

FEATURES: NEW AIRCONOMY ON THE RISE P.32 | FEATURES: MAKING CREATIVITY HAPPEN P.42

# BEIJING REVIEW

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## MOVING MOUNTAINS

Unpacking Xinjiang's development trends

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## The Right to Development

Let's zoom in on Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in northwest China: It covers an area of 1.66 million square km, about one sixth of China's total land area. With a population of more than 25.8 million, the region is home to all 56 of China's ethnic groups. The four largest ones in Xinjiang are the Uyghur (11.6 million), the Han (10.9 million), the Kazak (1.5 million) and the Hui (1.1 million), according to official figures.

The government has implemented a host of programs focusing on infrastructure development, education, healthcare and employment opportunities to encourage the region's development. These initiatives aim to improve living standards, enhance economic prospects and provide individuals with the means to lead better lives.

The GDP, an indicator of an economy's size and health, of the autonomous region rose from 840 billion yuan (\$117.5 billion) in 2013 to 1.77 trillion yuan (\$247.6 billion) in 2022. Its residents' per-capita disposable income increased from 13,700 yuan (\$1,917) in 2013 to 27,000 yuan (\$3,779) in 2022. The number of tourist

visits to Xinjiang, then, grew from 48.6 million in 2012 to 260 million in 2023, a record high.

These data indicate that the autonomous region has maintained steady economic growth over the past decade. China regards the rights to subsistence and development as the primary and basic human rights. It believes living a life of contentment is the ultimate human right. It is committed to advancing human rights in an all-round way, from economic, social, cultural and environmental rights to civil and political rights.

The country works to promote multi-ethnic unity and preserve the cultural heritage of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang. It highlights the protection of freedom of religious belief and the restoration and maintenance of historical sites in the region.

Notably, China now recognizes the significance of presenting an authentic representation of Xinjiang to the international community to counter disinformation. It has invited diplomats, journalists and officials from other countries to visit the region and get a sense of the progress made there. **BR**



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# COAST TO COAST

The container ship *WAN HAI 357* berths at Dalian Port in China's northeastern province of Liaoning on January 2. The ship had arrived at the port earlier that day, marking the launch of a regular container ship route linking the port and the west coast of South America.

This will expedite the entry of cold chain goods, such as seafood and fruits, from South America into the northeast China market.



## Tourism Festival

Performers dance at the opening ceremony of an international tourism festival at the Jiuzhaigou National Park in Sichuan Province on January 4. The festival features the frozen waterfalls of the park, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

## Holiday Trips

Chinese travelers made 135 million domestic trips during the New Year holiday from December 30, 2023 to January 1, statistics from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism showed.

According to the ministry, this is 155.3 percent higher than the same period last year and 9.4 percent higher than the 2019 figure.

During the period, total revenue in China's tourist market surpassed 79.73 billion yuan (\$11.2 billion), doubling the figure for the holiday season last year and increasing by 5.6 percent from 2019, the ministry added.

## New Expressway

A new segment of the Beijing-Xiongan expressway opened to traffic on December 28, 2023,

marking the completion of the entire expressway, according to the Ministry of Transport.

The direct expressway between Beijing and Xiongan New Area, in Hebei Province in north China, will reduce the driving time between Beijing's southwestern fifth ring road to Xiongan New Area from an hour and a half to an hour, the ministry said.

The major body of the expressway is approximately 97 km long, comprising the 70-km Hebei segment and the 27-km Beijing section.

In April 2017, China announced a plan to establish the Xiongan New Area, which spans the Rongcheng, Anxin, and Xiongxin counties and some adjacent areas.

The area aims to relieve Beijing of non-essential functions

related to its status as the nation's capital while also advancing the coordinated development of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region.

## Better Connected

More than 16.3 million inbound and outbound passengers and 3.26 million vehicles passed through the Zhuhai port of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) in 2023, 1.29 times and 3.8 times the 2019 numbers, respectively, official data showed.

Tour groups last year drove the main passenger flow via the bridge, the longest bridge-and-tunnel sea crossing in the world, according to the bridge's border inspection station on January 2.

The data further indicated that in 2023, more than 45,000 mainland tour groups traveled

to and from Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) and Macao SAR via the bridge. In the meantime, residents in Hong Kong and Macao paid a record high of almost 10 million visits to the mainland via the bridge.

In 2023, the highest single-day passenger flow via the bridge reached 115,000, hitting a new high since the bridge entered into operation in October 2018, a staffer at the station said.

The 55-km HZMB links Hong Kong SAR, the city of Zhuhai in the southern province of Guangdong, and Macao SAR. It has brought tremendous opportunities and benefits to the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, a megalopolis consisting of nine cities and two SARs in south China.

## Wind Farm

A large-scale wind power project, standing at an average altitude of 4,650 meters and with a total installed capacity of 100 megawatts, commenced operation on January 1 in Xizang Autonomous Region in southwest China.

According to CHN Energy Investment Group (CHN Energy), the group of 25 wind turbines in Nagqu is expected to provide approximately 200 million kilowatt-hours of electricity annually, saving around 60,000 tons of standard coal and reducing carbon dioxide emissions by about 160,000 tons.

Despite the harsh conditions caused by the high altitude, the project was completed in more than 260 days for an investment of 640 million yuan (\$89.6 million).

The wind farm's construction and operation will play a crucial role in demonstrating and promoting high-altitude wind turbine research, development and application, as well as the



large-scale development of high-altitude wind power projects, CHN Energy said.

## Financial Crimes Down

China has witnessed a decrease in financial crimes amid a heightened crackdown, yet a high incidence continues to persist, according to the Supreme People's Procuratorate (SPP).

From January to November 2023, procuratorial authorities nationwide approved the arrest of 11,060 individuals suspected of disrupting financial management order and engaging in financial fraud. Prosecutions were initiated against 22,529 suspects, down 10 percent year on year, showed figures released by the SPP at a press conference on December 28, 2023.

A total of 15,590 individuals were prosecuted for crimes involving illegal absorption of public deposits and fundraising fraud during the same period, marking a 5.6-percent year-on-year decline, the SPP said.

The figures showed that 2,301 individuals were prosecuted for money laundering crimes in the first 11 months of 2023, a 10-percent year-on-year increase.

Money laundering, illicit fund

payments and settlements, and unlawful foreign exchange trading cases are on the rise, Zhang Xiaojin, an SPP official, said.

The utilization of virtual currency transactions has emerged as a new means for cross-border fund transfers, Zhang added.

## Payment Environment

China will continue to work on accepting international bank cards, mobile payments, cash use and account services to create a more convenient payment environment for international visitors, Zhang Qingsong, Deputy Governor of the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, said on December 28, 2023.

Many international visitors use bank cards and cash when making payments in China, but mobile payment is more the norm in the country, making it inconvenient for international travelers when they make payments, Zhang said.

Efforts will be made to make foreign bank cards more widely accepted by businesses in major business districts, airports and train stations, Zhang said.

The central bank has guided mobile payment platform Alipay, mobile payment



## Trained and Practiced

Staff members replenish quartz sand into the sandbox (for anti-skidding purposes) of a high-speed electrical multiple unit train at a maintenance station in Hohhot, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region in north China, on January 2. Doing so guaranteed the train's normal operations following the three-day New Year holiday travel rush, which concluded on January 1.

app Tenpay, state-owned financial services corporation China UnionPay, and other institutions to enrich the supply of mobile payment products and has been developing digital yuan solutions to meet the mobile payment needs of visitor from other countries, Zhang said. The digital yuan is a central bank digital currency,

and legal tender in China, that aims to replace some of the cash in circulation.

ATMs will be upgraded to accept foreign cards for cash withdrawal, and commercial banks will optimize account-opening processes to make it easier for international visitors to open a bank account in China, said Zhang.



## I Want to Ride My Bicycle-Sled

Tourists on a *bingche* (literally "ice-bike") on a frozen lake at the Summer Palace, an imperial garden created in the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), in Beijing on January 1.

## Company Law

A revised Company Law was adopted at the Seventh Session of the Standing Committee of the 14th National People's Congress, China's top legislature, on December 29, 2023. It will take effect on July 1.

The revision strengthens the responsibility of shareholders in capital contribution when the company is unable to repay debts due and in other cases.

It further improves rules on the organizational structure of companies, including listed companies, to enhance corporate governance.

On protecting equal property rights, the newly revised law stipulates that smaller shareholders have the right to require the company to purchase the shares of the controlling shareholders at a reasonable price, in the event controlling shareholders abuse their rights or severely harm the interests of the company or other shareholders.

The revision also adds

punishment for fraudulence concerning registered capital and information of companies.

Adopted in 1993, the Company Law has been amended multiple times. The current version was enacted after an amendment concerning the capital system of companies in 2018.

## Processing Trade

Chinese authorities have rolled out a guideline to improve the development of the processing trade.

The guideline, released by the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) and nine other government departments, is an important document following another one issued by the State Council in 2016, according to MOFCOM.

It puts forward 12 measures across six categories, involving efforts to encourage the processing and trade of high-value-added products and provide improved financial and tax

support for the processing trade.

The processing trade refers to the activity of importing all or part of the raw materials and supplies, parts and components, accessories and packaging materials from abroad in bond, and reexporting the finished products after processing or assembly by enterprises in the Chinese mainland.

The processing trade remains a major driving force for the growth of foreign trade in the country's central, western and northeastern regions, playing a very important role in stabilizing foreign trade, foreign investment, and industrial and supply chains, MOFCOM said.

## Holiday Box Office

China's box office kicked off 2024 with a record-high revenue of approximately 1.53 billion yuan (\$214 million) for the three-day New Year holiday that ended on January 1.

This figure surpassed the previous highest earnings of

1.3 billion yuan (\$181.8 million) recorded in 2021, according to film data platforms Maoyan and Beacon.

Earlier data released by the China Film Administration on January 1 showed the country's total box office earnings in 2023 exceeded 54.91 billion yuan (\$7.7 billion).

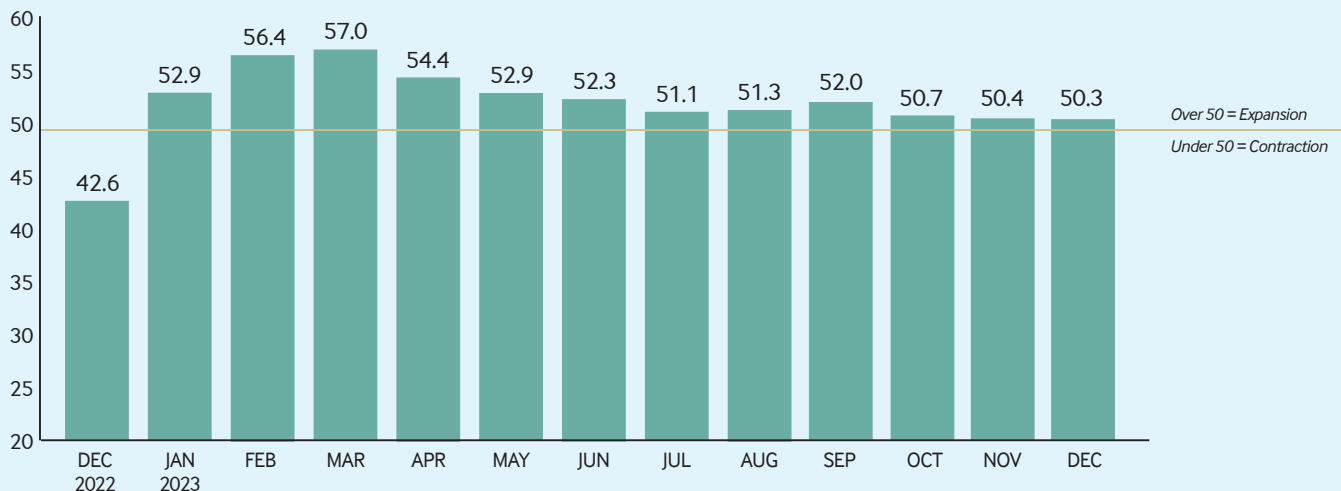
The figure is lower than the record highs of over 60 billion yuan (\$8.4 billion) in 2019 and 2018, but close to the 2017 level, making it the fourth highest annual box office in Chinese history.

Domestic productions have generated over 46 billion yuan (\$6.4 billion) in box office revenue, accounting for 83.77 percent of the national total.

The top 10 spots on the box office chart were dominated by domestic titles, with suspense comedy *Full River Red* ranking first, followed by sci-fi blockbuster *The Wandering Earth II* and crime drama *No More Bets* in second and third place.

## NUMBERS

China's Comprehensive Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI)





## Data Use

China will launch a three-year campaign to promote the use of data as a production factor in more scenarios, which will create a multiplier effect to boost the economy, an official with the National Data Administration said in Beijing on December 29, 2023.

By advancing the use of data, China intends to improve resource allocation and foster new industries and new patterns as well as new growth drivers, Shen Zhulin, deputy head of the administration, told a press conference, citing the 2024-26 action plan.

Over the next three years, China will increase efforts to promote the high-level application of data, ensure the quality of data supply, improve the environment of data circulation and strengthen data security, the action plan further read.

Shen said particular attention will be paid to 12 industries and areas, including industrial

manufacturing, modern agriculture, commercial circulation and transportation, with efforts to tap the potential of data and identify scenarios that give full play to the value of data.

## Steel Group Acquisition

China Baowu Steel Group Corp. signed investment agreements with the Shandong Provincial Government on the takeover of the state-owned Shandong Iron and Steel Group Co. Ltd. on December 28, 2023.

According to the agreements, China Baowu, a major steelmaker headquartered in Shanghai, will hold 49 percent stake in Shandong Iron and Steel. The Baoshan Iron and Steel Co. Ltd., a core enterprise of China Baowu, will hold a 48.61-percent stake in SD Steel Rizhao Co. Ltd.

China Baowu saw its steel output reach 130 million tons in 2022 and Shandong Iron and Steel currently has a steel

production capacity of more than 20 million tons. The acquisition marks a step toward consolidating China's domestic steel industry and helps the steel industry achieve high-quality development.

## Green Shipbuilding

By 2025, China aims to build a preliminary green development system in the shipbuilding industry, according to an action plan released by five authorities, including the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT) and the National Development and Reform Commission, on December 28, 2023.

MIIT officials said green development is an inevitable path that the shipbuilding industry will follow to achieve quality development. Focusing on the construction of a modern, industrial shipbuilding system is necessary, as is accelerating the green and low-carbon transformation of the sector.

By 2030, the country aims to see its green shipbuilding technology reach an advanced international level and lead in the global green shipbuilding market, per the plan.

## External Debt

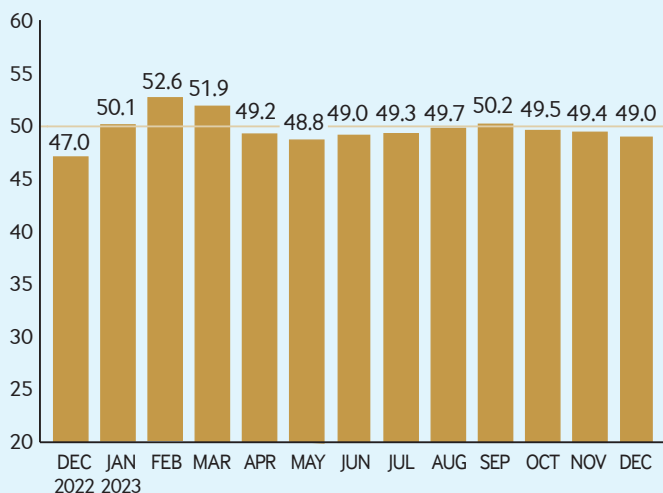
China's outstanding external debt stood at \$2.38 trillion as of late September 2023, data from the State Administration of Foreign Exchange (SAFE), the country's foreign exchange regulator, showed on December 29, 2023.

This represents a drop of 2 percent, or \$50.9 billion, from the level recorded in late last June, according to the SAFE.

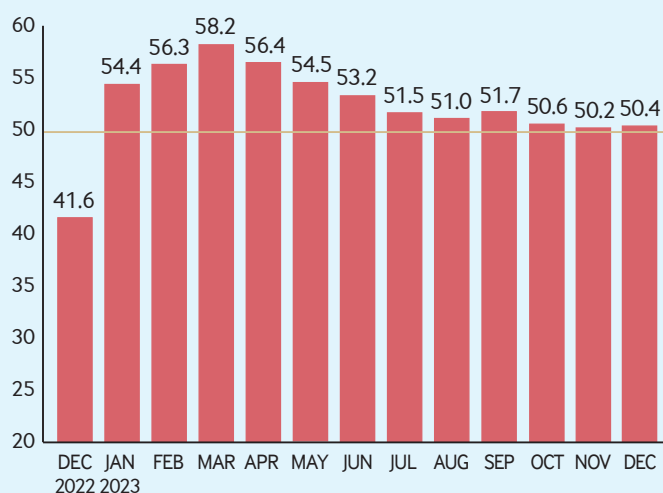
The lower outstanding external debt of banks is the main reason behind the drop, Wang Chunying, deputy head of the administration, said.

The scale of China's external debt will remain stable, as the country's long-term growth fundamentals remain unchanged, she said.

China's Manufacturing PMI



China's Non-manufacturing PMI



(Source: National Bureau of Statistics)



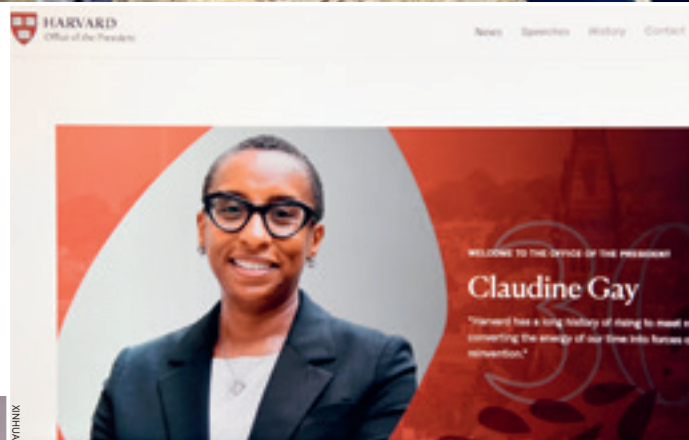
## DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

The Independent National Electoral Commission meets in Kinshasa on December 31, 2023, to announce the preliminary results of the country's presidential election. Felix Tshisekedi was reelected for a second five-year term



## REPUBLIC OF KOREA

Lee Jae-myung, chief of the main opposition Democratic Party, lies on the ground after being stabbed in the neck during a public event in Busan on January 2. Following the attack, Lee was taken to hospital, where he was moved from the intensive care unit to a general ward on January 3



## UNITED STATES

Then Harvard President Claudine Gay is seen on the webpage of the Office of the President of Harvard University on January 2. Gay announced that day that she would step down six months into her presidency amid a backlash over her handling of anti-Semitism on campus and allegations of plagiarism in her academic work





## JAPAN

Remains of a burnt-out building in an area hit by fire after earthquakes in Wajima, Ishikawa Prefecture, on January 3. The quakes, the largest of which had a magnitude of 7.6, started a fire and destroyed buildings on the west coast of Japan's main island, Honshu, and had killed at least 73 people as of January 4



## AUSTRIA

The Vienna Philharmonic under the baton of Christian Thielemann performs at the Vienna Philharmonic New Year's Concert 2024 on January 1



## PALESTINE

A man holds up one of his drawings in the southern Gaza Strip city of Rafah on December 27, 2023. To express his desire for peace, his works intend to convey the hardships his family and the people of Gaza are going through during the ongoing Palestine-Israel crisis





# THIS WEEK PEOPLE & POINTS

## ↓ NEW MINISTER OF CULTURE AND TOURISM

Senior official **Sun Yeli** has been appointed minister of culture and tourism. The appointment was made at a meeting of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC), China's top legislature, on December 29, 2023.

While the NPC is not in session, its Standing Committee has the power to decide on the appointment of ministers nominated by the premier.

Born in Anqiu, Shandong Province, in December 1964, Sun received a master's degree in history from Peking University in 1988. After graduation, he held several posts at the Party Literature Research Office, one of the predecessors of the Institute of Party History and Literature of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee. He became the institute's deputy head in 2018. Since 2021, he has been deputy director of the Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee.



## E-Justice

**Beijing Evening News**  
**December 28, 2023**

From late deliveries and lost shipments to complaints about defective goods and bad customer service, all kinds of grievances seem to haunt the world of e-commerce. Over the past few years, several online shopping platforms have set up their own virtual "courts," where users can serve as jurors after completing five mock cases as part of an entry examination. With access to order details, shipment information and statements from both parties, the cyber jurors will vote on which side should win.

To build customer loyalty, digital marketplaces tend to be entirely user-oriented.

This, however, means that sellers sometimes have to deal with false malicious reviews, and apologize and offer compensation for things they never did.

While the cyber juror system presents online sellers with a better means to address unjust negative reviews, people are worried that these cyber jurors, most of whom lack professional legal training, may let personal biases and emotions interfere with their rational thinking.

E-commerce platforms should offer both buyers and sellers a fairer solution to disputes. Who is eligible to apply for the positions? Who is to supervise and override cyber jurors' votes when a need arises? These are among the important questions that need to be addressed.



## A New Zest for Zoos

**Lifeweek**  
**January 1**

Over the past few years, more and more Chinese young adults are re-discovering their passion for zoos. According to data collected by Hongshan Forest Zoo in Nanjing, capital of Jiangsu Province, while 70 percent of its visitors in 2019 were seniors aged 60 and above, 60.21 percent of its visitors were young adults in their 20s in 2023.

Having received an all-round makeover in recent years, the zoo has risen to become one of the country's most popular ones. In 2011, it became

**"For the next three to five years, we believe China can still deliver decent growth."**

**Robin Xing**, wealth management firm Morgan Stanley's Chief China Economist, in a recent interview with Xinhua News Agency, expressing his optimism about the country's economic growth prospects despite challenges

**"China has been continuously improving its level of opening up in recent years, and Tesla is both a witness and a beneficiary."**

**Tao Lin**, Vice President of Tesla, commenting on a company report saying the U.S. carmaker's Shanghai plant, its first gigafactory outside the United States, delivered 947,000 vehicles in 2023, up 33 percent from the previous year

the first zoo in China to drop animal shows. Three years later, it released a new policy that prohibits visitors from feeding the animals. A series of new facilities were also added to provide the animals with more room as well as hideout spaces excluded from public view.

Besides Hongshan Forest Zoo, many other domestic zoos have also taken measures to upgrade their facilities. The bear park at Beijing Zoo was previously a deep, barren pit, which allowed tourists to throw food at bears from above. In recent years, the zoo has adopted a new design that uses both lush surroundings to mimic the animal's natural habitat and glass walls to allow visitors an eye-level view of the bears' daily activities.

Renovations like this have turned domestic zoos into a sort of quiet oasis in the stressful hustle and bustle of urban life. Seeing how animals connect with their own kind, their human caregivers and their surroundings in the most unpretentious ways is enticing younger generations to travel to zoos to find solace and warmth.

## Changing Stance on Fireworks

**Qianjiang Evening News**  
December 29, 2023

As China begins counting down to the Spring Festival, which falls on February 10 in 2024, the online community is once again caught up in a debate on whether fireworks should be banned. This time, the country's top legislature weighed in.

On December 26, 2023, a report issued by the Legislative Affairs Commission of the National People's Congress Standing Committee pointed out that the complete ban of fireworks in some cities is not in line with national laws, which allow the use of fireworks during national holidays and other

major events. As a result, policymakers in several cities have promised to scale back restrictions on their use.

In recent years, multiple cities have issued a ban to protect citizens from fireworks-induced injuries and air pollution. However, with the improvement of air quality and people's safety awareness in many parts of China, the fireworks ban no longer seems necessary.

In all their colorful variations, fireworks have brightened up Chinese holidays for centuries. To keep this tradition alive, decision-makers should substitute the fireworks ban with regulations that allow citizens to light fireworks at designated places and during limited times of day. Stricter standards should also be applied to the fireworks manufacturing sector to minimize safety risks.

## ↓ YOUNGEST ON *FORBES* 30 UNDER 30

Chinese competitive shooter **Huang Yuting**, 17, became the youngest person on the *Forbes* China 30 Under 30 list last year, according to an announcement made by *Forbes* China on December 28, 2023.

Hailing from Taizhou, Zhejiang Province, Huang has made a name for herself in the shooting world since beginning professional training in 2016. In March 2023, she claimed two consecutive gold medals at the 2023 International Shooting Sport Federation Rifle/Pistol World Cup in India. Two months later, she added a gold and a bronze medal to her collection at the World Cup in Azerbaijan.



*Forbes* 30 Under 30 is a set of lists of 30 notable people under 30 years old in a variety of fields, issued annually by *Forbes* magazine and some of its regional editions.

**"China's foreign trade has shown relatively strong resilience [in 2023], overcoming the impact of a shrinking external demand and the downward trend of prices."**

**He Yadong**, a spokesperson for the Chinese Ministry of Commerce, at a press conference on December 28, 2023

**"By coming together, the two countries can help unlock global ambition and provide a model of leadership that is sorely needed to drive forward faster climate action."**

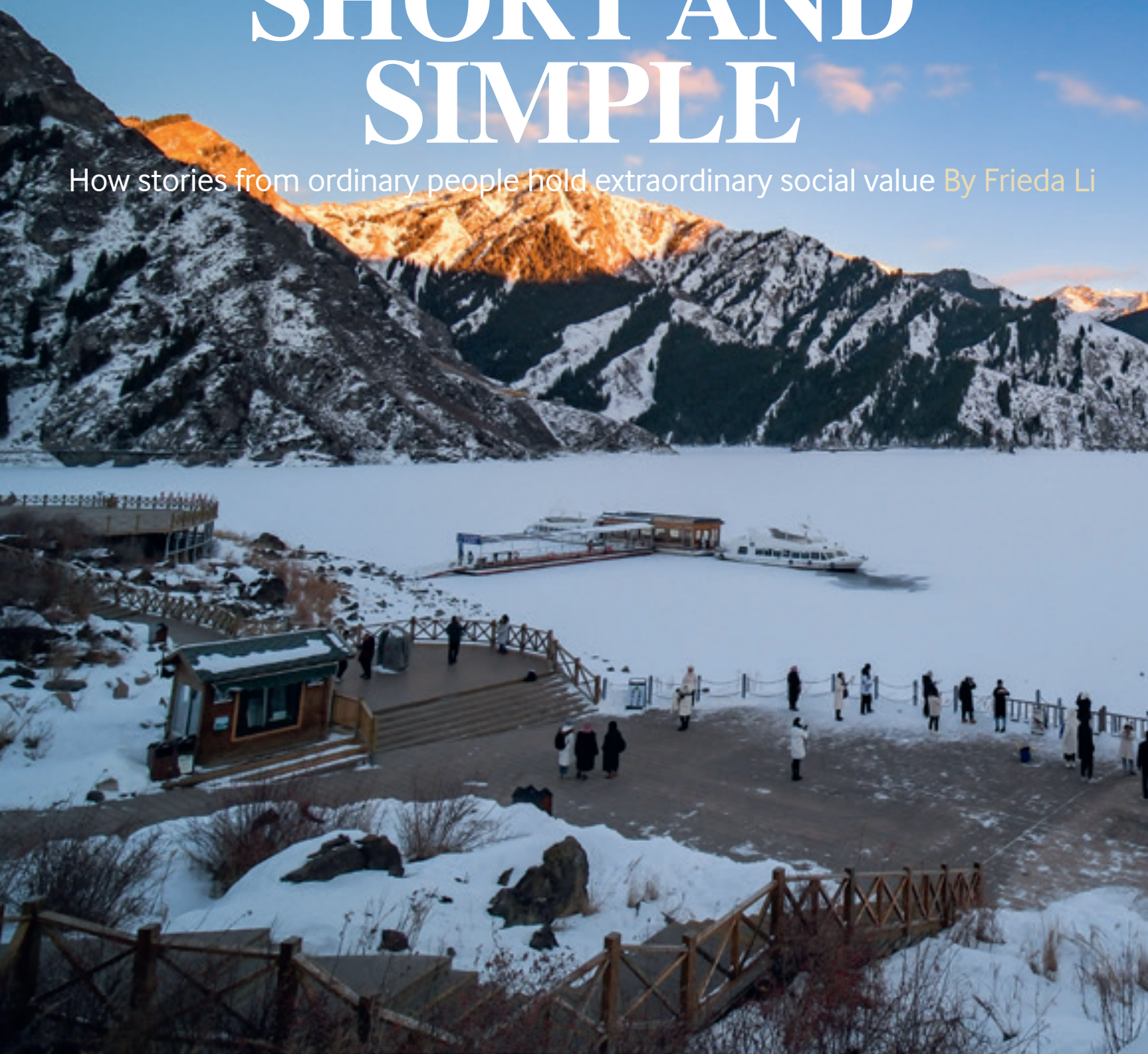
**Champa Patel**, Executive Director for Governments and Policy at the Climate Group, an international non-profit, in a recent interview with *Global Times* newspaper, stressing China and the U.S. should both be on board to drive real climate action



COVER STORY

# SHORT AND SIMPLE

How stories from ordinary people hold extraordinary social value By Frieda Li



**D**uring a two-week trip to my native Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region in northwest China,

I contemplated the following question: Born and raised in the region until the age of 18, how can I tell the stories that unfold here to people on the outside? The stories of ordinary locals are very simple, to the point that many people feel they hold

no real “news value.”

But for those who have lived through Xinjiang’s difficult times, the present is hard-won.

One topic that never received