

On path to peace

Israel-Hamas ceasefire comes into force after 3-hour delay

WORLD, PAGE 9



Porcelain relics shed light on trade across ocean

CULTURE, PAGE 16



Positive outlook

Shift to renewables to fuel growth of energy industry amid challenges

BUSINESS, PAGE 7

CHINA DAILY

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TikTok back online after Trump pledge

He plans to issue executive order upon return to office to delay ban on ByteDance platform

By HENG WEILI in New York
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After a brief weekend outage, TikTok was up and running again on Sunday in the United States after President-elect Donald Trump said he would issue an executive order Monday to keep the popular video platform active.

It was the latest in a flurry of news about the short-form video site, which is owned by Beijing-based ByteDance and has gained some prominent supporters in the US.

TikTok went dark around 10:30 pm ET Saturday but was back online just before 12:30 pm on Sunday. "Sorry, TikTok isn't available right now," users were told in a pop-up message Saturday.

The next day, a new pop-up said: "Welcome back! Thanks for your patience and support. As a result of President Trump's efforts, TikTok is back in the US! You can continue to create, share, and discover all the things you love on TikTok."

Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform on Sunday morning: "I'm asking companies not to let TikTok stay dark! I will issue an executive order on Monday to extend the period of time before the law's prohibitions take effect, so that we can make a deal to protect our national security."

"The order will also confirm that there will be no liability for any company that helped keep TikTok from going dark before my order. Americans deserve to see our exciting Inauguration on Monday, as well as other events and conversations," Trump wrote.

"I would like the United States to have a 50 percent ownership position in a joint venture. ... Without US approval, there is no Tik Tok. With our approval, it is worth hundreds of billions of dollars - maybe trillions. Therefore, my initial thought is a joint venture between the current owners and/or new owners."

In a post on X.com on Sunday by @TikTokPolicy, the platform said: "In agreement with our service providers, TikTok is in the process of restoring service. We thank President Trump for providing the necessary clarity and

assurance to our service providers that they will face no penalties providing TikTok to over 170 million Americans and allowing over 7 million small businesses to thrive.

"It's a strong stand for the First Amendment and against arbitrary censorship. We will work with President Trump on a long-term solution that keeps TikTok in the United States," the statement said.

The Protecting Americans from Foreign Adversary Controlled Applications Act — passed by Congress by a wide margin in the spring and upheld by the Supreme Court on Friday — required ByteDance to cut ties with the platform's US operations by Jan 19, due to alleged national security concerns. The statute, however, gives the sitting president authority to grant a 90-day extension if a viable sale were underway.

Google and Apple had removed the app from their digital stores to comply with the law by Sunday or potentially face hefty fines.

US Senator Rand Paul, a Kentucky Republican, took a strong stand for TikTok in a post on X.com on Saturday.

"Why am I joining @tiktok_us just as the government ban begins? Because I don't like being told what to do," he wrote. "I don't like being told what I can think or say. The courts may think @tiktok_us is excluded from the first amendment. I don't. I join @tiktok_us today as a form of civil disobedience. To the 170 million Americans using @tiktok_us: Don't give in and don't give up. Resist."

The ban, though, still has support among US lawmakers.

Senator Tom Cotton, an Arkansas Republican, warned companies on Sunday not to provide TikTok with the technical support it needs.

"Any company that hosts, distributes, services, or otherwise facilitates communist-controlled TikTok could face hundreds of billions of dollars of ruinous liability under the law, not just from (the Justice Department), but also under securities law, shareholder lawsuits, and state AGs," Cotton wrote on X. "Think about it."

See **TikTok**, page 3

Inaugural warmup



President-elect Donald Trump speaks at his victory rally at the Capital One Arena on Sunday in Washington DC. Trump will be sworn in as the 47th president of the United States on Monday in the Capitol Rotunda. SCOTT OLSON / GETTY IMAGES VIA AFP

Washington urged to address cyber affair concerns

By ZHANG YUNBI
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Washington should take seriously Beijing's concerns about US cyberattacks on China, and Beijing is also willing to build a cyber relationship with the US featuring peace, stability and mutual respect through dialogue, a senior Chinese diplomat said.

Wang Lei, the Foreign Ministry's coordinator for cyber and digital affairs, made the comments at a time when cyberspace security has become a hot issue in China-US ties.

Earlier this month, US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said, "We have sent clear messages to (China) about what it would actually mean if they acted to disrupt American critical infrastructure and how we would respond."

Wang said, "We have made it clear to the (Joe) Biden administration that China rejects the US accusations against China on individual cases in the absence of evidence."

At the same time, Beijing has made clear to the US its concerns after "China found that the US has

carried out long-running, systematic and large-scale cyberattacks against China", he said.

Such attacks "include cyber espionage as well as cyberattacks that jeopardize the security of China's critical infrastructure in areas such as telecommunication, finance and transportation", he added.

"We also introduced to the US side the scope and basis adopted for classifying China's critical infrastructure in accordance with China's relevant laws and regulations, and made clear China's seriousness in protecting its own critical infrastructure security," Wang said.

Beijing has emphasized that Washington "should first carry out what it asks others to do", he said.

"The crux of the matter is that the US side should take China's concerns seriously, and it should not consider itself justified just because it speaks louder. It does not work when it willfully sets rules for other countries based on what it calls a position of strength", he added.



Wang Lei

When asked how to approach the two nations' differences in this area, and how the China-US cyber relationship might develop, Wang said that China has pointed out that the two major countries should not stop interacting with each other, but should

have mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation, and should continue moving forward on a stable, healthy and sustainable path.

China is willing to "build a future-oriented China-US cyber relationship", Wang said.

Currently, the two sides have differences in the cyber area, "but they are fully capable of acting on equal footing and with mutual respect, discussing any matters of concern with each other openly and honestly, taking facts and supporting evidence as a basis and using common rules as benchmarks", he said.

"More important, from a broader scope and a longer-term perspective, we should figure out what kind

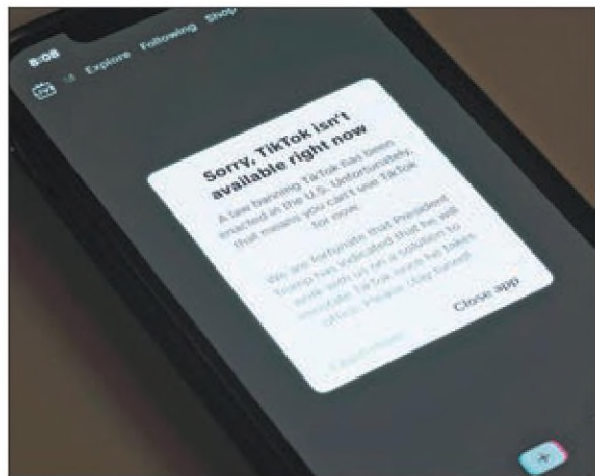
of cyber relationship China and the US should establish, and what kind of rules should be used for their interaction, and we should jointly explore the right way to get along with each other in cyberspace," he said.

China and the US have the largest influence in the global cyber domain, and both rely heavily on cyberspace, Wang noted.

Furthermore, both sides have similar concerns about maintaining their own cybersecurity, especially critical infrastructure security, he added.

"Maintaining peace and stability in cyberspace is not only in the common interest of both sides, but should be the goal of their joint efforts," he said.

"We are willing to work with the US side to build a China-US cyber relationship featuring peace, stability and mutual respect through dialogue," Wang added, "because we firmly believe that this is in the long run the best way to address the common concerns of both sides, no matter how the US administration changes".



A message reading "Sorry, TikTok isn't available right now" is displayed on the cellphone screen of a TikTok app user in Los Angeles, the United States, on Saturday. TikTok went dark late Saturday in the US as a ban on the popular video-sharing app took effect. ANDY BAO / AP

Bilateral ties with stability, cooperation will benefit all

The recent passing away of former US president Jimmy Carter serves as a reminder that even in the midst of ups and downs in China-US relations, one aspect remains unchanged: the interests of China and the United States are deeply interconnected, and through respect

and a spirit of cooperation, it can lead to mutually beneficial results.

While some in the US may find this hard to believe, but irrespective of the current state of China-US relations, the common interests of the two countries haven't diminished in any way. Rather, given the complicated state of our relations and the world, they've actually increased.

Unfortunately, over the past decade, mutual distrust between China and US has grown and

WORLD WATCH By Jon Taylor

become entrenched. There is enormous distrust in the relationship. The distrust on the US side stems from a belief that China's goal is not only to enhance its international status and achieve national rejuvenation, but also to weaken the US' hegemonic position as a global power. China's distrust centers on the US' intentions to try to contain China.

With the advent of any new US president, there is always an opportunity for the incoming administration to explore ways to foster better China-US relations.

However, the US President Donald Trump has a track record from a previous stint in office — one marked by economic and political belligerence toward China.

The question is will Trump change course and look to improve relations or continue his harsh rhetoric and treatment of China. The signs so far suggest that we shouldn't be optimistic, at least in the short term.

See **Relations**, page 3

SOCCER LEAGUE HELPS GUIZHOU CONNECT WITH WORLD

Cun Chao puts region on the global map, drawing thousands of tourists and improving livelihoods

By YANG JUN in Guiyang
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A qualifier match between Xiaorui village and Panxue village marked the start of the Guizhou Village Super League tournament on Jan 4 in Rongjiang county in Southwest China's Guizhou province, the birthplace of the hugely popular soccer events also known as Cun Chao.

The village super league has become a massive hit both in China and abroad, showcasing the immense popularity of the game among locals and the region's rich ethnic culture.

According to Wang Yonggui, deputy head of the Guizhou Village Super League office, as many as 3,000 players from 108 teams participated in the latest competition, which witnessed a sharp increase in scale compared with the previous two years. The league was born in 2023 with 20 local teams and has since attracted participants from across China and beyond.

See **Soccer**, page 2

INSIDE
Australia's role in mitigating major-country competition
Global Views, page 13

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PAGE TWO



Left: Foreign students from Guizhou University and players of Jiangxi team in action during a Village Super League match in Rongjiang county, Guizhou province, in April. ZHOU GUANGSHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY



Right: Former NBA player Stephon Marbury dances with locals in Taijiang county in July, 2023. ZHANG KUI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Soccer: Beautiful game unites the world

From page 1

Among the players this year was 31-year-old David Geary. A teacher at Guizhou University, Geary lived in Rongjiang as a child, moving back to the United Kingdom when he was 14.

He said that his love for soccer and Guizhou made him return to China. He considers Rongjiang his second home. Considered as one of them by the villagers of Liubaitang, he was allowed to join the village team and has played for it for two consecutive years.

"It's nice to see people playing soccer and cheering on their village. I'm proud to be a part of it, proud to be someone from Rongjiang," said Geary, adding that he hopes some young players will shine enough in the Village Super League to go professional.

Besides the Guizhou Village Super League, Rongjiang county is set to organize the first session of a national-level Village Super League. Invitational events with countries involved in the Belt and Road Initiative are also expected to be held during the National Day holiday this year, Wang of the super league office said.

In May last year, Brazilian soccer star Ricardo Izecson dos Santos Leite, aka Kaka, visited Guizhou and played in a charity match in Rongjiang county.

In September, 24 diplomats from countries including Argentina, Mexico and Brazil played a friendly match against a local team in the county.

The local players are not professionals but farmers, construction workers, teachers and students, brought together by their shared passion for the game. On the field, they represent the pride and aspirations of their respective villages.

In the stands, traditionally attired local villagers and international tourists cheer their favorite teams together. Rongjiang's stadiums, where admission is free, are packed for every game.

Wang Yonggui, who was a shop owner and member of the Fenghuang village team, played in the international match held in late September. "We're amateurs, but soccer brings joy to everyone on the team," he said.

Wang is an avid Cristiano Ronaldo fan. "I admire his discipline and passion," he said, pointing to his collection of Ronaldo jerseys and posters at home.

"Soccer connects us to new friends and a bigger world," he added.

Bridging worlds

When Kaka stepped onto the field in Rongjiang wearing jersey number 22 on May 28, the crowd erupted in cheers, chanting "Come on" in the Dong ethnic group language.

During the match, Kaka scored a stunning goal, which he celebrated with his signature gesture of pointing to the sky. Beyond the field, he encouraged local girls to compete in a youth game, recalled one spectator.

"In Brazil, we grow up playing soccer — it is part of our culture. What I saw here today is quite the same," Kaka shared.

Marcelo Gabriel Suarez Salvia, the Argentine ambassador to China, echoed the sentiment. "Many of

us, as Latin Americans and from the Caribbeans, feel a connection to Cun Chao. In the passion of the children and players of Rongjiang for the sport, we see the same dreams that resonate in our region."

After the game, Kaka proudly held up local specialties Tashixiang lamb and Xiaoxiang chicken, all the while grinning from ear to ear.

"The Village Super League is more than a sports event; it's a carnival blending soccer, food and ethnic culture," said Ouyang Zhangwei, the league's project head.

Guizhou has a rich cultural tapestry, being home to 17 ethnic minority groups, including the Miao, Bouyeli, Dong and Yi.

During game breaks, the crowd enjoys Miao folk songs and the Dong Grand Song, an intangible cultural heritage. Foreign visitors, enchanted by the vibrant ethnic culture, often join the celebrations.

"We have started receiving international tourists since July 2023, and they are very curious about everything in our village," said committee director Cen Jianglong of Taipan, a village in the province's Taijiang county.

The recognition of their culture has been gratifying for Cen. "I remember a group of tourists being fascinated by our intangible cultural heritage, such as the wooden drum dance. They even joined in, moving to the rhythm of the drum beats."

Cun BA, a village basketball league that started in Taipan village in 2022, has also gained international attention. In July, NBA player



Above left: Brazilian players celebrate scoring a goal during a friendly match with China in Rongjiang on Oct 4. Above right: Players of Hotdog Team from the United States and Thorn Pear Team from Guizhou receive a warm welcome as they enter the field in Rongjiang in June. PHOTOS BY ZHOU GUANGSHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY



"The villagers of Rongjiang may not speak English or Spanish, but they speak the universal language of sports. When foreign athletes step onto the village soccer field, they're met with cheers and a shared connection that transcends words."

Kang Xiao,
associate professor at Beijing Foreign Studies University

Danny Green played in a charity match in the county, and after the game, wore a Miao silver necklace on the court and danced hand in hand with locals.

Zhang Hongjun, a village basketball player, said, "I have always dreamed of going to the NBA, but I never expected that one day these players would come to my hometown, learn our Miao language and participate in the ethnic dance with us."

While the Village Super League celebrates local traditions, it is also an opportunity for the young generation to connect with the global soccer community.

In November, a Rongjiang youth team traveled to Brazil. As part of the league's exchange program, the six-member team visited the iconic Maracana Stadium and trained with CR Flamengo, a top club in Rio de Janeiro.

On Nov 16, the children attended the first leg of the Brazilian Women's

Soccer Premier League and appeared on the field as ball kids for the Flamengo team.

For 10-year-old Xu Xiangyang, the trip was an eye-opener. "Brazil's stadiums are huge and their players are so skilled. I can see the confidence and brilliance shining in their eyes," he said.

Xu, who has been playing soccer for two years, told China Daily that he was inspired by a foreign soccer star he saw on TV, whose charisma left a lasting impression.

"Although we lost to the Flamengo player, I am very excited and happy. Their passes, physical fitness and positioning are much better than ours, and there is still a lot for us to learn," Xu said. "I want to see more of the world and, one day, become the kind of player I admire most."

This is not the first time Rongjiang soccer teams have participated in international exchanges. In December 2023, a youth women's team visited Spain to meet with Real

Madrid players, while a Guizhou team traveled to France for a competition in July last year.

During the National Day holiday, Rongjiang county welcomed nearly 500,000 visitors — over 100,000 more than its permanent population. This influx generated 602 million yuan (\$821 million) in tourism revenue, marking a 22 percent year-on-year increase.

Rongjiang has hosted delegations of diplomats as well as soccer teams from nations like Portugal, England and Brazil ever since the league started.

Personal connections

Visiting foreign teams often stay in local villages, where they enjoy authentic local cuisine. "This not only gives foreign visitors a taste of rustic village life but also spreads the benefits of tourism more widely," Ouyang said.

In Taipan village, the birthplace of Cun BA, once unfamiliar to foreign visitors, English signs are now common and local vendors have picked up basic English phrases.

Li Zhouzhou, who runs a Miao handicraft shop, said these changes have brought unexpected opportunities. "When Cun BA first gained attention, tourists from Singapore visited my shop. They are drawn to Miao silver jewelry and embroidery, which have become their favorites," she said.

Li never imagined that her shop would attract so many international travelers. "Foreign visitors love the intricate designs and the stories

behind our crafts. Many buy them as souvenirs, which has increased our income."

To attract more customers, Li posted her interactions with foreign visitors on social media.

"This promotion unexpectedly helps lure more attention to my store," she explained.

Kang Xiao, an associate professor at Beijing Foreign Studies University's School of International Relations and Diplomacy, said, "The grassroots essence of Cun Chao is what makes it truly special."

Kang emphasized that rural revitalization goes beyond economic growth. "It's about enriching people's cultural lives and enhancing their mental well-being," he explained.

Argentine ambassador Salvia said during his speech in Guizhou, "They (the games) reflect the genuine energy and enthusiasm of local communities for the sport, demonstrating how soccer is deeply integrated into the daily lives of the people."

Kang likened international exchanges to building friendships, emphasizing the need to find common ground from an everyday perspective.

Sports, Kang noted, speak a universal language. "The passion and determination displayed by Guizhou villagers on the field embody their aspirations for a better life. That's what resonates with international audiences."

He added, "The villagers of Rongjiang may not speak English or Spanish, but they speak the universal language of sports. When foreign athletes step onto the village soccer field, they're met with cheers and a shared connection that transcends words."

Kang also expressed concerns about Cun Chao losing its viral status. "Its growth shouldn't depend on temporary online fame. Instead, it should focus on preserving its grassroots spirit while building structured international sports exchanges," he said.

Efforts to expand the international reach of the Village Super League are already in motion.

Rongjiang hosted a grassroots soccer coach training session led by the Premier League on Dec 2.

The program involved 42 participants, including the league's players and local PE teachers.

In 2023, the league signed a strategic partnership with the Premier League and launched several training programs, with plans to organize community soccer tournaments.

The plan aims to promote Cun Chao domestically, attract foreign teams and eventually host international tournaments.

"We're currently in the second phase and aim to invite more foreign teams and influencers this year," Ouyang revealed.

"Our goal is to strengthen partnerships with leagues like the Premier League and La Liga to learn from their events organization, fans engagement and soccer culture," he added.

During the third session of the 14th Guizhou Provincial People's Congress on Sunday, Governor Li Bingjun outlined the province's 2025 goals to promote mass sports participation and advance competitive sports development.

Liu Boqian contributed to this story.

TOP NEWS

Fiery tragedy



Firefighters try to put out the flames engulfing a fuel tanker that exploded in Suleja, Nigeria, on Saturday. At least 86 people were killed and 52 suffered severe burns in the accident. The tanker carrying 60,000 liters of gasoline exploded after flipping over. AP PHOTO / ARISE NEWS

Xinjiang vows to fight against US sanctions

Regional government to help enterprises find footing in new markets

By CUI JIA and MAO WEIHUA in Urumqi

The Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region will fight back against the United States' repeated crackdowns on local enterprises and firmly defend the rights of the enterprises to operate and of the region's people to work and pursue a better life, the chairman of the regional government said on Sunday.

"We will stand our ground on issues related to Xinjiang in accordance with the law, expand our means for countering foreign sanctions and enhance policy support for enterprises affected by US sanctions, including key industry chain enterprises and small and medium enterprises, so as to safeguard the stability and security of our industrial and supply chains," Chairman Erkin Tuniyaz said.

He made the remarks while delivering the government work report during the annual session of the 14th Xinjiang Regional People's Congress, which kicked off in the regional capital of Urumqi on Sunday.

Some Western countries, especially the US, have been smearing Xinjiang with baseless claims about "forced labor", and the US has even tried to crack down on businesses that source materials such as cotton, tomatoes and photovoltaic products from Xinjiang by imposing a slew of sanctions.

According to the Xinjiang government, by the end of 2023, sanc-

“ (Western countries) won't achieve their goal of containing China by curbing Xinjiang's development.”

Xu Guixiang, regional government spokesman

tions had disrupted operations at more than 100 local enterprises. Sanctioned textile and garment factories were forced to cut production or shut down entirely, resulting in significant layoffs.

Regional government spokesman Xu Guixiang said the government and people of Xinjiang have continued to show strong support for the enterprises affected by the unfair sanctions, and it's the regional government's responsibility to help these companies explore new international and domestic markets.

"Xinjiang is determined to strike back, and they (Western countries) won't achieve their goal of containing China by curbing Xinjiang's development," Xu said.

Li Xuan, deputy director of the Department of Commerce of Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, said the goal of the US is to remove materials sourced from Xinjiang

from international supply chains through the sanctions route, and the list of penalized Xinjiang enterprises will only get longer.

"We will continue to promote top-quality source materials produced in Xinjiang in international markets, especially in non-US markets. Preferential policies will also be extended to affected enterprises as they expand in domestic markets," Li said. "Of course, the businesses will be affected by the sanctions imposed by the US, but we are confident we can help them get through the difficult times."

Xie Yingzhou, deputy director of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs of Xinjiang, said the enterprises are vulnerable in the face of such groundless accusations and sanctions.

Citing the tomato industry as an example, Xie said more than 90 percent of the cultivation process and production process for tomato-based products in Xinjiang are mechanized, and the so-called forced labor issue simply doesn't exist.

"The best way to help sanctioned businesses in the tomato industry is to invite international business partners to Xinjiang and let them witness the whole production process for themselves. We have nothing to hide," Xie added.

Despite the crackdown, Xinjiang's GDP exceeded 2 trillion yuan (\$273 billion) in 2024 and achieved a growth of 6.1 percent year-on-year, which is higher than the coun-

try's expected GDP growth rate of 5 percent in 2024, according to the work report.

The report said the region's foreign trade volume increased 21.8 percent year-on-year. Xinjiang has made significant progress in developing the core area of the Silk Road Economic Belt, actively contributing to the China-Central Asia transportation corridor.

The region has particularly enhanced cooperation with central Asian countries. A delegation of Xinjiang's Party and government officials visited the five nations in the region, and several heads of state and government leaders from those countries visited Xinjiang.

The mutual visits resulted in the signing of several economic and trade cooperation agreements, and imports and exports to the five Central Asian countries accounted for 67.9 percent of the region's total trade last year.

In addition, as a result of many trips by delegations of foreign politicians, diplomats, reporters, scholars and entrepreneurs to Xinjiang, and a series of international symposiums in the autonomous region, international society has gained a better understanding of the real Xinjiang, Erkin Tuniyaz, the chairman, said.

"The region has also shown the world that it's confident about further opening-up and having more friends and partners," he said.

Meanwhile, the region has continued to improve its law-based routine counterterrorism and stability maintenance system. By taking firm legal measures to crack down on and prevent the activities of separatists, religious extremists and terrorists, Xinjiang is determined to resolutely nip the risks of violent terrorism in the bud and keep terrorist threats outside its borders, the chairman said.

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WEF annual meeting to push for more global collaborations

By XING YI in Davos, Switzerland xingyi@chinadaily.com.cn

Amid escalating geopolitical tensions, accelerating climate change and rapid technological advances, the World Economic Forum will call on global leaders to prioritize collaboration when it convenes its 55th annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland, this week.

Vice-Premier Ding Xuexiang will be among 350 senior government officials attending the five-day forum, which opens on Monday. He is scheduled to deliver a special address on Tuesday. The forum will also see the participation of over 900 CEOs and chairs of major companies.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and several heads of state, including German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, are set to deliver speeches during the event. US President-elect Donald Trump, who takes office on Monday, will attend the forum via video link on Thursday.

Klaus Schwab, founder and chairman of the WEF, said, "Despite divergent positions and great uncertainties, the annual meeting will foster a spirit of cooperation and constructive optimism with the objective of shaping the forthcoming intelligent age in a more sustainable and inclusive way."

Themed "Collaboration for the Intelligent Age", the meeting features a program of more than 300 sessions spanning five key topics: fostering new economic growth, navigating technological shifts, creating jobs and reskilling the workforce, combating climate change, and enhancing resilience for global cooperation.

The influence of technologies — particularly artificial intelligence — on business and society is a focal point of the discussions. The forum will release a new report series on AI, exploring its responsible adoption at scale across industries, alongside new research offering strategies for inclusive AI development.

AI "is reshaping industries, economies, and even the way we think about ourselves. This surge of technological development comes, not surprisingly, at the same time that the world is grappling with global

challenges that demand our immediate, and collective, attention and action", Schwab added.

Economic recovery is another critical issue on the agenda. The forum's survey of leading chief economists ahead of the meeting found that around 56 percent of respondents expect weaker global economic conditions in 2025, while 48 percent remain optimistic about the increase in global trade volume despite concerns over escalating protectionist measures.

As China is the world's second-largest economy, its economic trajectory is central to discussions about future global growth. A panel discussion titled "Decoding China's Economy" will take place on Wednesday, featuring experts who will analyze current economic policies and the country's shift toward new quality productive forces for high-quality development.

China's annual Central Economic Work Conference, held in December in Beijing, stated that the country will take steps to make scientific and technological innovation drive the development of new quality productive forces.

"I'm bullish on China's economy in the medium and long term," Borge Brende, WEF president and former foreign minister of Norway, said on Saturday during an interview with Xinhua News Agency.

Brende noted the steps that China is taking to stimulate its economy and increase domestic consumption, as the country reported that its GDP expanded 5 percent in 2024, which is in line with its preset target and provides a solid base for stabilizing the economy this year.

He also pointed out that China's growing population of college graduates will greatly contribute to future development in the intelligent age.

Despite geopolitical tensions looming over global cooperation, the Global Cooperation Barometer 2025 report, developed by WEF in collaboration with McKinsey & Co, showed that international cooperation gained positive momentum in the areas of climate and nature.

"Even in a world where there is more competition, we will need to work together," Brende said. "I agree with the notion that we are in the same boat. Global problems have to find global solutions."



Staff members prepare the plenary room ahead of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, on Saturday. The forum will run from Monday through Friday. YVES HERMAN / REUTERS

Relations: Antagonistic approach should be abandoned

From page 1

Trump is poised to escalate the hard-line approach that he took toward China during his first term as president. We should expect efforts at deepening economic decoupling, heightening military pressure, and engaging in imprudent actions that will almost certainly upset China and further destabilize relations.

Trump has already named people for his second administration who can rightly be described as uncompromising China hawks. Not a good sign if we're hoping for a quick improvement in China-US relations.

It should also be noted that while the more antagonistic turn in China-US relations may have begun during Trump's first term, this policy was continued by former president Joe Biden. That said, there's an opportunity to

Since the formal establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the US 46 years ago, the two nations have found ways to improve relations in the midst of crisis and contention. As the world's most important bilateral relationship, it's critically important for the two countries to find common ground.

move away from this approach. We know this because since the formal establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the US 46 years ago, the two nations have found ways to improve relations in the midst of crisis and contention. As the world's most important bilateral relationship, it's critically important for the two countries to find common ground.

For a scholar who teaches courses on Chinese politics and Chinese foreign policy, the current state of China-US relations is not just lamentable; it's disheartening. Students, scholars, artists and citizens are losing out on opportunities for people-to-people exchanges, tourism, cultural understanding and educational exchanges. China and the US are losing out on important country-to-country cooperation on a host of critical global issues ranging from climate change to global

governance to trade to anti-terrorism to economic development to cybersecurity.

Late Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping and Carter's leadership in 1979 opened a historic chapter in China-US relations. Carter saw establishing diplomatic relations with China as one of the most significant — and correct — decisions he made as president. Both Deng and Carter's historic contribution to the normalization and development of China-US relations resonates today with the continued hope that China-US relations will improve and move forward toward stability, cooperation and mutual respect benefiting not only both countries but the world.

The author is a professor of political science at the University of Texas at San Antonio, the United States. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

TikTok: A reprieve for platform's US presence

From page 1

Dave Portnoy, founder of the Barstool Sports website, in a video posted to his 3.4 million followers on X on Thursday, said federal officials were "detached from reality."

"There's just no way you can ruin that many jobs, livelihoods, careers, advertising because you're afraid of Chinese disinformation," Portnoy said. "I'm more worried about American government disinformation at this point than the Chinese."

TikTok CEO Shou Chew is expected to attend Trump's inauguration with a prime seating location.

Zhu Keli, founding director of the China Institute of New Economy, said the decision to uphold the ban casts a shadow on TikTok's

future in the US, but Trump's "most likely" 90-day extension could provide a valuable buffer period for the company.

"Trump's stand indicates that TikTok still has a chance to seek a better solution to ensure its legal operation in the US through negotiation, cooperation or other innovative methods. It is also a recognition of TikTok's immense user base and commercial value," Zhu said.

Zhu noted that the TikTok case highlights the compliance challenges that Chinese tech companies are facing, especially in terms of data security, when expanding their presence in overseas markets amid geopolitical uncertainties.

Fan Feifei in Beijing and agencies contributed to this story.

CHINA

Rare earth deposit found in Yunnan

Million-ton discovery thought to be largest of its kind in the country

By LI PEIXUAN
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China has discovered a rare earth deposit in Honghe, Yunnan province, composed of about 1.15 million metric tons of potential resources, further consolidating the country's rare earth resource advantage and industrial chain, the China Geological Survey said Friday.

The deposit includes more than 470,000 tons of critical rare earth elements, including praseodymium, neodymium, dysprosium and terbium, according to the CGS, a division of the Ministry of Natural Resources.

Primarily consisting of medium and heavy rare earths, the deposit is thought to be the largest of its kind in China. Medium and heavy rare earths are relatively scarce in the country but are crucial elements in electric vehicles, renewable energy, national defense and high-tech industries, the CGS said.

"Each new energy vehicle requires about 0.8 of a kilogram of medium and heavy rare earths, leading to substantial and increasing demand each year," said Hou Zengqian, an academician with the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

The discovery marks another major breakthrough for China since the first super-large ion-adsorption rare earth deposit was found in Jiangxi province in 1969, the CGS noted.

Hou said exploring medium and heavy ion-adsorption rare earth deposits is challenging due to their relatively low overall content and lack of distinctive mineral forms easily identified in the field.

Unlike deposits of iron or lead-

zinc ore, which can be quickly delineated with magnetic or electrical methods, rare earth deposits rely heavily on precise field measurements and laboratory analyses, Hou added.

The breakthrough was achieved by scientists who identified enrichment patterns for medium and heavy rare earths through geochemical mapping and scaled-up exploration efforts, Hou said.

Over the past decade, the CGS has built a national geochemical baseline network, gathered extensive geochemical data and developed a fast, precise and eco-friendly exploration system for ion-adsorption rare earths, the agency said.

"Our exploration methods are green, causing nearly zero surface damage," said Wang Xueqiu, chief scientist at the Institute of Geophysical and Geochemical Exploration at the CGS.

Wang and his team collected stream sediments in natural areas such as rivers and terraces. They also used a Gannan drill, a manual tool that requires no infrastructure and creates small holes about 10 centimeters in diameter, avoiding harm to vegetation, Wang said.

Extracting ion-adsorption rare earths involves drilling holes in a small hill, injecting extractants and collecting the rare earth elements—all without disturbing existing vegetation, he added.

Hou said scientists will continue to focus on advancing technologies for efficient separation and high-value usage of rare earths to strengthen the industry chain and boost international competitiveness.

Mobile market



Villagers carrying vegetables prepare to board the 5640 train at the Liugeji Railway Station in Qiangdongnan Miao and Dong autonomous prefecture, Guizhou province, on Saturday. Operating between Guiyang city and Yuping county, train 5640 is a slow train and has provided affordable, convenient transportation for over 100 ethnic minority villages near more than 10 small train stations along the route. In recent years, many villagers have boarded the train to sell vegetables, turning it into a bustling mobile market. Villagers affectionately call it the "village train". YANG WENBIN / XINHUA

5-year haul boosts nation's stash of gold, natural mineral resources

By LI PEIXUAN
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China has added 168 metric tons of gold resources and significantly increased reserves of 12 co-mineral or associated minerals over the past five years, bolstering the nation's resource security, the China Geological Survey said Sunday.

The CGS, a division of the Ministry of Natural Resources, announced breakthroughs in gold exploration, including the discovery of 102.4 tons in the Anbalibei mining area in Gansu province, 41.3 tons in the Hadamengou mining area in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region and 24.3 tons in the Baoxinggou mining area in Heilongjiang province. The resources have been classified as super-large and large-scale deposits.

The exploration, funded by the central government, leveraged advanced technologies, geological theories and computing power. Since 2021, as a result of efforts centered on key metallogenic zones such as Jiaodong and major gold resource bases like Hadamengou, 47 target areas have been identified and 35 have

102.4
tons

amount of gold found in mining areas in Gansu province.

been recommended for further exploration, the CGS said.

These findings have expanded the scope of gold exploration and deepened the understanding of national gold deposit patterns, the CGS said.

The breakthroughs are expected to guide local enterprises in future exploration, potentially spurring regional socioeconomic development.

In addition to gold, national reserves of 12 co-mineral and associated low-grade mineral resources, including gallium, germanium and indium, have significantly increased, according to the CGS.

Co-minerals are resources found within the same deposit that, after evaluation, reach concentrations suitable for industrial use. Associated minerals are those present in primary minerals that do not initially meet industrial standards but can be reused after

processing, the CGS said.

Since 2021, the CGS has collaborated with more than 100 divisions across 27 provincial regions to reassess 703 active mines and 1,148 medium-sized and large mining areas. This has resulted in substantial increases in co-mineral and associated mineral low-grade reserves.

Compared to previous estimates, reserves of cobalt and rhenium have increased by more than 100 percent, nickel and indium by over 30 percent, and gallium, germanium, vanadium and potassium salt by more than 10 percent, the CGS said.

The increase in gold, tantalum, rare earths and zirconium is also notable. Newly identified gold reserves as co-mineral or associated mineral resources have exceeded 1,200 tons, while vanadium reserves have increased by more than 12 million tons, and potassium salt by over 160 million tons, the CGS said.

The reevaluation establishes the current reserves of co-mineral and associated low-grade resources, supporting increased future production and strengthening domestic mineral resource security, the CGS said.

Soundbites

Editor's Note: Gold medal winners of the 47th WorldSkills Competition, held in Lyon, France, in September, shared their experiences at the event and discussed their future career plans at a news conference in Beijing on Thursday. They said they hope to inspire more youth and pass down their craftsmanship to future generations.

Completing the competition was not easy. It required us to design and install cable systems for telecommunication and network communications within very short time frames. A few years ago, China lagged behind in terms of information network cabling technology and facilities. Winning this gold medal proves that we are now front-runners, not just followers.

Li Hongyu, 21, Gold medal winner of Information Network Cabling

We Chinese competitors worked hard to win gold in an event that originated in Europe, where our foreign peers hold natural advantages. Our progress in this field can push the industry forward by improving technology and enabling people to create desserts using easier and more standardized methods.

Liu Xinru, 23, Gold medal winner of Patisserie and Confectionery

Winning gold is not the ultimate goal; rather, it's the recognition of one's skills and craftsmanship by the judges. For me, the true significance of this achievement is to pass on the spirit of craftsmanship. I aim to inspire younger people by teaching jewelry design and aesthetics.

Zhang Yupeng, 23, Gold medal winner of Jewelry Making

Chemical laboratory technology emphasizes both theoretical knowledge and practical skills. Contestants must operate quickly, precisely and steadily. This technology is widely applied in daily life, such as ensuring the safety of drinking water and food. I encountered numerous challenges during training but overcame them through persistence.

Lu Jingyi, 20, Gold medal winner of Chemical Laboratory Technology

The competition imposes extremely strict requirements on precision and accuracy, with a permissible error range of just 0.02 of a millimeter—about a quarter of the diameter of a human hair. The repetitive day-to-day operations can be stressful, but I'm deeply grateful for the strong support I've received from senior skilled masters and coaches. Currently, I am offering skills training to key domestic companies and programs, helping them improve and update their techniques.

Long Weijie, 23, Gold Winner of CNC Milling

CHENG SI



Workers engage in a mapping and exploration activity of rare earth in Honghe, Yunnan province, on Nov 8. ZHOU JIAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

FROM THE GRASSROOTS

Mainland camp gives Taiwan compatriots tour of historical sites

By ZHANG YI in Datong, Shanxi and SHI XUEFAN in Shenyang

Young people from Taiwan participating in a winter camp on the Chinese mainland say their visits to historical and cultural sites have enhanced their national confidence and provided insights into many aspects of history that have been downplayed in Taiwan.

Organized by the All-China Federation of Taiwan Compatriots, the activity has attracted about 1,000 young Taiwan people this year, the majority of whom are university students. More than half of them are visiting the mainland for the first time.

The winter camp spans 17 provincial regions and offers a diverse range of activities. Around 20 young people from Taiwan visited Datong and Taiyuan in Shanxi, a province known for its wealth of historical landmarks. The popularity of Shanxi's ancient architectural sites, which served as scene locations for the domestically produced game *Black Myth: Wukong*, has drawn a large number of tourists since last year.

"This is a well-made game about Chinese culture that is also popular in Vietnam. I often watch live-streams of this game," said Liao Chung-ming, a 24-year-old from Taiwan who is currently working in Vietnam.

He was visiting Shanxi with his Vietnamese girlfriend.

While visiting one of the scene locations, the Hanging Temple in Shanxi, Liao said he felt the game's depiction was beautiful and highly accurate.

His girlfriend, visiting China for the first time, specifically bought a cartoon pendant of Sun Wukong, having learned that the monkey is a childhood idol for every Chinese boy. She plans to use it as a car decoration for her father.

After visiting the Foguang Temple and Nanchan Temple in Shanxi—among the few surviving Tang Dynasty (618-907) temple buildings in China—An Wei-lun, a student from Taiwan studying at Peking University, said he learned about the architectural structures and the statues of Buddhas inside, and he gained insight into the development of the Chinese

“Without the sacrifices of the martyrs, there would be no peaceful era we enjoy today.”

Yang Shang-chieh, a youth from Taiwan after visiting the 9.18 Historical Museum in Shenyang, Liaoning province

nation with its rich cultural heritage.

"I can see the cultural confidence of the Tang Dynasty a thousand years ago," he said.

Despite learning about the history of the temples in classrooms, he said that he was truly moved when he visited the sites and saw the buildings himself, adding that it was then that he grasped the abundance of historical and cultural heritage in the country.

In Shenyang, Liaoning province, a group of Taiwan compatriots visited the 9.18 Historical Museum. After witnessing the mass graves

and remains of martyrs who were brutally slaughtered by the Japanese army in Northeast China, they expressed shock and emphasized the importance of remembering history.

The September 18th Incident, also known as the Mukden Incident, occurred on Sept 18, 1931. It was a staged event orchestrated by the Japanese army to create a pretext for Japan's invasion of Northeast China. It marked the beginning of Japanese military aggression against China.

"Without the sacrifices of the martyrs, there would be no peaceful era we enjoy today," said Yang Shang-chieh, a youth from Taiwan. He noted that Taiwan's curriculum guidelines have omitted many aspects of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45), suggesting that the Taiwan authorities aim to manipulate people by deceiving them.

Wu Chien-yi, a teacher from Taiwan, highlighted the positive educational role of the 9.18 Historical Museum. She expressed hope that this visit would help Taiwan students better understand the histo-

ry of the Chinese nation and recognize their historical responsibilities as Chinese.

The winter camp also featured ice and snow sports, experiences of New Year customs, and tours focused on modern China's development.

Zheng Jianmin, president of the All-China Federation of Taiwan Compatriots, said many Taiwan compatriots have witnessed firsthand the rapid development and transformation of the country, finding opportunities to realize their dreams on the mainland.

He expressed hope that young people from both sides would cultivate lasting friendships through interactions at the winter camp.

Since its establishment in 1989, the camp has attracted more than 8,000 youths from Taiwan.

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Online
Watch the video
by scanning
the code.

CHINA

Exquisite paper umbrellas connect with younger generation

Social media and fashionable styles a big hit online

By ZOU SHUO in Changsha
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A young entrepreneur from the city of Xiangtan, Hunan province, has stepped out of the shade of his more traditional father to take advantage of social media and e-commerce, and give the age-old business of making and selling oil-paper umbrellas a new lease of life.

When Zhou Le was growing up, his father impressed upon him the cultural significance of the area's 600-year history of making oil-paper umbrellas.

Zhou Hanyu, the father, taught his son the intricate steps of making these decorative pieces.

In 2017, Zhou Le left home and the family's oil-paper umbrella business to study chemical materials at Changsha University in the provincial capital.

Not forgetting his family roots, the following year Zhou Le and nine friends decided to make some money on the side by selling oil-paper umbrellas online, with business moving along nicely.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, he cooperated with a vlogger on popular video sharing platform Douyin to sell the umbrellas, and sales shot up. Soon, he was attracting millions of views and selling more than 500 umbrellas a day.

After his graduation in 2021, Zhou Le returned home to work in the family business full time. He also set up his own subsidiary startup studio focused on innovation and e-commerce.

A year later, he won an entrepreneurship competition in Changsha's Kaifu district, which awarded him 50,000 yuan (\$6,800) in support of his startup.

With a team of seven members, he developed, marketed and promoted new umbrella products on social media platforms.



Clockwise from top: Zhou Le (second from left) introduces traditional oil-paper umbrella making to senior residents at a community in Xiangtan, Hunan province. Traditional paper umbrellas and paper fans produced by Zhou's company are displayed at the company's showroom in Xiangtan. Zhou (left) makes an oil-paper umbrella in his father's workshop. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Zhou Le admits that his father's skills surpass his own.

"But by utilizing the power of social media and technology, I can spread the knowledge about the

decorative handicrafts to the world," he said.

He's given many of his umbrella products poetic names to attract younger customers who are fans of

traditional Chinese culture and who want umbrella accessories for their *hanfu*.

He has also incorporated new elements that young people like,

such as cartoons and anime, into patterns painted on the umbrellas.

The entrepreneur has also worked hard to sell the umbrellas overseas, which accounts for 10

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By utilizing the power of social media and technology, I can spread the knowledge about the decorative handicrafts to the world.”

Zhou Le, owner of an oil-paper umbrella production company

percent of the company's sales, he said. The overseas market will be a breakthrough for the company's future business, he added.

In 2021, Zhou Le was elected as a deputy to the people's congress of Xiangtan county, which has inspired him to reach out and help more people, especially those engaged in the oil-paper umbrella industry.

There are more than 50 oil-paper umbrella manufacturing companies in Xiangtan's Shigu township, employing more than 2,000 people. They can make 6 million umbrellas every year, accounting for one-third of the production in China, according to the local government.

The umbrellas at Zhou's company, which today employs more than 100 locals, are priced at a range from 10 yuan to several hundred yuan each.

The company has an annual output of 10 million yuan, Zhou Le said, adding that he wants to triple the figure in the coming years.

Tang Luoxun has worked at the company for six years. She used to work in coastal cities with her husband before returning to her hometown to work at Zhou's company.

She can make around 3,000 yuan per month, which is lower than what she could make in cities, but she said she is satisfied because she can look after her two children and elderly parents at home.

Winter fishing provides a chill community spectacle

SHENYANG — On the frozen expanse of Wulong Lake in Northeast China's Liaoning province, the calls of fisherman Dong Lijun motivate his team to haul up a massive net teeming with carp.

Among the spectators was Renat Lusupov, a Russian social media blogger, who captured the scene with his camera.

"In Russia, we also have winter fishing traditions, but they're small-scale events with fishing rods. The winter fishing on Wulong Lake feels more like a grand communal ritual. It is a real showcase of the power of teamwork," he said.

It was not long before Lusupov had edited his footage and shared this unique cultural experience with his friends overseas.

As winter settles in, China's rich "cold resources" are heating up inbound tourism. The expansion of China's visa-free travel policies, including the recent extension of transit visa-free stays to 240 hours and the increase of eligible ports of entry to 60, has opened the door for more international travelers to visit the country.

Among the seasonal highlights,

winter fishing stands out, captivating foreign visitors with its distinct charm. Kicking off on Jan 11 and slated to run to the middle of next month, the 10th Wulong Lake Winter Fishing Festival is welcoming foreign tourists eager to experience the age-old tradition.

Lusupov arrived early on the frozen lake, posing with a 10-kilogram fish while sharing his plans to cook it in a hearty stew.

The tradition of winter fishing on Wulong Lake dates back to the Liao (907-1125) and Jin (1115-1234) dynasties when it was first celebrated for its remarkable spectacle. According to fisherman Dong, the process involves a series of intricate steps, including entering the lake, cutting through the ice, laying the nets, pulling them in, and finally, reaping the bounty.

A single haul can yield 20 to 25 metric tons of fresh fish, Dong said. Fatemeh Nozzari, a student from the United States who studies at China Medical University in the provincial capital Shenyang, also marveled at the event.

"I never imagined winter fishing would be a tug-of-war-style opera-

tion," she said.

Intrigued by videos of past events on social media, she organized a trip with friends to see it firsthand. The abundant fish stocks of Wulong Lake, home to an estimated 10,000 tons of wild fish, left her in awe.

For the people of Kangping, where the lake is located, winter fishing is about more than just the harvest — it's a symbol of prosperity and good fortune for the new year.

Local Yang Di explained the cultural significance to foreign visitors.

"Watching the catch, enjoying fish soup and wishing for abundance in the coming year are all part of our traditions," he said.

To enhance the visitor experience, areas like Songyuan in Jilin province have invested in a program of immersive winter fishing. Initiatives include themed streets, ice and snow amusement parks and interactive fishing zones, providing tourists with hands-on opportunities to appreciate this ancient tradition.

Zhang Sining, a researcher at the Liaoning Academy of Social Sciences, noted that the influx of foreign tourists is raising the bar for ice and snow tourism in China.

"Beyond traditional products, it's crucial to delve deeper into local culture and design offerings with distinctive regional and cultural elements," Zhang said.

XINHUA



From left: Fishermen harvest fish on Wulong Lake in Liaoning province, on Jan 11. An aerial photo shows people watching the winter fishing on the lake on Jan 11. PHOTOS BY LI GANG / XINHUA



People ski at the Huada Ski Resort, which is also a national snow sports training base, in Jingtai county, Baiyin city, Gansu province. CHEN NAN / XINHUA

'Cold resources' become part of 'hot economy'

LANZHOU — Until a few years ago, Luo Chonggui, a farmer from Gansu province, had little to do during the winter months. However, since 2021, along with many other farmers, he has gained a stable income from the local winter sports industry.

The 52-year-old Luo and many other farmers have been working as snowmakers at a national snow sports training base in Jingtai county, Baiyin city.

At around 8 pm, Luo and his colleagues, wearing hats, headlamps and gloves, head out to work, checking if the water pipes are frozen before opening the snow guns.

"My work has begun," Luo shouted, though his voice was drowned out by the loud roar of the snow guns. With the aid of his headlamp, Luo adjusted the angle of the snow guns based on the wind direction, stepping into the mist and checking the snow quality.

When Luo returned to the small cabin where the snowmakers rest, his hat and eyebrows were covered in thick ice. His orange uniform makes him resemble Santa Claus.

"We will go out every half hour until sunrise to check the snow guns and adjust their angles," Luo said, explaining that sudden

changes in wind direction were a concern, as they could easily freeze the snow guns during the night.

Before working at the training base, Luo used to plant corn and potatoes on a small plot of land, and took up odd jobs as a decorator.

"It was a bit far from home," he said.

As a snowmaker, Luo earns over 4,000 yuan (\$550) per month without leaving his hometown.

"Over the past few years, Luo and other farmers have gradually mastered the skills of snowmaking, and their incomes are steadily increasing," said Kou Mingfu, Luo's fellow villager and director of the training base.

Kou explained that when they first started snowmaking in late 2021, more than 30 local villagers worked around the clock beside the snow track.

With better equipment and more experience, the snowmaking team has now been reduced to five people operating four snow guns this winter.

"The athletes who attended the Beijing Winter Paralympics praised our snow," Luo recalled.

The national teams for Para Nordic skiing trained here before the Beijing Winter Paralympics start-

ed. Luo and his team had paved an 8-meter-wide, 5-kilometer-long cross-country skiing track that met the requirements of various snow sports events.

Zhu Jifei, general manager of the training base, said that over 100 seasonal workers are employed at the training base and ski resort, most of whom are local farmers.

Meanwhile, in neighboring Qinghai province, many ski resorts provide stable employment opportunities for local farmers every winter.

The Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region welcomed 92.5 million domestic and international tourists during the 2023-2024 winter season, increasing tourism revenue more than threefold to 106 billion yuan (\$14.6 billion).

Today, over 300 million people participate in winter sports in China, and the once "cold resources" like snow have become part of a "hot economy" in the country's western regions.

"We expect the total number of visitors to our base's ski resort to exceed 200,000 this winter, continuing to drive income growth for local farmers," Zhu said.

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Editor's note: China Daily is publishing a series illustrating the country's efforts to achieve its carbon peak and carbon neutrality goals.

CHINA'S LOW-CARBON JOURNEY

By CHINA DAILY

While China might be well known for its popular fast fashion industry, a growing number of younger, sustainability-conscious consumers are shifting toward greener lifestyles, raising awareness of the impact that their daily choices have on the environment.

The fashion industry is one of the world's major polluters, potentially emitting around 2.7 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide annually, according to global management consultancy McKinsey & Company.

In recent years, a collection of sustainable fashion brands have emerged, including those in China, outputting clothing made from recycled materials, made using more eco-friendly manufacturing and promoting a sustainable message.

According to GlobalData, China's green fashion market was valued at \$1.95 billion in 2023, and is forecast to grow at a compound annual rate of nine percent from 2023 to 2028.

Landfill to lifestyle

Founded in 2019, Beijing-based Bottloop is a fashion brand that designs and sells apparel, bags and office supplies made from recycled plastic bottles and wastepaper. Prior to its establishment, its founder Liu Xuesong had been responsible for procuring waste plastics at Incom Recycle, the parent company of Bottloop.

"The company would purchase discarded plastic bottles and turn them into food-grade recycled PET (polyethylene terephthalate) flakes, which can be transformed into new beverage bottles. The factory's annual production capacity then was 50,000 tons, equivalent to one-third of the annual consumption of beverage bottles in Beijing, which meant that almost 3 million plastic bottles were needed every day," she recalled.

During her first two or three years at Incom Recycle, Liu visited over 100 waste disposal sites in Beijing, Tianjin, Shandong, Hebei and Henan provinces and the Inner Mongolia autonomous region, and saw that in some places wastewater was being disposed of untreated causing serious pollution.

This prompted her to establish her own brand with a vision of improving the recycling industry, increasing added value, making it more youthful, and ensuring participants in the industry have steady income.

Liu said that the brand's Chinese name, Baopu Zaisheng, means embracing simplicity to regenerate, and was inspired by the ancient classic *Tao Te Ching* by Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu. The text embodies the concept of returning to a simple, frugal lifestyle, with an emphasis on recycling and reusing resources.

Bottloop draws inspiration from rich traditional Chinese culture, from philosophies of respecting nature and avoiding waste, said Liu, adding the brand also uses advanced technology to improve the quality of recycled materials.

The brand uses blockchain to track the entire process from recycling discarded plastic bottles, cleaning and processing, to producing the final products, the founder said.

This sustainable approach has attracted some big consumer names to cooperate with the brand, including Starbucks, Shiseido, Pepsi and BMW.

"We recycle plastic bottles and coffee cups to make aprons for baristas at Starbucks, and help the company calculate the carbon emissions reduced from these products. We also collaborate with beauty salons to recycle makeup packaging and hair products, and turn them into bags and combs to achieve internal recycling," Liu told China Daily.

She said a T-shirt can be made from eight PET bottles, a silk-feel scarf from three bottles and a tote bag from 31 plastic bottles. As of the end of 2023, the company had recycled 25.6 million plastic bottles and reduced carbon emissions by 2,384 tons, Liu added.

"Sustainability is definitely not about preaching or moral coercion, but about passing on the ideas of aesthetics and recycling for good. We must spare no efforts to make each eco-friendly product more beau-



Tote bags made from recycled materials are displayed at the Intertextile Shanghai Apparel Fabrics exhibition in Shanghai in August. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Green fashion turns old plastics into profits

As awareness of the climate crisis and environmental issues grows, consumers warm to living more sustainable lifestyles

tiful and story-rich, in order to stimulate more people to adopt a sustainable lifestyle," Liu said.

Diversified materials

Zhang Na, who founded Shanghai-based Reclothing Bank in 2011, dislikes throwing things away.

"To me, every garment resembles a museum for the good old days and memories of the past, and by giving new life to old clothes, I want to connect the past, present and future and soothe the people," said Zhang, who makes new clothes out of the so-called outdated ones that have been thrown away.

When Reclothing Bank was in its initial stages, it primarily collected worn clothes and handcrafted them into various pieces of patchwork with the help of migrant workers, she said.

To scale up production, Zhang developed a generic design, which meant that fabrics of different colors and styles could be used to produce similar products using a fixed template.

Years later, Reclothing Bank started to use technologies to recycle other materials such as "ghost" fishing nets.

At recycling bases on Zhoushan Islands off the coast of Zhejiang province, migrant workers are hired to disentangle shrimps and crabs caught in these discarded nets.

After being picked from the sea, the fishing nets are remade into recycled nylon fabric by crushing, slicing and spinning them up. The resultant fabric is resistant to abrasion, shrinking, heat, oil and chemicals. It can be used to make durable and brightly colored bags and garments, according to Zhang.

Producing 100 tons of this recycled nylon is equivalent to saving 700 barrels of oil and reducing 571 tons of carbon dioxide emissions, the founder said.

"This has not only improved the economic situation for locals, but has also given them a feeling of achievement after learning that they have contributed to protecting the planet," she added.

There is a badge attached to every piece of apparel made by Reclothing Bank, which



A leather bag made from recycled materials by Bottloop. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



A tag on a bag by Reclothing Bank says it has been made from four to six recycled plastic bottles. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

shows how much carbon emissions have been reduced by using recycled fabrics to make the piece. It also shows the number of trees needed to be planted equivalent to the amount of carbon emissions reduced.

Reclothing Bank doesn't just use reusable and recyclable materials in its products, but natural fibers too.

The company has started using yak wool obtained at an altitude of around 2,500 meters on the Tibetan plateau.

"It takes about three months and nine processes for herdsmen to create the fabric using ancient hand-twisting techniques," Zhang said.

Yak wool is sometimes referred to as the "soft gold of the highland," as a coat made of it weighs only 1 kilogram and yet is warmer than a down jacket. Producing yak wool provides herdsmen with additional income.

Reclothing Bank's yak wool coats are dyed with natural minerals such as turquoise and malachite through an environmentally friendly waterless process, resulting in

vibrant, fade-resistant colors.

She and her team also transform bio-based materials, including pineapple skin and leaves, corn stalks and fungi fiber, into a leather-like polylactic acid fabric through cutting-edge technologies. The resultant material is 100 percent biodegradable, reducing carbon emissions by 90 percent.

"Every part of a pineapple is valuable. The fibers from three pineapple leaves are so strong that they can pull a car," said Zhang.

At Milan Fashion Week in September last year, Reclothing Bank unveiled an "edible" coat made from fungi. Made from mycelium filaments grown from a fungus root, the coat is indistinguishable in look and feel from traditional leather.

"Because the mushroom material is composed of protein, it emits a pleasant scent during the heating and shaping process, just like that of an omelet," Zhang said.

"The key to such innovative design lies in passion. Without it, the results may be lackluster. Our goal is to create sustainable prod-

ucts that stand out from the typical 99 percent in your wardrobe; we aspire to be part of that exceptional one percent," she said.

Shift in mindset

Supa, who co-founded Shanghai-based sustainable fashion brand HowBottle, said there has been a noticeable shift in consumer attitude toward clothes made from recycled materials.

"When HowBottle was established in 2016, we were excited about the idea that plastic bottles could be regenerated into polyester thread. However, few people knew this technology then," she said.

"At that time, many consumers didn't have a good understanding and awareness of environmental protection, and when we said that our products were made from recycled plastic bottles, the first thing they would ask was whether they were clean and safe," said Supa.

The recycled fabric feels the same as regular fabrics, and it's soft, durable and comfortable to wear. Compared with conventional polyester made from petroleum, recycled polyester can save about 45 percent of water and 40 percent of natural gas, and reduce carbon emissions by about 42 percent.

Things were not easy for Supa at first, but she noticed a change in public perception in 2019, when Shanghai's mandatory waste sorting policy came into effect.

"Suddenly, everyone was very curious about where the garbage would go after classification, and they discovered that plastic bottles could be made into clothes and bags. As a result, our sales started booming," she said.

"Nowadays, many of our customers are aware of technology. They want to dig deeper into where the plastic bottles come from, what the recycling process is like, and are even curious about the latest bio-based recycling technologies," she added.

HowBottle sells its products online and offline, with the main consumer groups including university students and young workers at around 25 years old, and mothers around 35 years old who want to cultivate awareness of sustainability in their children, Supa said.

"What our customers buy are not only the products, but also the concept behind them. They think what they wear should reflect their values."

HowBottle has partnered with the Palace Museum to release a series of cultural and creative products, including leather-like bracelets that are made from recycled fallen leaves and branches.

At Bottloop, it has also incorporated recycling technology with traditional craftsmanship. The company invited Zhao Sijin, an inheritor of the intangible cultural heritage of Daoming bamboo weaving, to weave environmentally friendly bags using traditional weaving skills.

Liu from Bottloop said: "Zhao has been weaving baskets with bamboo all his life, so we thought he may not accept materials other than bamboo. However, to our surprise, he was very happy to make plastic bags after learning that recycled plastic strips are conducive to sustainable consumption."

Public awareness and a willingness to participate in low-carbon consumption are on the rise. According to the 2024 Sustainable Consumption Report by consultancy SynTao Co and Shanghai-based Jiemiao News, over 87 percent of the respondents in China had engaged in low-carbon consumption.

It said almost a quarter of consumers are willing to buy sustainable sports and outdoor equipment, clothing, shoes and bags.

Aesthetic design and utility are key to gaining consumer favor, according to Supa. "I firmly believe that it's not that people don't care about our environment, but rather that there are not enough choices provided. A product needs to be attractive, useful, well-designed, and the concept behind it appealing."

Sai Hang, 31, who works at a university in Shanghai, recently bought a camera bag made from recycled materials. He said: "If a product boasts its sustainability, then it's lifted to another level. Between two products that are both reasonably priced, good-looking and of good quality, I would consider purchasing the recycled product."

Xu Nuo contributed to this story.



Recycled bottles usually undergo the following procedures before they become granulated plastics (Photo 5) and are made into clothes or bags by companies like HowBottle. Compacted plastic bottle blocks (Photo 1); Sorting by color (Photo 2); Shredding (Photo 3); Granulating (Photo 4). PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

BUSINESS

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Energy industry to witness boom times

Higher utilization of renewables, more private sector participation to expedite growth

By LIU YUKUN
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China's energy sector is poised for further growth this year, fueled by favorable policies that will expedite the country's shift toward renewable energy sources, even as it navigates challenges like demand-supply imbalances and trade barriers, said experts.

This growth is not only evident in increased installed capacity, but also in the utilization of renewable energy, enhanced private sector involvement in major projects, advancements in technology research and development, and the active overseas operations of businesses, they said.

In recent years, the energy sector has grappled with significant challenges stemming from a pronounced demand-supply imbalance, resulting in issues like pricing fluctuations and inventory concerns.

Therefore, a series of policies focusing on supply-side reforms in solar and wind power have been introduced since the end of 2024. Notably, the annual Central Economic Work Conference in December emphasized the establishment of a modern industrial system, calling for efforts to tackle price-centered hyper competition amid demand-supply imbalances.

"Since the latter part of the year, China has been actively driving the development and reform of the new energy sector, including supply-side reforms in solar power and demand-side reforms in wind power. By 2025, we anticipate the introduction of more new energy reforms with a growth-oriented approach," said Ken Liu, head of mainland and Hong Kong utilities and renewables research at financial services provider UBS.

Wang Peng, a professor at North China Electric Power University, projects that by 2025, China's combined wind and solar installed capacity will reach approximately 1.6 billion kilowatts. The proportion of non-fossil energy consumption is expected to surpass 21 percent by end-2025 and exceed 25 percent by 2030. In the medium term, there will be a noticeable shift toward electrification of end-use energy consumption, transitioning to electro-hydrogen combination in the long run.

"Future energy use will witness accelerated electrification across industries, construction, transportation, agriculture and other sectors, with end-use electrification levels projected to reach nearly 30 percent by 2025 and 34 percent by 2030. Electricity is poised to become the dominant end-use energy source, with hydrogen energy showing promising innovative development potential and anticipated increased role in end-use energy consumption transformation," Wang said.

He said the new energy law, effective Jan 1, also signifies a shift toward a more market-oriented approach in energy investment and operations, unlocking substantial



Workers install wind turbines at a wind farm project construction site in Ruichang, Jiangxi province, on Dec 19. WEI DONGSHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY



Left: An employee works in a photovoltaic module production workshop at a new energy company in Shangqiu, Henan province, on Jan 3. LI HENG / XINHUA Right: A person charges an electric car at a smart green charging station in Beijing on Dec 26. LI XIN / XINHUA



commercial opportunities. "The country is encouraging private companies to invest in energy development, utilization, and infrastructure construction in compliance with the law. Over the next decade, investments in key energy projects are poised to remain at the trillion-yuan level."

China has made significant progress in the development of renewable energy, with the installed capacity of wind and solar power totaling 1.35 billion kW as of end-2024. This accomplishment fulfills the country's commitment made at the Climate Ambition Summit six years ahead of schedule, according to the National Energy Administration.

Newly increased renewable energy installations in China surpassed 300 million kW last year, constituting over 85 percent of all new installations, while the energy self-sufficiency rate was maintained above 80 percent, said the NEA.

At present, the national wind power installed capacity stands at around 510 million kW, and solar

power installed capacity at approximately 840 million kW. Their utilization rates exceed 95 percent.

Meanwhile, China is intensifying efforts to bolster energy infrastructure construction, initiating 194 energy and power facility renewal projects. Advanced technologies continue to set new benchmarks, exemplified by the production of the world's largest 26-megawatt offshore wind turbine unit in Fujian province, and the constant record-breaking solar cell efficiencies. China's nuclear power capacity, both operational and under construction, has surged to the global forefront, underscoring China's pivotal role in driving global energy transformation and battling climate change, the NEA said.

Francesco La Camera, director-general of the International Renewable Energy Agency, highlighted China's essential role in leading the global shift toward sustainable practices.

"China is providing the world the panel, the blade, storage facilities at a reasonable price ... the country is

pushing the global energy transition," said La Camera.

China has to date contributed over 80 percent of photovoltaic modules and 70 percent of wind power equipment. Over the past decade, average power costs per kilowatt-hour of wind and solar power projects in China have fallen by over 60 percent and 80 percent, respectively, according to the NEA.

Amid China's rapid development, the renewable energy sector is confronted with significant challenges, with one being export obstacles stemming from geopolitical conflicts.

"China's renewable energy industry is poised to encounter substantial geopolitical hurdles. Political uncertainties following elections in various nations may trigger unforeseen policy shifts. Newly elected administrations, influenced by diverse political factions, often exhibit varying stances toward energy projects initiated by previous governments. This dynamic can lead to delays in wind and solar investments previously

aligned with Chinese firms, creating dilemmas where substantial investments in finance, manpower, and technical resources may be challenging to recoup, thereby impeding project advancement," said Lin Boqiang, head of the China Institute for Studies in Energy Policy at Xiamen University.

Lin said that escalating geopolitical tensions have underscored the significance of critical mineral resources vital to the new energy sector. The surge in resource nationalism has elevated the issue of securing critical minerals for the development of equipment such as electric vehicle batteries, intensifying their role in geopolitical rivalries.

While China holds a prominent position in the global renewable energy arena and exhibits a substantial demand for critical minerals, he said the industry's reliance on foreign sources for raw materials poses challenges. Despite expertise in extracting and processing specific critical minerals like rare earth elements, China's domestic reserves

of critical minerals are limited.

"In addition, forthcoming trade barriers are expected to heighten, impacting the export of Chinese renewable energy products. Despite notable advancements in sectors such as photovoltaics, wind power, and electric vehicles, China faces trade protectionist measures from countries like the United States and the European Union. These measures, encompassing tariffs and technology-related barriers, pose significant hurdles to exporting Chinese products and expanding the industry internationally."

Lin said that by conducting in-depth research on local demand, customizing products accordingly, localizing production, setting up sales and service networks tailored to specific regions, and expanding trade reach, companies can strengthen their market position.

Moreover, substantial investments in technology research and development, the cultivation of interdisciplinary teams, and a focus on improving product efficiency and performance while overcoming technological obstacles can drive innovations and increase Chinese companies' competitiveness.

Diversifying the investment destination also stands out as a solution for Chinese enterprises to mitigate geopolitical risks. This necessitates establishing factories in regions outside of the areas heavily influenced by the US' or the EU's tariffs, and areas that are characterized by high energy demand and receptivity to renewable products.

BloombergNEF said that Chinese solar manufacturers had established production facilities in Indonesia last year, with a capacity of 6 gigawatts for solar cells and 15 GW for modules.

"Indonesia currently falls outside the US' new scope of anti-dumping and anti-subsidy tariffs imposed on four Southeast Asian countries. Indonesia also mandates a certain level of local manufacturing requirements in foreign-invested solar projects, although these local content requirements were eased last year," said Tan Youru, a solar analyst with BloombergNEF.

Additionally, Chinese investments in renewable energy across the Middle East have been on the rise. A recent report by global accounting firm EY revealed that Chinese investments in solar and wind energy in League of Arab States economies surpassed \$13 billion between 2018 and 2023, constituting 24 percent of total investments. The report said Chinese companies are actively expanding their footprint in the renewable energy value chain.

The domestic market also grapples with profitability challenges stemming from demand-supply imbalances. For instance, the photovoltaic industry has witnessed substantial production growth in key components like polycrystalline silicon, silicon wafers, cells, and modules, alongside significant price declines. Despite these challenges, there are signs of improvement, with procurement prices stabilizing and some projects witnessing minor price increases since mid-October, indicating a trend toward stability across the industry chain, the China Photovoltaic Industry Association said.

Workers' passion behind manufacturing success

REPORTER'S LOG

By Liu Yukun

When I first met Li Ge, an engineer at Xuzhou Construction Machinery Group, he was deeply engrossed in work.

A staff member who brought me in asked if an interview could be arranged, but Li was hesitant at first, citing his busy schedule. However, he did not refuse me outright.

I began by saying, "Your family, spanning three generations, has

witnessed the evolution of China's manufacturing industry. I want to share our manufacturing narrative with the world, shedding light on the reasons behind our remarkable pace of development and quality achievements."

My simple statement seemed to strike a chord.

We met the next day, standing beside the XCA4000, the world's largest wheeled crane by lifting capacity that is manufactured by XCMG. The XCA4000 was the primary reason I visited the factory.

Soon, Li was telling me the story of his grandfather, father, and himself — spanning over half a century and witnesses to China's manufacturing development over 70 years.

His grandfather was a lathe worker

who in the mid-20th century achieved the highest honor for a worker — the "old eighth-grade worker" — due to his exceptional skills.

Under his grandfather's influence and guidance, Li's father joined XCMG as a technician for crane testing and inspections — a role he held for over 40 years.

Li shared how his father had approached work with passion and fervor, often losing sleep over a problem, or suddenly waking up in the dead of the night with a solution and rushing to the factory to test it out.

Influenced by his family environment, Li got to know cranes at a young age, considering them his favorite "big toys" during childhood.

So it was a natural progression for him to join XCMG as an apprentice

under his father's guidance when he started working in 1995. Over time, he developed a genuine love for the job.

He proudly showed us the "family heirloom" his father had left him — several notebooks containing a lifetime of experiences and solutions to problems at work.

He emphasized that these were lessons one couldn't learn from textbooks. Even today, Li maintains the habit of taking notes and continues to train successive apprentices from his own experiences, hoping to pass on this tradition at XCMG.

Today, Li is a renowned expert for crane testing and inspections, holding titles such as senior technician at XCMG's crane machinery division, "national technical expert" recognized by the Ministry of

Human Resources and Social Security, and "chief technician of Jiangsu province" elected by the local government, among others.

Taking Chinese cranes to the global stage has always been his dream. He vividly recalled early visits abroad when local engineers doubted China's ability to manufacture such large cranes — a challenge that fueled Li's determination.

In 2006 at an exhibition in Shanghai, Li recalled that XCMG's display of seven 100-ton to 400-ton cranes drew thousands of visitors, with the CEOs of several global crane manufacturers offering praise. Among the crowd stood Li, filled with immense pride.

"Our cranes are extensively used in new energy projects. For instance, the latest XCA4000 was designed for the installation of large-capacity wind turbine blades. As global renewable energy advan-

ces, wind turbines are getting larger, demanding higher lifting capacities from cranes. We have broken world records in lifting capacity seven times consecutively and we aim to go even further on this journey."

Several readers are familiar with China's rapid growth in the new energy industry and the upstream manufacturing sector. The country produces over 80 percent of the world's solar modules, more than 70 percent of wind power equipment, and about half of the world's new energy vehicles.

The country's industrial value added had surged from 12 billion yuan (\$1.64 billion) in 1952 to 39.9 trillion yuan in 2023. China has maintained global leadership in manufacturing scale for 14 consecutive years.

But few know what is behind these impressive figures — the hard work and enduring passion of generation after generation of workers like Li.

BUSINESSINSIGHT

Chinese path to modernization in full swing

EAGLE EYE

By Zhang Jun

The 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China and the third plenary session of the 20th CPC Central Committee have outlined the promotion of national rejuvenation through a Chinese path to modernization. In this context, the new era and new journey present both China's centrally and locally administered State-owned enterprises with new missions and responsibilities.

Boosting the growth potential of SOEs plays a crucial role in driving high-quality development and supporting the Chinese path to modernization. This is the central focus of the new round of SOE reforms.

SOEs are the cornerstone of advancing the Chinese path to modernization. Deepening SOE reforms and more effectively leveraging the role of these companies hold significant contemporary importance.

First, strengthening the role of SOEs will help China respond to unprecedented global changes and better serve the national interests.

Currently, the world is undergoing rapid and profound changes unseen in a century. SOEs are primarily distributed across many industries crucial to national security and represent an economic lifeline. They are crucial for realizing national strategic intentions and responding to changes in the external environment. Reform measures should therefore be accelerated, with the new round of SOE reforms becoming more thorough and actionable.

Through continuous reforms, the earning capability and asset structures of SOEs should be further strengthened and optimized in a market-oriented way, thus constantly improving China's institutional advantages.

Second, SOEs will play an important role in implementing the government's industrial policies. As industrial policies are crucial for driving innovation and economic transformation, governments of many countries are implementing relevant policies to foster growth of emerging industries.

Strategic emerging industries in China include sectors such as energy-saving and environmental protection, next-generation information technology, biotechnology, high-end equipment manufacturing, new energy, advanced materials and electric vehicles, said the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council.

On the other hand, with the accelerated restructuring of global industrial competition, China's industrial transformation and upgrading face unprecedented challenges. By deepening SOE reforms and accelerating the development of a modern industrial system, they will play a critical role in dealing with difficulties and advancing the Chinese path to modernization.

Third, reinforcing the important role of SOEs, in particular central SOEs, and fortifying countercyclical planning are essential for functioning as macroeconomic stabilizers.



CAI MENG / CHINA DAILY

Currently, the Chinese economy faces considerable challenges. Given the complex domestic and international environment, SOEs should strengthen their roles from the perspective of long-term national strategic security and sustainable development, fully leverage China's institutional advantages, enhance countercyclical planning and better serve as macroeconomic stabilizers.

The new round of SOE reform is driven by the goal of advancing the national objectives, with a focus on boosting competitiveness and solidifying core functions. The reform seeks to strengthen the leadership of SOEs in six areas, including technological innovation and the modern industrial system, to support the sustained progress of the Chinese path to modernization.

First, China should improve the

technological innovation mechanism to achieve high-level technological self-reliance. Technological modernization is essential to the Chinese path to modernization.

As an important part of the country's technological forces, SOEs must clearly recognize their strategic role within China's broader technological innovation framework. They should prioritize technological innovation as the "top priority", accelerate efforts to tackle core technologies and provide essential support for the development of the country's technological capabilities.

Second, it is practical for SOEs to consolidate their performance in various industries to help build a modern industrial system in China. SOEs should play an important role by actively entering new

industrial sectors, accelerating the development of new quality productive forces, and fostering new growth drivers. These efforts will help China speed up the formation of an autonomous, controllable, secure, reliable and competitive modern industrial system.

New quality productive forces are characterized by advanced productivity freed from traditional economic growth modes and productivity development paths, featuring high-tech, high efficiency and high quality, and in line with the new development philosophy.

Third, the government should provide increased support in key areas to ensure national strategic security, as it forms the foundation of development. SOEs are deeply involved in industries vital to national security and the economy. It is

essential to adopt a bottom-line thinking approach to balance development and security, strengthen the "defensive" line, enhance the ability to maintain "stability", and assume a protective role when needed.

Fourth, China should promote regional collaboration to reduce disparities and unlock the economic potential of inland regions. SOEs, as a crucial force in driving regional coordinated development, are key to effectively implementing the national strategy for regional coordination. They should optimize their regional strategies based on their functions and resource endowments, further supporting balanced regional development.

SOEs could play an important role in sectors such as industrial restructuring, transportation system integration and ecological improvements, contributing to higher-level regional development. By leveraging regional advantages, they should increase industrial investment tailored to local conditions, and guide SOEs to optimize regional economic layouts through incremental investments such as the establishment of new subsidiaries.

Fifth, it would be effective for SOEs to actively participate in global industrial division and cooperation to promote high-level opening-up, as openness is a hallmark of the Chinese path to modernization. SOEs must take a more proactive approach in opening-up and collaborating, deeply engaging in global industrial networks to broaden the development space for the Chinese economy.

SOEs should improve their ability to shape international standards and regulations, striving to gain greater influence in emerging sectors. They should adopt international business strategies to enhance their global presence, integrate their resources strategically and foster high-quality cooperation as Chinese companies expand their presence globally.

It is wise for SOEs to actively participate in the high-quality development of the Belt and Road Initiative and accelerate the development of the New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor.

With its operational hub based in Chongqing in Southwest China, this trade corridor connects global ports via railways, sea routes and highways through provincial-level regions such as South China's Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region and Southwest China's Yunnan province.

Sixth, SOEs are capable of playing a crucial role in driving a comprehensive green transformation of the economy, laying a strong foundation for high-quality green development. SOEs are not only important drivers of green transformation, but are also major contributors to it.

They must integrate the concept of green growth throughout their operations, accelerate green and low-carbon transformation, reduce energy consumption, improve production efficiency and contribute to achieving the harmonious coexistence of humans and nature along the Chinese path to modernization.

The writer is chief economist and head of the research institute at China Galaxy Securities Co Ltd.

The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Boosting high-standard opening-up to the world

MAIN STREET

By Lin Xuefen

The year 2025 marks the final year of the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) as the nation moves closer to achieving its 2035 long-term vision. The following years will be a critical period for accelerating the construction of a new development pattern, promoting high-quality development and establishing a higher-level open economic system. At the recent Central Economic Work Conference, nine key economic tasks for 2025 were proposed, one of which emphasizes expanding high-standard opening-up and stabilizing foreign trade and investment. High-level opening-up is an essential component of high-quality development and a key strategy for realizing Chinese modernization.

Currently, China faces increasing difficulties and challenges internationally and domestically in terms of economic and social development. China firmly promotes its opening-up policy, consolidating the foundation of foreign trade and foreign investment, and effectively supporting the achievement of the country's main goals for economic and social development. In 2024, in terms of foreign trade, the import and export of goods maintained steady growth, and the structure of foreign trade continued

to improve. Over the past year, China's total import and export trade grew by 5 percent year-on-year. Trade with countries and regions involved in the Belt and Road Initiative grew by 6.4 percent. In the process of developing new quality productive forces and accelerating the cultivation of new powers for economic growth, the export structure continued to be optimized, with exports of mechanical and electrical products growing by 8.7 percent, raising their share of total exports to 59.4 percent. In terms of attracting foreign investment, from January to November 2024, the number of newly established foreign-invested enterprises increased 8.9 percent year-on-year. While actual foreign investment declined slightly, there was strong growth in the high-tech manufacturing sector, with medical instruments and equipment manufacturing, computer and office equipment manufacturing, and professional technical services growing by 53.4 percent, 39.1 percent and 19 percent, respectively. This reflects the remarkable resilience and adaptability of China's economy, and a strong momentum for the development of new industries and new forces.

The Central Economic Work Conference highlighted China's high regard for pursuing high-standard opening-up and outlined a series of measures. First, the conference emphasized that China will voluntarily and unilaterally open its market wider. China will completely remove foreign investment access restrictions in the manufacturing sector, promote wider opening of sectors such as telecommunications, healthcare

and education, and focus on creating a market-oriented, law-based, and internationalized business environment, providing a favorable investment environment and stable growth and further consolidating foreign investors' confidence in developing in China. Also, China will improve the construction quality of pilot free trade zones and Hainan Free Trade Port, promoting the liberalization and facilitation of trade and investment, and fully leveraging the comprehensive pilot platform for reform and opening-up. Additionally, in terms of unilateral openness, China will increase support for the least developed countries, increasing the scope of products enjoying zero-tariff treatment for these countries and thus further promoting global openness.

Second, the conference emphasized the need to cultivate new drivers for foreign trade and develop services trade through innovation. As the new round of technological revolution and industrial transformation deepens, digital trade, cross-border e-commerce and green trade are gradually becoming key directions for future trade growth. China will actively develop the trade of digital products and technologies, as well as the digital services trade, thus accelerating the digital empowerment of the entire trading chain and enhancing the competitiveness of foreign trade. At the same time, China will promote international cooperation on green development, continue to actively participate in the formulation of international rules, and strengthen new advantages and momen-

tum for development. In addition, as the services sector holds the biggest growth potential, China will fully apply the negative list for cross-border trade in services, promote comprehensive pilot programs for expanding the services openness, and encourage establishing professional service institutions to enhance international services capabilities. A sound cross-border financial services system will be established, and the supply of financial products and services will be enriched.

Finally, the conference stressed the need to align with international high standards and promote high-level institutional opening-up. China will place more emphasis on building an institutional system that aligns with international high-standard economic and trade rules, achieving compatibility and integration in areas such as intellectual property protections, environmental standards, labor protections, etc, and will help build a transparent, stable and predictable institutional environment. China will accelerate the process of joining the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Digital Economy Partnership Agreement, deepen reforms in the foreign investment promotion system and continue to increase its role in international standards setting, international economic and trade cooperation, international division of labor and technology transfer.

In 2025, the global economy will face many challenges, including a global growth slowdown, increased risks and uncertainties, geopolitical tensions, rising trade protectionism, and adjustments in inflation and monetary policies, all of which will pose greater threats to the external environment stability. In terms of opening-up, China's tra-

ditional advantages in international division of labor and competition have weakened, institutional opening and alignment with international high standards in economic and trade rules still face gaps, and risks in key areas need to be effectively prevented and resolved.

Practice has fully proven that opening-up is the key choice of China and an essential path to building an open world economy and promoting inclusive and equitable economic globalization. By promoting high-level opening-up, China can create a stable external environment for high-quality development, better connecting domestic and international markets and resources, and constructing a new development pattern of dual-circulation. In order to achieve these goals, it is necessary to strengthen innovation and promote China's integration into the global innovation network, accelerating the construction of a globally competitive innovation ecosystem, deepening international innovation cooperation and cultivating China's new productive forces. At the same time, it is important to keep the balance of development and security, improving the regulation of key areas such as trade, finance and data, and enhancing risk prevention and security. China will also need to improve its participation in global security governance mechanisms, and actively engage in the formulation of rules for global security.

The writer is an assistant research fellow at the Institute of West-Asian and African Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

WORLD

Romance evolves into business success

By HOU CHENCHEN
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Ten years ago, Spanish young man Jesus Garcia used his university graduation scholarship to buy a plane ticket to China, set on winning the heart of a young Chinese woman, Yang Saijun.

That same year, 2014, the first China-Europe freight train departed from Yiwu — where Garcia made a home for himself — heading to Spain, connecting China's largest small commodity market with the Spanish capital, Madrid, Europe's largest such hub.

Today Garcia and Yang, now married, run an import business in Yiwu, using the rail link to carry Spanish wine and ham to China. At the start they were dispatching two or three containers a year to China, and that has since risen to 60 or 70.

With improved logistics provided by the rail link, Spanish products such as red wine, olive oil and ham, as well as Chinese staples, mechanical appliances and other equipment have gained easier access to both markets.

Yiwu, which enjoys its reputation as the world's supermarket and a key supplier for Chinese cross-border e-commerce platforms, is now about to launch a new round of international trade reforms aimed at strengthening its role in global commerce.

The hub, promoting Belt and Road collaboration and high-quality development of the China-Europe freight train network, will further contribute to advancing China's dual circulation strategy, which integrates domestic and global markets and supports efforts to build China into a strong trading nation, according to the plan published last month.

Yiwu's Global Digital Trade Center, which draws on artificial intelligence and digital tools to improve core trade elements, such as supply chains, logistics and markets, is due to open its market section for trial operations in October 2025.

Millions of packages

The city now serves more than 200 countries and regions, and attracts nearly 600,000 international traders a year. Thirty million packages are shipped out every day on average, supporting 2.1 million small and

medium-sized businesses across China and creating 32 million jobs.

In the first 11 months of last year Yiwu's imports and exports were worth 614 billion yuan (\$84 billion), surpassing the total value of trade, 566 billion yuan, for all of 2023 and setting a record.

Today more than 21,000 merchants from more than 100 countries and regions live and work in Yiwu, which boasts more than 40 international restaurants owned by foreigners. One standout is Beyti Restaurant, a popular Arab establishment and said to have been the city's first foreign-owned eatery.

Mohanad Shalabi, a Jordanian who opened Beyti in 2002, says he has spent fewer than three months away from Yiwu since then, he thus considers the city his home, and, like Garcia, has a Chinese wife.

His restaurant, which started out as a 70-80 square meter space, has now expanded to 1,600 square meters, occupying a prime location in the heart of the city.

In 2012 the local government set up a one-stop international trade service center to handle all foreign-related businesses, greatly improving the governance of these entities.

A few years later the local government began issuing foreign merchant cards to foreign business people in the city, an idea Shalabi says he had advocated. The card allows holders to enjoy the benefits that Chinese nationals in the city enjoy, including pensions, healthcare, children's education and other social services, according to People's Daily.

Shalabi says that Yiwu has allowed him to realize his Chinese dream, something he says is the right of everyone to pursue no matter where they are from, and that the Belt and Road Initiative is helping in the realization of that dream.

Beyti, an Arabic word meaning my home, symbolizes how Yiwu has become a new domicile for merchants from all over the world, Shalabi says.

"Yiwu is my home, and I want to do something for it." He sees the Chinese dream as a sweet flower, he says.

"When the flower blossoms, everyone can enjoy its lingering fragrance."

Agencies contributed to this story.



Israeli tanks open fire in northern Gaza on Sunday before the cease-fire deal takes effect. ILIA YEFIMOVICH / AP

Gaza cease-fire comes into force after delay

Experts express concern over fragility of truce as Israeli strikes kill 13 Palestinians

By CUI HAIPEI in Dubai, UAE
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A long-awaited cease-fire in the Gaza Strip took effect on Sunday after a delay of almost three hours, amid concerns that the serious trust deficit between Israel and Hamas might hamper its implementation and prospects for lasting peace in the Middle East.

An announcement from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said the cease-fire began at 11:15 am, instead of the planned 8:30 am. The delay was attributed to Hamas not providing the names of three Israeli hostages set for release. Israel had said it would keep fighting until the names were handed over.

Hamas cited "technical field reasons" for the delay and later named the three female hostages as Romi Gonen, Doron Steinbrecher and Emily Damari, saying it is committed to the deal announced last week. The three hostages were expected to be released after 4 pm on Sunday, Netanyahu's office said.

During the delay, the Israeli military carried out strikes across the Gaza Strip, killing at least 13 Palestinians, medics said.

A Palestinian official familiar with the matter, speaking on condi-

Without a fundamental settlement of the two sides' historical disputes and the implementation of the two-state solution, any cease-fire could be a pause in the next conflict."

Ma Xiaolin, dean of the Institute for Studies on the Mediterranean Rim at Zhejiang International Studies University

tion of anonymity, said the delay occurred because mediators had asked for 48 hours of "calm" before the implementation, but continued Israeli strikes right up until the deadline had made it difficult to send the list.

The delay underscored the fragility over the cease-fire implementation, during which Hamas would release the three hostages in exchange for scores of Palestinians imprisoned by Israel, the first step

in a long process aimed at ending the 15-month-old conflict.

On the seventh day of the deal, four more hostages will be released, and this procedure is expected to occur every Saturday for the next six weeks, leading up to the release of more hostages.

The three-stage deal was announced after months of negotiations brokered by Egypt, Qatar and the United States, and came ahead of the inauguration of US President-elect Donald Trump on Monday.

On Sunday morning, Palestinian residents began returning to their homes in parts of Gaza City, even as tank shelling continued. Families could be seen making their way back on foot, with their belongings loaded on donkey carts, residents said.

"The sound of shelling and explosions didn't stop," said Ahmed Matter, a Gaza resident. He said he saw many families leaving their shelters and returning to their homes. "People are impatient. They want this madness to end."

Temporary phase

Netanyahu had warned the 42-day first phase could be "temporary", as negotiations on the second phase should begin in two weeks.

Meanwhile, the party of Israel's hard-line National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir said its Cabinet ministers submitted their resignations from the government

on Sunday in opposition to the cease-fire.

Since Oct 7, 2023, Hamas and Israel have been engaged in a fierce conflict that has killed nearly 47,000 Palestinians. The conflict began after Hamas launched a surprise attack on Israel, killing some 1,200 people and taking 251 hostages.

The United Nations said Gaza's health system, road network and other vital infrastructure have been badly damaged. Rebuilding — if the cease-fire reaches its final phase — will need billions of dollars and years of work.

About 200 aid delivery trucks began arriving on Sunday at the Israeli-controlled Kerem Shalom border crossing ahead of entry into Gaza, two Egyptian sources told Reuters.

Although the international community has welcomed the truce, Ma Xiaolin, dean of the Institute for Studies on the Mediterranean Rim at Zhejiang International Studies University, said it remains a fragile prelude to peace, as there is serious mistrust between the two sides.

"Without a fundamental settlement of the two sides' historical disputes and the implementation of the two-state solution, any cease-fire could be a pause in the next conflict," Ma said. "Peace will never come until the parties to the conflict abandon the zero-sum mentality and the philosophy of violence."

Afaf Al-Najjar, a Palestinian journalist from Gaza, said temporary peace cannot replace the right to live freely and to dream beyond survival, calling for more meaningful actions from the international community, particularly Western powers.

"How do we rebuild a life in such conditions, knowing that this cease-fire might crumble as quickly as it came?" she asked.

Agencies contributed to this story.

Protesters storm court after Yoon's detention extended

SEOUL — Hundreds of supporters of South Korea's arrested President Yoon Suk-yeol stormed a court building on Sunday after his detention was extended, smashing windows and breaking inside, an attack the country's acting leader called "unimaginable".

Yoon on Wednesday became the first sitting South Korean president to be arrested as he faces allegations of insurrection related to his short-lived Dec 3 declaration of martial law that has plunged the country into political turmoil.

Shortly after the Seoul Western District Court announced the extension of Yoon's detention around 3 am on Sunday, his supporters swarmed the building, overwhelming the riot police trying to keep them at bay.

Protesters blasted fire extinguishers at lines of police guarding the front entrance, then flooded inside, destroying office equipment, fittings and furniture, footage showed.

Police restored order a few hours later, saying they had arrested 46

protesters and vowing to track down the others involved.

"The government expresses strong regret over the illegal violence ... which is unimaginable in a democratic society," acting President Choi Sang-mok said in a statement, adding he ordered the police to sternly investigate the incident.

Nine police officers were injured in the chaos, Yonhap reported.

With Yoon refusing to be questioned, investigators facing a deadline on detaining the president asked the court on Friday to extend his custody.

After a five-hour hearing on Saturday, a judge granted a new warrant extending Yoon's detention for up to 20 days, because of "concern that the suspect may destroy evidence".

On Sunday, Yoon's People Power Party called the court's decision to extend his detention a "great pity".

The main opposition Democratic Party said the decision was a "cornerstone" for rebuilding order.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Healthcare role of Africa's traditional cures stressed

By EDITH MUTETHYA

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Integrating African traditional medicine into national healthcare systems, while taking a leaf from the well-established practices of traditional Chinese medicine, could help address the health crises plaguing the African continent, experts and practitioners suggest.

Africa faces widespread infectious diseases, exacerbated by weak healthcare systems, poverty and limited access to medicine, which place a heavy burden on the continent's already under-resourced health facilities.

The World Health Organization reports that up to 80 percent of Africa's population relies on traditional medicine for its healthcare needs. It also highlights the industry's great commercial potential, stating that 34 research institutes in 26 African countries are dedicated to traditional medicine research and development.

In Kenya, the National Traditional Health Practitioners Association, an umbrella body for traditional medicine practitioners across the

We should go back to our traditional ways and traditional medicine because they can treat the diseases that are frustrating the continent."

Mbaabu Mathiu, professor of environmental physiology and ethnomedicine

continent, has been pushing for the integration of traditional medicine into formal healthcare. It is looking for partnerships with Chinese institutions to develop African traditional medicine.

Stephen Mugambi, the technical adviser to the association, said there is much to learn from traditional Chinese medicine, such as its technology, medicines and research innovations.

Mugambi said the association has written a proposal to Kenya's Minis-

try of Sports, Culture and Heritage, requesting funding to send members to China for lessons on developing African traditional medicine.

Meanwhile, the association has signed a collaboration agreement with the University of Nairobi to validate African traditional medicines and natural products.

"The association is pleading with the government of Kenya to ensure that the integration of the African traditional and alternative medicine and practice into the mainstream health system is implemented without any further delays or biases," Mugambi said.

Pharmaceutical companies typically deal only with specific active ingredients from medicinal plants to target specific diseases, separating allopathic practitioners from medicines they use for treatment, he added.

Holistic approach

In contrast, African traditional medicine takes a holistic approach, he said. Practitioners perceive all the active properties of a medicinal plant to be interrelated and believe that the various parts of the body are also related, he added.

Wahome Ngare, an obstetrician and gynecologist in Nairobi with 31 years of practice, said all original and authentic medicines have always been derived from herbs, noting that Africans knew of these medicinal herbs long before the arrival of the colonialists.

Embracing the use of African traditional medicine in healthcare not only restores it to its rightful place but also lowers treatment costs, fosters research, enables regulation and standardization of treatment protocols, and offers African solutions to African problems.

Mbaabu Mathiu, a professor of environmental physiology and ethnomedicine, lamented the loss of traditional African practices under Western influence.

Africans historically used herbal medicines to treat both themselves and their livestock, he said, but the West's perception that anything traditional is backward has undermined their value.

"We should go back to our traditional ways and traditional medicine because they can treat the diseases that are frustrating the continent," he said.

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WORLD

US' AI export curbs dubbed unworkable

Measures go against Washington's goal of maintaining leadership, experts say

By **LIA ZHU** in San Francisco
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Experts have sharply criticized the latest export controls on artificial intelligence models and chips implemented by outgoing US President Joe Biden's administration, describing the measures as unworkable and counterproductive to the US' stated goals of protecting national security and maintaining AI leadership.

The administration unveiled its Interim Final Rule for an "Export Control Framework for Artificial Intelligence Diffusion" last week as it approaches the end of its term.

While the framework aims to safeguard US national security by limiting the export of advanced AI chips and technologies to strategic competitors, particularly China, it has sparked intense debate about its potential impact on US competitiveness in the global market.

The new regulations, which took effect on Jan 13, include a grace period for compliance until May 15. The framework establishes a tiered system of export controls, with only 18 "trusted" economies designated as "tier one" and exempted from strict export caps. This select group includes close US allies such as the United Kingdom, Japan, and Germany.

The framework's "tier two" designation encompasses most of the world, including close US partners like Israel, Singapore, Brazil, India, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. These nations face substantial restrictions with stringent country-specific limits on chip imports. China falls into the most restrictive "tier three" category which the US considers "adversaries".

The regulations particularly affect the export of graphics processing unit chips essential for powering cutting-edge AI applications, including large language models. Industry experts warn that the framework's broad scope and lack of targeted measures could undermine US competitiveness in AI, weaken US global leadership in digital policy, and create opportunities for foreign AI chip manufacturers to capture greater market share.

"It's a nice, cute touch, but it doesn't actually work, and we know that from experience," said James Andrew Lewis, senior vice-president and director of the Strategic Technologies Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Speaking at a webinar organized by the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation on Thursday, Lewis said if the goal is to impede China's AI development, the framework will not work.

"It's worthwhile to accelerate what the US is doing. It's worthwhile to seek to dominate the market, but it's less useful to try and stop the Chinese. Because 10 years ago the Chinese were still dependent on the US for technology, and that's increasingly less true, they'll come up with workarounds. They'll come up with substitutes," he said.

Objectives questioned

Questioning the policy's fundamental objectives, Lewis suggested that instead of trying to constrain China, the focus should be on "having the biggest market share for American companies possible".

"When you design a regulation, you should have some goals in

mind, and the goal we should have in mind for this regulation is how to accelerate US leadership in this market, and the best measure for that is market share," Lewis said.

Ken Glueck, executive vice-president of Oracle, shared these concerns, arguing the new rules would foster new foreign competition for US companies and describing the "arbitrary market allocation scheme" as "just unworkable".

"The problem is that there are far too many tier two countries," Glueck said at the webinar. From a "practitioner's view", he said, "You are not allowed to deploy more than 50 percent of GPUs outside of the United States, that means US industry is a net loser under this discussion."

"If tariffs can be considered the first phase of America's economic war with China, then blacklisting appears to be the second phase. Of course, with tariffs, a Chinese company could still do business with the US, but those that are blacklisted are denied such opportunities," Anthony Moretti, department head and an associate professor of the Communication and Organizational Leadership Department at Robert Morris University in Pennsylvania, told China Daily.

"Biden has become even more of a China hawk since his vice-president lost the 2024 election; there have been multiple blacklist announcements over the past eight to 10 weeks, and they raise questions about just how sincere he was in supporting the San Francisco vision and any other efforts, for that matter, that might have improved US-China relations," Moretti said.

"Regardless of the reason or reasons, the erosion of the bilateral relationship continues, and that is not good for either country or for the global community as a whole," he said.

Flight of fancy



People watch as participants fly kites during the Qatar Kite Festival in Doha on Saturday. The festival is a vibrant celebration of creativity and culture, featuring a spectacular showcase of colorful kites soaring across the Doha skyline. KARIM JAAFAR / AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Briefly

COLOMBIA Death toll in guerrilla violence rises to 60

The death toll from attacks in guerrilla violence in Colombia has risen to 60 in the country's Catatumbo region, officials said on Saturday. Rival groups have for years been fighting in the region over control of the cocaine trade. Around 60 people have been killed across Catatumbo, Colombia's Ombudsman Office said late on Saturday, while some residents were "taking refuge in the mountains" to escape the violence. The ombudsman's office posted on social media that about 60 people have died violently, 32 were kidnapped and hundreds were displaced due to conflict in recent days between the National Liberation Army and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia.

IRAN 2 senior judges killed in shooting attack

Two senior judges were killed on Saturday in a shooting attack at the Supreme Court of Iran in Teheran, the Mizan news agency of the Iranian judiciary reported. Mizan said that the two judges were Ali Razini, head of Branch 39, and Mohammad Moghiseh, head of Branch 53, of the Supreme Court, and that the assailant committed suicide soon after the attack. Calling the attack a "premeditated act of terror" carried out by an "armed infiltrator", Mizan said investigations were underway to identify and arrest those behind the "terrorist" action. Meanwhile, the semiofficial Fars news agency, citing an informed source at Teheran's police, reported that the attacker was among the service personnel of the Supreme Court.

UNITED STATES Starship grounded after midair blast

The United States on Friday grounded SpaceX's Starship and ordered Elon Musk's company to investigate why the spaceship disintegrated in a fiery cascade over the Caribbean during its test mission. Authorities in the Turks and Caicos Islands confirmed they diverted all flights from their airspace during the incident and urged residents not to touch fallen debris, warning it could be hazardous. Under established procedures, SpaceX will now be required to carry out a "mishap investigation", including the identification of any corrective actions, which the Federal Aviation Administration will review before determining if the launch vehicle can return to flight.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

CHINADAILY
中国日报

Achieving balance in our lives

As we embrace nature's revitalizing energy, let's also absorb and appreciate the majesty that surrounds us and nurtures our common desire to create an environment for the harmonious coexistence of humans and nature.

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COMMENT

Editorials

Pooling wisdom, collective efforts best way to sustain global recovery

How to enhance cooperation and jointly seize the new opportunities for development presented by the digital revolution are the keys to a brighter future.

At a time when inclusive, green and sustainable development becomes an imperative need for the whole of humanity, the world is beset with risks and uncertainties and a vicious cycle of weak growth, conflict and division.

Ineffectual global coordination has resulted in growing development, governance and trust deficits, and both emerging technologies and economic globalization have shown themselves to be double-edged swords.

These deficits and the economic and development challenges have hindered concerted efforts to address not only common global challenges, such as global warming and climate change, but also conflicts and geopolitical tensions in various parts of the world.

It is against this backdrop that the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2025 in Davos convenes this week for deliberations under the theme "Collaboration for the Intelligent Age".

A platform for global leaders to discuss ways to address key global and regional challenges, the agenda includes responding to geopolitical shocks, stimulating growth to improve living standards, and stewarding a just and inclusive energy transition.

Viewed as a world economic bellwether event, President Xi Jinping has attended the forum three times in the past, delivering strong messages in support of economic globalization, safeguarding and practicing multilateralism, and jointly creating a better world.

This year, Chinese Vice-Premier Ding Xuexiang will attend the meeting before his visits to Switzerland and the Netherlands.

Ding, who is also a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, is expected to share China's experience, vision and proposals at the meeting with a view to strengthening exchanges and communication with other parties.

Over the past decade, China has been an important source of impetus for the steady growth of the world economy and the Chinese economy grew by 5 percent last year, despite the downward pressure, demonstrating that with its strong resilience it can continue to provide strong dynamism to the world.

But there is a pressing need to strengthen the shared will and resolve to steer the world economy toward a more inclusive, resilient and sustainable future. A better world can only be built by all working together. Common challenges will not be overcome in a divided world.

At Davos, Ding will engage in exchanges and communication with other parties with the aim of enhancing understanding and trust and strengthening the consensus for more effective global economic governance. Boosting world economic growth requires cooperation and the upholding of true multilateralism and an equal and orderly multipolar world and mutually beneficial and inclusive economic globalization.

The misguided approach of antagonism and confrontation pursued by some in their efforts to freeze the divisions they create into a new Cold War and their waging of trade wars and tech wars have hurt all countries' interests and undermined everyone's well-being.

Estrangement, confrontation, protectionism and conflict are choices that have only exacerbated the turmoil and turbulence that are leaving no country unscathed. It is time to set aside these failed zero-sum individual buoyancy aids in favor of the collective fostering of communication, cooperation, openness and peace that will keep all afloat.

TikTok tests US earnestness for cooperation

TikTok "temporarily" suspended its services in the United States on Saturday, following the Supreme Court's ruling that a law requiring the app to sever ties with its Chinese parent company, ByteDance, or face a ban, is constitutional and does not violate the First Amendment.

The Protecting Americans from Foreign Adversary Controlled Applications Act took effect at midnight on Sunday.

After the US Supreme Court's decision on Friday upholding an earlier appeals court judgment in favor of the sell-or-ban federal law, White House news secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said in a statement: "TikTok should remain available to Americans, but simply under American ownership or other ownership that addresses the national security concerns identified by Congress in developing this law," noting that actions to implement the law will fall to the Donald Trump administration.

That means the Joe Biden administration has handed a poisoned chalice to its successor.

After meeting with TikTok CEO Shou Zi Chew last month, Trump told the media he would "take a look" whether he would seek to prevent the Supreme Court's ban from taking effect. And in a telephone interview with NBC News on Saturday, Trump said he hadn't made a decision yet but he will "most likely" give TikTok a 90-day reprieve from a ban in the US after taking office.

"I think that would be, certainly, an option that we look at. The 90-day extension is something that will be most likely done, because it's appropriate. You know, it's appropriate. We have to look at it carefully. It's a very big situation," Trump said.

The law allows for such a 90-day pause in the restrictions on the app if there has been significant progress toward its sale to a US entity before the law takes effect. But according to what the Justice Department has said in court filings, a sale of TikTok does not appear imminent and, although experts have said the app will not disappear from existing users' phones once the law takes effect, new users won't be able to download it and updates won't be available.

TikTok has about 170 million users in the United States, suspending its service before it has to is a risky action for the company as that might lead to its users migrating to other social media platforms. But if it continues to operate without compliance, it could expose itself and associated platforms to legal penalties of up to \$5,000 per user. So suspending the app is a strategic move to mitigate legal risks and financial liabilities.

Media-savvy Trump attaches great importance to his media relations, as long as he thinks the media organizations are friendly to him, which is evidenced by the fact that several members of his Cabinet are former media veterans.

His personal rapport with Chew, and the important role TikTok played in helping him woo young voters in election mean TikTok might be regarded as a friendly social media platform that can contribute to his governance, as long as its alleged threat to the US' national security is addressed.

Users of the app are now greeted with a message apologizing for the app being unavailable that states, "we are fortunate that President Trump has indicated that he will work with us on a solution to reinstate TikTok once he takes office. Please stay tuned!"

It is also thought that Trump won't want to ban TikTok because he might seek to leverage the TikTok issue as a bargaining chip with Beijing in exchange for the latter's assistance on some other fronts. Trump is well aware TikTok's "threat" to US national security is just an excuse for some parties to try and Americanize the app, and the TikTok ban, one of the farewell gifts from the Biden administration, aims to shake Trump's popularity among young Americans and obstruct his efforts to repair ties with China.

Trump is certainly well aware that Biden's welcome-to-office gift is without substance and simply galvanized with a "national security" antitrust coating to make it appear of value. Thus it should not be difficult for the new administration to find a proper solution to the issue.

Shi Yu



Opinion Line

China and Vietnam strengthening ties as neighbors, partners and friends

The exchange of congratulatory remarks between the top leaders of China and Vietnam on the occasion of the two countries' 75th anniversary of diplomatic ties underscores both sides' commitment to nourishing their friendship and jointly building a China-Vietnam community with a shared future.

China and Vietnam have learned from each other and forged ahead hand in hand, advancing socialism and deepening their comprehensive strategic cooperation. Their reciprocal cooperation in a wide range of fields, including political, economic, trade, security, and people-to-people exchanges, has benefited the two peoples and contributed to regional and world stability, development and prosperity.

In recent years, under the guidance of the leaders of both parties and countries, bilateral ties have progressed by leaps and bounds and been lifted to a strategic height. The frequent high-level interaction has provided strong momentum for

bilateral relations to enter a new stage of higher political mutual trust.

The two neighbors signed a memorandum of understanding on the joint implementation of the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative and Vietnam's "Two Corridors and One Economic Circle" plan in 2017, ushering in major projects that have substantially improved people's well-being.

The strengthening of the China-Vietnam relationship serves the fundamental interests of both nations and aligns with the current global trends. China's stable, growing ties with Vietnam, a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, also contributes to China's overall relations with the 10-member bloc and the building of a closer China-ASEAN community with a shared future. In today's turbulent world, China-Vietnam cooperation also contributes to regional and world peace and development.

In stark contrast to some ill-inten-

tioned forces' repeated provocations over the South China Sea disputes, China and Vietnam have vowed to work together to maintain the South China Sea as a sea of peace and cooperation, oppose the involvement of external forces and accelerate consultations on the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea.

In this new phase of bilateral relations and at a new historical juncture, both nations should work more closely together to safeguard international equality and justice, practice true multilateralism, and support each other on issues concerning their respective major interests.

The two neighbors have everything to gain from continuing to leverage their shared opportunities, speeding up important cooperation plans and implementing the consensus reached between them so as to bring long-term benefits to the two peoples and ensure the giant ship of China-Vietnam friendship will sail toward greater success.

— WANG HUI, CHINA DAILY

Hard-won target shows economy on the rebound

In 2024, China's GDP grew by 5 percent year-on-year, successfully meeting the annual economic growth target of about 5 percent. That's a hard-won result.

Driven by the implementation of a series of incremental macroeconomic policies since September 2024, the recovery of the economy in the fourth quarter has accelerated, with production and demand both improved.

That is reflected in the rebounding of the industry and service sectors, consumer demand, infrastructure and manufacturing investment, and sales in the real estate market.

More important, the economic structure has also been continuously optimized and upgraded in the process. In 2024, the value added of China's high-tech industry and investment both achieved rapid growth, and the proportion of the service sector in its GDP increased to 56.7 percent.

The annual industrial value added last year increased by 5.8 percent compared with 2023. In particular, high-tech manufacturing and equipment manufacturing maintained a high output growth rate throughout 2024, accounting for 16.3 percent and 34.6 percent respectively of the value added of industrial enterprises above designated size.

The service industry also accelerated its expansion, with the service industry production index increasing by 5.2 percent compared with 2023, and the growth rate in each month of the fourth quarter remaining above 6 percent.

The trade-in policy has significantly boosted residents' consumption and manufacturing equipment renewal, while the recovery of manufacturing and infrastructure has led to a relatively rapid growth in overall investment.

Fixed asset investment grew by 3.2 percent in 2024. The cultivation of new

quality productive forces and the increase in equipment renewal policies continued to drive investment, and the capacity utilization situation also improved at the same time. In the fourth quarter, the capacity utilization rate of industrial enterprises above designated size was 76.2 percent, an increase of 1.1 percentage points from the third quarter, which is expected to further enlarge the space for manufacturing investment growth in the future.

Driven by the package of incremental policies continuously introduced by the central and local governments, coupled with the recovery of the endogenous momentum of the economy, China's national economy will continue to rebound and the macro fundamentals will continue to improve, laying a solid foundation for the country's high quality development this year.

— 21ST CENTURY BUSINESS HERALD

What They Say

Biden's move will deliver blow to American consumers

The Biden administration on Friday issued last-minute proposed rules to curb duty-free imports under the \$800 "de minimis" threshold, denying exemption for low-value shipments of goods that are subject to other punitive US tariffs.

The move marks a setback for e-commerce firms, including China-based Shein and PDD Holdings' Temu, which have exploited the de minimis threshold to ship millions of small packages a day to US consumers.

In addition, small package shippers will also be required to include the 10-digit Harmonized Tariff Schedule classifications for the package contents in order to claim the exemption.

"We cannot let Chinese-founded e-commerce plat-

forms gain an unfair trade advantage while American businesses play by the rules," National Economic Advisor Lael Brainard said in a statement.

"Today's actions are an important step forward to level the playing field for American workers, retailers, and manufacturers and to enforce US laws that protect the health and safety of our consumers."

But these are just excuses to cover up the absurdity of the proposed rule that will leave no party unscathed if implemented, especially US consumers, as well as US e-commerce companies such as Amazon, whose imported parcels are not exempted from the rule.

Although the US represents a fast-growing foreign market, the major market for the Chinese e-commerce giants is still the Chinese mainland, where the logistics costs are much lower than in developed economies.

China is not only a major manufacturing base of various kinds of consumer goods but also one of the largest e-commerce markets in the world with the largest body of e-consumers. To put the matter in perspective, the number of e-commerce parcels in Jinhua city, Zhejiang province, handled in 2023 is 13.6 billion, 10 times the number of the US' imported e-commerce parcels in fiscal year 2024.

Even if the US imposes the tariffs on imported e-commerce parcels, a move that may be rejected by the new US administration after a 60-day consultation with the public, the final price of the consumer goods might still be lower than that of the retail price at brick-and-mortar malls in the US.

In effect, what the US will be taxing is not Chinese companies but US consumers.

— LIYANG, CHINA DAILY

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COMMENT



China and the World Roundtable | AI for Davos 2025

Editor's note: The 2025 World Economic Forum, being held in Davos from Monday to Friday under the theme "Collaboration for the Intelligent Age", is expected to foster a spirit of cooperation and optimism in the digital age in a more sustainable way, despite the different positions of the participants and global uncertainties. Three experts share their views on the issue with China Daily.

Djoomart Otorbaev

Does AI pose a threat to sustainable development?

Projected estimates indicate that advanced artificial intelligence (AI) systems will necessitate over \$1 trillion in investments for cloud and enterprise data center infrastructure within the next five years.

The AI infrastructure includes servers equipped with graphics processing units (GPUs) or custom accelerators, dedicated networks, storage solutions and specialized facilities, which are all factors that demand significant capital investment. Therefore, evaluating the scale, potential returns and environmental impact of AI's rapid development and application is essential.

The rise of AI will significantly impact the energy sector, as AI systems require a substantial amount of energy. According to the International Energy Agency,

a large percentage of energy consumption in data centers is dedicated to computing and cooling, each accounting for about 40 percent.

This situation is expected to become even more complicated with the increasing use of AI systems, as their greater computing power leads to higher power density. Dense clusters of high-performance chips generate significantly more heat than standard central processing units (CPUs), requiring much more energy for cooling these systems to prevent overheating.

GPUs are specifically designed for AI and heavy computing tasks. They need to run continuously and thus consume significantly more power than standard processors. A typical CPU or server chip, in general, consumes between 75 watts and 200 watts, comparable to a light bulb's power consumption. In contrast, modern NVIDIA GPUs designed for AI applications can consume five to 10 times more power, resulting in a similar increase in heat generation.

As a result, the power consumption of a typical hyper-scale data center is expected to rise from its current level of 30-40 megawatts to over 300 MW within the next three to five years.

In 2022, data centers consumed 460 terawatt hours (TWh) of electricity, accounting for 2 percent of the world's total electricity consumption. However, a recent report by the IEA indicates that data centers could potentially double their energy consumption by 2026, exceeding 1,000 TWh, roughly equivalent to the entire energy consumption of Japan.

Morgan Stanley estimates that demand from generative AI will grow at an annual average of 70 percent up to 2027. It will account for about 25 percent of all data center energy consumption.

The industry is addressing the challenge of resource efficiency by building hyper-scale data centers and innovating in chip design. Data center operators are some of the largest investors in renewable energy. For instance, in May, Microsoft signed a deal to produce 10.5 GW of renewable energy, marking the most significant corporate power purchase agreement in history.

In July, Elon Musk's company built and launched a massive supercomputer

called a "gigafactory of computing" in Memphis, Tennessee. This initiative, called Project Colossus, features a data center equipped with 100,000 NVIDIA chips and is intended to train xAI's ChatGPT competitor, Grok. The new facility will consume 50 MW of electricity — enough to power about 50,000 homes — and require 1.3 million gallons of water a day for cooling. The substantial increase in resource consumption has even raised concerns among Memphis City Council members about the potential impact on the city's already strained power grid and water supply.

While AI consumes a significant amount of energy, its data centers need extensive cooling systems and utilize large amounts of clean, purified water. According to estimates, by 2027, the industry's projected annual water consumption could reach 6.6 billion cubic meters.

Consequently, the demand for cooling solutions and water-saving technologies will increase rapidly. An IEA study found that data center power consumption (excluding cryptocurrencies) accounted for 1-1.3 percent of the global electricity demand in 2022. However, recent forecasts have increased those figures to 1.5-3 percent.

Also, data center power consumption

is expected to rapidly approach the level of electric vehicles' consumption worldwide, which is projected to account for about 2 percent of the global demand by 2026. Power consumption for aluminum production, on the other hand, is expected to make up about 4 percent of the global demand.

Besides, the localization of data centers is crucial. It is already leading to local bottlenecks and challenges for energy companies. For instance, in Ireland, the data center sector accounted for 18 percent of the country's electricity demand in 2022, while in Singapore, it accounted for 7 percent.

Consequently, restrictions on new data center operations have been implemented in various regions. In Ireland, grid connection conditions have been in place since late 2021, and in the Netherlands, most hyper-scale data centers have faced restrictions starting in January 2024 due to grid constraints.

So some data center providers are increasingly exploring on-site power generation to address these connectivity issues and reduce dependency on the grid. For example, in China, where the demand for electricity is growing rapidly due to the emergence of data centers and 5G networks, Tencent has installed rooftop solar panels with battery storage that can generate about 10 MW at its cloud data center in Tianjin.

AI has also demonstrated its value in addressing climate challenges, contributing to energy efficiency, green technologies and weather forecasting. However, the substantial computing resources needed to operate AI systems have resulted in significantly increased energy and water consumption, and will continue to do so.

These competing risks and opportunities are closely linked to the broader decarbonization goal. Effectively managing them will require policies that promote the widespread adoption of renewable energy. And future applications of AI could include integrating renewables into the energy grid, developing multimodal AI systems, and utilizing more efficient models to tackle emerging challenges. There is still a lot of work to be done.

The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

David Gosset

How AI threatens linguistic diversity

Cultural diversity and biodiversity are often discussed in parallel, and for good reason. Both are invaluable to the richness and sustainability of life on Earth. Just as we must take action to preserve the vast variety of species that inhabit our planet, we must also protect the diversity of cultures that shape the human experience.

In this context, the plurality of languages plays a critical role in nurturing and maintaining cultural diversity. Language is not just a tool for communication; it is a vehicle for the transmission of knowledge, traditions, values and worldviews. However, despite their immense practical value, large language models (LLMs) are exacerbating the pressure on non-English languages, contributing to a subtle but significant decline in linguistic diversity.

Cultural diversity is deeply intertwined with linguistic diversity. Every language carries within it a unique set of ideas, ways of thinking, and forms of expression. When a language fades, so does the cultural knowledge it embodies. Linguistic diversity helps societies address and adapt to challenges and innovate in ways that might otherwise be impossible. Just as ecosystems thrive when diverse species coexist, societies become more resilient and dynamic when diverse cultures and languages flourish. The loss of a language is not just the loss of words, but the sad erosion of one particular vision of the world.

In the global village shaped by the influence of the United States, the rise of English as the dominant language in business, technology and academia has created a significant imbalance. While the proliferation of English has brought people together across borders, it has also placed enormous pressure on the survival of local languages. This phenomenon is especially visible in cyberspace, where English has become the lingua franca — 52.1 percent of websites

are currently in English. Spanish comes second, accounting for only 5.5 percent.

Large language models are contributing to this trend in both subtle and overt ways. This applies not only to already endangered languages (more than 3,000 of them) but also to more stable ones (more than 3,500). Among the latter, it even affects the most widely spoken languages worldwide, such as Chinese, Hindi, Spanish and French.

The message is clear: passively allowing linguistic homogenization to occur and become the norm is unwise. LLMs are designed to process vast amounts of data from the internet, and this data is overwhelmingly in English. Although these models are capable of understanding

and generating text in many languages, they are predominantly trained on English-language content. This structural bias toward English reinforces the dominance of the language. The increasing reliance on LLMs in applications like translation, customer service and content creation further consolidates the centrality of English.

While AI bias is a widely discussed issue, particularly in terms of race, gender and socioeconomic status, the impact of large language models on linguistic diversity deserves more attention. In fact, it may be one of the most pressing issues for the future of cultural diversity. The widespread use of English in AI systems risks marginalizing minority languages and expediting their extinction. As more people rely on AI for communication, learning and business, they may inadvertently reinforce the dominance of English at the expense of their native tongues.

This issue is compounded by the fact that the development of AI technologies is often driven by countries and companies in the English-speaking world. As a result, the tools designed to aid human communication are often created with little consideration for the preservation of linguistic diversity. While some AI developers are working on making their systems more inclusive, the challenge of supporting hundreds of languages, each with its own unique grammar and cultural context, is formidable.

Raising people's awareness of the impact of LLMs on linguistic diversity is crucial for fostering a true sense of cultural preservation. Just as biodiversity is not just about saving individual species but maintaining the intricate web of life that sustains ecosystems, cultural diversity is about protecting the multitude of human experiences that contribute to the global mosaic of human identity. As we continue to advance in the field of AI, it is essential to incorporate the values of linguistic diversity and cultural inclusion into the design and deployment of these technologies.

The conversation on AI's impact on language and culture must be global. Governments, tech companies and linguists must collaborate to ensure AI serves as a tool for promoting, rather than diminishing, cultural and linguistic diversity. By making concerted efforts to develop technologies that support the vitality of all languages, we can help safeguard the rich diversity of human cultures for future generations. This makes the preservation of linguistic diversity not just an academic issue, but also a cultural imperative that is essential to the flourishing of human civilization.

The view don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



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MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

Eugene Ch'ng

Metaverse a next step in human spatial expansion

Metaverse as a concept has become a narrative that is unifying the fragmented universe of virtual reality, augmented reality, and any of the variants of emerging reality technologies that we have witnessed. The emergence of the Metaverse highlights the saturation of the 2D digital space in which corporations vie for users' attention through advertisements on screens and through large displays.

Unlike 2D interfaces, Metaverse leans toward immersive environments, where users' primary sensory inputs (visual and auditory) are mediated through headsets or glasses. In this space, the body itself becomes the input device, shifting the focus from attention to embodied presence. Just like attention once drove profit, in the future, it will be our presence within the immersive virtual environment that will hold value for corporations. This shift signals a post-media future where interacting with the mediated world will become embodied, more physical, tangible and participatory.

The concept of space as a resource is crucial, as humanity has always sought to occupy and expand into available

spaces. Historically, our physical space has been exhausted, leading to overcrowding. With the rise of the internet and evolving versions of the Web, humans began to occupy digital spaces (the cyberspace), repeating the cycle.

Now that the 2D Web has become saturated, there's a growing need to explore the third dimension (3D space), driven by advancements in computing and investment from Big Tech. The Metaverse exists to fulfill our need to expand into spaces beyond the dimensions that we currently inhabit.

The proliferation of data-capturing devices has made data highly accessible in various formats and resolutions, which in turn supports content generation for Metaverse and Generative AI. XR technologies, when properly utilized, could transform how we learn, communicate and work, aligning with Daniel Bell's prediction about the growing importance of manipulating information. The rise of GenAI presents both uncertainties and opportunities.

In recent months, there have been GenAI models that transform heritage figurines into dancing models. I strongly oppose the use of AI in this particular way, because it belittles the cultural significance handed down to us from previous generations. The younger generation can be amused by dancing cultural heritage figurines, but they will grow up having the perception that all there is to heritage is amusement.

In my knowledge as an expert in Digital Heritage and Metaverse Technologies, to ensure these technologies benefit society, and especially our younger generation, it is necessary to understand their nature and properly define their purpose.

Before using digital technology for any purpose, I would ask questions such as: Can x technology do y which traditional approaches were not able to?

How will x technology add value to y within spectrum z which traditional approaches could not already have done so? How will technology affect those who use it, as well as society at large?

We need to understand that digital technologies can provide additional dimensions for information, and how these dimensions can be leveraged so that information becomes meaningful, and can be communicated in more effective ways. Our contemporary apps have given us permutations and combinations of information through only two dimensions.

What would three dimensions and even immersivity in Metaverse technologies give us? I think we have only begun to scratch the surface of these technologies. GenAI is providing us with higher dimensions of possibilities in the information space. This is a critical juncture, and how we aim to use this space to benefit society will define our progress in the conservation and communication of cultural heritage.

Digital technologies can enhance various aspects of the information space for cultural heritage, including interactivity, visualization, storytelling and the immersive qualities of virtual environments, but only if we understand the nature of these spaces, its dimensions and how to use them for enhancing the information space.

Digital technologies possess a distinct materiality, and it is only by fully understanding how to harness their potential that we can truly reap their benefits. Let's take a physical material for example. Glass is primarily made from silica (sand) and other minerals, which when melted and cooled, can form a rigid, transparent material. The composition and properties of glass is its transparency, brittleness, malleability when heated, and refraction and reflection under light. When human

beings learned to use glass as beads, pots, and containers, they harnessed only its basic uses.

But in advanced society, the progress in the understanding of glass has brought about the development of fiber-optics technology, where glass fibers as thin as hair are used to transmit data at incredible speed and long distances, which became the backbone of telecommunications and the internet.

Digital technologies create two major dimensions of information space: scientific and experiential. In the scientific dimension of archaeology and heritage, digital technologies can contribute to research and preservation, restoration and conservation, data-driven analysis, and simulation and reconstruction. The experiential dimensions would include virtual and augmented reality, interactive exhibitions, storytelling, narratives and education, memory and identity, and personalized heritage.

While the scientific dimension has facilitated the discovery of new information as well as contributed to new knowledge via the research process, the experiential dimension communicates history and heritage in a way that is experiential, providing much more information than textbooks and documentaries, which are passively consumed and used.

As we progress toward the future and advanced technologically, the ways in which we can gain knowledge and value by engaging with, preserving and communicating cultural heritage will continue to expand. It is in such an exciting future that we must do all we can to protect the distortion of information, through ethical use of Metaverse technologies and GenAI.

The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

GLOBAL VIEWS



SHIYU / CHINA DAILY

ERIK SOLHEIM

Navigating uncertainty

As a new Trump administration checks into the White House, the future of China-US relations and global order must be rules-based to prevent fragmentation

The future of relations between the United States and China in 2025 feels like a sea of uncertainty. One would either need boundless optimism or complete detachment to feel entirely confident about where things are heading. With Donald Trump's return to the presidency, the global order stands at a



crossroads, teetering on the brink of significant instability. His campaign was full of sweeping pronouncements on major global issues — trade, technology, climate and industrial policy — but it lacked the coherence of a clear plan. His idea of imposing tariffs on Chinese goods, for example, signals a strong "America First" attitude but leaves much to interpretation.

Adding to the unpredictability is Trump's Cabinet, a mix of staunch China hawks advocating for confrontation and pragmatic individuals with a deeper understanding of the nuances of US-China relations. This blend creates a murky picture, making it hard to discern what path the administration might take.

One thing is certain: the risk of tariffs and trade wars looms large under Trump. If it happens, China and other nations will not sit idle, but retaliate. China has prepared by innovating and building independent value chains in the chip business and more. But a trade war will make us all poorer. Political leaders across the world are preparing for a storm that might lie ahead.

Domestically, Trump's focus on revitalizing the US working and lower-middle classes is commendable. After decades of stagnant wages, these workers deserve attention.

Tariffs, in Trump's view, are a key tool for restoring the US economy, protecting jobs and boosting revenue. Yet, the claim that these measures won't burden the US citizens but will shift the cost to other nations is misleading. In reality, tariffs hurt everyone, developed and developing nations alike and not least the US working class.

The stagnation in middle-America reflects a much larger transformation in the global economic order. While the US remains a formidable economic power, its dominance has significantly waned. In the aftermath of World War II, the US accounted for around 40 percent of the global economy. Today, that share has almost halved. It reflects the rise of the rest and its good news for the world.

Militarily, the US remains strong, but recent history — from Vietnam to

Iraq, Libya and Afghanistan — shows the limitations of its might. Even the most advanced weaponry struggles in urban battlefields and regions where civilian opposition runs deep. Compounding this is the US public's aversion to sending their children to fight in far-away theaters. The US has basically lost all recent wars. Despite its technological sophistication and unparalleled military spending, it had to give up when facing village boys from Afghanistan carrying AK-47s.

Despite these challenges, the US retains cultural and democratic influence. Its movies and pop culture still captivate the world. Yet, the sheen has dulled. School shootings, drug abuse, economic stagnation and political polarization have eroded the once-idealized image of the US. While the country still has many admirable qualities, fewer nations now aspire to replicate the US model.

Meanwhile, the decline of US dominance coincides with the rise of the Global South, with China leading the way. China is the only nation capable of rivaling the US across multiple fronts. Its rise reflects broader shifts in global power. Asia, home to nearly 60 percent of the world's population, has become the center of economic growth. Together, the economies of China, India and their neighbors account for the bulk of global expansion.

This economic transformation is further underpinned by Asia's peace. Compared with Europe, Africa and the Americas, Asia experiences far fewer cross-border or internal conflicts, providing a foundation for sustained growth. Moreover, globalization has not only fueled this growth but also lifted China and much of Asia out of extreme poverty, fostering the rise of a thriving middle class that positions Asia as the hallmark of 21st-century development.

Trump's return places him face-to-face with a far stronger China. Over the past eight years, China has used US tariffs and criticisms as a catalyst to accelerate its ambitions in markets such as solar panels, electric vehicles, robotics and rare materials. Its advanced manufacturing sector has exploded in scale and sophistication, becoming a global powerhouse.

China's leadership in the green economy and its control over critical supply chains provide a significant advantage in any trade conflict. For instance, during a recent conversation I had with an Indian businessman, he acknowledged that China dominates 97 percent of the market for his company's minerals and emphasized that India should learn from China's strategies to develop its own competitive

advantages. This pragmatic perspective was both insightful and inspiring.

Moreover, China's robust state capacity enables it to drive large-scale breakthroughs in key areas such as solid-state batteries, quantum computing and artificial intelligence. These strengths will position China to navigate trade disruptions with resilience. By 2030, the United Nations projects that China could account for 45 percent of global manufacturing, surpassing the combined output of the US and its allies.

On the US side, let's not overlook the wild card that is Elon Musk. With Tesla's growing reliance on international markets — especially the Chinese market — Musk has the potential to act as a bridge between the US and its trading partners. As US columnist Thomas Friedman aptly observed, wasting Musk's talents on bureaucratic minutiae would be a grave mistake. Instead, the US should harness the energy of visionary leaders such as Musk to rejuvenate domestic manufacturing, drive innovation and create jobs.

On the foreign policy front, the current global landscape does not resemble a new Cold War. Instead of ideological divisions, we see a return to the pre-World War I balance of power. Major players — the US, China, Japan, Russia and Europe — are engaged in a geopolitical game akin to Bismarck's era in Europe. This transitional phase, filled with uncertainty, offers a rare opportunity. Why not seize this moment to establish a genuinely rules-based global order, with the same rules for everyone?

The US-led system cannot simply be replaced by chaos. Instead, the world needs a truly rules-based international order to prevent fragmentation. The complex interdependence of modern economies demands that such an order be built on international rules that are not static but evolve through a fair and inclusive process open to all stakeholders. This ensures that developing countries and emerging economies have a more equitable opportunity to participate. While we cannot predict the exact direction of the international system, only through dialogue and negotiation can we restore its strength. Most importantly, now is the time for unwavering commitment to the goal of a fair and sustainable global order.

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DARYL GUPPY

Test of resolve

Australia can play an important role in de-escalating major-country competition in the region if it does not succumb to the "America First" pressure

Australia's continued ingratiation with the United States has led to the belief that Australia will be immune to the imposition of "America First" tariffs by the new Donald Trump administration, and that, in the broader context, this immunity will extend to the



Australia-China trade relationship. Evidence for this belief comes from Australia's previous success in evading tariffs during the first Trump administration. The assumption is that the same escape is possible. It means Australia is able to adopt a beggar-thy-neighbor approach that ignores the damage done to others as long as Australia suffers no ill-effects.

This time around, Trump, emboldened by second term success, wants to take back the Panama Canal, buy Greenland, end the Ukraine crisis and Israeli-Palestinian conflict with a handshake and deport thousands who have made their homes in America. The idea that Australia's history of compliance will protect it from direct US tariffs and sanctions impacts looks more tenuous with every new and outrageous statement of Trump's policy intentions.

The Australian attitudes and the Trump administration's approach to China impact on the Australia-China relationship in two ways.

The first impact falls directly on the trade relationship. Sanctions make it more difficult for Australian companies to do business with China. We see this already with the Australian rare earths' industry which was developed with Chinese investment and expertise. Australian companies with significant Chinese investment are locked out of US markets by sanctions, meaning they are unable to sell their offtake to the US.

Sanctions distort investment and capital allocation. In Australia this delivers additional barriers to an investment environment that is already weighted against Chinese investment. Unfortunately it works against the normalization of Australia-China trade relationships.

High tariffs distort the free flow of global trade by diverting sales to countries that do not

have tariffs, so their markets are "overwhelmed" with products. While this is good for consumers, it can have an adverse impact on local industries. This feeds further tariff barriers and it can also be manipulated by political forces to heighten racist reactions.

The second impact comes from the way the "America First" policy is not just about trade relationships. Integral to this policy is the idea of US exceptionalism expressed as a military and political hegemony. The US sees itself as the leader of a world shaped in its own image. In this perspective, America always comes first and this flows through its military and defence policies, feeding and sustaining major country competition in the region.

Led by Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Richard Marles, Australia has moved from cooperation with US defence forces to virtual integration with US defence forces and their command structure. Former prime minister Paul Keating and former foreign minister Bob Carr, among other leaders, have decried this surrender of sovereignty with US bombers and troops stationed in Australia.

They believe the integration has become so pronounced that Australia has lost its sovereign ability to make decisions about military engagements in the region and that Australia has become a de facto US garrison.

The commitment to the AUKUS trilateral security partnership among the US, the United Kingdom and Australia and its offensive submarine weaponry is further evidence of Australia's willingness to assist with aggressive US policy.

A continuation or acceleration of an aggressive approach under the new Trump administration to affairs in the South China Sea or the Taiwan region will see increased pressure from elements of the Australian government to endorse and follow this approach.

Trade and aggression are the two ends of the dilemma faced by Australia and which configure the Australia-China relationship. Trump's "America First" policy approach makes it more difficult to maintain the tenuous policy balance achieved by Australia in previous years.

China's Global Development Initiative and active participation in supporting regional forums offer the opportunity to

Australia to extend cooperation and de-escalate major-country competition.

Australia's participation in Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation mechanism, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, the Pacific Islands Forum, and as an Association of Southeast Asian Nations guest, provides the potential for Australia to regain its role as an independent mediator and facilitator. Australia likes to think that it already plays this role, but its subservience to the US and its willingness to uncritically accept US agendas have diminished its role in these regional forums. Regaining that level of influence is difficult, but not impossible.

It is not too late for Australia to play a significant role in de-escalating major-country competition in the region. However, it will require a change in the way Australia approaches the Australia-US relationship, because, under the new Trump administration, this will increase pressure on the Australia-China relationship.

Australia has to juggle its economic prosperity, which rests overwhelmingly on its trading relationship with China, with its increasing subservience to the US trade and military agenda, as illustrated by the outrageously expensive AUKUS submarine program. The brash aggression of the new Trump administration will test Australia's resolve on both fronts to a greater extent than previous US administrations.

On balance, a history of ingratiation with US policy objectives, often in defiance of international law, suggests that Australia will find it more difficult to assist in de-escalating major-country competition. It will take courage and goodwill for Australia to further Australia-China cooperation against escalated major-country competition in the era of the new Trump administration. China will need to continue with the heavy lifting of genuine cooperation, not just with Australia, but with the region.

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MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

LIFE

I will ask everyone to sit still, and let me tell you a story about the fierce wind in my hometown," says He Lianshan, sitting in the center of the stage, holding his *sanxian*, a long-necked, plucked string instrument.

With a deep breath, He clears his throat and begins.

"In the spring, the wind blows warm and gentle. In the summer, the wind blows hot and dry. In the autumn, the wind blows cool and crisp. In the winter, the wind blows cold enough to freeze you solid," he sings, his face constantly shifting between playful and dramatic, capturing the character and intensity of the wind. His voice, rich, hoarse, and powerful, rises and falls in a rhythmic cadence, each word carefully shaped to evoke the wind in the city of Zichang, Shaanxi province.

Besides plucking the strings of his instrument, his hands move in the air as if he is painting pictures of the scenes described in his lyrics. The audience is captivated, hanging on his every word and note, laughing at his humorous portrayal.

Every week, the seasoned 58-year-old artist performs Shaanbei (northern Shaanxi) Shuoshu, a traditional form of oral performance art from Shaanxi province. The term *shuoshu* means storytelling, and this art form has deep roots in folk culture, particularly in rural northwestern China.

This ancient tradition requires neither stage nor props — just the raw energy of the storyteller's voice and the imagination of the audience.

He is a famous storyteller in Shaanxi who now lives in Yan'an, an important former revolutionary base in the province. One of his disciples, Xiong Zhuying, went viral on social media for performing Shaanbei storytelling during the opening of the second chapter of the Chinese video game *Black Myth: Wukong*, which became a global hit.

Since then, He's schedule has become busier. He performs all over the country to introduce the art form to a wider audience.

"I have more than 100 disciples, and Xiong has had the opportunity to take the art form to another level. I read many comments left by people on social media about how they are impressed by Shaanbei storytelling. Those who never heard of it express the wish to learn more about it. I am very excited, particularly because much of this new audience is young people," He says at the Yan'an Quyi Performance Theater. *Quyi* is a broad category of traditional performing arts that includes storytelling, *xiangsheng* (cross-talk), and *kuaiiban*, a rapid rhythmic storytelling form accompanied by wooden clappers.

According to Huyan Qiang, director of the theater, Shaanbei storytelling dates back to the Western Zhou Dynasty (c. 11th century-771 BC). The major characteristics of the art form include its dialect, instruments and techniques.

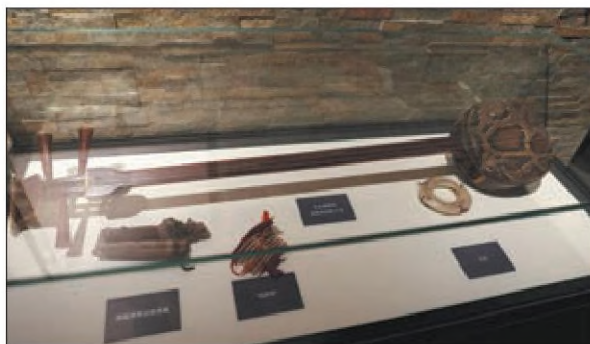
For example, besides the *sanxian*, storytellers also use the *pipa* (a four-stringed Chinese lute), *shuaiiban*, and *mazhazha* in their performances. The *shuaiiban* is a clapper, an essential part of the performance, and is attached to the performer's left leg. It is played by tapping the left heel, usually in fast tempo. Like the *shuaiiban*, the *mazhazha* is also a rhythmic



Shaanbei storytellers He Lianshan (left) and Qiao Yangwen at the Yan'an Quyi Performance Theater, Shaanxi province, on Jan 8.
PHOTOS BY ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

The art of painting pictures with words

Recent boost by popular video game takes Shaanbei storytelling tradition to young audiences, **Chen Nan** reports.



Above left: A replica of the *sanxian* given as a gift by Chairman Mao Zedong to Shaanbei storyteller Han Qixiang and other musical instruments used in performances on display in the Yan'an Quyi Performance Theater museum. **Above right:** Photos of Han in the theater's museum.

instrument but is attached to the performer's right wrist. As they pluck the strings of the *sanxian* or *pipa*, it produces sounds to draw the audience's attention.

"The performers tell stories in a dramatic, highly expressive manner, using different vocal techniques, gestures, and sometimes physical props to engage the audience. The stories focus on historical figures or popular folklore, ranging from tales of everyday life to major events," says Huyan.

He Lianshan became intrigued with Shaanbei storytelling when he was a teenager. He attended many performances in informal community settings, such as village gatherings, markets and temple fairs, which allowed him to engage directly with the performers. His favorite stories are from the classic novel *Journey to the West*. After watching a performance, He would imitate the performers and retell the stories at home.

"They usually performed without a script, relying on memory and improvisational skills. It is not only a form of entertainment but also a way to preserve local history and mythology. It is deeply tied to the oral tradition of rural China, where literacy was historically limited, and stories were passed down through the spoken word," says He.

Before learning to perform as a storyteller, He received two years of training in *daoping*, a traditional performing art that combines

storytelling, singing and acting.

His experience performing *daoping* helped him develop his own style as a storyteller, and he is skilled in acting and imitation. His voice rises and falls with excitement, allowing the audience to feel the tension in every story.

"My father was against my idea of becoming a storyteller, but I insisted. He told me that it was for the blind," He says.

Shaanbei storytelling is an important way for many blind people in



It is not only a form of entertainment but also a way to preserve local history and mythology. It is deeply tied to the oral tradition of rural China ..."

He Lianshan, Shaanbei Shuoshu (storytelling) artist

Shaanxi province to make a living, especially in rural areas. Since it is oral, it is well-suited to individuals who cannot rely on sight. One of the best-known blind storytellers from Shaanxi was Han Qixiang (1915-89), who lost his sight at the age of 3 from smallpox and learned the art when he was 13. He is credited with creating more than 500 stories, especially heroic tales about Red Army soldiers. In 1946, Han performed for Chairman Mao Zedong, who gave him a *sanxian* as a gift. In 1978, he founded the Yan'an Quyi Performance Theater and became its first director, dedicating himself to training storytellers and popularizing the art form.

Qiao Yangwen, 45, is also a Shaanbei storyteller at the Yan'an Quyi Performance Theater. Born in a small village in Yulin, Shaanxi province, he dropped out of school when he was 16 and became a storyteller.

For Qiao, the appeal of Shaanbei storytelling isn't just in the stories but in the emotional connection with the audience. The rhythmic chanting, the way the storyteller's voice brings characters to life, and the spontaneity of oral performance make it feel like a shared experience.

"It transcends the need for visuals. We are not just telling a story; we are living in it. The voice paints pictures in the audience's minds — there is laughter, anger and tragedy — all through the voice alone," he says.

However, like many traditional art forms, Shaanbei storytelling is struggling to find a place in today's fast-paced, screen-centric society. One of the biggest challenges artists face is the decline in young people taking up the craft. In fact, both He and Qiao have expressed deep concern over the lack of youth interested in learning storytelling.

"The younger generation is more interested in technology, video games and television. They don't understand the power of storytelling like we do. It's hard for them to see the value in learning a tradition that doesn't involve a screen or the internet," says Qiao.

Despite the challenges, both men are dedicated to keeping the tradition alive. They have taken it to schools, giving students a glimpse of the ancient art and stoking their interest, though progress has been slow.

"We create new stories relevant to the lives of the young. We also make the performances more interactive. We want to remind people of the enduring power of storytelling, a tradition that is never silent," Qiao says.

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National history museum decks hall with dinos

By **WANG QIAN**
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At *The Rise of Vertebrates*, an ongoing exhibition at the Natural History Museum of China in Beijing, visitors can follow fossil evidence to trace the origins of vertebrates and their journey out of the water to dominate land, sea and air.

Launched on Tuesday to mark the reopening of the hall for ancient reptiles, the permanent exhibition includes 197 exhibits, about 70 percent of which are on display for the first time, according to Wang Baopeng, deputy director of the museum's earth sciences department.

"We have introduced many new exhibits and used modern technology, such as naked-eye three-dimensional display technology and an interactive gaming system, to create an immersive, educational experience. There will be an artificial reality and virtual reality space opening

to the public soon," Wang says.

Divided into seven sections, the exhibition follows the timeline of vertebrates, each of which provides detailed insights into the evolutionary journey and key milestones of major groups.

The opening section, *Arising from the Ocean*, demonstrates how vertebrates originated as ocean-dwelling creatures and includes two *Haikouichthys* fossils found in Kunming, Yunnan province. The species is often heralded as one of the earliest-known vertebrates, living around 520 million years ago during the Early Cambrian period (538.8-509 million years ago). Often described by media as the "first fish" on earth, it is just 2 or 3 centimeters in length.

In the following section, *Conquest of the Land*, the Late Devonian period (385.3 to 359.2 million years ago) is brought back to life through vivid models. Over time, certain bony fish

developed anatomical structures suited for life on land, ultimately evolving into the diverse groups of tetrapods found today, including amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals.

The hall also features an exhibit that allows visitors to touch the fossilized remains of a dinosaur. Wang hopes the 600-square-meter newly renovated hall will inspire a new generation of children and paleontologists.

Among the many fossilized stars is a 26-meter-long *Mamenchisaurus jingyanensis*, a gigantic herbivore that lived around 150 million years ago and had one of the longest necks of its species. It is located in the center of the hall and is one of the longest dinosaur fossils ever found in China.

Besides fossils, there is a video of battles between a *Yangchuanosaurus* and a *Tuojiangosaurus*, two dinosaurs found in China, and

between a *Tyrannosaurus rex* and a *Triceratops*. According to Wang, the video vividly depicts the prehistoric environment, plants and paleontological understanding of these significant dinosaurs.

Besides the reopening of the hall, an exhibition celebrating the upcoming Year of the Snake opened at the museum on Tuesday. Focused on the titular reptile and zodiac animal representing the upcoming Chinese New Year, which falls on Jan 29, the exhibition will run till Feb 16.

A remarkable selection of 50 snake specimens from the museum's collection presents a full overview of serpentine beauty. Divided into four sections, it explains the origin and evolution of the Chinese zodiac, the cultural symbolism of the snake, its biological features, and its position in folk art.

"Through the event, we hope visitors will get a glimpse into the signif-



After a four-month renovation, the hall for ancient reptiles reopened on Tuesday at the Natural History Museum of China in Beijing with *The Rise of Vertebrates*, a permanent exhibition tracing the origins of vertebrates and their journey from water to land, sea and air.
WANG QIAN / CHINA DAILY

icant role that the snake plays in Chinese culture and embrace Chinese New Year," says Miao Yuyan, a museum worker.

With a collection of 400,000 his-

torical and current specimens, the 70-year-old Natural History Museum of China is one of the most visited museums in the capital, with some 1.8 million visits every year.

LIFE

Decoding serpentine paradox

With the Year of the Snake on the horizon, **Zhao Xu** takes a look at the enigmatic creature in myriad cultures.

Imagine a snake — coiled, elusive, and steeped in meaning — emerging from the depth of the world's cultural history to leave its mark on human imagination. Perhaps it's the rearing cobra, poised on the golden mask of the Egyptian king Tutankhamun, a symbol of protection and divine authority. Or it might be the head of Medusa, the Gorgon whose hair of writhing snakes and petrifying gaze have haunted myth and art alike.

For the more artistically inclined, there's the celebrated Hellenistic sculpture *Laocoon and His Sons*, capturing the agonizing moment when the Trojan priest and his sons are ensnared by sea serpents. Then, of course, there's the serpent in the Garden of Eden, an enduring symbol of temptation and the central figure in the Christian tale of original sin.

In the Chinese zodiac, 2025 kicks off as the Year of the Snake on Jan. 29. But looking at the bigger picture, snakes seem to slither just as prominently — if not more so — through the myths and symbols of other cultures, too. What stands out most about this enigmatic creature is its complexity — or, more precisely, its duality.

Ask the ancient Egyptians, and they'd tell you about Wadjet, the protective goddess of Lower Egypt and guardian of pharaohs, often depicted as a rearing cobra known as the uraeus. After the unification of Upper and Lower Egypt by King Narmer around 3100 BC, the cobra of Wadjet appeared alongside the culture of Nekhbet, the goddess of Upper Egypt, on the pharaoh's crown, symbolizing the unity of the two lands.

Another equally prominent snake deity is Renenutet, the goddess of nourishment and harvest depicted as a woman with the head of a cobra who would watch over granaries. Central to Egyptian royal iconography, the snake — crawling close to the earth — was also celebrated for its connection to the soil, symbolizing fertility. The same attribute also



Top: A sculpture of Asclepius, the Greek god of healing and medicine. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY
Above: Snake bracelets from Egypt's Roman Period dating to the first century. COURTESY OF THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART IN NEW YORK

linked the snake to the underground realm. Appearing in the tombs of pharaohs, they are expected to safeguard the king's journey to the afterlife.

Yet, it is in the ancient Egyptian portrayal of the snake as a force of chaos and destruction that one can find some of the most profound philosophical wisdom of the civilization. Apep, a massive serpent, was the archenemy of the sun god Ra. Each night, Apep attempted to devour Ra's solar disk as it journeyed through the underworld. Though Apep was defeated every night, he could never be permanently destroyed. The nightly battle epitomized the Egyptian view of the perpetual struggle between order and chaos, and the constant need to maintain balance in the universe.

In 332 BC, Alexander the Great conquered Egypt during his military campaign across the Persian Empire. After his death in 323 BC,

his empire was divided, and Egypt eventually came under the rule of his general Ptolemy I, marking the start of the Ptolemaic Dynasty. The Ptolemaic rulers accepted and reinforced the Egyptian motifs including the snakes, bringing to Egypt snake-themed bracelets.

Cleopatra VII, the last active ruler of the Ptolemaic Kingdom of Egypt, was ultimately defeated by Octavian (63 BC-AD 14), who later became known as Augustus, the first Roman emperor. While Cleopatra famously killed herself by snakebite in 30 BC, Augustus, bringing Egypt under direct Roman control, aggressively embraced the symbolism of the serpent to bolster his sense of legitimacy. Coins minted during his reign often depicted a serpent coiled around an altar, signifying the emperor's connection to gods and divine protection.

It's believed that the snake in this context represented Asclepius, the



Top: The gold burial mask of the ancient Egyptian king Tutankhamun on display at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. AMIR MAKAR / AFP
Above: The massive serpent Apep attacking the sun god Ra, who's sitting on his boat with the solar disk atop his head. COURTESY OF EGYPTIAN MUSEUM

Greco-Roman god of medicine and healing. Asclepius was often depicted holding a staff with a single serpent coiled around it, known as the Rod of Asclepius. In fact, sacred snakes were kept in temples dedicated to the god and sometimes allowed to roam freely around patients, as they were believed to be able to transmit healing energy.

Such was the powerful symbolism of the Rod of Asclepius that it was later adopted as the logo of the World Health Organization.

Some historians have suggested that the dual qualities of the snake — as both a symbol of healing and harm — stem from the nature of its venom, which can be both poisonous and curative. This paradoxical aspect aligns well with a ruler like Octavian, who was capable of delivering deadly strikes to his enemies and yet was eager to be perceived as a healer of the war-ravaged Roman world. The Roman world embraced

snake imagery, incorporating it into frescoes, mosaics, statues, and gold bracelets whose circular design evokes the ancient symbol of the Ouroboros — a serpent devouring its own tail. Derived from the Greek words *oura* (tail) and *bora* (eating), the Ouroboros is one of humanity's oldest symbols, embodying the cyclical nature of existence — seasonal changes, the rhythm of night and day, and the cycle of life and death.

Underlying these cycles is the concept of renewal, as reflected in the snake's periodic shedding of its own skin. In fact, in ancient Egypt, different types of snakes appeared in hieroglyphic writing and art, some carrying the meaning of rebirth and immortality.

Echoing the Egyptian theme of eternal life, the snake plays a significant role in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, one of the oldest known works of literature, originating from ancient Mesopotamia around 2100 BC. In the story, Gilgamesh, the death-fearing protagonist, successfully retrieves the "Plant of Life" from the bottom of the sea, only to have it stolen and consumed by a serpent.

The loss, widely interpreted as symbolizing the inevitability of death, reinforces the epic's central theme: the wisdom gained through accepting life's limitations, and the importance of finding meaning within those limitations.

A broken piece of clay bearing part of *The Epic of Gilgamesh* in cuneiform was on display at the Suzhou Museum in Suzhou, eastern China's Jiangsu province, during an exhibition from the British Museum last year.

Meanwhile, the story of Tutankhamun is being told through an ongoing exhibition at the Shanghai Museum titled *On Top of the Pyramid: The Civilization of Ancient Egypt*. The exhibition features a stone sculpture of the king, whose headdress includes a snake, largely damaged but still discernible.

It's worth noting that the Great Sphinx of Giza originally had a cobra on its forehead as part of its headdress, though it was almost entirely eroded over time. A guardian and a protector — that role of a snake was powerfully evoked by an ancient Egyptian hymn dedicated to Wadjet: "May Wadjet, the Great Serpent, encircle you and protect you."

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Journey steeped in fog of myth

By ZHAO XU

According to one version of the ancient Greek mythology, Hermes, the messenger god who was also the deity of commerce, travelers and boundaries, once encountered two snakes fighting. Using a staff, he separated them, and the snakes coiled around the staff in perfect balance, transforming themselves, together with the rod itself, into a symbol of harmony and peace befitting Hermes' role as a mediator.

Caduceus — that's the name of Hermes' rod, a staff with two intertwined snakes and wings, which the god, known as Mercury in Roman mythology, carried around to ward off disputes and bring about reconciliation.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York owns an 18th-century oil painting depicting Cupid, barely covered in pink drapery, holding a caduceus — the symbol of his father, Mercury.

While few may have associated snakes with the art of diplomacy, let alone with a chubby baby, many have confused the caduceus with the Rod of Asclepius, a staff entwined with a single snake that symbolizes healing and medicine.

Gliding seamlessly through ancient Greek and Roman mythology, the snake found its presence intricately woven into the literary tapestry by masters such as Ovid (43 BC-AD 17) and Virgil (70-19 BC), both Roman poets who lived during the reign of Emperor Augustus. To them, the serpent became a potent symbol, embodying divine wrath, prophetic insight, the inescapability of fate, and the complexities of human nature.

In his world-renowned narrative poem *Metamorphoses*, Ovid told what's perhaps the most famous serpent-related myth — the tragic story



An 18th-century canvas depicting Cupid. COURTESY OF THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART IN NEW YORK



An Augustan Roman marble copy of the head of Medusa. COURTESY OF GLYPHOTOHEK MUSEUM IN MUNICH



An ancient Greek vase featuring a scene of Heracles slaying the Hydra, the multi-headed snake. COURTESY OF THE J. PAUL GETTY MUSEUM IN MALIBU

of Medusa, a beautiful mortal priestess in Athena's temple.

In Ovid's Roman retelling of the Greek myth, Poseidon, the god of the sea, desired Medusa and raped her in Athena's temple, violating the sacred place. Enraged by the desecration of her temple, Athena, instead of punishing Poseidon, directed her wrath at Medusa, transforming the poor girl into a Gorgon, a monstrous figure with snakes for hair and a gaze that turned anyone who looked at her to stone. As if to add another layer of poignancy and irony to Medusa's fate, she was later slain by Perseus, a hero in Greek mythology who gave her severed head to Athena to be placed on the shield of the goddess as a protective emblem.

Later-day interpretations of Medusa's story continue to evolve, reflecting shifting cultural understandings. Modern readers and scholars often see her tale as a commentary on the injustice faced by women in both mythology and society. Some, however, interpret Athena's actions — though harsh — as an attempt to shield Medusa from further harm, granting her a mournful form of empowerment.

Divine wrath invariably exacted a heavy toll. In Virgil's *Aeneid*, Laocoon, a Trojan priest, warned his countrymen against bringing the wooden horse into the city, uttering the famous line: *Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes* ("I fear the Greeks, even when they bring gifts"). His warning was ignored. The massive wooden horse, constructed by the Greeks with a hollowed-out interior to conceal their elite soldiers, was welcomed into the city as a peace offering. At night, the Greek soldiers emerged from the horse, opening the city gates to the returning Greek army, leading to the fall of Troy.

Yet, Laocoon didn't even have the



The Hellenistic sculpture *Laocoon and His Sons* captures the agonizing moment when the Trojan priest and his sons are ensnared by sea serpents. COURTESY OF VATICAN MUSEUMS

chance to witness that fall — as punishment, he and his two sons were strangled by two enormous sea serpents sent by gods who supported the Greeks. In 1506, a statue of *Laocoon and His Sons* was excavated in Rome and put on public display in the Vatican Museums, where it remains today.

Dated to a time period between the 2nd century BC to the 1st century AD, the sculpture, capturing the harrowing, hopeless moment when the serpents crush the three in their coils and kill them in a horrifying spectacle, vividly conveys the full impact of divine retribution.

Elsewhere, Heracles, the son of Zeus and the greatest of all Greek heroes, vanquished the Hydra, a multi-headed serpent — a feat frequently depicted on ancient Greek vases.

Given the snake's connection to the earth, it is unsurprising that

these creatures are linked to Hades, the god of the dead and ruler of the underworld. The symbolism is also embodied by Caduceus, the staff held by Hermes, who, in his many roles, also served as a herald to the underworld.

Another story linking the snake to a magical staff appears in the biblical narrative. In the *Book of Exodus*, when God called Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, he provided miraculous signs to confirm his divine authority. One such sign involved Moses throwing his staff on the ground, where it became a serpent. When Moses picked it up by the tail, it turned back into a staff, demonstrating that God was with him.

Later, when the Israelites journeyed through the wilderness after their exodus from Egypt, the great hardship facing them led many to speak against God and Moses. As a

consequence of their ingratitude, God sent venomous serpents among the people, and many were bitten and died. The people, realizing their sin, repented and asked Moses to intercede on their behalf.

In response, God instructed Moses to make a serpent out of bronze and mount it on a pole. Anyone who had been bitten could look at the bronze serpent and would be healed. "The brazen serpent," with brazen historically used as a synonym for bronze, represented healing and salvation through faith in God's provision.

The snake in the Garden of Eden, which tempted Eve to eat the forbidden fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, is traditionally viewed in the West as a force leading humanity to question and defy God's command.

By eating the fruit, Adam and Eve claimed the divine prerogative, asserting the right to define good and evil for themselves rather than trusting in God's wisdom.

This act of moral autonomy brought with it the burden of moral responsibility and what is often referred to in the biblical context as the "loss of innocence." Consequently, some modern interpretations, while acknowledging the view of the snake as a source of temptation in the Judeo-Christian tradition, see it less as purely evil and more as a catalyst for human agency and free will.

In fact, the snake's connection to the Tree of Knowledge is tied to its role as a guardian — of kings and gods, temples and tombs, treasures and knowledge — as well as its mysterious and ancient nature, which has long been associated with wisdom.

In the *Gospel of Matthew*, the first book of the New Testament of the Bible, Saint Matthew, one of the 12 apostles of Jesus Christ who's credited as the text's author, encouraged the believers to be discerning while maintaining moral purity.

"Be wise as serpents and innocent as doves," he said.

CULTURE

By JIMENA ESTEBAN
in Buenos Aires

A journey through history and across waters

Exhibition of porcelain relics sheds light on colonial South America's trade and cultural links with imperial China

In a small but influential museum in the north of Argentina, a porcelain exhibit takes visitors back five centuries and around the world, bringing to life Chinese culture and its nuanced and multifaceted influence on South America.

The History Museum of the North in the city of Salta opened *Millennial Porcelain: A Journey from China to Salta*, an exhibition that puts the spotlight on Chinese porcelain that made its way from imperial workshops in the Middle Kingdom all the way to Spain's colonial settlements in South America. Visitors can explore the cultural phenomenon of porcelain collecting, and its historical significance along the ancient Silk Road, and also all the way to colonial South America.

At its most basic, the exhibition highlights the reality that "there were commercial and cultural ties between the Americas and China (going back many centuries)," says Maria Virginia Gunther, a researcher at the museum who headed up research for the exhibit. "We want to highlight the early connections between the Americas and China, showing how porcelain serves as tangible evidence of these exchanges.

"Our main goal is to make this collection accessible to the community. We decided to contextualize it using fragments of Chinese porcelain found in excavations conducted in ... Esteco I," says Gunther, referring to an Argentine historical site. "This allowed us to link the pieces to local history and provide a perspective on the early exchanges between Americas and China."

The exhibition, which includes pieces from a private collection, as well as recently excavated archaeological finds, opened in late November and will run through March 2025. It includes rare porcelain pieces, such as some believed to be from Emperor Qianlong's era in the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), and archaeological fragments dug up from the fabled Argentine colonial city known as Esteco, which was obliterated in an earthquake in 1962.

The exhibition is the result of a wide-reaching collaboration backed by Chinese and Argentine institutions, including the Chinese embassy in Argentina, an Argentina-China studies center, the Museum Anthropology in Salta (which led the dig in Esteco), provincial cultural authorities and local municipal governments.

It underscores the long-standing interest in Chinese culture and its deep historical links with the region, and features a variety of pieces, including representative samples of Imari porcelain and pieces from the "Rose" and "Green" porcelain families — so named for the colors used to glaze them — highlighting centuries of artistic evolution.

"It has been an enriching experience, especially because it allows us to connect our historical past with current generations," says Gunther. "It's a diverse collection, but we lack precise chronology or detailed information about its provenance.

"Some pieces have labels with seals that seem to correspond to the reign of Emperor Qianlong, between the years 1735 and 1795. There are also a couple of bowls with similar characteristics," says Gunther.

For many visitors, the exhibition is also a powerful reminder of the tragic history of the Spanish colonial settlement founded in 1566 that



Porcelain items from China on show as part of an exhibition, *Millennial Porcelain: A Journey from China to Salta*, at a museum in Salta, Argentina. The items include a piece (far left) from the "Rose" family; one (left) from the Emperor Qianlong period of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911); and a lion statue (above).
PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

“Most of the pieces on display were likely crafted toward the end of the Ming Dynasty at the earliest, but predominantly during the Qing Dynasty, spanning the 18th and 19th centuries.”



Ignacio Villaran, director of the Argentina-China Studies Center at the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Buenos Aires

"These fragments, belonging to the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), demonstrate that there were commercial and cultural ties between the Americas and China (centuries ago)," says Gunther, adding that these fragments are currently safeguarded by the Museum of Anthropology in Salta.

Over the years, archaeologists have dug up parts of the city, along with fragments of porcelain that are

included in the exhibit, according to Maria Campero de Larran, who leads the conservation and restoration efforts at the museum.

"The aim of this exhibition is not only to share this collection and preserve its legacy in Salta but also raise funds," says Campero de Larran, adding that it was the museum's management that "proposed showcasing this collection to make it accessible to a wider audience."

While the fragments dug up in Esteco are owned by the Museum of Anthropology in Salta, the complete pieces on exhibition are from the Mascias-Moinaria art collection, which includes 60 examples of Chinese art and was donated to the HOPE Foundation, which supports children with cancer. A parallel goal of the exhibition is to publicize the collection and, perhaps, find a buyer to raise funds for the foundation.

The pieces on loan to the exhibition originated in China and have been linked to similar items that were present in Salta, according to Ignacio Villaran, director of the Argentina-China Studies Center at the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Buenos Aires.

At first glance, Salta is an unlikely place for a repository of Chinese history, while historical Chinese artifacts may be an unlikely repository of efforts to preserve Salta's own legacy.

Some of the earliest exchanges between South America and China

emerged out of the porcelain trade.

Chinese porcelain made its way to the Americas starting in the 16th century through the Manila Galleon trade route, a trans-Pacific route used by Spanish galleons from 1565 to 1815, linking the Americas with Asia by connecting Mexico with the Philippines. It was used to transport luxury goods such as spices and porcelain in exchange for silver. At the time, Esteco I was at the heart of Spain's vast colonial holdings in the continent — Argentina did not declare independence until three centuries later.

The porcelain items were primarily circulated in Argentina during the Ming and Qing dynasties, according to Villaran.

"Most of the pieces on display were likely crafted toward the end of the Ming Dynasty at the earliest, but predominantly during the Qing Dynasty, spanning the 18th and 19th centuries," Villaran says.

Aside from porcelain, traders moved silk and spices along routes that spanned the globe starting in China, traveling westward to Europe, and then on Manila Galleon sailing vessels across to the Americas.

Despite these deep roots, there is relatively little research on how that trade helped South America's culture evolve. However, various studies suggest that porcelain artifacts were widely circulated.

The History Museum of the North has permanent collections that chronicle the region's rich history, while the building itself is a national historical landmark.

The exhibition takes the exploration of China's links to the region a step further and allows visitors to discover the rich history of the porcelain trade, porcelain art and its origins in China, the role of the Silk Road, and the journey these pieces took to Esteco.

On display are items including porcelain figurines, illustrations, bowls and incense burners. They are decorated in designs including peonies, plum blossoms, peach blossoms, pheasants and more.

There are pieces from the Famille Rose, porcelain painted in rose and pink shades, and Famille Verte, which has yellow, blue, red, green and purple color ranges.

The Famille Rose pieces were known in China as *yangcai*, or "foreign colors" because they originated in Europe in 1685. Famille Verte pieces use a palette of yellow or rich greenish black created largely during the reign of Emperor Kangxi of the Qing Dynasty. Later, during the reign of Emperor Yongzheng, rose colors were favored over the older and more traditional greens, according to the exhibition introduction.

The exhibition helps shine a light on the historical fascination with Asian art collections, "a vogue stemming from a broader European trend prevalent during the 19th and early 20th centuries," Villaran says.

"This movement had an impact on the collection of Oriental pieces, forming the conceptual framework for this exhibition. The display showcases a variety of plates, vases and other tableware decorated with Chinese motifs."

The fragments from 16th-century Esteco are among the oldest pieces on display.

"While no complete pieces have survived, their discovery is significant. It offers insight into the artistic production of everyday objects, both decorative and practical," Villaran says.

The writer is a freelance journalist for China Daily.

What's on

Elegant demeanor

Gu Kaizhi, who lived during the 4th and 5th centuries, is recognized as a consummate figure in art and literature, setting high standards for narrative painting and the depiction of figures, which influenced artists of later generations. His hand scroll *The Nymph of the Luo River* illustrates *Luoshenfu*, a 3rd-century prose poem composed by the poet Cao Zhi. The work is considered an iconic piece in art history and has inspired replicas.

One rare copy made by an anonymous



painter of the Song Dynasty (960-1279) is in the Liaoning Provincial Museum's collection in Shenyang, Liaoning province. It is now on display at *Fengshen Youyi* ("Attractive and Graceful"), an exhibition of ancient figure paintings at the museum running until March 23.

The exhibition displays a rich collection of the classic paintings that the Liaoning museum has built over decades, tracing the evolution of figure painting throughout centuries, during which dozens of multifaceted artists contributed to the genre with their innovative brushwork. When they outlined a graceful silhouette and rendered an appealing demeanor to the characters, the painters also conveyed thoughts about morality, ideals and beliefs.

9 am-5 pm, closed on Mondays. 157 Zhihuai Sanjie, Hunnan district, Shenyang, Liaoning province. 024-2274-1193.

Suzhou tales

An artist group named the Women school rose to prominence in Suzhou, Jiangsu province, during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). Its four leading painters — Shen Zhou, Wen Zhengming, Tang Yin and Qiu Ying — are collectively referred to as the "four painters of Women", whose styles and works had long-standing influence. The school's heritage has been carried on by artists of generations in the modern era. The care-free strokes, light colors and tranquil mood have been employed not only by ink painters but also oil painters.

Suzhou Art Museum presents the city's art landscape in the 20th century at an exhibition, *Xiaoyao Shanshui Jian* ("Carefree Between Mountains and Waters"). It displays landscape artworks by ink and oil artists hailing from or who are active in Suzhou, a prosperous cultural hub since ancient times.



The paintings are half reenactments of real nature scenes that also reveal a utopian land in which the painters reset their minds and hearts. The exhibition runs until Feb 23.

9 am-5 pm, closed on Mondays. 2075 Renmin Lu, Suzhou, Jiangsu province. 0512-6728-0798.

Ways of clay

The exhibition of contemporary ceramic art, *The Ways of Clay*, opened at the UCCA Clay Museum in October, the latest addition to the skyline of Yixing, Jiangsu province, a city renowned for producing quality clay used to make well-crafted teapots.

The exhibition runs until Feb 23 and shows a selection of award-winning works from the International Ceramics Festival Mino from the collection of the Museum of Modern Ceramic Art in Gifu, Japan. It is a salute to the long-standing ceramic



history that Yixing takes pride in. It also opens up a cross-cultural dialogue by gathering ceramic works by artists around the world, exposing people to the revival of a traditional medium via experimental methods. The museum is also the fourth venue in the museum constellation of the UCCA Center for Contemporary Art. 10 am-7 pm, closed on Mondays. *Tao'erchang Wenhua Jiequ* (Creative & Cultural Ceramic Avenue), Dingshu town, Yixing, Jiangsu province. 0510-8767-9989.

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