

BEIJING REVIEW

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THE PLATFORM PLUG

The digital economy as a game changer

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Setting the Stage

New digital business models have budded and blossomed since the early 2000s when the Internet first began permeating every sphere of life in China. Platform companies, bringing together buyers and sellers and managing their interactions online, for one, have thrived. In 2021, China's top 100 Internet firms earned a total revenue of 4.58 trillion yuan (\$664 billion), and the size of the country's platform economy is estimated to reach 100 trillion yuan (\$14.5 trillion) in 2030.

The Central Economic Work Conference on December 15-16, 2022, an annual gathering outlining economic priorities for the coming year, called for greater efforts to develop the digital economy, improve supervision and provide more support to platform enterprises so as to leverage their abilities in leading development, creating jobs and competing globally.

The platform economy is vital to the Chinese economy at large. The country does not yet have a solid foundation for economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and remains challenged by pressures of demand contraction, supply shocks and weakening expectations. The global environment is turbulent,

with the impact on the Chinese economy continuously deepening.

While managing these challenges, China must unleash the role of the platform economy in leading innovation, which means better connecting buyers with sellers and improving the efficiency of resource allocation.

Platform companies, including Internet and technology giants Alibaba and JD.com, have focused on improving their user experience, advancing the prosperity of different players and motivating international and domestic trade. Experts in the field believe that with support from the government and rebounding market demand, the platform economy will take on a more important role in the national economy.

But while enjoying the data dividends, the platform economy must also tackle the issues of monopoly as well as weak government supervision and data security.

It's crucial for global stakeholders to create a synergy for its healthy evolution. It is important to fortify weaker areas in both the long and short term, resolve prominent problems and promote its regulated and sustainable development. **BR**



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THE RABBIT STAMPS

The United Nations Postal Administration (UNPA) will issue a stamp sheet for the 2023 Chinese New Year on January 20.

The sheet consists of 10 stamps of a denomination of \$1.4 each, with a meticulously painted white rabbit against the backdrop of a golden moon surrounded by clouds, as the upcoming Chinese lunar year is the Year of the Rabbit.

In 2021, the UNPA completed the 12-year cycle of the Chinese zodiac Lunar New Year stamp series. The new rabbit stamp is the second of a new zodiac cycle issued for the series.

Chinese New Year, or Spring Festival, will fall on January 22 this year.



Setting the Sights High

A section of the round-the-island sightseeing highway in Wenchang, Hainan Province on December 30, 2022. The highway is scheduled for completion in mid-2023.

National Park System

China has selected 49 candidate areas for building national parks to better protect wildlife species and their habitats, according to a spatial layout plan for the country's national park system made public on December 29, 2022.

The 49 candidate sites, including the five having already been developed into national parks, cover an area of around 1.1 million square km. These sites include 44 land areas, three sea areas, and two land-sea areas. They were selected based on their ecological importance, unique natural landscapes and rich biodiversity, stated the plan, jointly issued by the National Forestry and Grassland Administration, the Ministry of

Finance, the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ministry of Ecology and Environment.

If all 49 candidate parks are constructed, China will have the largest national park system in the world in terms of protected areas, according to the plan.

More than 5,000 wild vertebrate species and 29,000 types of higher plants inhabit these parks, including over 80 percent of China's strictly protected fauna and flora.

Mental Health Rehab

China has issued a circular on starting a three-year campaign to develop community-based psychiatric rehabilitation services nationwide, Xinhua News Agency reported on January 4.

Issued by the Ministry of Civil Affairs, the National Health Commission and two other authorities, the circular reveals plans to establish an information platform covering medical facilities, community rehabilitation centers and patients with mental disorders across the country.

The circular requires all prefecture-level cities in China to set up community psychiatric rehabilitation centers with assessment and referral services. It also stresses that staff of these centers should receive proper training.

In 2017, the Ministry of Civil Affairs and several other authorities jointly issued a guideline, planning to make community rehabilitation psychiatric services

accessible in at least 80 percent of China's county-level regions by 2025.

Water and Soil Conservation

China has released a guideline to strengthen the conservation of water and soil to promote the construction of an ecological civilization in the new era, Xinhua News Agency reported on January 3.

The guideline, jointly released by the general offices of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council, details China's targets to strengthen water and soil conservation by 2025 and 2035, respectively.

By 2025, China aims to improve its institutional mechanism and system for the conservation of soil and water, enhance management efficiency and effectively control soil erosion caused by human activities in key regions, with 73 percent of the nation's territory being without soil erosion by that date, per the guideline.

By 2035, a systematic, coordinated and efficient water and soil conservation system will be formed, human-induced soil erosion will be fully controlled and soil erosion in key areas will be comprehensively treated. Areas without soil erosion should account for 75 percent of the nation's territory by that date, according to the document.

Wind Power Project

Liaoning Province saw a major onshore wind power project connect to the state grid and enter operation on December 31, 2022.

The 400,000-kilowatt wind power project can provide 1.13 billion kilowatt-hours of clean electricity every year, which can satisfy a whole year's power

demand for nearly 600,000 households.

The project can help save 345,000 tons of standard coal and reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 912,000 tons annually, according to the northeast branch of the State Power Investment Corp. Ltd., the project's investor and constructor.

With a gross investment of over 2.2 billion yuan (\$320 million), the project has 80 wind turbines, each with a capacity of 5 megawatts, in addition to a 220-kilovolt booster station.

This is the first major new-energy project completed by the State Power Investment Corp. in Liaoning during the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-25).

The company plans to build more new-energy bases in Liaoning and neighboring Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region and increase its installed capacity of clean energy to 6 million kilowatts before the end of the 14th Five-Year Plan period.

Coal Channel

The Watang-Rizhao Railway's total freight volume exceeded 103 million tons in 2022, which means China has upgraded another energy transport corridor capable of handling over 100

million tons of coal annually, according to China Railway Taiyuan Bureau Group Co. Ltd., Xinhua reported on January 3.

The railway, which begins in Watang Township in Shanxi Province and ends at Rizhao Port in Shandong Province, connects China's seven major railway routes. It is a heavy-haul coal transportation channel connecting the country's main coal-producing regions.

With joint efforts to improve coal transport efficiency, the railway saw its annual transport volume increase from 73.9 million tons in 2020 to over 100 million tons last year.

The channel is also a major route for China's west-to-east coal transportation, ensuring the country meets its energy consumption demand.

C919 Validation Flights

Entering the new year, China Eastern Airlines has increased the frequency of validation flights for the C919 large passenger jetliner, China's first homegrown large jetliner.

The company confirmed that on the first day of the new year, the aircraft flew from Shanghai Hongqiao International Airport



Plant-Based

People are seen at a cafe in a large commercial complex transformed from an old thermal power plant in Tianjin Municipality on January 1. The Tianjin No.1 Thermal Power Plant, founded in 1937, closed in 2011. The complex opened to the public just before the New Year's Day holiday (December 31-January 2).

to Beijing Daxing International Airport and then returned to Shanghai. On January 2, it departed for Haikou Meilan International Airport in the tropical island province of Hainan.

The jetliner is undergoing the 100-hour aircraft validation flight process on nine air routes. Each verification flight simulates the whole flight operation process, including dispatch and release, passenger boarding, pilot operation, and maintenance.

The company has completed

the training of nine pilots, 24 flight attendants and 13 maintenance personnel for the C919 jetliner's flights. Training of the second flight crew and supporting personnel is also underway.

The operator said the results of the validation flight process are expected to be reviewed and inspected by the Civil Aviation Administration of China, projecting the jetliner's commercial operation to commence as early as spring 2023—if the test results prove satisfactory.



Party Planning

A worker pickles ham at a ham-processing factory in Jinhua City, Zhejiang Province, on January 4. With the approach of Spring Festival, or Chinese New Year, running from January 21 to 27 this year, local enterprises have stepped up production to meet festival market demand.

NEV Sales

Leading new-energy vehicle (NEV) manufacturers in China reported a robust sales increase in 2022 thanks to fast market expansion and policy incentives, data showed.

BYD Co. Ltd., the country's largest NEV manufacturer, said its NEV sales jumped 208.64 percent year on year to over 1.86 million units in 2022.

Startup carmakers like Li Auto and NIO also reported strong growth. Li Auto delivered 133,246 NEVs last year, up 47.2 percent from the 2021 level. NIO delivered 122,486 units in the same period, an annual increase of 34 percent.

GAC Aion, an NEV subsidiary of GAC Group, sold some 271,000 vehicles in 2022, up 126 percent from the previous year. Gu Huinan, the company's general manager, said GAC Aion intends to deliver at least 500,000 units this year.

From January to November 2022, China's NEV sales exceeded

6.06 million units, double the same period level in 2021, according to the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers.

The association expected NEV sales in China this year will likely hit 9 million, a year-on-year increase of 35 percent.

Authorization Reform

Commercial authorities have canceled registration requirements for businesses engaged in foreign trade activities starting from December 30, 2022, following a revision of the Foreign Trade Law, the Ministry of Commerce said.

Authorities will no longer require market entities to provide foreign trade operator registration materials when applying for import and export licenses, registration certificates of technology import and export contracts, quotas, state-owned trade qualifications, and other relevant documents.

It is an important institutional innovation for the government

to promote trade liberalization, helping optimize the business environment, release the potential for foreign trade growth, and promote high-quality trade development and high-level opening up, the ministry said.

Container Port Buzz

Shanghai Port remained the world's busiest container port for the 13th straight year in 2022, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, port data showed on January 2.

The port's container throughput exceeded 473 million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) in 2022, according to Shanghai International Port (Group) Co. Ltd., the port's operator.

Braving the pandemic as well as waves of extreme weather last year, the port guaranteed the stable operation of the Shanghai International Shipping Center and safeguarded the stability of global industrial and supply chains.

Following COVID-19 flareups in the second quarter, the port managed to quickly generate

a V-shaped recovery, a term used by economists to describe the decline in various economic indicators followed by a rapid and strong recovery, in container throughput in July, when it handled a monthly record high of 4.3 million TEUs.

High-End Manufacturing

Chinese high-end manufacturing companies gained strong momentum in recent years, with a higher market value and expanded footprints in overseas markets, a recent report by the China Association for Public Companies read.

The number of high-end manufacturing companies listed on China's yuan-denominated A-share market reached 2,121 as of December 10, 2022, up 69.7 percent from 1,250 at the end of 2017, the report stated.

The market value of the companies increased significantly during the 2017-21 period. According to the report, they

NUMBERS

China's Comprehensive Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI)



raked in 11.79 trillion yuan (\$1.7 trillion) in operating revenue in 2021, compared with 7.47 trillion yuan (\$1.08 trillion) in 2017.

The companies' revenue from overseas markets stood at 27.51 trillion yuan (\$3.99 trillion) in 2021, up from 13.77 trillion yuan (\$2 trillion) in 2017, the report showed.

Tariff Plan Tuning

China has adjusted its tariff plan for 2023 and expanded the number of tariff items in line with the country's need for industrial development and technical advancement.

Approved by the State Council, the adjustment involves changes in the import and export tariffs of some products and sets up new tariff items such as white tea, jasmine tea, surgical robots, laser radars and vegetable seeds.

The move aims to optimize the country's tariff system and adapt to the need for industrial development and technical advancement, a statement of

the Customs Tariff Commission of the State Council said on December 29, 2022.

China's total number of tariff items has extended to 8,948 following the adjustment.

Trade Growth

Trade between China and the other members of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) has sustained rapid growth since the trade agreement took effect in early 2022, according to the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM).

China's trade with the other RCEP members expanded 7.9 percent year on year to 11.8 trillion yuan (\$1.7 trillion) in the first 11 months of 2022, accounting for 30.7 percent of its total import and export volume, MOFCOM data showed.

During the period, the country's exports to other RCEP members increased 17.7 percent from a year earlier to 6 trillion yuan (\$869.4 billion), MOFCOM spokesperson Shu Jueting told a

press conference.

More efforts will be made to promote the high-quality implementation of the RCEP and other free trade agreements, make full use of such agreements and improve their comprehensive utilization efficiency, Shu said.

The ministry will also conclude free trade agreements with more trading partners, further open up China's trade in goods, services and investment markets, and take an active part in negotiations on new rules for the digital economy and environmental protection, she added.

Patent Transfers

The industrialization transfer rate of China's effective patents in 2022 reached a five-year high of 36.7 percent, an annual survey read on December 28, 2022.

Issued by the National Intellectual Property Administration (NIPA), the survey said the patent industrialization rate for enterprise patentees was 48.1 percent last year. Among

them, enterprise investment from Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions and Taiwan had the highest rate, followed by foreign-invested, private and state-owned enterprises.

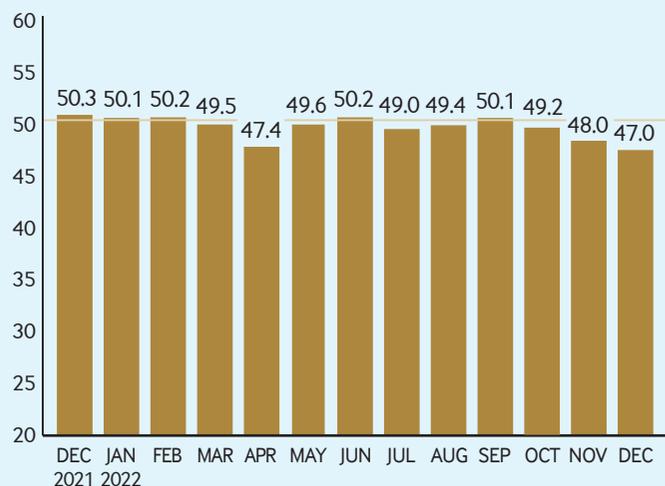
The proportion of patent holders affected by infringements dropped to 7.7 percent in 2022. It reached more than 10 percent between 2016 and 2020 and peaked at 28.4 percent from 2011 to 2015.

"The decline indicated that patent infringement has been effectively curbed and the country's intellectual property protection has consistently improved," Ge Shu, a senior NIPA official, said at a press conference.

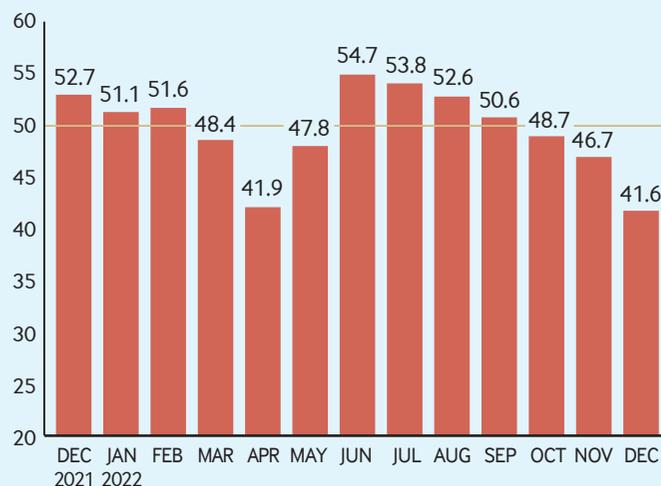
Meanwhile, the proportion of Chinese enterprise patentees taking countermeasures against infringements was 72.7 percent. It has remained above 70 percent for the past four years.

The survey report was based on valid questionnaires conducted among 18,000 patent holders.

China's Manufacturing PMI



China's Non-Manufacturing PMI



(Source: National Bureau of Statistics)

THIS WEEK **WORLD**



UNITED STATES

The Capitol building in Washington, D.C. is pictured on January 3 as a new U.S. Congress convened at noon that day amid a bitter House leadership battle. As the Republicans, who hold a majority in the House, grappled with intra-party division, this was the first time in 100 years a speaker hadn't been elected on the first ballot



CAMBODIA

The construction site of a China-funded bridge across the Mekong is captured in Kratie Province on January 1. The project broke ground that day



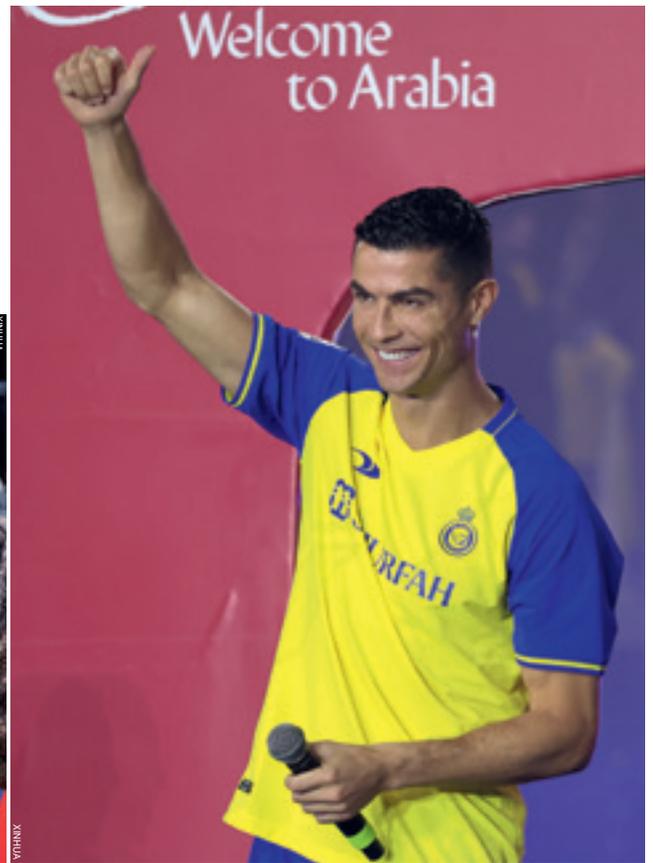
CUBA

The National Ballet of Cuba takes to the stage in Havana on January 1 to celebrate the 64th anniversary of the triumph of the Cuban Revolution



UNITED KINGDOM

People interact with a “dinosaur” during the annual New Year’s Day Parade in London on January 1



SAUDI ARABIA

Al-Nassr’s Portuguese forward Cristiano Ronaldo gives fans a thumbs up during his unveiling at the Mrsool Park Stadium in Riyadh on January 3



BRAZIL

Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva greets his supporters in Brasília on January 1 when he was sworn in as president for a four-year term



THIS WEEK PEOPLE & POINTS

NEW FOREIGN MINISTER

Qin Gang has been appointed foreign minister. The appointment was made by the 13th National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee on December 30, 2022 when he was serving as Chinese ambassador to the U.S.

Born in Tianjin in March 1966, Qin began his career in the Beijing Service Bureau for Diplomatic Missions, working there from 1988 to 1992. Later, he worked in what is now the Department of European Affairs of the Foreign Ministry.

Qin has also worked at the Chinese Embassy in the United Kingdom and as a foreign ministry spokesperson.

Qin served as vice minister of foreign affairs from 2018 to 2021. He arrived in the U.S. as Chinese ambassador in July 2021.



Tradition Meets Tech

Workers' Daily December 27

In celebration of the upcoming Spring Festival holiday from January 21 to 27, many restaurants have launched a range of new dishes for the traditional Chinese New Year's Eve dinner in collaboration with online grocery apps.

These brands, collectively known as "China Time-honored Brands," a title granted by the Ministry of Commerce, encapsulate the essence of cultural traditions by selling products and services passed down through generations. However, in an age dominated by mature markets with increasingly specialized niches, these classic brands cannot live solely off their past glories. Changes needed

to be made in order for these enterprises to stay afloat in the current digital era.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a mixed blessing for these brands. Successive waves of infections mean reduced traffic, which in turn has pushed these traditional brick-and-mortar stores to adopt a more digitized mode of operation through opening online stores and hosting online-offline hybrid events. Adopting these measures at once opens up new sales channels and enables market research based on extensive collection and analysis of customer data.

Ready or not, the future of the digital economy has already arrived. By both honoring historical legacies and embracing contemporary digital trends, China's time-honored brands will remain capable of passing on traditional culture for many years to come.



Grand Canal Cleanup

Oriental Outlook December 22

The Grand Canal, an ancient waterway running from Beijing to Zhejiang Province, is the world's oldest and longest artificial river. As the northern terminus of this conduit, Beijing is steeped in memories of the vicissitudes of the canal. Consisting of two major streams, the Tonghui River and the Beiyun River, the Beijing section of the canal was once a transport hub where select commodities from

"The year 2023 should be a window period for cooperation between the two countries and the world, and this opportunity cannot be missed."

Chen Fengying, a senior economist and former director of the Institute of World Economic Studies at the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations, talking about China-U.S. relationship in a recent interview with *China Daily*

"The fiscal balance issue is still outstanding in 2023, but we will not roll back spending on people's wellbeing."

Liu Kun, Chinese Minister of Finance, in a recent interview with Xinhua News Agency

a vast constellation of riverfront cities were gathered. With rapid urbanization beginning in the 1980s, these rivers became heavily polluted with all sorts of urban waste.

Fortunately, the city's long suffering of water woes has taken a favorable turn. During the past decade, local authorities have been diverting contaminated runoff away from the water body, converting sewage into reusable water, growing aquatic plants and building forest parks along the riverbanks.

With these measures in place, damaged aquatic ecosystems are recovering their lost biodiversity. According to a report released by the Tongzhou Water Resource Bureau, the Beiyun River alone is now home to 26 aquatic plant species, more than 60 aquatic animal species and more than 200 bird species.

Restoration of the canal also facilitates the coordinated development of Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei Province. As once murky water becomes clear, the Grand Canal is reentering the lives of local people. Popular ways to engage with the canal include walking along riverside trails, taking a night cruise for a view of dazzling city lights and engaging in fashionable water sports such as kayaking and paddle boarding.

Accessible Apps

Beijing Daily
December 28

Despite many online companies reinventing their interfaces to cater to the needs of the nation's increasingly tech-savvy senior population, technical pitfalls still abound for this generation of users. Common issues include advertisements and scams leading to unnecessary purchases and payments, large font sizes being available only on main pages, and apps returning to default mode after updating.

On the surface, these imperfections seem to be rooted in the long negligence of older adults' interests among app developers, who are accustomed to creating designs from

young people's perspectives. However, the real reason these new interfaces are so severely flawed is the conflict between senior users' needs for an ad-free and pop-up-free interface and applications' reliance on these as major sources of income.

With many apps aiming to become the next ubiquitous super app and constantly adding new functions, interfaces are becoming increasingly difficult to navigate. In response to this trend, some young people are switching to using "senior mode" for a cleaner and more streamlined user experience, offering online companies and app developers a new path forward.

This is a lesson not just for apps catering to older generations, but for the entire mobile app industry.

NEW HEAD OF TAIWAN AFFAIRS OFFICE

Song Tao has been appointed director of the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, the council announced on December 29, 2022. He has replaced Liu Jieyi, who had held the post since March 2018.

Song served as minister of the International Department of the Communist Party of China Central Committee from 2015 to 2022. He was previously the Chinese ambassador to Guyana and then the Philippines in the 2000s.

Born in Suqian, Jiangsu Province, in 1955, Song has a Ph.D. in economics. He spent his early career in Fujian Province and once worked at the Fujian Light Industry Research Institute, as well as at a trust and investment company, before taking a post at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2001. He was named its vice minister in 2011.



“With new policies in place, we will see a huge boost and significant contribution from the Chinese digital economy towards the whole world’s digital economy.”

Badiea Shaukat, an economic consultant at the Sustainable Development Policy Institute, a Pakistani think tank based in Islamabad, in a recent interview with Xinhua

“In 2023, we need peace, now more than ever. Peace with one another, through dialogue to end conflict. Peace with nature and our climate, to build a more sustainable world.”

António Guterres, UN Secretary General, in his New Year’s video message on December 28, 2022

COVER STORY

THE PEP TALK

Platform companies to play a greater role in driving the country's economic recovery By Zhang Shasha



A live-streamer checks the sales of her store on e-commerce platform Taobao on June 14, 2022