

# BEIJING REVIEW

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## THE SPRING SPLURGE

Consumption boom lights up the economy

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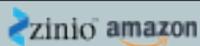
Canadian builds connections with standard Chinese

Cover Photo: A lantern festival in Zigong, Sichuan Province, on January 17 (WEI YAO)

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## A Spending Festival

China's outbound flight bookings more than quadrupled year on year during this year's Spring Festival holiday in late January, with combined bookings of all outbound travel products, including flights, accommodation and activities, showing an even greater upswing, increasing 640 percent from a year ago. Destination countries are welcoming the influx of Chinese tourists as the global tourism industry continues its recovery.

During the holiday, popular imported goods, including wine from France, almonds from the United States, cherries from Chile and steaks from Brazil, all saw an uptick in sales. Cross-border e-commerce platforms offered special promotions to satisfy the demand of Chinese consumers, benefiting overseas businesses.

Three years after the emergence of COVID-19, the world saw a China full of vitality during this year's Spring Festival period, January 21-27. The holiday was not only a powerful engine driving consumption, but also a window through which to observe the Chinese economy.

The fast-growing outbound travel and domestic consumption illustrate the growing momentum of economic recovery and demonstrate how much a strong

Chinese economy means to the world. The Chinese market has been a powerhouse of global growth for decades, and in the post-pandemic era, China's contributions will be even more significant as all countries strive to revive their economies.

This is also indicative of renewed confidence in China's development. The income of Chinese residents continues to grow, the number of upper-middle and high-income families has been expanding, and Chinese people are enthusiastically pursuing increased quality of life. The Chinese Government takes expanding domestic demand as a major driver for economic growth as it advances the nation's industrialization and urbanization. All these factors make China a huge market with great potential.

Strong sales of international products also demonstrate the importance of globalization, which is reflected in the global flow of goods and services. China is committed to defending and practicing economic globalization. Through its commitment to trade and investment facilitation, China is still playing a leading role in maintaining the stability of global industrial and supply chains. **BR**



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# CELEBRATE GOOD TIMES

A group of men play the *lusheng*, a reed-pipe wind instrument, during the Pohui Festival in Antai Township of Rongshui Miao Autonomous County in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region on February 1, the 11th day of the first lunar month.

Pohui is a traditional festival observed by the Miao ethnic group from the third to the 17th day of the first lunar month in Rongshui. People partake in a range of activities such as *lusheng* competitions, dragon and lion dances, as well as horse racing. The festival is also traditionally seen as an opportunity for young people to express their romantic interest in each other.



## A Mile a Minute

Migrant workers, who constitute the major part of China's industrial labor force, prepare to board a bullet train at Chongqing West Railway Station in Chongqing on January 30. The special train for migrant workers to return to work left for Guangzhou, capital of Guangdong Province that same day, carrying some 890 passengers.

## Central Axis Protection

A protection plan for Beijing's Central Axis was released on January 28, ahead of its application to become a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The plan, for the period from 2022 to 2035, pinpointed the conservation area's heritage and buffer zones, which had not been specified before.

The heritage zone covers an area of about 5.9 square km, including 15 heritage sites such as the Forbidden City and the Temple of Heaven. The buffer zone covers 45.4 square km.

A local official with the office for cultural heritage application and protection said the plan is a required aspect of Beijing's application for its Central Axis to be included on the UNESCO World

Heritage Site list.

The Central Axis, or Zhongzhouxian, which can be traced back to the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), stretches 7.8 km between Yongding Gate in the south of the city and the Drum Tower and the Bell Tower in the north. Most of the major ancient buildings of Beijing sit along this axis.

## Old Tea Trees

Yunnan Province in southwest China has passed a new regulation to protect its old tea trees, Xinhua News Agency reported on January 28.

The regulation, which will take effect on March 1, stipulates that wild and cultivated tea trees aged 100 and up should receive better protection, with a ban on the unauthorized cutting or transplanting of such trees. The regulation also

prohibits the use of chemical weed killers on old tea trees.

Yunnan is the province with the largest conservation area of old tea tree resources in China, with about 54 million old tea trees still standing tall in the province, according to official statistics.

## Defend the Yellow River

China has made remarkable progress in the ecological conservation of the Yellow River, the country's second longest river, Xinhua reported on January 26.

In the Yellow River basin, the proportion of surface water rated at grade I to III in the country's five-tier water quality system reached 87.5 percent in 2022, an increase of 5.6 percentage points from a year earlier, according

to the Ministry of Ecology and Environment.

Relentless endeavors have flowed into ecological protection along China's Mother River in recent years, with a Yellow River protection law to go into effect on April 1.

The ministry further said it would step up pollution control with regards to industry, agriculture, urban and rural life, as well as mining in the river basin, and explore more region-specific approaches for ecological conservation.

Local governments will receive instructions to better put the law into practice, the ministry added.

## Legal Aid

Throughout 2022, China's procuratorates provided legal aid to 82,000 people, up some 72 percent year on year, according to the Supreme People's Procuratorate (SPP), Xinhua reported on January 25.

The SPP, together with the National Rural Revitalization Administration, has released a collection of typical cases to highlight efforts to assist eligible rural families facing hardships stemming from lawsuits.

In recent years, the SPP has also partnered with other authorities to crack down on illegal activities that undermine the safety of agricultural products and the security of agricultural funds, among other issues.

Last year, procuratorial organs across the country supported indictments in 89,000 related cases to guarantee the timely delivery of paychecks to rural migrant workers and the legitimate rights of people with disabilities.

They also participated in campaigns to tackle senior care fraud, with 9,447 people charged with the crime in 2022.

## Park Potential

With a batch of new parks opening to the public during the Chinese New Year holiday from January 21 to 27, the number of parks in Shanghai has risen to 670, according to the Shanghai Landscaping and City Appearance Administrative Bureau, Xinhua reported on January 25.

A newly opened pocket park in the Jiangsu Road sub-district under Changning District caters to residents who live in its vicinity by making it possible for them to go for a quiet stroll or lounge in the sun without having to go very far.

"This park was created from a jumble of enclosed green space. Now, we don't just enjoy the flowers and green setting but also exercise and relax there," a resident called Chu Xiaonan said.

According to the city government's plan, Shanghai will be transformed into a "city of thousands of parks" by 2025.

## At Full Steam

A total of 4,100 km of new railway lines went into operation across China in 2022, including 2,082 km of high-speed tracks, data from the China State Railway Group Co. Ltd. showed,

Xinhua reported on January 29.

As of late last year, China's in-service railways stretched 155,000 km in total length, including 42,000 km of high-speed network, according to the group.

Fixed-asset investment in China's railways reached 710.9 billion yuan (\$105.4 billion) in 2022, promoting a series of major projects in the field of rail infrastructure construction.

This year, China plans to launch new rail lines spanning more than 3,000 km in total, including 2,500 km for high-speed trains, the group said.

The country has built the world's largest high-speed railway network to address the people's growing demand for convenient and comfortable travel.

## Road Construction

Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region in northwest China plans to invest 83.2 billion yuan (\$12.3 billion) in road construction this year, according to the regional transport department, Xinhua reported on January 30.

The investment will be allocated to 66 road construction projects, 22 of which will be completed within the year, Li Xuedong, Deputy Director of the



## Back on the Job

Assembly line staff are back at work inside an auto manufacturing enterprise's workshop in Jimo District of Qingdao, Shandong Province, on January 28, the first working day after the seven-day Spring Festival holiday.

department, said.

In recent years, Xinjiang's transportation infrastructure has undergone a tremendous transformation for the better. "In 2022 alone, Xinjiang spent more than 74.8 billion yuan (\$11.1 billion) on road construction, a new record since 2018," Li added.

The length of expressways in Xinjiang has reached 11,000 km. All prefecture-level localities and nearly 90 percent of county-

level localities are now accessible via expressways.

In June last year, a new highway traversing the Taklimakan Desert, the world's second largest shifting sand desert, went into operation.

Located in south Xinjiang's Bayingolin Mongolian Autonomous Prefecture, the highway, connecting Yuli and Qiemo counties, is the third one to cross the Taklimakan Desert.



## Spring Cleaning

Farmers remove weeds from a field in Nantong Township of Minhou County, Fujian Province, on January 30.

## Tax and Fee Cuts

China's tax refunds, as well as tax and fee cuts and deferrals, exceeded 4.2 trillion yuan (\$622.9 billion) in 2022, amid the country's efforts to stabilize the macroeconomy, the top tax authority said on January 31.

The total consists of approximately 2.46 trillion yuan (\$364.8 billion) worth of value-added tax credits that have been refunded to taxpayers' accounts, over 1 trillion yuan (\$148.3 billion) of tax and fee cuts, and 750 billion yuan (\$111.2 billion) of deferred tax and fee payments, Wang Daoshu, deputy head of the State Taxation Administration, told a press conference.

About 1.5 trillion yuan (\$222.5 billion) of tax and fee payments were rebated, deducted or deferred for enterprises in the manufacturing sector last year, accounting for 35 percent of the total, Wang said.

He added that small and micro enterprises, as well as individual businesses, saw more

than 1.7 trillion yuan (\$252.1 billion) in tax rebates, tax and fee reductions and deferrals in 2022.

"Market vitality has received a boost," Wang said, adding that last year saw the establishment of 13.15 million market entities which began engaging in tax-related activities.

## Manufacturing Expansion

The manufacturing sector regained expansion in January after three consecutive monthly shrinkages, with major sub-indices posing surges, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS).

The purchasing managers' index (PMI) for the manufacturing sector came in at 50.1 in January, up from 47 in last December, NBS data showed.

A reading above 50 indicates expansion and below that mark, contraction.

The sub-index for large enterprises stood at 52.3 in January,

up 4 percentage points from the previous month.

Demand in the manufacturing market also rebounded, with the sub-index for new orders gaining 7 percentage points from a month earlier to 50.9.

The sub-index for production stood at 49.8, up 5.2 percentage points from last December.

The PMI for the non-manufacturing sector stood at 54.4 in January, up from 41.6 last December, the NBS said.

## SOE Revenues

State-owned enterprises (SOEs) raked in 82.6 trillion yuan (\$12.2 trillion) in operating revenues in 2022, up 8.3 percent from a year ago, data from the Ministry of Finance revealed.

Their combined profits decreased 5.1 percent year on year to 4.31 trillion yuan (\$639.1 billion) last year, the ministry said.

The SOEs saw their debt-to-asset ratio reach 64.4 percent as of late 2022, up 0.4 percentage

points from the previous year.

The net profits of companies under the direct regulation of the State-Owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council, commonly known as centrally administered SOEs, climbed 5 percent year on year to 1.9 trillion yuan (\$281.8 billion) in 2022, according to the commission.

## Port Cargo Throughput

The Port of Ningbo Zhoushan in Zhejiang Province saw its cargo throughput exceed 1.25 billion tons in 2022, ranking first globally for a 14th consecutive year, according to the port.

Its container throughput hit 33.35 million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) last year, ranking third globally.

By the end of 2022, the port's sea routes totaled 300, marking an increase of 13 since late 2021.

Its sea-rail intermodal container transport service also saw robust growth last year, handling

## NUMBERS

Fixed Assets Investment Growth in China  
(% y.o.y.)



1.45 million TEUs for the first time, up 20 percent over the previous year.

## Services Trade

China's trade in services grew 12.9 percent year on year to 5.98 trillion yuan (\$887.2 billion) in 2022, according to the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM).

Exports of services expanded 12.1 percent year on year to around 2.85 trillion yuan (\$422.7 billion) in the period, while imported services totaled 3.13 trillion yuan (\$464.2 billion), up 13.5 percent from a year ago, resulting in a deficit of 275.71 billion yuan (\$40.9 billion), MOFCOM data showed.

Trade in knowledge-intensive services raked in 2.51 trillion yuan (\$372.2 billion) in 2022, up 7.8 percent year on year.

Exports of knowledge-intensive services increased by 12.2 percent to reach 1.42 trillion yuan (\$210.6 billion), led by categories such as intellectual property royalties and comput-

ing and information services.

Travel services continued their recovery momentum last year, as trade in this sector advanced 8.4 percent from 2021 to about 855.98 billion yuan (\$126.9 billion), figures showed.

## Digital Currency

The amount of digital yuan in circulation reached 13.61 billion yuan (\$2.02 billion) by late 2022, data from the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, showed.

With the digital currency included, China's outstanding MO, a measure of the amount of currency in circulation, totaled 10.47 trillion yuan (\$1.55 trillion) by the end of last year, up 15.3 percent year on year, according to the bank.

As a digital form legal tender, the digital yuan is a component of the Chinese renminbi currency—just like the physical yuan. It is necessary to combine the statistics and analysis as well as implementing overall man-

agement of the two currency forms, Xuan Changneng, Vice Governor of the bank, said.

The inclusion of outstanding digital yuan in MO can more accurately reflect the scale of currency in circulation, he added.

## Top Shipbuilder

By late 2022, China's shipbuilding sector continued to be a global leader in the field, displaying the biggest market share in terms of output and orders, official data showed.

The country's shipbuilding output hit 37.86 million deadweight tons (DWTs) last year, accounting for 47.3 percent of the world's total, according to the China Association of the National Shipbuilding Industry.

New orders, another major indicator of the industry, stood at 45.52 million DWTs in 2022, with a global market share of 55.2 percent.

The sector's holding orders totaled 105.57 million DWTs, up 10.2 percent year on year, taking

up 49 percent of the world's total.

Six Chinese shipbuilding enterprises ranked in the world's top 10 in terms of the three aforementioned indicators, the association added.

## Fixed Assets Investment

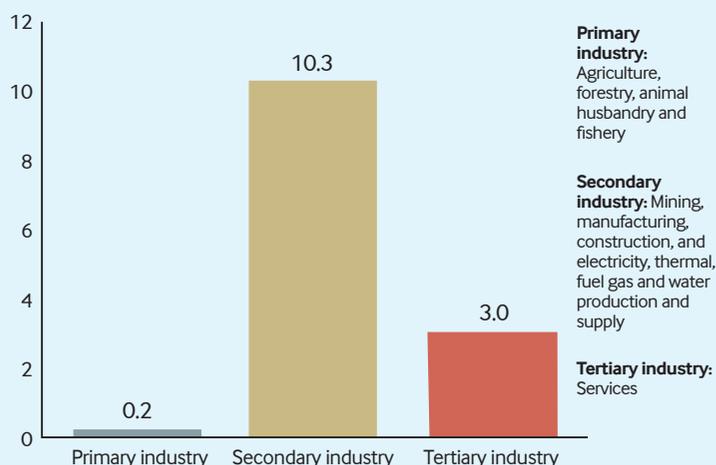
The National Development and Reform Commission said it approved 109 fixed assets investment projects in 2022.

These projects, with a combined investment value of 1.48 trillion yuan (\$219.5 billion), mainly covered the areas of transportation, energy and water conservancy, the commission added.

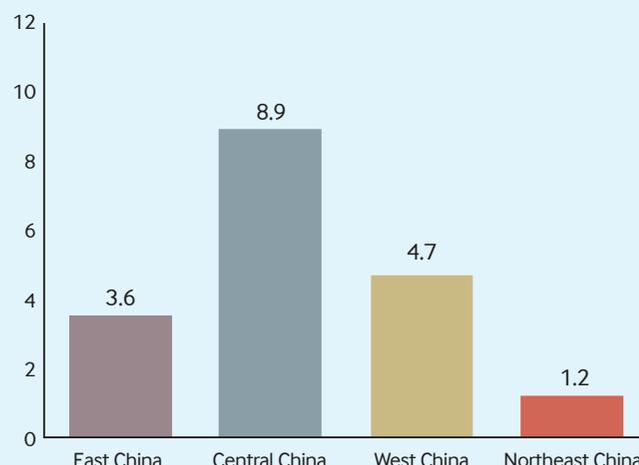
Earlier data showed China's fixed assets investment rose 5.1 percent year on year to over 57.21 trillion yuan (\$8.48 trillion) last year.

Investment in infrastructure and manufacturing climbed 9.4 percent and 9.1 percent from a year earlier in 2022, respectively.

Fixed Assets Investment Growth in China by Sector  
January-December 2022 (% y.o.y.)



Fixed Assets Investment Growth in China by Region  
January-December 2022 (% y.o.y.)



(Source: National Bureau of Statistics)

# THIS WEEK WORLD



YITHINK



## PAKISTAN

A man takes a closer look at the site of a suicide bombing in Peshawar on January 31. The death toll of the attack on a mosque on January 30 has risen to 100, with over 200 people sustaining injuries



## EGYPT

A photo taken on January 26 shows a restored piece of pottery at the archaeological excavation site of ancient tombs near the Pyramids of Giza, south of Cairo. The country's renowned archaeologist Zahi Hawass announced the exploration of the tombs had revealed a 4,300-year-old mummy



YITHINK



YITHINK



## SWITZERLAND

People leave the World Health Organization (WHO) headquarters in Geneva on January 30, the same day the organization stated the COVID-19 pandemic still constitutes a public health emergency of international concern, the WHO's highest alert level



## CUBA

People attend an activity commemorating the 170th anniversary of the birth of the country's independence hero José Martí in Havana on January 27



## UNITED STATES

A girl holds a candle at a nighttime vigil for the victims of the mass shootings in Half Moon Bay, California, on January 31. Seven people were killed and one person was critically injured in two related shootings on January 23



## MADAGASCAR

People cross a flooded road in Antananarivo on January 25 after the strong tropical storm *Cheneso* hit the country. Sixteen people were killed and 19 remained missing as of February 2



## ↓ BEST DIRECTOR AWARD AT SCO FILM FESTIVAL

The five-day Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Film Festival concluded on January 31 in India's economic hub of Mumbai.

**Rao Xiaozhi**, director of the Chinese film *Home Coming*, won the award for the best director. Born in Zunyi, Guizhou Province, in 1980, Rao graduated from the Central Academy of Drama in Beijing and started his career as a film and theater director in the early 2000s.

Based on real events, *Home Coming* depicts a perilous journey of two unarmed Chinese diplomats taking 125 Chinese expatriots to flee a war-torn country across a desert and through artillery fire. Released in late September 2022, the film has garnered over 1.59 billion yuan (\$237 million) at the box office in China to date. It has also been screened in the North America, Oceania, Europe, Southeast Asia and other major film markets.



## Floral Fest

**Guangzhou Daily**  
January 20

As the old Cantonese saying goes, “No flower fairs, no Spring Festival.” Spring Festival flower fairs are a time-honored tradition in the southern metropolis of Guangzhou, Guangdong Province. On January 19, the loud rings of a gong heralded the reopening of the flower market of this “City of Flowers”—the first to return after three long years of disruption due to the pandemic.

In 2021, Spring Festival flower fairs were added to the list of state-level intan-

gible cultural heritage, along with other local culture such as Cantonese Opera costumes, dim sum and paper-cutting. Now, flower fairs have become an iconic symbol of the city, attracting locals and travelers alike to participate in the preservation of festive traditions.

This year has seen the emergence of a floating flower fair that combines a dazzling array of activities, like lion dances, bazaars selling all kinds of festival goods and delicacies, performances of martial arts, traditional Chinese music, offline boat tours and live broadcasts, and also a virtual bazaar in the metaverse.

## Industrial Tourism

**Oriental Outlook**  
January 26

Recent years have witnessed the transformation of former industrial sites across China into popular tourist attractions. Some examples include the Winter Olympic venues at Shougang Industrial Park in Beijing, the World of Tsingtao, a beer museum converted from an old brewery in Qingdao, Shandong Province, and Shanghai Fashion Center, a one-stop shopping space built on the site of an obsolete cotton mill.

These new constructions all belong to

“China has always been very impressive in dealing with challenges.”

**Bandar Alkhorayef**, Saudi Minister of Industry and Mineral Resources, in a recent interview with Xinhua News Agency

“China has been one of the main promoters of international cooperation in recent years, with an emphasis on multilateralism and mutual benefit. It has always had a very clear predisposition to work cooperatively with our region.”

**Gonzalo Tordini**, Director of the China-Argentine Strategic Program at the National Defense University in Buenos Aires, in a recent interview with Xinhua

the category of industrial tourism, a form of tourism that fuses visits to decommissioned factories and plants with sports, museum tours, dining, and shopping. The concept originated in factory tours in Europe in the 1980s, and was first adopted in China by Haier Group, a home appliances and consumer electronics company, in the 1990s.

Though a latecomer, China is picking up speed in the development of industrial tourism. According to a report released by China National Tourism Administration in 2016, the domestic industrial tourism sector is expected to receive over 1 billion visitors and gross over 200 billion yuan (\$29.64 billion) in 2025.

The implications of this ongoing trend go far beyond the revival of tourism, as industrial tourism can be a strong powerhouse for the re-configuration of urban spaces. By transforming themselves into parks, museums and modern complexes, these industrial heritage sites have profoundly shaken the boundaries between industrial areas, offices, entertainment venues and green spaces.

China's rapid rise as an industrial power testifies to the hardships and glories that the country has went through since it embarked on a unique road of modernization. Chinese people have every reason to believe that these factory-converted landmarks will not only reshape the physical layout of cities, but also provide a new model for industrial upgrade.

## Cookie-Cutter Culture

Rednet.cn  
January 29

Datang Everbright City, a pedestrian street located in Xi'an, the capital city of Shaanxi Province, has once again entered the spotlight as one of the most visited tourist attractions during the Spring Festival holiday. A tribute to the culture of the Tang Dynasty (618-907), the street strives to create a one-stop leisure experience that integrates dining, shopping and performances.

Sensing strong rebounds in tourist activity after China recently broke the shackles of the COVID-19 pandemic, many cities

followed suit by creating their own versions of Everbright City. However, made up of the same ingredients—light and music shows, sculptures, snack stands and shopping, these newcomers seem to be little more than copy-and-pastes of their predecessor. On top of possible copyright issues, these spectacular yet repetitive projects already border on the clichéd, causing tourists to eventually lose interest in these types of tourist attractions.

When the novelty wears off, only those with strong local flavor can survive the ever-shifting trends in the tourist market. Hopefully, these Everbright-esque cities will offer a more varied and culturally distinct assortment of attractions in the years to come.

## WORLD CUP REFEREES

Chinese football match officials **Ma Ning**, Zhou Fei, Zhang Cheng and Fu Ming were appointed to officiate matches of the ongoing FIFA Club World Cup in Morocco.

Ma, a full international referee for FIFA since 2011, was the referee of a match between Egypt's El Ahly Cairo and Auckland City from New Zealand on February 8, while Zhou and Zhang served as assistant referees, the first time an all-Chinese referee team has officiated at the tournament. Fu was the assistant video referee of the match.



The 2022 FIFA Club World Cup, which opened on February 1, will run until February 11. A total of 26 match officials, including 6 referees, 12 assistant referees and 8 video match officials, have been chosen in close cooperation with FIFA's six Confederations.

“We believe that developing countries deserve to have access to long-term financing to underpin their structural transformation, the investment in climate resilience and low-carbon development.”

**Kristalina Georgieva**, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, at a roundtable discussion on climate financing schemes for developing countries on January 25

“The Asia-Pacific is not a battlefield for geopolitical contest and does not welcome the Cold War mentality and bloc confrontation.”

**Mao Ning**, spokesperson for China's Foreign Ministry, at a daily news briefing on February 1



COVER STORY

# A ROBUST RETURN

Consumer market rebound brings the hustle and bustle back  
By Li Xiaoyang