added. "This is mainly due to the ongoing correction in the domestic real estate market, a sharp decline in property investment. Meanwhile, weak final consumption continued to pressure industrial product prices and limited upward momentum in consumer goods prices."

Looking ahead, Wang said he expects the year-on-year PPI decline to narrow to around 2.1 percent in January due to a low comparison base in the previous year and the stepped-up macroeco-

nomics policy support.

He said the CPI will likely rise by around 1 percent in January fueled by a notable surge in consumer demand for goods and services, as the Spring Festival holiday starts in January this year compared to February last year.

NBS data showed that core CPI, which excludes volatile food and energy prices and is deemed a better gauge of the supply-demand relationship in the economy, was 0.4 percent higher year-on-year in December, following a 0.3 percent increase in November.

"This marked the third consecutive month with the index in positive territory," said Wen Bin, chief economist at China Minsheng Bank. "A package of incremental policies has helped boost overall demand, contributing to the continued improvement in core CPI."

However, looking at the price trends in the fourth quarter, Wen noted that the GDP deflator is expected to remain in negative territory for a seventh consecutive quarter, indicating that price pressures remain significant.

The GDP deflator is the ratio of nominal GDP to real GDP, to gauge the change of prices of all goods and services produced in the country.

As the broader economy is still facing pressures from still-weak domestic demand and relatively low consumer confidence, Wen called for intensified efforts to strengthen countercyclical adjustments of macroeconomic policies.

"Promoting reasonable price recovery has become an important consideration for the central bank's monetary policy, which will remain accommodative," Wen said. "Together with proactive fiscal policies and other supportive policies, that will help boost consumer spending, expand domestic demand, stabilize market expectations and enhance the economy's endogenous driving forces."

Looking ahead to 2025, he said the year-on-year CPI growth is expected to accelerate with targeted policy measures aimed at boosting domestic demand and spurring consumption.

"More significant rate cuts are now clearly on the table," said Louise Loo, lead economist at British think tank Oxford Economics. "We expect a cumulative 40 basis point cut in the main policy rate and 150 basis points in the reserve requirement ratio in 2025."



Shoppers seen at a supermarket in Zaozhuang, Shandong province. SUN ZHONGZHE / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Briefly

### Yuan strengthens against greenback

The central parity rate of the Chinese currency renminbi, or the yuan, strengthened 1 pip to 7.1886 against the US dollar on Thursday, 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.

### New indexes on STAR Market in pipeline

The Shanghai Stock Exchange and China Securities Index Co Ltd have said they will launch new indexes on China's Nasdaq-style Science and Technology Innovation Board, known as the STAR Market, on Jan 20 to meet growing investor demand for richer tools representing market performance.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

## POLICY



Employees work on an NEV assembly line in Chongqing. SUN KAIFANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

# Chengdu-Chongqing economic circle barreling ahead with sector upgrades

By CHINA DAILY

Construction of the Chengdu-Chongqing economic circle has made achievements over the past five years, and the circle will continue to strengthen cross-regional collaboration in various areas down the road, officials said at a news conference on Thursday in Beijing.

The economic circle is committed to creating a modern industrial system with efficient division of labor, orderly competition and regional integration, and has provided industrial support and platform construction to promote the deep integration of the upstream and downstream segments of the industrial chain, said Li Wengqing, vice-governor of Sichuan province.

"Looking ahead, we will further develop leading industries, build a modern industrial system and cultivate future industries such as artificial intelligence, low-altitude economy and commercial aerospace to provide strong support for improving the development quality," said Li.

By the end of 2024, the regional GDP of the Chengdu-Chongqing economic circle is expected to grow to 8.6 trillion yuan (\$1.2 trillion), accounting for more than 6.5 percent of the country's GDP, while

five years ago, the regional GDP was less than 6.3 trillion yuan, said the National Development and Reform Commission.

Chengdu, capital of Sichuan — alongside the municipality of Chongqing — have built four major industrial clusters focused on electronic information, equipment manufacturing, advanced materials, and products with local characteristics. The output value of the electronic information industry accounts for more than 10 percent of the national level, services catering to production, as well as modern agriculture have developed at an accelerated pace, said Chen Yajun, deputy secretary-general of the NDRC.

Sichuan and Chongqing will jointly promote regional market integration, actively explore institutional mechanisms for urban-rural integration, vigorously build the digital Chengdu-Chongqing economic circle, and continue to promote the integration of public services, said Chen Xinwu, vice-mayor of Chongqing.

"We will accelerate the construction of Chengdu-Chongqing connectivity infrastructure projects, promote cross-regional industry cooperation and the sharing of innovation resources, and jointly improve the level of public services connectivity, focusing on the areas

of transport, industry, technology, finance and public services," said Cao Junjie, vice-mayor of Chengdu.

Chongqing and Chengdu will speed up the transformation of development modes, cultivate modern metropolitan areas, promote urbanization, improve coordinated development of large and medium-sized cities and increase support for less-developed surrounding areas, thus constantly improving regional coordinated development, the NDRC's Chen said.

The policy will support technological innovation and the application of the technological achievements in Sichuan province and Chongqing, striving to build a modern industrial system, promote the training of talent and increase innovation vitality, he said.

The construction of the Chengdu-Chongqing comprehensive science center has been fully launched. A number of national key laboratories have been restructured and the technology resource sharing platform has been launched, with 12 high-tech zones having established strategic alliances for collaborative innovation, he added.

Tan Guoling contributed to this story.

# Region boosts auto industry cluster

By TAN YINGZI and DENG RUI in Chongqing

Sichuan province and Chongqing municipality, as pivotal parts of a national strategy aimed at developing the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle, have boosted their automotive industry to unprecedented levels, leading to the establishment of a 1 trillion-yuan (\$139 billion) vehicle industry cluster.

In 2021, China issued a master plan to build the Chengdu-Chongqing region into an economic center with national impact, a key hub for scientific and technological innovation, a new area for reform and opening-up and a place with high-quality living standards.

It is expected to make China's growth more balanced while coping with downward economic pressure and help China's southwestern region tap into potential talent, improve the business environment and grow new business models, according to experts and officials.

In 2023, the economic scale of the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle reached 8.19 trillion yuan, contributing 6.5 percent to the national economy with only 2 percent of the country's land area. The area has established three national advanced manufacturing clusters and four national strategic emerging industry clusters.

Chongqing, an industrial power-

house in China, is catching up with Guangdong province in terms of auto production as it was runner-up in 2023, and it aims to build a trillion-yuan level world-class intelligent new energy vehicle industry cluster.

It has now partnered with the neighboring province to foster a bigger auto industry.

In 2021, Sichuan and Chongqing jointly unveiled an implementation plan for fostering high-quality collaborative growth within the automotive industry and building a trillion-yuan automotive sector.

In recent years, Sichuan and Chongqing have capitalized on the automotive industry's shift toward intelligent connected NEVs, boosting brand visibility and advancing into higher market segments. Currently, the two regions have cultivated mid-to-high-end brands like Avatr, Aito and Zeekr, according to the Chongqing Municipal Commission of Economy and Information Technology.

Avatr is a joint venture between Chang'an Auto, lithium-ion battery provider CATL and Huawei.

"Our vehicles are not just made in Chongqing but also made in Sichuan and Chongqing. We collaborate with about 260 suppliers for our company's passenger vehicles in these regions," said Zhang Fatao, vice-president of Chang'an Auto, during a recent interview.

"The reason that the Aito M9 is hailed as the representative of domestic luxury cars is because it not only meets or exceeds the levels of traditional luxury in aspects like space and interiors, but also leads its competitors in terms of intelligence and electrification," said Zhang Xinghai, chairman of Seres, at the Seres Auto Super Factory in Chongqing Liangjiang New Area.

Aito M9, made by Seres, is a six-seater SUV that features a futuristic smart cockpit running on Harmony OS, Huawei's operating system.

The high-end cars have enhanced the brand value of Sichuan and Chongqing's auto industry and also boosted its production and sales. From 2021 to 2024, the cumulative automobile production in these two places reached 12.57 million units, with an average annual growth rate of 7.23 percent, of which the cumulative production of NEVs reached 2.378 million units, with an average annual growth rate of 70.47 percent.

At present, Sichuan and Chongqing have a total of more than 600 NEV parts companies, and about 300 automobile-related software companies covering all the major areas in NEVs, according to the Chongqing Municipal Commission of Economy and Information Technology.

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# More trade-ins support expected

By LIU YUKUN  
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China is set to further elevate policies to promote large-scale equipment upgrades and consumer goods trade-ins in 2025, stimulating the development of industries such as automobiles, ships, machinery and recycling, in a bid to not only offset external uncertainties stemming from geopolitical and trade frictions, but also to continue bolstering domestic demand, experts said on Thursday.

For the trade-ins of consumer goods, the government has preliminarily allocated 81 billion yuan (\$11.05 billion) for the first batch of funding in 2025, supporting regions in ensuring the seamless implementation of relevant policies continued from last year, said the Ministry of Finance on Wednesday.

On the same day, the ministry and the National Development and Reform Commission, the country's top economic regulator, jointly issued a notice, expanding the focus areas for equipment upgrades, broadening the scope of support for the replacement of scrapping automobiles, extending the range of consumer goods eligible for trade-ins, and introducing subsidies for the purchase of digital products like smartphones.

Zhao Chenxin, deputy head of the NDRC, said the total amount of ultra-long term treasury bonds allocated to support large-scale equipment upgrades and consumer goods trade-ins in 2025 will be significantly higher than last year, with the specific figures set to be disclosed to the public during this year's two sessions, the annual meetings of China's top legislative and political advisory bodies.

Last year, China issued 1 trillion yuan in ultra-long term treasury bonds, with 300 billion yuan allocated to support large-scale equipment upgrades and consumer goods trade-ins, splitting evenly between the two.

Yu Xiang, CITIC Securities' chief policy research analyst, anticipates that the funding to support large-scale equipment upgrades and consumer goods trade-ins through ultra-long term treasury bonds this year is likely to expand further on last year's basis, leading to an expanded range of subsidy categories for trade-ins. It is expected that the support from ultra-long term treasury bonds for boosting consumption will potentially reach 200-300 billion yuan.

According to China Metallurgical Industry Planning and Research Institute, driving large-scale equipment upgrades and consumer goods trade-ins will further stimulate growth in the machinery, automotive and shipbuilding industries, with the sales volume of new energy vehicles possibly reaching around 15 million units this year. The growth in these industries is expected to further boost demand for upstream materials like steel.

"Government's stepped-up efforts to support large-scale equipment upgrades and consumer goods trade-ins will incentivize more companies to renew their new energy buses and batteries, boosting the volume of recycled batteries. The policy also encourages new energy vehicle manufacturers and battery recycling enterprises to establish standardized recycling service networks, which will help enhance the efficiency and safety of battery recycling," said Charlie Zheng, chief economist at Samoyed Cloud Technology Group Holdings.

Zheng further emphasized that this policy will pioneer pilot projects for the circulation of second-hand goods, advancing the development of online second-hand businesses.

# WORLD

By YANG GAO in Toronto  
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While potential US tariffs on Canada and Mexico have received much attention, experts warn that the South American nations of Brazil and Argentina also could be affected.

"The US, Brazil's second-largest trading partner after China, plays a crucial role in Brazil's export market, particularly in medium- and high-tech goods," Jose Luis Oreiro, an associate professor of the Department of Economics of the University of Brasilia, told China Daily.

"These tariffs, if they are really implemented, will be a mortal blow to the recent surge of manufacturing industry in Brazil after almost 15 years of stagnation (in) manufacturing output," Oreiro said.

According to Oreiro, the manufacturing output has been crucial to the economic boom in Brazil.

However, he mentioned that increasing tariffs will hinder that, leading to higher unemployment and income inequality.

"Manufacturing jobs offer higher wages, which is critical for reducing inequality," Oreiro said. "If these jobs vanish, workers will be pushed into lower-paying service sector roles."

"In 2022, 62.4 percent of entrepreneurial R&D investments in Brazil were tied to manufacturing. Without robust exports, these investments will shrink, dragging down the technological competitiveness of the sector," he said.

Oreiro also pointed to risks in Brazil's monetary policy. A decline in exports could lead to currency depreciation, triggering inflation and forcing the central bank to raise interest rates, potentially to as high as 20 percent annually.

"This would increase government deficits and hurt long-term investment," he said.

Despite the challenges, Oreiro sees opportunities for Brazil to strengthen trade ties with other partners, such as the European Union and Asian countries. He cited the recent Mercosur-EU free trade agreement finalized on Dec 6 as a promising step forward.

## 'Simplistic view'

Referring to US President-elect Donald Trump's remarks defending tariffs, Welber Barral, former foreign trade secretary in Brazil's Ministry of Development, Industry, Trade and Service, told China Daily, "This is a simplistic view of international trade."

Trump has argued that tariffs would make the US "rich" while accusing countries like Brazil of unfair trade practices.

"For one, Brazil doesn't even set national tariffs; we follow the Mercosur's common (external) tariff," said Barral, who has served as an arbitrator at the Permanent Review Tribunal of Mercosur and in the dispute settlement system of the World Trade Organization.

"While average tariffs may seem high, most US imports, such as electronics and equipment, face much lower rates," he said.

"On the other hand, the US imposes high tariffs on our competitive products like orange juice, steel and aluminum," he added.

"Unilateral tariffs have historically had negative consequences, prompting retaliation and global economic downturns," Barral said.

He said the impact of potential US tariffs on Brazil might be sector-specific. While crude oil, Brazil's top export to the United States, is unlikely to face new tariffs, industries like metals could bear the brunt.

"Steel, aluminum, and copper are critical to the US industry but remain vulnerable to tariff hikes," he noted.

Barral criticized what he called the US' protectionist policies, arguing their unpredictability harms not just global trade but also US interests.

"Unexpected and unpredictable economic measures deter international investments. The Trump administration's threats could complicate bilateral investments and reduce US investment in Brazil," he said.

He also expressed doubts over the feasibility of a broader bilateral trade agreement between Brazil and the US.

"I don't foresee any large trade agreement due to the US protectionism in the agricultural sector," Barral said, highlighting a long-standing obstacle in the relationship.

"Since 2008, the US has not been Brazil's most significant trading partner; that title belongs to China, followed by the European Union. The EU-Mercosur trade agreement



Containers are lifted to the COSCO Shipping Argentina vessel at the Tianjin Port on May 6, marking the launch of a new direct route from China to ports in South America. TONG YU / CHINA NEWS SERVICE



A volunteer serves food to a group of people at a Christmas solidarity dinner for the homeless in Buenos Aires on Dec 24, as poverty reaches more than half of the Argentine population. TOMAS CUESTA / AFP

## Nations in eye of US tariff storm

Economies could face 'mortal blow' if Washington carries out threat, experts say



Tractor trailers enter the United States from Canada at the Pacific Highway border crossing in Blaine, Washington, on Dec 18. DAVID RYDER VIA GETTY IMAGES

could further boost Brazilian exports to Europe," he said.

Barral also mentioned the ongoing Mercosur negotiations with European Free Trade Association countries, Canada, and the United Arab Emirates as evidence of diversification.

"Brazil must focus on reducing trade barriers, improving logistics and facilitating financing for smaller exporters," Barral noted. Such measures, he said, require long-term political coordination in Brazil's complex and diverse economic landscape.

"Latin America is a peaceful region with a young, growing population and expanding consumer markets. It has plentiful natural resources and a stable political climate compared to other parts of the world," he said.

Those characteristics provide the region with a unique opportunity to strengthen the region's global trade presence, he said.

Argentina, South America's second-largest economy, has its own set of challenges under the shadow of US tariff policy. The country's fragile economic recovery, led by President Javier Milei's reforms, from years of stagnation and hyperinflation leaves it particularly vulnerable to external shocks.

"If tariffs like 10 percent on most countries, including Argentina, or even 25 percent on Canada and Mexico, are implemented, the global economy will face slower growth and higher prices," Luciano Campos, a professor at the University of Buenos Aires and a senior economist for Numera Analytics' Macro Research practice, told China Daily.

"High taxes, rigid labor markets and outdated price controls have further weakened its competitiveness," Campos said. "The stabilization plan has lowered inflation significantly and brought some economic growth," Campos said, but added that Argentina's economy remains vulnerable.

"Tariffs would hurt Argentina,



Free trade lowers costs by allowing countries to specialize. Disrupting that creates inefficiencies, driving up prices for everyone."

Luciano Campos, a professor at the University of Buenos Aires and a senior economist for Numera Analytics' Macro Research practice

particularly in sectors like oil, minerals and commodities such as aluminum and gold, which are key exports to the US," Campos said.

More concerning, Campos suggested, are the indirect effects.

"If the US imposes tariffs on China and other major economies, the resulting global slowdown would affect the demand for Argentine goods," he said.

"Free trade lowers costs by allowing countries to specialize. Disrupting that creates inefficiencies, driving up prices for everyone," he said.

Emerging markets like Argentina could be particularly vulnerable, as higher global inflation may worsen debt servicing and fiscal stability.

"For Argentina, the bigger concern is maintaining domestic economic stability," Campos said.

Campos suggested that Argentina could mitigate potential trade shocks by diversifying its economic partnerships.

"Argentina could strengthen ties with China, which is already a more significant partner than the US, or look to the European Union through agreements like the Mercosur-EU trade deal," he said.

Campos acknowledged the recent reforms in Argentina, including a Ministry of Deregulation, aimed at modernizing the economy.

"If Argentina continues this trajectory, it could become more resilient and attract investment, but it's a slow and challenging process," he said, adding that diversification of economic partners should be Argentina's priority.

Campos expressed cautious opti-

mism over Argentina's long-term prospects.

"The country's path to sustainable growth lies in continuing structural reforms, fostering trade diversification and improving competitiveness," he said.

Canada faces significant economic and strategic challenges following Trump's proposal to impose a 25 percent tariff on its goods.

Global shock

Peter Phillips, a distinguished professor at the University of Saskatchewan, told China Daily, "This is not just a Canadian issue; it's a global economic shock." He said such tariffs could disrupt industries, supply chains and bilateral relations.

"The tariffs' impact on Canada's GDP is estimated to be from 1 to 5 percent," said Phillips, an economist who was also a senior policy adviser in Canadian industry and government.

He said Canada's automotive sector was particularly vulnerable, given the deep integration of North American supply chains.

"We export roughly \$30 billion worth of cars and trucks to the US annually, and our trade is balanced, with nearly equal imports," he said.

"A disruption in this sector could trigger significant challenges for just-in-time manufacturing systems," he said.

Agriculture also could be affected, he said, especially red meat and livestock, because of the industry's heavy reliance on the US market.

"For products such as grains and oilseed, Canada might find another market, but not for the red meat.

"The supply chains are so deeply intertwined that tariffs would cause shortages and price spikes on both sides of the border," Phillips said.

He also mentioned potential regional difficulties inside Canada, most specifically in seasonal agricultural exports, which include fruits and vegetables.

"These exports are critically important to the US market during certain times of the year, and any disruption could create challenges for both countries," he noted.

While the tariffs present substantial risks, Phillips sees opportunities for Canada to rethink its trade strategy.

"The US has always been Canada's easiest and most profitable market, but this is a wake-up call to look elsewhere," he said.

He also urged a readjustment toward domestic-oriented economic policies, such as weaning off raw material exports and nurturing innovative industries, like biotechnology and advanced manufacturing.

"This could push Canada to achieve long-term gains, even if the immediate impact is disruptive," he said.

Ontario Premier Doug Ford suggested that the province could cut off energy exports to the US.

"Interrupting energy exports could destabilize the integrated North American power grid, which relies on seamless flows across borders," Phillips said.

"It could lead to brownouts or price spikes, not just in the US but also in Canadian provinces like Quebec, where electricity exports are a major economic driver," he said.

Phillips said the US tariffs reflect a broader shift away from the principles of the global trade system, which has traditionally been built on trust and cooperation.

"This kind of 'America first' model undermines the stability of international trade and creates volatility that's bad for everyone," he said.

Marjorie Griffin Cohen, a Canadian economist and a professor at

Simon Fraser University, told China Daily, "Canada could face profound economic and political consequences if the proposed 25 percent tariffs on Canadian goods materialize."

"This would radically alter both the Canadian economy and the global trading system shaped by the 'Washington consensus,'" Cohen said.

"If Trump unilaterally raises tariffs, it will erode confidence in the World Trade Organization and the rules governing North American trade deals," she said.

Cohen said tariffs targeting oil and gas would be particularly devastating.

"There's no existing pipeline to transport Alberta oil to the eastern provinces, and building one would take years," she said. "While some more could be shipped west for export, this would be no substitute because the volume would not make up for the lost sales to the US."

She cited the US' long-standing push for access to Canada's controlled markets for poultry, eggs and dairy products.

"These industries would struggle to survive a massive influx of American products," she said.

Trump's lack of interest in climate policies, Cohen said, complicates matters. "A large tariff will drive down prices for Canadian energy producers, putting pressure on governments to increase subsidies and reduce regulations," she said.

The potential tariffs also underscore Canada's reliance on the US market, a vulnerability rooted in trade agreements like the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement.

"Canada's economy is shaped by its relationship with the US, and these agreements have made the country less self-sufficient," Cohen said. "Canada needs to think long term and shift from primarily exporting resources to producing more of what it needs domestically."

"This will also require rethinking foreign policy to prioritize Canada's interests over closely following US decisions," she said.

Mexico is also on the list of potential tariffs. The US has threatened tariffs as high as 25 percent, with conditions tied to cooperation at the border on migration and illicit drugs.

## Negotiation strategy

Luis de la Calle, former undersecretary for international trade negotiations at Mexico's Ministry of Economy, described the proposed tariffs as part of a broader negotiation strategy rather than a credible long-term threat.

"The US and Mexico are too interconnected to fully decouple," he told China Daily.

"Geography and shared production systems make diversification a challenge, but they also create strong arguments for exempting Mexico from broad tariff measures," he said.

While such policies have sparked concern, de la Calle was more skeptical about their sustainability over the long term, given the extensive trade relationships that the tariffs would disrupt economically in both countries.

"Historically, energy products and highly integrated sectors like electronics and autos have been spared from tariffs due to their critical role in supply chains," he said.

De la Calle urged the country to bolster its competitiveness, viewing it as essential not only to maintain access to the US market but also to secure new trade opportunities.

"The answer to tariffs is becoming more competitive; the more competitive we are, the stronger our case for free trade and investment," he said.

Mexico's economy relies heavily on trade with the US, particularly in manufacturing and agriculture.

The potential tariffs could pressure Mexico to strengthen ties with Europe and Asia, de la Calle said.

However, he acknowledged the limits of diversification. "You can't fully diversify away from a market as large as the US," he said.

As Mexico prepares for a review of its trade agreements in 2026, de la Calle emphasized the importance of careful management in the coming months.

"The initial response to these tariff threats will set the tone for future negotiations. Mismanagement could complicate trade reviews, while a measured approach could ease tensions," he said.

Ultimately, de la Calle said he believes Mexico must double down on its long-term strategy to enhance competitiveness and build alliances.

"We need to strengthen our relationships across the Atlantic and Pacific. The more integrated we are globally, the harder it will be for the US to undermine North American cooperation," he added.

## WORLD US

## CES: Tech collaboration seen

US official: 'There are certainly areas' where US, China companies can work together

By RENALI LI in Las Vegas  
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Opportunities for collaboration in technology and innovation between China and the US remain promising despite political challenges, according to Don Graves, deputy secretary of the US Department of Commerce.

In an interview with China Daily at CES, the world's largest annual consumer technology trade show in Las Vegas, Graves underscored the importance of finding common ground, particularly in addressing global challenges like climate change.

"We need to continue exploring ways to collaborate effectively," Graves told China Daily on Wednesday after participating in a "Conversation with US Government Leaders" session.

"There are certainly areas where our companies can work closely together. For example, addressing climate change should be a priority for both of our countries. Recognizing the changing climate, we have a real opportunity to join forces on this critical issue," he said.

Graves also highlighted the potential for the US and China to jointly develop global standards, given the size and influence of their economies.

"Too often, we focus on areas of conflict and overlook the opportunities for partnership. While safeguarding our national security remains essential, we should also

seize the chance to foster collaboration between our countries and companies," he added.

The interconnectedness of the US and Chinese technology markets is evident at CES, where Chinese companies have a notable presence. More than 1,300 Chinese companies participated in the event, including 1,212 from the Chinese mainland and 98 from Hong Kong. Together, they accounted for more than a quarter of the 4,500 registered exhibitors, making China the largest foreign participant at CES 2025.

In addition to major tech companies like TCL and Hisense, participation by Chinese small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) at the exhibition is rebounding. Among the exhibitors, Qingdao Thunderobot Technology, a subsidiary of Haier Group, displayed a range of esports products, including the world's first ZERO series of high-performance gaming laptops.

"We have entered major sales channels such as Amazon in North America for many years," David Guo, the company's founder and vice-president told China Daily.

"As we look to expand globally, we aim to reach more gaming enthusiasts around the world. That's why we are here at CES for the first time this year, hoping to provide more services and equipment to consumers in the US," Guo said.

In the two-wheeler sector, Komda Bicycles Ltd from Hong Kong displayed its lineup of sporting and

recreation bicycles.

"We are an electric-vehicle manufacturer from China, and we have clients on both the East and West coasts of the US," said Terry Tsoi, the company's sales manager. He said that currently the US is the primary market because of Europe's tariffs, "which make exporting to Europe less advantageous. Of course, if the US further increases tariffs, it would also have a significant impact on us."

Chinese startups also were a strong presence at CES, particularly in the AI-driven technology space. Among them, Wisson Robotics displayed its AI-enhanced robotics featuring Pliabot muscles, joints and arms, drawing significant attention from attendees.

"Our company has shipped products to over 100 countries, including the US, and we recently completed an A round of investment, totaling nearly 30 million RMB," said Cheng Hui, a company representative.

The diversity of innovation extended to international exhibitors as well. At CES' Eureka Park, the French Pavilion hosted 100 companies, presenting a variety of technologies to a global audience, including China.

Elias Rock, head of Tech Pavilions at Business France Export, emphasized commitment to fostering collaboration with China, particularly in artificial intelligence.

"We have set up business offices in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Hong Kong," Rock told China Daily.

"We hope to foster our business and research collaborations between France and China, particularly in

the field of AI technology."

As experts at CES 2025 highlighted, technology continues to serve as a bridge between the US and China, even amid broader geopolitical tensions. From advancements in AI and electric vehicles to efforts in sustainability and global standards, collaboration remains a critical pathway to addressing shared challenges and shaping the future of innovation.

During his keynote address on Monday, Nvidia founder and CEO Jensen Huang spoke to an audience of more than 6,000 about the company's advancements in agentic AI, autonomous vehicles, robotics and gaming. He emphasized their potential to drive innovation and reshape business and society.

In a subsequent briefing, Huang noted two major influences reshaping the automotive industry: Tesla and the rise of Chinese electric-vehicle companies.

"Emerging Chinese companies like BYD, Xpeng, NIO and Xiaomi are showcasing advanced technologies and exceptional autonomous driving capabilities, which they are now promoting on a global scale," he said. "These technological breakthroughs are setting a new standard for future vehicles, emphasizing the importance of robust autonomous driving capabilities."

"We don't live in the virtual world. True connection comes when we're standing together, sharing the same space," said Delta CEO Ed Bastian at the carrier's 100th anniversary celebration on Tuesday, where he announced a set of tech initiatives leveraging generative AI.



Firefighters battle the flames of a burning building, as powerful winds fueling devastating wildfires in the Los Angeles area forced people to evacuate, in the Pacific Palisades neighborhood on the west side of the city in California on Wednesday. DANIEL COLE / REUTERS

## No letup in LA fires as damage toll soars

By HENG WEILI in New York  
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Wildfires continued to burn uncontained across Los Angeles County on Thursday — from the Pacific Ocean eastward to Pasadena — as the number of people displaced by the inferno has risen to at least 130,000.

More than 9,000 homes and structures were lost in the Palisades and Eaton fires, the Los Angeles Times reported, with more fire-conducive weather ahead.

"The Palisades fire is one of the most destructive natural disasters in the history of Los Angeles," said Los Angeles Fire Chief Kristin Crowley.

Five people have died, but officials say the death toll is likely to be higher. "This has the potential to be, at least collectively, the costliest wildfire disaster in American history," UCLA climate scientist Daniel Swain said in a livestream Wednesday. "Even just the Palisades fire on its own may become so."

The winds calmed somewhat on Thursday, but the National Weather Service warned that the wind is expected to strengthen in the evening.

The Palisades fire, near the Pacific Ocean coastline, has burned about 26.9 square miles (69.8 square kilometers). The Eaton fire, north of Pasadena, has burned about 16.6 square miles. The Hurst fire, in the San Fernando Valley, has burned 1.3 square miles. The Sunset fire in the Hollywood Hills has burned less than a square mile.

More than 420,000 customers statewide were without power as of 4:40 pm Pacific time Thursday, according to the tracker PowerOutage.us.

Tragic stories began to emerge on Thursday.

Victor Shaw was found dead holding a garden hose after the Eaton Fire swept through his neighborhood. Shari Shaw told KTLA that she tried to get her 66-year-old brother to evacuate with her on Tuesday night as the fire moved toward the home they shared. He told her he wanted to stay behind to try to fight the fire, she recalled.

"When I went back in and yelled out his name, he didn't reply back, and I had to get out because the embers were so big and flying like a firestorm — I had to save myself," she said. "And I looked behind me, and the house was starting to go up in flames, and I had to leave."

Al Tanner, a family friend, told television station KTLA that the next morning, they found Victor's body on the side of the road still holding the hose.

"It looks like he was trying to save the home that his parents had for almost 55 years," Tanner said.

President Joe Biden said during a White House briefing with staff on Thursday that he was making federal resources available and has approved more funding to help California. He described the blazes as the "worst fires to ever hit Los Angeles. Ever."

The new funding will cover 100 percent of the cost for 180 days for hazardous materials removal, temporary shelters, first responder salaries and measures to protect life, he said.

Biden noted that Vice-President Kamala Harris was "directly affected." Harris is a former California senator, and her home there was in the evacuation zone, but it wasn't clear if it was damaged. She described the scene as "apocalyptic."

"This is something that is going to have an impact for months and years to come," she said.

President-elect Donald Trump, who takes office on Jan 20, continued to

criticize California Governor Gavin Newsom's handling of the situation.

In a post on Truth Social, Trump wrote that Newsom "refused to sign the water restoration declaration put before him that would have allowed millions of gallons of water, from excess rain and snow melt from the North, to flow daily into many parts of California, including the areas that are currently burning in a virtually apocalyptic way."

“This has the potential to be, at least collectively, the costliest wildfire disaster in American history.”

Daniel Swain, UCLA climate scientist

Newsom's office responded, saying there was not a declaration.

"There is no such document as the water restoration declaration — that is pure fiction," Newsom communications director Izzy Gardon said in a statement. "The Governor is focused on protecting people, not playing politics, and making sure firefighters have all the resources they need."

Newsom said California has deployed more than 1,400 firefighting personnel. Arizona, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah and Washington were sending teams to help.

The Wall Street Journal, in an editorial, said that California has not allowed insurance companies to raise premiums related to natural disasters, noting that insurers are "paying out \$1.09 in expenses and claims for every \$1 they collect in premiums."

"Insurers had already scrapped hundreds of thousands of policies and limited coverage in wildfire-prone areas. Democrats blame climate change, which has become an all-purpose excuse for any disaster-relief failure," the editorial said. "But the real insurance problem is that state regulators have barred insurers from charging premiums that fully reflect risks and costs."

The editorial said that State Farm dropped nearly 70 percent of policyholders in one Pacific Palisades neighborhood "where the average home price is \$3.5 million."

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health issued an ocean water advisory on Thursday "out of an abundance of caution due to runoff from current fire-fighting efforts."

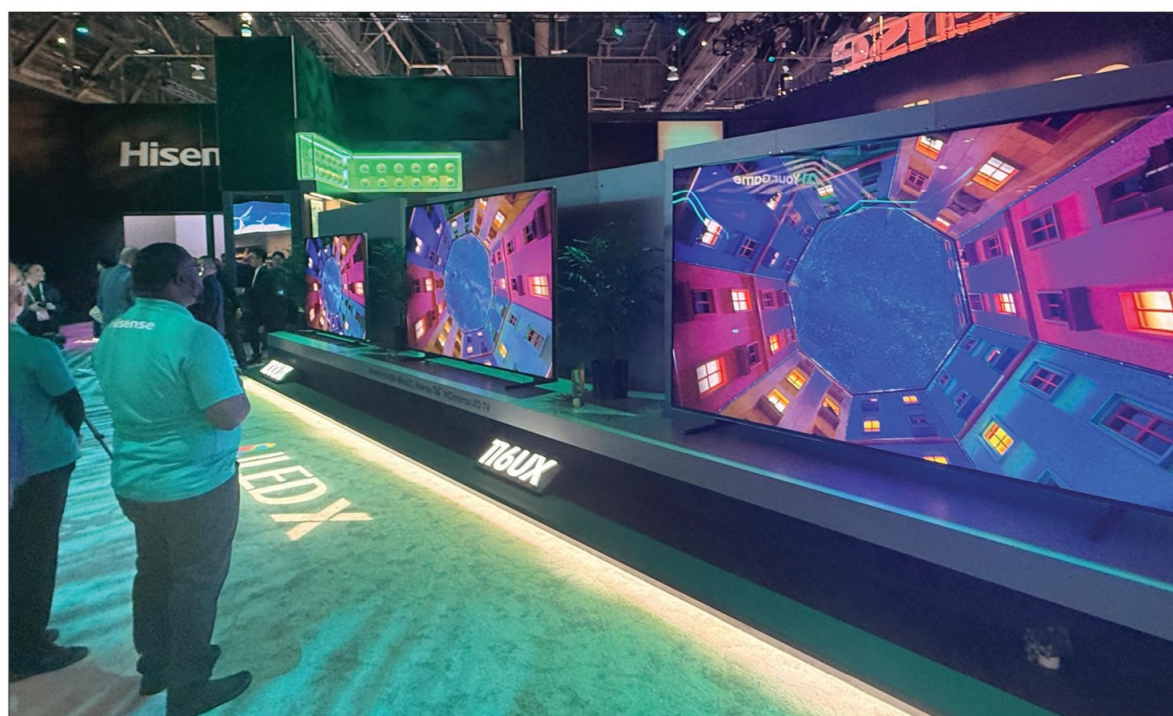
The department advised beach users to "avoid all water contact, especially near discharging storm drains, creeks, and rivers due to potential debris from fires and contamination. This includes any runoff that may flow onto or pond on the beach sand."

"This ocean water advisory is being issued due to the unknown quantity of fire-fighting runoff, including potentially toxic chemicals and debris, that have entered the ocean as a result of fire-fighting efforts."

Los Angeles County planned to implement a 6 pm local curfew Thursday in the areas around the Palisades and Eaton fires to stem looting, the Times reported. At least 20 people have been arrested on suspicion of looting, according to officials.

"As we work through the legal process to get that done, the goal is to try and implement it tonight," LA County Sheriff Robert Luna said of the curfew.

Agencies contributed to this story.



Visitors view the large-screen TVs at Hisense's booth at CES 2025, the consumer tech show in Las Vegas. LIA ZHU / CHINA DAILY

## China leads in global display innovation

By LIA ZHU in Las Vegas  
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At CES 2025, Chinese television manufacturers have their position reinforced as technology leaders through technological breakthroughs, setting new standards for quality and innovation in the global display industry.

Hisense and TCL, both leading Chinese television manufacturers, showcased their advanced electronic display technologies at the world's largest tech show, with a diverse range of products, from Mini-LED TVs to in-car displays to AR glasses. Hisense's core technology features its independently developed and manufactured Mini-LED chips, according to Denny Li, president of Hisense Visual Technology.

"To overcome the biggest challenge in RGB display — the ability to manage light and color at the same time — having a powerful chip is essential. Based on Hisense's extensive expertise in chip development, we have introduced a significant upgrade to our next-generation AI image processing chip," Li told China Daily.

This innovation addresses critical challenges in LED technology, including lifespan, color purity, and brightness issues, said Li, adding that the newly updated image-processing chip is at the forefront of the

LCD display technology.

With improved power efficiency and better color reproduction, the innovation extends LCD's life cycle, marking an important advancement for the LCD industry, said Li.

Electronic displays have become crucial across economic sectors, from consumer electronics like televisions, computers, mobile phones and tablets to applications in medical devices and home appliances.

Market analysis by Precedence Research projects the global display market to reach \$182 billion in 2024, with expectations of more than doubling to \$372 billion by 2034.

China's advancements in display technology are positioning the country at the forefront of this crucial industry, driven by innovations and manufacturing capabilities.

Recent research by the research company Display Supply Chain Consultants reveals China's increasing dominance in the global display industry. The country's share of total display capacity is expected to rise from 68 percent in 2023 to 74 percent in 2028, with LCD capacity specifically projected to reach 76 percent by 2028.

Notably, China is anticipated to surpass South Korea in OLED capacity by 2028, growing at an 8 percent compound annual growth rate, compared to South Korea's 2 percent.

This rapid advancement is

backed by substantial investment and research intensity. According to the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation's report in September, Chinese firms in the technology and electrical hardware sector have increased their R&D intensity by 64 percent over the past decade, far outpacing the 67 percent increase seen in US firms.

With investments exceeding 1 trillion yuan (about \$13.6 billion) in production lines, Chinese manufacturers have developed LCD panels that improve both display quality and energy efficiency, according to Li. The innovations enabled by such scale investments also represent a significant contribution to global industry development, he suggested.

Li also noted that display technology innovation combines many disciplines, including materials, engineering and mechanics — all these need to be integrated. Looking at China's display supply chain, innovation isn't about one company achieving competitiveness but about innovating across the entire supply chain, he said.

Standardization efforts have played a crucial role in this evolution. Hisense, for instance, has been actively involved in establishing international standards for light source display technology.

The company has been involved in drafting nearly 20 international

standards and winning the International Electrotechnical Commission's awards three times.

TCL, another Chinese leading TV manufacturer, has led and participated in the development of 386 technical standards, including 50 international standards, as of 2023. In the semiconductor display field, TCL CSOT has led the development of two international standards, filling industry gaps, according to the company.

In related fields such as audio-video technology and next-generation communication systems, Chinese companies continue to shape international standards, according to Sun Li, chief technology officer of TCL Industries.

That ensures seamless integration of display products with various technologies, including WiFi, operating systems, AI and decoders, he explained.

"In display technology, China has clearly mastered the entire supply chain, from semiconductors to complete machines, with increasing competitiveness," said Sun.

"This vertical integration has enabled Chinese companies to evolve from product assemblers to innovators capable of producing both core components and finished products with advanced features," he said.

## COMMENT

## Editorials

## Manila likely to be hung out to dry unless it provides Washington with pound of flesh

That outgoing US Secretary of State Antony Blinken wrapped up his last tour to the Asia-Pacific region with a back-to-back visit to the Republic of Korea and Japan, skipping the Philippines, might explain the tranquility in the South China Sea these days, however temporary it may be.

The ROK and Japan's honeymoon with the Joe Biden administration climaxed during a trilateral summit in Camp David in August 2023. And the Philippines also enjoyed such a highlight moment when a similar summit was held in Washington attended by the Philippine leader along with his US and Japanese counterparts in April.

So, with the Philippines being the only country among the three close US allies in the region that has not seen a recent change in its leadership, that the Biden administration still chose to omit the Philippines in the itinerary of its top diplomat's farewell visit to the Asia-Pacific must have rubbed insult into Manila's wound.

It highlights the Philippines' expendable position in the US' alliance network in the Asia-Pacific region. When the US evaluates the importance of its allies, which are classified into different classes, priority is given to those that share its "values", boast economic and high-tech prowess, and occupy strategic geopolitical positions.

The only value the Philippines has to the US lies in its geographical location overlooking the South China Sea and the waters south to China's Taiwan island. And that value naturally disappears when the Sino-US relationship is thriving.

So the quietness in the South China Sea, to some extent, reflects the Ferdinand Marcos Jr government's awakening to the bitter fact that despite the Philippines' selfless sacrifice to avail the US advancing its anti-China strategy on its doorstep — both the ROK and Japan have kept a more pragmatic China policy than the Philippines — it is a deserted piece.

Some Western media outlets recently reported that Chinese State-backed hackers hacked into Philippine government departments and stole sensitive data as part of a yearslong operation. This is a total lie fabricated just to goad the near-hibernating Marcos government to carry on its fool's errand.

As the Chinese embassy in the Philippines said in a statement in response to the reports, which link the "hacking" with the South China Sea issue and expose the external assistance available to Manila to that end, "Who is the mastermind behind this farce and who is using cyber issues to stir up regional tensions and seek geopolitical gains? The answer is self-evident."

At the same time, some US think tanks have sought to spur the Marcos government to keep on its momentum to continuously provoke China in the South China Sea.

Raymond Powell, the director of Sealight, a project of Stanford University's Gordian Knot Center for National Security Innovation, suggested the Philippine military invite its US counterpart to undertake humanitarian operations in the disputed waters, or a Philippine company partner with a US company for oil exploration, to increase the pressure on Beijing.

Powell's suggestions expose the US side's disappointment with Manila's failure to provoke China to take tough measures against it, if not the success of Beijing's South China Sea policy that prioritizes dialogue to resolve differences.

China, as well as other regional countries, have been well aware that it will only be a matter of time before Manila has to accept it is being caught in a dilemma of its own making on the South China Sea issue. That explains Beijing's restraint and the cold shoulders the other Southeast Asian countries have given to Manila's invitation for them to join it in playing the US' Asia-Pacific game.

Given the in-your-face "America first" stance the incoming US leader displayed in a pre-inauguration news conference on Tuesday, it should not be beyond expectation that the Marcos government will be pressed to pay for the privilege of being the US' pawn.

Manila has never been in a position to ask what the US can do for the Philippines, it has always been in the position of asking what the Philippines can do for the US.

If it hopes that it will get some quid for its quo from the new US administration, it is set to be disappointed. There will be a steep demand for quo even for the slightest quid.

## US has made Peninsula issue tough nut to crack

China has long been doing what it can to reduce tensions on the Korean Peninsula by promoting talks and preventing conflicts.

Despite the fact that the talks failed to yield any result for various reasons, the Six-Party Talks that China initiated to promote the denuclearization of the peninsula — which were held from 2003 to 2008 — speak volumes about the country's earnestness and sincerity in pushing for de-escalation of tensions on the peninsula.

Yet despite China's efforts and the breakthrough that had seemed on the cards in 2018, the situation on the peninsula has never been so complicated. Even more alarmingly, there are signs that a direct confrontation between the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is a distinct possibility.

It was therefore not only erroneous but also highly irresponsible for the deputy representative of the United States to the United Nations on Wednesday to point the finger of blame at China for the worsening situation on the peninsula.

While condemning the DPRK's Monday launch of an intermediate-range ballistic missile, he accused Beijing of emboldening and enabling destabilizing and threatening behavior by Pyongyang.

In her speech, US ambassador Dorothy Shea also incalculated China of muzzling the UN Security Council, claiming that along with Russia, it blocked the Security Council from acting to address the DPRK's "unlawful WMD and ballistic missile programs".

She also claimed that the US remains committed to a diplomatic resolution to the challenges posed by those programs.

Yet its weaponization of economic measures, in the form of the sanctions and trade embargo it has imposed against the DPRK along with its allies, has only increased tensions and made the situation even more complicated. These, along with the joint military exercises by the ROK and the US, have only increased Pyongyang's sense of existential angst.

The heavier the unilateral sanctions the US imposes against the DPRK and the more joint military drills it conducts with the ROK, the less secure the DPRK feels and the more acutely it feels the need to develop weapons and even nuclear weapons to defend itself.

The US also turns a blind eye to the fact that it is its own military presence on and around the Korean Peninsula that has led to the uncertainties and escalation of tensions. It is its own continued deployment of advanced weapons such as Terminal High Altitude Area Defense missiles that has resulted in an arms race on the peninsula.

China has long maintained that the issues on the peninsula can be resolved only through talks. However difficult the talks will be, China believes that they will work as long as those involved have the sincerity to reach a genuine understanding regarding each other's concerns.

As a neighboring country, China maintains normal relations with the DPRK as it does with any other country. But that is as far as it goes. Washington takes it for granted that China has leverage over the DPRK, but that is not the case. Beijing is willing to do what it can to promote peace and stability on the peninsula but it cannot tell Pyongyang what to do.

Despite this, some Western media have been happy to jump on Washington's bandwagon, not only demonizing and stigmatizing the DPRK, but also tarring China with the same brush.

Yet what Washington has done to the DPRK has left no room for the country to function as a normal nation. It has constantly toughened its sanctions against the DPRK, which has made life increasingly harder for people in the country. And it has sold arms to the ROK and repeatedly held joint military drills with the ROK with the aim of pushing the DPRK into a costly arms race, disregarding the effects that will have on the well-being of people in the DPRK.

If the DPRK is a hard geopolitical nut for the US to crack, it is of its own doing. Had it worked proactively with China in the Six-Party Talks, the situation on the peninsula would have been different.

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## Luo Jie



## Opinion Line

## Standardized law enforcement vital for vibrant business environment

In response to the requirement raised by the Central Economic Work Conference that a special campaign be launched to standardize law enforcement in the case of enterprises, the State Council, China's Cabinet, recently issued guidelines standardizing enterprise-related administrative inspections, which aim to curb random inspections.

This has been the market's demand, especially after the Zhejiang provincial procuratorate recently disclosed a case in which police from another province pursued a private entrepreneur in Zhejiang and Jiangsu provinces and extorted money.

Law enforcement is important for government departments to manage economic and social affairs. However, unfair, selective or profit-seeking law enforcement, infringing upon the legitimate rights and interests of private entrepreneurs and eroding the confidence of private enterprises is a problem. Such malpractices undermine the rule of law and pollute the business environment, and

must be resolutely eliminated according to the law and regulations.

The launch of special actions to standardize law enforcement related to enterprises sends a clear signal that the central authorities will resolutely safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of enterprises. To enhance the confidence of private enterprises and entrepreneurs and embolden them to operate without fear, the country must provide institutional and legal protection for their lawful operations and income according to law, and those irresponsible law enforcement behaviors must be held accountable.

The central authorities' reiteration that China is devoted to creating a good environment and providing more opportunities for the nonpublic sector also means that the property rights of private enterprises and the legitimate rights and interests of entrepreneurs should be protected in accordance with the law. Only by adhering to a problem-oriented approach, and resolutely preventing illegal and expedient

law enforcement, can a good development environment for all types of business entities be created.

In December 2024, the Supreme People's Procuratorate issued a guideline document to prevent the use of criminal means to interfere in economic disputes, and improve the procuratorial process to identify and correct wrongdoings involving enterprises. Only by detecting any malpractices that infringe on the interests of enterprises can the rule of law be better maintained.

Standardizing administrative law enforcement involving private entrepreneurs and putting an end to any illegal behaviors are central to creating a good environment for the private economy. Only by allowing private enterprises to participate in fair competition, giving them equal access to development resources and enhancing their sense of security can the country stimulate market vitality and inject strong impetus into its high-quality economic development.

— PEOPLES DAILY

## Equipment renewal policy boost for consumption

The National Development and Reform Commission and the Ministry of Finance issued a joint notice on Wednesday about intensifying the implementation of large-scale equipment renewal and consumer goods trade-in policies in 2025. This is among the first of the favorable policies meant to boost domestic demand in the new year.

In 2024, China's national economy showed signs of recovery, but insufficient consumer capacity remained a problem. From January to November 2024, the total retail sales of consumer goods increased by only 3.5 percent year-on-year. The growth rate of investment remained low; in particular, private investment lacked momentum. According to the notice, the government is required to provide subsidies for consumers purchasing new digital products.

Moreover, equipment renewal and consumer good trade-ins are expected to revitalize the existing market, particularly giving green and smart home consumption a boost.

The notice also proposes regulating the trading of secondhand goods, accelerating reuse levels and supporting the recycling and disposal of electrical and electronic products. These measures will further promote the development of the circular economy, improve the efficiency of the domestic logistics system, drive the development of new models and enhance the service of durable consumer goods, thereby improving the safety and resilience of industry supply chains.

To make this policy more effective, further supporting work needs to be done at the macroeconomic level. For example, it's necessary to solve the

unemployment problem and increase people's incomes, so that consumption will increase, providing internal momentum for the economic cycle. Employment and income are the key to boosting consumption and investment.

They are the fundamental guarantee for intensifying efforts to expand the new policy in 2025. It's also advisable to further improve the distribution system, placing greater emphasis on people's livelihoods, and increase residents' marginal propensity to consume. Additionally, expanding the coverage of social welfare systems, improving the operation and management system of social security funds, and strengthening the construction of social security systems will also help by stabilizing residents' expectations.

— 21ST CENTURY BUSINESS HERALD

## What They Say

## In worst of times we can still hope for the best

Some US allies' strong responses to the controversial points of view US president-elect Donald Trump made public in a news conference at Mar-a-Lago, Florida, on Tuesday speak volumes of their deep concerns over the changes that will result from Trump acting as he said he will in his second term.

Less than two weeks before his inauguration as the 47th president of the United States, Trump took advantage of the wide-ranging news conference following Congress certifying his victory in the 2024 presidential election to declare "I am back". In the news conference, Trump intensified his push for US expansionism, refusing to rule out using military force to add Greenland to the US and retake control of the Panama Canal.

As well as railing against the Joe Biden administration's policies in different fields, particularly energy, and calling himself already the driving

force behind the Gaza hostage talks, Trump continued to hold to the tough line on Canada he had revealed before, citing illegal immigrants and drug abuse in the US as excuses to threaten to impose "substantial" tariffs on Canada. He went further this time in saying that he could use "economic force" to turn Canada into the US' 51st state.

As such, no wonder many US allies have openly showed their concern, as the incoming US leader seems ready to pursue an "America first" agenda that has been increasingly preoccupied with what many are calling a new imperialist agenda.

Trump takes his reelection as president of the world's most powerful country as the endorsement of his policies by the US people, and therefore takes it as the green light for him to accomplish the rest of his unfinished God-given demolish-and-rebuild cause. But in actuality, it is the

Democratic Party's failure in many regards that has led to his reelection rather than the appeal of his policies. The real test for leaders in the modern world is to demonstrate courage rather than impudence, vision rather than fancy, and the ability to do rather than undo.

As Paul Krugman wrote in the New York Times last month concluding his 25-year service for the newspaper as an opinion columnist, "We may never recover the kind of faith in our leaders — belief that people in power generally tell the truth and know what they're doing — that we used to have. Nor should we. But if we stand up to the kakistocracy — rule by the worst — that's emerging as we speak, we may eventually find our way back to a better world."

Now is the time to prepare for the worst while we can still find enough reasons to hope for the best.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

## COMMENT

Borut Pahor

The British romantic comedy *Love Actually* is full of entertaining and funny scenes. But, as if it were a documentary, the director Richard Curtis introduces a startling fact at the very beginning: before the aircraft hit the World Trade Center in New York on Sept 11, no victim sent messages of hatred, only love.

From a young age, I wanted to believe that good overcomes evil. Fairy tales were a significant help in forming such beliefs. But as I grew up, I was confronted with various phenomena of evil and hatred. Thus, I began to wonder whether we were destined for both, love and hate. I was also wondering if we can influence which of the two wins in the end, love or hate?

At the university I returned time and time again to the question of the nature of human character. Is it good or evil at its core? At that time, Confucian philosophy entered my studies and my intellectual and later political mentality and, in a way, took me over. I simply wanted to believe that a person is fundamentally good, and Mencius justified this convincingly enough for me. I was convinced by his thought about the original goodness of the human spirit or heart. I was taken by his advice that we should think with our hearts.

This very much shaped my personal and political beliefs. In fact, I decided to believe it because I thought it was good and right. I followed this principle for the entirety of my 32-year political career, and this thought guided me in all political positions I held in Slovenia and Europe.

**Not to hate, but to love**

I rarely used quotes in political speeches. But the one I borrowed most often by far is the inspiring thought of Sophocles' *Antigone*: "Not to hate, but to love am I put into this world." My interest in politics was awakened by political history, and I was particularly interested in the nature of the personalities who had a decisive influence on the course of history. I tried to understand the complexity of the circumstances that gave them extraordinary strength and the complexity of the power that influenced these circumstances. Everything I have seen or read has strengthened my belief that a sincere striving for good within ourselves and the community is positive and right, and that giving in to the temptation of evil is bad and wrong.

My great role model Nelson Mandela once and forever exclaimed inspiringly, "No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite."

I do not know whether Mandela thought so because of the position of Mencius or whether he did not know about it, which I almost do not believe. In any case, they spoke the same language and from the heart. They were thinking with their hearts.

Tolerance and forgiveness are expressions of strength, while intolerance and hostility are signs of weakness. I have often been accused of allowing myself to turn the other cheek. This is never pleasant and is often misunderstood. But in the long run, this stubborn, consistent attitude works well in a tiring relationship with those who sow intolerance around them and seek conflict at all costs. In my book *Winning is the Beginning*, which is a handbook for young political beginners, I advise the following, "In the long run, it will be easier, better, more sustainable and more successful to live and work if we do all this in accordance with the nature of our personality. However, I would like to emphasize once again that it is not something that would be meant for us, it is something we teach ourselves. It will be worthwhile for us to teach ourselves to be a tolerant and kind personality. It will harm us and come back to bite us if we are driven by hatred and revanchism."

On Dec 7, 1972, one of the most recognizable photographs in the world, the so-called *Blue Marble*, was created. One of the three astronauts, Cernan, Schmitt or Evans, took it through the window of the spacecraft that was taking them to the moon. It was taken from a distance of 29,400 km from our planet and shows it fully illuminated in the embrace of space darkness. When this photo was developed on return, NASA Apollo mission engineering supervisor Anthony Errington said something important, "How fragile the Earth is and how stupid the conflicts between nations are. We're all on this ship together, and it would be better if we got along with each other."

**World not necessarily divided**

In the middle of the first quarter of the 21st century, humanity on this beautiful but wounded planet finds itself in a situation where the vast majority of humanity is worried about whether we will solve the accumulated security, political, economic and social problems peacefully, or whether a major war will once again be needed to reset international relations.

# How Mencius influences the West and my political character



LIMIN / CHINA DAILY

This is not a theoretical question, but a real and topical question. And I will answer it by saying it is our moral responsibility to do everything for peace to prevail and for war to be prevented. It is our moral and political duty to talk. If the dialogue does not bring a solution, it is necessary to return to the dialogue yet again.

We have found ourselves in this geopolitical situation because a lot has changed after the end of World War II. New great powers have sprung up. The world has become multipolar. In many ways, the political and legal architecture that was built on the ruins left behind by World War II is obsolete. The big question of modern times is whether we will reform it early enough and successfully enough, in a peaceful way, or not. It is a question of whether we are able to reform the legal and political order in such a way, that it reflects new relations of power, but is at the same time oriented toward promoting peace and punishing war. Above all, we need reform of the UN and the Security Council. We see that these two institutions, which are supposed to be essential for maintaining world peace, are all too often insignificant and powerless.

I see no reason why the West on the one hand and China on the other hand

should not understand each other. But they need to talk more than they do now. I believe in the power of dialogue and I think it is far from exhausted. It is precisely the successful resolution of the fundamental unresolved issues between the West and China that is decisive for the peaceful future of the world as a whole.

There is no evidence that lasting peace exists. Throughout the history of the human civilization, periods of peace were disrupted by wars. However, we have experience, especially after the World War II, that peace can be preserved in constructive dialogue and on the basis of agreed-upon rules. At the moment, there are 55 wars and conflicts in the world and, among other things, the threat that fewer and fewer people will believe in lasting peace. This belief, although without evidence, is of elementary importance for our survival. It seems to me that this is what Mencius would teach today.

**Beautiful legend inspiring today**

Let us not underestimate our actions. Even if we do not have great political or economic power, our actions are important, and those who have political and economic power are responsible. In this spirit, I allow myself to end with a beautiful legend.

Once upon a time, an elderly native American told his grandson, "Inside every man there is a battle between two wolves. The first wolf always represents evil: anger, envy, rage, lies, selfishness, and violence; the second wolf represents good: peace, love, selflessness, truth, compassion, courage, serenity, and hope."

After thinking about this for a while, the grandson asked, "Which wolf wins in the end?"

The old man replied, "The winner is always the one you feed!"

I was relieved. It may not be scientifically proven, but it is an old human wisdom. Since then, in interviews and speeches, I have mostly abandoned my authentic thought about angels and demons and cited the aforementioned legend.

I found the story of the native American wise man inspiring, especially in those political speeches, where I attempted to explain our collective responsibility in choosing what kind of community we want to create. First and foremost, we must be aware of the importance of our own responsibility in deciding what kind of person we want to become.

The author is former prime minister (2008-2012) and former president of the Republic of Slovenia (2012-2022).



Chen Weihua

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## Biden's desperate bid to curtail China's rise will prove to be futile

With just a few weeks left in office, US President Joe Biden has been wasting no time in desperately trying to check China's rise. In the latest such move on Monday, the US Defense Department added Tencent, a social media and gaming giant, and CATL, the world's largest battery maker, to a list of Chinese companies which Pentagon alleges work with the Chinese military.

The US administration has put 134 Chinese enterprises, including shipping giant COSCO and oil company China National Offshore Oil Corp, on the blacklist. Almost all the 140 companies included in the Entity List, a blacklist for export control announced by the US Commerce Department in December, are Chinese owned, including some Chinese-owned enterprises based in Japan, the Republic of Korea and Singapore.

On Dec 23, the US Trade Representative announced the launch of a Section 301 investigation into China's semiconductor industry, accusing it of causing harm to US trade and national security.

However, such reckless actions are not new. The Biden administration has been using "national security" as an excuse to wage an economic war against China. Its strategy of "vigorous competition" with China is simply another name for curtailing China's economic and technological rise by using all means possible.

Using the same absurd logic, the Chinese government could easily blacklist many US companies for working closely with the Pentagon or claim they pose a national security threat. But I'm glad that the Chinese government has refused to stoop as low as the Biden administration.

It's another matter that Biden officials are shamelessly proud of their track record of torpedoing China's rise.

### Safe shipping in the South China Sea is far more important for China, the largest trading nation in the world, than any other country.

In an exclusive interview with The New York Times on Jan 4, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken explained how the Biden administration had ganged up with the United States' European allies against China. Though he did not elaborate, it became clear that the US played a role in halting the China-EU Comprehensive Agreement on Investment.

China and the European Union concluded the CAI negotiations in principle on Dec 30, 2020, about three weeks before Biden took office. The CAI, if ratified, would have opened up a huge market and created more investment opportunities for EU companies, according to European Commission trade officials who took part in the seven-year-long talks.

Undermining China's rise and reputation has been a key mission and obsession of senior US officials. During a trip to India this week, US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan repeatedly mentioned China in a negative tone while delivering a speech at the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi, in a bid to drive a wedge between the two Asian neighbors. The latest signs of warming between the world's two most populous countries must have driven the Biden administration to spend sleepless nights.

The same is true for the warming relations between China and Japan, and China and the ROK. Blinken just concluded his visit to the two countries in what could be his last overseas trip as the US' top diplomat.

According to US State Department spokesman Matthew Miller, Blinken and Japanese leaders discussed the "PRC's dangerous and destabilizing behavior in the South China Sea" and both sides "reiterated the importance of maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait".

There is no doubt that the US has been dictating its European and Asian allies for decades. And yet the US has added fuel to the fire — and is playing with fire — by, among other things, announcing more than \$800 million in military aid and arms sales to Taiwan in late December — the 19th round of such sales and assistance during Biden's term in office.

One thing is clear: Compared with the US, China has far more interest in maintaining peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea. Safe shipping in the South China Sea is far more important for China, the largest trading nation in the world, than any other country.

History will ultimately prove that the US' efforts to curtail China's rise are an exercise in futility. But for now, it's good that the saboteur Biden administration will soon be out of office.

## GLOBAL VIEWS



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

STEPHEN NDEGWA

# Things are looking up

Led by the meteoric rise of China, the emergence of the Global South on the world stage is driving the rebalancing of power that has historically favored the West

The global governance landscape is undergoing a transformation, driven increasingly by the growing influence of the Global South. Dominated by Western powers, the existing system of international institutions, norms and procedures that facilitate cooperation on global issues such as economic development, trade, human rights, peace and security, and environmental protection is now witnessing a rebalancing.



At the heart of this shift is China, whose strategic partnerships and initiatives are reshaping the role of the Global South in institutions such as the United Nations, the UN Security Council and the G20, and promoting the emergence of new blocs such as BRICS.

The ascent of the Global South in global governance reflects a more equitable world order that accounts for the aspirations and priorities of developing nations. Within this transformation, China's leadership stands out as pivotal. Through its Belt and Road Initiative, China has fostered infrastructural connectivity and economic integration across Asia, Africa and Latin America. This initiative has not only stimulated economic growth in the Global South but also redefined global trade patterns, challenging the traditional dominance of Western-centric institutions.

One critical example of the Global South's influence is evident in the UN. Developing countries, often marginalized in decision-making processes, are now asserting their voices through coalitions such as

the G77+China. This bloc, which now represents over 130 developing nations, has pushed for reforms in multilateral institutions to ensure that they reflect the needs and concerns of the Global South. China's support for these calls has been instrumental, given its permanent seat on the UNSC and its ability to champion equitable representation and fair decision-making.

In the UNSC, where the balance of power historically favored the West, China has emerged as a staunch advocate for Africa, Asia and Latin America. Whether by backing African-led initiatives for conflict resolution or advocating for the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign nations, Beijing's positions often align with the broader interests of the Global South. This alignment underscores the importance of Sino-Africa cooperation in driving systemic change in global governance. African countries have increasingly relied on China's support to amplify their voices on issues ranging from peacekeeping to climate finance.

The G20, another crucial platform for global governance, highlights the growing impact of the Global South. Unlike the G7, the group includes prominent developing nations such as India, Brazil, South Africa and Indonesia. China's presence in the G20 is significant, not only because of its economic heft but also due to its ability to bridge the interests of developed and developing nations. For example, China's efforts to ensure that the G20 agenda addresses debt relief for low-income countries and climate finance are crucial to the Global South's sustainable development.

Perhaps the most striking example of the Global South's ascent is the emergence of BRICS as a counterweight to Western-dominated institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Initially an economic grouping, BRICS has evolved into a platform for political and security cooperation, reflecting a shared vision for a multipolar world. China's role within BRICS is particularly notable; it has spearheaded initiatives such as the New Development Bank, which provides infrastructure and sustainable development financing without the conditionalities often associated with Western financial institutions.

BASE, a newer coalition grouping Brazil, Argentina, South Africa and Ethiopia, further demonstrates how the Global South is reshaping global governance. These nations have collectively emphasized the need for reform in international trade rules to eliminate barriers that disadvantage developing economies. China's backing for these initiatives, coupled with its increasing investments in BASE countries, underscores its commitment to fostering a more inclusive global economy.

Sino-Africa cooperation has become a cornerstone of the Global South's influence in global governance. The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation exemplifies this partnership, serving as a platform for dialogue and collaboration on development, trade and security. Through the FOCAC, African nations have secured significant investments in infrastructure, education and healthcare. Additionally, China's support for African Union initiatives, such as Agenda 2063, demonstrates its recognition of

Africa's strategic importance in the global order.

Another striking example of the Global South's influence is the growing role of African countries in the UN's peacekeeping missions. Nations such as Rwanda, Ethiopia and Ghana have become leading contributors to UN peacekeeping forces, shaping global security discussions. China has consistently backed these efforts, providing logistical and financial support, while also deploying its own peacekeepers to regions such as South Sudan. This collaboration highlights the shared commitment of the Global South to fostering global peace and stability.

In addition, the establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area has positioned Africa as a critical player in global trade negotiations. Supported by Chinese investments in regional infrastructure, the AfCFTA aims to create the largest free-trade area in the world, boosting intra-African trade and enhancing the continent's negotiating power in global trade forums. This development underscores how regional initiatives, backed by Sino-African partnerships, are enabling the Global South to reshape global economic governance.

Moreover, China's role in addressing global environmental challenges has further cemented its leadership in the Global South. The Paris Agreement on climate change showcased Beijing's ability to rally developing nations around ambitious climate goals. By prioritizing renewable energy projects and sustainable development in its engagements with the Global South, China has positioned itself as a key driver of the green transition, ensuring that the voices of developing coun-



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

tries are central to global climate governance.

However, the rise of the Global South in global governance is not without challenges. Critics often question the sustainability of China's financial assistance and the transparency of its projects. Addressing these concerns will be crucial for the long-term credibility and effectiveness of Sino-Africa cooperation and the broader Global South agenda. Additionally, fostering greater unity among developing nations will be essential to overcoming divisions that could weaken their collective bargaining power in multilateral institutions.

The Global South's growing influence in global governance signals a paradigm shift toward a more inclusive and equitable world order. Central to this transformation is China's leadership, which has

empowered developing nations to assert their priorities and reshape global institutions. Through platforms such as BRICS and the FOCAC, and its strategic engagement with Africa and BASE, China has amplified the voice of the Global South on critical issues such as trade, development and climate change. As this trend continues, Sino-Africa cooperation will remain a driving force in creating a global governance system that genuinely reflects the diversity and aspirations of the world's nations.

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REN LIN

# Out with the old

Five aspects of concern regarding the transformation of the international order

The post-World War II international order has made big contributions to global peace and development by creating a stable environment and ensuring the proper handling of interstate relations. Although this order is not entirely based on international rules and regulations, particularly in the security domain, it



has nonetheless created a predictable world market, and provided development opportunities for all countries.

But we are living in an era in which the transition from this international order to a new one is underway. Achieving a peaceful transition of the international order is an issue of strategic importance that we must address. Some developed countries are driving five alarming changes in the process of the transformation.

First, the shift from "mutually assured dependence" to "mutually assured destruction".

For a long time, countries were committed to a world of "mutually assured dependence". Economic globalization has brought opportunities for development and prosperity. As the ballast of the international order, increasingly close trade and economic exchanges have bound major economies together by creating shared economic interests.

But the attempts of some major countries in recent years to decouple and sever supply chains are cutting the links that ensure interdependence, thereby undermining the foundation for the international order. The frequent adoption of economic policies characterized by "pan-security" indicates that "mutually assured dependence" is no longer a top priority of some developed economies.

Instead, they have begun to assess whether the "mutually assured destruction" mechanism still works, and is capable of ensuring the global security situation does not spiral out of control. Driv-

en by a misperception of insecurity, major powers' behavior logic and its consequences could become more dangerous.

Second, the shift from a "positive-sum game" to a "negative-sum game".

The "positive-sum game" refers to a situation in which economic globalization has facilitated the division of labor and specialization, allowing the rapid flow of production factors, including capital, across borders at low costs, thereby maximizing the overall benefits for all countries.

Despite a certain degree of imbalance, such as the North-South divide, economic globalization, underpinned by a "positive-sum game" mentality, has significantly increased the overall well-being of the world, bringing development opportunities for all countries.

But a "negative-sum game" mentality that puts security first is replacing the "positive-sum game" mentality that prioritizes development. A trade war is a typical "negative-sum game", in which the overall revenue within the system is negative due to conflicts. For the hegemon, the mindset has changed from "What can I gain?" to "What will my opponent lose?" It is an urgent task for the international community to reverse this shift, and prod major powers to think: "What can we create together?"

Third, the shift from "small countries seeking equality" to "big countries seeking reciprocity".

After World War II, the existing international political and economic institutions were established, and the developing countries came to realize that they must unite to seek equality and participate fully in global affairs. For instance, the G77,



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

which was established in 1964, was designed to unite developing countries and strive for a fair international environment for their development. Developing countries advocate that nations, big or small, strong or weak, rich or poor, are all equal members of the international community.

Therefore, it is usually the smaller countries that seek equality, and developing countries that demand a greater say in global affairs. But today, major developed economies, which are the initiators and beneficiaries of the established global order, especially the United States, are now demanding "trade reciprocity" and seeking "reciprocal

status" in trade with other countries.

When the current international order was established, the US "bought peace" by opening its market to the rest of world. Through the Marshall Plan and other political and economic plans, it printed US dollars and purchased goods in Europe and other parts of the world, thereby creating peace and order through sharing economic and trade benefits with other countries.

In a sense, this global order could never be of a reciprocal nature. In essence, it is the major powers that created the order and provide public goods, while "locking in" their

interests in the hierarchical system. But seeking for "reciprocity" during the first Donald Trump administration and similar practices since then are challenging the basic logic of the origin of this order. In essence, this pursuit of "reciprocity" by major powers is also concealing the nature of inequality.

Fourth, the shift from "seeking certainty under the consensus of major powers" to "upgrading the game of major powers to create uncertainty".

A stable international order is the prerequisite for peace, development and prosperity. Certainty is a necessity for a stable international order, and global governance is the institutional foundation for realizing certainty.

Major countries should behave in a manner befitting their status and shoulder their due responsibilities because what big countries do has huge spillover effects, and can have profound impacts on other countries. However, developed economies, particularly the US, are unilaterally using policy tools to protect their own interests.

Moreover, the hegemonic power is wantonly weaponizing multilateral mechanisms, eroding their legitimate authority. Some developed countries led by the US are abandoning certainty and creating uncertainty, which is the major source of instability in the international order.

In a sharp contrast, China is actively creating certainty and positive spillovers through the Belt and Road Initiative. The initiative not only helps catalyze the economic development of countries involved through trade and investment, but also shares China's successful experience in its modernization drive

with them to help them find their own development paths.

Fifth, the shift from a system of governance that "generates money" to one that short of money.

The current global governance system is facing a serious deficit in its capacity to deliver public goods due to a lack of money. As the major creators of the established system, developed economies are increasingly incapable of and unwilling to participate in global governance.

In multilateral organizations such as the United Nations, the World Trade Organization and G20, we hear a lot of voices calling for reform of the global governance system, and there are many discussions about reforming multilateral development banks (such as encouraging the private sector to participate in fundraising activities) and imposing "global taxes" on billionaires, which aim to explore alternatives to the current global governance system.

But the lack of consensus among major countries is the root cause of the failure of the global governance system and the public goods deficit. Raising funds from the private sector can alleviate the funding shortage of the public goods, but only a consensus among major countries can fundamentally solve the financing problems of global governance.

Amid the above changes, China has, in recent years, introduced the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative. These efforts reflect China's active contribution to global peace and development, aiming to bring greater stability, certainty and constructiveness to the evolving international order.

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## CULTURE

## Jade's royal seal of approval

Treasured artifacts from Xinjiang tell a story that extends beyond the Qing Dynasty's imperial court, **Wang Kaihao** reports.

When Emperor Qianlong (1711-99) ascended the throne in 1735, he inherited a court of wealth and a dynasty reaching its apex. Perhaps that partially explains why this Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) ruler nurtured such affection for fine art throughout his 60-year reign.

Jade, which in Chinese culture represents ritual and dignity, naturally became his focus.

On receiving a treasured jade piece, the emperor, who credited himself a member of the literati, would write a hymn and have it carved into the item.

The present-day Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, particularly around the Kunlun Mountains, is famed for its jade production. Top-tier Hetian (or Hotan) Jade, which is named after the Hotan region, was among Qianlong's favorites.

In the Forbidden City, a story involving the royal court in Beijing and jade, which originated thousands of kilometers away, took on legendary status.

To mark the centennial of the former imperial palace becoming the Palace Museum, an exhibition recalling the saga of jade through 200-odd carefully selected pieces from the storerooms of the emperors is currently underway.

*Jade From the Kunlun Mountains: Special Exhibition on Hetian Jade Culture in the Qing Court* opened in the Zhaigong (Palace of Abstinence) Gallery on Tuesday and will run for a year. Items ranging from royal seals and ritual artifacts to carvings and miscellaneous articles of daily use demonstrate the versatility of Hetian Jade and the ways it can be transformed under the skillful ministrations of artisans.

"You can see the rich jade culture of the Qing Dynasty," Huang Ying, curator of the exhibition, says. "Hetian Jade is a pillar of Chinese jade culture."

#### Literati taste

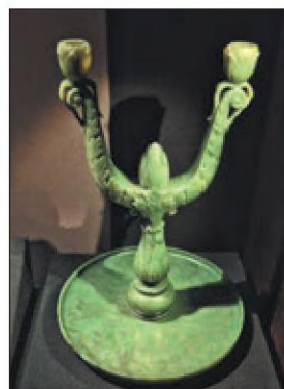
From 1761 onward, Hetian Jade was a presence at the Qing court in the form of biannual tributes in spring and autumn, and became the main type of jade used in the imperial palace, Huang explains.

"The production and use of jade ware underwent a huge advance, sparking another development boom in Chinese jade culture," she says.

As the exhibition shows, Qing imperial jade ware was elegant and refined and became a ubiquitous element in the places scholars worked.

"Jade stationery varies in style," Huang explains. "Some of the pieces were intricately adorned but some were aesthetically restrained. They are emblazoned with decorative motifs that convey a sense of grace."

Representations of six famous intellectuals from the Tang Dynasty (618-907), including renowned poet Li Bai, were carved on a jade writing brush holder to illustrate their daily indulgence in wine, song, poetry, and painting. Qianlong added an inscription to the holder in 1795, whether coincidentally or not, the year he relinquished the throne to his son to devote himself to a retirement of study.



**Counterclockwise from top:** Huang Ying, curator of a jade exhibition in Beijing's Palace Museum, talks about a Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) dark green jade vase duplicate of a Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220) bronze vase with a fish-waterfowl design. Emperor Qianlong's "Hindustan Jade" furcated candlestick. A group of jade seals. PHOTOS BY JIANG DONG / CHINA DAILY A jade lotus in pot from his era. WANG KAIHAO / CHINA DAILY

"During the reign of Qianlong, reverence and admiration for antiquity took deep root among the literati," the curator explains. "The emperor himself commissioned numerous archaic jade pieces. ... It reflected his pursuit of moral refinement, artistic mastery and a deep connection to the wisdom of ancient sages."

Hetian Jade duplicates of ancient bronze artifacts were produced in abundance for Qing royals. One such example is a dark green jade vase with a fish-waterfowl design on display, the original of which dates back to the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220).

As Confucian ideology deeply influenced the values of scholars, people began to attribute gentlemanly benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and faithfulness to the stone, inspiring the saying that "a gentleman never parts with his jade."

Hetian Jade articles of daily use, including dining vessels, chess pieces and perfume bottles also added



**Top:** A Han Dynasty jade *bixie* is the oldest Hetian Jade artifact in the Palace Museum collection. **Above:** A group of 12 Qing Dynasty white jade pendants. PHOTOS BY JIANG DONG / CHINA DAILY

a touch of class and elegance to the gentlemen of the court. The fashion reached its peak around 1780 as Emperor Qianlong celebrated his 70th birthday. "After all, jade adornment embodied the pursuit of beauty," Huang says.

#### Tracing the origins

The ritual use of jade dominated China for millennia, and Qing rulers preserved the tradition, using jade for royal documents and seals. Apart from use as offerings in sacrificial ceremonies to heaven, jade was also used to make instruments for musical rituals.

"The Qing court amassed numerous Buddhist statues carved in Hetian Jade," Huang says. "Imperial aesthetics and the distinct features of different ethnic groups were blended."

Nonetheless, the link between the Forbidden City and Hetian jades dates back far before the Qing Dynasty. The collections of Qing emperors merely reflected a millennia-long

connection between the jade hub in Xinjiang and the courts of the central dynasties.

Archaeological evidence shows that tremolite jade has been mined in Xinjiang for over 4,000 years to the Neolithic period, Huang adds. Hetian Jade was transported to Central China after the Han Dynasty, the trade booming during the Tang Dynasty. Hetian Jade gradually became the most important material for jade craftsmanship in Central China.

A white jade statue of *bixie*, a mythical lion-like creature that could ward off evil spirits, is the oldest Hetian Jade artifact in the Forbidden City. Lions are native to Western Asia and North Africa, and images of them were introduced to China via the Silk Road, where they were combined with traditional winged beasts, giving rise to the mythical Chinese creature.

Jade decorations bearing auspicious floral patterns and animal shapes from the Jin Dynasty (1115-

Emperor Qianlong places the use of Hetian Jade on the summit, and the era also left a rich legacy for future generations. The jade exhibits highlight the historical interaction, exchange and integration of Chinese ethnic groups."

**Du Haijiang**, deputy director of the Palace Museum

1234) and an exquisite cup from the Song Dynasty (960-1279) reflect the evolution of Hetian Jade around the rest of the country.

Emperor Qianlong also had his own way of tracing the origins of his treasured stones.

Huang particularly recommends seeing one artifact, a jade sculpture that resembles a miniature rockery, which includes a scene of several men mining jade in a mountain.

Again in 1761, the emperor wrote a poem on the back of the sculpture to honor their endeavors. "It's not only a piece of art, but also a lively witness to history," the curator adds.

"Emperor Qianlong places the use of Hetian Jade on the summit, and the era also left a rich legacy for future generations. The jade exhibits highlight the historical interaction, exchange and integration of Chinese ethnic groups. They are witness to the formation of a shared national identity," says Du Haijiang, deputy director of the Palace Museum.

#### Cultural exchange

In 1768, the emperor was given a pair of exotic jade plates as gifts. Amazed, he wrote about their origins, and over the ensuing decades, ordered the purchase of many similar jade artifacts from outside China, and had his poems carved on them as well. His Islamic-style "Hindustan Jades" included items not only from northern India, but also from the Ottoman Empire, Central Asia, and even Eastern Europe, says Xu Lin, a jade researcher at the Palace Museum.

"He loved Hindustan Jade so much, he ordered artisans to make duplicates," Xu says.

Both the duplicates and the originals are on display at the exhibition, so visitors may decipher the variations in artistic style from one culture to another.

Xu says that material analyses demonstrate that most of the Hindustan Jade in the Palace Museum collection is made of stone from Xinjiang.

"Hetian Jade became a link for interaction between China and the world," she adds. "That highlights the openness and inclusiveness of Chinese civilization."

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#### What's on



#### Plum blossoms

Plum trees and plum blossoms carry a rich spiritual symbolism in Chinese cultural and artistic traditions, representing integrity, perseverance, courage and other moral qualities.

Because it flowers in the last stage of winter and early spring, it also embodies the anticipation of spring. Drawing plum blossoms used to be a folk activity for many people, especially those living in the northern region where winters are long.

The ongoing exhibition, *Inquiring About the Message of Plum Blossoms*, at the National Art Museum of China shows how great ink artists throughout history have depicted the plum trees and plum blossoms, including Jin Nong, a member of the Eight Eccentric Painters of Yangzhou who was active in the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), and Xu Gu,

from the 19th century. The paintings are in the collection of the National Art Museum of China and are on display until Wednesday. 9 am-5 pm, closed on Mondays. 1 Wusi Dajie, Dongcheng district, Beijing. 010-6400-6326.

#### Lacquer art

Fujian province is a lacquer-making hub with a long-standing tradition. It is also at the forefront of transforming the time-honored handicraft into modern art and integrating it into institutional education. For example, in 1974, a lacquer painting major was added to the curriculum of Xiamen Academy of Arts and Design, Fuzhou University, in Xiamen, Fujian province. The China Artists Association is holding a lacquer painting exhibition at the Xiamen Art Museum



9 am-8 pm, closed on Mondays. 95 Tiyu Lu, Siming district, Xiamen, Fujian province. 0592-537-1757.

#### Female power

He Xiangning was a revolutionary social activist and avid advocate of women's rights, recognized as one of the nation's greatest women of the 20th century. She was also a gifted artist who left a body of paintings and calligraphy and co-created works with prominent painters of her time.

Since its opening in 1997, the He Xiangning Art Museum in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, has championed women artists and organized exhibitions to showcase their progress during the 20th century. *The Rhyme of My Heart*, an exhibition running throughout March, displays selected artworks by women



that the museum has collected. It gathers Chinese paintings, oil works, watercolors, paper-cuttings, installations and mixed-media created since the 1980s, glimpsing into the intimate inner worlds of female artists, collective social experiences and their thoughts on cultural identity. 9 am-5 pm, closed on Mondays. 9013 Shennan Dadao, Nanshan district, Shenzhen, Guangdong province. 0755-2660-4540.

# LIFESHANGHAI



From left: *The Gleize Bridge over the Vigneyret Canal*, a painting by Vincent van Gogh, will be shown at an exhibition about Impressionist art from the Pola Museum of Japan, at Shanghai Museum East from Jan 22 to April 21. Gentleman sitting by the creek, leaning on a tree, folding fan mounted as album leaf, by Tang Yin, will be among the exhibits demonstrating Chinese fan art at Shanghai Museum on People's Square from October. *Haystack at Giverny*, a painting by Claude Monet, will be shown at Shanghai Museum East. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Beginning with an exhibition featuring snakes, the Chinese zodiac animal representing the upcoming year, Shanghai Museum announced a series of 20 special exhibitions to start the new year.

The snake is closely related to the dragon, one of China's most important totems. "A snake has no feet but moves smoothly in the water and on the ground. It sheds its skin after hibernating, as if reborn," says Chu Xiaobo, director of the Shanghai Museum.

Such capabilities inspired awe in ancient Chinese people, who deified the creature. From oracle bones to bronze objects and ancient drawings on rocks, snakes are found everywhere in China's early civilization.

The exhibition *Spring: A Celebration of the Year of the Snake* from Tuesday to March 2 will feature 13 objects selected from the Shanghai Museum collection, including borrowed pieces from the first museum in China dedicated to bronze art in Lijashan site in Yunnan province, and Hubei Provincial Museum.

"We want visitors to learn about how the legends of the snake are passed down and have evolved over millennia in Chinese civilization, and to understand how the shared culture connects people of different ethnic groups across the country," Chu says.

One of the most anticipated exhibitions of the new year is the fifth installment of Shanghai Museum's series *A Dialogue with the World*, featuring Impressionist masterpieces from the Pola Museum in Japan, scheduled from Jan 22 to April 21.

The Pola Museum in Hakone, Kanagawa Prefecture of Japan, houses one of the most significant collections of Impressionist art in Asia. Shanghai Museum will work with Pola Museum and Nikkei Inc to present at its new venue on the eastern bank of the Huangpu River the largest international show organized by the Pola Museum.

Featuring a range of work from Vincent van Gogh, Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso and Yayoi Kusama, the exhibition is the first time Shanghai Museum presents a panoramic showcase of Impressionism — its beginning, development, expansion and continual impact on the later art scene, according to Chu.

## Museum announces Year of the Snake lineup

Chinese zodiac animal slithers into one of several exhibitions taking place in cooperation with overseas institutions, Zhang Kun reports.



The Shanghai Museum announces its exhibition plan for the year 2025 on Jan 3. GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY

"This visual feast will not only focus on the visual and aesthetic preferences of Impressionist art from an Asian perspective, but it also uses light, shadow and nature to connect the significance of Impressionism to post-Fauvism, Cubism and contemporary art, and to show the eternal creativity and innovative spirit of art," he says.

This year, Shanghai Museum will also work with the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York to present an exhibition of Chinese bronze art. Showcasing more than 200 objects from the collections of the Met, the British Museum in London, Musee Cernuschi in Paris, the Palace Museum in Beijing,



A lacquerware dating to the Warring States Period (475-221 BC), is featured in the ongoing exhibition *Slithering into Spring: A Celebration of the Year of the Snake* at Shanghai Museum.

the Shanghai Museum and the Liaoning Provincial Museum, the exhibition *Recasting the Past: The Art of Chinese Bronze 1100-1900* will take place at the Met from Feb 28 to Sept 28.

Ancient Chinese Bronze art reached its climax in the late Shang (c.16 century-11th century BC) and early Zhou (c.11th century-256 BC) dynasties in China, when ritual vessels in a wide variety of forms and patterns were cast for the worship of ancestors and the commemoration of important events.

Apart from ceremonial significance, bronze items continued to be made and appreciated, developing distinctive styles and aesthetic criteria. Bronzes were long favored by

the literati and continued to have an impact on Chinese decoration art, with traditional bronze patterns, shapes and designs used on other materials, Chu says.

The exhibition also marks the first collaboration between the Shanghai Museum and the Met as exhibition co-organizer. Previously, the Met has borrowed objects from museums in China. "It is completely different this time, as our staff has been involved in the preparation, transportation and planning of the exhibition," Chu says.

The exhibition will focus on bronze treasures of the period, study their interpretation, the passing on and development of the early bronze ritual tradition, and combine lacquerware, ceramics and jade of the same period to show the nostalgic fashion and cultural consciousness of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) literati furnishings, and present the unique artistic value of late bronze artifacts.

The exhibition will later be held at Shanghai Museum East from Nov 12 to March 16, 2026.

Other exhibitions scheduled at Shanghai Museum this year include arts made from rhinoceros horn, a treasured material banned in the modern age, the art of Chinese fans, paintings, calligraphy and ceramics donated to the Shanghai Museum, as well as Chinese lacquerware from the collection of the Tokyo National Museum and other institutions in Japan.

Shanghai Museum celebrated the opening of its east wing in 2024. The new Shanghai Museum East, together with its venue on People's Square, received a record-breaking 6.57 million visitors last year. This makes the institution one of the most popular museums in the world, according to Tang Shifen, the Party secretary of Shanghai Museum.

The ongoing exhibition *On Top of the Pyramid: The Civilization of Ancient Egypt* has been visited by 1.25 million people since its opening on July 19, more than any other touring exhibition of Egyptian art in the world. Shanghai Museum expects that by its closure on Aug 17 this year, the exhibition will break more records and become one of the most popular museum shows in the world.

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## New theater season is set to be spectacular

By ZHENG ZHENG  
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The Shanghai Opera House recently unveiled its 2025 season, which features a diverse lineup of international collaborations, classic masterpieces and original productions.

One of the season's highlights is the opera house's first-ever cooperation with the Bayreuth Festival to present Richard Wagner's sublime opera *Tristan and Isolde*. Based on the Bayreuth Festival's 2022 production, this collaboration will involve Shanghai singers taking on major roles alongside the Bayreuth ensemble cast.

The new production of *Falstaff*, directed by a British team, will also return to the Shanghai stage, moving the comic opera's setting to 1950s Britain with new backdrops and costume designs.

"Through these international collaborations, we aim to showcase the exceptional talent of Chinese artists and global companies, as well as the dynamism of China's audiences and market," explains Xu Zhong, director of the Shanghai Opera House.

"This season elevates our artistic output across every dimension," says Xu, describing it as a collection of original operas and major copro-



The Shanghai Opera House unveiled its 2025 season which features a diverse lineup of international collaborations and original productions, including Charles Gounod's opera *Romeo and Juliet*.

ductions with other theaters from China and abroad.

A centerpiece world premiere is *A Dream of Splendor*, an opera produced by the Shanghai Opera House in partnership with Tencent Video.

This piece, inspired by the popular eponymous TV series, dramatizes the lives of three women living in the Song Dynasty (960-1127), and celebrates the theme of female empowerment.

The score and libretto take inspiration from the era's poetry, music, and aesthetic ideals to artistically re-create vibrant scenes and the cultural milieu of the period.

"Opera must fully embody its essence with music as the driving force to highlight the singing, providing audiences with a fresh perspective," says director Jiang Weiguo. "While primarily an audio experience, the visuals are also imbued with ancient Chinese motifs and aesthetics."

Another major original production is the symphonic choral suite *New Journey Xin'an Touring Troupe*, which honors wartime musical troupes that entertained and rallied resistance forces against the Japanese invasion. Many core members of these roving performance ensembles, once dubbed "buglers for national liberation", later joined the Shanghai Opera House.

In creating this suite, the company hopes to pass on its spirit and pass on the revolutionary cultural gene to younger generations

through a contemporary perspective and youthful musical language.

Other performances include the opera *March of the Volunteers*, commemorating the 90th anniversary of this iconic patriotic song's 1935 debut. It greatly encouraged soldiers and civilians during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45) and was later chosen as China's national anthem. The opera will be presented at the West Bund Grand Theater with more polished and fluid staging.

The original dance theater production *Dance of Calligraphy in 353 AD* will also embark on a new tour in 2025. Meanwhile, the dance gala *Chasing Light* will showcase radiant moments in the dancers' quest to catch the ideal metaphoric light.

To commemorate the 80th anniversary of China's victory in the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, the Shanghai Opera House will collaborate with the Inner Mongolia Art Theatre for the choral concert *Ode to Peace*, paying tribute to the historical struggle.

Additional season highlights include semi-staged productions of classics including *Così fan Tutte*, *Rigoletto*, and *Cavalleria Rusticana*.



The announcement of the 2025 season coincides with the 40th anniversary of the Opera magazine. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Concert performances of the symphonic chorus *Carmina Burana*, along with collaborations with the Shanghai International Arts Festival, Shanghai Symphony Orchestra, and other regional orchestras, will also be held.

"This spectacular season showcases wonderful collaborations in opera, dance, symphonic concerts and events with renowned artists from around the globe," Xu says.

The announcement of the 2025 season coincides with the 40th anniversary of opera-themed magazine *Ge Ju (Opera)*, which will be celebrated with an exhibition at the Shanghai Grand Theatre. Through

immersive displays like stage models, photo galleries, artifacts and interactive digital experiences, the exhibition traces the development of both the publication and the art form in China over the past four decades.

The Shanghai Opera House will continue pursuing excellence through innovation and unwavering effort, says Zhao Lei, Party secretary of the Shanghai Opera House.

"We invite audiences to witness and participate in this journey that combines domestic and international artistic excellence while bridging traditional and modern, Chinese and Western essences," she says.

# LIFE

It was full house at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion at the Los Angeles Music Center on Saturday night, as an enthusiastic audience applauded a one-off performance of *Dance of Oriental*.

The show features an ensemble of dancers from the China Oriental Performing Arts Group, a revered national institution known for performing on some of the world's most prestigious stages.

Presented by Oever, a California-based cultural and media company dedicated to preserving and reinterpreting Chinese heritage, the program blended classical and folk dances, infused with a centuries-old storytelling tradition, through movement. The performances celebrated the richness of Chinese culture while fostering cross-cultural understanding and friendship between the United States and China.



The tour opens a new window for cultural exchange and mutual learning between China and the US."

**Meng Shi**, cofounder, Oever, California-based cultural and media company

A highlight of the evening was a selection from *The Journey of a Legendary Landscape Painting*, a dance drama interpretation of the 12th-century painting *A Panorama of Rivers and Mountains* by Wang Ximeng, that glorifies China's natural beauty. Blending dance, music, visual art and poetic imagination, the performance paid homage to Wang's masterpiece.

The dancers wore ethereal blue costumes, with hairstyles and movements that suggested both the fluidity of rivers and the majesty of towering cliffs.

Having toured over 70 cities, including stops in Singapore and Hong Kong, the production has delivered over 600 performances to enthusiastic audiences.

"The Chinese are famous for their level of artistry and creativity, and the



## Choreographing cultural classics

Dancers wow Los Angeles with passionate visual feast of elegance and excitement



Top: Dancers from the China Oriental Performing Arts Group perform the *Dance of Oriental* at the Music Center in Los Angeles on Saturday night. Above: Performers rehearse before the show at the music center. PHOTOS BY QIU CHEN / XINHUA

meticulous attention to every detail of this performance was truly remarkable," said one dance enthusiast and former DreamWorks employee.

Other notable performances included *Jasmine*, a lyrical dance with floral parasols evoking the beauty of southern China's water towns; *Four Practices of Chinese Medicine*, a humorous translation of traditional healing practices into dance; *Ink on Water*, a tribute to Chinese calligraphy and ink-wash painting; *Flying Apsaras*, inspired by Dunhuang murals and the Silk Road; *Far and Beyond*, a nod to digital innovation and scientific exploration; and *Green and Gaba* (Fish Movements), which celebrated the Dai people's aquatic heritage.

"I enjoyed the adroit and layered interplay of dance, music, costumes and backdrops," said another avid dance aficionado. "It may have originated in China, but the whole night had an international and timeless feel to it."

Many of the spectators praised the dancers for their effortless grace and gravity-defying leaps that result from years of intense dedication.

"I couldn't understand all the cultural nuances, but it made me realize Chinese and American cultures were not so different and the elegance and sophistication of the performance transported me to a world of beauty and delight," said one University of California, Los Angeles, graduate.

"Chinese culture is deeply rooted in history while thriving in contemporary contexts," says Meng Shi, one of Oever's cofounders.

"We believe culture transcends borders and time with the power to connect people, regardless of their origins and cultural backgrounds," adds her partner and cofounder Yanbing Bo.

Shi says that COPAG has already performed in San Diego and will soon take the stage in New York.

"The tour opens a new window for cultural exchange and mutual learning between China and the US, allowing more Americans to appreciate the beauty of traditional Chinese culture," she says.

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AD

## Films celebrate China-Ethiopia ties

ADDIS ABABA — The first China-Ethiopia Film and TV Festival was held recently in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, with the aim of promoting cultural exchange among the BRICS member states through collaboration in the film industry.

The groundbreaking event marked the establishment of a new partnership between China and Ethiopia in the creative industry with a special focus on the exchange of films, strengthening cross-cultural exchange, and sharing knowledge, technology, and experience.

Speaking at the event, Chinese Ambassador to Ethiopia Chen Hai said as ancient civiliza-

tions, both China and Ethiopia have long histories, rich cultures, and diverse ethnic customs, as well as beautiful landscapes, that can potentially be used in the production of films, dramas, and TV shows.

The two countries have enjoyed a long history of cooperation, mainly in the fields of construction, infrastructure development and manufacturing.

Shibru Mamo, director general for Public Diplomacy at Ethiopia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, emphasized the significance of the festival in strengthening people-to-people relations among BRICS member states through media.

"This festival also represents the strong, historic partnership between Ethiopia and China, a relationship that is continuously growing in scope and depth in economic, political, infrastructure and cultural collaborations," Mamo says.

The three-day festival featured 12 Chinese and Ethiopian films and documentaries. The documentary film *The Road to Prosperity*, which highlights China's transformative development, focusing on the hard work, resilience and commitment to growth of its people, was presented at the festival's opening ceremony.

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## Confucius Institute brings countries closer through exchange

ZAGREB — Kresimir Jurak, director of the Confucius Institute at the University of Zagreb, has a clear mission: to promote Chinese culture in Croatia and foster exchange and understanding between the two countries.

A well-known expert, Jurak has extensive experience of living and studying in China. After more than 40 visits and nearly three years of studying in the country, he has gained a deep understanding of Chinese culture.

Before becoming director of the Confucius Institute in May 2012, Jurak taught Chinese history at the University of Zagreb's Sinology Department.

He says he is proud that the Confucius Institute has become a leading teacher of Chinese language and culture.

Currently, the institute has 45 teaching locations in eight cities in Croatia employing 32 teachers and was once the biggest of its kind in Europe.

Since its founding in 2012, it has taught thousands of Croatian students through its Chinese language programs and engaged hundreds of more through cultur-

“For me, connecting people, cultures and languages is essential. The more we understand each other, the better friends we become. And friends don't fight, they don't need wars. We need friendship more than ever.”

**Kresimir Jurak**, director, Confucius Institute at the University of Zagreb

al initiatives such as the Chinese Bridge competition, a Chinese language proficiency competition, a Dragon Boat race, and cultural workshops.

"I think we help bring Chinese culture to Croatia, but also build

bridges between Croatia and China in many areas," he says.

Jurak emphasizes the importance of the institute's mission to foster deeper cultural exchange and mutual understanding.

"For me, connecting people, cultures and languages is essential. The more we understand each other, the better friends we become. And friends don't fight; they don't need wars. We need friendship more than ever."

Looking ahead, Jurak says the institute will focus on digital transformation and organize more cultural events in Croatia. It plans to incorporate Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality into its language programs to enhance the learning experience.

He also sees an opportunity in the tourism sector by helping Croatia's tourism professionals attract more Chinese visitors and tapping into the country's enormous outbound travel market.

"There are a lot of opportunities for the future development of the institute," Jurak says.

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