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# CHINA DAILY

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## Xi, Putin vow to consolidate relations

Nations called on to jointly defend intl system with UN at its core

By ZHANG YUNBI  
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President Xi Jinping has pledged to work with Russian President Vladimir Putin to take bilateral relations to greater heights in the new year and "cope with uncertainties in the external environment through the stability and resilience of China-Russia ties".

In a meeting via video link with Putin at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Tuesday afternoon, Xi also stated his willingness to work together to promote the development and revitalization of the two nations and to safeguard international fairness and justice.

As part of recent high-level interactions, Xi and Putin exchanged congratulatory messages on Dec 31.

With Chinese New Year coming up in a few days, the two heads of state also exchanged good wishes on Tuesday.

Xi expressed wishes for prosperous bilateral relations in the new year, while Putin wished Xi and the Chinese people a happy new year and all the best.

This year marks the 80th anniversary of both the victory in the World Anti-Fascist War and the founding of the United Nations, and the two anniversaries were high on the agenda of Tuesday's talks.

Xi said the two countries should take this opportunity to jointly safeguard the UN-centered international system and the outcomes of the World War II victory.

The two countries should encourage all nations to strictly observe the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, adhere to the universally recognized basic norms of international relations and practice true multilateralism, he added.

Putin referred to the fact that



President Xi Jinping talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin via video link from the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Tuesday.

LIU BIN / XINHUA

Russia and China defended their state sovereignty and national dignity 80 years ago by resisting invaders with blood and lives.

The two countries should jointly celebrate the 80th anniversary of the victory this year and safeguard the outcomes of the victory in World War II, he said.

Also this year, China holds the rotating presidency of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

Xi said that China is ready to work with Russia and other member states to take the SCO into a new phase featuring higher-quality development, greater commitment and better performance.

In addition, the two countries should work together to promote greater BRICS cooperation and write a new chapter of unity and self-improvement for the Global South, he added.

Putin said that Russia is willing

to strengthen cooperation with China in multilateral affairs and play an active role in world peace and development.

Last year, the two heads of state met three times and reached a number of important consensus, and the two countries celebrated the 75th anniversary of their diplomatic relations.

Bilateral trade between January and November last year reached \$222.775 billion, an increase of 2.1 percent year-on-year, according to the Chinese embassy in Russia.

As part of flourishing tourism cooperation, nearly 3 million visits by tourists were made between the two countries last year, Chinese Ambassador to Russia Zhang Hanhui said in a recent article.

Pragmatic cooperation is progressing steadily and the two sides have worked closely in multilateral

platforms such as the UN, the SCO and BRICS, observers said.

Xi said that China-Russia relations — characterized by permanent good-neighborly friendship, comprehensive strategic cooperation, and mutually beneficial, win-win cooperation — "have witnessed constantly renewed vitality".

The two countries "provided more positivity for the reform and construction of the global governance system", he added.

He called on the two sides to further deepen strategic cooperation, firmly support each other, safeguard the legitimate interests of the two countries, consolidate and expand bilateral ties, and promote the in-depth growth of practical cooperation.

Putin said that Russia firmly supports that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory, and it

firmly opposes any form of "Taiwan independence".

Putin noted that Russia and China always trust each other, support each other and treat each other as equals, and bilateral cooperation meets the interests of the two peoples and is never affected by changes in the international situation.

He said he was pleased to see that the two countries' cooperation in the economy, trade and energy has maintained good momentum, the number of tourists visiting each other has been increasing, and the two sides have maintained close communication and collaboration on multilateral occasions.

The two heads of state also had an in-depth exchange of views on international and regional issues of common concern, and they agreed to maintain strategic communication in the new year.

### SOUTHERN PARTS OF CHINA DISCOVER JOY OF SNOW TOURISM

Visitors throng mountain resorts in provinces such as Jiangxi, Hubei and Anhui to partake in winter sports

By ZHAO RUINAN in Nanchang  
zhaoruinan@chinadaily.com.cn

Twenty-six-year-old Yi Wei could barely contain her joy as she watched snowflakes swirling around her while on a trip to Lushan Mountain in Jiangxi province last January. "My friends and I had planned to climb the mountain and enjoy a snowy day," said Yi, who rarely gets to see snow in her native Fujian, a southeastern coastal province.

### In-depth

She did not have to travel too far to experience the thrill of this winter wonder. Jiangxi is right next to Fujian. After seeing numerous posts on the social media platform Xiaohongshu, Yi and her friends decided to go and enjoy the snow for themselves.

"We began monitoring the weather in Guling town about a month in advance because snowfall can be very unpredictable.

"When we noticed the temperature dropping below zero for three consecutive days on various weather apps and saw videos from local bloggers on Xiaohongshu showing heavy fog, we knew there was very high chance of snowfall," Yi said.

See **Snow**, page 2

### Celebrating traditions



Artists perform a lion dance on Sunday at a gala in Nairobi, Kenya, to mark the upcoming Spring Festival. The daylong event also featured dragon dances, display of kung fu skills and traditional Kenyan arts. LI YAHUI / XINHUA See story, page 6

### Some hopeful signs for US-China ties

By HENG WEILI in New York and YIFAN XU in Washington

The course of US-China relations will be watched closely now that President Donald Trump is back in the White House, with the past week showing some grounds for optimism.

One issue that has drawn global attention is Trump's executive order to delay Congress' ban on TikTok, the popular social media platform owned by China's ByteDance.

In an executive order posted on the White House website Monday, Trump said he has instructed the attorney general not to take any action to enforce the ban effective Jan 19 for 75 days so that the new administration has time "to determine the appropriate course forward in an orderly way that protects national security while avoiding an abrupt shutdown of a communications platform used by millions of Americans".

US Senator Rand Paul, a Kentucky Republican, and US Representative Ro Khanna, a California Democrat, went a step further on Monday. They introduced the bipartisan, bicameral "Repeal the TikTok Ban Act".

The bill would annul the law requiring the sale of TikTok "as well as ensure that any existing designation has no force or effect".

In a news release on his Senate website, Paul wrote: "They tell you this is about China. About security. About safety. That's a lie. This is about control. About fear. About silencing you." He said that "some politicians think

the First Amendment has fine print. It doesn't. The right to free speech doesn't come with exceptions. Not for apps. Not for ideas. Not for politicians who think they know better than you. They don't ban speech to protect you. They ban speech to control you," Paul said. "That's why today, I'm introducing a bipartisan, bicameral bill to repeal the TikTok ban."

In Trump's inaugural address, he mentioned China only once, over the operation of the Panama Canal. Considering that he had talked of imposing 60 percent or higher tariffs on Chinese imports, the omission of China in discussing that topic was noteworthy.

However, in an executive order-signing ceremony on Monday and in a wide-ranging news conference on Tuesday, Trump said "we're looking at" 25 percent tariffs on Mexico and China starting on Feb 1.

There also was no mention of restricting technology exports to China, which the Biden administration had increasingly done.

Also, The Wall Street Journal reported that Trump was looking to visit China in his first 100 days back in office. He did make a state visit in 2017, the year before his administration initiated tariffs on hundreds of billions of dollars' worth of Chinese goods.

China Daily spoke with some Americans who were in Washington DC for the inauguration to gauge their outlook on the bilateral relationship.

Mark Rogers of Sacramento, California, said the relationship is "all about respect and friendship".

"I think ... incredibly positive," he said of his outlook for relations. "I think the president of China and Donald Trump will get together, and I think there (will) be excellent, positive ideas, and they'll come into an idea together," he said. "And I think we'll move forward."

Anna Benson from Utah expressed optimism, emphasizing the importance of maintaining a good relationship with China. She highlighted the potential for unity and collaboration, saying, "If we [could] be together, united, we can be stronger. ... The power will benefit the people. That's what we want, a power that can benefit the people, the people in China, and the people in the United States."

"He (Trump) has a very good relationship with China, and we want him to keep it up," Benson said. Claire Toalson, 23, from Texas, expressed excitement about the future of the relationship. "I'm confident that he (Trump) can get a good deal struck up and kind of get a healthy relationship going between the two," she said.

In a December interview posted on X.com, Professor Jeffrey Sachs, director of the Center for Sustainable Development at Columbia University, said Trump could "end the talk of the war in East Asia, which would be the utter disaster and folly, by recognizing that we shouldn't be meddling in China's internal affairs".

Contact the writers at hengweili@chinadailyusa.com.

### WORLD WATCH

By Shakeel Ahmad Ramay

### US mindset of confrontation, sanctions, decoupling not sustainable

United States President Donald Trump said on Monday he will not immediately impose tariffs on imported products, but will order federal agencies to assess trade issues, which could ultimately result in taxes on imports from China, Canada, Mexico and other countries.

While this move could help ease tensions with its trade partners as of now, tariffs and trade-related sanctions still cannot be excluded.

History has shown that sanctions have limited utility, which should serve as a reminder for the new Trump administration. A study by the Peterson Institute for International Economics indicated that during the 1970s and 1980s, US sanctions only produced positive outcomes in fewer than one in five cases.

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## PAGE TWO

## Snow: Southern winter wonderlands wow



Ski enthusiasts practice at Qu Yuan's Hometown International Ski Resort in Zigui, Hubei province, on Dec 15. ZHENG JIAYU / FOR CHINA DAILY

## From page 1

On Jan 22 2024, Yi and her friends went to Lushan from Xiamen by high-speed train and set out on a three-day, two-night ice and snow tour.

"Fortunately, we experienced heavy snowfall in the mountains, it was breathtaking," she said.

"As I walked, all I could hear was the sound of my boots crunching on the thick layer of snow and the wind whistling through the trees. A song called *Sweet Rumors* started playing in my mind. At that moment, my surroundings were entirely white, and the joy in my heart swirled like the snowflakes falling from the sky," she said.

In recent years, thousands like Yi have visited Lushan Mountain to admire the snow-clad scenery. On social media platforms, Lushan Mountain is often referred to as the best place for viewing snow in southern China, with some even calling it the "Hokkaido of Jiangxi".

In December 2023, Lushan Mountain attracted 174,100 visitors in just 10 days. Traditionally a summer resort, Lushan Mountain's daily visitor numbers during winter now rivals that of the summer months.

## South bound

The craze for ice and snow tourism has heated up with dropping winter temperatures. Unlike in previous years, southern regions like Jiangxi are now actively competing for a share in the ice and snow tourism pie, luring visitors away from well-known northern winter attractions such as Harbin in Heilongjiang province.

Data from the hotel booking app Qunar indicates that since November, nationwide bookings for ice and snow-related attractions have risen by 30 percent compared to the same period last year.

Additionally, searches for terms such as "skiing", "ice and snow", and "ski resorts" have tripled. Notably, half of the most popular ice and snow destinations going by early bookings before the end of December are located in southern China.

Another popular winter destination in Jiangxi is the Qixingling International Ski Resort in Tonggu county, Yichun city, which is just a four-hour drive from Lushan Mountain.

At an altitude of approximately 1,400 meters, the ski resort offers various slopes, including beginner and intermediate trails, as well as a snow play area.

This spread attracts numerous visitors from nearby cities such as Yichun, Nanchang and Changsha in Hunan province, who come for skiing and recreational activities.

One such avid skier is Nanchang resident Guo Yajian. "I've been skiing for two years now, and the excitement surrounding the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics has deepened my passion for this sport," said Guo, who has mastered both single and double-board skiing techniques through constant practice.

As a skiing enthusiast, Guo has visited Qixingling several times, each time taking more and more friends along.

"Gliding on the snowboard, speeding down the slopes, and experiencing the exhilaration of chasing ice and snow—it's a truly refreshing experience," he said.

However, it's not only young people making a beeline for the resort, it's the destination of choice for a number of families too.

Deng Xide, the deputy general manager of the resort, said that since

Dec 15, the resort has welcomed over 10,000 visitors a week. Early bird ticket sales have surpassed 8 million yuan, and he expects a vibrant snow season this winter.

Yuan Zhiqiang, director of snowfield planning at the resort, said that since the ski resort opened in 2016, it has attracted not only local visitors from Jiangxi but also guests from Hunan, Guangdong, Fujian and other provinces, totaling over 300,000 so far.

"Last year, during the Spring Festival, we introduced night skiing, which allowed us to host 5,000 visitors daily, setting a new record," Yuan said, adding that Qixingling ski resort exemplifies the growing trend of ice and snow sports moving southward.

For southerners, there is a sense of novelty surrounding ice and snow tourism, and thus its market potential is huge.

"People living in southern China have always been fascinated by snow. At the end of January 2024, during a cold wave, my friends and I visited Mingyue Mountain in Yichun city," said Zhu Jie, a college student from Nanchang, the capital of Jiangxi. Needless to say, she found it a fascinating experience.

"It was the day after a heavy snowfall, and we couldn't resist going up the mountain. We spent over 100 yuan to take the cable car up. The soft snow and rime filled us with tremendous awe," the 21-year-old said.

"That was the first time I had seen such a scenery. The mountain was truly worth visiting that day."

## Moving indoors

Recently, the General Office of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism



**Above:** A child skis at the Lyucongpo Ski Resort in Badong, a county in Hubei province, on Feb 26. HU JINGWEN / XINHUA **Below:** Children enjoy winter time at the ski resort in Zigui on Dec 15. ZHENG JIAYU / FOR CHINA DAILY



released the 2024-25 National Ice and Snow Tourism Boutique Routes in a document. It identified 12 routes designated as national ice and snow tourism routes for 2024 and 2025, including three located in southern provinces such as Hubei and Sichuan.

The notice also highlighted that the growth rate of indoor ski resorts across the country had surpassed that of outdoor ski resorts.

During the 2013-14 ice and snow season, there were only five indoor ski resorts in China; however, by the 2023-24 season, this number had increased to 59, predominantly in southern cities.

Liu Gang, the director of the mass sports division of Jiangxi Provincial Sports Bureau, said that Jiangxi currently has two outdoor ski resorts, and cities such as Yichun, Xinyu, Ganzhou and Nanchang also feature both indoor and outdoor ice rinks.

"We encourage various ice and snow-related activities like dry land skiing and grass skiing to expand the ice and snow sports community throughout the province and meet the public's demand for these sports," said Liu.

On Jan 10, 2021, the local sports bureau launched a key project with the groundbreaking for the nationally recognized Jiangxi Ice and Snow Training Center in Yudu county of Ganzhou city.

Once completed, this center will not only host Jiangxi's ice and snow sports teams but will also feature the world's largest artificial snowfield and ski slopes.

"By constructing a world-class ice training center in Yudu, we can attract professional ski teams from

across the country and even globally for training and competitions in Jiangxi. The training center will include professional tracks in addition to amateur tracks and a public fitness area," said Zhang Songtao, an official from the Jiangxi Provincial Sports Bureau.

"Furthermore, ice and snow sports will be introduced in schools in Yudu, with plans to implement programs in five to six schools annually. This initiative aims to promote ice and snow sports in Jiangxi among the young," he added.

In neighboring Hubei province, Badong county is also capitalizing on the opportunity to develop ice and snow sports as a means to boost the local economy.

The local government constructed a ski resort in the town of Lyucongpo, located at an altitude of over 1,700 meters.

According to Xinhua News Agency, the Lyucongpo Ski Resort has led to the development of over 160 hotels and homestays and more than 80 dining and entertainment venues in the surrounding area, contributing to local employment and income growth.

This snow season, Badong county expects to welcome over 100,000 ice and snow tourists, generating a total income of over 200 million yuan.

Anhui province, located in the central region of the Yangtze River Delta, is also witnessing rapid growth of ice and snow sports. Ski resorts in scenic areas such as Dabie Mountain and Tianzhu Mountain are currently handling peak crowds.

Due to the distance and high travel costs associated with extremely cold regions like Northeast China, many people in the south often search for and experience "snowy places" within their own provinces to satisfy their cravings.

Xu Mingming, a member of the post-1990s generation, recently drove with friends from Fuyang city, Anhui, to Dabie Mountain ski park. They purchased ski package tickets that included a night's stay at a homestay and two tickets to the ski resort.

"After watching short videos of Harbin, I wanted to experience the icy landscapes in person. So, I decided to explore the snow and ice nearby first. When I have a longer holiday, I plan to travel to Harbin in the future," Xu said.

## Immense potential

According to a 2023 report on ice and snow tourism, the total scale of China's ice and snow industry exceeded 800 billion yuan in 2022 and is expected to reach 1 trillion yuan by 2025.

The report said the current ice and snow tourism market primarily focuses on sightseeing experiences, entertainment and basic skiing activities, indicating that market development is still in its early stages. In the future, ice and snow-themed vacations are expected to become an important sub-market, it said.

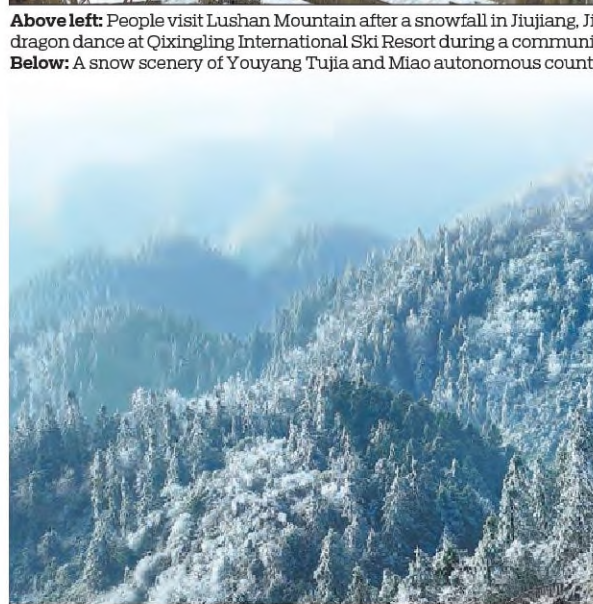
Industry experts believe that China's ice and snow sports segment and its related economy are currently experiencing vigorous growth, and there is potential for many more ski resorts to come up in future.

Ice and snow sports are expected to stimulate the development of related industries, extend the industrial chain, create new formats, and possibly establish a new model for ice and snow economic development, said the report.

This industry chain can already be witnessed in Lushan Mountain.



**Above left:** People visit Lushan Mountain after a snowfall in Jiujiang, Jiangxi province. LIU LIXIN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE **Above right:** Skiers perform dragon dance at Qixingling International Ski Resort during a community sports meeting in Yichun, Jiangxi province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY **Below:** A snow scenery of Youyang Tujia and Miao autonomous county, Chongqing. CHEN BISHENG / XINHUA



## TOP NEWS

## Trump using TikTok as leverage in Sino-US trade links, experts say

By FAN FEIFEI  
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United States President Donald Trump seems to be using TikTok, a popular video-sharing app owned by Chinese tech company ByteDance, as a bargaining chip in Sino-US economic and trade relations, experts said on Tuesday.

A forced stake sell-off through the use of political pressure deviates from the principles of market economy and fair competition, they said.

The US is using national security as a pretext to contain and crack down on Chinese companies operating in the country, which is not only harming the legitimate rights and interests of these enterprises but also disrupting healthy market order and impeding global economic growth, they added.

On Monday, Trump signed an executive order intended to pause Congress' TikTok ban for 75 days, a period in which he said he will seek a US buyer in a deal that can protect national security interests while leaving the popular social media platform open to Americans.

Trump also said that tariffs on China could hinge on a deal over TikTok's ownership. The US should be entitled to get half of TikTok if a deal for the app is reached, he said, adding that he intended to impose tariffs on China if it rejected the deal.

Bai Ming, a researcher with the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, said the Trump administration is resorting to political maneuvers to threaten TikTok's Chinese owner to sell a significant stake, while in the process attempting to suppress China's rise as a technological power.

Such unilateral action not only violates the principle of fair competition in a free market, but also affects normal business activities of companies operating in the US, ultimately harm-

ing the rights of US consumers, given TikTok's wide popularity among the country's young generation, Bai said.

TikTok, which boasts 170 million users in the US, went dark briefly on Saturday, disappearing from the app stores operated by Apple and Google, hours before a law requiring its Chinese parent company to sell the app to a US company or face a nationwide ban took effect on Sunday.

TikTok restored its services after Trump said on Sunday he would issue an executive order to grant the app an extension. He also proposed to establish a joint venture where the US owns 50 percent of the social media platform.

While the app is now up and running, it still faces an uncertain future.

Zhu Keli, founding director of the China Institute of New Economy, said that Trump's 50 percent ownership proposal is undoubtedly a direct intervention in the market behavior of enterprises. The US government generalizes the concept of national security and politicizes economic and trade issues, he said.

Zhu emphasized that "the move not only goes against the basic principles of market economy, but may also have a negative impact on the global science and technology innovation ecosystem."

"TikTok is still facing several challenges in the US. How to maintain user growth amid fierce market competition is an urgent problem. In addition, the US government may continue to leverage political power to contain it, which further increases uncertainty and adds to its operational difficulties in the country," he said.

Market insiders said that US authorities should create a fair, just and nondiscriminatory business environment for enterprises from all countries to invest and operate in the US, instead of interfering in the normal operation of enterprises through political means.



## Seeking shelter

Displaced Colombians stand in line outside the General Santander Stadium in Cucuta, Colombia, to be registered for shelter on Monday. More than 80 people have been killed in recent clashes between rival guerrilla groups in the country's north-east amid the government's failed attempts to hold peace talks. The violence has also displaced more than 11,000 people, according to reports.

CARLOS EDUARDO RAMIREZ / REUTERS

## Top court to improve foreign case handling

China a preferred venue for resolving intl maritime disputes, official says

By CAO YIN  
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China's top court is planning to interpret the foreign-related provisions of the Civil Procedure Law to improve the quality of case handling, as the country increases its efforts to build a market-oriented, legalized and international business environment, a senior official said.

The move comes at a time when China is seeking to reassure foreign businesses that their legal rights are protected and easily facilitated under Chinese law.

"The judicial interpretation will be issued as quickly as possible, with specific rules on parallel litigation and the service of judicial documents," Wang Shumei, a standing member of the Adjudication Committee of the Supreme People's Court, said in an interview with China Daily.

Wang, who is also a justice of the top court, said it will participate in amending laws involving foreign-related affairs, including the Maritime Law and Arbitration Law, and strengthen relevant talent cultivation, in order to contribute more to improving the country's legal system in this area.

By offering equal protection and

efficient legal services to both domestic and foreign litigants, China has "seen a significant progress on the path of foreign-related legal construction", becoming one of the preferred venues for resolving international commercial and maritime disputes, she said.

Data shows that more than 29,000 maritime cases were heard by Chinese courts in 2023, compared with only 18 in 1984. In the past 40 years, litigants of more than 80,000 cases involving over 100 countries and regions chose maritime courts of China.

Wang said the types of maritime cases have also increased from 18 in 1984 to currently 108, encompassing issues such as port operation, ship repair, shipping logistics, and maritime finance and insurance.

"China tackles the largest number of and most diverse maritime disputes in the world," she said. "This shows the rapid development of our opening-up in the maritime field, as well as the continuous improvement in our maritime adjudication."

Data shows the number of maritime courts in China rose from six in 1984 to 11 in 2019, covering every harbor and waterway in the country, including the Yangtze River and the Pearl River.

Wang emphasized that effectively and efficiently resolving maritime cases is crucial for safeguarding the nation's sovereignty, safety and development interests. "It's also conducive to enhancing our judicial credibility worldwide, attracting more foreign litigants to turn to us to settle their disputes," she said.

In April 2019, the Qingdao Maritime Court in Shandong province facilitated a settlement among parties and stakeholders from six countries in a case involving a 300,000 metric ton oil tanker, allowing the continuation of the ship sale contract. The Greek shipowner renamed the oil tanker *Respect* to honor the rule of law in China.

Wang said the top court has encouraged Chinese judges to attend global forums and voice their ideas on the formulation of international rules, in order to assist the international community in building a fair and reasonable maritime trade order.

Chinese courts have seen a rapid growth in foreign-related commercial disputes over the past decade. Data shows that the number of cases rose from 14,800 in 2013 to 44,900 last year, covering litigants from more than 100 countries and regions, including Singapore, Thailand, India, France and Germany.

Wang said that new types of disputes have emerged, such as those related to cross-border commerce and China-Europe freight trains, adding that many litigants are from nations and regions participating in the Belt and Road Initiative.

To build a sound business environment around the rule of law, she said the top court has streamlined procedures for processing foreign-related commercial cases, giving foreign litigants easier access to legal services.

In 2018, the top court set up two dedicated international commercial courts in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, and Xi'an, Shaanxi province.

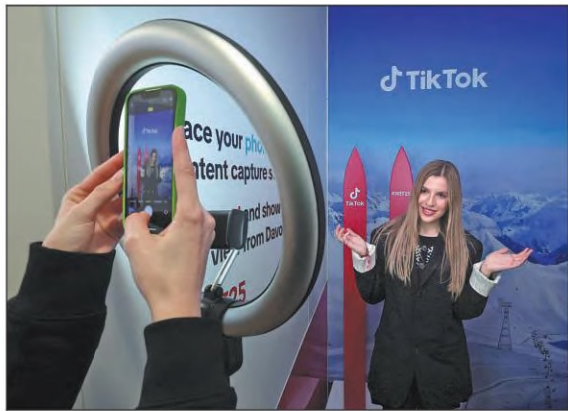
"We've invited commercial legal experts from home and abroad to act as our 'think tank' in hearing international commercial disputes, especially in providing us with support during mediation and in ascertaining when foreign laws should be applied," Wang said.

To date, the top court has attracted 63 legal experts from 26 countries and regions, she added.

"We'll continue our endeavor to improve the quality of resolving foreign-related commercial and maritime cases, making every effort to promote the high-quality development associated with the endeavor," she said.

The top court has also advanced the high-level opening-up and optimization of the business environment by holding international activities to increase exchanges between judicial professionals, Wang said.

In recent years, it has held forums for judges from Shanghai Cooperation Organization member countries, as well as the Maritime Silk Road International Forum on Judicial Cooperation.



A woman poses at the TikTok booth on the opening day of the 55th Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, on Monday. YVES HERMAN / REUTERS

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## Decoupling: Innovation gets a boost amid restrictions

From page 1

And yet, from Trump to former US president Joe Biden and back to Trump, politicians and administrations in the US have remained eager to use trade measures, among others, to serve the needs of the military-industrial complex in containing China's competitive edge.

Contrary to initial expectations, the former Biden administration accelerated economic, trade and technological war with the world, especially with China. First, Biden revived the Barack Obama administration's "Pivot to Asia" and China containment policies. He worked with allies and introduced initiatives, including Build Back Better World and Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment, to counter the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative. Then, he intensified the previous Trump administration's policy of tariffs, confrontation and sanctions. Next, he launched sanctions and restrictions through the CHIPS and Science Act, among others. Even before taking office, Trump started flexing his muscles to unleash a new wave of restrictions, sanctions and confrontation.

There were efforts to understand the cost of sanctions on the US economy. The Federal Reserve Bank of New York and Colombia University found that the trade war cut the market value of listed companies by \$1.7 trillion between 2018 and 2019. The overall impact was even deeper, as it lowered growth

rate, put high pressure on producers, caused losses for farmers and increased the price burden on consumers. The companies tried to avoid transferring the impact to consumers, but only a few were successful, at the cost of compromising wage rise and loss of jobs.

Unfortunately, despite paying a high price, the US has opted to continue its sanctions and confrontation policy. From semiconductors and chips to electronic vehicles and even TikTok, the US is trying to rein in China to keep the dominance of its military-industrial complex intact. Therefore, it is pressuring its allies and trade partners to follow in its footsteps and reduce business with China.

## Sanctions backfire

There is a general consensus that Western sanctions led by the US will not be successful and have negative implications for Western companies and economies. This policy is already hurting allies and partners of the US.

For example, China is one of the major buyers of photolithography machines from Dutch firm ASML. After the imposition of sanctions, the company has faced challenges. Qualcomm, a major US chip company, depends on China for over 60 percent of its sales, and sanctions are not good news for it. Lam Research, a US chipmaker, also lost substantial revenue — about \$2.5 billion — due to the sanctions.

It's understandable that China's countermeasures are related to its

upper hand in producing the raw and refined materials used for manufacturing semiconductors. China has the largest reserve of rare earth metals, with data suggesting it has more than one-third of global resources. China has also outpaced the world in mining these metals, accounting for 60 percent of global mining. These are critical materials for technological development, infrastructure, batteries, medical tech and energy.

China is working to enhance its capacity and capability to lead the fourth industrial revolution, innovation base and technology development through a high-quality education system and produced quality STEM graduates to build the capability to create knowledge.

Now, China is reaping the benefits of its investments, and it is on its way to matching or surpassing Western countries. Therefore, many experts from the Global North and the Global South believe that it is just a matter of time before China breaks technical barriers in the chip sector. They also believe that the sanctions and restrictions further accelerate the pace of innovation and technological development in China.

Many years ago, in anticipation of US sanctions and hostility, China started to diversify its economic linkages and export markets. It launched numerous initiatives to

build sustainable economic linkages with the world, including the Belt and Road Initiative. China has also erected many technology-related platforms to build the capacity of poor countries and share its experience with them. As a result, China is deeply integrated into the global system and is open to sharing the dividends of innovation and technology development.

Therefore, the US and some of its allies will not be able to contain China or control its technological development.

Sanctions or the rhetoric of decoupling, devoid of economic sense, are often exploited for political purposes to appease a few but hurt the majority of US consumers and industries. Political parties and the military-industrial complex are looking for a scapegoat to hide their inefficiency and inability to serve the people and sustain economic development.

US politicians and their financiers need to understand that sanctions, confrontation or decoupling are neither sustainable nor will they help solve the problems US is facing. Therefore, these should be avoided in favor of a formula for win-win cooperation and peaceful coexistence. That will help solve the US' problems and bring positive development outcomes for the world.

The author is CEO of the Asian Institute of Eco-civilization Research and Development in Pakistan. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

## CHINA

## Humans training humanoid robots



Workers train humanoid robots to inspect the structure of a car at a humanoid training ground in Shanghai on Tuesday. The training ground, the first of its kind in the country, is owned by China's National and Local Co-built Embodied Artificial Intelligence Robotics Innovation Center, accommodating over 100 full-size humanoid robots. CHEN MENGZE / FOR CHINA DAILY

# Courts to intensify efforts in fight against economic crimes

Move comes in the wake of sharp rise in financial offenses last year

By CAO YIN  
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China's courts pledged to intensify efforts to uphold market order through the rule of law, targeting activities that disrupt the socialist economy as economic crimes surge.

The Supreme People's Court reported a sharp rise in economic crimes last year, with bid-rigging cases jumping 56.6 percent compared to the previous year. Other crimes also saw significant year-on-year increases, including copyright infringement (47.5 percent), loan fraud (33.9 percent), counterfeit trademarks (26.3 percent), illegal business operations (23.9 percent), the production and

sale of fake goods (18.8 percent), and contract fraud (18.1 percent).

"The trends in these cases demand our utmost attention," Zhang Jun, president of the Supreme People's Court, said during a national conference of chief judges on Monday. "While we must address the tangible financial damages caused by these illegal activities, it is even more critical to focus on their social harm and impact on market order."

Zhang urged harsher punishments for those defrauding vulnerable populations, including the elderly and farmers, and stronger action against the production and sale of harmful food and drugs. He also called for selecting cases that

cause little financial harm but have a strong negative impact on society to deter repeat offenses.

"It is essential to use legal measures to mitigate and prevent major financial risks," Zhang said. He encouraged judges to study emerging issues in the market economy and offer judicial support to address new challenges.

"For issues where consensus has been reached, courts should promptly explain them through judicial interpretations or guidance," he said. "In cases lacking consensus but requiring legal intervention, influential and typical cases can serve to maintain industry order."

Zhang also stressed the need for collaboration with government departments to analyze systemic issues disrupting the market economy and to foster a fair and robust

business environment.

In addition to economic crimes, Zhang highlighted the growing complexity of family and marriage disputes, which saw a slight increase last year. Rising asset values and new types of family properties — such as intellectual property, equity, bonds and virtual assets — have complicated case handling.

Judges face challenges in determining shared marital properties and distinguishing between shared and individual debts, Zhang said, adding that courts should address the underlying conflicts in family lawsuits and prioritize the emotional well-being of litigants.

"Family disputes are closely tied to people's personal interests and daily lives," he said. "Addressing these issues effectively is integral to maintaining social harmony."

# Shenzhou XIX crew completes 2nd spacewalk

By ZHAO LEI  
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Shenzhou XIX mission crew members have conducted their second spacewalk outside the Tiangong space station, completing several assignments, according to the China Manned Space Agency.

The agency said in a news release that mission commander Senior Colonel Cai Xuzhe and crew member Lieutenant Colonel Song Lingdong returned to the Wentian science module at 1:12am on Tuesday after floating for eight and a half hours outside the colossal orbital station.

The third crew member, Lieutenant Colonel Wang Haoze, stayed inside Tiangong to provide support, it said.

With support from ground controllers and the use of a robotic arm, the team completed all their assigned tasks, including installing space debris shield devices and checking the condition of extravehicular equipment, the agency said.

The spacewalk was the 19th to be carried out by Chinese astronauts. It was also the fourth time Cai

participated in a spacewalk. He made two during his first orbital journey in the Shenzhou XIV mission in the second half of 2022, and went on another with Song on Dec 17 to mark the Shenzhou XIX crew's first spacewalk, during which they spent more than nine hours outside Tiangong.

The Dec 17 effort set a world record for the longest spacewalk, exceeding the previous one of 8 hours and 56 minutes set by United States astronauts in March 2001.

The Shenzhou XIX trio, the eighth group of inhabitants of the Chinese space station, were launched on Oct 30 by a Long March 2F carrier rocket from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwestern China and arrived at the orbital outpost later that day to take over from their peers in the Shenzhou XVIII flight.

Since their arrival, Cai's crew had completed various tasks, including station maintenance and emergency response drills and had been working on a host of science and technology tasks, according to the space agency.

The crew is expected to return to Earth in late April or early May.

## FROM THE GRASSROOTS

# Xinjiang tunnel project progressing smoothly

By WANG XIAOYU  
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Road construction manager Li Xiaoming arrived in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region 18 months ago to help oversee the excavation of a tunnel through the snow-capped Tianshan Mountains. Since then, he has faced flooding, communication blackouts and sleepless nights in bone-chilling temperatures below -20 C.

Yet, Li said the hardships are worthwhile. The 15.7-kilometer West Tianshan Super-Long Tunnel, part of an expressway connecting southern and northern Xinjiang, is progressing as planned.

"We are working toward the goal of breaking through around July of 2026 and completing supporting facilities in the following months," Li said. "The tunnel's success will be critical for the entire expressway to begin operations by late October 2027."

The Tianshan Mountains, one of the world's longest ranges, divide Xinjiang into northern and southern regions. The West Tianshan Super-Long Tunnel extends from Yili Kazak autonomous prefecture to Aksu prefecture and is the most significant section of the G219 highway.

Once completed, the tunnel will cut travel time between Yili and Aksu from 1,710 km to less than 500 km. The shortened distance is expected to boost tourism, improve convenience for local residents and drive economic development, according to China Communications Construction Co, which is overseeing the project.

Sun Zhanjun, deputy project manager, said the unique geological conditions of the region have posed technological, safety and environmental challenges.

"The tunnel runs as deep as 2,365 meters, increasing the risk of

rock bursts and spiking temperatures to 43 C at the deepest stretch," Sun said.

Its location in a seismically active region has required additional measures to ensure structural stability and worker safety, he said.

Despite the harsh conditions, crews stationed at one end of the tunnel in Aksu's Wensu county are capable of drilling 18.5 meters per day on average, largely due to a custom-built tunnel boring machine.

The domestically developed machine, which has a cutting diameter of 8.83 meters and a length of 253 meters, weighs 1,800 metric tons. It was transported from a factory in Jiangsu province to Xinjiang in June 2023, with assembly and transportation taking nearly 50 days.

The machine incorporates special designs to enhance torque and thrust, large cooling systems, and monitoring and early warning systems for rock bursts, Sun said.

"Manual blasting and drilling methods typically achieve 6 to 7 meters per day. With this machine, we've progressed 3,400 meters since July," he said.

The tunnel is the nation's first to carve a straight path under vast glacial regions, presenting further environmental challenges.

"Working in a glacial area requires careful environmental planning and readiness for glacial snowmelt," Sun said.

To mitigate these risks, new battery-powered electric vehicles have been deployed at the construction site, and the tunnel's drainage systems have been reinforced to handle heavy water inflows.

Li said he had initial doubts about working in the remote mountains after a grueling five-hour ride from the nearest county, but now he feels optimistic about the project.

"Our accommodations have improved significantly, and more importantly, construction is on track and progressing well," he said.

## Briefly

### Over 70,000 held in anti-fraud operation

A joint law enforcement operation involving China and five Southeast Asian countries last year resulted in the cracking of over 160 cases, primarily related to telecom fraud, and the arrest of more than 70,000 suspects, according to a report by China Media Group on Tuesday.

According to the report, a joint operation, named "Seagull", was organized by the Lancang-Mekong Integrated Law Enforcement and Security Cooperation Center, lasting from August to December last year. Preliminary statistics showed that during the operation, over 160 cases, mainly involving telecom fraud, were cracked, more than 70,000 suspects were arrested, and over 160 victims were rescued.

### 1,866 prosecuted for not paying wages

Procuratorates in China prosecuted 1,866 individuals last year for failing to pay labor compensation, a 7.3 percent increase from 2023, as part of efforts to combat malicious wage arrears. The procuratorates successfully recovered over 244 million yuan (\$33.6 million) in unpaid wages last year, the Supreme People's Procuratorate said on Tuesday.

The Supreme People's Court has launched a nationwide campaign since November last year to tackle wage arrears to ensure migrant workers receive their rightful pay and return home for Spring Festival family reunions.

XINHUA—CHINA DAILY

# NBA fans tap to beat of Matun drums

By ZHENG JINRAN  
and SHI BAOYIN in Zhengzhou

The eyes of hundreds of basketball fans awaiting the start of an NBA game in the United States were suddenly yanked away from their cellphones when some 30 Chinese women on the floor — all dressed in traditional flowing skirts — began a pulsating drum performance.

Many spectators were scrolling or chatting, but the thundering rhythms, accompanied by the deep, resonant sound of horns, grabbed their attention. The performance left the crowd in awe, said Dong Wenzhu, the group's leader.

"We heard people saying, 'You're amazing! We didn't know drums could sound like that!'" Dong said. "They were shocked by how these seemingly delicate women could create such powerful sounds."

After the spectacular performance, which unfolded at the Moda Center in Portland, Oregon, people were eager to tap their fingers on the handmade drumheads and feel the texture. They examined their intricate designs and surface patterns.

All the drums came from Henan province in central China, where Dong grew up. The ones featured in the performance were produced in Matun village, in the town of Goushi in Luoyang, which is known as a drum production base.

Matun has a complete industrial chain for producing drums, from processing raw materials to fine finish work. For more than 300 local family workshops, drums are part of the rhythm of life. The drum-making industry generates an annual output value of more than 100 million yuan (\$13.6 million), making it a pillar industry for the area, said Qu

Zhijia, deputy head of Goushi.

He said drum-making is closely related to the area's traditional cuisine, which has long relied heavily on beef and mutton for people's daily diet. Long ago, after butchering cattle and sheep, residents learned to put the hides to good use. They would carry their drums around on their shoulders and offer them for sale.

The selling has continued, but the mode has changed in modern times. "With the rise of e-commerce, sales have made for steady growth in the village's drum-making industry," Qu said. "More than 85 percent of the drums in China are produced here."

The drums of Goushi have been used on many important occasions, including at the opening ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympics. In recognition of their exceptional craftsmanship and the cultural significance of the drums, the skills of the artisans in Matun were listed as an intangible cultural heritage in 2020.

Ma Yinwei, a sixth-generation inheritor of the craft, recalled how he got started.

"I grew up surrounded by drums. Everyone around me made them," he said. "Now, the use of drums has expanded widely, with some being customized as decorative items or even as dining tables and stools, especially in southern China, where people use drum tables for tea ceremonies."

As cultural confidence grows, he said, the popularity of these handcrafted drums continues to rise, both as performance instruments and as unique pieces of home decor. Drum performances typically accompany celebrations such as Spring Festival or weddings.

The peak season for the drum-making industry in the village runs

from September through the end of the year and into the spring of the following year.

Li Jituo, deputy director of the Yanshi district bureau of culture, radio, television and tourism said the Matun drum, as a unique intangible cultural heritage, has become increasingly integrated with the cultural tourism sector, scenic areas and other creative industries.

The authorities plan to further develop the drums through research and innovation to fuse them with the tourism market.

"We hope to expand the reach of Matun drums, bringing this traditional craft to the global stage," Li said.

After the well-received performance at the NBA arena in the US, Dong, the director, has greater motivation and confidence about the drums and related cultural exchanges in communities around the world.

Her team was created in 2022, with female members ages 35 to 62. They regularly visit high schools to perform.

"Currently, we are preparing for a performance at the Chinese New Year Gala to highlight the beauty of Chinese traditional music and arts. We're also planning a performance in Washington state and continue to seize every opportunity," she said.

Guo Yanqi and Qi Xin contributed to this story.

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Online  
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Guests view a model of a tunnel boring machine used in the construction of the West Tianshan Super-Long Tunnel in Aksu, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, on Jan 15. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

## WORLD

## Supply chain expo links China, Thailand closer

By YANG WANLI in Bangkok  
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China's open business environment and growing potential for international trade are attracting Thai enterprises that look forward to building closer trade bonds with China at a major international supply chain expo in July.

"We can see vast potential for cooperation between China and Thailand that will benefit both," said Dhanin Chearavanont, senior chairman of Charoen Pokphand Group, one of the world's largest producers of animal feed and livestock in Thailand.

Speaking at the Thailand road show of the Third China International Supply Chain Expo, or CISCE, that was held in Bangkok on Tuesday, Dhanin said China has seen dramatic changes over the past three decades and its current infrastructure construction has reached the world's top-level.

"China's cutting-edge technologies impressed me a lot. During my recent trips to China, I was also amazed by the country's talents. As the world's first of its kind, the expo in China is very creative and will bring great chances of boosting cross-border trade to companies worldwide," he added.

China has been strengthening policy support to bolster foreign trade and investment and spared no effort to promote a higher level of opening-up to the outside world in the past few years. A total of 59,080 foreign enterprises were newly established in China last year, up 9.9 percent year-on-year, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

As the world's first exhibition along the theme of supply chain, the CISCE aims to connect upstream, midstream and downstream sectors, bring together enterprises and related partners from all fields, and foster interaction between China and international business partners.

"The expo is an important platform for deepening industrial development in the region and an open stage for determining the direction of global production and industrial transformation," said Suchart Chomklin, the Thai deputy minister of commerce.

In his opening remarks, Suchart reviewed the strategic partnership between China and Thailand. He noted that China is Thailand's top trading partner, maintaining the highest bilateral trade value for 12 consecutive years since 2013.

"As the two nations are celebrating their 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations this year, we hope the expo will further promote the sustained growth of trade and investment between Thailand and China," said Narongsak Puttapornmongkol, president of the Thai-Chinese General Chamber of Commerce.

The second CISCE that was held last November witnessed the signing of more than 210 trade deals and tentative agreements totaling more than \$21 billion, according to the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade, or CCPIT. The five-day event saw more than 600 exhibitors from nearly 70 countries and regions.

Ren Hongbin, chairman of the CCPIT, led the Chinese delegation at the event and gave the keynote speech. He highlighted China's extensive market and its openness while inviting Thai enterprises to participate in the third CISCE, which will kick off in July in Beijing.

"We chose Thailand as our first station for this year's road show because the kingdom has been our good neighbor, friend and family member for a long time. We hope to upgrade our cooperation and create greater value from our trade," he said.

"China welcomes more Thai enterprises to the third CISCE and seeks more opportunities for a win-win result."



## Camel wrestling

Camels fight in the Pamucak Arena in the town of Selcuk in the Aegean region, Turkey, during the annual Efes Selcuk Camel Wrestling Festival on Sunday. The festival will run to the end of March when one camel is chosen as the winner.

MURAD SEZER / REUTERS

## Strong future seen for Sino-Afghan relations

Envoy reaffirms Beijing's support to Kabul as nations mark 70 years of ties

By XU WEIWEI in Hong Kong  
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China is ready to stand shoulder to shoulder with Afghanistan, jointly advancing the development and prosperity of both countries, promoting regional peace and security, and fostering cultural exchange and mutual learning, according to a Chinese diplomat.

Chinese Ambassador to Afghanistan Zhao Xing said this during a speech at a ceremony to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Afghanistan on Monday.

The event, held in the Afghan capital Kabul, was jointly hosted by the Chinese embassy and the caretaker government.

Zhao said China firmly adheres to the policies of "Three Respects" and "Three Nevers", as well as supporting peace and reconstruction in Afghanistan.

He highlighted the abundant achievements in China-Afghanistan cooperation over the past seven decades and the deepening friendship between their peoples.

China respects the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Afghanistan, respects the independent choices made by the Afghan people, and respects the religious beliefs and national customs of Afghanistan, according to a paper stating China's position on Afghanistan released by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. China never interferes in Afghanistan's internal affairs, never seeks selfish interests in Afghanistan, and never pursues the so-called sphere of influence.

## Enduring friendship

Attending the ceremony, Afghan Deputy Foreign Minister Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai spoke highly of the enduring friendship between the two sides and the achievements in China-Afghanistan relations.

Stanikzai expressed gratitude for China's support of Afghanistan's national independence and development, as well as the improvement of the Afghan people's livelihoods.

He also called on both sides to use the 70th anniversary as an opportunity to deepen cooperation and promote mutual development and prosperity.

The Chinese ambassador noted that China's direct cooperation in Afghanistan recorded the highest growth rate among its investments in Asian countries in 2024, the Afghan media reported.

It is expected that trade between China and Afghanistan will surpass \$1.5 billion this year.

As China and Afghanistan celebrate 70 years of diplomatic ties, it is

clear that the future of their relationship is built on mutual respect, cooperation, and shared aspirations for peace and prosperity, said Maarif Farooq, deputy editor-in-chief at Pakistan Economic Net and Daily Ittehad Media Group.

"China's Belt and Road Initiative offers Afghanistan a unique opportunity to become a hub for regional connectivity, unlocking its potential for trade and economic growth," he said.

"Furthermore, China's economic support for Afghanistan will have a ripple effect across the region. A stable Afghanistan is essential for ensuring peace in neighboring countries and advancing regional integration."

Najibullah Jami, a professor and political analyst at Kabul University, hailed China's noninterference policy, expressing anticipation for closer cooperation between the two countries.

"China does not express its opinion on Afghanistan's internal affairs and it respects Afghanistan's territorial integrity," Jami told Xinhua News Agency in a recent interview.

China and Afghanistan have mutually prioritized each other's diplomatic interests, according to the analyst.

"I believe that Afghanistan and China have a long and positive history of diplomatic relations and that should be expanded, because this can have a greater and better impact on several fields, such as economy, security, and culture," he said.

The current momentum and efforts by both governments indicate that the relationship will be strengthened in the coming years, said Shakeel Ahmad Ramay, CEO of the Asian Institute of Eco-civilization Research and Development in Pakistan.

Ahmad said Afghanistan can benefit immensely from Chinese development, noting that China can help build its infrastructure and create economic opportunities.

However, he added that "Afghanistan will have to ensure that it is implementing the reforms and programs which it promised when the Taliban took over the country" to reap the benefits.

Xinhua contributed to this story.

## Briefly

INDONESIA  
Landslides, flash floods leave 18 dead

Indonesian rescuers recovered the bodies of at least 18 people who were swept away in flash floods or buried under mud and rocks that hit hilly villages on the country's main island of Java, officials said Tuesday. At least nine people were missing. Torrential rains on Monday caused rivers to burst their banks, tearing through nine villages in the Pekalongan regency of Central Java Province, said Bergas Catur-sasi Penanggungan, head of the Central Java disaster mitigation agency. The landslides also critically injured 10 individuals and partially damaged two houses.

UNITED NATIONS  
Tourism recovers to pre-COVID levels

Global tourism fully recovered from the COVID-19 pandemic in 2024, with 1.4 billion international tourist arrivals recorded worldwide due to "robust" demand from key markets, UN Tourism said on Monday. "A majority of destinations welcomed more international tourists in 2024 than they did before the pandemic, while visitor spending also continued to grow strongly," the Madrid-based body said in a statement. The number of international tourist arrivals last year was 11 percent higher than the number recorded in 2023, reaching the level seen in 2019, the year before the pandemic paralyzed travel.

TANZANIA  
New Marburg virus outbreak confirmed

Tanzania's President Samia Suluhu Hassan confirmed on Monday that there was a new outbreak of the deadly Marburg virus, in the East African country. One "confirmed case of the Marburg virus marks the second outbreak" in Tanzania since 2023, the president told a news briefing. Last week, the World Health Organization said that a suspected Marburg outbreak in Tanzania had killed eight people, assessing the risk at the national level as "high". That report has not been confirmed by Tanzania.

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AD

## Inquiry into Southport killings launched

By EARLE GALE in London  
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The United Kingdom's prime minister admitted on Tuesday the government had failed to prevent the terror-related murders of three young girls at a Taylor Swift-themed dance class last year and that the country would redefine terrorism as a result.

Keir Starmer said 18-year-old Axel Rudakubana's murders on July 29 of three girls in the town of Southport in northwest England should not have been allowed to happen.

He added that the case should serve as a "line in the sand" after which government departments and law enforcement agencies change their thinking about who constitutes a terror threat.

Starmer was speaking after

Rudakubana pleaded guilty on Monday to the three murders, and to the attempted murder of eight other children and two adults in the same incident. Rudakubana also pleaded guilty to producing the deadly toxin ricin and possessing a terrorist document.

"The blunt truth here is that this case is a sign Britain now faces a new threat," Starmer said in a public statement from 10 Downing Street. "Terrorism has changed."

He said the new terror threat does not come exclusively from religious or political extremists but also from "loners, misfits, young men in their bedrooms" with an interest in "extreme violence".

He made the comments after his government announced it would hold a public inquiry into the kill-

ings and Rudakubana's contact with agencies that should have prevented them.

Starmer said the public inquiry will seek to establish why Rudakubana, who had a long history of violence and whom police officers had visited at least five times, was not identified as a possible terrorist and put through deradicalization programs, despite having been referred to them on numerous occasions.

He also said the government would review the UK's terrorism laws and change them if necessary.

Starmer added that the inquiry will also look into whether the authorities released enough information about the killings in their immediate aftermath.

Rudakubana will be sentenced on Thursday.

## WORLD

## Expert calls for stronger educational partnerships

By XING YI in Davos, Switzerland  
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Cross-border collaboration in scholarship and idea generation should remain unabated despite efforts to decouple supply chains, said an education expert on Tuesday at the World Economic Forum's annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland.

"Now there is a growing focus in the United States on managing scholarly collaborations between US and Chinese universities and scholars. However, it is important that the decoupling of manufacturing supply chains does not extend to the decoupling of educational supply chains," John Quelch, executive vice-chancellor of Duke Kunshan University in Jiangsu province, told China Daily.

"In other words, cross-border exchanges, people-to-people exchanges, and scholarship should be, as always has been, international in scope," he said. Quelch's university is itself a joint project between Duke University in the US and China's Wuhan University.

Having served as dean of three leading business schools and as a professor at Harvard Business School for more than 30 years, Quelch pointed out that scholars always want to collaborate, and will collaborate.

"Putting a brake on the free flow of people-to-people exchanges or the free flow of ideas is not healthy for global prosperity, which will benefit from rapid and efficient collaboration across national boundaries," he said, adding that this year's World Economic Forum meeting is themed around collaboration.

Despite challenges, Quelch expressed optimism about educational, cultural and people-to-people exchanges between China and the US, stating that even "if a commercial rivalry results in tougher tariffs and more decoupling in economic terms, educational and cultural exchanges will continue and people will value them even more."

John Quelch

## Mutual learning

Quelch said Duke Kunshan University is a good example of mutual learning and cultural exchange, not only between China and the US but also between China and the world, with two-thirds of its non-Chinese students hailing from 70 countries, half of which are from the Global South.

He said he greatly appreciates China's initiative to invite 50,000 US youths for exchange and study programs over five years from 2024.

His university organized a 10-day Chinese immersion program last year for 70 US undergraduate students in cooperation with Jiangsu province's education department.

"We are trying to do the best that we can to bring more American students to China, but also non-Americans," Quelch said, adding that China's economic success and the Belt and Road Initiative have attracted many students from developing countries to study at his university.

"True breakthroughs are often made at the intersections of multiple disciplines and intercultural exchanges," he said.



Palestinian children rush to get out of the way of a moving aid truck in Rafah, southern Gaza Strip, on Monday, following a cease-fire between Israel and Hamas. MOHAMMED SALEH / REUTERS

## Israeli attacks continue despite truce

By JAN YUMUL in Hong Kong  
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As a fragile cease-fire holds in Gaza, violence and raids by Israeli forces in the occupied West Bank are intensifying, drawing warnings from the United Nations.

Any move to annex the West Bank would constitute "a most serious violation of international law", UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said at a Security Council meeting on Monday, emphasizing that some senior Israeli officials have openly discussed annexation plans. Guterres expressed deep concern over "an existential threat to the integrity and contiguity of the occupied Palestinian territory of Gaza and the West Bank".

"It is clear that greater stability in the Middle East requires irreversible action toward a two-state solution between Israelis and Palestinians," he said.

In a statement, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Palestine said it was alarmed by "a wave of renewed violence perpetrated by settlers and Israeli security forces" in the West Bank, which coincides with the implementation of the Gaza cease-fire agreement and the release of hostages and detainees.

"This has been accompanied by increased restrictions on Palestinians' freedom of movement across the West Bank, including complete closure of some checkpoints and installation of new gates, effectively confining entire communities," the statement said.

Further, Israeli officials' warnings against Palestinian families celebrating the release of detained loved ones have coincided with calls by settlers to gather and stage attacks near locations where detainees are returning home.

According to the UN human rights office, settler attacks followed on Sunday in towns, including Sinjil, Turmus Ayya and Qalqilya, where scores of settlers torched Palestinian houses and vehicles, blocked roads and hurled stones. Six Palestinians were injured in Sinjil, including three children aged 14 to 16.

Palestinian security forces also detained several Palestinians, including journalists covering the release of Palestinian detainees.

The UN human rights office in Palestine said that while the cease-fire takes hold in Gaza, it is important to "stress again that international law binds duty-bearers in the Occupied Palestinian Territory".

"Israel has an obligation as the occupying power to ensure the protection of Palestinians from all acts of violence," it said.

## Imposing 'price tag'

Israeli human rights group B'Tselem shared on X that a 15-year-old boy was shot and killed by Israeli soldiers in Sebastia, West Bank. The post, accompanied by a video, accused settlers of imposing a "price tag" for the release of Palestinian prisoners.

Israel has released 90 Palestinian prisoners in exchange for three hostages as part of a multiphase

cease-fire and hostage-prisoner swap agreement with Palestinian militant group Hamas.

However, recent attacks in the West Bank have raised doubts over efforts to stem the conflict and whether the truce will hold.

Ayman Yousef, a professor of international relations at the Arab American University in Jenin, West Bank, told China Daily that there are "many factors that led to this cycle, or round of confrontations", and one of them is the current cease-fire.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is trying to compensate for his deal with Hamas by "providing more spaces for settlers" in the West Bank amid Donald Trump's return to the White House, he said, noting the new US president is "extremely supportive of Israel and its policies in the West Bank".

Yousef believes the Palestinians are entering "the phase of a new wave of violence by the settlers" and a new wave of confrontation. The Israeli army, meanwhile, "is threatening the Palestinians day and night", he said, especially refugees in the northern West Bank.

"I'm very much pessimistic about the future of the truce and the future political deal with Hamas in Gaza," he said.

"Israel will not stop the war. They may stop fighting temporarily but again they will go back to fight because they feel Gaza is still posing a real threat to Israel, and there is a good opportunity for the Israeli side to settle many political issues and political differences with the Palestinians through this war."

## Welcome kit

Giant panda Yilan explores a welcome gift at the Adelaide Zoo during her debut on Tuesday in Adelaide, Australia. Xingqiu, another giant panda, also made his debut at the ceremony. The pair are the only giant pandas in the Southern Hemisphere.

GU SHIHONG / CHINA NEWS SERVICE



## Kenyan capital lights up with Spring Festival mood

By OTIATO OPALI in Nairobi, Kenya  
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Spectacular Chinese lion dances, kung fu by local and Chinese groups, and captivating performances of traditional Chinese and Kenyan arts lit up Nairobi on Sunday, drawing hundreds of revelers to celebrate the upcoming Spring Festival.

Extending greetings and wishes, Chinese Ambassador to Kenya Guo Haiyan said at the event that Spring Festival has become a symbol of Chinese culture that is accepted, recognized and appreciated by the world.

"China actively implements the Global Civilization Initiative and advocates for exchanges, mutual learning, inheritance and development among different civilizations," she said. "Today's Nairobi Chinese

New Year Gala is a vivid practice of this initiative. Spring Festival contains the cultural genes and emotions that have been transmitted within the Chinese nation over thousands of years."

Marking the start of Chinese New Year, Spring Festival is the most important traditional celebration in China. This year, it falls on Jan 29. It was listed as a United Nations floating holiday in December 2023, and was inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity last year.

Ummi Bashir, Kenya's principal secretary for culture, the arts and heritage, said culture and tourism are gaining their rightful place in bilateral cooperation between Kenya and China and will contribute to the growth of bilateral relations.

"Cultural cooperation is a vital tool of people-to-people contact, which constitutes one of the pillars of our strategic partnership, serving both as a bridge and a foundation for fostering mutual understanding and friendship, trust and respect," she said.

"Kenya remains committed to strengthening cultural cooperation and people-to-people contact, and seeking new opportunities to enhance friendship."

Kenya and China will contribute to advancing the Global Civilization Initiative, which promotes respect for the diversity of civilizations, common values of humanity, importance of inheritance and innovation of civilizations, as well as robust international people-to-people exchanges and cooperation."

The colorful event, designed to offer attendees a glimpse into the rich traditions of Spring Festival, surpassed expectations, said Sylvia Achieng, a Nairobi resident who attended the gala.

Achieng was particularly captivated by the Chinese food on display, highlighting surprising similarities between Chinese and Kenyan cuisine. She compared the Chinese beef skewers to Kenya's *mshikaki*, and said the dumplings reminded her of local samosas.

"I also had the opportunity to taste Chinese dishes I have never heard of, and I think I'll be visiting Chinese restaurants more often," Achieng said. "The chefs have taught me how to use chopsticks and I have to make sure I practice by trying more Chinese cuisine."

## Yoon attends court hearing for first time

Impeached leader defends martial law decree as prosecution decries remarks

SEOUL — South Korea's impeached President Yoon Suk-yeol appeared at the Constitutional Court for the first time on Tuesday, and vowed to cooperate with the judges who will decide whether to remove him from office.

The country was plunged into political chaos by Yoon's Dec 3 martial law declaration, which lasted just six hours before lawmakers voted it down.

They later impeached him, stripping him of his duties. He also became the first sitting South Korean president to be arrested in a criminal probe on insurrection grounds.

Thousands of protesters — both for and against Yoon — flocked to the Constitutional Court, which is holding hearings to decide whether to uphold his impeachment.

"I will respond to any questions or provide further remarks if necessary," Yoon told the judge.

Yoon was asked during the hearing whether he had instructed top military commanders to "drag out" lawmakers from parliament to prevent them from voting down his martial law decree.

"No," he told the judge. Court spokesperson Cheon Jae-hyun told reporters that Yoon's legal team has requested to call "at least 24 individuals" as witnesses, including election-related officials.

Yoon, who remains head of state, is being held in a detention center pending a criminal probe on charges of insurrection.

Shortly after the hearing, the Corruption Investigation Office probing the martial law declaration said it had sent six investigators and a prosecutor to the detention center to question Yoon, who has been refusing to submit to their questioning.

However, the van escorting Yoon was seen traveling to a hospital in Seoul, instead of the detention center.

The Justice Ministry said Yoon went for "a medical treatment", based on results of a medical exam the previous day.

If the court rules against Yoon, he will lose the presidency and elections will be called within 60 days.

The prosecution lawyers, who were selected by the parliament, slammed the comments made by Yoon and his lawyers as "largely contradictory, irrational and unclear, making them entirely incomprehensible".

"If they continue to evade responsibility as they did today, it will only work against them in the impeachment trial and cause even greater disappointment among the public," they added.

Yoon stayed away from the first two hearings last week, but the trial, which could last months, will continue even if he is absent.

Yoon has also been refusing to submit to separate questioning by the Corruption Investigation Office, the body in charge of the criminal probe into his martial law declaration.

It said it had attempted to compel him to attend but because of the "suspect's continued refusal to cooperate", they abandoned the efforts.

On Saturday, Yoon attended a hearing at the Seoul Western District Court on whether to extend his detention. When it was extended, hundreds of pro-Yoon protesters attacked the court building and scuffled with police officers. Dozens were arrested.

Refusing to comply with the warrant execution and declining to testify will gradually be considered as factors unfavorable to his case in the impeachment trial. It shows they are not adhering to the legal framework."

Kim Nam-ju, legal expert

## 'Riling public opinion'

The impeached president's decision to start showing up at the Constitutional Court hearing is more about inflaming his die-hard supporters than helping the judicial process along, legal expert Kim Nam-ju said.

"Whether it's the legal representative speaking or Yoon himself speaking, it's nearly the same — it's more about riling public opinion," Kim told AFP.

But whatever Yoon's motives, "from the perspective of the Constitutional Court judges, hearing directly from the defendant is far more significant", he said.

Kim added that Yoon's refusal to engage in the criminal investigation into his martial law declaration will not work in his favor overall, even if he continues showing up at the Constitutional Court.

"Refusing to comply with the warrant execution and declining to testify will gradually be considered as factors unfavorable to his case in the impeachment trial," said Kim.

"It shows they are not adhering to the legal framework."

Yoon has claimed the criminal probe is illegal and resisted arrest for weeks, vowing to "fight to the end".

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA



South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol attends the third formal hearing of his impeachment trial at the Constitutional Court in Seoul on Tuesday. WOO-HAE CHO VIA XINHUA

WORLD

Immigration crackdown, deportation bid launched

WASHINGTON/PIEDRAS NEGRAS, Mexico — US President Donald Trump on Monday kicked off his sweeping immigration crackdown, tasking the US military with aiding border security, issuing a broad ban on asylum and taking steps to restrict citizenship for children born on US soil.

Declaring illegal immigration a national emergency, Trump ordered the Pentagon to provide support for border wall construction, detention space, and migrant transportation, and empowered the Secretary of Defense to send troops to the border as needed.

Trump called for his administration to reinstate his "Remain in Mexico" program, which forced non-Mexican migrants to wait in Mexico for the resolution of their US cases.

Shortly after the inauguration, US border authorities said they had shut down outgoing president Joe Biden's CBP One entry program, which had allowed hundreds of thousands of migrants to enter the US legally by scheduling an appointment on an app. Existing appointments were canceled, leaving migrants stunned and unsure of what to do.

Trump, a Republican, recaptured the White House after promising to intensify border security and deport record numbers of migrants. He criticized Biden for high levels of illegal immigration during the latter's presidency, but as Biden toughened his policies last year and Mexico stepped up enforcement, the number of migrants caught crossing illegally fell dramatically.

Republicans say large-scale deportations are necessary after millions of immigrants crossed illegally during Biden's presidency. There were roughly 11 million immigrants in the US living illegally or with temporary status at the start of 2022, according to a US government estimate, a figure that some analysts now place at 13 million to 14 million.

"As commander-in-chief, I have no higher responsibility than to defend our country from threats and invasions, and that is exactly what I am going to do," Trump said in his inaugural address.

Trump's critics and immigrant advocates say mass deportations could disrupt businesses, split families and cost US taxpayers billions of dollars.

The American Civil Liberties Union, or ACLU, said in a federal

court filing on Monday that Trump's decision to end the CBP One program removed the only avenue to asylum at the US-Mexico border, an opening salvo by the civil rights group to fight Trump's agenda in court.

People in the US have grown less welcoming toward immigrants without legal status since Trump's first presidency, but remain wary of harsh measures such as detention camps, a Reuters/Ipsos poll in December found.

In several Mexican border cities, migrants saw their appointments on Biden's CBP One app canceled just after Trump took office. Some 280,000 people had been logging into the app daily to secure an appointment as of Jan 7.

Migrants alarmed

Migrants waiting in Ciudad Juarez scrambled to find short-term rentals, buy bus tickets and call family members back home.

Denia Mendez, a Honduran sitting in the courtyard of a migrant shelter in Piedras Negras, across from Eagle Pass, Texas, opened her email inbox 30 minutes after Trump became president. She stared at an email for several minutes, reading it over and over, before her eyes welled up.

"They canceled my appointment," she said.

In his order focused on so-called "birthright citizenship", Trump called on US agencies to refuse to recognize the citizenship of US-born children unless at least one parent is a US citizen or a permanent resident.

His order prompted the swift filing of a lawsuit in federal court in New Hampshire by the ACLU and other groups, who argued that Trump's order violated the right for anyone born in the US to be considered a citizen enshrined in the Citizenship Clause of the US Constitution's 14th Amendment.

"Denying citizenship to US-born children is not only unconstitutional — it's also a reckless and ruthless repudiation of American values," Anthony Romero, the ACLU's executive director, said in a statement.

In other orders, Trump suspended US refugee resettlement for at least three months and ordered a review of security to see if travelers from certain nations should be subject to a travel ban.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA



Margelis Tinoco, a migrant from Colombia, reacts after receiving news that her CBP One appointment was canceled, on the Inauguration Day of Donald Trump's second presidential term, at the Paso del Norte International Bridge in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, on Monday. JOSE LUIS GONZALEZ / REUTERS



US President Donald Trump signs an executive order at Capital One Arena in Washington on Monday. LI RUI / XINHUA

Trump leaves Paris climate treaty again

Experts say US move will undermine global green efforts

By YANG RAN yangran1@chinadaily.com.cn

US President Donald Trump announced on Monday that the United States will withdraw from the Paris Climate Agreement for a second time, a move experts warn will undermine global climate efforts, harm the US' international reputation, and result in lost economic opportunities for the country.

Trump signed an executive order Monday to pull the US out of the Paris climate accords. The order stated, "It is the policy of my administration to put the interests of the United States and the American people first." The formal exit will occur in one year, as per the accord's rules.

This announcement, anticipated since Trump's election, significantly threatens the Paris Agreement's goal to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius, especially since last year was the hottest on record.

Ma Jun, director of the Beijing-based Institute of Public and Environmental Affairs, said, "As the world's largest economy and top historical emitter, the US has a major responsibility in tackling global climate change. By exiting the Paris Agreement again, it shirks these duties. This is unfair to developing countries that have contributed little to emissions but are heavily impacted by climate change."

In June 2017, then-President Trump announced that the US would leave the Paris Agreement. The withdrawal became official on Nov 4, 2020, drawing widespread criticism.

Liu Yuanling, an assistant researcher at the Institute of American Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, criticized Trump's decision as driven by nationalism and anti-science views. "It dealt a major blow to global climate governance and ambition," she added.

Li Shuo, director of the China Climate Hub at the Asia Society Policy Institute, noted that compared to the first withdrawal, this time the US' exit

comes at a critical moment when global climate efforts are already slowing and conditions are less favorable. "This sudden policy shift will likely worsen the challenges to global climate progress in the coming years,"

Besides pulling out of the Paris Agreement, Trump also issued orders to revoke previous support for electric vehicles and introduced a comprehensive plan to boost oil and gas production, including declaring a national energy emergency to expedite permitting and rolling back environmental regulations.

Ma argued that these moves are not forward-looking. "Trump's plan aims to lower current oil prices and support traditional industries. However, the global trend is toward a green and low-carbon future. Unlike eight years ago, people now can see the opportunities in green transitions, which have already spurred economic growth in many regions," he said.

Li echoed Ma's opinion, saying that as the costs of key decarbonization technologies drop, investing in these sectors benefits a country's economy, while backtracking on climate change efforts harms a nation's international reputation and economic opportunities.

Despite the withdrawal, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres remains confident that US cities, states, and businesses "will continue to demonstrate vision and leadership by working for the low-carbon, resilient economic growth that will create quality jobs," said associate UN spokeswoman Florencia Soto Nino in a written statement. "If the US withdraws at the federal level, climate cooperation at the local level becomes particularly crucial. This was evident the last time the US exited the Paris Agreement, and it remains true now," said Ma.

When considering how to advance global climate governance in the absence of US participation, experts agree that China and the European Union will need to step up.

"At COP29, China and the EU show-

cased effective cooperation. The EU has to continue and expand its leadership role, while China also has to play a bigger role. This involves both collaborative efforts between China and the EU and strengthened cooperation between China and the Global South to tackle climate change and promote green transitions," said Ma.

China will stay committed to actively responding to climate change, Foreign Ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun said on Tuesday. Guo made the remarks at a regular news conference after US President Donald Trump signed an executive order directing the US to again withdraw from the Paris deal.

"Climate change is a common challenge for all humanity, and no country will be able to stay unaffected," Guo said, adding that China will work with all parties to address the challenge and promote green and low-carbon transition.

Withdrawal from WHO

On Monday, Trump also signed an executive order that will see the US withdrawing from the World Health Organization. The text of the executive order, released by the White House, indicates that this is Trump's second attempt to leave the WHO, following his unsuccessful first attempt in 2020 after losing the presidential election to Joe Biden.

According to the executive order, Trump's decision is again based on his assertions that the WHO failed "to adopt urgently needed reforms" and "continues to demand unfairly onerous payments from the United States, far out of proportion with other countries' assessed payments."

Guo said China will continue to support the World Health Organization in performing its duties after Trump announced that the US will again withdraw from the WHO. The role of the WHO should be strengthened, instead of weakened, he said.

Wang Qingyun and agencies contributed to this story.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

A flurry of orders

US President Donald Trump on Monday issued a flurry of executive orders and directives as he sought to put his stamp on his new administration on matters ranging from energy to criminal pardons and keeping TikTok open in the US.

Here's a look at some of Trump's initial actions and upcoming plans:

• Government efficiency Trump signed an executive action to create an advisory group called the Department of Government Efficiency, aimed at carrying out dramatic cuts to the US government, attracting immediate lawsuits challenging its operations. The group, dubbed "DOGE", is being run by Tesla CEO Elon Musk. Biotech entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy was a co-chair but has left to run for elected office, Trump spokeswoman Anna Kelly said.

• Targeting the 'deep state' The president signed a document "ending weaponization" of government against political opponents. The order directs the attorney general to investigate the activities of the federal government over the last four years, including at the Department of Justice, the Securities and Exchange Commission, and the Federal Trade Commission during the prior administration.

It said the government will "identify and take appropriate action to correct past misconduct by the federal government related to the weaponization of law enforcement and the weaponization of the intelligence community."

• Renaming Trump signed an executive order to rename the Gulf of Mexico the "Gulf of America" hours after taking the oath of office.

Trump claimed that the water body "has long been an integral asset to our once burgeoning nation and has remained an indelible part of America".

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum said at a news conference on Jan 8: "Obviously, the Gulf of Mexico is recognized by the United Nations... but why don't we call this 'Mexican America'?"

Trump also called for North America's tallest peak — Denali in Alaska — to be renamed Mount McKinley, reviving an idea he'd floated years ago and drawing a rebuke from Alaska's Republican senator.

• Undoing Biden moves At a rally at a sports arena, Trump revoked 78 executive actions of the previous administration.

"I'll revoke nearly 80 destructive and radical executive actions of the previous administration," the US president said.

Trump also said he would sign an order directing every agency to preserve all records pertaining to "political persecutions" under the Joe Biden administration.

• Death penalty Trump signed a sweeping executive order on the death penalty that directs the attorney general to "take all necessary and lawful action" to ensure that states have enough lethal injection drugs to carry out executions.

Nearly all charged with Jan 6 Capitol riot pardoned

WASHINGTON — US President Donald Trump on Monday pardoned or commuted the prison sentences of nearly all of the 1,500-plus people charged with crimes in the US Capitol riot on Jan 6, 2021, including people convicted of seditious conspiracy and assaulting police officers.

Trump's action, just hours after his return to the White House, paves the way for the release from prison of dozens of people found guilty of violent attacks on police, as well as leaders of extremist groups convicted of failed plots to keep the Republican in power after he lost the 2020 election to former president Joe Biden.

The pardons are a culmination of Trump's yearslong campaign to rewrite the Jan 6 attack that left more than 100 police officers injured as the angry mob of Trump supporters — some armed with poles, bats and bear spray — over-

whelmed law enforcement, shattered windows and sent lawmakers and aides running into hiding.

Trump also ordered the attorney general to seek the dismissal of roughly 450 cases that are still pending before judges stemming from the largest investigation in the Justice Department's history.

'Process of reconciliation'

Casting the rioters as "patriots" and "hostages", Trump has claimed they were unfairly treated by the Justice Department that also charged him with federal crimes in two cases he contends were politically motivated. Trump said the pardons will end "a grave national injustice that has been perpetrated upon the American people over the last four years" and begin "a process of national reconciliation".

The pardons were met with elation from Trump supporters and lawyers

for the Jan 6 defendants. Trump supporters gathered late on Monday in the cold outside the Washington jail, where more than a dozen defendants were being held before the pardons.

"We are deeply thankful for President Trump for his actions today," said James Lee Bright, an attorney who represented Oath Keepers founder Stewart Rhodes, who was serving an 18-year prison sentence after being convicted of seditious conspiracy and other crimes.

It's unclear how quickly the defendants may be released from prison. An attorney for Enrique Tarrio, the former Proud Boys national chairman who was sentenced to 22 years in prison for seditious conspiracy, said he expected them to be released from prison on Monday night.

Democrats slammed the move to extend the pardons to violent rioters, many of whose crimes were captured

on camera and broadcast on live TV. Former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi called it "an outrageous insult to our justice system and the heroes who suffered physical scars and emotional trauma as they protected the Capitol, the Congress and the Constitution".

"Donald Trump is ushering in a Golden Age for people that break the law and attempt to overthrow the government," Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer said in an emailed statement.

Michael Fanone, a former police officer who lost consciousness and suffered a heart attack after a rioter shocked him with a stun gun, appeared stunned to learn from an Associated Press reporter that those who assaulted police officers are among the pardon recipients.

Fanone said he has spent the past four years worried about his safety and the well-being of his family. Par-



A White House Justice Department liaison officer announces that two Jan 6 rioters have been released, outside the Central Detention Facility in Washington on Monday. ROBERTO SCHMIDT / AFP

doning his assailants only compounds his fears, he said.

Trump had suggested in the weeks leading up to his return to the White House that instead of blanket pardons, he would look at the Jan 6 defendants on a case-by-case basis.

And Vice-President JD Vance had said just days ago that people responsible for the violence during the Capitol riot "obviously" should not be pardoned.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

## Z WEEKLY

All about Gen Z

## Z WEEKLY

## Social Media Digest

## Enduring empresses

If we were to highlight TV dramas that have left a lasting impact on young Chinese audiences, *Empresses in the Palace* (2011) would undoubtedly be on the list.

This was evident on Jan 11, when a livestream event dedicated to the drama on the Chinese video platform Youku quickly garnered over 6 million views.

The drama tells the story of Zhen Huan, a young woman who enters the Forbidden City as an imperial concubine to Emperor Yongzheng of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). Throughout the series, she transforms from an innocent, sheltered girl into a shrewd and determined empress dowager, navigating the dangerous intrigues of the palace.

Fourteen years after its release, the drama continues to resonate with viewers in China. Many fans have created their own interpretations and remixes of iconic scenes, reflecting their own experiences in real life.

This has sparked a wave of memes, popular phrases, and fresh takes on the characters, now collectively referred to as "Zhen Xue" (the study of *Empresses in the Palace*) among Chinese internet users.

During the livestreamed event, the director and main cast of the show reunited for the first time in over a decade. Through performances and interviews, they shared behind-the-scenes stories, rekindling the connection between the characters and their devoted fans.

"It's not enough to simply create something beautiful, because 'beauty' and 'attractiveness' change with time," said director Zheng Xiaolong at the ceremony. "What endures is the complexity of human nature, which will always captivate audiences."



The lives of imperial concubines are the inspiration for many TV shows in China. vcg

## Meet Generation Beta

In 2025, a new generation will arrive — Generation Beta, which will include children born from early 2025 to the end of 2039, following Generation Alpha (born from 2010 to 2024).

Both Generation Beta and Generation Alpha were named by the Australian research firm McCrindle. Their research predicts that by 2035, Generation Beta will represent 16 percent of the global population, with many expected to live well into the 22nd century.

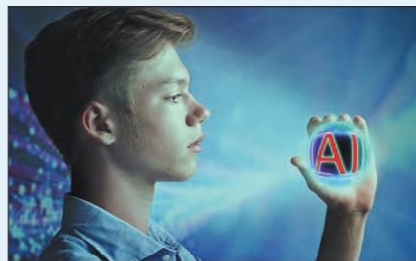
This generation will be significantly shaped by the widespread use of artificial intelligence and digital technologies.

For example, the research notes that Generation Beta will be the first to experience technologies like autonomous transportation, wearable healthcare devices, and immersive virtual environments as part of everyday life.

However, they will also face major global challenges, such as climate change, population shifts, and rapid urbanization.

"This will result in Generation Beta being more globally minded, community-focused, and collaborative than ever before," the report said. "Their upbringing will emphasize the importance of innovation not just for convenience, but for solving the pressing challenges of their time."

MENG WENJIE



Generation Beta's life will be significantly shaped by the widespread use of artificial intelligence. vcg

## Youth drive change at Movers Camp

Event brought together young participants to explore sustainable development goals, empowering them to act toward a more equitable future.



Students present their ideas at the 2025 Movers Co-Creation Camp held at Shanghai Jiao Tong University from Jan 18 to 19. YE CHEN / FOR CHINA DAILY

By GUO JIATONG  
guojiatong@i21st.cn

Imagine a world where poverty is a distant memory, women enjoy equal rights in the workforce, and clean energy is accessible to all — these are the ideals of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

From Jan 18 to 19, the 2025 Movers Co-Creation Camp was held at Shanghai Jiao Tong University (SJTU), co-organized by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), with the goal of engaging more young people with the SDGs.

During the two-day camp, 30 university students gathered to exchange ideas for a better, more equitable future.

Divided into six groups, the students worked with UNDP experts to explore the impact of the SDGs on their daily lives, climate action, and entrepreneurship.

Yang Peijie, a 23-year-old graduate in transportation engineering from SJTU, gained a deeper understanding of the fifth SDG — gender equality — through in-depth discussions with his group mates and instructors during the workshop.

He shared that women face income disparities, promotion barriers, and unequal career opportunities across various sectors. "I've learned from our discussions that these issues are not limited to low-income countries, but also persist in some developed nations," he said.

According to Yang, promoting gender equality requires changes in both institutional frameworks and societal attitudes, with even small steps making a meaningful difference.

"In recent years, China has witnessed significant shifts in gender attitudes," he added. "As a 'mover', I will continue to work on breaking down gender role stereotypes, promoting equal employment opportunities, and helping to mainstream the concept of equality in China."

Climate change is also a critical global issue. It is the 13th SDG and was a key topic during the workshop at the camp.

Chen Haojun, a 22-year-old student at the School of International Rela-



“Certain problems, such as greenhouse gas emissions, were caused by more than one country, which is why effective climate governance cannot be achieved by any single nation alone.”

Chen Haojun, 22, a student at Fudan University

tions and Public Affairs at Fudan University in Shanghai, who has been raised with a strong sense of environmental responsibility, emphasized the importance of justice in addressing climate change.

"Certain problems, such as greenhouse gas emissions, were caused by more than one country, which is why effective climate governance cannot be achieved by any single nation alone," he said. "It requires the full cooperation of all countries."

He also highlighted China's efforts in promoting green development, citing its goal of peaking carbon emissions before 2030 and reaching carbon neutrality before 2060, which demonstrates China's commitment to climate action.

"To achieve the global climate goal, we must maintain an international perspective. This means focusing on domestic development while also



“Leadership is not about authority. It's about the ability to empower others to participate in collaboration and harmonize differences to develop practical and actionable solutions to problems.”

Yang Peijie, 23, a student at Shanghai Jiao Tong University

considering the challenges faced by other countries," Chen said.

## Building connections

During the event, the young participants not only gained a deeper understanding of the SDGs but also explored the power of communication.

Nazikai Zhumabieke, a 20-year-old Kazak student from the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region studying at SJTU, shared her experience.

"Unlike workshops I've attended before, where participants sat in rows while experts commented on academic articles, the Movers Co-Creation Camp brought us together around a table, allowing everyone to speak," she said.

Zhumabieke, an administrative management major, believes this camp provides an excellent platform for cross-discipline and cross-profes-

sional collaboration, unlocking more possibilities for solutions.

"During the entrepreneurship-focused workshop, for example, as we worked on optimizing our sales plan, I contributed my ideas from an administrative perspective, while other group members brought insights from their economics background. It made me realize that no discipline operates in isolation — there are many intersections," Zhumabieke explained.

Chu Yunyi, a 22-year-old student at SJTU Paris Elite Institute of Technology and president of the department's student union, is known for his excellent communication skills. Still, he learned something new at the camp: the importance of accepting differences in global governance.

"Effective communication in cooperation should involve acknowledging our differences first. It's not just about delivering our own messages unilaterally but also about understanding others' perspectives," he said.

Yang agreed, emphasizing that communication is essential for bridging gaps in international contexts.

"Leadership is not about authority. It's about the ability to empower others to participate in collaboration and harmonize differences to develop practical and actionable solutions to problems," he said.

Zhang Xunyan, a 23-year-old student majoring in international organizations and international exchange at Zhejiang University in Hangzhou, was inspired by the program's mission to ensure that no one is left behind.

She explained that while globalization and technological advancements have brought prosperity and progress, developing countries — especially low- and middle-income nations — still face challenges such as resource scarcity and technological delays.

This is why Chen wants to encourage more young people to join the camp and take action for a brighter future for all.

"We are global citizens; we should act like one and take pride in it," he said.

# Beyond the textbook

Universities are increasingly offering innovative courses that focus on practical life skills, helping students prepare for the real world beyond academics.

By MENG WENJIE  
and LIU KUN in Wuhan

In a university classroom, 27-year-old teacher Fu Yiqiang, dressed in a suit and apron, cooked for his students using an electric frying pan.

This wasn't a cooking class but an elective course titled "Guide to Adult Life" at the Communication University of China, Nanjing (CUCN), in Jiangsu province, which Fu began teaching in the second semester of 2024.

Fu, a 2018 graduate of CUCN, started his career as an e-sports commentator. His success in the field earned him an invitation to return to the university in 2019 to teach e-sports commentary courses.

However, Fu soon noticed a challenge many college students face outside their academic work.

"Throughout our schooling, we were always told to focus on studying, but few taught us how to live," Fu said. "After graduation, we're suddenly expected to navigate the real world on our own, yet there's so much we don't know."

This realization inspired him to create the Guide to Adult Life course.

The course covers a wide range of real-life situations, equipping students with practical skills for both university life and their transition into society. Topics include visiting a hospital, basic cooking, understanding consumer rights, advice on renting, labor laws, and resume writing.

"This is the most challenging course I've ever prepared," Fu admitted.

To ensure the lessons were relevant and engaging, Fu researched reliable sources and even took online courses to learn the material himself before teaching it to his students.

The course quickly became a hit. Initially designed for 100 students, nearly 200 enrolled, with many in standing-room attendance.

Fu is also a video content creator who regularly shares his experiences as a young university teacher.

In September 2024, he began to post segments of his course on Chinese social media platforms like Bilibili and Douyin, where his content resonated with many young netizens. Today, Fu's channel has more than 5 million followers, mostly university students.

"I believe this course meets the real needs of students," Fu said. "University education isn't just about acquiring knowledge; it's about developing critical thinking and learning how to live a fulfilling life."

Yu Feng, a psychology professor at Wuhan University (WHU) in Hubei province, shares a similar perspective.

In 2021, Yu's lecture on "The Psychology of Love" gained immense popularity, leading to its inclusion in the university's general elective courses.

It later evolved into "Positive Psychology," which covers a broader range of topics and has become one of the most sought-after electives at WHU. Even the largest lecture halls struggle to



**Left:** Graduates present flowers to Yu Feng (center), a psychology professor at Wuhan University. **Below:** Fu Yiqiang teaches cooking skills to students at the Communication University of China, Nanjing. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



**Above:** Hou Xin relaxes on a branch during a tree-climbing class at Xiamen University. **Right:** While interning at a hospital, Zhou Yi (front) holds a patient's wrist to offer comfort. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



accommodate all the interested students.

"While traditional psychology focuses on addressing mental health issues, positive psychology aims to help people achieve happiness," Yu explained.

The Psychology of Love remains the most popular section of the course.

In these sessions, Yu encourages students to discuss their relationship challenges and uses psychological principles to help them understand the stages of intimate relationships — from initiation and growth to decline — and how to manage emotions when a relationship ends.

"I hope this course helps stu-

dents approach life with a more positive mindset," Yu said. "Teachers present ideas and knowledge in ways that students both enjoy and find meaningful — that's what makes a great teaching method."

## More than knowledge

Hou Xin, a 21-year-old philosophy student at Xiamen University (XMU) in Fujian province, feels that universities are increasingly attuned to students' needs. "University education now focuses on developing our overall abilities, such as life skills and emotional management, not just academic knowledge," she said.

In her third year, Hou finally secured a spot in XMU's popular tree-climbing course during the first semester of 2024 — a class she had been eager to join since her freshman year but had always missed out on due to its high demand.

Introduced in 2012, the course was the first of its kind among universities on the Chinese mainland.

Every Wednesday morning from 8 to 10 during the semester, Hou and her classmates gathered in the campus' mango tree grove for class. Students worked in pairs, with one climbing while the other held the rope to ensure safety.

Hou cherished the peaceful moments spent in the trees, where she could unwind and watch ants crawling along the branches.

"It's so refreshing to start my day with sunshine and morning mist, rather than a stuffy classroom," Hou said. "This activity helps me connect with myself, nature, and the spirit of teamwork."

She added that the course isn't about climbing as high or as fast as possible but about enjoying the experience.

"This is one of the key differences between the tree-climbing course and traditional physical education classes," explained

Zheng Daxiong, one of the PE teachers leading the course. "It's not just about building physical strength; it's also about fostering a deeper connection between individuals and nature."

Zheng and his students established a tree-climbing association at the university. The group's activities extend beyond tree-climbing to include public service.

For example, after a typhoon struck Xiamen in 2016, the association helped prune ancient trees that had been damaged and were inaccessible to heavy-duty aerial vehicles.

Interestingly, none of these courses feature traditional, quantifiable final assessments. Instead, students are encouraged to reflect on their learning in various ways.

In Fu's course, for instance, students share how they've applied the course content to their lives, with submissions ranging from travel guides to homemade cake recipes.

## Rooting in life

Zhou Yi, a graduate student at Harbin Medical University (HMU) in Heilongjiang province, was given a unique final assignment for her "Death Education" course: to write her own epitaph.

"On campus, we celebrate youth, but we rarely address the concept of death," Zhou said. "However, it is only by understanding death that we can truly appreciate life."

In her epitaph, Zhou wrote: "Every individual born through sexual reproduction is unique. Since most of the genetic combinations that could have occurred never had the chance to exist, we are incredibly fortunate to be among the one in a million. Our very existence is, indeed, a miracle."

Yin Mei, director of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at HMU, leads the course.

According to her, over the past decade, this course has evolved from a general education elective into a comprehensive program that includes lectures, salons, and book clubs. It attracts a diverse group of students from the humanities, medical fields, and clinical medicine.

"Being a doctor is about engaging in a dialogue with life," Yin said. This is why she designed the course to combine philosophical discussions about death with practical case studies to guide future medical professionals in their careers.

Zhou took the course during her sophomore year, and it continues to influence both her personal life and her work as a graduate student.

While interning at a hospital, she encountered a patient who had attempted suicide and was taken to the emergency room. As the patient waited for monitoring, Zhou gently held her wrist.

"Even though she might not have been fully conscious, she could still feel the warmth of my hand. This is the 'warmth of life' I could offer her, shaped by my education," Zhou said.

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## Z WEEKLY

# Reviving dough art with precision and passion

Wang Yuyu, a culinary arts teacher from Ningbo, revives the ancient craft of dough modeling, showcasing exceptional skill and perseverance.

By GUO JIATONG  
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Two peacocks display their dazzling feathers above a majestic dragon, which is gracefully coiled atop a drum. The drum, placed at the base of the sculpture, is intricately adorned with carvings of peonies and clouds.

This exquisite dough modeling artwork, *Huakaifugui* (Blossoms Bring Prosperity), has captivated netizens across China with its ingenious design and exceptional craftsmanship. The piece was created by Wang Yuyu, a 23-year-old culinary arts teacher at Yuyao Technician College in Ningbo, Zhejiang province.

Wang began honing his sculpting skills at the age of 15, while still a student at the same college, specializing in fruit and vegetable carving.

However, he was not content with mastering only one skill. To expand his expertise, he traveled to Hebei province in August 2024 to study dough modeling — an intangible cultural heritage craft that uses sticky rice flour as its main material. By blending the flour with pigments, artisans create vivid figures, sculpted entirely by hand or with simple tools.

According to Wang, dough modeling shares certain techniques with fruit and vegetable carving, a connection that initially inspired him to explore this ancient art form.

However, his journey into dough modeling was far from easy, as mastering the skill required extensive practice and repetition.

"I was under immense pressure during my studies in Hebei," Wang recalled. "We would wake up at 7 am and practice until late at night, with little time to rest throughout the day. The training was grueling."

Despite the stress, Wang's perseverance paid off.

"When I finished my figurines, I felt a profound sense of accomplishment and realized that all my hard work hadn't been in vain," Wang said with satisfaction.

To date, Wang has created four notable pieces, among which he is most proud of *Huakaifugui*, a work that took him nine days to complete.

The crafting process consists of four key steps: kneading the



Three of Wang Yuyu's dough modeling creations, with the one in the middle being *Huakaifugui*. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

dough, ironing the structure, carving the dough, and painting. Each step is essential to achieving the desired final look of the figurine.

Kneading the dough, the first step, requires meticulous attention to ensure the raw material is both pliable and properly colored. This is followed by boiling the framework, which Wang considers the most arduous stage of dough modeling. "Ensuring the correct head-to-body ratio of the peacocks is a significant challenge for me. Once the iron has cooled, altering the

framework becomes almost impossible," Wang explained. "I've had to try three times to get the ratio just right."



Even though people unfamiliar with dough modeling might not notice the differences between the versions, I can't allow any imperfection in my work."

Wang Yuyu, 23, a teacher at Yuyao Technician College

sculpting each feather. But when I see how the feathers become the finest part of my work, it's all worth it," Wang said.



Wang Yuyu

This is why he believes the key to mastering dough modeling lies in passion.

"Crafting can sometimes be tedious. Without a genuine love for dough modeling, I wouldn't push myself to perfect every figurine," Wang admitted. "That passion shows in the details — the pure color of the dough and the intricacy of each feather."

However, passion alone is not enough. For Wang, a true craftsman must also possess sharp observational skills and quick comprehension.

Whenever Wang begins a new piece, he carefully considers every aspect: from selecting which elements to include in the figurine to determining how these elements should be arranged, and deciding which colors would best convey the emotions he wishes to express.

When working on *Huakaifugui*, for example, crafting the peacocks' heads alone required three attempts.

"Even though people unfamiliar with dough modeling might not notice the differences between the versions, I can't allow any imperfection in my work," he said.

For Wang, truly exceptional artwork has a soul, as craftsmen pour their hearts into their work long before the actual modeling begins — from selecting themes to sketching designs. "These steps are the foundation of a figurine," Wang said. "It's not just about the physical creation; it's about embodying the spirit of the creator."

Looking ahead, Wang plans to continue pursuing dough modeling and hopes to pass on the spirit of craftsmanship to his students and a wider audience.

"Although I spend most of my time in the workshop and sacrifice my leisure time for hobbies, I feel a deep sense of fulfillment," he said. "My goal is to offer people a glimpse into the traditional Chinese aesthetic, while also reviving this intangible cultural heritage."

framework becomes almost impossible," Wang explained. "I've had to try three times to get the ratio just right."

The most time-consuming part is crafting the peacock's feathers, which took Wang almost four days to complete — all 86 of them.

Each feather requires about 35 minutes to make, involving the careful rolling of dough into a mold and refining it once it has dried.

"During this process, I felt like a worker on an assembly line, repeatedly performing the precise task of

## Youth shaping the future of elderly care

By MENG WENJIE  
and LIU KUN in Wuhan

In recent years, an increasing number of young people have joined the elderly care industry, including 23-year-old He Fuqu, the director of a nursing home in Wuhan, the capital of Central China's Hubei province.

Born in 2001, He graduated from Wuhan Social Work Polytechnic with a degree in elderly services. She began her career at 19 as an intern caregiver and assistant manager.

In March 2023, she joined her current company and quickly advanced to become the youngest director at one of its nursing home branches.

"Most of the managers at our nursing home are quite young, with the oldest being under 30," He said, explaining that the institution focuses on creating a vibrant and elderly-friendly environment.

And it works. He has observed that the young management team has brought positive changes to the industry. While traditional nursing homes, where she previously interned, primarily focused on providing basic care and essential servi-

ces, her current institution goes further. The young team not only ensures that residents' basic needs are met but also prioritizes their mental and emotional well-being.

"The elderly really enjoy spending time with us," she said. "We actively engage with them to bring joy and energy."

Alongside daily activities like singing and crafting, He organizes special events such as afternoon teas and games for the elderly. For example, during this year's winter solstice, she and her colleagues made dumplings with the residents, a traditional celebration for the occasion.

He's nursing home currently cares for 25 elderly residents, most of whom cannot live independently. This requires extra patience from He and her team.

"These elders may not be good at expressing it or may feel shy, but they also long for more interaction and emotional connection," she said.

He's lively personality helps her easily connect with the residents, earning their trust and affection. For example, during the last Chi-



He Fuqu (left) takes a senior resident (center) at the nursing home outdoors for exercise. HUANG SHIFENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

nese New Year, He had to stay at the nursing home for work and couldn't go home, marking her first time away from her family for the holiday. One elderly woman gave her a red envelope and a bag of candy, despite her polite refusal.

"She insisted, saying that to them, I'm still like a child and I should receive good luck from the elderly," He said.

She has also realized that sincerity is key when communicating with the elderly.

"I don't just show them my best side," she explained. "I try to be real with them so they can sense my honesty."

In addition to building relationships with the residents, He offers practical suggestions to improve the nursing home's management. She revised the nursing care level chart to better match the services provided.

"This adjustment helps meet the residents' needs more effectively and facilitates clearer communication with their families," she explained.

### Changing landscape

He also noticed how the elderly care industry has evolved over time.

She recalled that during her college years, the program mainly focused on two years of theoretical learning, with internships beginning in the third year.

This often created a gap between textbook knowledge and real-world application, causing some classmates to switch careers and resulting in a loss of talent in the field.

Today, the program she studied has been updated to "Smart Elderly

Care Services and Management" to reflect the growing integration of technology in the industry.

The new curriculum combines theoretical instruction with internships, giving students a more comprehensive understanding of industry developments.

He mentioned that Wuhan boasts many government-supported smart senior care service labs.

"At our nursing home, for example, we use a smart sleep monitoring device, just like the smartwatches that young people wear. It's placed under the bed to track the sleep patterns of elderly residents," He explained.

Working in a nursing home, He has faced the realities of aging and death at a much younger age than most people in their 20s. At first, she would tremble when calling for an ambulance during emergencies, but now, she has learned to stay calm.

"Aging and death are natural parts of life. We just need to learn to handle them with more acceptance," she said.

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# COMMENT

## Editorials

### New impetus injected to promote healthy development of Sino-Russian relations

The current high-level cooperation between China and Russia is the result of the joint guidance given by Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin, who have steered bilateral relations in the right direction with their shared commitment to good-neighborliness, comprehensive strategic partnership, and mutually beneficial cooperation.

Having exchanged greetings on New Year's Eve, the two leaders had a video call on Tuesday in which they exchanged Chinese New Year greetings and reiterated their joint resolve to promote practical cooperation to advance the high-quality development and modernization of the two countries.

Xi called on the two countries to continuously use the certainty and resilience of their relations to respond to the rising uncertainties of the external environment, and to jointly promote the two countries' common development and safeguard international fairness and justice.

To that end, he said that the two countries should further strengthen their good neighborly relations, which have displayed fresh vitality over the past year, and consolidate their strategic coordination to safeguard the two countries' legitimate interests and deepen their pragmatic cooperation.

Echoing Xi's remarks, Putin said that Russia is willing to strengthen cooperation with China in multilateral affairs and play an active role in promoting world peace and development.

The exchanges between the two heads of state are both the compass and anchor for the mutually beneficial relations between China and Russia. Over the past year, the two heads of state have met three times — in Beijing, Astana, and Kazan — and maintained smooth communication through various channels. Their candid exchanges of views have helped forge a consensus on building on the two countries' enduring friendship to continuously upgrade bilateral relations based on the fundamental interests of the two countries and the two peoples.

Beijing and Moscow over the years have developed a new paradigm for international relations. The two countries are not military-political allies, but rather represent a new model of major power relations characterized by non-alignment, non-confrontation, and by not targeting any third country.

The cooperation between China and Russia has gone beyond the bilateral scope, and they are consolidating the solidarity of developing countries via multilateral platforms such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and BRICS cooperation mechanism so as to make the international order more just and equitable, and jointly safeguard global strategic stability.

The development of their relationship is not a threat to any country, nor is it subject to any interference from any third party. Both countries are permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, and are fully aware of the historical responsibilities they shoulder to uphold the postwar world order with the United Nations at its core.

This is especially true as this year marks the 80th anniversary of the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45), the Soviet Union's Great Patriotic War and the World Anti-Fascist War, and it is therefore a timely occasion for the world to recognize and uphold the authority of the world body.

After 75 years of profound development since the establishment of diplomatic ties between Beijing and Moscow, China-Russia ties have reached their highest level in history, resulting in deepening cooperation that is bringing real benefits to the two peoples and making new contributions to safeguarding world peace and stability.

As Xi said, the two neighbors should encourage all countries to practice true multilateralism, abide by the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and adhere to the universally recognized basic norms of international relations.

### Climate pact withdrawal breaks trust in US

This year will see countries finalize their national plans to meet their emissions reduction targets by 2035, the focus of this November's COP30 global climate talks in Brazil.

Many of those countries' 10-year climate strategies — which will guide how aggressively they can curb their greenhouse gas emissions — are dependent on the funding the developed countries have promised to provide.

The United States' withdrawal from the Paris Agreement that the new US administration announced on Monday shortly after President Donald Trump began his second term has therefore undoubtedly dealt a heavy blow to the world's efforts to fight climate change at this crucial stage.

Even though the US Climate Alliance, a coalition of governors from 24 states that represent nearly 60 percent of the US economy, has pledged to meet the previous US administration's climate target of cutting the country's emissions by 66 percent by 2035, the US walking away from the pact necessarily calls into question a host of other US commitments, such as providing billions of dollars to support the climate actions of poorer nations.

Trump accompanied his pullout from the global climate pact for the second time — which will take effect in a year, after the official notice period — with a barrage of executive orders, including one declaring a national energy emergency that Trump said would unlock what he called America's "liquid gold" by expanding drilling in the world's top oil and gas producer.

With his re-embracing of fossil fuels and revoking of his predecessor's climate actions, certain vested interest groups in related industries will benefit tremendously from his winding back of the clock. No wonder Manish Bapna, president of the Natural Resources Defense Council, accused the Trump administration of further enriching billionaire oil and gas donors, saying "the US is producing more oil and gas than any country in history", rightly pointing out that "There is no energy emergency. There is a climate emergency".

Trump tried to justify the move by claiming "the United States will not sabotage our own industries" while some major developing countries pollute "with impunity".

But as Ani Dasgupta, president and CEO of the World Resources Institute, said in a statement, "Walking away from the Paris Agreement won't protect Americans from climate impacts, but it will hand China and the European Union a competitive edge in the booming clean energy economy and lead to fewer opportunities for American workers."

The need to realize the global green transition means that the clean energy sector and the green economy have become engines of growth around the world, a central topic in the ongoing Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos.

That explains why about half of Americans "somewhat" or "strongly" oppose US action to withdraw from the climate accord, and even Republicans aren't overwhelmingly in favor, according to a poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. Only about 2 in 10 US adults are "somewhat" or "strongly" in favor of withdrawing from the Paris Agreement, while about one-fourth are neutral.

Although the US is the second-biggest source of carbon emissions after China, carbon dioxide lasts in the atmosphere for centuries, and the US has put more of the heat-trapping gas in the air than any other nation if its accumulative historical emissions are taken into account. The US is responsible for nearly 22 percent of the carbon dioxide put in the atmosphere since 1950, according to a Global Carbon Project report. And US carbon emissions fell just 0.2 percent last year. The US had already been slipping behind its 2030 climate targets despite hundreds of billions of dollars in clean-energy spending by the former administration.

Unlike the US, China has never ceased its efforts to realize green development. China's carbon dioxide emissions per unit of GDP decreased by more than 50 percent in 2021 compared to 2005, with its forest stock up by over 6.49 billion cubic meters, the report said. As of 2023, nonfossil fuels accounted for 17.9 percent of China's total energy consumption, while by October 2024, the total installed capacity of wind and solar power in the country had reached 1.28 billion kilowatts.

And China's commitment to the global low-carbon transition remains unwavering. "Climate change is a common challenge faced by all of humanity, and no country can remain unaffected or solve the problem on its own," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun said.

China is willing to work with all parties to actively address the challenge of climate change.

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Chen Sha



## Opinion Line

### Resolving regional conflicts as a true force in the pursuit of peace

The more China develops, the greater will be its ability to help resolve regional and global conflicts and contribute to regional and world peace and development. After all, China has proved to be an active mediator in various conflicts.

This is no tall claim, there are countless examples, the most recent being the signing of a formal ceasefire agreement in Kunming, capital of Yunnan province, between the Myanmar government and Kokang's Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army, which came into effect on Saturday. With China mediating, the Myanmar government and MNDAA held their seventh round of peace talks in mid-January, and both parties expressed gratitude for China's efforts to facilitate the successful outcome of the talks.

Being a friendly neighbor, China firmly opposes conflicts in Myanmar, as it knows that this does not serve

the common interest of Myanmar and other countries in the region and is also detrimental to the security and stable development of the China-Myanmar border area. That is why China has been brokering the de-escalation of the tense situation in northern Myanmar and hoping that all parties will honor the ceasefire and further resolve relevant issues through negotiation.

The conflicts between the Myanmar government and Kokang and other local armed factions are extremely complicated. Therefore the reaching of a formal ceasefire between the parties concerned under China's mediation is commendable. It not only embodies their trust in China, but also reflects their increasing recognition of China's role as a major power.

China's influence in helping resolve regional disputes extends beyond the region. On July 23 last

year, 14 Palestinian factions concluded conciliatory talks in Beijing and jointly signed the Beijing Declaration, aimed at strengthening Palestinian unity.

The declaration was a milestone for those seeking Palestinian statehood. Thanks to China's mediation, even Iran and Saudi Arabia, two major powers in the Middle East that have not seen eye to eye for decades, made peace and restored diplomatic relations in the spring of 2023. China has also been making efforts to bring an early end to the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, and its role has been increasingly recognized by relevant stakeholders.

China has proved that it is a true force in the pursuit of peace, unlike a certain Western country which calls for peace but does everything in private to pursue bloc confrontation.

— WU YIXUE, CHINA DAILY

### TikTok farce has damaging repercussions

The resumption of TikTok's basic functions in the United States, after it was temporarily suspended on Saturday, is definitely good news for its 170 million users in the country, including the 7 million small businesses that rely on the social media platform. Recent developments highlight the irrationality of the ban imposed by the law, as well as the popularity of the app.

However, the new US leader's statement on his Truth Social platform that he would like the US to have 50

percent ownership of TikTok in a joint venture may not be good for the market. After all, TikTok has been operating in the US for many years and has played a positive role in creating jobs and driving consumption in the US. That would hardly have been possible without the cooperation of its Chinese parent company ByteDance and its operating team in the US.

Forcing a flourishing social media platform such as TikTok to sell half of its holdings could prove to be its undoing, as its team might then lose

the trust of users in the US market. Worse, companies might lose trust in the US market. Why would anyone risk doing business in a country where they could be forced to sell half their holdings? The US leadership should provide an open, fair, just, and nondiscriminatory business environment for market entities from various countries operating there.

The new US administration should handle the TikTok issue with prudence, and avoid a worst-case scenario.

— ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

## What They Say

### EU automakers at odds with tariffs on Chinese EVs

The European Union should encourage Chinese automakers to open more plants in the bloc as part of a deal to drop punitive tariffs on imported Chinese electric vehicles, the boss of Mercedes-Benz has said in a recent interview with the Financial Times.

Ola Källenius, who is also president of the European Automobile Manufacturers' Association, said China had asked European automakers to invest domestically to access its market decades ago, and the EU could adopt that approach as part of a solution to the trade dispute.

"Nobody disagrees about the fact that a level playing field is a legitimate discussion. The question is, what tool do you use?" Källenius told the FT.

Chinese EV manufacturers have been leading the effort to drive down the price of EVs through domestic and global market competition, as well as consistent innovation. As Källenius' remarks indicate, although German automakers are also struggling to compete against more affordable and advanced Chinese-

made EVs, they are more familiar with the industry and in a better position to know cooperation and competition represent the best way to promote the development of the EU's own electric vehicle companies, as only through cooperation and competition with the leading Chinese EV makers can the EU companies have the opportunity to learn from their advanced technology and so jump across the river instead of crossing it by feeling the stones.

Also, well aware of the protectionist nature of the EU's steep duties on Chinese-made EVs, which are actually a result of the former US administration pressing the EU to form a united front with it against China, the German automakers also know that it is the EU companies and consumers that are paying for the punitive tariffs the bloc levies on Chinese-made EVs.

With a new US administration taking office on Monday, its "America first" practices should prompt the EU to review its gains and losses by surrendering its strategic autonomy to the US over the past four years.

Now is the time for Brussels to heed rational voices such as that of Källenius and other visionary EU entrepreneurs and put an end to its unfair tariffs on Chinese-made EVs that leave no party unscathed.

The EU has set an ambitious target to phase out combustion engines by 2035 as part of its Green Deal, and affordable, high-quality EVs are crucial to achieving this goal. Making EVs less affordable for European consumers only hinders Europe's ability to meet its climate commitments.

The economic and trade relations between China and the EU are of a win-win nature. Both ardent supporters of multilateralism, fair trade and economic globalization, the two sides are partners and friends, rather than challenges to each other or enemies.

That's why Källenius said tariffs would hurt the industry and Brussels should compromise with Beijing on a deal to remove them, adding that China had become an integral part of the global automotive supply chain, including raw materials, advanced chips and components.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

## COMMENT

Zhang Guoqing

## US again puts climate fight at a crossroads

US President Donald Trump announced the US' withdrawal from the landmark Paris climate agreement just hours after being sworn in for a second term. This decision on Monday, following a similar one in 2017, poses significant challenges to global efforts to combat climate change.

The Paris Agreement aims to limit long-term global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels or, alternatively, to keep temperatures well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. Trump's stance, criticizing clean energy as expensive and wasteful, signifies a stark contrast to that of his predecessor Joe Biden.

Following Biden's victory in the 2020 election, the US had rejoined the Paris Agreement in 2021, overturning Trump's 2017 withdrawal and restoring the US' responsible image on climate issues. The US Climate Alliance launched in June 2017, now comprising 24 governors, had earlier pledged to continue advancing action to counter climate change.

The alliance represents approximately 60 percent of the US economy

**The impacts of climate change disproportionately affect the younger generation and low-income families, influencing career choices and imposing burdens on households.**

and 55 percent of the US population. The governors in the alliance have pledged to collectively reduce net greenhouse gas emissions, and collectively achieve overall net-zero greenhouse gas emissions as soon as practicable, and no later than 2050.

Trump's potential dismantling of federal climate actions through executive orders, in order to promote energy independence and economic growth, could pose challenges to federal leadership on climate policy.

Climate policy is now predominantly in the hands of state and local governments, which have taken ambitious steps during both Trump's first term

and Biden's term. Despite this, Trump's potential new policies might disrupt these efforts, exacerbating federal-local tensions on climate policy.

Europe is already seeing a declining public focus on climate change, as the EU grapples with rising right-wing populism, potential trade conflicts with the US and reduced support for Ukraine. The EU's nuanced stance on fossil fuels and renewable energy reflects shifting priorities toward economic and livelihood concerns because of the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

In his second term, Trump's priorities include revitalizing the economy and his "Make America Great Again" slogan. To fulfill campaign promises and support his oil industry backers, Trump is likely to significantly alter US climate and environmental policies, including expanding oil and gas drilling. His nomination of fossil fuel executive Chris Wright as energy secretary underscores this intent.

Trump aims to boost oil production through aggressive drilling policies, claiming the US has the largest oil reserves. He plans to cut energy costs by 50 percent, believing this will benefit the American people. His reversal of

Biden's climate policies, including potential changes to the policies surrounding electric vehicles to revive the domestic auto industry, could have far-reaching implications.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warns that immediate reduction in fossil fuel use is crucial to avoid surpassing dangerous temperature thresholds within the next decade, leading to catastrophic global warming. The impacts of climate change disproportionately affect the younger generation and low-income families, influencing career choices and imposing burdens on households.

The future of US climate policy remains uncertain, with potential shifts under a second Trump administration posing risks to global climate efforts. As the world observes the US' role in addressing this pressing challenge, it remains a critical issue for policymakers and societies globally.

*The author is an associate researcher at the Institute of American Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. The views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.*

Tseng Taiyuan

What's in a name for *Chunjie*, now put on UNESCO list?

On Dec 4, 2024, *Chunjie* was included in UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. While this recognition marks a significant milestone for Chinese culture, it also reignites an ongoing debate: What is the most appropriate English translation of *Chunjie*?

For decades, *Chunjie* has been widely translated as "Spring Festival" in English, a term now adopted by UNESCO in its lowercase form. However, according to English orthography, the name of a festival is a proper noun and should be capitalized — hence, "Spring Festival" is the grammatically correct form.

Beyond this, three main English translations are currently in use: Spring Festival, Chinese New Year and Lunar New Year. All the three terms are documented in major Chinese-English dictionaries, with "Spring Festival" being the most favored, followed by "Chinese New Year".

In fact, calling *Chunjie* "Lunar New Year" could be misunderstood as diluting the Chinese nature and characteristic of Spring Festival, or even seen as an attempt to undermine the cultural heritage. This translation could be controversial, and seen as disrespectful to traditional Chinese culture.

The Chinese lunar calendar is, in reality, a lunisolar calendar. Therefore, calling it "Lunar New Year" is not accurate, and may lead to people misunderstanding its scientific nature.

Interestingly, the preference of people in English-speaking countries is different from that of the Chinese people. In the United Kingdom and the United States, for example, Chinese New Year is the most commonly used term, followed by Lunar New Year. Notably, the Collins English Dictionary includes the pinyin-transliterated *Chunjie*, making it a unique and somewhat isolated case in English lexicography.

**While Chinese New Year remains the most common term, its growth rate has plateaued.**

Dictionaries, with their scholarly rigor and authoritative status, play a crucial role in shaping language norms. However, they often lag behind the rapid evolution of languages. To gain a more comprehensive understanding, it is necessary to turn to large language corpora, such as the NOW (News on the Web) Corpus, which tracks English language usage in real-time across online newspapers and magazines. As of Jan 1, 2025, the NOW Corpus contained more than 20.3 billion words, offering invaluable insights into contemporary language trends.

The NOW Corpus shows that Chinese New Year is the most frequently used term in the English-speaking world, followed by Lunar New Year, with Spring Festival being a distant third. The pinyin-transliterated "*Chunjie*", despite being recorded, remains statistically negligible. The data align with the preferences seen in English dictionaries, highlighting the clear divide between Chinese and Anglo-American perspectives on the translation of *Chunjie*.

One notable trend is the growing prominence of Lunar New Year in English usage. While Chinese New Year remains the most common term, its growth rate has plateaued. In contrast, Lunar New Year has seen a significant uptick in usage, particularly over the past decade. This shift can be attributed to efforts by the Republic of Korea and Vietnam to promote de-Sinicized terminology in international discourse.

The two East Asian countries, deeply influenced by Chinese culture, have sought to assert their separate cultural identities by advocating for the use of Lunar New Year instead of Chinese New Year. In some cases, using Chinese New Year in the US has even drawn criticism, further accelerating the adoption of Lunar New Year.

English, as the world's lingua franca, is no longer the exclusive domain of a few countries. The concept of "World Englishes" acknowledges the diversity and adaptability of the language. While we respect the rules and conventions of the English language, it is equally important to assert our own cultural identity in international communication. Translating culture-specific terms like *Chunjie* requires a balance between authenticity and comprehension.

Historical precedents offer valuable insights. Traditional Japanese festivals, such as Tanabata (Lovers' Day) and Obon (Festival of the Dead), are commonly transliterated in English and recognized by authoritative dictionaries. Similarly, Korean New Year (Seollal) and Vietnamese New Year (Tet) are widely used by English speakers. Given these examples, the transliteration of *Chunjie* is not only natural but also consistent with global practices.

With *Chunjie* now part of UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list, the time is right to reconsider its English translation. From the perspective of primary term, it is necessary to use the term *Chunjie* to emphasize its cultural specificity and authenticity. From the perspective of supplementary term, we can include the literal translation of Spring Festival for clarity and familiarity. From the perspective of contextual gloss, when necessary, we can use Chinese New Year to aid understanding, especially in international communication.

This approach allows us to claim our cultural discourse rights without sacrificing clarity. It is a balanced and impartial solution that respects both Chinese cultural identity and the practicalities of global communication. As the Year of the Snake approaches, let us embrace this opportunity to assert our cultural voice on the global stage. By adopting *Chunjie* as the primary term, supplemented by Spring Festival and Chinese New Year, we can ensure that our traditions are represented authentically and respectfully. After all, language is not just a tool for communication — it is a vessel carrying culture, history and identity.

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Amitendu Palit

## RCEP an FTA with 'low ambition' but high potential

The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership agreement that entered its third year on Jan 1 is a significant rules-based trade and economic framework for the Asia-Pacific region.

Although the negotiations for the RCEP, which comprises the 10 ASEAN member states and five of ASEAN's trade partners (China, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Australia and New Zealand), were concluded in November 2019, the agreement came into effect on Jan 1, 2022, because different members ratified the rules of the agreement at different times.

In its present form, the RCEP represents roughly one-third of the global population and world GDP, making it the largest free trade agreement in the world in terms of the number of people and markets that it covers.

In the two years since coming into effect, the RCEP has played an important role in advancing industrial production in the Asia-Pacific. It has done so by eliminating tariffs on more than 90 percent of the goods that are traded between the member states, and significantly reducing the non-tariff barriers on the movement of goods between countries. This has helped make transit of goods across borders cheaper.

The overall result has been a noticeable decline in the cost of trade. Lowering the cost of trade is a significant achievement of the RCEP at a time when the overall trade cost is increasing due to a variety of reasons. These include the rising US dollar in past several years, the high crude oil prices due to the Russia-Ukraine conflict, and the higher cost of booking containers due to irregular supply after the Israel-Palestine conflict broke out.

Besides, the RCEP is working as an ASEAN++ framework, as it is a combination of ASEAN+1 FTA countries. India is the only country that has an FTA with ASEAN but opted to stay out of the RCEP. As a mega ASEAN+1 FTA, the RCEP has helped ASEAN to scale up its trade and investment liberalization agenda, setting an important example for the rest of the world to follow.

However, the RCEP has been criticized for being a "low-ambition" agreement, particularly when compared with the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.

The CPTPP and the RCEP, nonetheless, have several common members, including Japan, Australia, Brunei, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore and Vietnam. These countries have been working according to the rules of both FTAs. It is noticeable, though, that the CPTPP does not include any less-developed economy. The RCEP, on the other hand, has three less-developed economies from ASEAN — Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar.

The inclusion of these low-income member states is one of the major reasons why the RCEP is being criticized for being less ambitious than the



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY



**The possibility of more conflicts in the world, including in Asia, cannot be ruled out, and the potential conflicts could be disruptive for trade.**

CPTPP. It is not possible for less-developed countries to commit to as much market liberalization as their advanced counterparts. Indeed, even with respect to tariff liberalization, the RCEP allows greater flexibility to less-developed member states. This makes the RCEP a truly inclusive FTA, a rare example.

However, the RCEP needs to address two major challenges.

First, the RCEP will have to develop the capacity to respond to some of the major new-generation issues, including the challenge of ensuring environmental sustainability for its member states. The RCEP must also ensure that its rules are consistent with the efforts of the member states to reduce carbon emissions and environmental pollution.

That would require the rules to facilitate easy transfer of green and clean-technology products and services among member states, meaning the RCEP rules ought to focus on harmonizing the quality standards of clean products, liberalizing commitments on cross-border transfer of environmental services, and making intellectual property rights protection rules flexible for quick transfer and

greater intra-bloc trade of green and clean-tech products.

The second challenge the RCEP needs to meet is of adapting to the complicated geopolitics that is impacting global and regional trade. The RCEP must ensure that political disagreements between member states do not impact trade and economic relations. This is essential for it to remain a cohesive and productive rules-based framework.

It is also important for the RCEP, as an economic bloc, to be prepared to address the uncertain outcomes of major political developments, such as the return of Donald Trump to the White House. The possibility of more conflicts in the world, including in Asia, cannot be ruled out, and the potential conflicts could be disruptive for trade. Hence, the RCEP must be strong and flexible enough to handle these disruptions.

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## GLOBAL VIEWS

AUGUSTO SOTO

## Friendly fire

The EU should reconsider virtues of Comprehensive Agreement on Investment in light of threatening posture of new US administration

It seemed that we already foresaw the policies of the new Donald Trump administration from a review of his first presidency, his most recent statements, or reading the book *The Art of the Deal*.

Nevertheless, 2025 has begun with his threat to appropriate Greenland, reapropriate the Panama Canal, without ruling out the use of force to achieve it, and with the pretension of annexing Canada as the 51st state of the United States. At the same time, he has promised to replace the name Gulf of Mexico with "Gulf of America".

If these aspirations were to succeed, the US would become the largest country, with almost 22 million square kilometers. But this is unacceptable to the rest of the world.

In Europe, there is perplexity, caution and alertness, with no document outlining an updated strategy in the face of Trump's expansionist ambitions.

The President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen spent a week in hospital with serious pneumonia from which she is convalescing at home, and from there she issued a tweet on the X platform in January, in which she declared the traditional commitment to strengthen the transatlantic link, while stressing that the European Union "will always protect our citizens and the integrity of our democracies and freedoms". A similar statement was communicated by António Costa, president of the European Council.

For her part, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the

European Commission Kaja Kallas said that "the sovereignty of states must be respected". Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen has declared that sovereignty is not negotiable and the King of Denmark Frederik X has modified the country's coat of arms to emphasize the political ties with Greenland and the Faroe Islands.

A preliminary conclusion from Spain is that seasoned journalists — as in other European countries — are envisaging scenarios. But seasoned think tanks throughout the continent are more cautious, following their traditions of gauging deep forces, not statements that are sometimes contradicted, half executed or come to nothing.

The Trumpist approach, as for the rest of the EU, is unacceptable to Spain. And more immediately, in relation to Denmark — a partner in the EU and NATO — the matter is of deep concern as it is in France and Germany, which have expressed strong opinions.

And of course, the current pressure on Denmark could simply be a ploy to get NATO members to pay the 5 percent of their GDP on defence that Trump insisted on last month.

As for the well-known and publicized threats in the commercial sphere, some analysts are rereading some classics that can always be consulted. For example, *Economics* by Paul A. Samuelson and William D. Nordhaus, both Nobel laureates, is a classic economics textbook from which the elite of half the world have learned. In the chapter on "The Economics of Protectionism", the authors argue that those who pretend to help reform other countries by imposing what they understand as retaliatory tariffs should think "with great caution" because "just as building missiles leads to an arms race as

often as to arms control, protectionist bluffs may end up hurting the bluffer as well as the opponent".

Trump may not consider the EU as a US ally anymore, and by wanting to pivot toward China to contain it, he shows that as in his first presidency, he could be a classic isolationist in this second term as well. However, faced with a complex rivalry, China has the attributes to get ahead, and the US and the rest of the world, including the EU, should understand this. If the planet does not suffer a natural or human-induced cataclysm this decade, China will be able to weather a potential Trump blockade by drawing on its traditions, human resources and size.

As a whole, looking back over the past few decades, we see that China prefers multidimensional collaboration and cooperation rather than confrontation. This juncture therefore is an opportunity for the EU and China to consider, again, the possibility to restart talks to rescue the Comprehensive Agreement on Investment that was concluded in principle in 2020. The agreement was hailed as providing a level playing field.

It is key to remember this, as in 2025 China and the EU celebrate the 50th anniversary of their win-win relations. Maybe as the EU competitiveness is diminishing, there is margin for the new leadership of the European Parliament to have a more sympathetic and realistic view on the issue.

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MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

EDUARDO TZILI-APANGO

## Mexican standoff

China, Mexico and the US are all set to be losers if the new Trump administration implements its proposed policies

Donald Trump's second term is set to dramatically change US foreign policy priorities, as his focus is on economic protectionism and political isolation. In fact, Trump will continue the "Make America Great Again" trend initiated by himself in 2017, but followed by Joe Biden afterwards.

This will negatively impact global adversaries and partners alike, and in the case of the China-United States-

Mexico triangle, it seems to be reaching a Mexican standoff in the Trump's second term.

Basically, a Mexican standoff is a situation in which no party can achieve victory.

The standoff among China, Mexico and the US was initiated by Trump during his first term. At the time, the US triggered trade wars against both China and Mexico. Additionally, Trump forced Canada and Mexico to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement, which resulted in the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement. The USMCA, with few but important changes, is one of the most significant, and the notorious Article 32.10, which prevents any party of the USMCA signing trade agreements with non-market economies, the so-called anti-China clause. As needless to say, China has been one of the main trade partners of both Canada and Mexico in the last decade.

The new Trump administration may guide the US to its most trade protectionist period in nearly a century, according to some reports. During his 2024 campaign, Trump proposed tariffs of about 20 percent on global imports, 25 percent on



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Canadian and Mexican imports, and 60 percent tariffs on all Chinese imports. Beyond the commercial logic, Trump has announced tariffs to pressure China and Mexico to address migration and drug trafficking.

Trump's rhetoric has already pro-

voled reactions from both China and Mexico. In November, the Mexican government announced reciprocal one-by-one tariffs facing Trump's announcements, with President Claudia Sheinbaum declaring that "one tariff will follow another in response and so on, until

we put our common businesses at risk". Similarly, in early 2025, the Chinese government announced measures on 28 US entities and the addition of some US companies to the export control list in order to safeguard its national security and interests.

Nevertheless, also in November, Mexican President Sheinbaum communicated a plan to substitute Chinese imports. Then, Mexico announced the imposition of 35 percent tariffs to global textiles imports, of which China is the origin of one-third. In January 2025, Mexico imposed a 19 percent tariff on e-commerce products coming from countries with no trade agreement with Mexico, affecting in particular Chinese brands such as Temu and Shein. In contraposition to the free trade principle that Mexico has traditionally followed — the Latin American country has 14 free trade agreements with 50 countries — all of the mentioned actions have been reactions to Canada and US pressure to reduce the Chinese presence in North America.

To be precise, the Mexican standoff is manifested when Mexico is obligated to act against China to the potential detriment of its own economy. First of all, the increase of tariffs on textiles and e-commerce products affects consumers and isolates Mexico from the global production chains that have benefited Mexican exports. It is well known that a large portion of Mexico's trade deficit with China is transformed into Mexico's surplus with the US. Second, to prioritize North America is to foment dependency on a single market, which may hinder Mexico's geopolitical autonomy. Third, even though China and Mexico have managed to adapt their trade and investment relations up till now, the new Trump administration may force China and Mexico to move away from each other, damaging a historic and important bilateral relationship.

By way of example is the automotive industry dynamics within the China-US-Mexico triangle. One of

the key differences between the NAFTA and the USMCA is country-of-origin rules in order to enjoy tariff-free status. The requirement for North America-made components increased from 62.5 percent to 75 percent. In 2023, the Mexican government announced the construction of Tesla's Gigafactory, but in mid-2024 Tesla announced that this facility will be put on hold due to macroeconomic concerns. In contrast, BYD has gone from being an unknown brand in Mexico to be part of popular brands in new car sales — 50,000 units sold in 2024 — a situation that reflects consumption preferences. This could lead to many win-win projects, such as learning from China's experience of innovation, more investments and joint ventures.

As it can be seen, in the China-US-Mexico triangle, the US is trying to contain China by provoking a lose-lose game, and forcing Mexico to sacrifice its own interests in this confrontation, which will certainly bring greater losses to Mexico's interests. Mexico should keep a clear mind about this and make the right decision based on its own development needs, instead of following the US' order to damage Mexico-China economic ties. The US tariff measures will not benefit the US, Mexico and China, but only disrupt global trade stability as well as the interests of these three countries.

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# BUSINESS



Employees work at a steel production plant in Maanshan, Anhui province, in September. LUO JISHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Nation to remain world's top steelmaker this year

By LIU YUKUN  
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China is set to remain the world's top producer and consumer of steel in 2025, driven by strong demand from industries like new energy vehicles, household appliances and shipbuilding despite an expected slight dip in overall demand, said the China Iron and Steel Association.

CISA said there will be rising demand for critical steel materials such as high-quality special steel — special steel varieties with higher performance, longer lifespans, environmentally friendly characteristics, high-tech content and higher added-value special alloys for high-end equipment.

The association said that while steel demand is expected to continue decreasing this year, the rate of decline is likely to narrow.

"The apparent consumption of crude steel in China has declined

from its peak of 1.048 billion metric tons in 2020 to 892 million tons in 2024, reflecting a decrease of 156 million tons over a span of four years. Forecasts suggest a continued downturn in downstream steel demand this year, albeit at a potentially slower pace. With a focus on policies aimed at stabilizing the real estate market, steel demand decline from the construction sector is projected to ease," said Yao Lin, head of the association.

Yao said policies such as the consumer goods trade-in program will spur consumption and production in the automotive and household appliance industries, thereby driving demand for a certain type of high-grade silicon steel. Steel used in household appliances will prioritize lightweight and corrosion-resistant requirements. Steel used in shipbuilding is also expected to see significant growth.

"Additionally, demand for high-strength steel in sectors such as

engineering machinery and mining equipment is set to rise. There is a certain growth potential in the demand for steel in high-end pressure vessels, which are used in new energy equipment," he said.

Yao said a primary challenge faced by the steel sector is ample total supply capacity coupled with weakened demand, with a new dynamic balance mechanism between supply and demand yet to be established. He said such a situation has posed significant challenges for steel companies' stable operations and profitability.

Moreover, steel exports also face obstacles due to geopolitical tensions and trade frictions. CISA data showed that in 2024, China was involved in 33 cases of trade remedy investigations, surpassing the total number from 2020 to 2023.

In response to these challenges, Yao stressed the need to continue breaking through in various aspects such as constructing a new balance

between market supply and demand, adjusting industrial structures, developing resource security systems, and advancing the development of key core technologies. Steel enterprises must also fight against price-centered hypercompetition and continue to promote green and low-carbon transformation.

Song Zhiping, head of the China Association for Public Companies, emphasized the importance of preventing industry-wide competitive pressures and further advancing structural reforms on the supply side. This includes strictly limiting homogeneous additions while enhancing the absorption capacity of surplus production capacity on the demand side.

"Enterprises should focus on enhancing product differentiation, branding and specialization, particularly by intensifying research and development efforts and producing high-value-added products," he said.

## Jilin's Yanji brewing brisk coffee biz in Northeast

By LIU MINGTAI in Changchun and PENG CHAO

Chang Jiayan, a tourist from Zhejiang province who claims to be a "level-10 coffee enthusiast", gives a big thumbs up to the coffee offerings in Yanji, a small border city in Northeast China, after visiting its coffee shops on a "must-try list".

"The city's coffee not only boasts excellent quality, but also integrates local characteristics," she said.

Yanji, capital of Yanbian Korean autonomous prefecture in Jilin province, has seen a boom in the coffee business in recent years, with its density of coffee shops significantly surpassing that of first-tier cities, earning it the title of the "city strung together by cafes".

Official figures show that the city, with some 670,000 residents, has over 1,000 cafes, with the number of coffee shops per 10,000 people nearly four times that of Shanghai, China's economic hub.

An average of over 27 metric tons

of roasted coffee beans are consumed monthly in Yanji, with a daily sales volume of about 45,000 cups. The annual per capita coffee consumption in the city is 24 cups, according to a survey report by the city's commerce bureau.

Cui Fenghua, president of Yanbian's coffee culture exchange and development association, said coffee entered local residents' daily lives in the 1990s, thanks to its unique geographical location at the border area.

Cui recalled that her first experience with coffee was in the 1990s when a relative brought back instant coffee from Russia.

Later, many Yanbian residents who had worked in South Korea, returned to their hometown and opened coffee shops, bringing back the design, service details, and the concept of private rooms from foreign cafes.

"In recent years, young people who are eager to innovate have incorporated more creativity and distinctive personalities into their coffee shops,

resulting in more diverse and vibrant business formats," Cui said.

Li Meiyang, who quit her job in Shanghai in 2020, returned to her hometown of Yanji and opened a coffee shop specializing in Korean ethnic fruit tea and coffee.

A type of coffee she developed, infused with the flavor of Yanbian's specialty apple-shaped pears, quickly became a sought-after "fashion item" among tourists.

"We hope to tell the story of Yanji through coffee," Li said.

By leveraging the rich ethnic cultural resources, local authorities and coffee industry practitioners have integrated coffee with its culture and tourism industry, making coffee shops an important part of the tourism experience.

Tourists often flock to capture moments in front of an internet-famous wall outside Yanbian University in the city, holding a coffee cup with a sleeve featuring "Yanji" characters.

The city's coffee industry is experiencing a surge in consumption this

winter, thanks to its abundant ice and snow tourism resources. In December, group-buying orders for coffee in Yanji increased 184 percent year-on-year, and the number of coffee shops in the city on the Meituan app rose 202 percent, said Meituan Travel.

"The city's unique cultural genes have led us to discover a distinctive development path," said Huang Chunshan, one of the founders of Yanji's coffee association, who runs 27 chain coffee shops.

However, the city's rapidly developing coffee industry also faces challenges, such as cutthroat competition, Huang said.

To address these challenges, Yanji established the coffee association in December, formulated an industry self-discipline convention, and encouraged its members to pursue differentiated and personalized development paths, she added.

Xinhua contributed to this story.  
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## Govt investment funds to better spur innovation

Targeted steps attracting greater influx of social capital seen as key to economy

By WANG KEJU  
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**33.5**  
trillion yuan

total worth of investment funds operated by governments at all levels nationwide

China has taken a series of policy measures to calibrate its government investment fund system through its entire lifecycle, with a particular emphasis on enabling unimpeded exit channels and allowing for reasonable risks.

This, analysts said, is expected to foster innovation while accepting the possibility of failure.

By collaborating with the private sector, government investment funds are able to maximize the impact and efficiency of fiscal resources, ultimately attracting a greater influx of social capital into priority sectors and driving sustainable and innovation-driven growth, they added.

The country will leverage the unique characteristics of government investment funds as patient capital and their role in cross-cycle and countercyclical adjustments, said the State Council, the country's Cabinet, in a guideline earlier this month.

These funds will be steered toward major strategies, key areas and weak links where market forces alone cannot fully address the existing gaps, thus catalyzing greater social capital participation, according to the guideline.

Governments at all levels have been running 1,627 such funds as of end-2024, collectively managing assets worth some 33.5 trillion yuan (\$4.6 trillion), according to data from CVSource, an information service provider.

The inherent risks and uncertainties of future returns associated with innovation activities often deter private investors, who may be more inclined to focus on short-term, low-risk investments, said Wen Bin, chief economist at China Minsheng Bank.

In this context, government investment funds can play a crucial countercyclical role in sustaining innovative enterprises through the critical early stages of development, Wen said.

The holding periods of government investment funds, according to CIB Research, have been gradually extended, from the previous seven-eight years to over 10 years. This change is intended to enable these funds to act as more patient capital, providing long-term support for the development of key industries.

Government investment funds can also serve as catalysts, attracting and mobilizing additional private capital, and contributing to the creation of a more supportive environment for the growth and commercialization of new technologies, Wen added.

However, the availability of diverse exit options in China is still relatively limited, analysts said, stressing that robust exit channels are crucial for attracting long-term and patient capital to support the government's strategic investment initiatives.

To this end, China is improving the withdrawal policies for different types of funds. Notably, government investment funds are required to determine their exit timelines in a scientific manner, and clearly specify the withdrawal conditions in partnership agreements, according to the guideline.

The establishment of clear and transparent exit policies for government investment funds will enhance the attractiveness of these funds to long-term and patient capital providers, said Hu Bo, an associate professor in the School of Finance at Renmin University of China.

Meanwhile, it is a strategic move to facilitate the efficient recycling of capital. This, in turn, will allow the funds to reinvest their resources in a timely manner, ensuring sustained support for innovation and industrial transformation, Hu added.

The market has also been closely watching the establishment of tolerance and liability exemption mechanisms for investment funds, the current lack of which has hindered the ability of fund managers to fully unleash their investment potential.

Rather than relying solely on the profitability or losses of individual projects or single-year results, the authorities are working to develop a comprehensive, end-to-end evaluation system that takes into account the broader investment dynamics and the overall realization of policy objectives, as noted in the guideline.

By embracing a certain degree of risk tolerance, the government is signaling its understanding that not every investment will yield immediate or predictable returns. This shift in mindset can empower fund managers to pursue more ambitious, high-potential opportunities without the fear of overly stringent performance assessments, Hu said.

Policymakers have taken note of the worrying trends emerging in the establishment of government investment funds, which have expanded from provincial jurisdictions down to the county level, and in some cases have even led to a formal and disorderly development at the local level.

The guideline stipulates that county-level governments should exercise strict control over the creation of new investment funds. If counties with relatively robust financial resources and favorable conditions need to establish investment funds, they must seek prior approval from higher-level government authorities.

## West Air takes delivery of first A319neo with DPOS

By TAN YINGZI and DENG RUI in Chongqing

An Airbus A319neo aircraft equipped with a decentralized pulse oxygen system (DPOS) arrived at Chongqing Jiangbei International Airport from Hamburg, Germany on Thursday, to support the ongoing Spring Festival travel rush.

According to its operator West Air, the aircraft is the first Airbus aircraft globally equipped with a DPOS, which enhances the aircraft's safety margins and loading capacity.

The aircraft's arrival also marked the expansion of its Airbus fleet to 45, and will soon enter service on popular tourist routes in Yunnan province, the carrier said.

"This aircraft excels in safety, efficiency, environmental consciousness

and exceptional navigation capabilities in challenging flight environments, particularly on high-altitude routes," said Shuai Sheng, president of West Air.

Apart from the delivered aircraft, the Chongqing-based low-cost carrier plans to introduce six more this year.

Operating an extensive network of routes, especially to high-altitude destinations, the airline said it had recently scheduled over 1,000 extra flights on domestic routes. In terms of international routes, it has launched direct flights from Chongqing to Phuket, Thailand and Hanoi, Vietnam; from Zhengzhou and Hefei to Bangkok, Thailand; as well as routes from Lhasa via Chongqing to Singapore. The weekly flight frequency on international routes will exceed 40 flights.

"DPOS guarantees pulse and efficient delivery, while traditional central gas supply systems (CGS) function in constant flow," said Yang Long, an employee with West Air.

Yang said that unlike CGS, which relies on central cylinders below deck and fixed hoses, DPOS utilizes movable containers that can be adjusted to accommodate various configurations, resulting in weight reduction, an increase in cargo capacity and simplified operations.

DPOS demands less maintenance as well. For example, the lifespan of aircraft cylinders in DPOS is 26 years, whereas in CGS it is limited to 15 years.

In addition, with a full economy class cabin layout housing a total of 144 seats, the adjustments in seat spacing, compared to older models,

have enhanced passenger comfort during flights.

Chongqing has been enhancing its position as a key aviation hub. In April, the city's government and Liaoning province-based Fangda Group signed an agreement to launch the Fangda Chongqing Aviation City project.

According to public information released by the government, the initiative will incorporate the largest aviation flight training center in the Asia-Pacific region.

The project is expected to see an overall investment exceeding 100 billion yuan (\$13.73 billion) over the next five years, creating job opportunities for 25,000 people.

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West Air's first Airbus A319neo aircraft with DPOS arrives at Chongqing Jiangbei International Airport on Thursday. The aircraft will shoulder flights bound for destinations in Yunnan province. LUO BIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

# BUSINESSFOCUS

## CHINA UP-CLOSE

# Rich culture inspires Spring Festival goods

Brands look to deepen emotional connections with consumers through designs symbolizing prosperity, adaptability

By WANG ZHUOQIONG

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As Spring Festival, the most significant annual celebration in the country, approaches, global and local brands have stepped up efforts to deepen emotional connections with Chinese consumers, with innovations and designs symbolizing prosperity and adaptability to not only boost sales, but also strengthen their cultural resonance.

Sportswear brand Nike has launched its "Agile Snake Welcomes the New Year" collection, inspired by the snake's symbolic attributes in Chinese traditional culture — wisdom, agility and resilience.

The series encourages wearers to embrace flexibility and adaptability when facing challenges, aiming to infuse the Lunar New Year with vitality and growth, according to Nike.

Drawing inspiration from the snake's fluid movements, the collection features distinctive elements such as "agile snake patterns", copper coins symbolizing prosperity and spring-themed motifs, said the company.

Designed to bring good fortune "with every step", the range includes men's, women's and children's categories across lifestyle, basketball, running and more, catering to both athletic and everyday needs.

Nike has also introduced fresh looks for its athlete ambassadors, highlighting the collection's versatility and vibrant energy. Tennis star Zheng Qinwen is promoting the women's Nike Dunk Low shoes, which boast a classic retro paneled upper, specially crafted Lunar New Year-themed laces and playful Chinese knot embellishments.

In the natural world, snakes shed their skin to adapt to their growing bodies — a process that symbolizes change, renewal and self-transcendence in traditional Chinese culture. Drawing on this rich symbolism, Nike Inc's Jordan brand has launched a New Year Transformation product series to celebrate the arrival of the Year of the Snake in 2025.

Jordan's new collection has merged cultural elements with innovative designs, positioning itself as a trendsetter in the realm of street fashion, said the company.

The brand said it offers a blessing to the younger generation, encouraging them to embrace change, pursue personal growth and fearlessly elevate themselves at the start of the new year.

"Today's consumers are more rational and value-driven, placing a strong emphasis on cost-effectiveness. However, during major festivals, they remain willing to spend on experiences and emotional connections. Brands that can tap into these consumer emotions have a great opportunity for growth," said Jason Yu, general manager of CTR market research.

Athletic lifestyle brand Lululemon has launched a 2025 Chinese New Year Capsule. Inspired by the zodiac sign and ancient floral print art, the capsule artistically fuses tradition and modernity. Lululemon uses a brand-new color palette to depict the canvas of spring.

Additionally, serpentine patterns are used to outline lines and add lively embellishments, balancing traditional and modern aesthetics.

The new series meets the needs of various scenarios, whether for leisure or sports, and encourages everyone to rediscover the feeling and embrace their own spring — a time full of hope, passion and vitality, said the company.

Global fashion brand Zara recently announced a new collaboration with Chinese brand AO YES, introducing a limited edition collection that spans men's and women's apparel as well as home products.

This partnership follows Zara's collaborations with other Chinese designers, reflecting the brand's growing focus on embracing local cultural elements and creative talent.

The design inspiration for the



A view of a Pop Mart store in Changzhou, Jiangsu province, in January. HE XIAOXIAO / FOR CHINA DAILY



People browse goods for Spring Festival in Wuzhou, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, in January. HE HUAWEN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Zara |AO YES collection is rooted in the symbolism of the "Chinese Knot", a traditional motif representing unity and good fortune.

Timed to coincide with China's most important family reunion season, the collection blends traditional Chinese aesthetics with contemporary design, offering consumers a fresh interpretation of modern Oriental style through AO YES' visual lens, said the brand.

On Jan 9, Zara unveiled the limited edition series at a pop-up space in Shanghai. The location featured a Victorian-style building that dates back to 1897 in an effort to blend East and West — a theme central to the collaboration. The space was transformed into a modern art venue, anchored by a giant Chinese knot sculpture.

Zara launched a live broadcast of the pop-up event on its app and official website, marking its first cross-platform livestreaming initiative. The brand aimed to enhance online consumer engagement by offering real-time product showcases and interactive content.

Eugenio Bregolat Lukashov, president of Inditex Greater China, said, "The cooperation with AO YES is not only due to the unique creativity

and inspiration of Chinese local designers, but also an opportunity for the brand to continue to learn about Chinese tastes and aesthetic culture."

For Zara, diversity and creativity are of great significance, and new Chinese style is also part of the brand's inspiration sources, said the president.

As more and more Chinese local designers go global, their works have also injected inspirational vitality into the global fashion stage, he added.

The charm of Zara lies in its ability to integrate different creativity, diverse cultures and various fashion tastes, thus shaping a more diverse and inclusive fashion proposition, said the company.

In addition to new apparel, confectionery is also a major gift sector during the festival season.

Global confectionery giant Ferrero Group, known for its brands such as Ferrero Rocher, Ferrero Collection, Kinder and Kjeldsens, has unveiled a Spring Festival-themed collection to celebrate the Year of the Snake, blending traditional elements with modern design.

This festive lineup features snake-inspired designs while incorporating key symbols of Chinese culture

into Ferrero's signature products. The initiative underscores Ferrero's strategy to strengthen its presence in China by aligning its offerings with important cultural celebrations.

One standout product is the "rocher lucky token pack", inspired by Chinese fortune sticks. Each pack includes three variations representing "Luck", "Wealth" and "Happiness". Opening the pack reveals a hidden message, adding a layer of surprise and best wishes to festive gifting.

Ferrero has also introduced the Ferrero Rocher Tree, a fortune-themed product featuring a tree-shaped design with layers of chocolates. Cut-out ingot shapes reveal the chocolates inside, creating a shimmering golden tree that symbolizes prosperity. Adorned with the auspicious phrase "bringing in wealth and treasures", the product doubles as a decorative piece, enhancing its appeal as both a gift and a festive home accessory.

To meet the increasingly diverse preferences of Chinese consumers, Ferrero China has integrated its brand resources by combining the gifting attributes of Ferrero Rocher, Ferrero Collection and Kjeldsens.



Customers purchase goods for Spring Festival in Tangshan, Hebei province, in January. LIU MANCANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

This approach is designed to drive sales by leveraging product complementarity and enhancing the gifting experience during the holiday season.

"Spring Festival is a precious time for family reunions and expressing blessings. We value emotional connections and are committed to strengthening Ferrero's association with major festive gifting occasions like Spring Festival through products that blend tradition with modern flair," said Zhang Suyi, general manager of Ferrero China.

Hsu Fu Chi, a leading confectionery brand, launched a 17-day candy tour spanning six major cities across China, aiming to spread sweetness and joy while driving holiday sales.

The "Sweet Tour", which began on Jan 1 in Beijing's Sanlitun, will travel through Zhengzhou of Henan province, Wuhan of Hubei province, Shanghai, Fuzhou of Fujian province, and concludes in Dongguan of Guangdong province — Hsu Fu Chi's headquarters.

The company aims to rekindle cherished festival memories by distributing billions of candies during the tour. This initiative seeks to enhance consumer engagement while boosting sales during the most significant gifting season in China.

Hsu Fu Chi's signature Spring Festival candy jars, featuring eight best-selling flavors, remain a staple of the holiday season. Widely regarded as symbols of fortune and joy, these candy jars have become a popular choice for family

gatherings and celebrations.

This year, in collaboration with renowned Chinese designer Pan Hu, Hsu Fu Chi has introduced a limited-edition "Sugar Coat" candy bucket. The bucket features traditional Chinese motifs such as river cliffs and floral patterns combined with modern design elements. Additionally, it includes a national-style scarf, enhancing its visual and cultural appeal, making it both a collectible and a gift.

According to a consultancy Nielsen data, Hsu Fu Chi captured 30.2 percent of the bulk candy market in 2022, securing its position as a leader in the confectionery industry. During the 2023 Spring Festival, the brand achieved a market share of 28 percent in the bulk segment, marking a five-year high. Its share in the bulk sugar candy and bulk chocolate categories also exceeded 35 percent and 40 percent, respectively.

By blending cultural symbolism with innovative marketing strategies, Hsu Fu Chi continues to dominate the holiday candy market, offering consumers with products that resonate with both tradition and modernity.

Yu of CTR added that the official Spring Festival holiday has been extended from seven days to eight, with many people likely to take earlier leave, further stimulating holiday market demand. He said that the government continues to introduce stimulus measures aimed at energizing consumption. "Longer holidays also present new opportunities for the cultural and travel industries," Yu said.

## SPORTS

## SOCCER



Noni Madueke scores Chelsea's third goal during a 3-1 English Premier League win against Wolverhampton Wanderers at Stamford Bridge, London, on Monday. ACTION IMAGES VIA REUTERS

## Chelsea tames Wolves to return to Premier League top four

LONDON — Chelsea overcame a howler from goalkeeper Robert Sanchez to beat relegation-threatened Wolves 3-1 on Monday, ending a five-game winless run to climb back into the Premier League's top four.

Enzo Maresca's team was just two points behind leader Liverpool in mid-December, raising hopes of an unlikely title challenge before losing its way.

Now it is back on track to qualify for next season's Champions League after second-half goals from Marc Cucurella and Noni Madueke spared Sanchez's blushes.

The Spanish goalkeeper had dropped the ball moments before halftime, allowing Matt Doherty to cancel out Tosin Adarabioyo's opener.

Maresca said Chelsea had dominated the first 40 minutes before problems that have haunted it in recent weeks returned.

"We lost a little bit of confidence, we conceded a goal and we started to struggle a little bit and then the second half I think we started quite well and then after the second and third goals the game was in control," he told Sky Sports.

He added: "In the past five games we didn't win but I said many times that the performance was there. We created many chances, we didn't score and tonight finally we scored three goals."

Chelsea's top scorer Cole Palmer, a doubt before the game, was fit to start as Maresca made five changes from last week's draw against Bournemouth including bringing in centerback Trevoh Chalobah, recalled from his loan spell at Crystal Palace.

The home side dominated possession in the early stages and Palmer had a couple of early efforts, curling one wide and forcing Jose Sa into a diving save.

The home side was rewarded for its dominance midway through the first half when Adarabioyo fired home for his first Premier League goal for the club.

The defender controlled the ball well after it was deflected into his path from Reece James' shot from the edge of the box.

A number of Chelsea players were in offside positions in a crowded penalty area and the flag was raised but the on-field decision was overturned after a VAR check.

### Sanchez blunder

Wolves, anaemic in attack for most of the first half, came back into the game as halftime approached, scoring with their first shot on target thanks to Sanchez's error.

The visiting side won a corner and the goalkeeper dropped the inswinging delivery from Matheus Cunha under intense pressure when

he could have punched clear, with Doherty poking home.

The home side started the second half brightly and was back in front on the hour mark when Cucurella hooked home on the stretch after Madueke's cross was flicked on by Kiernan Dewsbury-Hall.

Five minutes later Chelsea had a two-goal cushion when Madueke scored his fourth goal of the season against Wolves, heading home Chalobah's goal-bound effort.

Sanchez palmed a Cunha shot behind with 10 minutes to go but Chelsea was largely comfortable despite the occasional minor scare and leapfrogged Newcastle and Manchester City, whom they face next.

Former Leicester boss Maresca, in his first season in charge at Stamford Bridge, stubbornly insisted his team was not in the title race even when it was flying high after five straight wins from late November.

Starting with a 0-0 draw at Everton just before Christmas, it took just three points from five games before returning to winning ways on Monday.

Wolves, who have conceded a league-high 51 goals, are outside the relegation zone on goal difference alone after three straight defeats following a bright start for new manager Vitor Pereira.

AFP

## Mbappe dispels doubts before Champions clash

Striker's form comes at right time when Real faces Red Bull

MADRID — Just when it seemed the pressure of a lifelong dream switch to Real Madrid might prove too great for Kylian Mbappe to overcome, the French superstar silenced his doubters.

After a troubled start to life at Madrid, Mbappe finally seems at home and ready to wreak havoc both in Spain and in Europe.

Mbappe's rediscovered elan comes at the perfect time for Real Madrid with two crucial Champions League matches ahead, starting with Red Bull Salzburg's visit to the Santiago Bernabeu on Wednesday.

Madrid then faces Brest on the road next week, aiming to secure progress to the next phase of the competition.

It would be unthinkable for the holder and record 15-time European champion to suffer an early knock-out, but after a poor start it is presently 20th in the 36-team group, with the bottom 12 teams eliminated.

Madrid lost at Liverpool, with Mbappe missing a penalty, as well as against AC Milan at home and away at Lille.

Shortly after the defeat at Anfield, Mbappe missed another spot kick in a La Liga defeat by Athletic Bilbao and it proved a turning point for the France captain.

"A big mistake in a match where every detail counts, I take full responsibility for it," said Mbappe in a post on social media platform Instagram.

"It's the best time to change this situation and show who I am."

Since pledging to turn things around, Mbappe has scored eight goals in 10 games for Madrid across all competitions, including a stunning solo effort against Barcelona in the Spanish Super Cup final.

Mbappe also struck as Madrid won the Intercontinental Cup against Pachuca in December, but beyond the goals, he now looks every part the devastating, world-beating talent club president Florentino Perez hoped for.

### 'Moves only he can make'

Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti has been patient with Mbappe, often defending the forward and insisting he needed time to adapt to life in the Spanish capital and gel with his new teammates.

The Italian also stuck by his guns



Real Madrid's Kylian Mbappe (right) fights for the ball with Las Palmas' Fabio Silva during a Spanish league match at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid on Sunday. AFP



His (adaptation) period, which he obviously needed, because everyone needs it, is over. Where does Mbappe have to improve? Just in consistency... trying to make the moves that only he can make, as often as possible."

Carlo Ancelotti, Real Madrid coach

with regard to Mbappe's positioning, insisting from the start of the season the French hitman should play down the middle, leaving Vinicius Jr to stay on the left flank in his preferred role.

Mbappe and Vinicius struggled to gel, at times occupying the same spaces on the pitch.

The team's 4-0 Clasico humbling by bitter rival Barcelona in October was a particularly disappointing moment for Mbappe, who was caught offside numerous times in the match by the Catalans' high defensive line.

Left out of the national team squads for Nations League matches at the time by coach Didier Deschamps and battling with former employers Paris Saint-Germain over unpaid income, Mbappe seemed weighed down and overwhelmed.

Ancelotti persisted with the striker and said at the end of December Mbappe had bedded in and, after a thigh injury, was now ready to perform at his best.

"His (adaptation) period, which he obviously needed, because everyone needs it, is over," said the coach.

"Where does Mbappe have to improve? Just in consistency... trying to make the moves that only he can make, as often as possible."

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Ancelotti, a record five-time European Cup winner as a coach, was right.

Mbappe's skill and speed have made him unstoppable in recent weeks and the 26-year-old looks increasingly confident in himself with every passing match.

"The Bilbao game was good for me, I hit the bottom... and it was a moment to realize that I have to give everything for this shirt and show my personality," said Mbappe at the end of 2024.

Mbappe produced arguably his finest display for Madrid as he netted a brace against Las Palmas on Sunday to help take Real to the top of La Liga.

"I have adapted to the team and I can play how I want, with my teammates, with personality," he said after the game.

Vinicius was suspended against Las Palmas but will return in the Champions League, and he and Mbappe must continue developing their partnership.

If Madrid's dynamic duo can find the same wavelength it will be ready to defend its status as the king of Europe.

AFP

## Stuttering PSG faces moment of truth against Man City

PARIS — A stuttering and entirely unconvincing Champions League campaign for Paris Saint-Germain will come to a head if it loses to Manchester City on Wednesday, an outcome which would leave the French club teetering on the brink of an early exit.

PSG was handed what seemed like the toughest draw of any team in this new-look Champions League, with Arsenal, Atletico Madrid and Bayern Munich among its opponents before this meeting with Pep Guardiola's City at the Parc des Princes.

But a club that is one of the richest and most influential in the world game under its Qatari owner has still made a mess of things so far, even accounting for the difficulties of adapting to life without the departed Kylian Mbappe.

Beaten semifinalist last season, the Parisians deservedly lost away to Arsenal and Bayern and succumbed to a last-gasp defeat at home to Atletico.

They were held at home by PSV Eindhoven and only beat Girona

courtesy of a late own goal.

Luis Enrique's team has scored only six goals in six games thus far, with three of those coming in the away win at a poor Red Bull Salzburg side last month.

It comes into the clash with City — to whom it has lost four of its last five meetings — sitting one point and one place outside the qualifying spots for next month's play-off round.

Failure to beat the English champion will see it going into its final match of the league phase, away to VfB Stuttgart on Jan 29, having to win to avoid going out.

To put that into some context, PSG has not gone out in the group stage in any of the last 12 seasons since returning to the Champions League in the wake of the transformative Qatar Sports Investments takeover of 2011.

Prior to that its last appearance had been in 2004-05, when it finished bottom of its group with one win in six matches.

However, that PSG was to all intents and purposes a different



Paris Saint-Germain's Bradley Barcola celebrates scoring his side's winning goal during a 2-1 French Ligue 1 victory against Lens in Lens, France, on Saturday. REUTERS

club to what it is now.

### No Kvaratskhelia yet

The lack of goals this season underlines the fact that no direct

replacement was signed for Mbappe — scorer of 44 goals in the last campaign — when the France captain left for Real Madrid.

Goncalo Ramos has missed much

of the season due to injury and Randal Kolo Muani has fallen so far out of favor that PSG decided to send the French international out on loan in the January window, 18 months after he signed a 90 million-euro (\$93.6m) deal.

At least PSG's domestic form has been relentless, with a comeback win at Lens on Saturday moving it nine points clear on top of Ligue 1.

"We are in a good dynamic going into a competition in which we have a lot of hope," said Luis Enrique, who will renew acquaintances with his old Barcelona teammate Pep Guardiola.

The problem is that PSG's domestic dominance has not always proven very relevant in the past when it has come to its results in Europe, often underwhelming albeit rarely a problem before the knockout stage.

"We find ourselves in this situation because of our performances," Enrique said of his team's European travels last week. "But we are prepared and we are optimistic."

Having the brilliant attacking

right back Achraf Hakimi and France winger Ousmane Dembele back will be key — the latter has been ill but has six goals in his last five appearances.

Meanwhile PSG must hope that Bradley Barcola's match-winning performance last weekend is a sign of better things to come from a player who has not scored in the Champions League this season.

Barcola, 22, has seen his position on the left wing come under threat following the signing of Khvicha Kvaratskhelia from Napoli last week for a reported 70 million euros (\$72 million).

However, the Georgian star is not eligible for this game and cannot be registered for the match against Stuttgart either, so Barcola will have his chance to impress against City.

"He is having an exceptional season. We all have confidence in him. This is the best season of his career," said Enrique.

For PSG, this match could be the one that defines the season.

AFP