



Inheriting skills

Artist innovates ancient techniques to make lanterns more durable **HOLIDAY IMAGE, PAGE 7**



Picture perfect

Photographers capture amazing moments of achievement

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China to file lawsuit against latest tariffs

Nation to take action at WTO after US moves in violation of trade body's rules

By **ZHU WENQIAN** in Beijing and **BELINDA ROBINSON** in New York

China will file a lawsuit with the World Trade Organization and take necessary countermeasures to safeguard its own rights and interests, the Ministry of Commerce said on Sunday after the United States announced it would impose a 10 percent additional tariff on goods from China.

The Ministry of Commerce said this move fails to solve the problems faced by the US, and undermines normal economic and trade cooperation between the two countries. An expert from a think tank in Beijing said the decision is expected to have a significant impact on US and Chinese industries.

"The unilateral imposition of tariffs by the US seriously violates the rules of the WTO. We urge the US to objectively and rationally view and handle its own fentanyl and other issues, rather than resorting to tariff threats against other countries," the ministry said in a statement.

Zhou Mi, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, said a higher tariff on Chinese goods will likely result in higher costs of importing products from China, and this cost may be further amplified along the supply chain.

"For US manufacturers, when they import intermediate materials or products from China, the costs of those products will increase, and the price increase will be transmitted along the layers of the supply chain. US consumers could face price inflation on certain products of over 10 percent," Zhou said.

He added that Chinese exporters could also face a significant challenge, as US importers may need to renegotiate with Chinese companies about specific prices and plans on additional costs.

The Foreign Ministry said in a

statement on Sunday that China has expressed strong dissatisfaction and resolute opposition to the latest move, and will take necessary countermeasures to firmly safeguard its legitimate rights and interests.

There are no winners in trade disputes, and China's stance is consistent and firm.

The US has levied a 10 percent tariff on Chinese imports under the pretext of the fentanyl issue.

The Foreign Ministry said fentanyl is a problem of the US, and China has been among the countries with the strictest and most thoroughly enforced narcotics control policies in the world. In a humanitarian spirit, China has provided support to the US in dealing with its fentanyl problem.

"China urges the US to correct its wrong practices, maintain the hard-won progress of China-US drug control cooperation, and promote stable, healthy and sustainable development of China-US relations," the Foreign Ministry said in the statement.

The latest move comes after a year of robust foreign trade between US and China.

In December alone, US seaports handled an equivalent of 451,000 40-foot containers of goods from China, up 14.5 percent year-on-year, with some companies stockpiling goods early to get ahead of tariff threats, according to trade data supplier Descartes Systems Group.

Last year, US imports of machinery, bedding, plastic toys and other products from China rose 15 percent over the levels seen in 2023, data from Descartes showed.

Some US companies decided to import goods "earlier" than usual to avoid the tariff threats and potential strikes at ports, Jonathan Gold, president of supply chain and customs policy at the National Retail Federation, told China Daily.

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CLEAN BILL OF HEALTH FOR HOME SERVICES

Household industry scrubs up driven by fast-growing demand

By **CHINA DAILY**

Chinese people have a tradition of thoroughly cleaning their homes before Spring Festival to sweep away bad luck and welcome good fortune.

Since the word "dust" sounds similar to the word "old" in Mandarin, removing dust and trash symbolically sweeps away the old to usher in the new.

In recent years, many households have chosen to "outsource" such pre-festival home cleaning. According to 58 Daojia, a home services company, there has been a surge in demand for house cleaning services before Spring Festival. As of December 2024, the number of orders for comprehensive house cleaning ser-

vices increased by 178 percent month-on-month, window cleaning orders surged by 2.7 times, and kitchen hood cleaning orders rose by 109 percent.

The rising demand for short-term house cleaning services is indicative of the rapid growth of the home services industry. Li Chao, a spokesperson for the National Development and Reform Commission, said at a news conference that the market size of China's household services industry has exceeded one trillion yuan (\$136.5 billion), with over 30 million professionals working in the industry. But even that is not enough to meet the demand.

See **Helpers**, page 3

Elevated performance



Folk artists on stilts entertain tourists on Saturday at the China Grand Canal Intangible Cultural Heritage Exhibition Hall in Cangzhou, Hebei province. **YUAN LIWEI / FOR CHINA DAILY**

Experts: DeepSeek sets benchmark for Chinese firms

By **CHENG YU**
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An increasing number of Chinese firms are poised to follow DeepSeek in pushing forward innovation and cooperation and making global breakthroughs despite rounds of sanctions from the United States, industry experts said on Sunday.

They made the comments after the US National Security Council is reportedly to look at the alleged national security implications of DeepSeek, a private Chinese startup that rocked the tech world recently with a super cost-effective AI large language model.

DeepSeek has already built a homegrown supply chain alliance, including 278 companies, which has increased the domestic production rate of key intellectual proper-

ties from 19 percent in 2022 to the current 64 percent.

Pan Helin, a member of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology's Expert Committee for Information and Communication Economy, said: "Amid the AI competition between US and China, DeepSeek has carved out a new technical path for large language models that doesn't rely on high-end chips and saves on computing power."

"It means that the computing power trap created by the US to restrain Chinese companies is bypassed by DeepSeek. More importantly, it once again proved that the ability to innovate, rather than geopolitical barriers, will be the key for a country in terms of winning the global AI competition," he said.

DeepSeek's models were built despite the US curbs on chip exports to China. Analysts at mar-

ket consultancy Jefferies estimated that a recent version of DeepSeek's models had a training cost of only \$5.6 million, less than 10 percent of the cost of Meta's Llama.

Pan added that DeepSeek will not be the only Chinese company to make such breakthroughs in the future.

Since DeepSeek launched its new AI model R1 in January, US technology firms have been racing to adopt it despite US authorities' attempts to block DeepSeek.

OpenAI investor Microsoft launched support for DeepSeek's R1 last week on its Azure cloud computing platform.

Meanwhile, top chip designer Nvidia has made DeepSeek's R1 model available to users of its NIM microservice since Thursday, saying that the model provides state-of-the-art reasoning capabilities, high inference efficiency, as well

as leading accuracy for some tasks.

Wang Peng, a researcher at the Beijing Academy of Social Sciences, said: "While the US views AI as a tool to maintain its hegemony, DeepSeek takes the mission of benefiting humanity, with open-source technology and global free application."

"China's vision of AI development seems increasingly unstoppable, fueled not just by financial resources, but by a growing culture of collaboration and innovation," he emphasized.

On Saturday, Huawei's cloud business and Chinese AI firm Sili-conFlow announced that they'd jointly launched and went live with DeepSeek's R1/V3 inference service based on Huawei's Ascend cloud services.

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Woodblock prints add to holiday's traditional flavor

By **TAN YINGZI** and **DENG RUI** in Chongqing

As Wen Li attached her hand-made Liangping woodblock print featuring door gods — an item of national intangible cultural heritage — to her front door, she knew this Spring Festival would be unforgettable for her family.

Wen, 32, from Yihe, a village in Panlong township of Liangping district, Chongqing, recently took part in a celebration activity in the district, for which she had personally crafted a woodblock print.

"When every household in our village hangs up traditional well-wishing Chinese couplets and woodblock prints on their doors, I can feel that the New Year is in the air," she said.

According to the local cultural and tourism commission, over 50,000 copies of woodblock prints and couplets were distributed in 33 townships in Liangping at themed events.

The local government has also collaborated with multiple platforms to enhance the festive atmosphere, with the prints being offered as gifts at several local shopping malls.

On Jan 10, over 1,000 students completed a massive Liangping woodblock New Year painting spanning approximately 1,000 square meters on the playground of Chongqing Liangping Vocational Education Center.



Xu Jiahui, a national inheritor of Liangping woodblock New Year painting, colors a woodblock print at his workshop in Chongqing's Liangping district on Jan 14. **HUANG WEI / XINHUA**

Under the guidance of Xu Jiahui, a national inheritor of Liangping woodblock New Year painting, the students completed the art work, titled *Generals as Door Gods*.

Woodblock paintings have been well received in many places. From January to February, Liangping woodblock New Year painting exhibitions are taking place in multiple districts of the municipality, as well as in Xiong'an New Area and Handan in Hebei province. In Beijing, the paintings are currently being exhibited at the China Intangible Cultural Heritage Museum, local authorities said.

The custom of New Year paint-

ings is one of the important traditional activities to celebrate Spring Festival.

Woodblock printing was invented in the Song Dynasty (960-1279). As this art form developed and became more and more popular among Chinese people, its content and functions also increased.

On Dec 4, the Spring Festival and the social practices associated with the celebration of the traditional Chinese New Year, were added to UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Liangping woodblock New Year paintings played a role in the application

process, local authorities said.

In May 2006, the art form of Liangping woodblock New Year painting was included in the first batch of national intangible cultural heritage items.

"I believe our intangible cultural heritage should be presented in its good old traditional form," said Xu, who is 59, and has dedicated 48 years to studying the craft.

Situated in northeastern Chongqing, Liangping is renowned for its rich intangible cultural heritage, boasting five national-level, 26 municipal-level, and 124 county-level items.

Recognized by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism for its unique Spring Festival customs, folk culture and art heritage, Liangping is particularly celebrated for its woodblock New Year paintings and bamboo curtains, both of which hold national geographical indication trademarks.

Building on this cultural legacy, the district has established five primary and secondary schools dedicated to preserving traditional Chinese culture and art. Additionally, it has developed 13 city-level experimental bases for intangible heritage inheritance, and offered over 120 special interest classes, engaging more than 10,000 students in the vibrant traditions of Liangping.

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HOLIDAYNATION

China's restored wetlands continue to grow

Drive to renew ecosystems gives nation's biodiversity better chance of flourishing

By **YAN DONGJIE**
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China has added more than 1 million hectares of wetlands since 2012 — equivalent to restoring an area the size of London every two years — bringing its total wetland area to over 56 million hectares, the National Forestry and Grassland Administration announced on Sunday, the 29th World Wetlands Day.

This achievement is part of China's broader efforts to restore and protect its wetland ecosystems, which have seen significant improvements in their ecological conditions, with over 2,200 wetland nature reserves established nationwide.

Covering just 6 percent of the Earth's land surface, wetlands are among the planet's most productive

ecosystems. They support 40 percent of all species, including countless plants, fish and migratory birds, while providing critical services such as water purification, flood control, and carbon storage, according to renowned wetland ecologist Max Finlayson.

China's mangrove restoration efforts have been particularly noteworthy. Over the past five years, the country has planted over 8,800 hectares of mangroves and restored an additional 8,200 hectares, making it one of the few nations globally to achieve a net increase in mangrove coverage.

China's mangrove area exceeds 30,000 hectares, a nearly 40 percent increase since the early 2000s, the forestry and grassland administration said.

Catherine Lovelock, a mangrove



The Hainan Lingshui Mangrove National Wetland Park in Hainan province is one of over 2,200 wetland nature reserves established nationwide. PU XIAOXU / XINHUA

ecologist and professor at the University of Queensland, said, "Restoring mangroves is one of the most cost-effective ways to combat climate change and protect wetland health."

In December, China further solidified its commitment by establish-

ing the International Mangrove Center in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, aimed at promoting global collaboration in mangrove conservation.

Zhou Licheng, head of planning and construction at the Yellow River Delta National Nature Reserve in

“Restoring mangroves is one of the most cost-effective ways to combat climate change and protect wetland health.”

Catherine Lovelock, professor at the University of Queensland

Shandong province, said a critical aspect of China's wetland conservation is the control of *Spartina alterniflora*, an invasive species that disrupts coastal ecosystems.

"In areas densely populated by *Spartina alterniflora*, water flow slows, native plants disappear, and benthic organisms like clams and crabs die off, reducing habitats for birds," he said

Since the launch of the *Spartina*

alterniflora Control Action Plan (2022-25), nearly 90 percent of the targeted areas have been treated, effectively curbing the species' spread, according to the administration.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the establishment of China's national wetland park system. Over the past two decades, 903 national wetland parks have been established, protecting 2.4 million hectares of wetlands and generating over 50 billion yuan (\$6.9 billion) in regional economic growth. Entry to approximately 90 percent of these parks is free to the public.

The administration said that China's wetland parks are a model for integrating ecological conservation with public well-being.

As China continues to implement its Wetland Protection Law and expand conservation initiatives, the focus is shifting toward innovative models like "wetland culture-tourism" and cross-border collaboration, the administration added.

Editorial

Trump tariff hike will leave no party unscathed

The Chinese Foreign Ministry said that China firmly deplores and opposes the move by the United States to impose additional tariffs on all Chinese imports, and will take "necessary countermeasures" to defend its legitimate rights and interests.

The remarks by a ministry spokesperson on Sunday came after the US decided on Saturday to impose a 10-percent tariff on goods imported from China. The White House said the 10-percent tariff is on all imports from China and on top of existing tariffs. The tariff hike will come into effect on Tuesday.

The US side cited the fentanyl issue in the US as the justification for the move. The Foreign Ministry spokesperson said that this issue is just a pretext. "The additional tariffs are not constructive and will only harm the counternarcotics cooperation between the two sides in the future."

As the spokesperson pointed out, China has conducted counternarcotics cooperation with the US side in a broad-based way. At the request of the US, China officially put all fentanyl-related substances under control on humanitarian grounds in 2019, making it the first country in the world to do so. The move played a vital role in preventing the illicit manufacturing, trafficking and abuse of these substances and has won full recognition from the international community, including the US.

The US administration should objectively and rationally view the country's fentanyl crisis, which is a domestically driven problem for the US. The tariff hike also severely violates World Trade Organization rules, and the Chinese Ministry of Commerce said in a statement released on Sunday that China will file a lawsuit with the WTO regarding the wrongful practices of the US in imposing tariffs on Chinese goods. It also stated that China will take corresponding countermeasures to firmly safeguard its rights and interests.

China has repeatedly stated that there is no winner in a trade war or tariff war, but it has been left with no choice but to respond to the US move. It will only be a matter of time before Beijing unveils its countermeasures toward the latest tariffs from the US side.

The tariff hike will not contribute to resolving the issues plaguing the US. Economists from the Peterson Institute for International Economics have predicted that the tariff hikes imposed on imports from Canada,

Mexico and China will be passed on to consumers, resulting in higher prices for a wide range of goods. It is especially so with Chinese imports, as the US cannot find alternatives of huge amounts of Chinese goods that stretch widely across the US consumer market and industries.

Despite the protectionist measures the US has taken against China in recent years, the trade volume between the two countries hit \$688.28 billion last year, a year-on-year increase of 3.7 percent. It speaks volumes of the mutual benefit the two countries gain from trade and economic cooperation.

The US tariff hikes will only harm economic and trade cooperation between the world's two largest economies. A review of the series of protectionist measures the US has initiated against China since the first Trump administration launched its trade war against China, clearly indicates tariff measures are not conducive to the interests of either side, nor to the rest of the world.

Beijing urges Washington to correct its wrong practices, maintain the hard-won momentum of China-US drug control cooperation, and promote the stable, healthy and sustainable development of China-US relations.

Economic and trade relations between China and the US have been and should continue to be of a win-win nature. The two economies have strong structural complementarity and their links are crucial parts of global industry and supply chains. The Trump administration has said that the two countries have a shared responsibility to work together to resolve some common challenges faced by the world, and that should include the well-being of the global economy.

The two sides, as agreed by the two heads of state in their exchanges last month, recognize it is natural for countries to have divergences and disputes with each other, but they should seek to resolve them through appropriate means in a responsible way. Beijing therefore urges the US to meet China halfway, face the problems that have emerged, have frank dialogues, strengthen cooperation, and manage differences on the basis of equality and mutual respect.

That's what they should do to prove Sino-US relations can be at a new beginning rather than returning to the old trail that will only take a heavy toll on the mutually beneficial relations between the two countries.

nology at Tsinghua University, said that DeepSeek demonstrated that the gap between the US and China has significantly narrowed in terms of AI development. DeepSeek still faces increasing challenges in expanding its model and service capabilities, and the AI technologies are still rapidly evolving, Liu said.

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"It will enable the model to run stably in large-scale environments and meet the requirements for commercial business deployment," said the two companies.

Liu Zhiyuan, an associate professor of computer science and tech-

New year, new start



Job seekers attend a job fair held by the federation of trade unions in Xiandu county, Zhejiang province, on Sunday. More than 60 enterprises provided some 2,000 job opportunities at the fair. WANG HUABIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Landmarks light up for Spring Festival

By **HE QI** in Shanghai
and **CUI HAIPEI** in Dubai, UAE

Dubai's iconic Burj Khalifa tower was lit up on Wednesday and Thursday, in celebration of Spring Festival, attracting thousands of tourists from around the world to participate in China's largest annual celebration.

Among the visitors bathed in Chinese red below the world's tallest building was Mark Brennan from Ireland, who was on vacation in the United Arab Emirates.

"The light show was excellent. It offered a chance to know more about Chinese culture," Brennan said.

"Spring Festival is very similar to our Christmas, with the theme of family reunion. Our emotions and spirits are always connected," he said, adding that his nephew lives in China and is married to a Chinese woman. "Although I have never been to China, I have experienced the atmosphere of Chinese New Year in Dubai and my hometown. I hope I can go to China in the future and experience it for myself"

During this year's festival, many towers and skyscrapers world-

wide have been illuminated with red lights in response to an invitation from the city of Shanghai to commemorate the first Spring Festival since UNESCO listed the celebration as a World Cultural Heritage.

The initiative was given a warm welcome by the World Federation of Great Towers, and the Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat.

Two iconic landmarks in Shanghai, the Oriental Pearl TV Tower and Shanghai Tower, took the lead in lighting up in Chinese red on Jan 28, the day before Chinese New Year.

As the third tallest building in the world, Shanghai Tower has been adorned with red lanterns and ribbons. Its spire displays scrolling greetings such as "Happy Spring Festival" and "The World Lights Up in Chinese Red" in both

Chinese and English.

In collaboration with the skyscraper cluster in Lujiazui, Pudong New Area, the two landmarks will glow red until Feb 4.

On the same day, the iconic Marina Bay Sands in Singapore was also lit up in Chinese red and will continue to do so until Lantern Festival on Feb 12.

Tokyo Tower was also lit up in red on Chinese New Year's Eve, with 2025 balloons featuring giant pandas and Japanese anime characters released to symbolize the global community's hopeful expectations for the new year.

The Empire State Building and One World Trade Center, two iconic landmark buildings in New York City, also shone red on the evening of Jan 28. The Empire State Building has done so to celebrate Chinese New Year for the past 25 years.

"We are delighted to see the Empire State Building serve as a bridge for American friends to better understand Chinese culture, which highlights the importance of people-to-people exchanges in promoting friendship between our two countries," said China's Consul General in New York Chen Li. He made the remarks while jointly

unveiling an exhibition with Jean-Yves Ghazi, president of the Empire State Building Observatory, at the Fifth Avenue lobby to celebrate the Chinese New Year.

The window exhibition displays exhibits related to the Year of the Snake according to the Chinese zodiac, and will run for a few weeks.

Other famous landmarks were also illuminated in Chinese red to celebrate Spring Festival, including Niagara Falls in Canada, the London Eye in the United Kingdom, the Leaning Tower of Pisa in Italy, and the Winter Palace in Russia.

"As overseas Chinese, we are proud to see our culture win world recognition," said Xu Xiaofeng, a Chinese resident of Dubai. "I have been in Dubai for five years, but this kind of show and celebration was a first for me. I am glad to see this show that reminded me of my home country. It shows the strength and cultural cohesion of our motherland."

Mingmei Li in New York contributed to this story.

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Trade: Curbs imposed in 2018 have had major impact

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Since 2018, the original round of tariffs imposed on China by the first Trump administration and those kept and extended by then President Joe Biden's administration, have caused a significant impact.

The Peterson Institute for Inter-

national Economics in Washington, DC, found that in 2018, the two-way trade between China and the US was \$659 billion. In 2024, the figure declined to \$578 billion.

Thomas Fullerton, an economics professor at the University of Texas at El Paso, said a better way for the US to address the competition with

countries in the Asia-Pacific region would have been "to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership," a free trade agreement between 12 countries.

"As trade barriers, tariffs can also cause domestic industries to become less competitive," Fullerton said.

According to the executive order, the US also imposed a 25 percent tariff on goods from Mexico and Canada. For energy products from Canada, the US imposed a 10 percent tariff.

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HOLIDAYCOVER

Helpers: Training key in catering to new needs

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“As demand for elderly care and childcare continues to rise, it is estimated that there is a shortage of over 20 million household service professionals, particularly high-quality personnel with professional knowledge and skills,” she said.

At the same time as the demand has soared, people have increasingly diverse and specific needs. For instance, the demand for pet-sitting services has increased by 2.7 times, that for home chefs by 11.6 times, the cleaning of rented houses by 3.3 times, and Japanese-style moving and organizing services by 1.3 times, according to the 2024 service experience report by 58 Daojia.

“Paying for services that bring happiness and joy has become a new consumption trend among the quality-oriented Generation Z, which has fueled the development of the on-demand economy,” the home services company said in its report.

Changes in customer demand have spurred home services personnel to engage in training programs to enhance their professional knowledge and skills so they can offer a better service and gain a competitive edge in the market.

Mastering skills

Liu Ping, 43, is delighted to have completed a training program for mother-and-child care and to have received an “Excellent Trainee” award from a home services company in Beijing.

Liu closed her clothing store three years ago due to poor business. Believing that home services held the most promising prospects, she switched careers and entered the industry.

“Every household has elderly members and children, and people are busy with work and have little time to take care of them. Therefore, the demand for elderly care and childcare is always there,” she said.

Initially, Liu provided what she called “not-so-professional” home services to two households, such as preparing complementary foods for infants, offering early childhood education, and doing some simple chores. However, she soon realized she needed to enhance her knowledge and skills to better meet customers’ expectations.

“Parents now have stricter requirements for childcare. During job interviews, employers look at how many qualifications and certificates you have, what skills you possess, how much experience you have, whether you can drive, speak English, and so on,” she said.

Recognizing the gap between her abilities and customer expectations, Liu decided to take professional training courses, which she believes will be beneficial for future job opportunities and earning customer trust. She enrolled in a training program offered by a large home services company and embarked on a one-month intensive course that included theoretical lessons and practical exercises.

“The courses I registered for included postpartum recovery, pediatric massage, lactation stimulation, as well as infant care, all taught by experienced professionals in maternal and child care. The overall training lasted about a month,” Liu said.

What left the deepest impression on Liu was a lesson on infant care, where the teacher demonstrated multiple safe and comfortable ways to hold a baby. “In the past, we used to hold babies in just one position, but now I’ve learned that there are multiple positions that are comfortable and safe for the baby.”



During job interviews, employers look at how many qualifications and certificates you have, what skills you possess, how much experience you have, whether you can drive, speak English, and so on.”

Liu Ping, an employee of a home services company in Beijing

To complete the training program, Liu and her peers had to pass a practical exam. “The exam is very rigorous and detailed. For example, in the postpartum rehabilitation exam, we needed to describe the procedures for head care, waist care, uterine care, ovarian care, and identify the acupuncture points when massaging the mothers,” she recalled.

Armed with more professional skills, Liu now feels confident in her career prospects: “With my growing experience and improved skills, earning over 10,000 yuan per month is achievable.”

Liu’s story is an example of the trend of home services workers becoming more professional through training. Data from 58 Daojia shows that in 2024, the number of home services personnel participating in training programs increased by 196 percent compared to the previous year. Home services companies are providing standardized and specialized training, while also developing new courses such as child development companions, medical companions, and elite housekeepers.

Training and employment are closely connected. After passing assessments and obtaining certificates, workers can more efficiently match with employers and receive



From top: Residents take part in a home services training at a community center in Lianyungang, Jiangsu province, in December. WANG CHUN / FOR CHINA DAILY A culinary training session takes place at a community center in Anqing, Anhui province, in November. HUANG YOUAN / FOR CHINA DAILY A teacher demonstrates childcare skills at a skills training school in Zhangye, Gansu province, in November. ZHANG YUAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

orders on online platforms. Some even begin their in-home services the day after they complete training.

More than 70 percent of trainees see an increase in salary after training, with a salary boost of up to 41 percent for employees in second-tier cities and below, according to the report.

Nurturing success

Ning Erjian, head of the home services sector at a company in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, wrapped up his Spring Festival holi-

day early this year and has already returned to work to process a large influx of orders.

Nine years ago, Ning was admitted to the home economics major at Jilin Agricultural University in Northeastern Jilin province. Like most of his classmates, this major was not his first choice.

“I had never heard of home economics back then, but after researching online and discovering the country’s increasing focus on the home services industry, I decided to pursue it,” the 27-year-old recalled.

Wu Ying, dean of the School of Home Economics at Jilin Agricultural University, explained that the university established China’s first undergraduate program in home economics in 2003, foreseeing that the home services industry would prosper as the country placed more emphasis on people’s welfare.

“Although the home services market was not very prosperous at that time and our program faced challenges in student employment and internships, we believed that one of a university’s missions is to cultivate talent for emerging industries, so we persisted,” she said.

As a pioneer in home economics, the school offers more than 40 courses, including core subjects such as family nursing, family nutrition, family psychology, and home economics industry services and management. Students also take optional courses such as home design, flower arrangement and tea art.

“We are committed to nurturing talent that meets the increasingly diverse and specialized market demand. In addition to theoretical courses, students are required to complete practical assignments, such as conducting cognitive assessments of the elderly. We also mandate internships at nursing homes, home services companies, and training institutes,” Wu said.

“During the summer vacation of 2019, I interned at a domestic services company in Nanjing through a teacher’s recommendation. This experience helped me gain an in-depth understanding of how home services companies operate, which sparked my interest in the industry. After graduation, I joined my current company,” Ning said.

“I think my biggest achievement during college was improving my knowledge and skills in domestic service, developing teamwork and communication abilities, and cultivating the habit of thinking independently and creatively,” he added.

“Our graduates have two main career pathways: one is to become training instructors for home services enterprises and vocational school teachers, while the other is to

enter management positions at home services companies,” Wu said.

With an annual graduate employment rate exceeding 95 percent, the university has seen a surge in students choosing home economics as their first major.

Currently, Ning is busy recruiting sales and home services personnel, developing standardized work processes, training sales teams and service workers, and providing quality services to customers. As a manager, he also conducts regular follow-up visits to learn about customers’ needs to optimize the user experience.

After graduating, Ning earned a monthly salary of 6,000 yuan with commission. Six months later, his income exceeded 10,000 yuan, and after a year, he secured a management position.

“I feel very fortunate that I enrolled in this major. Otherwise, it would be difficult for a graduate from an ordinary university to have the income and position I have now,” he said.

Promoting synergy

Reflecting on the home services industry, Ning acknowledges that despite its rapid development, challenges remain: a lack of universal standards, disorganized competition such as price wars, and unprotected rights for consumers and service providers are hindering the industry’s healthy growth.

To tackle these problems, localities are pooling resources and accelerating industrial transformation through technology.

Zheng Baolan, president of the Shanxi Province Domestic Service Association, recalled meeting a middle-aged couple at a local hospital who had undergone gastroscopies and had polyps removed from their stomachs.

“Unwilling to burden their child, who lives in another city, they found themselves with no one to care for them after the surgery,” Zheng said.

Zheng recommended the Sanjin Smart Home Services mini-app that connects users with medical companions and caregivers.

“This online platform is indispensable. I believe it will become as popular as Alipay in the future,” she observed.

In December, the Shanxi Domestic Services Association launched Sanjin Smart Home Services, providing an online platform to connect consumers, domestic services companies, and workers. The platform allows consumers to place orders and choose caregivers based on qualifications, experience, medical reports, and service evaluations.

It also offers online training courses and rights protection channels for services personnel, making it easier for them to improve their skills and safeguard their rights.

“We’ve invited 60 influential home services companies in Shanxi to join the platform, hoping to transform the traditional C-to-C business model and ensure high-quality services for consumers,” Zheng said.

The Shanxi Home Services Association is also exploring new ways to integrate business and education. Zheng revealed that the association is discussing a partnership with Shanxi Technology and Business University to establish a home services industry incubator on campus.

“Students in home economics can become managers of online service shops, learning about the business with the assistance of the internet, big data, and artificial intelligence technologies,” she said.

Xu Nuo contributed to this story.



Left: A home services worker cleans a range hood in Beijing in January. MA HUAIGANG / FOR CHINA DAILY



Center: A home services company worker in Shanghai makes calls in January as she tries to arrange services during Spring Festival, when many workers choose to return to their hometowns. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Right: Home services workers help wheelchair-bound people bask in the sun in Beijing in January. MA HUAIGANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

HOLIDAYWORLD

Arab countries reject Trump's relocation plan

Two-state solution urged for peace as Netanyahu heads to Washington

By **CUI HAIPEI** in Dubai, UAE
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Major Arab nations and Arab League representatives on Saturday rejected US President Donald Trump's suggestion to relocate Palestinians from their land to Egypt and Jordan, days before Trump's scheduled meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on the second phase of the cease-fire in Gaza.

"We affirm our rejection" to compromising Palestinians' unalienable rights, whether through settlement activities, evictions, annexation of land or vacating the land from its owners "in any form or under any circumstances or justifications", Arab foreign ministers said in a joint statement.

On Jan 25, Trump floated the controversial "clear-out" plan to displace Palestinians to Egypt and Jordan, calling Gaza a "demolition site" after 15 months of Israeli bombardment that left most of its 2.3 million people homeless, more than 47,000 people dead and 110,000 others injured.

The Arab statement warned that such plans "threaten the region's stability, risk expanding the conflict and undermine prospects for peace among its peoples".

It followed a meeting in Cairo of top diplomats from Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar, as well as Hussein al-Sheikh, a senior Palestinian official who serves as the main liaison with Israel, and Arab League chief Ahmed Aboul Gheit.

Participants called for the international community to help "plan and implement" a comprehensive reconstruction plan to ensure that Palestinians stay on their land, saying they would work with the Trump administration to "achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East, based on the two-state solution".

'Can't be tolerated'

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi has rejected Trump's suggestion, saying the transfer of Palestinians "can't be tolerated or allowed".

"The solution to this issue is the two-state solution. The solution is not to remove the Palestinian people from their place. No," he said.

Jordan's Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi said his country's opposition to Trump's idea is "firm and unwavering".

In Gaza, Hamas official Sami Abu Zuhri said the claims about "displacing Gazans under the pretext of rebuilding it reflect a persistent US complicity in the crime", warning that the US plans would only "fuel further chaos and tension in the region".

In another development, Netanyahu will begin talks on the second phase of the Gaza cease-fire in Washington on Monday, his office

said hours after the completion of the fourth hostage-prisoner exchange of the truce.

Netanyahu spoke with Trump's Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff on Saturday and agreed that negotiations would "begin when they meet in Washington".

A date for formal talks involving mediators and delegations from Hamas and Israel has not been set, with the 42-day first phase due to end next month.

The second phase is expected to cover the release of the remaining captives and to include discussions on a more permanent end to the conflict, something several members of Netanyahu's government oppose.

As part of the first phase, Hamas on Saturday freed three Israeli hostages in exchange for 183 Palestinian prisoners released from Israeli custody.

183 Palestinian prisoners

were released from Israeli custody in exchange for three Israeli hostages on Saturday in the fourth such prisoner-hostage exchange

Netanyahu said on Sunday that he will discuss "victory over Hamas", countering Iran and expanding diplomatic relations with Arab countries in his meeting with Trump.

Tuesday's meeting at the White House will be Trump's first with a foreign leader since returning to office last month.

Netanyahu, who faces an arrest warrant from the International Criminal Court over allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza, had strained relations with Trump's predecessor Joe Biden and has not visited the White House since returning to office at the end of 2022.

Meanwhile, a large-scale Israeli military operation in the occupied West Bank continues for the third week.

A 16-year-old Palestinian boy was among five killed on Saturday in Israeli raids on Jenin, the Palestinian authorities said.

The Israeli military began raiding the city in northern West Bank on Jan 21, just two days after the cease-fire in Gaza came into effect.

Asked whether a teenage boy had been killed in an airstrike, the Israeli military said the air force had struck "armed terrorists" in the Jenin area, declining further comment.

In Jenin, dozens of houses have been demolished and some roads have been dug up by armored Israeli bulldozers, driving thousands from their homes.

Agencies and Xinhua contributed to this story.

Air ambulance tragedy



Investigators work at the scene on Saturday after a medical jet crashed in Philadelphia. The plane, carrying a Mexican child home after medical treatment in the US, plummeted into a busy neighborhood on Friday. All six people on board — Mexican nationals — were killed, along with one person in a car. MATT ROURKE / AP

Belgium set for new govt after long talks

By **CHEN WEIHUA** in Brussels
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After nearly eight months of political deadlock following the June 9 election, Belgium is set to finally form a new government, with Bart De Wever, leader of the right-wing New Flemish Alliance, poised to become prime minister.

Five Belgian parties struck a coalition deal on Friday following months of arduous negotiations and a recent ultimatum from King Philippe, who had urged De Wever to secure a deal by the end of January or face a new national election.

De Wever informed the king of the breakthrough during a meeting on Friday, the Belgian Royal Palace said on Saturday. The 54-year-old marked the occasion with a post on X late on Friday, quoting Julius Caesar's Latin phrase, "Alea iacta est!" (the die is cast) along with a photo of him shaking hands with the king.

The next steps will involve coalition parties agreeing on the names for the new cabinet, which will then be submitted to the king for approval. Once the king signs the decrees, the new government will be sworn in.

De Wever, who has served as mayor of Antwerp since 2013, will become the first nationalist from the Dutch-speaking region to assume the role of Belgian prime minister, though his nationalist view has softened greatly over the years.

Besides his New Flemish Alliance, the new government will include two other parties from the Dutch-speaking Flanders region — the centrist Christian-Democrats and the leftist Vooruit — and two from French-speaking Wallonia — the centrist Les Engages and the center-right Reformist Movement. Together, the coalition holds 81 seats in Belgium's 150-seat Parliament.

Absent from the coalition is Vlaams Belang, a popular Flemish nationalist party that calls for the secession of the Flemish region from Belgium.

De Wever will succeed Prime Minister Alexander De Croo, whose seven-party coalition took 493 days to form after the 2019 election. De Croo has served as caretaker leader since the June election, when the New Flemish Alliance won the most seats.

Belgium's record for the longest period without a government was

set after the 2010 election, when it took 541 days to form a new administration, ultimately leading to the appointment of Elio Di Rupo from Wallonia as prime minister.

With the new government, Belgium joins a list of European Union states led by right-wing nationalist parties, such as Italy's Giorgia Meloni and Hungary's Viktor Orban.

The European Conservatives and Reformists, of which the New Flemish Alliance is a member, said its co-chairs, Nicola Procaccini and Patryk Jaki, congratulated De Wever on successfully forming Belgium's new coalition government. "ECR Group parties will now have prime ministers leading governments in three EU countries," it said.

Alberto Alemanno, a professor of EU law at HEC Paris business school, said on X, "Boom: This makes 15 out of 27 EU governments on the right."

De Wever is no stranger to Belgium-China ties. He has visited China as mayor of Antwerp — a sister city with Shanghai since 1984. Dressed in Chinese attire, he attended the Chinese New Year parade in Antwerp in 2019 and has met various Chinese officials and business leaders over the years.

Ties between people of Australia, China highlighted

By **XIN XIN** in Melbourne, Australia
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Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese emphasized the significance of China to Australia during a Chinese New Year celebration in Melbourne on Saturday, highlighting the deep ties between the peoples of both nations as a cornerstone of the relationship.

"Australia is fortunate to look north to the fastest growing region of the world in human history, and that represents an incredible opportunity for Australia to seize," Albanese said.

He underscored the Australian government's efforts to stabilize relations with China. "It means that families in Shanghai and Beijing are sitting down to enjoy a meal of Australian beef, perhaps with Australian barley making a contribution as well," he said, adding the stabilization serves the interests of both nations.

"The economic and trade relations between Australia and China are very important, but even more important



Tourists take part in Chinese New Year celebrations in Melbourne, Australia, on Saturday. MA PING / XINHUA

is the relationship between the peoples of both countries," he said.

Speaking positively about the future of bilateral relations, Albanese reaffirmed his confidence in deepening ties. "The relationship is very strong, and I want it to be even stronger in the future."

Chinese Ambassador to Australia Xiao Qian said that since 2022, China-

Australia relations have been steadily improving, achieving a comprehensive turnaround. The bilateral relationship is mutually beneficial in nature, he said, and friendly cooperation is the mainstream.

Xiao expressed his hope that overseas Chinese will continue to contribute to the friendship between the two countries in the Year of the Snake.

Briefly

SUDAN Shelling leaves 56 dead in Khartoum

Artillery shelling and airstrikes killed at least 56 people across greater Khartoum on Saturday, according to a medical source and activists, the latest bloodshed in Sudan's devastating conflict between the army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces. RSF shelling killed 54 and injured 158 people at a busy market in Omdurman, overwhelming the city's Al Nao Hospital, according to a medical source and the Health Ministry. The RSF denied carrying out the attack. In Khartoum proper, an airstrike on an RSF-controlled area killed two civilians and injured dozens, local volunteer group Emergency Response Rooms said.

CHAD French troops formally pull out of country

Chad held a ceremony on Friday to mark the formal withdrawal of French troops from the country. At the ceremony, France handed over its main military base in N'Djamena, the capital of Chad, marking the end of its 125-year military presence in the country. "We are not breaking our relationship with France, but we are putting an end to the military dimension of this cooperation," Chadian President Mahamat Idriss Deby Itno said.

ALBANIA Blow for Meloni as migrants return

Dozens of migrants left Italian-run facilities in Albania on Saturday after judges in Rome refused to approve their detention, in another setback for Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni. An Italian boat carrying 43 migrants departed from the Albanian port of Shengjin for the Italian port of Bari, according to an AFP journalist. The migrants arrived in Albania on Tuesday, the third group transferred under Italy's effort to outsource migrant processing to a non-European Union country and speed up repatriations of failed asylum-seekers.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

US town celebrates Chinese New Year with cultural festivities, renewed friendship

By **XI YU** in New York
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The conference hall of The Merrill Hotel in Muscatine, a small city along the Mississippi River in the US state of Iowa, was decorated with Chinese knots, paper-cuttings and couplets. Each table featured red snake mascots, symbolizing good fortune and festivity.

More than 100 local residents and students gathered on Wednesday morning for an event hosted by the Chinese Consulate General in Chicago to celebrate the Chinese New Year of the Snake.

Luca Berrone, who served as a guide and chaperone to Chinese President Xi Jinping and his delegation during their stay in Iowa in 1985, expressed his delight at seeing so

many young people participating in the festivities. "We have the opportunity to expose the younger generation to this 40-year relationship between Iowa and China," Berrone said. "I think it's fundamental for the future."

Chinese Consul General Wang Baodong opened his speech with a touch of humor, "My speech was drafted by my colleagues at the Consulate General in Chicago, not by China's AI model DeepSeek." Wang went on to express his hope that DeepSeek and OpenAI will serve as tools to unite, rather than divide, the two peoples.

"We are delighted to celebrate the first Intangible Cultural Heritage Chinese New Year alongside our friends in Iowa and Muscatine," Wang told China Daily. "We hope to spread the joy of Chinese New Year across the

vast Midwest and share the values of harmony and goodwill embedded in Chinese culture with American people." He added that such celebrations help pass down the stories of friendship, cooperation and mutual understanding between China and the United States for generations to come.

In November 2023, during the APEC forum in San Francisco, President Xi proposed to invite 50,000 US youths to China over the next five years for exchange and study programs. The initiative is already making strides in fostering cross-cultural connections.

Dan Stein, chairman of the Muscatine-China Initiatives Committee, told China Daily that last year, at least three delegations traveled to China for exchanges, emphasizing the pride of Muscatine High School in being the

first school to visit China in January last year following the proposal.

Tony Joseph, a member of the Muscatine-China Initiatives Committee, joined an exchange delegation to China in March, which included 90 students and a total of 101 participants. Reflecting on the experience, he underscored the value of long-term friendships forged through such exchanges.

'Great reunion'

"We asked our students to make at least one friend during their visit. These connections often last a lifetime. Today, I'm reconnecting with friends I met a decade ago. Even though we don't meet on a regular basis, when you see each other, it's a great reunion," he said.

Joseph's involvement in US-China

relations dates back to 2012, when Xi revisited Muscatine, a town he had first visited in 1985. Since then, Joseph has witnessed growth in educational and cultural exchanges between the two countries.

"Over the past 12 years, we've facilitated numerous exchanges involving students, professionals and various groups. This has opened people's minds in Muscatine, fostering a deeper understanding of China's capabilities and opening doors for collaboration both as a country and a city," he said.

Sarah Lande, an old friend of Xi and a key figure in Iowa's relations with China, said the exchange programs are significant for young students "to know each other as friends, colleagues, even competitors".

"They learn to work together and

respect each other intellectually," Lande said. "As they move forward in their career, in business or in the government, they will carry these experiences with them, realizing they know how they can do things together."

Regarding her hopes for young people, Lande added: "We don't always agree, but we could learn how to advocate civility, disagree but don't be disagreeable. Let's work together. We have so much in common. Some things are different. That's the way it is. So respect differences. Learn from them. Be curious. Figure out a way to collaborate and live peacefully."

Wednesday's celebration also featured performances by the art troupe from the High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China and a string quartet performance of *Spring Festival Overture*.

HOLIDAYPEOPLE

Poetry born of a mother's sacrifice

Sanitation worker finds peace in written word

By ZOU SHUO in Changsha
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Huang Xinsheng starts every day early. By the time the sun peaks over the horizon, she is already cleaning a 1-kilometer street in Changsha, Hunan province.

After finishing her shift, the 53-year-old goes home to read books and write poetry.

"Whenever I feel depressed or anguished from pressure at work and life and cannot find ways to alleviate the pain, I pick up a book, and my heart starts to calm down," Huang said.

She has encountered great difficulties in life. "I can be humble during hard times, but I need to be able to find self-respect while doing so," she said.

As a creative outlet, she writes poetry. She has written hundreds of poems over the years.

In one of her poems, Huang wrote: "Why do you have a low voice, because you keep clean the city day after day; why do you have a calm smile, because you have seen the passage of time in falling leaves, blue skies and white clouds. You have seen so many faces and heard so many stories of happiness and sadness."

Born in Hunan in a village in Lianyuan, Loudi city, Huang developed a love for literature during her primary school years. In high school, her teachers sometimes selected her essays to be read aloud as exemplary pieces.

Despite her writing successes, Huang did not do well enough in the national college entrance exam in 1990. Her mother borrowed money so that she could continue studying and retake the exam the following year. Instead, she started working so the family would have more money to support her two younger brothers.

She went from city to city, working odd jobs as a printer, construction worker and nanny to make a living.

Looking back, Huang said she regrets the decision as she could have contributed more to the family if she had obtained a college degree.



Huang Xinsheng reads a book during a break from work as a sanitation worker in Changsha, Hunan province in 2023.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Huang reads a book next to her road sweeper in Changsha in 2023.

Tragedy struck in 2011 when her husband lost his life in a construction site accident in Zhejiang province. Devastated by the loss of her beloved partner, Huang returned to his hometown in Shaoyang, Hunan, to arrange his funeral.

Her in-laws urged her to remain and support her sons through farming, but she knew there

wasn't enough land to support the family. Instead, she took a factory job in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, and brought her younger son with her.

Before long, she realized that life in a factory dormitory was unsuitable for a three-year-old, so she sent him to live with her parents.

After working in Guangzhou for

three years, she reunited with her youngest in Changsha, where she got a small apartment and took on the role of a sanitation worker. To supplement her income, she cooked for a family and did tailoring work at night.

In her free time, she visited the Hunan Provincial Library with her son. He grew to enjoy being there so

much that he would go on his own while she worked.

After a few years, her older son graduated from vocational school and found a job in Changsha. The family was reunited at last, and the income he brought in eased the strain.

In 2019, Huang joined a group chat of sanitation workers from Hunan who shared a passion for



Whenever I feel depressed or anguished from pressure at work and life and cannot find ways to alleviate the pain, I pick up a book, and my heart starts to calm down."

Huang Xinsheng, a sanitation worker in Changsha, Hunan province

literature and began sharing her poems. Editors in the group published Huang's works online, where they garnered praise and popularity.

Participating in numerous literary competitions, Huang clinched multiple awards and embarked on a self-study program for a vocational degree in literature at Hunan Normal University.

Despite understanding that a degree would not help her much at her age, Huang persevered and now stands on the brink of completing her degree. She emphasized that her pursuit of education was driven by her love for literature and the desire to enhance her proficiency in the field.

"I used to think that I was too old to pass the exams, but I have learned the tricks and become more patient in chasing the dream," she said.

Huang's reading preferences have evolved over time, shifting from romantic fiction to classic novels. Reflecting on her journey, she underscored the transformative power of adversity: "Hardships nurture personal growth. In my youth, I envisioned a rosy future, but reality proved otherwise."

For Huang, books are companions in a life filled with responsibilities toward her children and aging parents. Despite the challenges she faces, she remains resolute, embodying a spirit of tenacity and fortitude.

"Life is not easy, and you cannot show your sadness and weakness in front of family," she said. "You need to be tough."

Delivering a muse

By ZHANG XIAOMIN
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When Wang Jibing, 56, known as the food delivery poet, received an invitation to participate in the CCTV Spring Festival Gala as a representative of ordinary yet remarkable individuals, he and his wife, Guo Yiyun, were overjoyed.

Before the prying lenses of cameras, Wang recited a poem titled *I Clumsily Love This World*, which he wrote years ago for his wife. Overwhelmed with emotion, he choked up.

"I have no trouble reciting this poem, except in front of her," Wang explained during a phone interview.

"It's about an old sofa with a broken leg that made my wife so happy. Those were really tough times back then," he said.

The couple runs a grocery store in Kunshan in Suzhou city of Jiangsu province. Wang also works as a food deliveryman.

Since 2018, he has traveled more than 150,000 kilometers to deliver food and has written thousands of poems.

"I enjoy my job as a deliveryman," Wang said. "It fuels my creativity."

He believes people think he is from the bottom of society and, therefore, feel sympathetic to him and his art.

In 2022, one of Wang's friends posted his poem *Man in a Hurry* online.

"Wind is born from air in a hurry. A knife is forged from the wind in a hurry ... The man in a hurry has no four seasons; he only has one stop after another. His world is about the name of a place," he wrote.

The poem went viral and was viewed over 20 million times. It has become synonymous with food delivery workers.

Wang finds much of his inspiration on the road.

Once, after delivering takeout to an apartment, the customer



Above: Wang Jibing delivers food in September 2020, in Kunshan in Suzhou city of Jiangsu province.

Left: Wang takes part in an event to mark the 70th anniversary of the founding of The Writers Publishing House in March in Beijing.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

down any inspiration on his phone as soon as it struck.

Wang began seizing snippets of time — while waiting for orders, waiting for the elevator or while stopped at traffic lights — to record sporadic sentences via voice notes on his phone.

Delivering food exposes one to all kinds of people. It sometimes leads to moments of frustration.

A drunken man once grabbed Wang by the collar inside an apartment. It turned out that the woman who placed the order had mistakenly written the address of her ex-boyfriend's residence.

Upon seeing the man's tear-filled eyes, Wang let go of his resentment

and instead felt a sense of forgiveness and understanding.

He later wrote a poem titled *Forgive*. It helped him come to terms with himself.

In another poem, Wang wrote: "If life is an empty space, poetry is a heavy snow that falls on my clearing. It can't change anything; even after the sun comes out, it will only muddy my road. But thanks to it, my life of clearing is not purely blank; it is wonderfully white."

As a husband and father of two daughters and a son, Wang shoulders the majority of the financial responsibility in his family.

Born in rural Xuzhou, Jiangsu, Wang held an assortment of jobs to

make a living over the past decades — as a builder, garbage collector, street peddler, food deliveryman, and so on.

Thanks to a bookstall near a construction site where he worked in 1988, Wang delved into reading and writing.

He published a novel in 1992 and has written as a hobby ever since.

At times, his obsession with poetry caused him to neglect his work, which led to conflict in his marriage.

In recent years, with his deliveryman poems gaining more attention, conflicts have smoothed out.

Wang's experience also inspired his children.

In 2020, his eldest daughter, who married after graduating from vocational school and gave birth to two daughters, decided to resume her studies.

"Now, at the age of 31, she has obtained her pharmacist license and is the manager of four pharmacies," Wang proudly stated.

In 2023 and 2024, Wang published three collections of poems.

These days, the food delivery poet hardly has time to take any orders. His days are filled with book signings, appearances on speaker panels and various activities across the country.

Despite the recognition and busy schedule, Wang still goes out to deliver food whenever he returns to Kunshan.

Weaving through the streets and alleys of the city puts him back into the deliveryman's work mode. The inspiration for writing poetry still lingers, he said.

"The difference is that my income is higher, so when I deliver food, I don't have to desperately take as many orders as before. It's more about doing it out of interest," Wang said.

Chen Nan contributed to this story.

HOLIDAYREAD

Remembering legendary Bethune

Event held in memory of Canadian surgeon who saved lives of many Chinese people during World War II

By ZHANG YUNBI
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People from home and abroad have paid tribute to the legendary Canadian surgeon Norman Bethune, who treated patients alongside Chinese people in their fight against Japanese invaders during World War II, while marking his 85th death anniversary recently.

Bethune, a member of the Canadian Communist Party, arrived at Yan'an in Shaanxi province in 1938 as the head of a medical team amid the raging Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression.

He set up a mobile hospital and operated on soldiers close to the battlefield, saving the lives of thousands. However, his life was cut short at the age of 49, a year after his arrival in China. He died of blood poisoning on Nov 12, 1939.

A commemoration event was held at North China Military Martyrs Cemetery in Shijiazhuang of North China's Hebei province in December to honor Bethune for his selfless service and upholding the spirit of internationalism. His remains were relocated to the cemetery in 1953.

Around 100 people, including soldiers, students and individuals from various walks of life, attended the event themed "Memories Through Time and Space". They bowed before the surgeon's tomb and presented flower baskets.

Michael Crook, chairman of the International Committee for the Promotion of Chinese Industrial Cooperatives, also attended the event.

"My father met Norman Bethune in Spain during his recovery from battle injuries. Influenced by him, my father aspired to come to China, where he met my mother and later had me," he said.

Crook's parents, David Crook from the United Kingdom and Isabel Crook from Canada, helped train a large number of foreign-language professionals for China for decades.

In 1936, David Crook went to Spain to join the International Brigades — soldiers recruited and organized by the Communist International to fight in the then Spanish civil war.

"When he was wounded he went to Madrid to recover. There he met Dr. Bethune, who also spoke in English," Crook recalled.

It was 1937, and just at the time a great book introducing China and the Communist Party of China, titled *The Red Star over China*, written by American journalist Edgar Snow, was published in the UK. The English-speaking members of International Brigades, the Canadians and British, who used to hang around together developed an enthusiasm in reading *The Red Star over China*, according to Michael Crook.

"I think that was one of the reasons why many International Brigades fighters decided to come to China (those days)," Crook said.

"My father came to China in 1938 when the chances matured, as he was moved by the heroic deeds of the CPC after reading *The Red Star over China*. Dr. Bethune also left for China in 1938," he added.

Initially, Bethune stayed in the areas ruled by the Kuomintang before entering the liberated areas led by the CPC-led Eighth Route Army.

He encountered financial difficulties for his further travel, and a patriotic overseas Chinese learned of the situation and provided financial assistance to make the trip possible, according to Crook.

"After that, he entered the front line and became a household name in China for his heroic deeds," Crook said.

"It is noteworthy that Bethune was not the only Canadian health worker who helped the Chinese people fight the war."

Crook mentioned Dr. Robert Baird McClure, a Canadian doctor and medical missionary who arrived in China in 1923, serving as surgeon and medical educator.

"All of them helped and contributed to the Chinese People's War of Resistance, laying a good foundation for the friendship between China and Canada."



Chinese and Ethiopian doctors perform cataract surgeries on local patients at Tirunesh-Beijing Hospital in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, on Jan 2. XINHUA



Zhong Hua (right), a Chinese doctor from Yunnan province, conducts a post-operative check-up on a patient in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on April 25. CHEN DONGSHU / XINHUA



Participants bow before the tomb of Canadian surgeon Norman Bethune during a commemoration event in Shijiazhuang, Hebei province, on Dec 21. XINHUA

Shen Xin, vice-president of the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, also praised the role of Bethune in sowing seeds for subnational friendship between the two nations.

"Since the establishment of bilateral diplomatic relations in 1970, China-Canada relations enjoyed great developments, and exchanges and cooperation have been very dynamic. Canada was once an ideal travel destination for many Chinese," Shen said at a symposium marking Bethune's death anniversary in November.

He added that China "has never stopped practicing Dr. Bethune's dedication to public welfare and to the betterment of global health", noting that over the past few decades, China has sent foreign medical aid teams to 76 countries and regions in Asia, Africa, Latin America, Europe and Oceania, treating 300 million patients.

Inspiration to many

Bethune's pioneering role and enterprising spirit in the medical profession continue to win him constant recognition from today's medical workers and scholars from

many countries though 85 years have passed since he left this world.

He was hailed as having "made significant contributions to thoracic surgery and medical instrumentation", besides designing many surgical instruments that have been further refined and being used in modern medicine, such as periosteal scrapers and table-mounted scapula retractors.

Bethune was "an innovator in the field of medicine, and an altruist whose impact extended far beyond his home country", wrote Krystal Rampersad and Michael Montalbano with St. George's University School of Medicine in Grenada, in an article published last year.

"Throughout his career, Bethune's devotion to self-improvement was notable. He was renowned for his self-critical approach," they said.

Zhang Shunhua, a senior ophthalmologist at Peking Union Medical College Hospital, is one of the Chinese ophthalmologists who have been greatly inspired by Bethune.

She has been a member of Chinese volunteer medical teams sent to Asian and African countries six



Michael Crook (third left), chairman of the International Committee for the Promotion of Chinese Industrial Cooperatives, visits the memorial hall of Canadian surgeon Norman Bethune in Shijiazhuang, Hebei province, on Dec 21. XINHUA



Norman Bethune XINHUA

times, in Ethiopia in 2014, Mauretania (2015), Sri Lanka (2016), Laos (2017) and Namibia in 2018 and 2019, respectively.

"My work is a continuation of Bethune's spirit," she said.

"We have helped some underprivileged countries in Africa and South Asia as we were there to perform cataract surgeries, so that more of the poverty-stricken cataract patients could get their sight back."

She noted that blinding eye diseases are a very serious social problem in countries that are relatively economically challenged.

"Fortunately, through current medical technology, patients with cataracts have the opportunity to regain their sight, regain the ability to take care of themselves, and even do what they can do," she said.

In some countries in Africa and South Asia, ophthalmologists are in short supply, so Zhang and her colleagues came to lend a hand.

"We had a team to do this, and the team included at least five doctors, three nurses and maybe some technicians, because we had to carry

around a lot of medical equipment."

She and her colleagues usually spend 20 days in a stay, during which they had to carry out three to four hundred cataract surgeries.

"In these places, the facilities for ophthalmology were limited, and all of our work, including the pre-surgical examinations and some of the ward management, is done by our staff, so each of us is a multi-talented multitasker."

In many countries, these Chinese doctors were also faced with the problem of language barriers. She showed a form in English that was provided to patients before surgery, asking detailed questions about their sickness and illness.

"We also spent a lot of time and energy creating many forms of this kind in order to make sure that each patient receives a high level of treatment and that no mistakes are made."

According to photos provided by Zhang, there was great excitement among the Namibian patients who were singing and dancing the day their gauze was opened, and there was great joy inside the whole ward.

"We have seen patients in different countries giving us lots of recognition after surgery, and we also felt happy from the bottom of our hearts," she said.

Bethune's legacy

Bethune cut his finger while operating on a wounded soldier on Oct 28, 1939. The infection spread, and on Nov 11, he hypothesized, "I think ... I have septicemia or typhus fever."

Alex Bowers, a writer with Canada's military history magazine *Legion*, wrote in a recent article, "He was right. The next day, Nov 12, 1939, a combination of sepsis and gangrene claimed him after he



My work is a continuation of Bethune's spirit. We have helped some underprivileged countries in Africa and South Asia as we were there to perform cataract surgeries, so that more of the poverty-stricken cataract patients could get their sight back."

Zhang Shunhua, a senior ophthalmologist at Peking Union Medical College Hospital

refused to have his arm amputated. He was just 49 years old."

"Norman Bethune's legacy, however, lives on through several acts of remembrance, especially in China where, even today, an essay written in memoriam by Mao Zedong remains mandatory reading," Bowers said in reference to the household article by Chairman Mao — "In Memory of Norman Bethune".

In his article dated Dec 21, 1939, over one month after Bethune's demise, Mao said, "Now we are all commemorating him, which shows how profoundly his spirit inspires everyone."

"We must all learn the spirit of absolute selflessness from him. With this spirit, everyone can be very useful to the people. A man's ability may be great or small, but if he has this spirit, he is already noble-minded and pure, a man of moral integrity and above vulgar interests, a man who is of value to the people," Mao added.

Li Longchi is a veteran medical expert with the People's Liberation Army and former honorary president of Chinese Bethune Spirit Research Association.

He said China "still needs the spirit of Bethune" when it comes to innovation and the pursuit of becoming a strong nation in science and technology.

"Pioneering, pursuing excellence and being the first is the way Bethune has always lived by."

While in Canada, Bethune had already invented dozens of types of medical devices, he noted.

"After arriving in China, he created a series of medical instruments and medical supplies adapted to the needs of guerrilla combat, based on the extremely rudimentary conditions and supplies in the revolutionary base areas."

As a keen researcher on Bethune, Li formerly worked as political commissar of Bethune Military Medical School, and he is associate managing editor-in-chief of *Norman Bethune* published in Chinese, English, French and Spanish by China Publishing Group.

"General Nie Rongzhen (of the PLA) praised him as a 'scientist and statesman for the public,'" Li said.

"In addition, Bethune's dedication to excellence in his work is exactly the spirit of craftsmanship that we endorse earnestly these days."

Regarding the changes that Bethune's dedication has brought to China, Li said, "Eighty-five years ago, Bethune's great spirit significantly inspired the Chinese people to fight for national independence and liberation, and since the founding of the People's Republic of China, it has also greatly facilitated the improvement of moral codes in Chinese communities."

"Although Bethune left us 85 years ago, he is still able to be deeply remembered by the Chinese people, frequently commemorated in Canada, in Spain, and throughout North America and even in Africa, and he is constantly studied by historians and portrayed in works of art," he said.

"All these are strong living proof that Bethune's great spirit has not been diminished by the changing times, and that he has manifested great relevance to the current times," Li said.

HOLIDAYIMAGE



He Jixing checks festive lanterns at Hongcun village of Yixian county, Huangshan city, East China's Anhui province on Dec 9, 2024. SHI YALEI/FOR CHINA DAILY

INHERITOR OF FESTIVE LANTERN MAKING SKILLS

Artist innovates ancient techniques to make them durable

Yixian county, Huangshan city, East China's Anhui province, is noted for its "lantern gala," an important folk event held during traditional festivals. A research and education base was established in 2020 at Hongcun village, focusing on manufacturing craftsmanship and performing arts pertaining to traditional festive lanterns.

He Jixing, a municipal-level intangible cultural heritage inheritor in his late 30s, has been studying fes-

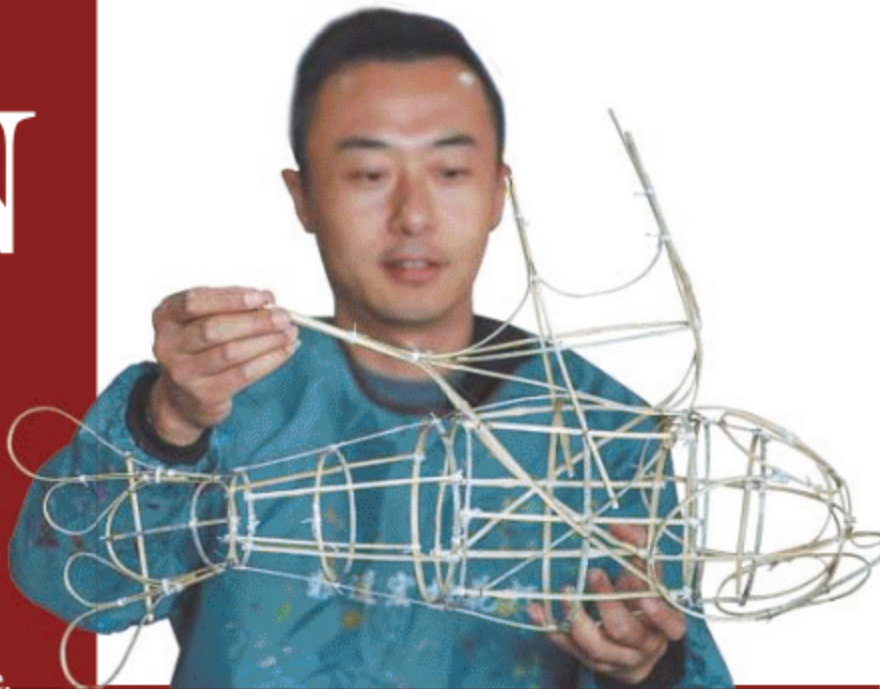
tive lantern-making skills for more than a decade. Apart from inheriting from local masters, he has also contributed his share of innovation by adopting from other lantern genres from around the country. Thanks to raw materials he helped to improve, lantern products there are now more durable than before.

He and his team have hosted hundreds of lantern-themed events over the past few years, attracting tens of thousands of visitors.

XINHUA



He Jixing makes a festive lantern at Hongcun village of Yixian county, Huangshan city, East China's Anhui province on Dec 9, 2024. SHI YALEI/FOR CHINA DAILY



People hold festive lanterns during a parade at Hongcun village of Yixian county, Huangshan city, East China's Anhui province on Sept 15, 2024. SHI YALEI/FOR CHINA DAILY

Below left: He Jixing (center) instructs trainees on how to make festive lanterns at Hongcun village of Yixian county, Huangshan city, East China's Anhui province on Dec 9, 2024.

Below middle: In this aerial drone photo, people holding festive lanterns take part in a parade at Hongcun village of Yixian county, Huangshan city, East China's Anhui province on Sept 15, 2024.

Below right: He Jixing (right) and a trainee check festive lanterns at Hongcun village of Yixian county, Huangshan city, east China's Anhui province on Dec 9, 2024. SHI YALEI/FOR CHINA DAILY



HOLIDAYTREND

By ZOU SHUO in Changsha
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Liang Jing, a 32-year-old white-collar worker in Beijing, never thought that she would get “addicted” to checking her blood sugar level from a continuous glucose monitor.

She wakes up every day, looks at her blood sugar level, and checks it before she goes to bed at night.

She uses a CGM to aid her weight loss efforts. With the device, she can see real-time data on how exercise and diet affect her blood sugar level.

Checking her blood sugar levels has become an indispensable part of her life. At work, she checks her app every few minutes, almost matching the device's three-minute intervals. During meals, she monitors her blood sugar in real-time, watching how her food intake impacts her levels. “I don't even watch TV dramas anymore. I just watch the CGM,” she said.

Liang discovered that whole grains have a lesser impact on her blood sugar than white rice. If she takes a walk when her blood sugar spikes, the steep curve quickly levels out.

Chinese youth are increasingly concerned about their blood sugar levels, particularly as the diabetes rate remains high and is affecting more people of the younger generations.

Currently, the main types of diabetes are type 1 and type 2. Type 1 diabetes requires daily insulin and has no known cause or prevention. Type 2 diabetes, often preventable, affects how the body uses glucose and is linked to being overweight, lack of exercise, and genetics, making up the majority of all cases. Prediabetes indicates higher-than-normal blood sugar levels, increasing the risk of heart disease, stroke, and type 2 diabetes, but it can often be reversed.

CGM devices, initially designed for managing diabetes, have now caught the attention of some young people.

A CGM is a device that attaches to the abdomen or arm. A soft needle is inserted under the skin to monitor blood sugar levels continuously. The device connects to an app via Bluetooth and generates a continuous blood sugar curve over 14 days.

On social media platforms like Douyin, the Chinese version of TikTok, videos tagged with “sugar control” have amassed 20.8 billion views, reflecting the growing interest in blood sugar management, especially among younger people.

In these videos, young individuals with abnormal blood sugar levels manage their conditions through glucose tests, food recommendations, and exercise, while those with regular blood sugar proactively control their sugar intake to aid in weight loss and overall wellness.

For Liang, weight loss has been a painful process. She often has to make great efforts to exercise more and eat less before seeing a bit of success.

The CGM has been an important tool for her weight loss efforts. The device records her food intake and every step she takes, revealing her blood sugar level. In 14 days, she wore the device and lost 2.5 kilograms.

Wang Xu, who works in Changsha, Hunan province, said she has worn CGM twice under the recommendation of a friend.

Discussions about the amount of calories each type of food contains have become very popular among young people as healthy living and body image have



Left: Visitor at the medical equipment and healthcare products exhibition of the 5th CIIE in Shanghai, on Nov 8, 2022. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY
Right: Medical staff provide free blood sugar testing for residents in Zaozhuang, Shandong province, on Tuesday. SUN ZHONGZHE / FOR CHINA DAILY



Health awareness rises in Chinese youth

Adopting healthier diets, exercise regularly, and routine medical check-ups for those with a family history of diabetes is necessary, expert stresses



Medical volunteers from a local hospital provided free blood sugar and blood pressure testing for residents in a community at Rongcheng, Shandong province, on Tuesday. LI XINJUN / XINHUA

become more important for them, the 27-year-old said.

She often eats takeaway foods and wants to keep an eye on which food can significantly increase her blood sugar level so she can avoid eating them and adjust her diet.

However, she said she has been anxious about the readings on the CGM devices and checking them uncontrollably.

She said she won't wear it all the time. After she learns about which food is healthier by monitoring her blood sugar level and forming a proper diet accordingly, she will rarely use it anymore.

Xiao Yang, a 23-year-old designer in Changsha, said he recently start-

ed to wear a CGM after finding that he had gained some weight since working in July.

“It's difficult to keep a healthy lifestyle transitioning from school life to the workplace. I find myself working out rarely, eating lots of take-out and going to bed late at night,” Xiao said.

As a result, he gained more than 5 kilograms in six months, so he believes it is important for him to do something about it.

He also noticed that some of his colleagues in their 30s were beginning to have blood sugar problems during annual physical checkups, so he decided to wear a device to monitor his blood sugar.

After wearing the CGMs, he realized he needed to drink less milk tea, which contains lots of sugar, so he switched to coffee without sugar while exercising more.

CGM users share their experiences in controlling blood sugar levels on social media and creating new food and exercise strategies.

For example, they said that the correct way to drink milk tea is with 50 percent sugar and no cream, taking small sips while walking to avoid blood sugar spikes. Always eat vegetables before carbohydrates. Don't drink water during meals and wait 30 minutes after eating to drink.

However, CGMs are not without

their downsides.

Zeng Li, a patient with insulin resistance in Beijing, said she feels extremely anxious about the data from the monitor to the point that fluctuations in the readings affect her physical condition.

In the first two days of wearing CGM, her blood sugar level was around 7.0 before eating and postprandial blood sugar increased to 11.2. She was worried deeply that she might develop diabetes.

She hesitated between monitoring for a few more days and going to the hospital before she looked at hundreds of online posts on the symptoms of diabetes and the blood sugar level of normal people. She

could not fall asleep until 3 am in the morning and found that her blood sugar level further increased the following day.

She almost cried when she saw the number. She said she trusted the number and device more than she actually felt.

She had planned to wear them for half a month and stop for the next, but she could not bear not seeing the numbers, so she started wearing them three days afterward.

The popularity of the devices is clearly reflected in the sales numbers.

Yi Ke, a sales director for the medical company Changsha Sinocare Inc, said the market size for CGM is expanding, and more people are using the device to monitor their blood sugar.

Based on data from e-commerce platforms T-mall and JD, the sales of CGM needles increased by 63 percent year-on-year in the second half of 2024, while the sales of Sinocare's CGM needles increased by 104 percent year-on-year during the same period.

Li Guangwei, senior doctor of the endocrinology department at China-Japan Friendship Hospital, said CGMs can serve as a helpful reference for diabetic patients or those at risk, though the data isn't entirely precise.

“If abnormalities are detected, it's important to seek professional medical advice. For those using CGMs solely for weight loss, they're unnecessary. We advocate for a balanced and healthy approach to beauty, not extreme thinness,” he said.

“Previously, it was mostly middle-aged or elderly people coming into the clinic. But in the past two years, I've seen a lot of young faces worried about fatigue, poor sleep, and elevated blood sugar,” said Cheng Xiaoyun, senior doctor of the Endocrinology Department at Shanghai Tenth People's Hospital.

Excessive consumption of high-fat, high-sugar foods, lack of exercise, and unhealthy lifestyle habits are major causes of diabetes. Young diabetics are also more prone to complications, said Li.

He recommends that young people adopt healthier diets, exercise regularly, and undergo routine medical check-ups, especially those with a family history of diabetes. By managing their health through evidence-based practices, they can reduce the risk of diabetes and its complications.

Ma Jinju, head of the diabetes outpatient department of Sinocare Health, said there has been an apparent increase in the number of people using CGMs in recent years, as more young people are being diagnosed with diabetes and they pay more attention to their health.

In the age of information, it is also easier for people to get health information about the functions of such products, she said.

Moreover, as the symptoms of early diabetes and prediabetes are not easily noticeable, such devices are very important for people to get a hold of their situation and seek medical treatment in time, she said.

Besides, CGMs can also help people prevent sudden spikes or drops in their blood sugar levels, which is significant in reducing harm to their blood vessels and other vital organs, she said.

However, she also stressed that people who wear the device should not be too concerned about the readings. Checking the numbers every two or three hours is enough, and healthy people do not need to wear the device all the time, she added.

Li Boyu contributed to this story.

Experts call for a healthy lifestyle to young people

By ZOU SHUO in Changsha

Obesity and diabetes have affected more young people, with many taking to social media platforms to share their symptoms of being diagnosed with diabetes at a young age.

The hashtag “diabetes beginning to drain on young people” has become one of the trending topics on Sina Weibo, which has been read more than 46 million times.

Guo Xiaohui, a senior doctor at the endocrinology department of Peking University First Hospital, told Economic Information Daily that 20 years ago, none of her diabetic patients were under 30, but nowadays, around 20 percent of them are under 30.

Yao Qiyuan, a senior doctor at Huashan Hospital of Fudan University's department of obesity and hernia, said there are diabetes patients who are in middle school or even primary school in recent years, some of whom are obese and have high blood pressure.

It is hard to imagine a 12-year-old child with blood sugar reaching 20 mmol/L and blood pressure reaching 200 mmHg, he said.

It is common knowledge in medicine that obesity is one of the major causes of diabetes and cardiovascular diseases.

According to a 2020 report on Chinese people's nutrition level and chronic diseases released by the National Health Commission, around 10 percent of children under the age of 6 are obese, which

increased to almost 20 percent for children aged between 6 and 17.

Xie Zhuangli, a doctor at Tongji Hospital of Tongji University's department of endocrinology and metabolism, said that when young people suffer from chronic diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and high blood pressure, their chances of suffering complications are significantly higher than those of older people.

For example, for diabetes, it takes, on average, five to 10 years for patients to develop complications after they are diagnosed, so young people are more likely to have complications.

These complications can cause disease in multiple organs, kidney diseases, even blindness and amputation, and will seriously

affect the patient's daily lives and bring burden to their family, she said.

Experts said the reason for the increasing number of young people who have diabetes is that they eat food with lots of oil and sugar and have an unhealthy daily schedule.

Some beverage brands have become so popular among young people that many of them seldom drink water, they said.

More importantly, they lack knowledge about chronic diseases and often think that only older people suffer from such diseases, Xie said.

Many young diabetic patients go to the hospital for treatment after they develop serious complications and it is often too late for effective intervention, she said.



Female fighters practice boxing at a martial arts gym in Taiyuan, Shanxi province, on Mar 20, last year. Boxing has become a new choice for exercise for many women. WU JUNJIE / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Yao suggested that more efforts should be made to increase health education among teenagers, moni-

tor children's diets, and ensure that they have enough time for sports every day.

HOLIDAYBIZ LIFE

By WANG YING in Shanghai
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Benefiting from the speedy recovery of China's cruise industry, both domestic and international cruise operators are actively positioning themselves for home port operations and offering diversified and creative services in the world's second-largest economy, according to senior executives of cruise companies.

"It is expected that China's home ports handled more than 2 million passengers trips throughout 2024. The active recovery and rapid growth are expected to confirm China as Asia's largest cruise market," said Qiu Ling, chairman and deputy director of the Shanghai International Cruise Business Institute.

Speedy recovery

"The year of 2024 was the first year for China to resume cruises and home port operations after the pandemic. Cruises have quickly become a highly sought-after choice of Chinese consumers who love international travel," said Qiu.

According to Qiu, the Chinese cruise industry celebrated the inaugural voyage of the country's first domestically-made large cruise ship *Adora Magic City* on the first day of 2024, and was cheered up by the return of big-name international cruise brands' flagship cruises. Major Chinese home ports including the Shanghai Wusongkou International Cruise Port reported significant growth in both cruise ships and passengers.

Benjamin Bouldin, president of Royal Caribbean International China, said 2024 was an exceptional year for Royal Caribbean.

"Since April, *the Spectrum of the Seas* has successfully operated 51 sailings, welcoming over 250,000 guests with a high load factor. This performance reflects not only the strong recovery of China's cruise industry, but also the growing demand among Chinese consumers for high-quality travel experiences," said Bouldin.

Notably, in peak travel seasons such as during the May Day holiday, Mid-Autumn Festival and National Day holiday, all sailings were fully booked a month in advance, according to Bouldin.

"These results exceeded our expectations and demonstrated the resilience and enthusiasm of the Chinese market. Our success in 2024 lays a solid foundation for continued growth and reinforces our commitment to providing unforgettable cruise experiences for our guests in China," he said.

Last year also saw Switzerland-headquartered MSC Cruises completely recommence operations in the Chinese market.

"As the first international cruise line to depart from home ports in the Chinese mainland after the pandemic, we deployed *MSC Bellissima*, the flagship of the Asian market with a gross tonnage of 172,000, to Shanghai and Shenzhen home ports, allowing guests in East and South China regions to have the opportunity to board an international cruise ship on the home front," said Huang Ruiling, president of MSC Cruises China.

"She successfully completed 25 near full capacity voyages, taking more than 100,000 guests to enjoy high-quality European-style luxury cruise vacations during peak travel seasons in winter and summer," Huang said.

According to Huang, by implementing a strategy of market segmentation and leveraging the peak seasons in different areas, MSC Cruises received positive feedback from consumers.

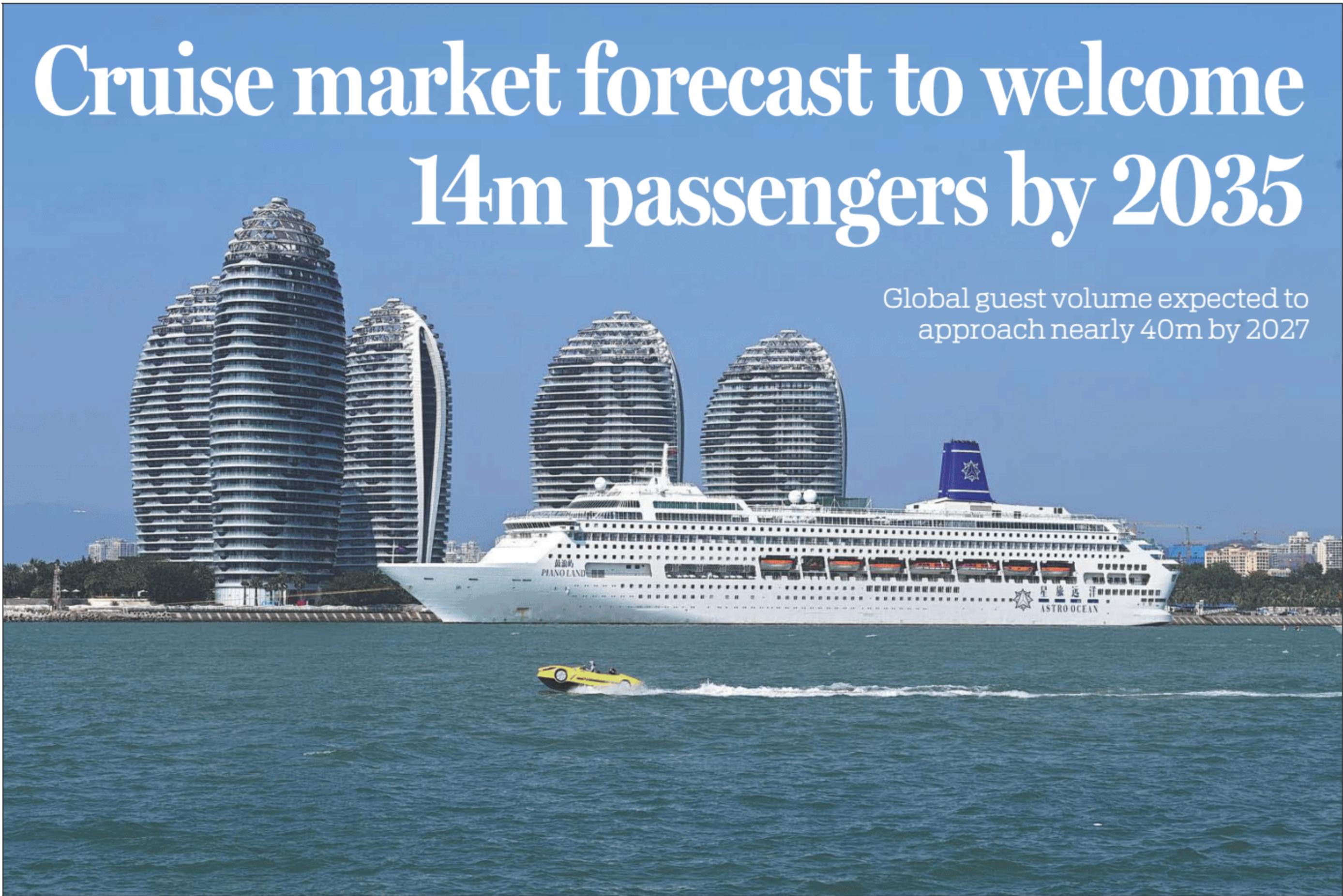
While international cruise operators ended 2024 with exceptional performance, the advent of *Adora Magic City*, the nation's first domestically built cruise ship, also closed its first-year with a strong performance in the post-pandemic era.

"Since its maiden commercial voyage on the first day of 2024, *Adora Magic City* has successfully completed 87 trips as of Jan 15 and served over 300,000 guests from both home and abroad," said Chen Ranfeng, chief executive officer of Adora Cruises, operator of *Adora Magic City*.

"The majority of our guests are Chinese, and about 5 percent of them are international guests in each sailing. Feedback from our guests shows that the satisfaction rate stands above 95 percent," Chen said.

Looking ahead

Encouraged by the strong market recovery and promising outlook, cruise operators are investing in the China market with diversified and



Cruise ship *Piano Land* is berthed at Sanya Phoenix Island International Cruise Port in South China's Hainan province, on Jan 3. SHA XIAOFENG / FOR CHINA DAILY



tailored offerings this year.

Adora Cruises will continue to explore the Chinese market via a wider range of cruise routes. "The two cruise ships, *Adora Magic City* and *Adora Mediterranea*, will operate nearly 170 international cruise routes for both domestic and foreign guests throughout 2025, meeting the diversified travel needs of consumers," Chen said.

Adora Magic City is scheduled to make Shanghai its major home port in 2025 and launch more than 80 sailings lasting from 4 to 7 nights. According to cruise itineraries, the vessel will take guests to an array of destinations in Japan and South Korea this year.

Adora Mediterranea, another cruise ship in operation under Adora Cruises, will leverage the advantage of multiple home ports including Tianjin, Guangzhou of Guangdong province, Xiamen of Fujian province, Qingdao of Shandong province and Dalian of Liaoning province. In its two to five nights of sailings, it will take tourists to popular destinations like Japan, South Korea, Vietnam and the Philippines.

For Royal Caribbean, *the Spectrum of the Seas* will continue its year-round deployment in Shanghai and Hong Kong in 2025, offering a variety of itineraries that cater to diverse preferences. Guests can choose from short 3-night weekend cruises to immersive 8-night explorations, visiting nearly 20 destinations, including Tokyo, Osaka, Hokkaido, Fukuoka, Nagasaki, Okinawa, Jeju Island, Busan and Nha Trang.

According to Bouldin, Royal Caribbean has curated over 100 premium shore excursions that combine classic attractions with innovative experiences, including whale watching and helicopter tours, in order to ensure that guests can enjoy both thrilling adventures and deep cultural immersion.

"By providing such diverse options, we aim to meet the evolving needs of Chinese travelers while continuing to inspire confidence in

the market," said Bouldin.

Deeming China as one of its key strategic markets, MSC Cruises is expected to make steady progress this year with its brand heritage and global capacity deployment set to meet the diverse needs of Chinese guests, according to Huang.

"On Jan 16, we marked the grand return of *MSC Bellissima* as she brought a total of 25 voyages throughout this year covering the winter and spring season from January to March and the summer season from July to September, taking guests to popular Japanese and Korean destinations including Fukuoka, Sasebo, Kagoshima, Okinawa, Jeju, Busan and Incheon," said Huang.

Additionally, with more Chinese guests choosing our overseas itineraries to enjoy cruise vacations in Europe, the Middle East and other regions, we have announced 127 specially selected 2025-26 overseas cruises in China, covering a total of 8 regions and over 30 countries and territories, offering more global travel options, Huang said.

Strong market drivers

The Chinese cruise market's strong comeback in 2024 and rosy outlook for 2025 is driving the global cruise market's growth and expansion.

In its 2024 State of the Cruise Industry report, the Cruise Lines International Association said that global cruise passenger volume reached 31.7 million in 2023, surpassing 2019 by 7 percent. It projected the cruise tourism market globally to rebound to 34.7 million in 2024, and approach nearly 40 million by 2027. The report also forecast cruise capacity to grow at least 10 percent from 2024 through 2028.

"We will continue to invest in the Chinese market, bringing innovation and delivering high-quality offerings to promote the prosperous development of the Chinese cruise market," said Huang.

"Meanwhile, we will continue to innovate, bringing more offerings

Left: An usher on cruise ship *Adora Magic City* greets passengers.
JIA TIANYONG / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Right: A passenger on cruise ship *Piano Land* tries a local dance after arriving at Sanya.
SHA XIAOFENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

“China remains the world’s largest and most promising consumption market, which contains huge growth potential.”

Qiu Ling, chairman and deputy director of the Shanghai International Cruise Business Institute

500 billion yuan
approximate scale of the cruise market by 2035

10 percent
growth rate of global cruise capacity from 2024 through 2028

that integrate cruise travel with other tourism segments, entertainment and culture. This includes developing popular cross-border collaborations and launching cultural and tourism integration projects, such as Chinese culture-themed and festival-themed voyages. Our aim is to offer consumers more diverse and personalized experiences, catering to the ever-changing market demand," Huang explained.

Huang said MSC Cruises is confident that the Chinese cruise market is full of potential as the overall travel willingness of Chinese consumers is improving, policy support and infrastructure improvements have provided strong guarantees for the development of the Chinese cruise market, and the joint and active promotion of cruise culture throughout the cruise value chain is ongoing.

"We are optimistic about the long-term growth of China's cruise market. With the steady recovery of outbound tourism and the expanding middle-income group, the demand for premium travel experiences continues to rise," said Bouldin.

According to Bouldin, Royal Caribbean has observed notable shifts in Chinese consumer behavior. Travelers are increasingly prioritizing quality and unique experiences over cost, with balcony and ocean-view staterooms now among the most sought-after accommodation. This evolution reflects the growing sophistication of Chinese travelers and perfectly aligns with Royal Caribbean's premium offerings.

"From an industry perspective, Chinese guests traveling on international cruises play a crucial role in strengthening global connections and elevating China's profile within the global cruise industry. This dynamic not only encourages the development of tailored offerings for Chinese consumers but also enriches the international perception of China through cruising," said Bouldin.

"The cruise economy is an industry with unlimited outlook that is

deeply integrated with advanced manufacturing and modern service industry," Zhang Weijiong, vice-president of the China Europe International Business School was quoted as saying by China Times.

"Along with the country's visa-free policies, the entire cruise industry is gradually entering the fast lane. In the medium- to long-term, China's cruise market is expected to reach a passenger volume of 14 million passenger trips, and the nation's cruise market scale may exceed 500 billion yuan by 2035," Zhang said.

"Following the commercial operation of China's domestically built cruise ships, Chinese travelers and the local market will embrace more options," Chen said.

"We take advantage of our proximity to the market and a deeper understanding of Chinese consumers, which also makes us competitive in the global cruise industry," said Chen.

Committed to integrating the essence of Chinese culture into the brand experience, Adora Cruises vows to provide an innovative cultural tourism experience for passengers, offering cruise products tailored for Chinese people, and exploring a Chinese paradigm for the global cruise industry.

"In the future, we will continue to develop and optimize cruise products that better understand Chinese people, and create a unique cruise innovation experience in multiple dimensions," said Chen.

"China's status as the world's largest emerging market for the cruise industry as well as the world's second-largest cruise market is unshakable. China remains the world's largest and most promising consumption market, which contains huge growth potential," Qiu said.

With regards to China's supportive measures, continued opening-up and growing appeal of the China market for cruise companies, the Chinese cruise market is expected to experience positive and long lasting growth," Qiu said.

HOLIDAYTRAVEL

Captivated by the raw beauty of nature

Chinese tourists flock to scenic Iguazu Falls on the border of Argentina and Brazil

By JIMENA ESTEBAN in Buenos Aires
For China Daily

In the northeast of Argentina, straddling the border with Brazil, sit the longest series of waterfalls in the world. A magnet for about 1.5 million visitors every year, Iguazu Falls is one of the Seven Natural Wonders of the World and one of the most impressive sights in Latin America.

Over the last few years, Chinese tourists have been increasingly willing to travel to the edges of the rainforest to take in the spectacle of the falls and the forest around them.

Most travel to Buenos Aires, the capital of Argentina and the biggest tourist landing spot in the country, and use that as the take-off point for the two-hour flight north to Puerto Iguazu, the city closest to the falls.

Once at Iguazu Falls, they can take in the 275 individual waterfalls along 2.7 kilometers that make up Iguazu.

From Beijing, Buenos Aires is among the farthest national capitals in the world. The journey can take more than 20 hours, depending on the route.

More than 3 million people are expected to visit Buenos Aires this year to take in the many cultural sights, eat the country's famous *parrillas* (barbecue) and travel to the many tourist attractions throughout the country.

Many of them choose to head south to the expanses of Patagonia and perhaps take an Antarctic cruise, while others head west to the mountains and ski resorts along the Andes mountains. Another option is to stay closer to Buenos Aires in the center of the country and check out the vast expanses and ranches of the Pampas or head east to the Atlantic Ocean beaches.

Over the last few years, many visitors to Argentina have chosen to head north, to the province of Misiones that borders Brazil. The province is home to the Argentine side of Iguazu Falls.

"Chinese visitors are captivated by Argentina, and many express a desire to explore the country further," said Matias Esteras, chief executive of Vivaterra, a travel agency in Argentina that arranges trips and tours.

"They frequently visit not only Iguazu and Buenos Aires but also various areas of Argentine Patagonia, where they are amazed by the landscapes, silence, and moments of peace."

"Iguazu National Park is well-preserved, clean and offers an intense experience of the river, jungle and nature," said Esteras.

Iguazu Falls sit some 1,300 km north of Buenos Aires, with many daily flights that take you to it in a couple of hours. Puerto Iguazu, the city closest to the park, sits in a geographical triangle within Argentina that shares borders with both Paraguay and Brazil.

Charming city

Puerto Iguazu is a charming city marked by a vibrant local culture, surrounded by lush subtropical forests and scenery, and artisan markets. Visitors can explore the markets or experience the local cuisine and hospitality. Its location near the tri-border area gives it a unique vibe.

"The national park is a 30-minute drive from downtown Puerto Iguazu," said



Tourists admire the Brazilian side of the Iguazu Falls, the longest series of waterfalls in the world and one of the Seven Natural Wonders of the World, in November. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



One of the waterfalls as seen from the Argentine side of the Iguazu Falls. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Students from Macao perform in front of the Iguazu Falls during a cultural event celebrating Chinese New Year, jointly organized by the Chinese embassy in Brazil and the Foz do Iguaçu city government, in February 2024. LIN CHUNYIN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Micaela Pereyra, a travel agent. Tours can be easily booked from there as well.

Pereyra recommends staying at least two nights to explore the Argentine side of the Iguazu National Park and the Brazilian side "which, though featuring fewer waterfalls, offers a unique perspective of the falls".

"Visiting the Brazilian side typically requires three or four hours, including crossing the land border between Argentina and Brazil," said Pereyra.

"If you have a free afternoon, consider visiting the Three Borders Landmark, where Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay meet. The site features a daily light and sound show," Pereyra said.

"Longer stays in Puerto Iguazu offer opportunities for horseback riding in the jungle or visiting Guira Oga, an animal rescue center where guided tours showcase the work done with rescued wildlife," Pereyra added.

The falls have become increasingly famous over the last few decades. They are

often featured in Hollywood movies and are, since 1984, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

They are also at the heart of one of South America's most crucial subtropical rainforest ecosystems, with more than 2,000 plant species and wildlife such as tapirs, giant anteaters, howler monkeys, ocelots, jaguars and caimans. There are also hundreds of birds, butterflies, and curious coati mammals in store for visitors on the Brazilian side of the falls.

The best time to visit the falls is from October to March. Visitors who choose to travel as part of groups usually spend two days traveling to Iguazu Falls from Buenos Aires, said Esteras, the Vivaterra CEO.

On the first day, groups often explore the Argentine side of the falls, which has three different circuits. Visitors can take inflatable boat rides to get closer to the falls.

"The lower circuit allows for close-up views of the river and falls from below. The upper circuit offers views of the river before it cascades into the falls, offering an incredible perspective," Esteras said. "The high-

light is the Devil's Throat, one of the most impressive."

On the second day, visitors often explore the Brazilian side, which offers a more panoramic — albeit more distant — view of the Iguazu.

"While 80 percent of the falls are on the Argentine side, the most picturesque photo opportunities, with all the falls visible at once, are from the Brazilian side," said Esteras.

Argentina, Brazil and China have taken steps to strengthen tourism relations. Brazil, for instance, recently introduced a 10-year visa policy to encourage travel and business exchanges.

Argentina has become a key destination for Chinese tourists, many of whom are attracted by the country's reputation as a soccer powerhouse or won over by the increased connectivity between the two countries, as well as visa assistance for Chinese tourists.

This trend is visible throughout Latin America, with Brazil, Argentina and Peru



We have found Chinese visitors to be easy to work with, always pleasant and eager to explore remote places."

Matias Esteras, chief executive of the travel agency Vivaterra in Argentina

the most popular destinations in the region during the first few months of 2024, according to the Chinese travel portal Qunar. The portal recently noted that Chinese tourists are increasingly likely to choose exploratory or immersive natural experiences during visits to Latin America.

Helicopter rides over Iguazu Falls and hikes in the rainforest are among the top choices, but horse rides and boat rides are also common, as are food tours and shopping excursions.

Tourism authorities throughout the region have taken steps to make visits easier and more accessible. In 2017, Brazil and Argentina launched a joint tourism promotion program, including promotional tours in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, to woo more visitors from China. The Brazilian Tourist Board announced plans to join China's travel trade show in Shanghai this year.

"We have found Chinese visitors to be easy to work with, always pleasant and eager to explore remote places," said Esteras.

Long history

One often overlooked feature of Iguazu is its history, which goes back many millennia.

More than 10,000 years ago, the hunter-gatherers of the Eldoradense culture lived in the area. They were displaced around the year 1000 by the Guarani, who brought new agricultural technologies. The Guarani themselves were displaced by the Spanish and Portuguese conquistadors in the 16th century.

The Spanish explorer Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca named the falls Saltos de Santa Maria in 1541. Later, Jesuit missions followed. A Brazilian army officer, Edmundo de Barros, suggested the creation of a national park near the falls in 1897.

The horseshoe-shaped falls create a natural border between Brazil and Argentina. Once the boundaries of the countries were defined, two separate national parks were established, Iguazu National Park in Argentina and Iguaçu National Park in Brazil's Parana state.

The falls are also important as a source of power, with the huge Itaipu Hydroelectric Plant jointly built by Paraguay and Brazil and completed in 1991. The dam is one of the largest in the world, providing nearly 15 percent of Brazil's electricity and 90 percent of Paraguay's.

In 2011, the Iguazu National Park and Iguazu Falls were chosen as one of the "Seven Natural Wonders of the World".

The Iguazu Park, which covers more than 67,620 hectares, has a team of protectors who guard the local environment and biodiversity.

Starting in 1996, Iguazu Argentina supervises the infrastructure that makes visiting the falls possible. The entity oversees and maintains water sewers, walkways, walks and trails, an ecological train, and an underground electrical system to help preserve plant and animal species in the park.

The writer is a freelance journalist for China Daily.

Falling in love with Buenos Aires' tango music, dancing and sumptuous steaks

By JIMENA ESTEBAN in Buenos Aires

Buenos Aires, known as the "Paris of South America," often enchants visitors with its European-style architecture, vibrant neighborhoods, rich cultural heritage, fantastic food, passion for soccer and penchant for music and dancing.

As the birthplace of tango music and dance, the city allows visitors to watch authentic tango performances or take lessons to learn this world-famous dance.

The city is also a paradise for food lovers, offering some of the finest steaks in the world, local *empanada* pastries, fantastic pizza and exceptional wines from the nearby Mendoza region. Across Buenos Aires, there are designer boutiques and traditional markets like the city's Feria de San Telmo.

Buenos Aires is a growing favorite among Chinese visitors thanks to increasing connectivity and Argentina's visa assistance. The city has seen a steady rise in visitors from China eager to explore its culture, history, and vibrant lifestyle — not to mention the growing popularity of tango dancing in China and the country's affinity for soccer.

"Chinese visitors are often pleasantly surprised when they see Buenos Aires, as it turns out to be much more beautiful and attractive than they expected," said Matias



The Caminito Tango bar in the La Boca neighborhood of Buenos Aires, an area which is generally regarded as the birthplace of the tango. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Esteras, CEO of Argentine tourism agency Vivaterra.

Whether exploring its world-class museums, strolling through the colorful streets of Palermo, or enjoying a lively barbecue,

Buenos Aires offers something for most travelers. The city also has a busy and active nightlife. Dinner is typically eaten very late, often after 10 pm, with bars and nightclubs busy until dawn.

From Buenos Aires, Chinese visitors can take excursions to nearby ranches or boat rides along the Parana River delta.

In ranches on the country's famous and fertile plains, known as the Pampas, visitors "are often amazed by the vast plains, the silence and the connection with nature, which leaves a significant impression on them," said Esteras.

Tour companies often personalize Buenos Aires experiences for tourists, Esteras noted. For example, his agency offers a tour of specific parks where Chinese visitors are often fascinated by certain trees or plants.

"This is especially true during October, November and December, which coincide with the (spring and) summer season," said Esteras.

When it comes to outdoor activities, Chinese visitors also appreciate Argentina's passion for tango and soccer, which is the Latin American country's most popular sport.

The Chinese "take countless photos and spend a lot of time in places that reference tango events. In many cases, our company organizes spontaneous appearances by tango-dancing couples, which captivates them," said Esteras.

Tango originated in Buenos Aires and Montevideo, Uruguay, in the late 19th century. Buenos Aires holds a tango festival every

year in August, which allows professional and amateur dancers from around the world to showcase their dancing skills. Free classes are also offered to enthusiasts during the two-week celebration.

"Tango is a unique and highly attractive dance for everyone, but it's clear that Chinese visitors adore it," said Esteras.

Aside from activities, Chinese visitors are seduced by the taste and quality of Buenos Aires' food, especially the steaks and prime cuts of beef. China is the main export market for Argentine beef, accounting for 78 percent of exports from the Latin American nation.

"Normally, we offer a combination: one meal is traditionally Argentine, including beef, *empanadas* and salads, while the second main meal of the day is at a Chinese restaurant," said Esteras.

Don Julio, the Michelin-starred grill in the Palermo neighborhood, is a must-try for gourmet Argentine barbecue, said Micaela Pereyra, a travel agent in Buenos Aires.

She advised tourists to make reservations as it may take a long time to get in. Another food option is in the Puerto Madero neighborhood, Cabana Las Lilas, and restaurants such as Puerto Cristal or La Parolaccia which offer varied menus with views of Puerto Madero.

HOLIDAYS

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A year of legacy and innovation

For the Olympic Movement, 2024 marked a milestone in equality, diversity and leadership

Last year marked a milestone for the Olympic Movement, as the Summer Olympics returned to Paris after a century.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) advanced significant reforms, ranging from the integration of artificial intelligence (AI), to the future of esports and diversified event formats. These changes are designed to attract a broader audience, particularly younger generations, and underscore the Olympic spirit of inclusivity and progress.

With IOC president Thomas Bach completing his term at the helm, 2024 was also a pivotal year of leadership transition. The election of a new president not only symbolizes a transfer of power, but also sets the stage for a new chapter in the Olympic Movement's journey.

A historic return

The 2024 Summer Olympics opened on July 26 with a dazzling ceremony along the Seine River, marking the first time in modern Olympic history that the opening ceremony was held outside a stadium. Athletes from 205 delegations traveled six kilometers by boat, from Pont d'Austerlitz to the Eiffel Tower, captivating the global audience with a seamless blend of urban scenery, history and Olympic ideals.

Paris, hosting the Olympics for the third time, successfully integrated sports into the city. Iconic landmarks like the Eiffel Tower hosted beach volleyball, the Grand Palais held taekwondo, and breaking premiered at Place de la Concorde, creating new cultural dimensions for the Games.

"We wanted to bring sports closer to the heart of the city and showcase the vibrancy and inclusivity of Paris," said Paris 2024 president Tony Estanguet.

The Paris Olympics achieved a historic milestone in gender equality, becoming the first Games to feature an equal number of male and female athletes. It also introduced more mixed-gender events, demonstrating the IOC's commitment to equity.

"Gender equality lies at the core of Olympism. Through the Paris Olympics, we aim to send a clear message that sports belong to everyone," said Bach.

Sustainability was another defining theme of Paris 2024. As a model for the IOC's Olympic Agenda 2020+5, the event reduced carbon emissions by 50 percent compared to the previous Summer Games, prioritizing existing venues. Only three new facilities were built: the Porte de La Chapelle Arena, the Le Bourget Climbing Venue and the Olympic Aquatic Center near Stade de France, and all will continue to serve local communities after the Games.

The Olympic Village, featuring modular designs and eco-friendly technologies is set to be converted into 3,000 residential units, creating lasting benefits for the local



Clockwise from top: The Paris Olympics achieved a historic milestone in gender equality, becoming the first Games to feature an equal number of male and female athletes; With IOC president Thomas Bach completing his term, 2024 was also a pivotal year of leadership transition; To sustain Olympic excitement beyond the Games, the IOC introduced the Olympic Qualifier Series that took place over two legs, one in Shanghai and another in Budapest. AGENCIES AND PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

community.

"Paris 2024 is more than a sporting event, it's a legacy for future generations," said IOC Corporate and Sustainable Development director Marie Sallois.

Olympic reform

In 2024, the IOC demonstrated foresight in advancing the Olympic Movement. In April, it launched the Olympic AI Agenda, outlining the potential of AI in sports.

AI was deployed extensively at Paris 2024, from OBS's "Cloud Venue" for live broadcasting to AI-enhanced refereeing and personalized athlete training programs. It even played a role in promoting a positive digital environment by combating online hate speech on social media.

"AI enhances fairness, and efficiency, and delivers an immersive experience for global audiences," Bach noted.

"Gender equality lies at the core of Olympism. Through the Paris Olympics, we aim to send a clear message that sports belong to everyone."

Thomas Bach, IOC president, on the Paris Games being the first to feature an equal number of male and female athletes

To sustain Olympic excitement beyond the Games period, the IOC introduced the Olympic Qualifier Series, with two legs, one in Shanghai and another in Budapest, featuring skateboarding, sport climbing, breaking and BMX freestyle. These innovative qualifiers drew top athletes to compete for Paris 2024 berths and attracted a

younger audience with music, cultural performances and interactive experiences.

"The Qualifier Series is more than an experiment; it's a new way to express Olympism," said Pierre Fratter-Bardy, Olympic Games Strategy and Development associate director.

Esports also gained momentum as a focus of IOC reforms. Following the for-

mation of the Esports Committee, the IOC announced plans for this year's inaugural Olympic Esports Games in Saudi Arabia. While esports offer vast opportunities to engage a younger audience, its alignment with Olympic values remains a key challenge.

"Esports is a global language for youth, but we must ensure its values align with the Olympic spirit," said David Lippartient, chair of the IOC's Esports and Gaming Liaison Group.

Flexibility in event formats was another highlight of this year's reforms. The Dakar 2026 Youth Olympics will introduce interactive cultural showcases while reducing event disciplines to 151, easing the organizational burden. The event will also achieve full gender parity and will see *wushu* debut as an official sport, further celebrating the diversity of Olympic culture.

These reforms, blending tech-

nology, youth engagement and cultural inclusion, have strengthened the Olympic Movement's relevance and appeal.

The achievements of 2024 set a solid foundation for future Games.

A new chapter

As Bach's 12-year tenure nears its end, the IOC is preparing for a leadership transition. Over his term, Bach led reforms like the Olympic Agenda 2020 and 2020+5, advancing sustainability, innovation and gender equality.

Last summer in Paris, the 70-year-old German announced he would step down in 2025, marking the start of a new chapter for the IOC.

Seven candidates have entered the race to succeed Bach, including IOC vice-president Juan Antonio Samaranch, World Athletics president Sebastian Coe, International Cycling Union president Lappartient, Zimbabwean Olympic champion Kirsty Coventry, International Ski Federation president Johan Eliasch, International Gymnastics Federation president Morinari Watanabe, and Prince Faisal Al Hussein of Jordan.

The election vote will take place in March in ancient Olympia. Candidates made their presentations last month, and members will cast their votes in a closed-door ballot.

Meanwhile, the IOC's commercial framework has seen significant changes.

Three Japanese firms — Panasonic, Toyota and Bridgestone — will exit The Olympic Partner (TOP) program, raising questions about future partnerships. Despite these departures, the IOC remains confident in TOP's global appeal.

"TOP remains one of the most successful marketing platforms, and we are actively engaging new partners," said an IOC marketing executive.

Chinese brands have emerged as strong contenders, with firms like Hisense, Vivo and BYD having already gained international exposure through major sports sponsorships.

As the Olympic Movement adapts to a shifting global landscape, new opportunities for partnership and growth are expected.

Looking ahead, the Olympic Movement continues to embrace innovation.

The Los Angeles 2028 Games promise to redefine AI-driven spectator experiences, leveraging cutting-edge technology for unprecedented engagement. Meanwhile, the 2030 Winter Olympics in France will fully implement green initiatives, setting a benchmark for sustainability at major sporting events.

With evolving leadership, technological integration and cultural inclusivity, the Olympics stand poised for a new era of global unity and progress.

XINHUA



Beach volleyball being played in the shadow of the iconic Eiffel Tower in late July has become one of the enduring images of the 2024 Paris Olympics. XINHUA

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YEARENDER

DRIVEN TO SUCCEED

Over the past year, the world's top athletes produced some sporting moments that were truly unforgettable. Fortunately, the world's best sports snappers were on hand to ensure they remain so.

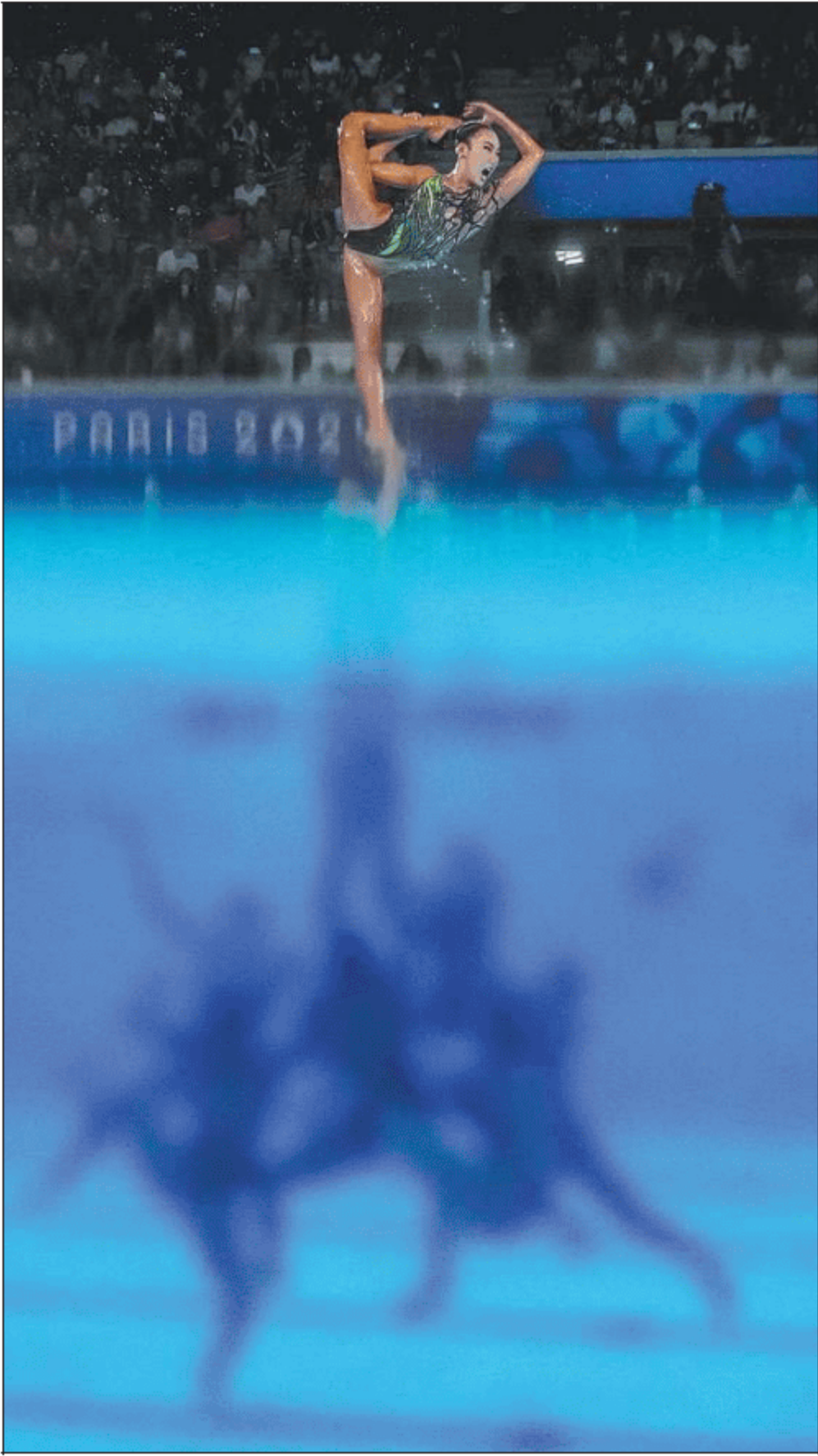
Qatari racing driver Nasser Al-Attiyah, and co-driver Mathieu Baumel of France, push their car to the limit on stage 6 of the Dakar Rally in Saudi Arabia on Jan 12, 2024. REUTERS



Gabriel Medina, of Brazil, wipes out during practice prior to the quarterfinals of the 2024 Summer Olympics surfing competition in Teahupo'o, Tahiti on Aug 1. AP



Athletes make a splash during the Paris Olympics women's 3,000m steeplechase on Aug 4. REUTERS



The United States team in action during the Paris Olympics artistic swimming competition on Aug 7. REUTERS



Anthony Jeanjean of France makes his point during the Paris Olympics BMX freestyle men's park final at Place de la Concorde on July 3. REUTERS



Paul Townend rides Galopin Des Champs alongside the riderless Fastorslow during the Cheltenham Festival on March 15. REUTERS



A surfer competes at the 2024 Paris Olympics in Teahupo'o, Tahiti, French Polynesia, on Aug 6. REUTERS