

# BEIJING REVIEW

VOL.66 NO.4 JANUARY 26, 2023

北京周报 WWW.BJREVIEW.COM

## HOMeward BOUND

Families reunite for the Spring Festival



RMB6.00  
USD1.70  
AUD3.00  
GBP1.20  
CAD2.60  
CHF2.60  
JPY188

ISSN 1000-9140



9 771000 914239

邮发代号2-922·国内统一连续出版物号: CN11-1576/G2

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A News Weekly Magazine  
Published Since 1958

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Published every Thursday by  
CICG Center for Americas, 24 Baiwanzhuang Lu,  
Beijing 100037, China

**Overseas Distributor:** China International Book Trading  
Corporation (Guoji Shudian), P. O. BOX 399,  
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**Website:** http://www.cibtc.com

**General Distributor for Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan:**  
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17/FI, Paramount Bldg, 12 Ka Yip St, Chai Wan, HK  
**Tel:** 852-28046687 **Fax:** 852-28046409

*Beijing Review* (ISSN 1000-9140 USPS 2812) is distributed weekly  
in the United States for US\$64.00 per year by Cypress Books,  
360 Swift Avenue, Suite 48, South San Francisco, CA 94080  
News Postage Paid at South San Francisco, CA 94080  
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Beijing Review*,  
Cypress Books, 360 Swift Avenue, Suite 48,  
South San Francisco, CA 94080

## Time for Reunion

China's Spring Festival travel rush, the largest annual human migration on Earth, is underway.

As part of its pandemic control measures, China called on people not to travel during the Spring Festivals in 2021 and 2022. Many could reunite with their families only via video link. As China now manages COVID-19 with measures designated for combatting Category B, instead of the most severe Category A, infectious diseases, passengers are no longer subject to nucleic acid tests or the risk of centralized isolation. Family reunion is now the order of the day.

Category B management, of course, does not mean no management at all, because the pandemic is not yet over. The Chinese Government has taken steps to minimize the impact of the virus. For instance, the country will equip public transportation hubs and long-distance trains with more emergency medicine. Transport operators are required to increase backup staff for key personnel such as drivers and rotate work schedules to prepare for possible staff shortages caused by infections.

The Spring Festival travel rush this year will last 40 days from January 7 to February 15. Based on the figures during the first week, 2.1 billion trips will be made, up 99.5 percent over a year ago.

This has been made possible through China's optimization of its efforts to contain COVID-19. As the virulence of the virus waned, China made a series of science-based adjustments, leading to the downgrading of COVID management measures as of January 8 this year.

As the peak of the latest infection wave has subsided, Chinese people are returning to their normal lives, with the Spring Festival travel rush being a telling example of recovery.

The Spring Festival is also a national spending spree. Thailand, Indonesia and other popular holiday destinations are trying to attract Chinese tourists. Many shopping malls and supermarkets in China have recorded their biggest increase in sales within the past three years. All these are signs boding well for both China and the world. **BR**



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AUSTRALIA.....AUD3.00 UK.....GBP1.20  
CANADA.....CAD2.60 SWITZERLAND.....CHF2.60  
JAPAN.....JPY188 EUROPE.....EUR1.90  
TURKEY.....YTL5.00 HK.....HKD9.30 NEPAL.....RS40

主管单位：中国外文出版发行事业局

主办单位：中国外文局美洲传播中心（北京周报社）

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印刷：北京华联印刷有限公司

北京周报 英文版2023年 第4期 ISSN 1000-9140

国内统一连续出版物号：CN11-1576/G2 邮发代号：2-922

广告许可证0171号 北京市期刊登记证733号

国内零售价：人民币6.00元



## A FRESH CATCH

Hezhe people prepare to clean the fish they just caught on the East Lake of Fuyuan City, Heilongjiang Province in northeast China, on January 11.

In addition to preparing an all-fish banquet, the Hezhe ethnic group, one of China's smallest, usually holds a range of traditional activities to welcome the Chinese New Year, such as tug of war.



## Cube Compilation

Farmers arrange large blocks of ice collected from the frozen rivers in Heijanzi Township, Tangshan, Hebei Province, on January 14. The blocks are used to preserve aquatic products and vegetables.

## COVID-related Deaths

Medical institutions nationwide registered 59,938 deaths related to COVID-19 from December 8, 2022 to January 12, a health official said on January 14.

A total of 5,503 people died of respiratory failure caused by COVID-19, and 54,435 died of underlying issues complicated by COVID-19 infection, Jiao Yahui, head of the Bureau of Medical Administration under the National Health Commission, said at a press conference held by the State Council's joint COVID-19 prevention and control mechanism.

The average age at the time of death was 80.3, with about 90.1 percent aged 65 and above,

and about 56.5 percent aged 80 and above, Jiao said.

More than 90 percent of the deaths involved underlying issues, including cardiovascular diseases, advanced tumors, cerebrovascular diseases, respiratory diseases, metabolic diseases and renal insufficiency.

Winter is a season with a high incidence of respiratory diseases, and the cold weather can aggravate cardiovascular and cerebrovascular diseases among seniors. These diseases, combined with COVID-19 infection, have led to a relatively high number of deaths among that age group, Jiao said.

China downgraded the management of COVID-19 from the most severe Category A to the lesser Category B infectious

disease starting from January 8.

In the future, relevant data will be released to the public in a timely manner in accordance with the relevant provisions for Category B infectious diseases, Jiao said.

## Wintering Birds

More than 64,000 migratory birds have recently been spotted in a nature reserve in Hebei Province, Xinhua News Agency reported on January 14.

During the 2022-23 migratory-bird monitoring operations conducted from January 7 to 11, the reserve's staff spotted 60 species of migratory birds, according to Zhang Yuguang with the resource protection bureau of Hengshui Lake

National Nature Reserve.

These birds included six species under first-class national protection, such as the Baer's pochards and oriental white storks, an increase of two species compared with that of the 2021-22 period, Zhang said.

"The Baer's pochards and oriental white storks are 'long-term residents' of Hengshui Lake," Zhang added. "We also monitored 16 bird species under second-class national protection, an increase of three compared with the 2021-22 period."

A survey of wintering Baer's pochards and cranes in the 2022-23 period was also completed, with 42 Baer's pochards and 3,860 grey cranes monitored.

Hengshui Lake is the only national nature reserve on the North China Plain that maintains a complete wetland ecosystem of swamps, water, mud flats, meadows and woodlands.

## Noise Pollution

China will continue to tackle noise pollution and improve the country's acoustic environment during the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-25), according to environmental authorities.

With remarkable progress being made in pollution control, public expectations regarding the ecological environment are growing and noise pollution is now among the most complained-about environmental issues, an action plan jointly issued by the Ministry of Ecology and Environment and 15 other departments read.

In 2021, of the over 450,000 complaints received by China's national platform for environment-related complaints from the public, 45 percent were about noise disturbance, ranking second among all types of pollution, according to the ministry.

The plan pledged to enhance control of the noise sources, as well as noises from industrial firms, construction sites, transportation and social activities.

## Disciplinary Punishment

China imposed disciplinary punishment on 592,000 individuals in 2022, of whom 53 were provincial or ministerial-level officials, an announcement released by China's top anti-graft body on January 13 read.

According to the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Commission for Discipline Inspection and the National Supervisory Commission, Chinese disciplinary inspectors handled 596,000 cases involving discipline violations in 2022. Some 180,000 officials of different levels received punishment.

Disciplinary authorities also stepped up efforts in educating and warning individuals who conducted a minor breach of discipline, which involved about 1.2 million individuals last year.

## Wage Default

Procuratorial organs across China handled 1,073 criminal cases of intentional wage

defaults in the first 11 months of 2022, down 34.09 percent year on year, the country's top procuratorate said on January 12.

A total of 1,136 individuals involved in these cases were dealt with from January to November 2022, down 33.49 percent from the same period in 2021, according to data released by the Supreme People's Procuratorate (SPP).

In recent years, the rising incidence of defaults on the wages of migrant workers has further reversed in China, courtesy of increased efforts in eradicating such problems and a better awareness among workers to safeguard their rights, according to the SPP.

The SPP pledged strengthened punishment over wage default crimes to create a sound legal environment for the private sector.

## Land Quality

A report released by the China Geological Survey Bureau with the Ministry of Natural Resources showed that the geo-chemical quality of land in China is in overall good condition, *Science and Technology Daily* reported on January 13.

According to the report, the land of premium, good and



## Traditional Teaching

Two women take pictures at an exhibition on Spring Festival culture and customs at the Urumqi Museum in Urumqi, capital of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, on January 14.

medium grades today exceeds 90 percent of the nationwide total, which meets the needs of agricultural production.

The report pointed out that the black soil in northeast China is rich in organic matter, 1.4 times the national average, and has a strong ability to retain water and nutrients.

The report also showed the soil in the southern part of the country tends to be acidic, while that up north is more alkaline,

with neutral soil accounting for just 12 percent. These data can provide a basis for decision-making on ecological conservation and restoration, as well as for the restructuring of agricultural cultivation, according to the report.

The report was based on the results of national land geo-chemical surveys from 1999 to 2022, which covered an area of 2.67 million square km across 31 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities in China.



## A Festival Feast

People buy vegetables at a fair in Helan, a county in Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, on January 14 to prepare for Spring Festival, which fell on January 22 this year.

## Monetary Policy

China's prudent monetary policy will focus on coordinating the expansion of domestic demand and supply-side structural reform, Xuan Changneng, Vice Governor of the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, said on January 13.

To increase domestic demand, measures will be taken to maintain reasonably sufficient liquidity, guide financial institutions to release credit supply reasonably and in accordance with market principles and the rule of law, Xuan told a press conference.

China will actively coordinate its monetary policy with fiscal and social policies to ramp up support for enterprises and key groups, stabilizing and creating jobs and raising the incomes of urban and rural residents through multiple channels.

Work should be done to ensure the monetary policy is

reasonable and moderate, and to avoid flood-like stimulus, Xuan said, stressing the importance of efforts to balance stable growth, employment and prices.

At the same time, structural monetary policy tools will be used to improve support in key fields, including carbon reduction, technological innovation, the construction of a modern industrial system, major infrastructure and projects and rural revitalization, to achieve a high-level dynamic equilibrium between effective supply and demand, according to Xuan.

The country will reduce enterprises' comprehensive financing costs and individual consumption costs to boost both consumption and investment. It will guide financial institutions to shore up support for manufacturing companies, as well as for private and smaller services firms.

Bulk consumption related to housing and automobiles will

be encouraged, and services consumption in the fields of education, culture and sports will also receive more support, Xuan said.

## Foreign Trade

China's annual foreign trade value topped 40 trillion yuan (\$5.97 trillion) for the first time in 2022, as the country works to better coordinate its pandemic response with economic and social development amid complex domestic and international circumstances, official data showed on January 13.

Total trade in goods reached a record 42.07 trillion yuan (\$6.28 trillion), up 7.7 percent year on year, ranking first in the world for six consecutive years, according to the General Administration of Customs of China.

Exports rose 10.5 percent to 23.97 trillion yuan (\$3.58 trillion) and imports went up 4.3 percent to 18.1 trillion yuan (\$2.7 trillion).

China's imports and exports with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the European Union and the United States gained 15 percent, 5.6 percent and 3.7 percent, respectively.

Trade with other Belt and Road participating countries climbed 19.4 percent to account for 32.9 percent of China's total foreign trade, while that with other members of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership agreement rose 7.5 percent.

## Auto Exports

Automobile exports of China soared 54.4 percent in 2022, effectively promoting the sector's overall growth, industry data showed.

More than 3.11 million vehicles were exported last year, with passenger car exports nearing 2.53 million units, a jump of 56.7 percent year on year, according to the China Association of Automobile

## NUMBERS

China's Producer Price Index Growth (%)



China's Consumer Price Index (CPI) Growth (%)



Manufacturers.

In the same period, exports of commercial vehicles climbed 44.9 percent to 582,000 units, and exports of new-energy vehicles increased 1.2 times year on year to 679,000 units.

The association attributed the robust growth to factors such as the increasing competitiveness of Chinese auto companies and the overseas supply shortage.

In 2021, China's annual auto exports exceeded 2 million units for the first time, compared to about 1 million units in previous years, the data showed.

## Renminbi Popularity

The renminbi has gained popularity in cross-border transactions and settlements as China steps up efforts to expand the use of its currency in trade and investment, the Ministry of Commerce said on January 12.

Cross-border renminbi settlements for trade in goods

amounted to 7.92 trillion yuan (\$1.18 trillion) in 2022, up 37.3 percent from a year ago, Shu Jueting, a spokesperson for the ministry, told a press conference.

In addition, cross-border renminbi settlements for direct investment expanded 16.6 percent year on year to 6.76 trillion yuan (\$1 trillion) last year, according to Shu.

Affected by changes in the global financial market, major currencies have experienced wider fluctuations in their exchange rates and businesses are more inclined to use the renminbi in cross-border transactions and settlements, she said.

The spokesperson also noted that market demand for renminbi in cross-border investment, financing, and risk management is on the rise.

## Local SOE Assets

Local state-owned enterprises

(SOEs) saw a steady growth of assets in 2022, according to the country's top SOE regulator.

The total assets of the companies reached 205.5 trillion yuan (\$30.66 trillion) by the end of November 2022, up 10.1 percent year on year, the State-Owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council said on January 12 at a meeting.

Local SOEs saw their total business revenue go up 8.1 percent, totaling 33.7 trillion yuan (\$5.03 trillion) in the first 11 months of 2022.

China launched a three-year campaign in 2020 to boost SOE competitiveness and innovation capabilities through multiple rounds of reforms. The campaign ended in 2022 with its targets accomplished, the meeting noted.

## Industrial Growth

The industrial economy posted overall steady growth in 2022,

according to a national industry and information conference on January 11.

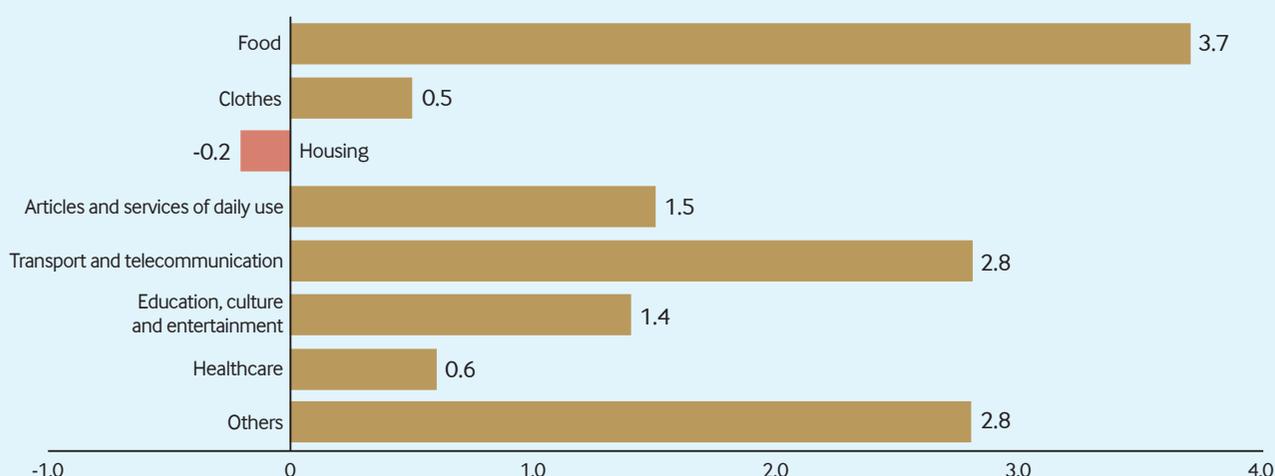
The country's value-added industrial output of industrial firms each with an annual main business revenue of at least 20 million yuan (\$2.98 million) rose 3.6 percent year on year in 2022, the conference estimated.

The value-added industrial output of manufacturing climbed 3.1 percent year on year. Its share in GDP was expected to reach 28 percent, up 0.5 percentage points over 2021.

By late 2022, the country had over 70,000 specialized and sophisticated enterprises that produce new and unique products, and more than 2.3 million 5G base stations had been built.

The conference expected the country's telecom business volume to expand 8 percent year on year in 2022.

China's CPI Growth by Type  
December 2022 (% y.o.y.)



(Source: National Bureau of Statistics)

# THIS WEEK WORLD



## NEPAL

Crowds gather at the crash site of a passenger plane carrying 72 people in the Pokhara region on January 15.

At least 69 had been killed in the accident as of January 16



## CROATIA

Kuna and euro banknotes are shown at a vegetable stand in Sibenik on January 14. Croatia adopted the euro as its currency on January 1, becoming the 20th member state of the eurozone. The kuna, the country's official currency since 1994, ceased circulation on January 15



## MALAYSIA

A resident of Kuala Kubu Bharu follows the traditional recipe and method to make rice cakes for the Lunar New Year, which fell on January 22 this year, on January 8



## LEBANON

Visiting Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian (left) and his Lebanese counterpart Abdallah Bou Habib attend a press conference on bilateral relations in Beirut on January 13



## UGANDA

A cleaner works at an Ebola isolation center at a hospital in the Central Region district of Mubende on January 11. That same day, the country announced the Ebola Sudan Virus outbreak had ended



## SWEDEN

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen (center), King of Sweden Carl XVI Gustaf (right) and Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson jointly cut the ribbon at the inauguration ceremony of the Spaceport Esrange, Europe's first satellite launch complex, at the Esrange Space Center in Kiruna on January 13



# THIS WEEK PEOPLE & POINTS

## ↓ GOLDEN GLOBES BEST ACTRESS

**Michelle Yeoh** won the award for best performance by an actress in a motion picture (musical or comedy) for her role as Evelyn Quan Wang in *Everything Everywhere All at Once* at the 2023 Golden Globes.

Born in 1962, the Malaysian actress and action film star rose to fame in the 1990s after starring in a series of Hong Kong action films in which she performed her own stunts, such as *Yes, Madam!*, *Police Story 3: Super Cop* and *Holy Weapon*. Internationally, she is known for her roles in the James Bond film *Tomorrow Never Dies* and Ang Lee's martial arts film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*.

Yeoh is the second actress of Asian descent to win in the best performance by an actress in a motion picture (musical or comedy) category, following Awkwafina's win for *The Farewell* in 2020.



## Safe Journeys

**Yangcheng Evening News**  
January 13

The passenger flow for this year's Spring Festival rush is expected to reach 2.1 billion trips or so, up by 99.5 percent from a year earlier. At a time of frequent COVID-19 infection, the railway authorities of some cities have already deployed first-aid teams that have undergone specialized training onto trains.

COVID-19 infection could seriously disrupt a passenger's travel, but with the presence of these first-aid teams, passengers can breathe a sigh of relief. The teams' medical kits contain a lot of basic

medicines, including fever medications, and a number of seats are reserved for patients with a fever. Sometimes, even those who have recovered from infections might suffer from complications such as viral myocarditis (inflammation of the heart muscle). In this case, such a medical team on board can be first on the scene to provide treatment.

The first-aid teams are good news for passengers taking these trains. It's hoped that more trains will be equipped with such staff all the year around, and that this service will expand to airplanes, ships and other forms of passenger transport to ensure smooth journeys for all.



## Ecological Defense for Green Development

**Outlook Weekly**  
January 9

Acting on the idea that green ways of life and business are the foundation for sustainable high-quality growth, Chongqing Municipality in southwest China is playing an exemplary role in the green development of the Yangtze River Economic Belt by promoting low-carbon transition in its industry and business.

Environmentally friendly industries like new-energy vehicles, biomedicine and sophisticated equipment are

“We need to re-energize the global economy through massive support to the developing world.”

**António Guterres**, UN Secretary General, at the Handover Ceremony of the Chairmanship of the Group of 77 and China on January 12

“There is a need to enhance preparedness for such extreme events and to ensure that we meet the UN target of Early Warnings for All in the next five years.”

**Petteri Taalas**, Secretary General of the World Meteorological Organization, making the remarks on January 12 as the organization's provisional State of the Global Climate in 2022 report was released

being encouraged and green development concepts are being used to accelerate the development of other sectors. The two conventional pillar industries in Chongqing, electronic information technology and the auto industry, are being upgraded, with hi-tech and strategic new manufacturing accounting for an increasing share of local industrial added value.

The Yangtze River and Jialingjiang River run through the central district of the city. For decades, factories stood along the rivers, high buildings and streets ate into river banks while quays big and small dotted the banks. In this mess, the ecological system of the whole city was cut into pieces.

In recent years, more than 40 cruise-boat restaurants that were moored along the river have been removed to make room for scenic spots. Since 2018, Chongqing has renovated more than 2,600 old and dilapidated residential areas. The final goal is to have 100 million square meters of old communities renovated.

As a crucial ecological defense for downstream regions along the Yangtze River, by taking advantage of its geographical location and ecological endowments, Chongqing is advancing at a fast and steady pace on the path of green development.

## Let Them Stay

**Rednet.cn**  
**January 12**

Winter vacation is kicking off across the country's universities. Some universities are requiring that graduate students who have strong reasons to stay on campus need to have their requests approved after talking to their tutors. If they are allowed to stay, their tutors should accompany them while they remain on campus, instructing them on experiments or research. Other students are required to leave as soon as possible.

The majority of students have chosen to go home. However, some have still chosen

to stay. Many of these students either want to prepare for their graduate entrance exams, or need to do part-time jobs to pay for tuition and daily expenses. After all, not all families can afford to support their children's studies after two years of financial hardship.

Part-time workers may not be given the green light to stay as easily as those preparing for exams. They may be required to rent a room off campus, adding to their economic pressures. Colleges and universities thus need to show more care and tolerance to these students. After all, their braveness to earn their own living and relieve their parents of economic burdens deserves encouragement.

## ATHLETICS ASSOCIATION VICE PRESIDENT

Olympic shot put champion **Gong Lijiao** and star sprinter Su Bingtian have been elected as vice presidents of the Chinese Athletics Association (CAA), the governing body confirmed on January 13.

Thirty-three-year-old Gong won the women's shot put gold medal at the Olympic Summer Games Tokyo 2020, and she also claimed titles at the 2017 and 2019 World Championships.

Su, also 33, set a new Asian record of 9.83 seconds in the men's 100m en route to becoming the first Chinese to qualify for the final of the event in Olympic history at Tokyo 2020.

Yu Hongchen was elected as the CAA president during the First Session of its 10th Congress in December 2022. Gong and Su are the only two active athletes among all 14 vice presidents.



“Countries in the Asia-Pacific region stand for justice and are against hegemony. They aspire for cooperation and oppose confrontation. They pursue true multilateralism and reject creating small circles that incite bloc confrontation.”

**Wang Wenbin**, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson, at a daily news briefing on January 13

“China is committed to opening up and welcomes friends from abroad to study and work in China and engage in business, scientific research, academic exchanges, innovation and entrepreneurship.”

**Liu Haitao**, Director General of the Department of Frontier Inspection and Management under the National Immigration Administration, at a press conference on January 13



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3



COVER STORY

# THE JOURNEY HOME

More people hit the road for the Spring Festival holiday after the lifting of travel restrictions By Ji Jing