

Joint response urged

Davos meeting calls for leaders to find solutions amid multiple crises

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Housing market is expected to recover with policy support

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Myths of mountain and sea

Gala offers modern musical interpretation of literary classic on ancient civilizations

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# CHINA DAILY

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## Conflict aftermath



Emergency personnel work on Sunday at the site where an apartment block was heavily damaged by a Russian missile strike in Dnipro, southeastern Ukraine. The death toll from the strike had risen to 35, an official said on Monday. Ukraine has become a "test bed for Western weapons", CNN reported, as Britain announced it will send 14 of its main battle tanks to the country. CLODAGH KILCOYNE / REUTERS See story, page 7

## Patents granted to foreign entities up in 2022

By CAO YIN  
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China saw a stable growth of patents and trademarks granted to foreign entities in 2022, showing that its efforts to protect intellectual property have provided a sound business environment for foreign companies in the country, IP regulators said.

The number of valid invention patents that China granted last year to foreign entities rose by 4.5 percent year-on-year, bringing the total to 861,000, said Hu Wenhui, deputy head of the National Intellectual Property Administration, on Monday.

"It can be clearly seen that we are constantly moving forward on the road to building a powerful IP state, and it also shows that IP has continuously contributed to our nation's high-level opening-up," he said. Underlining the Chinese government's equal protection of both domestic and foreign enterprises, Zhang Zhicheng, head of the administration's IP Protection Department, said, "The rising figures fully demonstrate that our efforts in IP protection have provided a sound business environment for foreign-invested companies in China."

Zhang said that the administration has set up 97 centers at the national level, including 10 established last year, to offer efficient IP services and help protect the IP rights of domestic and foreign enterprises across the country. So far, more than 2,900 foreign-invested and joint-venture companies

have been put on record at these centers, he added. "We have also attached importance to dealing with administrative disputes involving foreign entities, and our timely handling of such cases and prompt stop to infringements have been widely praised by IP professionals," Zhang said. To ensure that voices of foreign-invested enterprises can be heard and to help them solve difficulties in IP protection, the administration has strengthened information exchanges with other authorities, including the National Development and Reform Commission, the Ministry of Commerce and the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade. "We also delivered IP protection achievements made by Chinese departments to more than 340 chambers of commerce in over 70 countries after compiling the contents in English, so as to let foreign-invested companies deeply

understand our efforts in protecting IP rights," he said. "There will always be room for improvement in IP protection," he said, vowing to further strengthen IP protection and improve its efficiency to create a market-oriented and internationalized first-class business environment. While witnessing the IP growth involving foreign companies, China also saw rapid IP development among its own enterprises last year. Statistics released on Monday showed that the administration authorized 798,000 invention patents in 2022, bringing the country's total number in this regard to 4.21 million. Of the total, 3.28 million valid invention patents came from the Chinese mainland. "It makes China the first country with over 3 million valid domestic invention patents in the world, and shows the vitality and innovation of domestic enterprises," Hu said.

## Xi's visit carries forward Sino-Arab friendship

President Xi Jinping's recent visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was an event with far-reaching impacts. During his visit, Xi attended three summits — between Saudi Arabia and China, the Gulf States and China, and the Arab states and China. These summits paved the way for direct meetings between Arab kings, princes and presidents on the one hand, and the Chinese president and senior officials of the People's Republic of China on

WORLD WATCH  
By Yahya M. Bin Junaid

the other. There is no doubt that these meetings were impactful, as they promoted closer relations, broader rapprochement and positive results. This was confirmed by the closing statement of the summit between the Arab states and China, which

emphasized strong and comprehensive cooperation in various fields. It also stressed the need to benefit from the historical aspect of this relationship, which extends back more than 2,000 years, and the spirit of the East, characterized by harmony and respect. The statement explained the endeavor of the Arab states and China to consolidate international peace and solve problems through negotiation and not to

resort to force, in order to spare the world of the evils of wars and their devastating effects. The relations between Chinese and Arabs have been based, since ancient times, on the principle of mutual respect, noninterference in the affairs of others and respect for privacy. Perhaps this aspect of the Arab-Chinese relationship is what has ensured its vitality and permanence. See Ties, page 3

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## NATION'S SPACE INDUSTRY HITS NEW HEIGHTS

Completion of Tiangong orbital hub highlight of busy year

By ZHAO LEI  
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China's space industry had a busy year in 2022, the highlight of which was completion of one of the world's largest and most sophisticated orbiting infrastructures, the Tiangong space station. After traveling for 15 months in low orbit, about 400 kilometers above the Earth, Tianhe, the



space station's core module, received its first long-term companion — the Wentian lab module — in late July. Wentian lifted off on a Long March 5B heavy-duty rocket from the Wenchang Space Launch Center in Hainan province to

become Tiangong's first scientific component. Weighing 23 metric tons and with a length of 17.9 meters, Wentian carries eight scientific cabinets, which are mainly used for biological and life science studies, but can also support research on the growth, aging and genetic traits of plants, animals and microbes in space. See Space, page 2

## Belt and Road bearing fruit across Africa

From expressways to agricultural exports, initiative spurring growth, improving lives

By EDITH MUTETHYA  
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A range of projects under the Belt and Road Initiative — from an electric light-rail line in Nigeria and a pharmaceutical warehouse in Zimbabwe, to an expressway in Kenya and a fruit-export program in Tanzania — are improving people's livelihoods across Africa and helping countries there realize sustainable development. In Nigeria, the first phase of the Blue Line of the Lagos Rail Mass Transit project, the first electric-powered light rail in West Africa, is expected to greatly reduce traffic congestion in the state of Lagos and make travel much easier. Completed in December and expected to be commissioned later this month, the 13-km section

"The expressway is very convenient," Murrey said. "It saves us a lot of time and fuel, which is becoming much more expensive." The expressway, financed and built by China, has been warmly welcomed by local residents. Since it officially started operations at the end of July, the number of vehicles using the road has continued to increase. By late December, an average of 50,000 cars were commuting on the road each day, an increase of nearly 400 percent compared with the initial period of operation, according to its operator. In Zimbabwe, a \$22 million pharmaceutical warehouse, funded and built by the Chinese government, was commissioned in April. The facility has boosted the country's medicine storage capacity as well as improved its health system.



Nicholas Tonderayi, a resident of Harare, Zimbabwe's capital, said that the warehouse, which is located at Sally Mugabe Central Hospital, the country's second-largest referral hospital, will help the country store medicines, thus improving the availability of drugs in the health centers. "Previously, Zimbabwe had drug storage difficulties, which severely affected the country's health supplies delivery," he said. By early December, 150 countries and 32 international organizations had joined the Belt and Road Initiative, with more than 200 cooperation agreements signed. In Nairobi, Adhere Cavince, a scholar of international relations with a focus on China-Africa cooperation, said that most African countries have benefited from the BRI in various ways since the initiative was launched nearly a decade ago. Under the BRI, Africa has seen comprehensive investment and infrastructure upgrades including ports, railways, roads, telecommunications and energy installations, he said. While infrastructure construction remains the most visible component of the BRI, the initiative is supported by the four pillars of trade, policy coordination, financial inclusion and cultural exchanges, Cavince said. See Initiative, page 3



Performers dance at a ceremony marking the completion of the headquarters of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The facility, built with China's assistance, is an example of China-Africa health cooperation. Moussa Faki Mahamat, chairman of the African Union Commission, said during the ceremony on Wednesday. DONG JIANGHUI / XINHUA

# PAGE TWO

## An artist's impression of the Tiangong space station

Mengtian space lab launched on Oct 31, 2022

Tianhe core module launched on April 29, 2021

Tianzhou 5 cargo spacecraft launched on Nov 12, 2022

**MAJOR TASKS OF THE SHENZHOU XV MISSION CREW**

- Carry out three to four spacewalks to mount equipment outside the Tiangong space station
- Unlock, install and test 15 scientific cabinets
- Conduct more than 40 scientific experiments and technological demonstrations
- Carry out six cargo orbital deployment operations
- Maintain routine operations of the station

Shenzhou XV manned spaceship launched on Nov 29, 2022

Wentian space lab launched on July 24, 2022

Nov 29, 2022 Shenzhou XV, the eighth spacecraft and the fourth crewed ship

Nov 12, 2022 Tianzhou 5

June 5, 2022 Shenzhou XIV

May 10, 2022 Tianzhou 4

Sept 20, 2021 Tianzhou 3

May 29, 2021 Tianzhou 2

Jun 17, 2021 Shenzhou XII

Oct 16, 2021 Shenzhou XIII

Eight spaceships visiting the Tiangong station

Source: China Manned Space Agency

# Space: 60 rocket launches planned this year

From page 1

Wentian's exterior is equipped with extravehicular payload adapters that carry scientific equipment for experiments requiring exposure to space, cosmic rays, vacuums and solar winds.

In addition to its scientific functions, Wentian acts as a backup control station to the Tianhe module in case of emergencies or malfunctions. It has the same flight-control devices as Tianhe, as well as three separate sleeping quarters and an area for personal hygiene, enabling the entire Tiangong station to be operated via Wentian if necessary.

In late October, the second lab module — Mengtian — lifted off on another Long March 5B rocket to dock with Tianhe.

Mengtian, the world's largest single-body spacecraft in active service, carries 13 scientific cabinets for use in microgravity studies and experiments in fluid physics, materials science, combustion science and fundamental physics. It also has 37 extravehicular payload adapters.

A major technical feature of the spacecraft is that it can move scientific apparatus out of the Tiangong station — without any manual labor from the astronauts — to conduct extravehicular experiments, before returning with the apparatus.

Moreover, Mengtian's designers said it can send miniature spacecraft, such as CubeSats, into orbit. The addition of Mengtian marked the end of the in-orbit assembly process for the Tiangong station.

Four teams of astronauts have lived and worked on the space station, which now consists of the Tianhe module, the Wentian and Mengtian science capsules, the Shenzhou XV spacecraft and the Tianzhou 5 cargo ship.

The current crew — the three members of the Shenzhou XV mission — arrived at the station in late November. They worked with the three Shenzhou XIV astronauts, who had been aboard the station for almost six months, for four days before the latter team returned to Earth.

The Shenzhou XV crew is scheduled to remain at the space station until May, before being relieved by members of the Shenzhou XVI mission.

In his annual New Year address on Dec 31, President Xi Jinping announced that the Tiangong station had been completed.

According to the China Manned Space Agency, Tiangong will serve as a national space-based platform for science and technology. It is expected to remain in orbit for more than 10 years, and will be open to astronauts from other countries in the near future.

Yang Yuguang, a senior space industry

observer in Beijing and vice-chair of the International Astronautical Federation's space transportation committee, said that although the Tiangong station is much smaller than the International Space Station, it is more cost-effective.

"We spent much less than the sum needed to build and run the ISS. The steps we took (to construct the Tiangong station) were also simpler and easier than those required for the ISS. Nevertheless, Tiangong has a pretty strong capability to perform scientific experiments and technological tests through its cutting-edge equipment," Yang said.

Starting this year, members of the third group of Chinese astronauts are scheduled to take part in flights, officials from the China Manned Space Agency said. The 18 new astronauts — 17 men and one woman — are in three groups: seven spacecraft pilots, seven spaceflight engineers and four payload specialists.

They are undergoing systematic training at the Astronaut Center of China in Beijing, before being certified for spaceflights.

### Launch records

In addition to the space station, China achieved another major space landmark last year by conducting 64 rocket launches, a national record.



Mengtian, the world's largest single-body spacecraft in active service. XINHUA

Of the 64 liftoffs, 53 were completed by the Long March series of rockets. The Shanghai Academy of Spaceflight Technology carried out 30 launches, and the China Academy of Launch Vehicle Technology 23. Both are subsidiaries of China Aerospace Science and Technology Corp, the nation's leading space contractor.

It was the first time that China had conducted more than 60 rocket launches in a year. In 2021, it conducted 55 space launches, with the Long March series used for 48 of them.

The Long March 2D model, a product of the Shanghai academy, was used for 15 liftoffs last year, heading all Chinese rockets by number of annual flights.

Over the past year, two new Long March models conducted their first flights and entered service.

In late February, a modified version of the Long March 8 lifted off from the Wenchang Space Launch Center on its maiden flight to transport 22 satellites into orbit, a record for the most spacecraft launched by a single Chinese rocket.

Before this mission, the nation's record for the most satellites launched by one rocket was held by the first flight of a Long March 6 in September 2015, which deployed 20 satellites.

Like the original Long March 8 model, the variant is 50.3 meters long and has a diameter of 3.35 meters. It is propelled by four engines — two on the first stage and two on the second — and has a liftoff weight of about 356 metric tons.

The rocket can transport satellites with a combined weight of 3 tons to sun-synchronous orbits. The major difference between the two models is that the new one does not have side boosters. Its fairing is also shorter than that of the original, according to the designers.

In late March, a Long March 6A made its first flight from the Taiyuan Satellite Launch Center in Shanxi province.

Developed by the Shanghai Academy of Spaceflight Technology, the 50-meter-long rocket is China's first to use liquid- and solid-propellant engines as its main form of propulsion.

With a liftoff weight of 530 tons, it is tasked with transporting satellites into different types of orbit, including sun-synchronous, low-Earth and intermediate circular.

Despite being named the Long March 6A, the new model is far different from the Long March 6, which was also designed and built by the Shanghai academy.

The Long March 6, which is about 30 meters high and weighs 102 tons, is much smaller and lighter than the new model. First launched in September 2015, it has carried out 10 flights.

Long Lehao, a top rocket scientist at the China Academy of Launch Vehicle Technology, said that about 27 percent of Long March flights last year were undertaken by new types of rocket developed in recent years.

"The fact that new-generation rockets have been widely used represents a big leap in our research, development and production capabilities in the carrier rocket field," he said.

In July, the rocket company CAS Space, which is based in Beijing and owned by the Chinese Academy of Sciences, carried out a successful debut flight of its ZK 1A rocket.

With a length of 30 meters, diameter of 2.65 meters and liftoff weight of 135 tons, the model is China's largest and most powerful solid-propellant rocket capable of sending satellites with a combined weight of 1.5 tons into a typical sun-synchronous orbit of about 500 km above Earth.

This year, the nation plans to carry out some 60 launch missions, including manned and robotic flights to the Tiangong space station and the maiden flight of the Long March 6C rocket, mission planners said.



The Shenzhou XV spacecraft lifts off from Jiuquan, Inner Mongolia autonomous region, on Nov 29. LI GANG / XINHUA

The crew of Shenzhou XV prepares for the mission in a spacecraft simulator on Sept 1. XU BU / FOR CHINA DAILY

## TOP NEWS

## Risky ride home



Devotees who offered their final prayers at Biswa Jiterna, the world's second-largest Muslim congregation after the hajj, take a train home at Tongi, north of Dhaka, Bangladesh, on Sunday. MOHAMMAD SHAJAHAN / GETTY IMAGES

## Initiative: BRI brings benefits to world, expert says

From page 1

President Xi Jinping has said that BRI cooperation aims to improve connectivity in infrastructure, such as roads, as well as trade, capital, policy and the promotion of people-to-people exchanges.

In addition to infrastructure development, the BRI saw increased exports of African agricultural products to China last year. In August, Kenya exported 45 metric tons of avocados to China after the latter opened its market to fresh Kenyan fruit in March.

By October, Kenya had exported \$57 million worth of avocados to China, according to the Kenya Export Promotion and Branding Agency.

Tanzania is also expected to start exporting avocados to China after the two countries signed a protocol

on sanitary and phytosanitary — relating to plant health, especially regarding international trade — procedures in November.

According to a report by the World Bank, the BRI has the continuing potential to substantially improve trade, foreign investment and people's living conditions, and transportation projects carried out under the BRI can lift 7.6 million people out of extreme poverty.

Cavince, the Kenyan scholar, said: "The BRI is about more than the often discussed infrastructure construction. At its core, the initiative is emblematic of the socioeconomic transformation of China and the resulting goodwill that Beijing has extended to other developing nations. The BRI allows emerging economies to learn from China while tapping into the opportunities arising from China's decision to

share the proceeds of its development with the rest of the world."

Zhang Yongpeng, a researcher of China-Africa relations at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said the BRI, proposed by President Xi in 2013, is China's contribution to global peace and development.

In Africa, the initiative has been closely linked with the African Union's Agenda 2063, a blueprint to transform the continent into a global powerhouse of the future, as well as the development strategies of various African nations, thereby promoting the sustainable development of the whole of Africa, Zhang said.

"The rich fruits of China-Africa cooperation have proved that the BRI meets the demand of the international community and human development, and that it can bring benefits to the whole world," he added.

Paul Tembe, a senior lecturer and researcher at the University of South Africa's department of linguistics and modern languages, said that although the BRI was proposed by China, it has brought benefits to the world through infrastructure development and people-to-people understanding, as well as by promoting multilateralism and international solidarity.

"As the world faces the prospect of a retreat from globalization toward hyper-nationalism, it is prudent to reflect on the benefits of the Belt and Road Initiative," he said, calling the BRI "a game changer in international affairs, trade and financial relations, and the governance of multilateral institutions."

Wang Xiaodong in Nairobi contributed to this story.

## Economists say growth potential remains strong

Private consumption, infrastructure spending to be key drivers of nation's rebound this year

By OUYANG SHIJIA  
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China's economy has shown signs of resilience and vitality, and is set to rebound strongly in 2023 with a gradual pickup in domestic demand, including consumption and investment, according to economists.

They said the world's second-largest economy will likely see economic prospects improve noticeably in the second quarter given the optimized COVID-19 containment measures. Private consumption and infrastructure spending will be the key drivers of the rebound.

"China's growth potential remains strong," said Lin Jianhai, vice-president of the International Finance Forum (IFF).

"Given the large slack in the economy and low inflation, a continued fiscal policy with a shift to greater support for households and consumption, combined with some additional interest rate-based monetary easing, would promote a balanced recovery in 2023."

Even though the economy will likely face some difficulties in the first few months of the year, growth, particularly in consumption, is expected to pick up from the second quarter as waves of COVID-19 subside, Lin, who is also former secretary of the International Monetary Fund, told China Daily.

"For the year, various projections point to a growth rate of about 5 percent or even higher (in China)," he added.

The tone-setting Central Economic Work Conference, which concluded in mid-December, has sent a clear signal that reviving the COVID-hit economy and bringing GDP growth back within a reasonable range will be a major task of the government.

China's pro-growth stance and the optimization of COVID-19 control measures have cheered investors and analysts. Many economists and banks have recently upgraded their

forecasts for China's growth prospects to above 5 percent for this year.

Morgan Stanley recently raised its forecast for China's economic growth this year from 5.4 percent to 5.7 percent, saying a robust cyclical recovery can occur despite lingering structural headwinds.

Lisa Shalett, Morgan Stanley Wealth Management's chief investment officer, said China could see economic prospects improve by the spring. China's growth prospects could also have positive spillover effects for other economies in Asia and Latin America in 2023 in areas such as exports and tourism.

"Since it's not experiencing high inflation or rising interest rates, China has a significant runway for stimulus — a policy lever it will likely pull in 2023 to support the residential housing market," she said in a recently published briefing.

While multiple cyclical and structural headwinds — from a gloomy global outlook to China's weak property market — may weigh on the country's near-term outlook, macro policy easing will help stabilize the economy, with targeted property sector support, relief measures for households and infrastructure spending being the preferred policy tools, said Louise Loo, senior economist at British think tank Oxford Economics.

Local governments have voiced optimism for a robust 2023 upon expectations of a gradual recovery in domestic activity.

China's 31 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities have set their growth target for this year within a range of 4 percent to 9.5 percent, with most of them targeting around 6 percent.

Zhou Maohua, an analyst at China Everbright Bank, said that localities have given priority to the expansion of domestic demand, saying more efforts will be made to spur consumption, continuously deepen reforms, accelerate industrial upgrading and promote high-quality development.

## Ties: Sino-Saudi relations set to witness renaissance

From page 1

This principle is the model that the Arabs invoke in their relations with the West, so they do not accept any interference in their affairs and issues related to the core interests of their countries. However, Western countries do not desist from interfering in the affairs of the Arab states and China and criticizing issues related to the core interests of these countries.

Relations between China and Saudi Arabia and the Gulf and Arab states are set to witness a renaissance after President Xi's visit, not least in the field of culture. The cultural field will contribute, through the expansion of teaching Chinese in these Middle East countries and teaching Arabic in China, to a broader and deeper knowledge and understanding of the reality of the two sides. This will enable them to obtain information about the other directly from the source.

In addition, the mutual exchanges of Arab and Chinese thinkers, scholars, writers, academics and researchers will deepen the communication between the Chinese and Arab civilizations, promoting broader understanding.

The Center for Research and Knowledge Intercommunication, with its distinguished relations with Chinese research, scientific and academic bodies, has established the Saudi Institute for Chinese Studies. This institute will function to activate the role of education and

**The mutual exchanges of Arab and Chinese thinkers, scholars, writers, academics and researchers will deepen the communication between the Chinese and Arab civilizations, promoting broader understanding.**

culture between Saudi Arabia and China by providing programs covering political, economic, cultural and historical topics, so that Chinese and Saudi scholars can learn more about each other's country. The institute will also provide translation, facilitate joint research and promote visits by academics and researchers.

One of the most important channels for cooperation between China and the Arab States is the Belt and Road Initiative, which we need to fully activate as a channel for positive interactions and as the main tool for implementing the goals of the Chinese-Saudi-Gulf-Arab summits.

*The author is chairman of the Center for Research and Knowledge Intercommunication in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.*

## FM trip focuses on Middle East peace, development

By ZHANG YUNBI  
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China's Middle East policy, the Palestine issue and prospects for China-Arab cooperation were high on the agenda of Foreign Minister Qin Gang's trip to Egypt.

When meeting with reporters, along with Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry, in Cairo on Sunday, Qin elaborated on China's Middle East policy.

China believes that the state sovereignty and territorial integrity of countries in the region should be respected, and it encourages dialogue and consultation among them to seek solutions to major issues, he said.

Beijing urges more support for the development of countries in the region and greater unity in the fight against terrorism, he added.

Countries outside the region are urged to avoid intervening in regional countries' domestic affairs, seeking unilateralism or creating divides among cultures, he warned.

Speaking on the Palestine issue, Qin said that the stalled Israel-Palestine peace talks and the failure to achieve a two-state solution are behind the frequent escalation of the situation.

The international community should "increase its sense of urgency and prioritize the Palestine issue on the international agenda" to push for resumption of the peace talks and a fair and lasting solution to the Palestine issue based on the two-state solution, he said.

"Major countries with great influence should shoulder their responsibility for this," he said.

Beijing calls on the parties involved to exercise calm and restraint, and avoid further escalation of tension, and Israel in particular should stop any provocations



Foreign Minister Qin Gang and Secretary-General of the League of Arab States Ahmed Aboul-Gheit meet the media in Cairo, Egypt, on Sunday. WANG DONGZHEN / XINHUA

and any unilateral moves that may worsen the situation, he added.

Wu Bingbing, director of the Center for Middle East Studies at Peking University, said, "There are two basic elements behind China's positions on Middle East. First, is to resolve issues through a peaceful, diplomatic approach and the second is to focus on the role of development in security issues and boost security through growth."

Dong Manyuan, a senior fellow on Middle East studies at the China Institute of International Studies, said China has offered a series of proposals and fresh ideas on issues in the Middle East, and has sent special envoys on mediating missions in the region.

"All these efforts constitute tangible actions responding to the prevailing questions among Arab states about peace," he added.

Egypt was the final destination of Qin's five-stop new year visit to the

African continent, which started on Jan 9.

As the capital of an Arab state and an African country, Cairo is also home to the headquarters of the League of Arab States.

Further advancing China-Arab cooperation in various fields was high on the agenda when Qin met on Sunday with Ahmed Aboul-Gheit, secretary-general of the League of Arab States.

The secretary-general expressed appreciation for China's long-standing dedication to international justice and its support for Arab countries' growth and the group's unity.

Over a month ago, China and Arab states held their first leaders' summit in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, where a landmark outline was issued of a comprehensive cooperation plan encompassing 182 cooperative measures in 18 fields such as politics, the economy, trade and investment.

At the summit, President Xi Jinping also proposed eight major joint actions for China-Arab pragmatic cooperation, covering eight areas including development, security, along with 56 detailed cooperative measures.

Speaking to reporters, Qin said China will build effective working mechanisms with the Arab states to implement these cooperative measures.

When talking about the consensus reached between Beijing and Cairo during his visit to Egypt, Qin said the two sides agreed to further their mutual support on issues involving their core interests and major concerns, and expand cultural exchanges.

The two countries will work closer on pushing for the political settlement of regional hot spot issues and jointly promote the common interests of developing countries, he added.

## CHINA

## Dual therapies



A COVID-19 patient undergoes fumigation therapy with traditional Chinese medicine at a TCM clinic in Tangshan, Hebei province, on Sunday. The clinic has been combining TCM and modern Western treatments to speed up the patient's recovery. MU YU / XINHUA

# COVID-19 has peaked among Chinese populace, figures show

Fewer patients seeking fever treatment while number in ICU begins leveling off

By LI LILEI  
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While the number of COVID-19 patients needing intensive care has "reached a plateau", the number seeking treatment at fever clinics is dropping nationally, both national and local data show. Fever clinics on the mainland received 470,000 patients on Thursday, just one-sixth of the peak on Dec 23, according to the National Health Commission.

While speaking at a news conference on Saturday, Jiao Yahui, director of the commission's medical administration, said that the downturn applied not only to large cities but also rural areas, which authorities last month described as "vast, populous and thinly resourced".

Late last month, about one-third of visitors to fever clinics tested positive for COVID-19. That figure dropped to 10.8 percent by Thursday, she said.

Meanwhile, the number of hospitalizations fell from 1.62 million on Jan 5 to 1.27 million on Thursday, Jiao added.

Prior to the announcement, local authorities from Guangdong province to Chongqing reported that the strain facing fever clinics had eased significantly this month as infection peaks had passed.

Health authorities in the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, home to more than 50 million people, said daily visits to such clinics culminated at 118,537 on Dec 22 and dropped to about 10,000 across the region as of Jan 10.

The government of Zhongshan, Guangdong province, held a news conference on Wednesday, during which local officials assured the public that the city had "smoothly" reached its infection peak late last month, and daily appointments at its fever clinics had remained below 1,000 since Jan 3.

Its neighbor, Foshan, said its infection curve flattened last month and new cases were still declining. The number of patients that turned up at fever clinics was 2,110 on Jan 8, down from the peak of 30,000 on Dec 20.

The provincial capital Guangzhou said its hospitals were handling

around 19,000 fever patients earlier this month, compared with about 60,000 on Dec 23.

A local newspaper in Shenzhen, a metropolis on the border with Hong Kong, reported on Jan 5 that community hospitals across the city received 1.54 million patients between Dec 11 and Jan 1, accounting for 65 percent of the city's total.

Over the period, daily visits to such facilities rose from 4,000 to more than 140,000 on Dec 21 before falling to around 30,000, it said.

Beijing received 12,000 fever patients on Jan 4, down from as many as 73,000 a day in mid-December. The number in Chongqing was 7,000 on Jan 3, much lower than the peak level last month, local media reported.

Fever clinics in Shanghai treated 29,300 patients on Jan 7, down about 65 percent from Dec 22, and those seeking emergency care and ambulance services started to decline this month.

However, the number of COVID-19 patients needing intensive care remained high in the city but had "reached a plateau", experts said.

In interviews with local media, experts said it takes longer for crit-

ically ill COVID-19 patients to peak.

That's because while most patients recover after a week of infection, conditions worsen for a small number of patients — usually older adults with preexisting illnesses — and necessitate hospitalizations or critical care.

Chen Erzhen, a member of Shanghai's expert panel treating critically ill COVID-19 patients, said it is difficult to estimate how long the peak of severely ill patients may last.

"Currently, the peak in infections is mainly predicted through models, and some errors may exist," he told ThePaper.cn, a news website headquartered in the city. "With the passage of time, the continuous implementation of various intervention measures and the continuous improvement of clinical treatment network, I believe it will gradually get better."

The stabilization of new COVID-19 infections and critical cases came as people contracted and recovered from their first novel coronavirus infections.

Zhang Wenhong, a senior epidemiologist based in Shanghai, has projected that the second wave of infections will peak somewhere between May and June, and symptoms will likely be milder.

## Hebei treatment center key in epidemic fight

By ZHANG YU in Shijiazhuang  
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A national-level treatment center for epidemics has played an important role in preventing severe infections of COVID-19 in Baoding, Hebei province, a hospital director said.

Construction started in 2020 on the center, located at the Affiliated Hospital of Hebei University, and it began operations in November.

"It was built as a major facility to cope with the COVID-19 epidemic and other grave public health events," hospital director Cheng Shujie said, adding that it's the first such center to be put into use in Hebei.

The center has received many elderly patients infected with COVID-19, with the oldest 100 years old. Most of the patients have multiple underlying diseases and require careful medical treatment, Cheng said.

Liu Mingqi, an alias, was the 100-year-old patient. He got infected in early December and went to see a doctor at the hospital after spending a week fighting the virus.

"It had developed into severe pneumonia by the time he was admitted at the center," Cheng said, adding Liu had other illnesses, including acute coronary syndrome, a term used to describe a sudden reduction or blockage of blood flow to the heart.

Based on his health conditions, the doctors at the center came up with a plan for Liu and began car-

rying out treatment including detoxification and lipid-lowering.

"Even with the efforts, the patient suffered blood clots in his lower extremity veins, rapid breathing and respiratory failure," Cheng said.

The doctors acted quickly and successfully saved Liu after more than 10 days of treatment, he added.

"He returned home before the new year," he said.

Cheng also talked about the importance of advanced equipment for treating severe diseases at the center.

He noted that the center has 120 invasive ventilators, 40 noninvasive ventilators and two devices for the oxygenation of blood.

It also has negative-pressure wards with 240 intensive care beds and 450 regular beds. The regular beds can accommodate patients with common illnesses in normal times but can be quickly transformed into "epidemic mode" during public health emergencies to treat people with severe symptoms, Cheng said.

The center was approved to cope with major public health events during the country's 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) period by central organs, including the National Development and Reform Commission and National Health Commission.

Other cities have applied to host similar centers, including Nanjing in Jiangsu province, Hengyang in Hunan province and Guangzhou in Guangdong province.

## Extra protection



A man receives his second COVID-19 booster shot at a community health center in Yinchuan, Ningxia Hui autonomous region, on Monday. The regional government is encouraging key vulnerable groups to get the boosters. YU JING / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

## Cities ferrying migrants to hometowns for free

By ZHENG CAIXIONG  
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Coach buses carrying more than 230 passengers left Foshan, Guangdong province, for destinations in Qiongdongnan Miao and Dong autonomous prefecture, Guizhou province, on Jan 9.

The passengers on board were the first batch of migrant workers to be transported to their hometowns for free on buses provided by the Foshan government for the Spring Festival holiday, which officially begins on Jan 21.

According to the Foshan City Bureau of Human Resources and Social Security, related departments and companies will organize more buses and trains to help transport the huge number of migrant workers in the city back home to spend time with their families during China's biggest holiday.

Yang Chuncan, one of the workers being transported, said he was happy to take the free trip home as it was difficult to purchase a train or coach ticket during the Spring Festival travel rush period.

"The free coach service has been very useful in helping migrant workers go home," he said.

Wang Shihui, another migrant worker, praised the generosity shown by the city government.

"I was also given some anti-COVID-19 materials on the bus, including face masks and disinfection spray," he said.

Earlier this month, Foshan government agencies began working with their counterparts in Qiongdongnan as well as in Chenzhou, Hunan province, to arrange for

buses and trains to take the workers to their hometowns and return them to Foshan after the holiday.

Foshan, one of the major production bases in the world, is aiming to further strengthen labor cooperation agreements with inland provinces and regions.

The city organized 24 job fairs in Qiongdongnan last year, offering more than 27,000 jobs to local residents, authorities said.

To encourage the migrant workers to return to Foshan after the festival, city departments will organize trains and at least 10 coaches to transport them back to their workplaces in the city.

In addition, more than 10 job fairs offering more than 20,000 jobs will also be held in Foshan to help local companies recruit workers in February, authorities said.

Foshan is not alone in its efforts. Dongguan in Guangdong is also helping facilitate transportation for its workers, hoping to persuade them to return after the festival.

Dongguan's Bureau of Human Resources and Social Security has planned to allocate more than 25 million yuan (\$3.68 million) in subsidies to help local companies send migrant workers home for the holiday and transport them back afterward.

The bureau has also sent teams to various places, including Ji'an in Jiangxi province, Nyingchi in the Tibet autonomous region and Yajiang in Sichuan province to boost labor cooperation and attract workers from those areas to Dongguan.

Dongguan authorities said more than 40 job fairs will be held to recruit workers from Jan 30 to the end of March.

## Workers incentivized to stay on the job during holiday

By CANG WEI in Nanjing  
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Many local governments across the country are encouraging workers not to return to their hometowns for Spring Festival so that factories can continue production at normal capacity and avoid backlogs after the holiday period.

As this year is the first since 2019 that migrant workers will be able to easily travel back home to reunite with their families for Spring Festival, it is especially challenging for factories and the service sector to keep pace with demand.

In Nanjing, the provincial capital of Jiangsu, the government has introduced a raft of measures to entice workers to remain at their stations over the holiday, including providing a 500-yuan (\$74) bonus to factory workers who do so.

Entry into many scenic spots in the city will be free of charge for remaining migrant workers, who will also receive free movie tickets, according to the government.

The government in Suzhou, Jiangsu, has asked factories to provide better food, higher pay and various recreational activities for workers who continue working during Spring Festival.



Gift packages are offered last week to workers who chose to stay on their jobs during Spring Festival in Huzhou, Zhejiang province, instead of returning home. TAN YUNFENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Many of the city's places of interest will open for free for all visitors, and public transportation, such as buses and the subway, will also be free, the government said.

Hoping that the Year of the Rabbit will get off to a great start, Suzhou officials said they have organized for inheritors of intangible cultural heritage to spend the holiday demonstrating their skills to the public. The series of activities, held under the moniker of "the Unusual Year

of the Rabbit", will feature free gifts, experience sessions and lectures on intangible cultural heritage.

Yu Xiaofeng, director of the Suzhou Labor and Employment Management Service Center, said that the government measures aim to provide both financial and spiritual support to the workers who stay and work over the holiday period.

"We know that orders will increase in February and March, so

factories need to keep up their production," Yu said. "By rolling out such measures, we hope more people will choose to stay in Suzhou."

In Shanghai, e-commerce platforms and delivery companies are also encouraging employees to remain on the job so that orders can be picked up, sent out and delivered in a timely manner.

ZTO Express said it will pay three times the salary to workers who continue working during Spring Festival.

Zhang Jun, who works for ZTO Shanghai, decided to stay and take his seven-day break after the holiday.

"The salary was very enticing," he said. "I want to help in achieving our company's goal of providing services in 300 cities during the holiday. Many of my colleagues have made the same decision."

In Quanzhou, Fujian province, migrant workers are being encouraged to invite their parents to the city for family reunions, and are even offering those who do so a reward of 1,000 yuan.

Not to be outdone, the government in Jinjiang, Fujian, will give each migrant worker that stays at their post over the holiday 1,000 yuan, capped at 150,000 yuan per factory.

## CHINA



Patients receive treatment at the emergency clinic of the Beijing Chaoyang Hospital on Dec 27. WANG ZHUANGFEI / CHINA DAILY

# Medical networks help Beijing overcome COVID-19 outbreak peak

After Beijing optimized its COVID-19 control measures early last month, authorities established a comprehensive medical treatment network and made full use of grassroots facilities to cope with the soaring number of cases.

"Thanks to the effective treatment networks, Beijing has passed its infection peak," said Yin Yong, Beijing's acting mayor, in an interview with China Media Group on Jan 9, about a month after the city lifted its strict control and prevention regulations.

Now, most residents have been infected with and recovered from the disease. Hospitals have played a critical role, while the city government, especially the health bureau, has introduced measures to combat the virus and save lives.

"Beijing has eased the medical pressure by expanding the number of fever clinics, optimizing emergency transfer and admission channels, enhancing cooperation between different levels of hospitals and redoubling efforts in the treatment of critical illness," said Li Ang, spokesman for the Beijing Health Commission, at a news conference on Jan 6.

After the control measures started being lifted on Dec 8, authorities ordered all community health centers to establish fever clinics so they could accommodate more patients.

The centers, whose major task used to be identifying positive cases, are now working to meet the medical needs of residents, especially providing services to key groups, such as seniors and people with underlying illnesses to help prevent them from developing into critical cases.

The growing number of patients saw health centers facing difficulties in terms of a shortage of staff members and a lack of medicines.

However, the situation improved after all the medication manufacturing plants in the city began working at full capacity. Nearby provinces also helped by delivering medicines to the capital.

By Dec 19, the number of fever clinics in Beijing had risen to 1,263 — 960

Newly formed treatment systems have taken the lead in dealing with the disease. **Du Juan** reports.



Medical workers attend to patients at the fever clinic of the China-Japan Friendship Hospital in Beijing on Dec 27. WANG JING / CHINA DAILY

of them in communities — from the 94 that existed before the control measures were lifted, the commission said.

Cui Xueli, director of a health center in the Sanlitun area of Chaoyang district, said the number of residents visiting the center has fallen to a relatively normal level in the two weeks since the peak outbreak because people now understand that they don't need to visit if their symptoms are mild.

As a result, health centers can devote more time and energy to helping patients with urgent and serious needs.

## Maximize services

On Dec 12, a few days after the city lifted the strictest control measures, Li told a news conference that authorities were working to improve the grade-based diagnosis and medical services network.

To help a greater number of people, Beijing promoted such services by establishing 56 treatment networks, with three levels of facilities.

In each network, a top-level hospital acts as a lead, followed by several second-level hospitals and grassroots

health centers or hospitals, according to the health commission.

A complete diagnosis and transfer mechanism has been built in each network to treat different types of patients. If grassroots hospitals receive critically ill patients they are unable to treat, the top-level hospital in the same network will provide a green channel to accept them.

When the patient's condition stabilizes after treatment at the top-level hospital, they will be transferred back to grassroots facilities for further rehabilitative treatment, including transfusion and oxygen therapy.

The measures significantly eased staff member shortages and the pressures resulting from soaring patient numbers at the top-level hospitals during the infection peak.

In addition to the grade-based diagnosis and medical service network, Beijing introduced other measures, including health monitoring for key groups, classified management (of patients) and online medical services, according to Li.

The city government ordered hospitals to stockpile medicines and medical equipment, increased the capacity of intensive care units and

Beijing has eased the medical pressure by expanding the number of fever clinics, optimizing emergency transfer and admission channels, enhancing cooperation between different levels of hospitals."

**Li Ang**, spokesman for the Beijing Health Commission

expanded the number of intensive care specialists through training. It also offered help to facilities that required assistance.

Health commissions in all districts conducted surveys of seniors with existing illnesses and introduced grade-based health management to prevent any treatment delays.

Community health centers distributed pulse oximeters to seniors and other high-risk groups so they could measure their own oxygen levels.

## Advice, assistance

Patients with mild symptoms or asymptomatic carriers are being advised to stay home to recover. If their health worsens, they can visit their nearby community health centers.

People with serious symptoms and those with existing health conditions must be transferred to higher-level hospitals.

Meanwhile, Beijing has taken full advantage of online diagnosis and other information technology. Statistics from the health commission show that by last month, 44 internet hospitals and 167 regular facilities were offering online diagnoses.

The health commission has stated

that public hospitals should offer online medical treatment at the same cost as on-site services, with the outlay covered by the medical insurance system.

Medication can be delivered to patients by third-party units after approval by a pharmacist.

The commission has also issued guidelines on home recovery and community health management, and provided manuals about rehabilitation at home.

The information was released in a timely fashion to serve people's needs during the outbreak's peak.

All districts have released contact details for family doctors and identified the areas they oversee so people with a fever or cough can have consultations with medical professionals, who will offer advice according to the person's symptoms.

Seniors with mobility problems are being offered a door-to-door diagnosis service or assistance in transferring to higher-level hospitals, based on health evaluations by medical advisers.

The measures are providing ample cover for the city's residents. For example, early this month, an 83-year-old woman surnamed Zhang was treated for COVID-19 at a community hospital in Chaoyang.

The medical network ensured that she received rapid treatment after doctors held an online meeting with experts at the China-Japan Friendship Hospital — the top-level facility in their network — to discuss her condition. After several days of treatment, Zhang's health improved.

Experts also visited the community hospital to provide diagnostic advice. Bai Yongtao, director of the community hospital, said the network with different grade-based hospitals has made it possible to use the major facilities' resources to serve more people effectively.

*Wang Songsong contributed to this story.*

*Contact the writer at dujuan@chinadaily.com.cn*

## Tough times, but no need to panic

I never thought I would be infected so quickly. However, at about 3 am on Dec 12, just four days after the capital lifted its strict COVID-19 control measures, I developed a bad headache and my back started to ache.

The pain made it impossible to sleep, and I soon realized that I might be infected.

I immediately took some fever pills left from the time I had a cold in summer.

During the week that followed, I had a continuous headache, fatigue, fever, a cough and a runny nose.

My 62-year-old mother and 5-year-old daughter both live with me, and they quickly

followed suit by becoming infected as well.

Even though it was tough when we were all sick and had to take care of each other, we didn't panic.

First, there was a lot of information online. The city's health authorities had used the media to release plenty of advice, medical guidance and suggestions. Many people who had already recovered posted video logs to relate their experiences of the disease.

Based on that advice, we didn't go to the hospital after we got sick. I basically knew what we were going to go through and how long it would last. My daughter's temperature climbed to 39.9 C, which made my mom a little anxious. However, I decided to just give her some medicine and insisted on not going to the hospital. After two days, my daughter's health improved.

Second, people were helping each other in many ways.

Except for some fever pills, I had not prepared any other medication before I got sick as I was not expecting to get infected at all. I called a few friends and they delivered some of the medicine I needed to my home, especially medication for my daughter.

Beijing's logistics services were also very efficient, which was really helpful.

Meanwhile, I saw news that drugstore owners had divided big packs of medicine into many smaller units and given them to residents free of charge, which helped treat a lot of people. Moreover, community workers went to the homes of disabled and senior residents to check their condition and offer help if required.

Last but not least, the city government had taken several measures to ensure adequate supplies of daily food and medicines, given more support to community health centers, encouraged people to use online hospitals and made sure the fees were covered by health insurance.

My reporting team has done many interviews since we all recovered. It is true that some hospitals were crowded with patients, but for the most part, people were pretty calm. They seemed to be prepared.

In many community hospitals, patients lined up for registration, diagnosis and medicine in orderly fashion. There were seniors — including some wheelchair users — but others were young. Everyone was very understanding and caring, especially toward the doctors and nurses.

It's now the beginning of 2023, and everyone in the country is preparing for and welcoming the arrival of Spring Festival, or Chinese Lunar New Year, at the weekend. I hope everyone will be reunited with their families and have a great time.



**Du Juan**  
Reporter's  
Log

## Grassroots facilities playing their part in new vaccination drive

By **DU JUAN**

Beijing's grassroots community health centers have been making wide-ranging efforts to protect seniors during the COVID-19 outbreak.

In addition to major hospitals, where critically ill patients are treated, medical institutions in the city — including hospitals at the district level and community health centers — are doing everything they can to stop seniors from contracting the disease.

Last month, the Beijing Health Commission published a document stating that community clinics should distribute pulse oximeters to seniors (so they could measure their own oxygen levels) and provide oxygen therapy for peo-

ple in need. It added that health commissions in all districts should conduct surveys of seniors who have existing illnesses and provide grade-based health management to avoid any treatment delays.

Evidence shows that vaccination is still the most effective way of protecting seniors from becoming infected or developing into critical cases.

Thus, many districts have been working on providing good vaccination services.

Liu Ziyun, a nurse in charge of vaccination work in Hujialou sub-district in Chaoyang district, said there are more than 14,200 residents age 60 and older in the area's 11 residential communities. More than 90 percent of them have had

their first vaccination shot, and 80 percent of people in Hujialou age 80 and older have been vaccinated.

"Seniors who need a door-to-door service can make reservations through their family doctors. After medical assessment, mobile vaccination teams will visit to offer the service within a day," Li said.

Li Xiaofeng, a doctor at the Hujialou Second Community Health Service Center, said there is no difference between vaccination services, irrespective of whether the shots are administered at a medical facility or in people's homes.

"The earlier people get vaccinated, the more protection they have," she said.

When the vaccination team members arrive at a person's home, they

first inquire about their health, including underlying illnesses, measure their blood glucose levels and blood pressure, then inspect any medication they use regularly.

If no abnormalities are discovered and the seniors' family members have signed an informed consent form, the medical team staff will provide the vaccination.

"I made an appointment for my father's third shot in the morning, and the team came that afternoon," said the son of a 90-year-old surnamed Yan.

To protect seniors via vaccination, Chaoyang has set up 48 stations and 46 mobile teams to provide services.

Authorities have also released hotline numbers for related consultations and reservations in subdis-

tricts, residential communities and villages. In Huairou district on the outskirts of Beijing, teams are offering individually tailored vaccination services for seniors, especially those unable to leave home.

Family doctors visit the seniors' homes to provide physical examinations and medical treatment, as well as vaccination services.

Huairou has also organized 20 door-to-door vaccination teams for seniors, which have played a key role in protecting them. Since last month, the teams have vaccinated 2,103 people age 60 and older, accounting for 74.55 percent of the vaccinated senior population.

*Wang Songsong contributed to this story.*

## WORLD

**Editor's note:** With the third anniversary of the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union approaching, China Daily takes a look at the difficulties felt by businesses across the country, the impact on the movement of people, and the long-running talks over the trade status of Northern Ireland.



An anti-Brexit protester stands outside Lancaster House in London on Jan 9. Many UK businesses say they have been struggling since the UK's departure from the EU. VICTORIA JONES / ASSOCIATED PRESS

## Brexit trade woes grind on

3 years after Britain parts ways with EU, firms left with empty promises as costs mount

By XING YI in London  
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Jan 31 marks the third anniversary of the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union, which is the UK's biggest trading partner.

And it is just over two years since then prime minister Boris Johnson struck the post-Brexit trade deal, the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement, or TCA, in December 2020, which he claimed would make "no non-tariff barriers to trade" with the continent, and allow UK firms "to do even more business with our European friends".

However, the promises made to UK businesses have not been fulfilled.

The only detectable impact so far has been increased costs, customs paperwork and border delays, according to a report published last year by Parliament's Public Accounts Committee.

A steep fall in the UK's trade with the EU occurred over the months following the end of the transition period, at the end of 2020, and red tape and the formalities of trading outside the European single market forced many businesses to reduce their trade volume, if not stop cross-Channel trade altogether.

Vishaka Chhetri Agarwal and her husband are Indian tea traders who have lived in the UK for 17 years and were among many people whose business with the EU has been affected by Brexit.

The couple told The Guardian newspaper that previously, they were able to send tea to a packing company in Spain and have it returned for dispatch within three weeks. But now, in the same amount of time, the tea could not even arrive in their EU partner's hands.

"When we send a consignment over to them, almost every single one is



The business strains, as seen with this closed store in Basingstoke, England, on Nov 13, have been felt across the country. XINHUA

held by customs and they always ask for extra documentation. Next time, we send all of those same documents, the same commodities — but they still come back asking for more," said the couple, adding that a consignment of elderberries had been stopped by customs for more than a month.

It is not just small businesses who are taking the blows in trading with the EU after Brexit; big companies, though better able to cope with the difficulties, are also suffering.

In January last year, world-renowned London food store Fortnum & Mason stopped sending most of its goods to EU nations. In a notice, the company said: "Due to further regulatory changes around deliveries to the region, direct deliveries from Fortnum's to countries in the European Union are currently unavailable." It advised customers to shop for a selection of products for EU delivery through its European retail partner.

Marco Forgiato, director-general of the Institute of Export and International Trade, told The Times newspaper that the organization's monthly monitoring shows the continuation of a decline in the number of businesses trading internationally, and that is primarily with the EU.

"The challenge has been understanding what the rules and regulations are and overcoming the issues of trading into a third nation. Have traders got a handle on it now? No, they haven't," he said. "Those that

are doing it are getting better at it, but for a whole raft of others, particularly for micro and small businesses, they have struggled."

A recent poll of 328 traders by the institute found only 15 percent said they had increased sales to EU-based customers since Brexit, with 24 percent reporting a fall and 54 percent stating that volumes had remained broadly flat in the past two years.

The most common challenge remained around customs requirements and navigating changing export controls on goods that could have dual use and be caught by sanctions and quotas, reported The Times.

### 'Anything but frictionless'

Malcolm Harrison, the CEO of the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply in the UK, told the Bloomberg news agency that the situation reminded him of the difficulties of trading with mainland Europe 40 years ago. "We used to have all sorts of tariff barriers. We used to have quite a lot of administration and customs controls to get through. We used to carry more stock. We used to have many more alternative suppliers because of those challenges of a border which was anything but frictionless," Harrison said.

Although the post-Brexit situation did not turn the clocks back to 1973 when the UK joined the European Economic Community, the predecessor of the EU, it has done

much damage to cross-Channel businesses, and years of preparation for the post-Brexit scenario did not prevent trade disruption.

For one, the long queue of trucks waiting to clear customs at the port of Dover or the undersea Channel Tunnel to France has not been cleared, so much so that the UK government recently signed a 200,000-pound (\$244,605) yearlong contract with a humanitarian organization to provide food and water to truck drivers stuck in the line for over two days.

According to data from supply chain information organization FourKites, over-the-road shipments crossing the Schengen Area border — which encompasses most of the EU — were delayed 38 percent of the time in the fourth quarter of last year.

Many complaints about post-Brexit trade have been voiced by businesses registered with the British Chambers of Commerce, or BCC.

In a December poll, more than three-quarters of firms for which the Brexit deal is applicable said it is not helping them increase sales or grow their business. In addition, 56 percent of firms face difficulties adapting to the new rules for trading goods.

A retailer in Dundee, Scotland, told the chamber: "Customs on both sides of the EU border seem to have a separate set of rules to be able to charge different amounts for the same thing. We don't know until it's too late what these costs are."

A manufacturer in England's East Midlands observed: "We have experienced a lot of our goods going missing when they reach customs control. Due to additional import costs, we have found that quite a few of our EU customers that we have dealt with for a long time, in regard to providing a qualifying service, now stay within the EU instead of the UK."

Shevaun Haviland, director-general of the BCC, said: "Businesses feel they are banging their heads against a brick wall as nothing has been done to help them, almost two years after the TCA was first agreed.

"The longer the current problems go unchecked, the more EU traders go elsewhere, and the more damage is done."

## Plenty of talks but little to agree on over N. Ireland

By JONATHAN POWELL  
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Much work has been done to mitigate the impact on Northern Ireland of the UK's separation from the European Union, but some disruptions have been unavoidable.

Northern Ireland, politically part of the United Kingdom but geographically isolated, shares the UK's only land border with an EU member state, the Republic of Ireland.

During Brexit talks, the EU and the UK agreed on legislation called the Northern Ireland Protocol that promised no new checks on goods crossing that border.

However, those sending goods across the Irish Sea from Great Britain — England, Scotland and Wales — have faced significant disruptions, which have reportedly eased as businesses have become more familiar with new customs procedures.

The legislation aimed to assure the integrity of the EU's single market for goods, and to facilitate unfettered access for goods from Northern Ireland to the UK market, and the inclusion of such goods in free-trade agreements between the UK and third countries.

But the protocol's conditions remain sharply divisive, with many Brexit supporters and Unionists in Northern Ireland — those whose loyalty is to Britain — fearing that they erode Northern Ireland's place in the UK and damage the economy.

This has caused a boycott — in place for almost a year — of the regional power-sharing government by the pro-British Democratic Unionist Party, or DUP, in protest.

Data released in December indicating that the protocol has boosted trade flows both ways between Great Britain and Northern Ireland has further inflamed the dispute between pro- and anti-protocol parties.

The figures, from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, suggest trade rose by 7 percent in the year after the protocol was introduced in late 2020, equating to a boost of more than 1 billion pounds (\$1.2 billion).

The pro-protocol Sinn Fein and the Social Democratic and Labour Party, or SDLP, say this disproves claims that the legislation is restricting the province's economy.

SDLP Brexit spokesman Matthew O'Toole said: "This data should finally put to bed the idea that protocol is ruining the Northern Ireland economy."

"For nearly two years, DUP politicians and British ministers have exaggerated and distorted the effect of the protocol on trade flows

and business across the Irish Sea."

The anti-protocol DUP responds that the figures may be distorted by the protocol, or EU law, not yet being fully implemented, and trade remains propped up by an extended grace period that temporarily simplifies procedures to protect against any excessively negative impact.

DUP leader Jeffrey Donaldson said: "Were these vital protections removed then we know businesses here have said it would have a devastating impact, including the halting of vital supply chains within 48 hours. The continued importance of trade within the UK highlights how barriers to trade inside the United Kingdom are not just constitutionally but economically damaging."

The grace periods have all been unilaterally extended by the UK, without the EU's agreement. The EU has agreed, however, not to take formal legal action while the two sides continue discussions.

### Continuing problem

Ongoing negotiations between the EU and the UK have sought to resolve the continuing problem of Northern Ireland's trade status post-Brexit.

The DUP last week rejected talk of progress over the territory's post-Brexit future.

"I don't think we are anywhere close to a deal," Donaldson told BBC radio after Northern Irish leaders met with UK Foreign Secretary James Cleverly. "At the moment, while some progress has been made on some technical issues, there are major political issues in those negotiations that have not yet been addressed."

Ireland's leader Leo Varadkar, accompanied by his deputy Micheal Martin, visited Belfast a day later.

Recently, business group Logistics UK emphasized to the UK government the need to reduce administrative and cost burdens, and called for a renewed protocol deal "that delivers stability, certainty, simplicity and affordability for businesses".

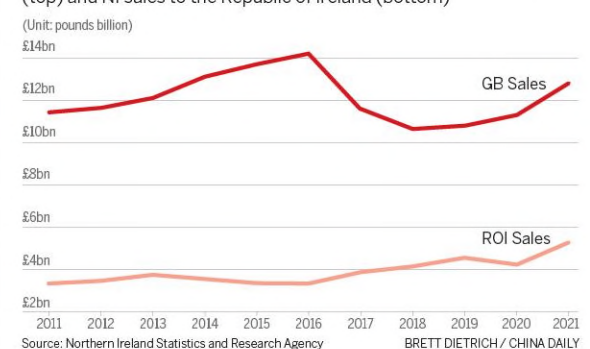
However, DUP member of Parliament Gregory Campbell said this agreement on one issue did not address the party's wider protocol concerns.

"At the bottom line from all of this there are two fundamental issues that flow from the protocol problem: one is the constitutional political implications that it provides for Northern Ireland; the other is the trading implications," he said. "We need to hear the details of what this does for trading. It might just shift the burden slightly but it doesn't resolve the overall problem."

Agencies contributed to this story.

### Sales by broad destination, 2011-2021

Released December 14, 2022, showing Northern Irish sales to GB (top) and NI sales to the Republic of Ireland (bottom)



## Ending freedom of movement comes at a cost in UK

By JULIAN SHEA in London  
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In a speech made on Jan 23, 2013, then-British Prime Minister David Cameron announced the next Conservative government would hold a referendum on Britain's European Union membership.

He thought he was lancing a boil of the internal party dispute to settle a long-running argument. Little could he have known that a decade later, Brexit would still cast such a shadow over British life, causing even deeper divisions.

"Hundreds of thousands of British people now take for granted their right to work, live or retire in any other EU country," Cameron

said. But what was taken for granted in 2013 is, in 2023, taken away.

On the EU's official website, "freedom, security and justice without internal borders" is listed second only to the promotion of peace as an EU core value. But freedom of movement is perceived differently on a landmass of shared land frontiers than it is on a geographically separate island.

Ending freedom of movement was painted by many "Leave" campaigners as meaning freedom from EU citizens moving freely to the United Kingdom to work — overlooking that many Britons did the same — and was integral to the "taking back control" message that proved so persuasive in the referendum victory of the Leave camp.

But while taking back control may have tightened up Britain's legal borders — although Brexit has made the illegal entry situation worse — changing the face of Britain's workforce has also made life harder for Britons who exercised that freedom to work in Europe.

Figures from the Office for National Statistics in May showed that in the pandemic-affected year to June 2021, 12,000 more EU nationals left the UK than came in. In 2021, just 43,000 EU citizens were granted visas for work, family, study or other purposes, compared to figures of up to 10 times that number in each of the six years up until March 2020.

Industries and regions were affected differently. The agri-sector, which has heartlands including some of the most pro-Brexit areas, saw a 28 percent decline in EU worker numbers. In July 2021, the Recruitment and Employment Confederation estimated there was a shortfall of 30,000 haulage drivers in the UK. Geographically, London was the hardest-hit area in losing EU labor with a 10 percent drop overall, and 30 percent in its hospitality sector.

Leaving NHS

Even before Freedom of Movement was abolished, EU staff members were leaving the National Health Service. A January 2023 report by the Nuffield Trust showed that this had led to increased hiring

from countries on the World Health Organization's "red list", whose own health services need safeguarding.

An article in The New European newspaper in June quoted Home Office figures, showing a rise of more than 40 percent in the number of study or work-related visas granted in 2021 compared to 2019, and an increase of 164 percent in the number of sponsored study visas for Indians. Rather than reducing immigration, Brexit seems to have rerouted it.

An end to freedom of the movement has not meant the freedom from the movement that some Brexit voters expected, and many Britons whose work relied on that freedom have been penalized. One example is the music industry, which is worth 5.8 billion pounds (\$7.08 billion) and supports 200,000 jobs.

The Independent news site reported that the EU offered Britain a con-

cession for visa-free touring, but the UK rejected it because it thought it went against ending freedom of movement. So the Brexit agreement contained no such provision, meaning that, since Jan 1, 2021, UK musicians working abroad must comply with the specific regulations relating to each of the 27 EU member states.

On the official Vote Leave website, one of the most tumultuous periods in British history — with its fallout still being settled — is summed up in the briefest of statements.

"Thank You. It's because of everyone involved, all across the country, that we achieved this magnificent result. This is your victory," it stated.

Brexit's winners may have found the spoils of victory are not what they expected. Meanwhile, those who lost their freedom of movement would interpret that last sentence in a very different way.

## WORLD

## Cooperation rings out in Davos call

In 'fragmented world', joint response needed for solutions, WEF founder says

By WANG MINGJIE  
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Cooperation in a "fragmented world", with multiple crises deepening divisions, has emerged as a rallying call at the World Economic Forum's annual meeting, which opened in Davos, Switzerland, on Monday.

With elevated inflation, higher interest rates, reduced investment and disruptions caused by the Ukraine-Russia conflict, the meeting, which runs until Friday, has brought calls for world political and business leaders to take collective action, engage in constructive dialogue and help find solutions through public-private cooperation.

"We see the manifold political, economic and social forces creating increased fragmentation on a global and national level," said Klaus Schwab, founder of the forum, during a media briefing before the opening.

"To address the root causes of this erosion of trust, we need to reinforce cooperation between the government and business sectors, creating the conditions for a strong and durable recovery.

"At the same time, there must be the recognition that economic development needs to be made more resilient, more sustainable and nobody should be left behind."

More than 2,700 leaders from 130 countries, including 52 heads of state and government, are participating this year. Among them are German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and International Monetary Fund Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva. They have been joined by more than 600 CEOs from sectors such as financial services, energy, materials and infrastructure, information and communication technologies.

At the invitation of Schwab, Chinese Vice-Premier Liu He is also attending the meeting. He will be delivering a speech on Tuesday.

The meeting program features more than 450 sessions on accelerating progress on global challenges. The focus will be on advancing new systems for energy, climate and nature; investment, trade and infrastructure; private sector innovation and resilience; work, skills and care; and dialogue and cooperation in a multipolar world.

John Beirne, vice-chair of research at the think tank Asian Development Bank Institute, said: "Given the uncertain global economic outlook for 2023 related to ongoing geopolitical tensions coupled with debt sustainability risks in developed and emerging markets, this year's World Economic Forum takes place at a critical juncture.

"Mechanisms to tackle the cost-of-living crisis and alleviate macroeconomic instability will be key, as well as driving greater efforts on energy transition reforms."

Higher global interest rates and amplified economic uncertainty have hampered the growth outlook for 2023. In its latest forecast, the World Bank has cut projections for global growth to just 1.7 percent, down from 3 percent predicted in June last year.

"With investor sentiment projected to deteriorate and worsening risks of debt distress in developing economies, lower overall global growth can be expected compared to previous projections," Beirne said.

Christopher Bovis, international business law professor at the University of Hull in the United Kingdom, said: "The world leaders face a massive challenge in 2023. Not only geopolitics and economic headaches, but a consistent battle to raise productivity and bring on economic growth to their respective economies."

## Uncertainty remains

Michel Ruimy, an economist and affiliate professor at ESCP Business School in Paris, said: "There is no doubt that 2022 was a difficult year economically. 2023 will continue to be dominated by uncertainty."

Given the precariousness of the economic situation, Ruimy said any new "adverse developments could push the global economy into recession and threaten the development of emerging and developing economies, which have been experiencing sluggish growth for several years due to high levels of debt and insufficient investment."

This year's forum also facilitates public-private collaboration through impact initiatives, which address issues ranging from pandemics and the climate crisis to education, technology and the energy transition.

Bovis said he believes that the role of the private sector will emerge as a lever of economic growth in 2023 and beyond, as private sector investment represents the acid test of resilience and ultimate performance in economies, both developed and emerging.

Following China's recent move on the optimization of its COVID-19 policy, observers are watching the country's 2023 economic prospects with great anticipation. According to the World Bank's projection, China is one of the very few countries to exhibit strong growth this year, at 4.3 percent.

"China's projected economic recovery in 2023 will support global growth, underpinned by domestic macroeconomic policy stimulus and its emergence from the pandemic," Beirne said.

## Snow birds



Pigeons show they are at home in the snow in Teheran's Tajrish Square on Sunday. The rare snowfall and cold weather have led to a shortage of natural gas for households and factories, with schools also forced to close in parts of Iran. VAHID SALEMI / AP

## Diplomat underscores peaceful coexistence

By WANG QINGYUN  
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China and the United States should find the right way to get along and assume responsibility to promote the healthy and steady development of bilateral ties, which matter not only to the two countries but the future of the world, a senior diplomat said.

In an address to a forum in Beijing on Monday, Vice-Foreign Minister Xie Feng said the two countries, as well as the world, will benefit from China-US cooperation, while suffering from their confrontation. He urged both countries to "stick to the bottom line of peaceful coexistence."

Describing head-of-state diplomacy as a "compass" that plays an irreplaceable and guiding role in bilateral ties, Xie said the two largest economies should fully implement the important consensus their leaders have reached.

President Xi Jinping has met or spoken with US President Joe Biden over the phone six times since 2021, and has shown the right direction for bilateral ties by calling for the two countries to respect each other, coexist in peace and pursue

win-win cooperation, Xie said.

Mutual respect is the prerequisite for China-US exchanges, Xie said, urging both sides to acknowledge and respect the differences between their social systems and paths of development, instead of trying to change, or even overthrow each other's system.

Peaceful coexistence is a bottom line that the two countries must hold on to, Xie said. He warned that countries will fail in their attempts to crack down on China in the way they did to the former Soviet Union or to contain China through the "Indo-Pacific strategy".

## Mutual benefits

China and the US should work for win-win cooperation, Xie said. As the world's largest developing and developed countries, the two have a lot they can and should cooperate on. Xie called for both countries to expand cooperation, while ensuring the cooperation is mutually beneficial and reciprocal.

Also, China values and asks the US to implement what Biden has reiterated many times to President Xi — that the US does not seek to change China's system, that it does

not support "Taiwan independence", and that it does not intend to be in conflict or "decouple" with China among others, according to Xie.

Speaking of China's opening-up, Xie said it should be two-way.

"One cannot ask others to open up, while closing their own doors. This is self-contradictory and will harm others as well as themselves," he said, calling for fair and reasonable competition.

Some countries have waged war over tariffs, trade, science, technology, chips and rules to try to deprive others of their right to develop, which is unfair and dishonorable, Xie said.

The diplomat said the behavior to cut exchange and cooperation will lead to a halt in progress in science, as well as reclusiveness and backwardness.

"One will block their own road ahead by shutting others out," Xie said.

Through recent refinement of its COVID-19 response measures, China has opened its door wider to the world, Xie said.

The readjustment will help stabilize and improve China's economy, and inject new momentum into the global economic recovery, he said.

## Briefly

UNITED STATES  
GOP's Santos under fire amid calls to resign

US Representative George Santos, who lied about much of his resume and life story, will be removed from Congress if found to have broken campaign finance laws, fellow Republican and House Oversight Committee Chairman James Comer told CNN's *State of the Union* on Sunday. Santos has repeatedly refused to resign, even as pressure has grown within his own party for him to do so. On Thursday, he said he would vacate his New York City-area seat only if he loses the next election. More than a dozen Republican officials, many of them from Santos' district in parts of Queens and Long Island, have demanded his resignation.

SENEGAL  
19 dead, dozens injured in Senegal road crash

A bus swerved to avoid hitting a donkey and collided with a truck, killing at least 19 people and injuring dozens of others in Senegal on Monday, authorities said. The collision happened near Ngeum Sarr in the country's north. President Macky Sall tweeted. The crash involved a public bus and a transport truck, the fire department said. The bus was apparently trying to avoid hitting a donkey, local fire department commander Ousseynou Ndiaye said. Last week, 40 people were killed in a bus crash in Gnivy village in Senegal's Kaffrine region. After that crash, the government announced reforms to try and avoid collisions.

GERMANY  
Defense minister quits amid criticism

Germany's much-criticized defense minister announced her resignation Monday, as her department steers the massive project of modernizing the country's military and overseas expanding weapons deliveries to Ukraine. Christine Lambrecht said in a written statement that she had submitted her resignation request to Chancellor Olaf Scholz, adding that "months of media focus on my person" had stood in the way of a factual debate about the military and Germany's security policy. A spokesperson for Scholz said the chancellor had accepted Lambrecht's resignation.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

## West's firepower turns Ukraine into weapons 'test bed'

By REN QI in Moscow  
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Britain has announced it will send 14 of its main battle tanks along with additional artillery support to Ukraine, a move that may reinforce perceptions aired in US media that the country has become a "test bed for Western weapons".

In a recent CNN special report, experts and open-source analysts said Ukraine has become a veritable battle lab for cheap but effective solutions, mainly because officials from the United States and other Western countries don't always have perfect insight into exactly how Ukraine's custom-made systems work. These limitations stem in large part from the fact that the officials are not on the ground in Ukraine.

The military operation in Ukraine has also offered the US and its allies

a rare opportunity to study how their own weapons systems perform under intense use, and what munitions both sides are using to score wins in this hotly-fought modern military contest. For the US military, the conflict in Ukraine has been a source of data on the utility of its own systems, the CNN report said.

Some high-profile systems given to the Ukrainians, such as the Switchblade 300 drone and a missile designed to target enemy radar systems, have turned out to be less effective on the battlefield than anticipated, according to a US military operations officer with knowledge of the battlefield, as well as a recent study from a British think tank.

The debate over the effectiveness of the supplied arms comes as a statement from the office of British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said the 14 Challenger 2 tanks would arrive in Ukraine

within weeks and around 30 self-propelled AS90 guns, to be operated by five gunners, are expected to follow.

The UK will begin training Ukrainian forces to use the tanks and guns in the coming days.

## Ambition outlined

The announcement follows a phone call with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky earlier on Saturday during which Sunak "outlined the UK's ambition to intensify our support to Ukraine, including through the provision of Challenger 2 tanks and additional artillery systems".

Sunak's office said last week that Britain would coordinate its support with its allies after Germany, France and the US indicated last week that they would provide armored vehicles to Ukraine.

The Russian embassy in London

said the decision to send the tanks would drag out the confrontation, leading to more victims including civilians, and was evidence of "the increasingly obvious involvement of London in the conflict".

The Challenger 2 is a battle tank designed to attack other tanks, and has been in service with the British Army since 1994.

Separately, Russian President Vladimir Putin on Sunday praised his forces after their claimed capture of the Ukrainian town of Soledar.

Ukraine denied the claims and said heavy fighting continued in Soledar.

The death toll from a weekend Russian missile strike on military targets in the southeastern Ukrainian city of Dnipro has risen to 35, an official said on Monday.

Agencies contributed to this story.

## China drives global electric-vehicle sales to new record

By MAY ZHOU in Houston  
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Global sales of electric vehicles (EVs) in 2022 reached 10 percent of all car sales for the first time, with China driving the trend, according to an analysis by an automotive research company.

China's share of EV sales hit 19 percent domestically, while in Europe the share of EVs accounted for 11 percent, according to data from LMC Automotive and EV-Volumes.com, which provides global data and sales forecasts for the automotive sector.

Total global sales of full EVs totaled around 7.8 million units, an increase of 68 percent from the previous year, according to the analysis. Overall, global sales of vehicles fell 1 percent last year to 80.6 million units, LMC data showed.

The sales decreased by 8 percent in the US and 7 percent in Europe, but rose by 4 percent in China.

China accounted for around two-thirds of global sales of full EVs last year. According to the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers (CAAM), 26.86 million vehicles were sold in 2022, with 6.89 million units being EVs. Sales of EVs almost doubled, surging by 93.4 percent year over year, thanks to cheap electricity and favorable government policy in China.

Ralf Brandstatter, the chief of Volkswagen China, was reported saying last week that EVs would continue expanding fast and that China could soon reach a point where sales of conventional vehicles begin to permanently decline, as plug-in vehicles take more market share.

"Last year, every fourth vehicle we sold in China was a plug-in, and this year it will be every third auto," Brandstatter said. "We haven't reached the tipping point yet, but we're expecting to get there between 2025 and 2030." Volkswagen lags China's domestic

EV makers such as BYD in EV sales in China, but the company believes that the future is bright in China's EV market.

Data from Chinese brokerage CMBI showed that Volkswagen's passenger brand sold 1,962 EVs between Jan 1-8 in China; its most notable rival, BYD, sold 40,046 EVs.

Brandstatter said at a media roundtable Monday that Volkswagen plans to broaden its higher-end and lower-end offerings in the Chinese car market, calling the country's automobile market a "giant fitness center for the industry".

"We don't want to give up this competition — we want to participate," Brandstatter said. "We want to play a leading role. The cards are being mixed anew."

Brandstatter said that to the German car maker, diversification "doesn't mean shutting down in China and ramping up America. It

means continuing to use the market opportunities in China and ramping up America."

US auto makers sold 807,180 full EVs last year in the domestic market and raised the share of EVs to 5.8 percent of all vehicles sold, up from 3.2 percent in 2021.

However, not all Americans are jumping on the EV wagon. Wyoming's state Legislature is proposing to phase out of EVs in the state by 2035.

The resolution states that Wyoming's "proud and valued" oil and gas industry has created "countless" jobs and contributed revenue to the state's coffers. It adds that a lack of charging infrastructure within Wyoming would make the widespread use of EVs "impracticable" and that the state would need to build "massive amounts of new power generation" to "sustain the misadventure of electric vehicles".

The resolution calls for phasing out EVs by 2035.

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## BUSINESS

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# RMB, equities show recovery is on track

USD/CNY spot at 6.7281, SCI at 3227.59; stimulus, COVID steps prove effective

By SHI JING in Shanghai  
shijing@chinadaily.com.cn

Strong performances on Monday by the Chinese currency renminbi and the A-share market — the benchmark Shanghai Composite Index rose 1.01 percent to close at 3227.59 points — provide further evidence that China's economic recovery is on track, experts said.

The RMB's spot exchange rate against the US dollar opened below 6.7 on Monday and closed at 6.7281. This is the first time in six months that the USD/CNY spot rate breached the 6.7 level. This indicator has gained 3.6 percent since the beginning of this year.

The offshore USD/CNY, which reflects international investors' outlook for the Chinese currency, also touched 6.69 during morning trading. The indicator has also risen more than 3 percent this year.

Xuan Changneng, vice-governor of the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, said at a news conference on Friday that the renminbi has gradually appreciated against the US dollar since mid-November as the economic stimulus policies have started to take effect.

The introduction of optimized COVID-19 control policies and financial measures to support the property sector, as well as the anticipation of the US Federal Reserve's slowdown in interest rate hikes, have all contributed to the recent rise of the renminbi.

Experts from UBS Global Wealth Management's Chief Investment Office said the market sentiment brightened as China optimized its epidemic control policies earlier than expected. Investors' outlook on China's economic growth has thus improved, which will translate into capital inflows into Chinese risk assets.

Meanwhile, the US employment and wage data have shown sluggish signs. The Fed's interest rate hike cycle may come to an end. The divergent economic growth trajectories of China and the US will be conducive to the renminbi's appreciation, said UBS experts.

That assessment led them to

upgrade the three-month USD/CNY forecast to 6.6 on Monday, down from the earlier estimate of 6.9. Their 12-month USD/CNY forecast, which was 6.7, has been also adjusted to 6.5.

Meanwhile, the Shenzhen Component Index jumped 1.58 percent to close at 11785.77 points on Monday while the technology-focused ChiNext in Shenzhen closed 1.86 percent higher.

The northbound capital, the amount that foreign investors pump in to buy A shares via the stock connect program linking the Shanghai, Shenzhen and Hong Kong bourses, reported a net inflow of 15.8 billion yuan (\$2.4 billion) on Monday.

The A-share securities brokerages, whose rally is always interpreted as a sign of an overall bull run, reported the strongest average daily increase of 3.18 percent for any sector on Monday, followed by the 2.99 percent average gain made by semiconductor makers.

Market mavens said they believe the A-share market has entered a key stage where investors may want to increase their exposure as odds are high the benchmark indexes will rise further in the Chinese Lunar New Year, which starts on Jan 22 this year.

CITIC Securities' Chief Strategist Qin Peijing said recent economic data are in line with the market expectation of China's fundamentals, boosting investors' confidence and encouraging them to increase their positions. More capital, including foreign capital, will enter the market after the Spring Festival holiday. The A-share market is very likely to continue its bullish performance after the holiday, some traders said.

Analysts from Guotai Junan Securities are optimistic about the A-share market's prospects in the new year as long-term investors, like foreign institutional investors, wealth management firms and insurers, have increased their holdings.

Dai Kang, chief strategist from GF Securities, said the bull run will continue as the supply of capital has remained stable, economic recovery is orderly and in an advanced state, and the renminbi has steadily appreciated.



Employees work at the production line of a manufacturer's plant that makes export-bound electronic products in Hai'an, Jiangsu province. ZHAI HUIYONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Confident MNCs to up investment

By ZHONG NAN  
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China's opening-up measures, carbon-neutrality commitments and fast-growing trade in services will all motivate multinational corporations to increase their investments in the country, so as to profit from the potential of its vast domestic market, said heads of foreign business chambers, corporate executives and academics.

China's purchasing power, cost effectiveness and supply chain reliability are persuading an increasing number of MNCs that are keen to stay competitive, to look at areas like green growth, healthcare, high-end manufacturing, trade in services and cross-border e-commerce businesses.

As China continues to press ahead with industrial innovation, and promote multilateral trade initiatives and pilot free trade zones, many MNCs are seeking to reorient their role in the country's new growth pattern, underscoring their long-term confidence in operating in China, said Cui Fan, a professor of economics at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing.

With China planning to reach its targets of peaking carbon emissions by 2030 and achieving carbon neutrality by 2060, British companies have been supporting China's carbon markets and driving down the cost of offshore wind energy, said John

Edwards, UK trade commissioner for China.

"Hydrogen is another area with high-growth potential for bilateral collaboration," he said, noting a significant number of UK companies have already built a presence in this field in China.

Jens Hildebrandt, chief representative of the Delegation of German Industry and Commerce in Beijing, said: "The Chinese market is of paramount importance to many German companies ... German companies expect growth in most industries, especially in fields like decarbonization, e-mobility and connected driving."

Similar views were expressed by Roberta Lipson, vice-chair of the Board of Governors of the American Chamber of Commerce in China. Lipson said China's new opening-up policies have won support from US business leaders and the country will create a better environment for high-quality economic growth in wide-ranging areas such as culture, science and technology.

Over 99 percent of the surveyed foreign companies are confident that China's economy will fare well in 2023, and 98.7 percent said they would maintain and expand their investment in China, according to a report released by Beijing-based China Council for the Promotion of International Trade last month.

As the economy continues to recover, the Chinese market will bring more and better investment

opportunities to global companies in 2023, said Zhang Xiaoyu, president for China at Arkema SA, a French manufacturer of specialty materials.

"With China further optimizing its COVID-19 control policies and vowing to make greater efforts to maintain steady foreign investment growth, we remain confident and ready to contribute to the development of local industry," she said.

Bostik, one of Arkema's subsidiaries, announced last month it will increase its investment by 400 million yuan (\$59.6 million) in new businesses and innovation in Shanghai, Zhang said.

China has placed high priority on strengthening capacity for innovation, and on promoting the transformation and upgrade of its manufacturing and services sectors. It has been able to achieve groundbreaking innovation broadly across various sectors, particularly in digitalization and smart manufacturing, said Killian Aviles, senior vice-president for APAC at Dekra SE, a German testing, inspection and certification group.

Even though the COVID-19 pandemic and the downward economic pressure posed challenges to the global economy in recent years, the actual use of foreign direct investment in the Chinese mainland expanded 9.9 percent year-on-year to 1.16 trillion yuan during the January-November period of 2022, data from the Ministry of Commerce showed.

## Didi gets nod for new user registration

By MA SI  
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Didi Global Inc said it resumed new user registration for its ride-hailing app on Monday, after the Beijing-based company was granted approval from China's Cyberspace Security Review Office.

The move came after China sent positive signals in support of the development of platform companies after two years of healthy industry corrections in the sector.

Didi said in a statement on social networking platform Weibo that over the past year, the company has cooperated with the national network security review, seriously treated the security problems found in the review and carried out comprehensive rectifications.

Didi added that in the future it will take effective measures to ensure the security of its platform facilities and data, as well as safeguard national cybersecurity.

Shen Meng, director of investment bank Chanson & Co, said Didi resuming registration of new users is a positive signal that the company is returning to the market.

Didi was fined more than 8 billion yuan (\$1.19 billion) in July for illegally collecting information and other practices that violated the Cybersecurity Law, the Data Security Law and the Personal Information Protection Law.

“I care most about key projects in the digital economy in 2023, which will have an immediate impact on stabilizing economic growth.”

Qi Xiangdong, chairman of Qi-Anxin Technology Group

Shen said China's platform economy is expected to usher in a new round of healthy development.

Last month, the tone-setting Central Economic Work Conference said platform companies will be supported to "fully display their capabilities" in bolstering economic growth, job creation and global competitiveness.

That marked a shift from previous remarks. At the 2020 Central Economic Work Conference, the central authorities pledged to prevent the "disorderly expansion of capital". In 2021, the conference maintained that the country should set red and green lights for capital market activity in order to prevent unbridled growth.

Several authorities, including the top securities regulator and the central bank, also recently ramped up calls to support and facilitate the development of platform companies.

The moves are also part of China's broader push to support the development of private enterprises. Private companies have contributed about 50 percent of the country's tax revenue, 60 percent of gross domestic product, 70 percent of technological innovation and 80 percent of urban employment, said the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology.

Qi Xiangdong, chairman of Chinese cybersecurity company Qi-Anxin Technology Group, said private enterprises are an important force in helping pursue the Chinese path to modernization, and the company will work to beef up its innovation capabilities.

"I care most about key projects in the digital economy in 2023, which will have an immediate impact on stabilizing economic growth," said Qi, who is also vice-chairman of the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce.

### Briefly

#### Locked up shares to be made tradable

Locked up shares worth about 177.03 billion yuan (\$26.3 billion) will become eligible for trade on China's bourses this week. From Jan 16 to 20, more than 27.43 billion shares will become tradable on the Shanghai and Shenzhen bourses, according to data from financial information provider Wind. Under China's stock market rules, major shareholders must wait for one to two years before they are permitted to sell their shares.

#### Power battery output surges in 2022

China's installed capacity of power batteries logged steady growth in 2022 amid a boom in the country's new energy vehicle market. The installed capacity of power batteries for NEVs totaled 294.6 gigawatt-hours last year, surging 90.7 percent year-on-year, said the China Automotive Battery Innovation Alliance. About 183.8 GWh of lithium-ion batteries were installed in NEVs in 2022, up 130.2 percent from a year earlier and accounting for 62.4 percent of the total. In December alone, the installed capacity of power batteries increased 37.9 percent year-on-year to hit 36.1 GWh.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

## Medtech firms racing to meet COVID-19 demand

By LIU ZHIHUA and MA SI

Chinese medical device companies are gearing up capacity for novel coronavirus-related medical supplies like oxygenators, pulse oximeters and ventilators amid surging demand after the country optimized COVID-19 prevention and control measures.

Authorities concerned have also stepped up efforts to remove constraints undermining the efficiency of related industrial and supply chains, for instance, a shortage of some raw materials.

Micomme Medical, a manufacturer of high-end medical products for respiratory disease treatment in Changsha, Hunan province, said its output of respiratory equipment like ventilators has hit up to 500 units per day, while that for disposable single-use products sometimes stands at some 2,000 pieces daily.

"Since early December, our staff has been sleeping in the factory and working round-the-clock to ensure optimal production output," said Wang Na, an executive of the company.

The company's noninvasive ventilators and high-flow respiratory therapy equipment are included in China's general treatment guidelines for COVID-19 patients.

Amid the recent demand spike for

relevant products triggered by the contagion, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology — the nation's top industry regulator — has communicated with several major enterprises in relevant areas to research problems and challenges that hinder the expansion of related product production amid efforts to strengthen coordination and increase supplies.

As of the end of December, daily pulse oximeter capacity in China had risen to more than 250,000 units, the ministry said.

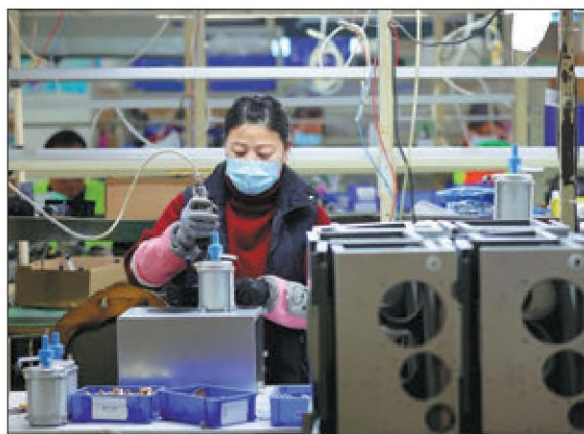
It also said it will continue to motivate enterprises to increase supplies of key anti-epidemic equipment and materials.

Local governments have also taken action to help ease burdens of enterprises and increase supplies.

On Jan 3, Ji Jing, deputy mayor of Suzhou, Jiangsu province, inspected oxygen generator and compression nebulizer manufacturer Carer Medical Technology, and urged joint efforts to help enterprises solve challenges in recruitment, raw materials and cash flow.

Market analysts said there is huge growth space in China for oxygenator producers, as Chinese customers are increasingly interested in healthy living and related products.

In developed countries, around 20 percent of households keep at



An employee works on an oxygenator production line at a company in Shenyang, Liaoning province. YANG QING / XINHUA

least one oxygenator on hand, while the figure in China is only 1 percent, according to the Journal of Applied Science and Technology, a publication affiliated with the China Household Electric Appliance Research Institute.

Contec Medical Systems Co Ltd, a high-tech company focusing on the research, manufacture and distribution of medical devices, said it has adjusted its production lines and hired more workers to boost daily pulse oximeter capacity to 150,000 units.

Contec's oximeter products alone generated sales revenue of 154 million yuan (\$22.89 million) during the first half of 2022, about 50 percent of the company's total top line

during the period.

Jiangsu Yuwell Group, the world's largest oxygenator producer, said it has significantly increased its oxygenator output to meet surging demand from medical institutions and households since late November.

In 2021, its combined oxygenator and ventilator sales stood at 2.62 billion yuan, accounting for around 40 percent of its total revenue.

The company has also been donating oxygenators to 832 counties that have shrugged off poverty in recent years starting this week. It plans to donate oxygenators to all 11,532 townships in county-level regions.

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# BUSINESS

## RCEP highlighted for promoting global trade

By ZHONG NAN  
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The tangible growth of the one-year-old Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership agreement will attract foreign companies to expand their presence in China and other signatory economies, creating favorable conditions for the integration of regional industrial and supply chains, said the country's top foreign trade and investment promotion agency on Monday.

As China is committed to building an open economy and ensuring the security and smooth flow of global supply chains, the RCEP will assist its companies in better participating in regional industrial and supply chain cooperation, said Zhang Shaogang, vice-chairman of the Beijing-based China Council for the Promotion of International Trade, or the CCPIT.

Commenting after a news conference in Beijing, Zhang said the RCEP's cumulative rules of origin will help lower businesses' expenditures on tariffs, and expand the production and trade of intermediate goods in the region while pushing more multinational corporations to strengthen their industrial layout in the Asia-Pacific region.

### \$1.93 trillion

China's foreign trade with other RCEP economies in 2022

The RCEP comprises 10 member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations plus China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand. With the agreement entering into force for Indonesia on Jan 2 of this year, only the Philippines remains to have not yet ratified and implemented the pact.

Zhang said that the other RCEP member countries are important sources of raw materials and components for many Chinese companies. They are also key overseas markets for intermediate and manufactured goods produced by exporters in China.

China's foreign trade with other RCEP economies grew by 7.5 percent on a yearly basis to 12.95 trillion yuan (\$1.93 trillion) in 2022, accounting for 30.8 percent of the country's total exports and imports last year, statistics from the General Administration of Customs (GAC) showed.

Chinese exporters applied for a total of 608,000 certificates of origin and issued declarations of origin under the RCEP in the first 11 months of 2022, corresponding to an export value of 213.4 billion yuan. They are able to enjoy an

estimated 1.37 billion yuan in tariff concessions from importing countries, according to the GAC and CCPIT.

Relying on such advantages for complete industrial support and their "going global" demand, many Chinese companies in the automotive, electronics, machinery and textile industries have undertaken regional industrial and supply chain cooperation in other RCEP markets to optimize regional industrial layouts and cultivate diversified global supply chain networks, Zhang said.

The CCPIT said that the RCEP also sets out rules relating to investment liberalization, protection, promotion and facilitation measures, with a significantly higher level of openness than the bilateral free trade agreements signed between member countries previously.

The openness dividend is particularly evident in the free trade relations established for the first time among China, Japan and South Korea through the RCEP. For instance, China saw investment from Japan and South Korea jump 122.1 percent and 26.1 percent, respectively, during the January-November period of 2022, according to the latest data released by the Ministry of Commerce.

Accelerating the liberalization of intra-regional goods trade and tariff cuts are important benefits of the RCEP. Tariff reductions have directly reduced companies' operating costs and improved their competitiveness in global markets, said Gao Ming, vice-president of the overseas business unit at Beiqi Foton Motor Co Ltd, a commercial vehicle manufacturer owned by State-owned carmaker BAIC Group.

"The RCEP's preferential policies have attracted more global companies to add investment in China and created new consumers. Our sales in RCEP member countries surged more than 10 percent year-on-year in 2022," he said.

China saw its foreign trade with eight RCEP member countries grow double digits year-on-year in 2022, while its trade with Indonesia, Singapore, Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos grew by over 20 percent on a yearly basis, said the GAC.

Lian Ping, chief economist at the Shanghai-based Zhixin Investment Research Institute, said that multiple highlights are expected this year in terms of China's trade structure.

"Exports of integrated circuits and auto parts, among other goods, could rise with low-tariff arrangements under the RCEP. New energy products are also expected to see boosted exports amid global carbon-neutrality commitments," he said.



Builders work at the construction site of a housing project in Shanghai on Wednesday. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## Gradual recovery likely in real estate

Sector may see Q2 bottoming out, with policies playing key stabilizing role

By JIANG XUEQING  
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Home prices in the majority of China's 70 large and medium-sized cities dropped month-on-month in December but the housing market is expected to recover gradually as the country recently rolled out supportive policies.

In December, 55 of the 70 cities saw month-on-month declines in new home prices, compared with 51 in November. New home prices in first-tier cities remained flat month-on-month, compared with a decrease of 0.2 percent in November, said Sheng Guoqing, chief statistician with the urban division of the National Bureau of Statistics, on Monday.

"China's real estate market is expected to bottom out in the second quarter of 2023 and major cities are likely to take the lead in market stabilization," said Lian Ping, chief economist at Zhixin Investment and head of the Zhixin Investment Research Institute.

"The overall housing finance policy will further rebound this year to boost housing demand. Mortgage rates are expected to remain at a record low and commercial loans will accelerate mortgage loan extensions," Lian said. Home prices in some of the hot-

test property markets are likely to stabilize and rise in the second quarter while the decline in land prices may narrow, and real estate investment will pick up later, he said.

China has unveiled a series of policies to bolster the property market in a bid to revive the real economy. Its financial regulators recently drafted and proposed a plan to improve the balance sheets of quality property developers facing liquidity issues, as part of efforts to defuse financial risks in the real estate sector.

The plan aims to improve cash flows of quality property developers and guide their balance sheets to return to a safe range, said Zou Lan, head of the monetary policy department of the People's Bank of China, at a news conference on Friday.

The PBOC, the central bank, is considering launching several structural monetary policy instruments to stabilize operations of the real estate sector, Zou said.

"With the effects of policies on both the supply and demand sides of the real estate sector being released continuously, quality property developers will be revitalized," said Wen Bin, chief economist at China Minsheng Banking Corp.

"The sector is likely to embrace a wave of restructuring activities and acquisitions, and risks to the sector will be further mitigated. In addition, housing finance will further pick up, thus promoting a slight drop in home purchasing costs," Wen said.

The real estate market is expected to hit bottom and rebound in the first half. By that time, the property sector will once again have a stabilizing effect, rather than a dragging

effect, on the economy, he said.

The central bank and the China Banking and Insurance Regulatory Commission have also decided to establish a dynamic adjustment mechanism on mortgage rates for first-time homebuyers to further support the property sector.

For cities where the selling prices of new homes fall month-on-month and year-on-year for three consecutive months, the floor on mortgage rates can be lowered or abolished for first-time homebuyers in phases, the PBOC said.

Yan Yuejin, director of the Shanghai-based E-house China Research and Development Institution, said 35 out of the 70 cities meet the requirements of lowering the floor on mortgage rates for first-time homebuyers, according to data from October to December.

"The current newly constructed commodity residential housing price index indicates that home prices have the foundation to become stabilized but the foundation is not yet solid enough," Yan said.

The authorities' thinking on stabilizing home prices is clear. On the supply side, measures to improve the balance sheets of quality property developers are expected to be announced soon. As the money is coming into place, real estate pricing will stabilize. On the demand side, a new round of policies stimulating home purchases is on the way, he said.

Stabilizing home prices will remain a vital task in 2023. It is an essential condition for stabilizing market expectations and promoting the steady development of the housing market, he said.

## Zhejiang seeks more investment from HK

By MA ZHENHUAN in Hangzhou  
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East China's Zhejiang province is ramping up efforts to attract more investment and a delegation has been sent to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region to this end recently.

The tour marks the province's latest bid to attract more global companies to settle in the area and promote its economic development, according to Zhejiang officials.

"Hong Kong was our first stop in the new year, with its role as an international trade and financial hub. It is also an important bridge connecting the Chinese mainland with the global market," said Chen Pinpin, deputy director of the Zhejiang International Investment Promotion Center, who also serves as the secretary-general of the delegation.

The delegation is scheduled to visit Invest Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Trade Development Council and Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corp, along with other institutions. They will conduct in-depth exchanges with service agencies such as PricewaterhouseCoopers and some multinational companies, Chen said.

Attending the Asian Financial Forum is also on their agenda. During the event, the delegation will further introduce Zhejiang's attractive business investment environment.

Zhejiang's investment promotion in 2023 will focus on high-end foreign-invested industries and major foreign-invested projects to foster more stable growth, build a more reasonable structure and optimize the business environment, said Shi Qiqi, deputy director of the Zhejiang Provincial Department of Commerce.

Apart from sending delegations, Zhejiang will seek to attract foreign investment through investment funds, financial intermediaries and multiple platforms, and will release a series of new policies, Shi said.

As of mid-December 2022, Zhejiang organized 29 chartered business flights and 34 regular flights for more than 1,780 businesspeople to travel overseas, part of a province-wide campaign to "send 1,000 business delegations and 10,000 companies to explore the international market". Import and export contracts worth over \$2.6 billion were signed as a result, according to the Zhejiang Provincial Department of Commerce.

Official data show that the actual use of foreign capital in Zhejiang reached \$18.21 billion in the first 11 months of 2022, increasing 11.4 percent year-on-year.

One of Zhejiang's priorities in 2023 is to continue to attract foreign investment and expand the international market, said Wang Hao, the provincial governor, in the government work report he delivered at the Zhejiang Provincial People's Congress annual session on Thursday.

Meanwhile, municipal authorities in the province are following suit. Hangzhou is planning to send 30 delegations in the first quarter to attract global investment. Jiaxing, another city that relies heavily on foreign trade, will send 24 in the same period.

"Organizing 30 delegations to go abroad in three months is quite unique in the commercial history of Hangzhou," said Cai Ruijie, deputy director of the Hangzhou Investment Promotion Bureau.

Cai said that the Hangzhou delegations are expected to visit countries including Germany, France, Japan, South Korea and Singapore, with a focus on the five areas of intelligent internet of things, biomedicine, high-end equipment, new materials and green energy.

Four investment promotion delegations from Jiaxing went to Japan, Germany and France last year, according to the local government.

Xu Weiqiang, vice-president of the Jiaxing municipal council for the promotion of international trade, said that Jiaxing has already lined up 71 investment promotion delegations for overseas trips this year and they will target the high-end equipment manufacturing industry in Germany, Japan, the United States and Singapore.

Fang Xiaoying in Hangzhou contributed to this story.

## Experts applaud latest supportive measures targeting smaller firms

By MA SI  
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China's latest measures to help micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, or MSMEs, tide over difficulties will strengthen their ability to overcome challenges and promote the high-quality development of these firms, experts said.

The comments came after the State Council recently unveiled 15 targeted measures assisting MSMEs to stabilize growth and improve their competitive edge.

Some measures seek to assist MSMEs through policy support, easier financing and demand expansion, among others, according to the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, the nation's top industry regulator.

In particular, large enterprises and platform institutions are encouraged to release procurement lists targeting MSMEs and carry out cross-border matchmaking activities, in order to create more business opportunities for these enterprises.

Wang Peng, associate professor at the Hillhouse Research Institute at the Renmin University of China

in Beijing, said China's economy will have good momentum if private and small businesses remain sound, given that many are increasingly being recognized for their role as leaders in new concepts and business models.

"But in reality, they tend to become vulnerable to external pressures. Thus, targeted efforts are needed to help them overcome short-term challenges," he added.

In China, small and medium-sized enterprises, or SMEs, are responsible for nearly 50 percent of the nation's tax revenue and 60 percent of GDP. They also contribute to 70 percent of the nation's technology innovation and 80 percent of urban employment, according to the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology.

Zhou Hongyi, founder of cybersecurity company 360 Security Group, said it is of great importance to push forward the digital transformation of MSMEs, as they still face mounting pressures and challenges from the shortage of capital, talent and technology.

More efforts are needed to leverage digital technologies to help such enterprises, which play a critical part in narrowing the income

gap and bolstering the development of the real economy, Zhou said, adding that the company has launched a SaaS — or software as a service — platform and is helping drive the digitalization push of MSMEs.

Chinese MSMEs are facing increasing data security risks according to a report jointly released by 360 Dipper Research, the company's think tank, and organizations including the China Association of Small and Medium Enterprises.

More than 85 percent of MSMEs surveyed by the report have encountered digital security problems and have suffered more cyberattacks in recent years. About 77 percent said they could not effectively deal with digital security risks by themselves.

By 2025, China aims to grow 10,000 "little giant" companies, according to a government guideline on the development of SMEs during the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-25).

To be labeled a little giant, a Chinese firm must see a minimum 5 percent year-on-year average growth rate of its main business income or net profit in the past two



Employees work at a production facility of a handicraft company in Linyi, Shandong province, on Thursday. DU YUBAO / FOR CHINA DAILY

years. More importantly, it must have two valid invention patents or other similar proof of its innovation capabilities and at least 3 percent of its top line must be dedicated to R&D, among other financial and operational criteria.

All this comes as innovative SMEs have sprung up and gained greater visibility for their increasingly important role in cementing the country's industrial strength amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

"If you randomly look into an industrial chain in China, you'll find countless dynamic small players," said Xu Xiaolan, vice-minister

of industry and information technology.

Yang Yuanqing, chairman and CEO of Lenovo Group, said established companies such as the information technology giant should play a bigger role in driving the joint innovation and development of SMEs in the upstream and downstream segments of industry and supply chains.

According to Lenovo, SMEs account for 44.5 percent of the company's industry chain and it will assist in areas such as financing and marketing resources, especially for those with core technologies.

## BUSINESSFOCUS

## E-commerce propelled by linguistics

Speakers of Southeast Asian languages help drive cross-border biz in Nanning

By ZHU WENQIAN in Beijing and SHI RUIPENG in Nanning

Nanning, capital of the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, has seen a spark in business thanks to residents who speak languages that, while regionally important, are not spoken widely across the globe, officials said.

The city is incubating its cross-border e-commerce livestreaming business as a result of the talent living there being fluent in what are sometimes called minor languages.

Unlike Shenzhen, Guangdong province, and Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, Nanning doesn't possess many advantages in the e-commerce supply chain.

Yet, with a low cost of living and government support for foreign trade with Southeast Asian nations, Nanning has shown an important strength. The city has also benefited from the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership agreement that took effect on Jan 1, 2022.

The RCEP agreement covers 15 Asia-Pacific countries, which include 10 member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Over the next 20 years, the pact is expected to reduce up to 90 percent of tariffs on goods traded among its members.

Nanning is located close to Southeast Asian countries such as Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Thailand. Many foreigners have gravitated to Nanning, which has provided the city with a diverse language pool.

Nutchaya Seyungkun, a young Thai livestreaming anchor, has continued to live and work in Nanning after her graduation from Guangxi Minzu University in 2020. Besides anchoring e-commerce livestreaming sessions, Seyungkun said she is considering opening a Sino-Thai cultural company to promote exchange between the two countries.

During the fifth China International Import Expo held in Shanghai in November, Seyungkun set up a demonstration livestreaming session representing Guangxi. During the 19th China-ASEAN Expo held in Nanning in September, Seyungkun recommended Thai products at a booth.

Livestreaming has reshaped the e-commerce business in China, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic. Anchors serve as the core of the livestreaming sector, and providing a competitive salary has been critical for retaining talent.

Anchors who speak minor languages and conduct livestreaming sessions often earn 4,000 yuan (\$596) to 5,000 yuan monthly, comparable to the average level of local salaries, based on public recruitment information. In higher-cost cities such as Shanghai, Hangzhou and Shenzhen, the monthly salary of a similar job is often above 10,000 yuan.

One company, Guangxi Tus Innovation Cross-Border E-Commerce Co Ltd, has recruited international students in cooperation with a number of domestic colleges, officials said. They have attracted students from Southeast Asia who are eager to learn about cross-border e-commerce and encouraged them to start their own businesses in China.

The company has also helped overseas returnees and high-level overseas talent engage in cross-border e-commerce entrepreneurship or work in Guangxi.

"The popularity of cross-border e-commerce livestreaming in minor languages in Nanning is expected to rise continuously and drive the accumulation of resources such as talent, materials and more cross-border platforms," said Zhao Hui, head of overseas projects at Guangxi Tus.

Another company, Guangxi G&M Enterprise Management Co Ltd, a cross-border integrated service platform, opened a livestreaming center in Nanning a few months ago. It aims to recruit and train anchors and conduct livestreaming sessions on TikTok. It also plans to organize an anchor contest, officials said.

The salaries of anchors who speak English or minor languages are anticipated to range from 3,000 yuan to 20,000 yuan a month, they said.

In the first quarter of 2023, the center plans to foster 30 retailers on TikTok conducting livestreaming sessions in minor languages. It will provide offline training, and qualified businesses will be supported through subsidies, it said.

The company already operates a Thai livestreaming room, and a couple of Chinese anchors who speak Thai serve as anchors. They hold livestreaming sessions on TikTok and sell products to Southeast Asian countries, with average daily transactions exceeding 1,000 yuan.

The center plans to foster 500 cross-border e-commerce anchors and create a total of 2,000 jobs by 2025. It also plans to provide profes-



Nutchaya Seyungkun, a Thai livestreaming anchor, holds a livestreaming session during the fifth China International Import Expo in Shanghai in November. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



A Vietnamese student (left) from Guangxi University of Foreign Languages introduces products in his mother tongue at a livestreaming booth in Nanning in May 2020. LIN HAO / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

“The popularity of cross-border e-commerce livestreaming in minor languages in Nanning is expected to ... drive the accumulation of resources such as talent, materials and more cross-border platforms.”

Zhao Hui, head of overseas projects at Guangxi Tus Innovation Cross-Border E-Commerce Co Ltd

sional services to more than 1,000 local enterprises in Guangxi.

Meanwhile, the shopping platform Lazada, acquired by Alibaba Group in 2016, has been a primary force in advancing the development of livestreaming sessions locally. While the business is still in the beginning stage, the company jointly trains talent with the local government and colleges.

COVID-19 has accelerated online shopping among residents from Southeast Asian countries. The gross merchandise volume of Southeast Asia's digital economy is expected to have reached \$200 billion, according to a recent report jointly released by Google, Temasek Holdings of Singapore and management consultancy Bain & Company of the United States.

E-commerce adoption is high across both urban and suburban

consumers in the six countries the report tracked — Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

According to another survey released in early December by Singaporean consultancy Black Box Research, 35 percent of surveyed respondents in Singapore said they prefer online shopping and deliveries.

In Nanning, more companies involved in cross-border e-commerce businesses are looking to work with local colleges and recruit more talent.

The School of Southeast Asian Language and Culture under the Guangxi University of Foreign Languages has been a major source of training in Asian languages in Guangxi. The school offers undergraduate majors in Vietnamese, Thai, Cambodian, Indonesian, Bur-

mese and Japanese.

"The school has been devoted to teaching practical, interdisciplinary skills, and students should constantly improve their language abilities to be better prepared for future jobs. The school is looking to strengthen cooperative arrangements with more related enterprises," said Wu Guiming, vice-principal of the Guangxi University of Foreign Languages.

Southeast Asian markets are continuing to expand, according to executives at Nanning Lightning Future E-commerce Business Co Ltd, and the demand for related language talent is also growing. The company hopes to work with the university and fill the shortage of those who can speak regional languages, the executives said.

The Guangxi branch of another company, Shenzhen Jiuye Industrial Group, which is involved in cross-border e-commerce business, plans to strengthen cooperation with the university by training recent graduates in minor languages at its e-commerce incubation center in Shenzhen.

During internships, the company offers opportunities for students to learn and practice in a type of apprenticeship, according to Liu Zhiping, general manager of Shenzhen Jiuye. Students will have opportunities to conduct livestreaming sessions on different social media platforms.

"Students will also engage in work such as answering and solving different problems and complaints from customers about the usage of products. We will help students introduce the related resources of trading companies and propose employment solutions based on their needs," Liu said.

Contact the writers at zhuwenqian@chinadaily.com.cn

## Colleges, enterprises cook up profits in Guangxi

By ZHU WENQIAN in Beijing and SHI RUIPENG in Nanning

*Luosifen*, pungent rice noodles containing pickled bamboo shoots and river snails, is a dish that has become increasingly popular among young consumers looking for tasty and quickly prepared meals.

It is also a dish that takes its inspiration from the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region and has created a culinary boom benefiting the region's companies and its people.

With sales of the easy-to-make noodle dish starting to rise, a lot more cooperation between colleges and enterprises in producing and marketing the product is taking place in the region.

In the past few years, co-branded *luosifen* jointly produced by schools and enterprises has sprung up. Manufacturers have been relying on the resources and cultural intellectual property power of the schools, and colleges have expanded their influence with the promotion of *luosifen*, which has become a big hit.

Guangxi University of Science

and Technology and Guangxi Hugu Food Group Co Ltd collaborated on the research and development of a new variety of *luosifen*, and the packaged product was released in November. The school has been responsible for R&D on the taste of the soup and control over product quality. The product has been popular with a large number of students.

"Currently, there is still a certain gap between enterprises and colleges in terms of scientific research strength and the availability of R&D talent," said Luo Anfeng, president of Guangxi Hugu Food Group.

"Through cooperation, companies can rely on the scientific research strength of colleges to solve some technical difficulties in the R&D and production process. Enterprises can provide internship opportunities for college students and offer a platform for those students who have entrepreneurial intentions," Luo said.

Packaged *luosifen*, introduced in 2014 in China, has gained wide acceptance among consumers. Easily prepared meals have emerged as a rapidly growing business due to the

COVID-19 pandemic.

From January to October 2022, sales revenue for the whole industrial chain of *luosifen* in Liuzhou, Guangxi, reached 48.37 billion yuan (\$7.2 billion), up 16.48 percent year-on-year, according to Liuzhou's business bureau.

Liuzhou *luosifen* manufacturers have also expanded sales in overseas markets. The product was first exported in 2016, and now it has been exported to more than 20 countries and regions, such as the United States, Canada, Australia and Malaysia.

In the first 10 months of 2022, the export value of *luosifen* in Liuzhou reached 55.78 million yuan, up 68.4 percent year-on-year, according to Customs authorities in Nanning.

As the product continues to develop, *luosifen* makers have been working to make it more convenient to prepare while retaining the original flavor. The firms have been working hand-in-hand with educational institutions, and such relationships help cultivate more talent for the industry, experts said.

In 2020, Liuzhou Luosifen Industrial College was unveiled by

Liuzhou Vocational and Technical College. It was created to be a practical training center that fosters practical, innovative workers who master technologies and skills related to *luosifen*.

Officials said they would emphasize training in four areas — electromechanical equipment, inspection and detection, e-commerce and art design. The courses are offered to full-time students in related majors, or those who would like to take the courses in their spare time or as a minor. The college will also tailor courses based on the needs of enterprises.

The college aims to help cultivate talent for the entire *luosifen* industrial chain. Relevant areas include automatic equipment maintenance and operational management, quality and safety inspection and management, marketing planning, building sales channels and management, livestreaming and culture and brand promotion.

"Based on the development trends of the *luosifen* business in Liuzhou and the demand of companies, in 2022, we launched some featured courses such as the opera-



Students of Liuzhou Luosifen Industrial College study relevant knowledge about *luosifen*, or Liuzhou river snail rice noodles, in Liuzhou, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, in November 2020. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

tion of online and offline *luosifen* stores, new media marketing and e-commerce customer service," said Chen Fang, dean of Liuzhou Luosifen Industrial College.

As more Chinese companies leverage the country's booming livestreaming market to boost sales, Liuzhou Vocational and Technical College established a new livestreaming e-commerce industrial college in October 2021 to train more talent.

The college has provided livestreaming training sessions for more than 10,000 people from local small and medium-sized companies and worked with some 20 enterprises.

"Our students have helped local *luosifen* enterprises sell their products through more than 100 livestreaming sessions, and sales revenues during the sessions exceeded 40,000 yuan," said Meng Liucui, executive dean of the livestreaming e-commerce college.

## COMMENT

## Editorials

## China constant in coherently calling for greater global cohesion at Davos

The annual World Economic Forum is in session offline again in Davos, Switzerland, convening global business, political and opinion leaders, including a Chinese delegation led by Vice-Premier Liu He.

The return of the gathering in Davos may be a hallmark of the world emerging from the shadow of the three-year COVID-19 pandemic. But just as the theme of the 2023 event, "Cooperation in a Fragmented World", indicates, the prospects for this year remain gloomy.

Just as the organizers observed, the meeting is taking place as multiple crises are tearing a fragmented world further apart, threatening the collapse of the decades-old global order. Many countries, developed and developing alike, are struggling in the shock waves from the Russia-Ukraine conflict, difficult post-pandemic recovery, broken global supply chains, and a host of regional security hotspot issues, which are amplifying their pains as the geopolitical divide exacerbates confrontation.

As global economic barometers everywhere alert us to a possibly more difficult year ahead, our divided world badly needs the synergy of cooperation for a healthy recovery. That is exactly what the Chinese presence at Davos is all about.

Beijing is fully aware of what Davos stands for as a global platform for sensible global governance, which fits China's increasingly globalist development perspective well. The continuous Chinese presence in Davos since 1979 shows the country's

commitment to its opening-up policy and enthusiasm for international cooperation.

We have witnessed the themes of the annual Davos meetings change from "Responsive and Responsible Leadership" in 2017 to "Creating a Shared Future in a Fractured World" in 2018, all the way to "Working Together, Restoring Trust" in 2022, and now "Cooperation in a Fragmented World". Davos hasn't prevented the widening of the global geopolitical rift. But China has never given up on its efforts to preserve the momentum of economic globalization, which it believes needs to evolve and not be reversed.

In 2017, following his presence at Davos, where he expounded the Chinese outlook on globalization, President Xi Jinping expounded on his signature vision of a community with a shared future for humanity at the United Nations headquarters in Geneva. In September 2021, at the UN General Assembly in New York, the Chinese leader put forward the Global Development Initiative, a global development public good that complements the Belt and Road Initiative.

From Davos to various international platforms, Beijing has persistently called for practicing true multilateralism, safeguarding economic globalization, and preserving global industry and supply chains.

China's reform and opening-up has not only benefited people and businesses at home and abroad, but received renewed emphasis in today's China. The land of opportunities remains ready and willing as ever to embrace the rest of the world.

## US repeats its mistake of releasing a devil

In their joint statement delivered on Jan 11, US President Joe Biden "commended Japan's bold leadership in fundamentally reinforcing its defense capabilities" as illustrated in the new National Security Strategy, National Defense Strategy and Defense Buildup Program.

Considering the fact that US House of Representatives Speaker Kevin McCarthy established the House Select Committee on the Strategic Competition between the United States and China almost immediately upon taking office, and that the bill passed by 365 votes to 65 in the House, there are quite a few politicians in Washington that view the world's largest developing country as a competitor, even a potential enemy. For them, a re-militarized Japan can act as a guard dog at the door of the "Indo-Pacific" to keep China contained.

But few of them might realize how fierce their imagined guard dog is. According to data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Japan's defense-related expenditure reached \$50.69 billion in 2021, \$647 million higher than that of 2020. The spending had already exceeded the 1 percent ceiling set by its so-called pacifist Constitution that Japanese politicians have vowed to break.

Japan's maritime Self-Defense Force ranks fourth in the world, and it has more than 150 ships that exceed 550,000 in tonnage, more than those of the United Kingdom and France.

Notably, it has two Izumo-class so-called helicop-

ter carriers, one bearing the name *Kaga* that belonged to a sunken Imperial Japanese Navy aircraft carrier that participated in both the Shanghai Incident and the attack on Pearl Harbor. In October 2021, the two ships passed the US Navy's test landing of an F-35B fighter plane, showing that they could easily be turned into aircraft carriers, and so giving up the pretense that they were not built for that purpose.

Further, on Jan 11, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida signed a defense pact with his UK counterpart Rishi Sunak in London allowing the two countries to station troops on each other's soil, a move that reminds the world of their alliance in 1902.

History always tends to repeat itself. Seventy-seven years after its unconditional surrender as a Fascist power, Japan is not only gaining military capability as it did before World War II, but also making arrangements with the Western powers that tried to appease it in the 1930s.

Even the appeasers are the same. But the planners in Washington should beware their guard dog showing itself to be a wolf that does not heed the voice of its master.

That was the fatal mistake the US made in the 1930s. By continuing to export crude oil and used steel to imperial Japan even after the latter launched an invasion against China, the US not only deepened the sufferings of the Chinese people, but also suffered the Pearl Harbor attack on itself.

## Real issue governance deficit, not debt

With the United States' federal debt expected to hit the existing ceiling on Thursday, the US Treasury Department has announced that it will have to take unusual means to sustain the operation of the government if the ceiling is not raised.

US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen urged lawmakers to act quickly to raise the debt ceiling, which at \$31.38 trillion is already more than the economies of China, Germany, Japan and the United Kingdom combined.

Republicans, who now control the House of Representatives, want to use the debt ceiling as leverage to force the Joe Biden administration to cut spending on a "far-left" agenda that is anathema to them. As one Republican lawmaker said there's no reason for them to help facilitate policy that they disagree with.

The struggle between the two parties is further indication that the country is evolving in exactly the direction its founders made so many institutional preparations to avoid.

The rise of Trumpism was an inevitable response of the nation to the weakening, if not fake, representativeness of the US political system, which has been hijacked by the private interests of the wealthy. But that has only aggravated the situation.

The Republicans make budget cuts a prerequisite for their agreeing to a new debt ceiling, which will only sustain the US debt crisis as before instead

of addressing it, and create spillover effects for the world as the US prints more dollars. Meanwhile, the Democrats think the GOP is turning a serious governance procedure into a "political game", as the White House spokesperson called it. "This should be done without conditions," Karine Jean-Pierre told reporters. "There's going to be no negotiation over it."

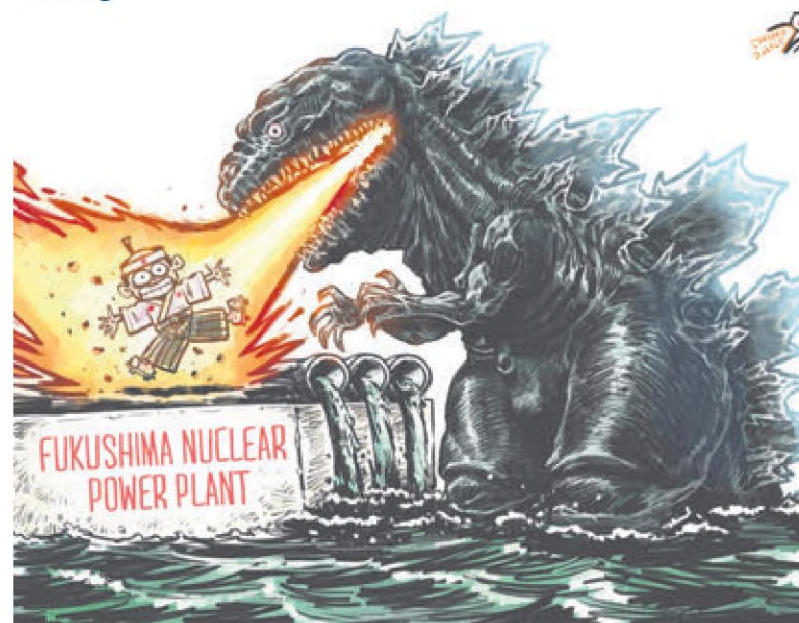
The Democrats accuse the Republicans of not really caring about the US people, while the Republicans claim the Biden administration is putting future generations in debt.

The horse-trading over the debt ceiling only serves to show how much the nation pays for the political tussle between the two parties, whose only point of agreement is fabricating a fake, external enemy in the form of China.

They are both willing to borrow big so they can spend money like water to contain China. This serves their common interest of keeping the people uninformed of the true nature of their governance, which hijacks the country's interests for their own.

In fact, there is no real debate between the two parties and the widely anticipated debate over the federal debt ceiling is just the latest round of bargaining over future exchanges of interests between them. The haggling over the debt ceiling makes clear that the zero-sum game does not exist between the US and China, but between US politicians and the US people.

Cai Meng



## Opinion Line

## Better coordination reflected in clear blue skies over Beijing

The Beijing municipal government has made great efforts to protect the blue skies over the past five years, with the annual average concentration of fine particulate matter in the air dropping to 30 micrograms per cubic meter, down 48.3 percent since 2017, an achievement the United Nations Environment Program has hailed as the "Beijing Miracle".

According to data released by the Beijing Municipal Ecological and Environmental Monitoring Center, the number of good days that reached the grade-one standard increased by 24 in 2022 from a year ago, with a total of 286 clean air days and only three heavy air pollution days. This shows that Beijing

has laid a solid foundation for retaining blue skies.

Once upon a time, fog and hazy weather were a lingering "ailment" for Beijing. Today, it is not uncommon to see stars in Beijing's sky on most nights. Last year, Huang Runqiu, the minister of ecology and environment, showcased a star orbit image taken at the Meridian Gate of the Imperial Palace, a true reflection of Beijing's air pollution control results. It can be said that Beijing's transition from "being heavily circled by haze" to the long staying of "Beijing blue" depends not only on a series of effective and timely measures launched by the relevant authorities, but also on the

close cooperation among people from all walks of life in the capital.

Of course, behind this remarkable achievement is greater understanding of the relationship between man and nature, that is, people depend on nature and the environment for survival, and only by protecting the environment can they create a better homeland and life. This kind of interdependent relationship should be protected. To some extent, it is a deeper understanding of this relationship among the government and ordinary citizens that has contributed to the return of blue skies and fresh air in Beijing.

— BEIJING NEWS

## 'China threat' fallacy brews Asian hatred

An 18-year-old Asian student was brutally stabbed by a fellow bus passenger in Bloomington, Indiana on Saturday. The suspect was quoted as saying she thought the Asian was Chinese.

Indiana University confirmed the attacked girl was their student and blamed the attack on "Asian hate". What they didn't mention is that the Asian hate comes from certain US politicians' tireless "Chinese threat" propaganda.

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, when Chinese workers were build-

ing railways in the US, they faced discrimination too, being called "dirty" and "untouchable". Now that China is working to uphold globalization, they see China as a "threat".

That's how Asian hate emerged and has grown. By propagating the "China threat" theory, US politicians and media are widening the split in their own society and encouraging the US people to hate Asian Americans for no reason. By stabbing an Asian student, the perpetrator has exposed the danger that lies in US society.

The cheerleaders there invented the "China threat" fallacy to play international politics, but it is a toxin in US society. The policy aimed at pitting the rest of the world against China has successfully pitted US citizens against US citizens.

To bridge the deep social divide and curb Asian hate, what the US needs to do is not only profess love and brotherhood among different ethnic groups, but also give up its anti-China policy and policy of demonizing this imaginary enemy.

— ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

## What They Say

## Countermove to weaponization of the dollar

The Ministry of Commerce and the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, have jointly issued a notice, calling on banks to provide more convenient and efficient settlement services in renminbi for all types of cross-border trade and investment.

In the notice, the two departments call for facilitating cross-border renminbi settlement of trade in goods and services, supporting renminbi pricing and settlement of bulk commodities, supporting overseas investors to invest in China and reinvest in China with renminbi. Banks are encouraged to jointly conduct overseas renminbi loan business at home and abroad, reduce renminbi financing costs in accordance with commercial principles, and better meet the cross-border investment and financing needs of enterprises.

Over the first 10 months of 2022, 18.1 percent of China's foreign trade was paid in renminbi, up 3.4 percentage points year-on-year. The renminbi remains the fifth most active currency in the world, accounting for 2.37 percent of global currency use, according to SWIFT data.

Compared with China's status as the world's second-largest economy, largest goods trading country and

largest energy importer, the degree of renminbi's internationalization does not match its status and strategic needs. It is imperative to promote the internationalization of the renminbi.

Over the past year, the United States has imposed sweeping sanctions on Russia through the international financial system it controls, raising concerns in many countries about the weaponization of the dollar. Last year, the Federal Reserve's aggressive interest rate hikes triggered currency depreciation and liquidity risks in most countries in the world. In addition, the US has continued to significantly increase the scale of its debt after the subprime mortgage crisis, especially during the global COVID-19 pandemic, which has weakened the international community's confidence in the dollar system. As a result, some countries are looking for alternatives.

The dollar's primacy depended on the Bretton Woods system after World War II and was reinforced by its dominance in the Middle East oil trade and financial globalization after the Cold War. Bretton Woods II was largely sustained by Asian petrodollars and trading dollars. But now that the US is self-sufficient in energy, and China is the world's largest importer of oil, the

US is pursuing trade rebalancing to reduce Asia's dollar surplus. This means that the dollar, which is supported by US demand, will inevitably be weakened.

China has no reason not to take this as an opportunity to use its own currency for trade and investment after the US reduces part of its trade with China, and it should encourage more and more energy and resource exporting countries to accept renminbi pricing and trading, as reducing dependence on the dollar is now an international consensus, particularly among the developing countries.

China should actively promote the central bank currency swap mechanism and try to sign more bilateral local currency settlement cooperation agreements. The country should leverage its strengths in trade, investment and energy demand, give priority to international renminbi transactions, and gradually participate in the building of an international monetary system that is not dominated by the dollar.

This will greatly help strengthen the ability of Chinese companies to trade and invest abroad, reduce the risk of exchange rate fluctuations and make Chinese assets more attractive.

— 21ST CENTURY BUSINESS HERALD

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## COMMENT

Xu Hongcai

## Economy will soon be back on track

The global economy, according to many economists, will grow at a moderate rate, inflationary pressure will ease and the effects of monetary policy in major economies will diminish in 2023.

In the first three quarters of 2022, the "trio" of consumption, investment and exports contributed 41.3 percent, 26.7 percent and 32.0 percent respectively to China's GDP growth. But as global economic growth declines, external demand will provide significantly less tailwind for economic growth, with the negative growth of imports and exports in the past two months bearing this out.

On the other hand, inflation continues to be high in the European Union and the EU economy is likely to slip into recession. True, China-US trade and China-EU trade contributed about 80 percent to China's trade surplus, but China's services trade deficit will widen significantly as outbound tourism resumes in 2023. This means Chinese policymakers need to boost domestic demand so it can act as a strong driver of growth.

But despite the short-term blow or the initial shock wave of the easing of the pandemic prevention and control measures, the Chinese economy is expected to rebound in the second quarter of 2023, with GDP growth expected to reach 4.7 percent this year and 5.0 percent in 2024.

While imported inflationary pressure is likely to subside this year and prices may remain stable, the consumer price index is expected to hover around 3 percent and the producer price index could trend higher from a low basis to 4 percent throughout the year.

Besides, the employment situation will improve significantly, because the economy is gaining momentum, demand for labor is rising and large numbers of job vacancies are being created as the "baby boomers" generation born in the early 1960s has already retired or will soon retire. Also, the yuan will continue to fluctuate against the US dollar, while the basic equilibrium in balance of payments will likely be maintained.

Furthermore, since the Central Economic Work Conference held recently accorded priority to the expansion of domestic demand, investment in fixed assets will increase faster in 2023, possibly growing more than 8 percent for the whole year. In the real estate sector, investment will move from negative to positive territory due to the rising confidence of private and foreign investors, which will contribute to the faster growth of high-tech industries and social sectors.

As for the investment structure, it will be significantly optimized in 2023, since the odds are that the real estate sector will gather steam over time even though its recovery will be range-bound. Consumption, too, will gain momentum, especially from the second quarter onward, with a strong recovery in domestic tourism, which in turn will spur the growth of the transportation, entertainment and catering sectors. The stock market will gain traction as well.

Moreover, China will continue to uphold the economic policy of pursuing progress while maintaining stability, and implement a proactive fiscal policy

and a prudent monetary policy while strengthening policy coordination.

First, proactive fiscal policy will be more effective and targeted, maintaining sufficient intensity in terms of fiscal spending, optimizing the mix of deficits, special bonds, interest subsidies and other tools, and increasing transfer of payments to local governments.

Second, China's prudent monetary policy will be more targeted. The country may also see a reasonable growth of M2, with the government urging financial institutions to increase support for, among other things, small and micro-sized enterprises, scientific and technological innovation and green development, and take measures to maintain the basic stability of the yuan's exchange rate.

Third, China will also boost the transformation and upgrading of traditional industries, cultivate strategic emerging industries, strengthen the weak links in the industrial chain, and continue to take measures to ensure its carbon emissions peak before 2030 and the country achieves carbon neutrality before 2060.

Fourth, the science and technology policy will focus on making the country self-reliant and achieve excellence.

And fifth, the goal of social policies will be to improve people's livelihoods. As such, the government will continue to create new jobs, including for young people, especially college graduates.

The central government's emphasis this year will be on stabilizing growth and prices, and increasing employment. The emphasis has shifted from stability on six fronts to only three. The government's other priorities will be to spur domestic demand and consumption.

But while an increase in investments will deliver quick results, measures to boost consumption will take time to bear fruit. The key is to increase the incomes of urban and rural residents, and the right way to do so is to increase employment and shore up small and medium-sized enterprises and household entrepreneurs, because it is necessary to create an enabling business environment for the 160 million market players.

It is also necessary for the government to improve income distribution and strengthen

the social security system. Spending on daily necessities, food, housing and transportation — especially for housing and cars — accounts for almost 50 percent of household budgets. Hence, the goal of government policies should be to provide better housing facilities and new-energy vehicles.

Moreover, given China's fast rising aging population, the demand for elder care is increasing, which will spur economic growth.

In addition, the government's policy incentives will attract private investment in major national projects, helping strengthen the weak links. And the increase in government investments will catalyze private (including foreign) investment, rallying all available resources to boost China's economic growth.

All in all, we can expect China to return to sustainable economic growth in 2023.

The author is deputy director of the Economic Policy Commission.

Source: chinanews.com  
The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

Mahesh Pathak

## US-led West's pandemic trick won't succeed

Right from the initial days of the COVID-19 pandemic, China has been stigmatized by some Western countries, especially the United States, with many people of Chinese origin becoming the target of hate crimes.

Hate-mongers in some Western countries, the US in particular, used the pandemic as an excuse to target people of Asian, especially Chinese, origin. They blamed people of Asian origin for the spread of the novel coronavirus. Worse, previous US president Donald Trump played a key role in increasing racist attacks by labeling the novel coronavirus as the "Chinese virus".

"People first" has remained at the core of China's COVID-19 response over the past three years, during which the virus mutated many times and the pandemic situation got from bad to worse before improving. Yet the worsening pandemic situation also spurred different governments and pharmaceutical companies to invest more resources and use more scientific minds to develop vaccines and prescribe the treatment for COVID-19 patients. As for China, the pandemic not only prompted it to develop COVID-19 vaccines but also provide free vaccination for all Chinese citizens.

But with China lifting almost all anti-pandemic restrictions on Jan 8, some countries, including the United States and the United Kingdom, reintroduced compulsory pre-flight COVID-19 tests for Chinese visitors, while countries such as Japan, the Republic of Korea and Italy, now require Chinese visitors to undergo COVID-19 tests on arrival and quarantine if they test positive.

The World Health Organization has said that it is very concerned about reports of rising number of severe cases in China after the country abandoned the dynamic clearing COVID-19 policy.

Most countries have not announced new entry requirements for Chinese visitors, and a select few have ruled them out entirely, including Poland and Bulgaria which refused to toe the European Union's line on entry requirements for Chinese visitors.

The US has made it mandatory for Chinese visitors to take an RT-PCR test less than 48 hours before boarding a flight and test negative to gain entry into the country from Jan 5. China fully opened its borders from Jan 8, welcoming visitors without mandatory quarantine and allowing Chinese citizens to travel abroad.

At the Hong Kong airport, hundreds

of people were recently seen waiting to check in for flights to cities on the Chinese mainland, but the arrivals hall was relatively quiet. Many of Hong Kong's border checkpoints were fully opened, as were transportation halls and shuttered storefronts.

Given the present situation, therefore, China may first normalize economic ties with some countries, including Belt and Road countries, before it does so with Western nations to establish a channel for the normal movement of people and goods.

The Global North is also trying to reduce China's expanding global presence in the fields of infrastructure and technology. For example, the G7 Summit in June 2022 launched a \$600 billion fund to mobilize investment in global infrastructure projects as an answer to the Belt and Road Initiative. But the G7's endeavor is a decade too late and short of billions of dollars, because the China-proposed initiative was launched in 2013 and completed or is working on projects worth more than \$4 trillion.

There are also presentation problems. The industrialized countries claim they are banding together to defend universal values, underpinning a liberal world

order. But China and Russia argue that the industrialized countries are trying to rebuild a hierarchy based on imperialism and white supremacy. Opinion polls in the Global South show the arguments of Russia and China have found a receptive audience. Even within the Global North, many countries believe unilateral US actions are alienating some of their business partners. In fact, the US' restrictions on technology exports to China will deal another big blow to the biggest tech enterprises in the ROK, Japan and the EU.

The Global North is also worried that China might end up controlling the technologies of the future and building what one senior US official said was "a terrifying surveillance autocracy" with a worldwide reach.

To be sure, the pandemic has intensified the competition between China and the US, and the US has been bad-mouthing and stigmatizing China in the hope that it will help it emerge victorious in the competition. But that might not happen.

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## Party determined to succeed in mission to end corruption

**Editor's note:** Chinese discipline inspection commissions and supervision agencies at all levels are urged to ensure strict discipline enforcement, and great efforts are made to enforce strict political oversight to uphold the authority, writes a veteran journalist with China Daily.

As its year-opener, China Central Television broadcast a four-part documentary on the investigations into corruption cases and sentencing of the suspects last year. Such TV programs, supported by the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection of the Communist Party of China, have been aired for the past several years to demonstrate the Party's determination to root out corruption and act as deterrence against potential wrongdoers.

Corruption has been a challenge for governments across the world for thousands of years. Many a regime has met its end due to uncontrolled corruption. Some countries have even witnessed violent revolutions leading to the overthrow of the government.

Learning from history, the CPC, after coming to power 74 years ago, made it clear that it represents the interests of the people, is committed to serving them, and has zero tolerance for corruption of any kind.

For example, in 1952, two provincial-level officials were sentenced to death for embezzling disaster relief funds nearly 2 million yuan (\$298,383) despite the fact that they were revolutionary war heroes. When the Party chose the road of reform and opening-up in the late 1970s, it set up two important organs — the advisory commission and the discipline inspection commission. While the former comprised hundreds of veterans who had retired from important positions to make room for younger officials, the latter served as watchdogs to ensure Party discipline is maintained and corruption cases are investigated.

**Discipline inspection groups have been sent to ministries and provinces, which in turn sent similar groups to lower-level jurisdictions.**

The advisory commission was disbanded in the early 1990s after completing its mission. But the discipline inspection commission was strengthened, both in terms of human resources and power, because of the increase in corruption with the development of the market economy.

Its work, however, was conducted mostly within the Party, with the corruption cases and officials' punishment either not made public or conveyed through Party documents that only higher-level officials had access to. As a result, there were rumors and hearsay about certain officials being dismissed or imprisoned because of corruption.

About a decade ago, the campaign against corruption was intensified and the public was made aware of the rising number of cases in the hope that the people would strengthen the anti-corruption drive by acting as whistleblowers.

The policy worked. Almost every week, the website of the CCDI uploads several corruption cases involving provincial-level or lower-level officials. In 2021, the CCDI and lower-level discipline inspection commissions investigated about 630,000 cases and punished nearly the same number of corrupt officials and Party members. Of the officials punished, 36 were of provincial or ministerial level, 3,024 were of bureau directorial level, 25,000 of county level. The CPC has a membership of 96.7 million.

The punishment ranged from Party warnings, demerit, cancellation of Party membership and dismissal from the official position for minor cases to the death sentence by a court of law. Discipline inspection groups have been sent to ministries and provinces, which in turn sent similar groups to lower-level jurisdictions.

The inspectors attend decision-making meetings either as members of a leading body or as non-voting members. Reporting directly to the CCDI, they have their mail box, letter box and phone number open to any information.

Inspection teams have also been sent to Party and government institutions, either randomly or according to advance plans. As a result, some 81,000 people have voluntarily surrendered to discipline inspection and supervision agencies over the past five years.

But despite the intensive campaign, corruption is yet to be fully eliminated. Last year, China's courts investigated 31,000 embezzlement and bribery cases involving 44,000 people — mostly leading officials. That means an increase of 6.7 and 5.2 percent respectively over the previous year.

That also indicates the fight against corruption remains tough and complex, and the tug-of-war between the Party and corrupt officials will continue for a long time.

With the Party determined to root out corruption with the help of discipline and supervision inspectors and the full support of the public, we are sure the Party and the public will emerge the winner.

# GLOBAL VIEWS

LOU CHUNHAO

## Making trouble is its business

Efforts of the US to drive wedges between China and its neighbors are creating turbulence in the region

To serve its ambition to out-compete and outmaneuver China, the United States has stepped up efforts to incite bloc confrontations in the Asia-Pacific region, and sow discord between China and its neighbors.

The US has linked the Ukraine crisis with the Taiwan question and the South China Sea situation in a bid to hype up the alleged "China threat", undermining the trust of neighboring countries in China. The US has also enhanced defense cooperation with its allies and partners to establish a military alliance network that encircles China.

It has advanced exclusive security blocs such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) and the Australia-United Kingdom-United States Partnership (AUKUS), aiming to create an "Asia-Pacific NATO". From the geo-economic perspective, it also tried to persuade Japan, the Republic of Korea and India to decouple from China, compete with China and even replace China's role in the global supply chains. It has launched the "Indo-Pacific" Economic Framework for Prosperity, which has been joined by Japan, the ROK, India and seven members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in an attempt to reshape the region's economic order.

The US has also fanned the flames of the East China Sea issue, the South China Sea issue and the tension between China and India

over their border dispute, stirred up trouble in the Taiwan Straits, and hyped up the so-called Xinjiang issue and Tibet issue.

Although most of China's neighbors are reluctant to choose sides between China and the US, certain countries and forces have been actively cooperating with the US in its anti-China strategy, posing severe security challenges in China's neighboring environment.

In the East China Sea, Japan is actively playing the role of a US military outpost to serve the latter's strategy to contain China in exchange for the US commitment that the disputed Diaoyu Islands fall within the scope of the US-Japan Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security. It has planned joint operations with the US for a possible military conflict with China over the Diaoyu Islands.

On Dec 16, 2022, Japan finalized three documents including the National Security Strategy, which outlined an overhaul of its defense and security strategy. The three documents enable the country to acquire so-called counterstrike capacity, which marks a milestone shift from its "purely defensive" postwar posture, and reveals the country's intent to compete militarily with China.



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

rily with China.

China has made great efforts in cooling down the South China Sea issue together with countries in Southeast Asia which have also shown restraint. However, a few extra-regional powers such as the US and Japan, don't want to see the peaceful settlement of the territorial disputes. They have tried to pressure China to comply with the so-called South China Sea arbitration of 2016. They have increased their military involvement in the area, interfered in negotiations over the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea, and hyped up the South China Sea issue on various multilateral occasions.

Although China and India have reached a consensus on maintain-

ing stability in the western section of the China-India boundary, India has put the border situation as a precondition for improving bilateral ties, and continuously strengthened its infrastructure building and military presence in the border areas. In November, India and the US conducted a high-altitude joint military exercise near the Sino-Indian border, heightening tension in the border region. In early December, Indian troops illegally crossed the Line of Actual Control in the Dongzhang area of the eastern section of the China-India border.

Political tensions in Northeast Asia and South Asia remain high. The Republic of Korea has toughened its stance against the Democrat-

ic People's Republic of Korea, and beefed up its joint military exercises with the US. In response, the DPRK has carried out a series of missile tests and vowed to bolster its nuclear capability, aggravating the tension on the Korean Peninsula.

The past year has witnessed much less frontline exchange of fire between India and Pakistan, but the two countries have quarreled severely over issues such as the Kashmir dispute and terrorism. The two sub-regional hotspot issues pose direct challenges to China's border security.

In the face of the complex and challenging neighboring environment, China has played the role as a responsible

major country and cooperated with neighboring countries to build a community with a shared future. It has advanced its head-of-state diplomacy successfully. In September, President Xi Jinping attended the 22nd Meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and paid state visits to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, cementing China's strategic partnerships with its Central Asian neighbors.

After the conclusion of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, leaders of neighboring countries, such as Vietnam, Pakistan, Mongolia, and Laos, successively visited China, highlighting the importance China

attaches to its neighborhood diplomacy. In November, President Xi attended the 17th G20 Summit and the 29th APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting, and paid a state visit to Thailand, where his proposal of building an Asia-Pacific community with a shared future won international acclaim.

China has promoted pragmatic cooperation and win-win cooperation. China is willing to share its development benefits with neighbors and help them walk on a path of peaceful development.

In 2022, China promoted the alignment between the Belt and Road Initiative and development strategies of other countries, such as Mongolia's Steppe Road Program and Laos' strategy to convert itself from a land-locked country to a land-linked hub. China signed with neighboring countries agreements of cooperation on trade and investment facilitation, the digital economy and low-carbon development, while advancing major projects. It also pressed ahead with the implementation of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, furthering the regional integration process.

China has also made efforts to defuse regional tensions.

China has called for the US to take concrete steps to address the legitimate security concerns of the DPRK. China has also maintained close communications with ASEAN countries over the political situation in Myanmar, and stressed the unique advantage of ASEAN in handling the Myanmar issue, and tried to promote peace talks. The country has also, via multiple channels, sent humanitarian assistance such as foodstuff, medical materials and winter supplies to Afghanistan, supporting the peaceful reconstruction of the country.

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WEI ZONGYOU

## Looking at the 'Indo-Pacific' in 2023

Both opportunities and challenges exist for the region's security landscape where there have been promising new developments as well as some old problems

The "Indo-Pacific" region was largely at peace in 2022, although tension ran high in the Taiwan Straits in early August due to the then US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan against Beijing's wishes. Looking ahead, three new developments will help reinforce peaceful trends in the region, while "old problems" will still pose serious challenges to regional peace and stability.

First, China-US relations may witness some progress after years of free fall. In November 2022, ahead of the G20 Summit in Indonesia, President Xi Jinping and President Joe Biden met face-to-face for the first time since Biden became president. The two leaders shared the view that it was necessary to work out the principles guiding China-US relations and agreed that their respective diplomatic teams should maintain strategic communication and conduct regular consultations. Besides, the two leaders agreed that their financial teams would continue dialogue and coordination on macroeconomic policies, economic and trade ties, and the two sides would conduct dialogue and cooperation in public health, agriculture and food security, among other areas.

In a word, the two leaders agreed to maintain communication and dialogue and responsibly manage the differences between the two countries and avoid strategic miscalculation and misunderstanding. As a first step, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will visit China in February to follow up on the agreements and guidance the two leaders have reached. In addition, the financial and trade teams will also resume their dialogue to deal with the thorny economic and trade issues between them. The resumed communication and dialogue will not only help manage the differences and avoid strategic miscalculation and misunderstanding, but also pave the way for more practical cooperation in the areas of climate change, public health, economic and trade relations, among others.

And the thaw in China-US relations will no doubt help reduce the growing tensions in the "Indo-Pacific".

Second, there may appear some precious opportunities to arrest the downturn spiral in China-India relations. For the past several years, China-India relations have experienced some difficulties due to border conflicts, strategic distrust and growing competition. India even put its long-held non-alignment foreign policy tradition in jeopardy by joining the Quad, an informal grouping among India, Japan, Australia, and the US, updated from senior-level security dialogue to leader-level summit in 2021 aiming at containing China's influence in the "Indo-Pacific" region. And while India refused to join the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership trade agreement, of which China is a member, it joined the US-led "Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity", from which China is excluded.

That said, India still feels uncomfortable about putting all its eggs in one basket and doesn't want to be viewed as overtly anti-China. In 2023, India will host two very important international events for the first time, namely the G20 Summit and the annual summit of heads of state of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Both India and China are members of the two institutions, with China being SCO's initiator and founding member. As India prepares for these two important summits, there's an opportunity China-India diplomatic relations may warm up and the two sides may join hands in arresting the downward relations.

Third, the South China Sea situation may take a turn for the better. In the past three years, partly due



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to the COVID-19 pandemic, consultations and dialogues on the Code of Conduct on the South China Sea have largely stalled with few offline meetings going on to make progress on the draft text of the COC.

With China's major policy updates about the COVID-19 pandemic prevention and control, the year 2023 is expected to see more offline meetings and dialogues between China and ASEAN concerning the COC, and hopefully the concerned parties may finalize the draft text consultation as soon as possible.

In addition, Vietnam's General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong and Philippine President Ferdinand Romualdez Marcos Jr. visited China in October 2022 and January 2023 respectively. Both leaders expressed their wishes to develop friendly relations and promote further prac-

tical cooperation with China. On the South China Sea issue, China and Vietnam agree on the need to maintain peace and stability, so as not to let maritime issues affect the overall development of bilateral relations. The Philippine president expressed his willingness to continue to properly handle maritime issues through friendly consultation, and resume negotiations on oil and gas exploration. As two important parties to the South China Sea disputes, their leaders' visit to China and willingness to handle the issues in a cooperative and friendly manner will no doubt help dial down the tension in the South China Sea.

Despite the above-mentioned positive developments, there remain at least three challenges for the security environment in the "Indo-Pacific" region in 2023.

First, the Taiwan question. The

Biden administration has reassured China on numerous occasions that it sticks to the one-China policy, does not support Taiwan independence, and does not support "two Chinas" or "One China, One Taiwan". However, on at least four occasions since he became president, Biden vowed the US will defend Taiwan if it is "attacked" by the Chinese mainland, though on each occasion the White House backpedaled on his "stumble".

What's more, the new House Speaker Kevin McCarthy declared in 2022 that if elected Speaker, he would do what Nancy Pelosi did by "visiting" Taiwan to show his support for Taiwan's democracy. And the US Senate and House each put forward a Taiwan Policy Act, which aims to fundamentally change the US' interactions with Taiwan in the political, economic, and security arenas. Though the Taiwan Policy Act is unlikely to be passed by both chambers, let alone signed into law in its current version, its impact on China-US relations and the cross-Straits stability cannot be taken lightly.

If McCarthy does visit Taiwan in 2023 or parts of the Taiwan Policy Act make its way into policy formula, China-US relations will witness another shock comparable to or even worse than that in August 2022 when Pelosi visited Taiwan.

Second, the Korean Peninsula situation. On Dec 31, 2022, at the Enlarged Session of the Sixth Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the Korean Labor Party, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's top leader Kim Jong-un declared that the DPRK will develop new intercontinental missiles, launch new military reconnaissance satellites, and greatly enlarge its nuclear stockpile to defend its sovereignty and secu-

riety and create a deterrent against the threat from the Republic of Korea and the US. The ROK reacted by warning that if the DPRK dares to use nuclear weapons, it will mean self-destruction. Besides, the ROK Department of Defense vowed to significantly improve the implementation of the US' "extended deterrence" to deter and cope with the DPRK's nuclear threat.

ROK President Yoon Suk-yeol even declared that the ROK was discussing with the US on the possibility of holding joint nuclear exercises. He said that even though the nuclear weapons belong to the US, the nuclear planning, information sharing and exercises should be jointly carried out by both the ROK and the US. However, the White House immediately denied the US will conduct joint nuclear exercises with the ROK. Nevertheless, given the DPRK's ambition, the security situation on the Korean Peninsula in 2023 looks bleak.

Third, the China-India border issue. In December 2022, Chinese and Indian border troops clashed in the eastern part of the China-India border, with both sides suffering minor injuries. The incidents didn't escalate or impact overall bilateral relations. However, it indicates how precarious the situation is and its potential to trigger confrontation. Given the complexity of the issue, both sides are unlikely to make major progress in discussions on the border issue, even though both sides don't want the issue to run out of control. The best they can do is to reach some protocols in patrolling the disputing border areas and avoid military escalation once incidents break out. The border issue is like the Sword of Damocles hanging over China-India relations and remains a flashpoint in bilateral relations.

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LIFE

# Exhibition frames New Year pictures

As Spring Festival approaches, the ongoing exhibition of traditional Chinese New Year pictures at the Guangdong Museum provides an artistic and cultural angle for understanding this important event.

Traditionally, New Year pictures are acquired and displayed in homes and other places to celebrate Chinese New Year.

The more than 300 pictures, and woodblocks used for making such pictures, at the exhibition come from museums and publishers in Foshan, Guangdong province; Taohuawu in Suzhou, Jiangsu province; Yangjiabu village in Weifang, Shandong province; Zhuxian town in Henan province; Mianzhu, Sichuan province; Wuqiang county, Hebei province and Tianjin's Yangliuqing township.

Among them, the history of New Year pictures from Zhuxian town in Henan province can be traced back to Kaifeng, the then capital of the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127).

New Year pictures mostly reached their peak during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) in the aforementioned places that have contributed exhibits.

The exhibition at the Guangdong Museum in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, is themed on immortals, people, life and customs, and legends.

Traditionally, the preparations for celebrating the New Year start in the 12th lunar month. Late in the month, the picture of *zaoshen*, the kitchen god, is displayed in the cooking area for good luck in the new year, according to the organizer of the exhibition.

On Lunar New Year's Eve, pictures depicting *menshen*, or door gods, appear on front doors to guard the house from evil spirits. Door gods were initially pictured in a military style, but started to also feature figures resembling civil officials during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). In the Ming and Qing dynasties, celestial beings and auspicious animals also found a position on the door.

When the new year descends, images depicting gods of luck, fortune, longevity, happiness and wealth adorn houses.

Figures with a sacred status that also appear in the New Year pictures can include saints and immortals from Confucian, Buddhist and Taoist beliefs, as well as a number of "gods" that oversee vari-

Guangdong Museum explores images and reason behind activity associated with ushering in a fresh era, reports **Li Wenfang** in Guangzhou.



More than 300 New Year pictures, and woodblocks used for making such pictures, are on display at the Guangdong Museum in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, themed on immortals, people, life and customs, and legends. The exhibition will end on March 29. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

ous areas of life and business.

Among them, Zhong Kui, who is a mythological demon-killer, and Guan Yu, a general in the late Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220), who was later elevated to divine status following the Song Dynasty (960-1279), are famous examples.

Besides figures in human form, animals deemed auspicious also

have a place in New Year pictures, including the dragon, tiger, deer, crane, goat, monkey, lion and cat. For example, a picture featuring the cat and butterfly expresses a wish for longevity, because *maodie*, or the names of the two animals (*mao* meaning cat and *die* meaning butterfly) joined together, is a homophone of the word pertaining to

very old age — from 80 to 90. Additionally, the cat, by catching the mouse, guards the grains, and the silkworm that produces the materials for textile products.

Mortals followed divine figures, and began to appear in the New Year pictures, as people paid more attention to their own lives and development.

During the Ming and Qing dynasties, many such pictures depicted beautiful women living a desirable life. In the pictures, they can be seen visiting quiet, natural surroundings, or staying in an exquisite room. They are often pictured doing embroidery, playing a musical instrument or chess, painting, nurturing children or enjoying

some form of performance.

The most memorable New Year pictures, however, are perhaps those featuring one or more cherubic babies, often depicted holding a big fish, which express the hope of having a large family. Fish and lotus flowers in those pictures both have auspicious connotations.

New-style New Year pictures were first created in the liberated areas during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45) in line with the political, military and economic needs.

After the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949, and with the support of the Ministry of Culture, more new-style works were created, alongside the more traditional themes. The new-style works cover themes on industrial and agricultural work, unity of the army and the people, healthcare and children's education.

In the 1980s, art publishers started to move away from their New Year picture business to other, more lucrative, sectors.

The third part of the exhibition focuses on New Year pictures that highlight traditional festivals, people's daily work, four seasons and current affairs.

Pictures featuring scenery and places of interest drew on traditional Chinese painting techniques and showed the influence of the Western artistic technique of linear perspective.

Flowers, birds, plants and insects, which were themes in traditional Chinese paintings, also featured in New Year pictures, often joined by auspicious elements.

In the final part of the exhibition, visitors can see historical figures and events, legends, as well as scenes and actors from traditional Chinese operas, in New Year pictures, with some being produced in a serial form.

During the late Qing Dynasty, and from the early 1910s to '40s, news-themed New Year pictures appeared, as novel things kept emerging during those turbulent times.

Alongside the pictures, the technique for making such pictures, which includes woodblock printing and a combination of woodblock printing and painting, are also displayed. The exhibition will run until March 29.

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## Tang Dynasty tombs unearthed in Shaanxi province

XIAN — Three tombs believed to date back to the Tang Dynasty (618-907) have been discovered in Xi'an, the capital of Northwest China's Shaanxi province, local authorities said on Thursday.

The three tombs were unearthed in Chang'an district in Xi'an, according to the Shaanxi provincial institute of archaeology.

In one of the tombs, a well-preserved 1,769-word epitaph was

**1,769**  
characters

number of words in an epitaph found in a Tang-Dynasty tomb excavated in Xi'an

found on a stone measuring 76.7 centimeters in length, 77.1 cm in width and 14.5 cm in height. It was written by Liu Gongquan, a famous litterateur and calligrapher during the Tang Dynasty.


The tomb where the epitaph was found was built in the shape of a knife handle and is positioned in a south-north direction.

One tower-shaped pot lid, two pottery busts and one pottery dog


were also unearthed.

The epitaph was written by Liu in his later years. It has been excavated by archaeologists and will provide important physical materials for the study of Liu's calligraphy art, says Chen Xuwei, a research intern at the Shaanxi provincial institute of archaeology.

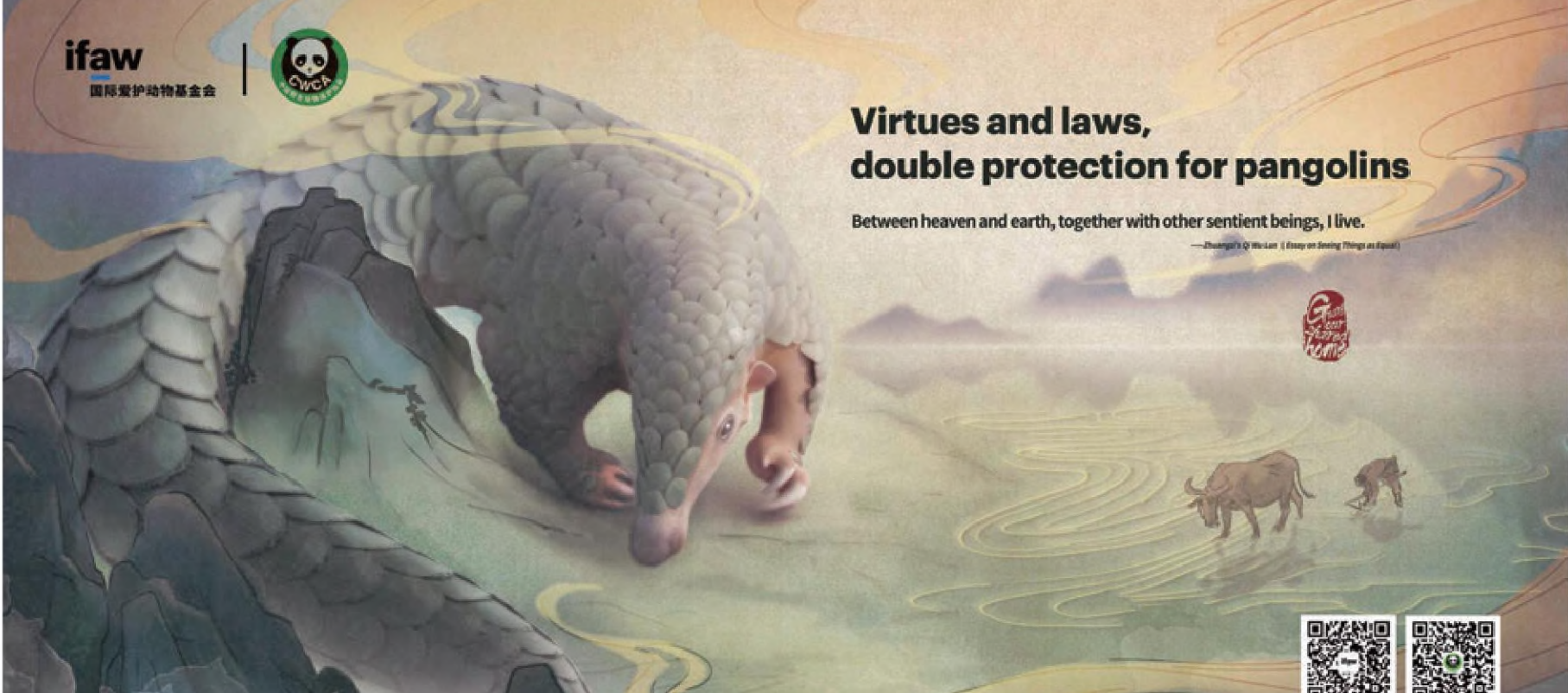
XINHUA



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**Virtues and laws,  
double protection for pangolins**

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

—Zhangzi's Qi Wu Lun (Essay on Seeing Things as Equal)

## LIFE



# Gala delves into a sea of myths to present a mountain of culture

Henan TV continues its festival-themed programming with a modern musical interpretation of an ancient Chinese literary classic, **Wang Qian** reports.

The ancient Chinese myths featured in *Shanhaijing*, or *The Classic of Mountains and Seas*, have long inspired modern music. *Mountainsea Musical Evening*, a gala hosted by Henan Satellite TV and streaming platform Youku, is the latest example of how young musicians have interpreted the mythology in their lyrics. Presented via extended reality technology, and with creative stage designs in line with the mythological tales, the gala was broadcast on Saturday evening — the day of “Little New Year”, or *xiaonian* in Chinese, which is usually celebrated a week before Lunar New Year, which will fall on Sunday.

“Through the musical language, we tried to depict the stories in *Shanhaijing* onstage, presenting Eastern aesthetics to the audience,” Zhou Jun, director of the gala, says, adding that, as a treasure in Chinese literature, the book is an encyclopedic collection describing faraway lands and the fantastical tribes residing in them, which shows Chinese people’s romanticism, philosophy and values.

The show opened with Taiwan singer

Kenji Wu’s song, paying tribute to the legendary story of Kuaifu, a man who aspired to chase the sun.

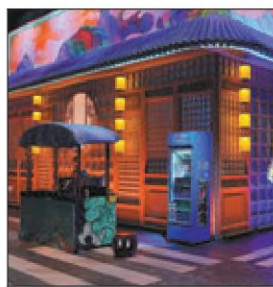
“We made a big adjustment to the ending of the story to mark the country’s successful launch of Kuaifu-1, a solar exploration satellite. Unlike the tragic hero in *Shanhaijing*, the Kuaifu onstage does catch up with the sun,” Zhou says, adding that, from the legend more than 2,500 years ago to the progress in space exploration the country has made today, it is amazing and they are proud to see the past and the present interact with each other in the performance.

Following the opening song, four chapters themed on the mythical creatures in *Shanhaijing* are unveiled, featuring pop songs and dances categorized as *guochao*, which refers to the modern trend toward Chinese cultural elements and traditional style. The ancient tales were staged with modern elements or interpretations.

In the pop songs, Zhou hopes the audience can feel the bravery of *yinglong* (a winged dragon) and that the love songs can express the charms of *jiuweihu* (nine-tailed fox). Although

“Nowadays, young people want things that reflect their own culture, which takes the *guochao* trend to new heights.”

Zhou Jun, gala director



these implausible tales have endured for thousands of years, their exploration about the feelings of fury, love, desire and loss are still felt today.

In these songs, the ancient mythical world is recalled and triggers the cultural confidence among the younger generation, according to Zhou.

Besides songs, Liu Yu performed a dance, *Painting Scroll*, using his body as brush strokes to paint *luanniao*, *zouwu* and *zhulong*, three mythical creatures from *Shanhaijing*.

At the gala, there was also a specially created “street” with a hotpot restaurant that hosted a gathering of post-1990 generation photographers, illustrators, craftsmen and designers, who have rediscovered the beauty of ancient Chinese culture.

“Nowadays, young people want things that reflect their own culture, which takes the *guochao* trend to new heights,” Zhou says, adding that *Shanhaijing* provides endless expressive possibilities to youths, favoring creativity and surrealism.

As technology changes how stories are told, Xu Jia from the gala’s digital team says it was the stage that brought

these mythical tales from human imagination to audiences, both visually and immersively.

“In technological terms, I can say that we created a spectacular stage, applying the latest invention in motion capture, the virtual camera,” Xu says. The virtual camera acts more like a virtual monitor that allows directors to judge the overall effect of the show.

It was not the first time that Henan Satellite TV has produced programs inspired by traditional culture. Since its dance show depicting female musicians at the Tang Dynasty (618-907) banquet went viral in 2021, breaking the stereotype of Chinese classical dance with its humorous and realistic tone, the television station has released a series of programs themed around Chinese festivals.

“Drawing experiences from these successful programs, the content creation team wants to create a brand-new stage, which shortens the distance between performers and audiences,” Zhou says.

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*Mountainsea Musical Evening* depicts the stories in *Shanhaijing* onstage, and presents Eastern aesthetics to the audience. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## Harbin’s winter tourism starts heating up again

HARBIN — Seeing an increasing number of people visiting the Polar Park since it started operating weeks ago in Harbin, capital of Northeast China’s Heilongjiang province, Zhang Jiwei, the park’s marketing manager, is becoming more confident about the venue’s performance this winter.

Harbin is famous for its ice and snow resources. This winter, the city opened three winter-themed parks, launched 12 ice and snow experience products and 10 winter tourism routes, and created more than 100 related activities to promote the development of winter tourism, culture, fashion and sports.

Although the temperature can drop below -20°C, screams of joy and waves of laughter have been heard in the parks.

“We planned to celebrate the New Year here; the colder it is, the happier we are,” says Liu Shuang, a tourist from Tianjin who came to Harbin with her husband.

China recorded roughly 52.7 million domestic tourist visits during the three-day New Year holiday, up 0.44 percent year-on-year, according to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

Tourism revenue generated over the holiday reached over 26.5 billion yuan (\$3.8 billion), up 4 percent from the same period last year.

These figures showed that people’s consumption willingness and travel expectations were shifting from a cautious to a more optimistic direction, says Dai Bin, president of the China Tourism Academy.

“Winter tourism attracts more

young people, and therefore we pay more attention to the quality of our products to effectively meet tourist demands,” says Geng Deyong, an official of the management committee of Changbai Mountain in the northeastern province of Jilin.

Changbai Mountain is building itself into a globally influential tourism destination and is expanding its ice and snow tourism options.

Industry insiders believe that the recent recovery of winter tourism is due to the recovery of people’s travel confidence and increasing demand, while the upcoming Spring Festival holiday will also boost winter tourism.

Optimized epidemic prevention and control measures, inspiration stemming from the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, and the popularization of ice and snow sports will further promote the development of the ice and snow industries, Dai says.

XINHUA

## Sichuan Paleolithic site offers further clues to human cultural evolution

CHENGDU — A rich collection of artifacts has been unearthed from a large Paleolithic site in Southwest China’s Sichuan province, marking a major breakthrough in China’s Paleolithic archaeology.

Located in Xiangshan township of Suining, the Taohuahe site is composed of two separated areas, with one covering over 90,000 square meters, according to Zheng Zhexuan, leader of the archaeological team from the Sichuan Provincial Cultural Relics and Archaeology Research Institute.

Preliminary estimates suggest that the site dates back between 50,000 and 200,000 years.

Hundreds of stone artifacts such as hatchets and scrapers, and dozens of fossils of deer, cattle, horses

“The well-preserved site provides rich information in areas such as ... the living environment of ancient humans and their behavior.”

Gao Xing, researcher

and other herbivores, have been unearthed at the site.

Archaeologists say the site is clearly stratified, with densely distributed stone tools revealing three consecutive periods of

Paleolithic culture.

“The well-preserved site provides rich information in areas such as geological conditions, geomorphological characteristics, the living environment of ancient humans and their behavior,” says Gao Xing, a researcher from the Institute of Vertebrate Paleontology and Paleoanthropology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

This information will help reveal the sequence of cultural evolution over a specific time period in the region, Gao adds.

The Taohuahe site was discovered in June 2022 during an archaeological investigation, and excavation work started a month later.

XINHUA

## LIFE



A member of Xie Zhilei's water environment monitoring team takes samples for testing from a river in Hulunbuir in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

# Water guardian's tide of progress

Protecting lakes from pollution ensures environmentalist has a clear sense of achievement, report **Yang Feiyue** and **Yuan Hui** in Hohhot.

**H**ulun Lake resembles a snowfield as winter grips the country's northern area.

Yet, the pretty lake scene in Hulunbuir in the north of the Inner Mongolia autonomous region hides a multitude of hazards and difficulties for Xie Zhilei as he takes sample of its water in January.

"It's the biggest lake in North China, so we have to set up multiple checkpoints to get the big picture of its water conditions, from the banks all the way to the center," says the 35-year-old, director of a water environment monitoring division in Hohhot that is affiliated to the region's general environmental monitoring station.

"Things are easier in the summer, when we can just take a boat," he says.

The lake usually freezes from November to April, so Xie and his colleagues would have to drive on the ice to reach the lake's deeper ends.

"The surface is rugged and sharp here and there, so it might slice open the tires," Xie says.

"You also have to be careful and circumvent the 'green ditch,'" Xie adds as he keeps a fully opened eye on the ice surface.

Locals refer to precarious ice surface as the "green ditch."

"Once you drive on it, you'll run a big risk of dropping into the lake."

Years of work experience have enabled Xie to navigate potential dangers and get the water sampling done.

"The ditches are mostly formed because of the spring mouths at the bottom of the lake, as the temperature of spring water is relatively high," Xie explains.

But as their positions can be surveyed, the "green ditches" can thus be predicted after Xie and his team work with the lake's management committee.

"Another safe bet is to follow the existing skid marks," he says.

Despite the rich experiences of Xie and his team, precautionary measures have been taken in case

of emergencies.

The team is divided in two cars that run at least 200 meters apart, so once an accident happens, rescue work from the other vehicle can be carried out immediately.

The water quality check has to be conducted once a month, come rain or shine.

"The freezing of the surface will result in a reduction of oxygen in the water, which could affect fish and other living creatures in the lake," Xie explains, adding that keeping track of the water quality will help preserve its ecology.

"We're more like a health check-up department. Once the problem is spotted, other related departments will come in to intervene."

After they reach a water sampling point, they will start drilling through the ice, which is sometimes 1.5 meters thick.

The manual work is demanding amid the wisps of white air rendered by the cold temperature that is 40 degrees below zero.

When the ice is drilled through, water sampling ensues according to stringent protocols.

"For example, it has to be about 50 centimeters below the water surface, for fear of interference from drifting leaves or ship oil residue," Xie explains.

The lake covers an area of more than 220,000 hectares and was one of the first lakes in the country to have water ecology evaluation carried out.

Xie spends the daytime with his colleagues sampling water and then analyzing data at night.

He knows about the perils of nature. He has traversed the uninhabited grasslands, stayed in the dormitories of border guards, experienced skin allergies brought about by mosquito bites, and even had a few close calls when the car was trapped in muddy swamps for a long time.

"The harsh natural environment comes with the territory," he says.

But Xie has come to enjoy it.

He loves to see the water distribution through the satellite images before planning the routes of his expedition.

"When I get back from a field trip, I review it online, and it will enhance my perception of the sur-

Although (Xie) Zhilei is young, he has become a backbone (of the division) and takes on a large amount of important environmental monitoring work."

**Tian Yongli**, head of Inner Mongolia's general environmental monitoring station

rounding environment," Xie says.

Plus, he has got to appreciate nature's wonder as some of the water sites are tucked away in stunning landscapes.

Wearing thin-framed glasses, dark blue jeans and a thick sports jacket, Xie exudes a scholarly vibe.

He studied water engineering at the Hefei University of Technology in East China's Anhui province from 2006-10 out of his awareness of the importance of environmental protection.

"I watched the news a lot and I saw how the government put a premium on preserving nature, and talent in the field of water engineering was in demand," he recalls.

Xie went on to pursue his master's and doctoral degrees in lake ecology at the Inner Mongolia University in Hohhot.

"As you connect the dots of a water system, hydrology, climate and ecology, you'll find it very interesting, taken as a whole," Xie says.

Upon graduation, Xie received offers from economically developed cities, including Beijing, Shenzhen in Guangdong province and Nanjing in Jiangsu province, but he chose to stay put.

"I found three out of the four lakes, such as Hulun Lake and Daihai Lake in my hometown that I studied, were all highlighted by the government for strengthening ecological restoration," Xie says.

"It gave me a sense of mission,

since I had already had a good grasp of related theories, which would pave the way for me to conduct field work," he says, adding that the decision was also partly out of nostalgia.

In order to ensure the surface water environmental quality monitoring data is factual, accurate and comprehensive, the central government and the autonomous region have built a number of monitoring stations.

A major responsibility of Xie's work is sorting out and analyzing mass data from those stations across the autonomous region.

"We need to make sense of those abstract data," Xie says.

For example, some data discrepancies might be temporary due to extreme weather like heavy rain or complex geological conditions, while some are actually a result of human activities.

When some of the water stations were put into use at the beginning, Xie and his team were able to identify certain enterprises that stealthily discharged pollutants through the data.

"It could lead to a significant increase in the main indicators of surface water through the analysis of continuous real-time data from the automatic monitoring," Xie says.

Then, Xie and his colleagues immediately reported the problem to law enforcement departments, which urged those enterprises to improve the sewage treatment process, and reduce the concentration of pollutant emissions.

But, since those stations can only be built on sites with access to electricity, water, good transportation and the internet, it's still necessary for Xie and his colleagues to conduct field research.

"The west of the region is relatively dry, so we wouldn't miss any rivers and lakes, but the eastern part enjoys relatively rich water resources, therefore, we choose our subjects selectively," he explains.

As his work experience grows, Xie has managed to deliver monthly environmental quality reports on key lakes in Inner Mongolia and takes a lead in drafting

the construction plan for an ecological and environmental monitoring system for the Yellow River basin in the region.

"Although Zhilei is young, he has become a backbone (of the division) and takes on a large amount of important environmental monitoring work," says Tian Yongli, head of Inner Mongolia's general environmental monitoring station.

His work laid a solid technical foundation for pollution prevention and water improvement, Tian adds.

Xie's work has also enabled him to see the positive changes in local environment over the years.

"It surprised me to see that a long dried riverbed near my home (in Tongliao) started to have water flow through it in 2022," he says.

"And the water quality improvement has been evident over the past five years, with strange odors and colors in the water all gone."

In particular, the Hulun Lake has seen its water area expanded, wetland ecology recovered and biodiversity improved.

The water area of Hulun Lake has expanded to about 224,400 hectares, an increase of nearly 50,000 hectares from a decade ago, according to the Hulun Lake National Nature Reserve Administration.

The lake's water volume, meanwhile, has reached 13.97 billion cubic meters, a near-record high, the administration says.

The wetland ecology of the once dwindling lake has gradually recovered and the biodiversity in the area has continued to improve. Since 2016, the number of bird species recorded in the area has increased from 333 to 345, and the number of mammal species has risen from 35 to 38.

Xie has come to realize how the steady monitoring and accurate scientific analysis at work play a vital role in establishing environmental protection standards and helping to make major environmental protection decisions.

"I feel fortunate to be a guardian of the lucid waters and lush mountains," he says.

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## Fascinating Dunhuang exhibition, but VR is the future

Last month, I went to Dunhuang. I didn't actually go to the desert town in Gansu province, though I'm spending a few days there this Spring Festival, if only to contribute to the 2.1 billion passenger trips expected during the rush. Instead, I attended an exhibition at Beijing's Minsheng Art Museum.

Put together by the Dunhuang Academy, it was exhaustive; room after room of painstaking reproductions of the murals for which Dunhuang's Mogao Caves are globally (and justifiably) famous. Painted in a variety of styles — the 492 caves and cells span 1,000 years — the originals vary in quality, some more crude than others.



Warren Singh-Bartlett  
Second Thoughts

There were also texts and sculptures unearthed at the site, which hint at the diversity of life in what for China, was a frontier town on the fringes of the great western deserts, but which as a Silk Road trade post, was frequented by people from all over Central and South Asia, and beyond. Hence, there are texts in Tibetan, Sogdian (a language once widely spoken in Central Asia), Sanskrit, Old Uyghur and even Syriac, an ancient language still spoken by some Arab Christians in Syria and Lebanon, and on which I have subsequently learned, the Mongols based their alphabet.

For me, several things stood out. Of course, the re-creations of the most famous painted caves which, better lit and uncrowded, visitors are free to enjoy — a luxury I'm told is not as true in Dunhuang, but also a fascinating short film about a panel from Cave 254. It dates to the Northern Wei Dynasty (386-534) and depicts one of the most famous jatakas (Buddhist fables), the story of the Indian prince, Mahasattva, who relinquishes reincarnation (and hence salvation) by sacrificing himself to feed a family of starving tigers.

Though less than 2 square meters, the panel artfully squeezes in five central scenes, along with 20 figures, eight tigers, five goats, two deer, a monkey and the shining white pagoda that commemorates Mahasattva's noble sacrifice. The film highlights the techniques used to create the visual flow, and how it heightens emotions.

Two things struck me while watching. First, the echo with medieval stained-glass windows, which like Mogao's murals, were aids designed to be "read" by devotees familiar with the story, and second, the way the anonymous Cave 254 painter conveyed movement. The panel devoted to the prince's self-sacrifice verged on being animated. It was easy to imagine how, in flickering candlelight and a heightened state of devotion (or for fasting monks, hunger), Mahasattva would seem to move.

While the exhibition was spectacular, more curious was the decision to pair it with an unrelated virtual reality show. Parts were intriguing (yes, hot pink dancing 3D Shou Xing avatar, I mean you) and very "now," but for me, it just made me think of what it could have been.

As a longtime cheerleader for VR — my visit to the melancholy remains of the Temple of Artemis in Ephesus in 1997 first got me dreaming of walking through a digital re-creation of the former wonder of the ancient world one day — the juxtaposition with the Dunhuang exhibit turned this technical showcase into mere amusement.

And while that is the fate of so many of the technologies currently being hyped (Meta, anyone?), we are putting the cart before the horse. It isn't what VR can do now that's interesting, it's what it could do, soon.

Imagine then returning to Mogao 2.0 in a few years' time and instead of painted reconstructions, we walk through the Mahasattva mural, witnessing the fable unfold and then visit the caves as they are being built, painted and used, smell the burning candles and incense, chat with their craftsmen and illustrious sponsors, and learn history firsthand? As some have known for a long time, seen with the proper eyes, the past is far from dead. And once VR finally lives up to its promise, we'll be able to experience cultural treasures like Mogao the way they were always intended.

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Left: Horses race across the Hulun Lake to the grasslands. Right: Xie (third from right) discusses water monitoring operations with his colleagues in the Hohhot office. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

