

FEATURES: 12356 TO THE RESCUE P.30 | FEATURES: AN ENGINEERING BREAKTHROUGH P.32

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China's high-speed rail
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Cover Photo: A high-speed train runs through the fields of a village in southwest China's Chongqing Municipality on July 10, 2024 (CNSPHOTO)

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Fast-Track Development

In 2024, China's high-speed railway network made two major achievements. First, its total length reached 48,000 km, maintaining first position globally. Second, a train prototype capable of reaching a test speed of 450 km per hour was unveiled and will be put into commercial operation this year, ushering in a new era of high-speed railway at 450 km per hour, an increase from 350 km.

With the world's fastest trains and the largest network, China's high-speed railway showcases the advanced technologies used in its construction. Ensuring the safe and stable operation of the high-speed railway network requires technologies in the areas of materials, telecommunications, signaling, design and operation management, in all of which China excels globally.

Breakthroughs in China's high-speed railway technologies benefit the international community. As the Belt and Road Initiative progresses, China will enhance cooperation with countries along its routes, jointly improving connectivity in transport, energy, telecommunications and other infrastructure. China's experience in high-speed railway can be a reference for these countries, helping them achieve leapfrog developments in infrastructure.

Breakthroughs in China's high-speed railway also benefit the country's economic and social development. The increase in the length of the network has stimulated the development of related industries, since construction of high-speed rail requires a large amount of steel, cement and machinery. It has also stimulated the development of tourism, logistics, food and beverage and other industries, bringing new impetus to economic growth.

High-speed railway enables travel between regions to be more frequent and convenient, strengthens inter-regional connectivity and makes regional economic development more balanced. For instance, in the Yangtze River and Pearl River deltas, which both have dense high-speed railway networks, several high-speed railway economic circles have been formed, and cities within these circles cooperate closely to promote high-quality regional economic development.

The length of China's high-speed railway network is expected to reach 50,000 km in 2025. A number of planned railway projects will start operating this year, ensuring China will remain the global leader in high-speed railway for the foreseeable future. **BR**



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GREAT MIGRATION BEGINS!

Children pose for a photo in front of Spring Festival decorations at Beijing West Railway Station on January 14.

This year, the Spring Festival, China's biggest traditional holiday, will fall on January 29.

The Spring Festival travel rush, known as *chunyun*, is the world's largest annual human migration, with a substantial surge in transportation demand as millions return home for family reunions.

Chunyun began on January 14 and will continue until February 22. Authorities expect an unprecedented 9 billion inter-regional trips during this year's travel rush.



Promoting Cultural Heritage

Du Hui, inheritor of a birch bark pyrography technique, uses birch bark to create an artwork on train K7041 from Harbin to Mohe, Heilongjiang Province, on January 11. As winter tourism continues to thrive, five inheritors of intangible cultural heritage from the Oroqen ethnic group showcased their traditional crafts to passengers on the train to promote ethnic culture.

Cross-Border Fraud

The Ministry of Public Security has issued a notice urging the public to remain vigilant and avoid falling victim to fraudulent overseas job offers which turn out to be cross-border fraud schemes, Xinhua News Agency reported on January 15.

The notice follows an increase in appeals for help from families of victims who were lured abroad, subsequently lost contact and became trapped in criminal activities.

Local public security agencies have been instructed to conduct thorough investigations into these cases, the ministry said, adding that

efforts are being made to rescue stranded individuals and ensure their safe return.

The ministry warned of deceptive tactics used by overseas fraud syndicates, which often promise high-paying jobs, free meals and accommodation, or other enticing offers. Once victims are lured overseas, they may be illegally detained and coerced into participating in telecom and Internet fraud schemes, it added.

Families dealing with cases of missing or trapped relatives abroad are advised to report to local police and seek assistance through official channels, including Chinese diplomatic missions, the ministry added.

Public security authorities will continue their high-pressure crackdown on cross-border telecom and online fraud, with a particular focus on emerging fraud hubs such as Myawaddy in Myanmar, said the ministry.

Cruise Ship

On January 15, China completed the construction of the main structure of its second homegrown large cruise ship in Shanghai.

The construction of the structure for the ship, *Adora Flora City*, took less than nine months—over two months faster than the first ship, *Adora Magic City*, which embarked on its commercial maiden voyage on January 1, 2024.

This timeline is on par with the manufacturing processes of Europe's leading large cruise shipbuilders, according to Shanghai Waigaoqiao Shipbuilding Co. Ltd., manufacturer of the cruise ship.

The next phase will focus on interior decoration, equipment installation and system commissioning.

The deadweight tonnage of *Adora Flora City* is 141,900 tons, 6,400 tons more than that of *Adora Magic City*. Its total length has increased by 17.4 meters to 341 meters and the number of cabins has risen by 19 to a total of 2,144.

The ship can accommodate 5,232 passengers when fully loaded and features a 16-story upper structure, equipped with more entertainment facilities.

Adora Flora City is scheduled to undergo its first dock floating test at the end of April this year and is expected to be delivered by the end of 2026, according to the plan.

Mangrove Conservation

The construction of China's first national mangrove germplasm bank has officially begun in the city of Beihai, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, Xinhua reported on January 13.

The project, which is expected to be completed by the end of 2025, will include three key areas: the in-situ germplasm preservation area, the breeding pilot area and the scientific experiment area.

The project is of great importance to the conservation, screening, cultivation and promotion of mangrove genetic resources and biodiversity.

In recent years, Beihai has been focusing on restoring

and protecting its mangrove forests, continuously increasing the size of its mangrove ecosystems. The city's mangrove forests now cover 4,636 hectares, improving the integrity and stability of these critical coastal ecosystems.

MCN Regulation

The Cyberspace Administration of China has released a draft regulation to standardize the operations of multi-channel network (MCN) institutions and regulate their online content services, aiming to foster a healthier online environment.

The draft regulation, which was published to solicit public opinions on January 10, defines that MCN institutions are entities registered on Internet content platforms that provide services such as planning, marketing and brokerage for Internet content creators.

The proposed rules prohibit MCN institutions from engaging in or facilitating activities such as fabricating or spreading rumors, inciting confrontation between groups, promoting vulgar content or profiting in ways that harm minors' mental and physical health.

Unauthorized online news services and other actions that violate laws and regulations are also banned under the draft.

Additionally, MCN institutions are required to obtain professional qualifications or service certifications before engaging in activities such as performances or program production.

The draft regulation mandates that content platforms establish dedicated reporting channels for complaints involving MCN institutions and promptly address public concerns.

The public can submit feedback on the draft regulation until February 9.

Tourism Expo

Tourism Plus Shanghai 2025, a comprehensive annual tourism expo, is scheduled to take place from March 30 to April 3, Xinhua reported on January 10. It is expected to reach a record scale amid a growing China-travel wave.

Spanning three venues across the city, the event will have a total exhibition area of 700,000 square meters and over 6,000 exhibitors, and is expected to draw more than



Snake Crafts

Customers select colored glaze crafts themed on the Year of the Snake in Boshan District of Zibo City, Shandong Province, on January 9. Boshan is well-known for its colored glaze industry.

450,000 visitors from over 140 countries and regions.

According to the organizers, the expo will feature four major exhibitions covering 14 key industries, including tourism, hospitality, food and drink, retail, commercial real estate and health.

Exhibitors from countries including Germany, Italy,

Spain, Slovenia, Japan, the Republic of Korea (ROK) and Viet Nam have already registered for this year's event.

After China expanded its visa-free entry policy in November 2024, the hashtag "China travel" went viral on global social media, particularly in nearby countries like Japan and the ROK.



Skills Competition

A competitor works on an ice sculpture during the first edition of the Heilongjiang Ice Carving Vocational Skills Competition at the Harbin Ice and Snow World in Harbin, Heilongjiang Province, on January 15. The competition ran from January 15 to 21, attracting participation by more than 50 skilled professionals.

Auto Milestone

China's auto sector hit a milestone in 2024 as both production and sales exceeded 31 million units, data from the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers showed.

The country's total auto output was 31.28 million units last year, up 3.7 percent from the 2023 level, and sales rose 4.5 percent year on year to reach 31.44 million units, according to the association. Both figures remained first globally last year.

One of the sector's highlights last year was the new energy vehicles (NEVs).

NEVs refer to vehicles completely or mainly driven by new energy sources, including battery electric vehicles, plug-in hybrid vehicles, and fuel-cell vehicles.

NEV production grew 34.4 percent to 12.89 million units, while NEV sales rose 35.5 percent to 12.87 million units, according to the data.

NEV sales accounted for 40.9 percent of all new car sales in 2024, an increase of 9.3 percentage

points from 2023.

Last year, the country exported 5.86 million vehicles, a surge of 19.3 percent year on year, the data showed.

Data Labeling

China has recently unveiled a guideline aimed at nurturing its data-labeling industry, as the country seeks to boost the development of artificial intelligence (AI).

As an emerging industry, data labeling focuses on processing data through filtering, cleaning, classification, annotation, tagging and quality inspection. This enables machines to learn more efficiently and effectively.

By 2027, China's data-labeling industry is expected to make strides in scientific and technological innovation, along with a substantial increase in industry scale, according to the guideline issued by departments including the National Development and Reform Commission and the National Data Administration.

To achieve the targets, the country aims to cultivate several

influential data-labeling companies while also establishing data-labeling hubs nationwide that demonstrate distinctive achievements and advantages, as per the guideline.

The guideline also calls for efforts to promote the application of AI in areas such as government services, urban governance and rural revitalization, a strategy to promote the economic prosperity and overall development of rural areas.

The country will support the development of data labeling with favorable fiscal, financial and tax policies. It will also create or revise national standards for professions related to AI training and data labeling, according to the guideline.

Real Estate Projects Loans

Loans approved for China's "white list" real estate projects have exceeded 5 trillion yuan (\$695.5 billion), the National Financial Regulatory Administration (NFRA) said on January 12.

Under the "white list" mechanism, launched in January 2024, local authorities are recommending that financial institutions provide financial support to eligible real estate projects.

The risks of China's small and medium-sized financial institutions have been pointedly reduced, and the "white list" mechanism has been effective, the NFRA said.

Efforts will be made to speed up the reform and risk reduction of small and medium-sized financial institutions, and to deal with high-risk institutions. Work should also be done to expand the "white list" mechanism and increase its efficiency, as well as build a new development model for the real estate sector, the NFRA said.

The mechanism is part of China's efforts to stabilize the sector, which is weighed down by debt problems, and boost industry confidence.

SME Development Index

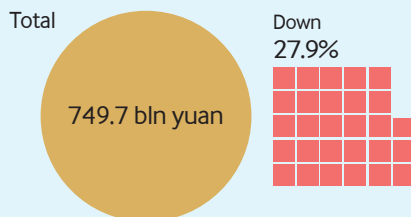
China's small and medium-sized

NUMBERS

Foreign direct investment (FDI) in January-November, 2024

(All growth rates are y.o.y., \$1=7.18 yuan as of January 16)

FDI in the Chinese mainland in actual use



46,893

New foreign-invested companies



enterprises (SMEs) saw improved business performance between October and December 2024, according to a report from the China Association of Small and Medium Enterprises.

The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Index, based on a survey of 3,000 SMEs across eight major industries, stood at 89 in the fourth quarter of last year, 0.1 points higher than in the third quarter.

The index's threshold for stable economic conditions is 100; a reading below 100 indicates a downward economic trend for SMEs.

The index also contains multiple sub-indexes to gauge SME performances and expectations.

The sub-indexes for industrial production, construction and transportation all showed improvement, while the sub-index measuring SMEs' confidence in the macroeconomy remained stable compared to the third quarter, according to the report.

China's SMEs saw a gradual improvement in both confidence

and market demand, leading to a surge in development vitality, according to the association.

It emphasized the importance of expanding demand and boosting consumption in future efforts while also calling for creating more opportunities and room for the development of SMEs.

Data Market Transaction

The transaction volume of China's data market is estimated to have topped 160 billion yuan (\$22 billion) in 2024, up more than 30 percent year on year, according to the National Data Administration.

China accelerated its construction of data infrastructure in 2024. By the end of the third quarter of last year, the total number of data center racks in use exceeded 2.11 million, a year-on-year increase of more than 100 percent, administration head Liu Liehong said at a national data work conference on January 10.

Liu said the administration will continue to implement the mega data project that has been dubbed "East Data, West Computing" to accelerate the construction of an integrated national computing network.

By the end of 2025, new computing power in major computing hubs is expected to account for more than 60 percent of the country's total. The use of green electricity is projected to exceed 80 percent, Liu noted.

A key part of China's digital infrastructure, the project was initiated in 2022 and designed to develop inland regions' capacities to store and process data transmitted from economically advanced eastern areas.

Investment Restrictions

China has decided to abolish the terms in a previous circular in 2011 and lift its restrictions on foreign investment companies using domestic loans to carry out equity investment, the Ministry of

Commerce (MOFCOM) said on January 9.

The move aims to implement the Foreign Investment Law and encourage multinational companies to establish headquarters-type institutions in China, MOFCOM spokesperson He Yadong told a press conference.

He said the scale of reinvestment by foreign-funded enterprises in China has continued to grow in recent years, and some foreign companies have expressed hope for the removal of restrictions on addressing their capital needs of reinvestment through domestic loans.

Foreign-funded enterprises are welcome to report any difficulties or problems they encounter in their investment and operations to Chinese authorities, the spokesperson said.

MOFCOM will work to coordinate and promote solutions for the reasonable demands of foreign enterprises, and provide a good business environment for foreign enterprises to invest and operate in China, He added.

FDI in

Hi-tech manufacturing sector

82.53 billion yuan

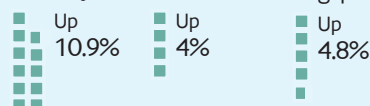
 = 10 billion yuan



11% of the total


FDI in the Chinese mainland from

Germany Switzerland Singapore



Manufacturing sector

202.5 billion yuan

 = 10 billion yuan



27% of the total

(Source: Ministry of Commerce)

THIS WEEK **WORLD**



CHILE

Chinese taikonauts (from left to right) Wang Haoze, Cai Xuzhe and Song Lingdong greet the 14th edition of the Congreso Futuro de Chile in Santiago via video on January 13. This edition reflected on “the relationship between current technology and the humanity we want to be”



BELGIUM

Cars on show at the Brussels Motor Show 2025 on January 10



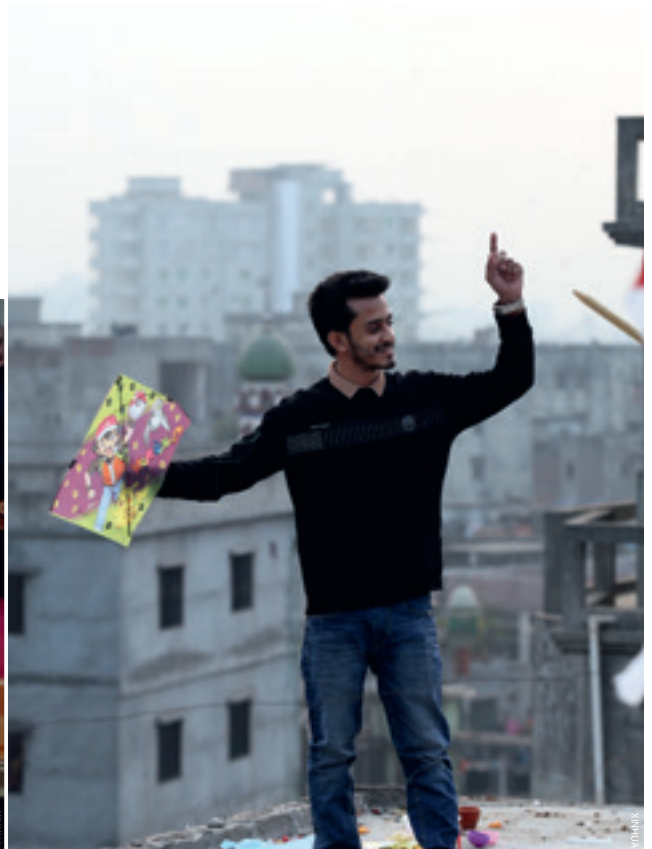
SOUTH AFRICA

Police officers and forensic pathology service workers conduct a rescue operation at an abandoned gold mine in Stilfontein, North West Province, on January 13. A total of 118 illegal miners were brought to the surface, with 36 confirmed dead



FRANCE

Prime Minister Francois Bayrou delivers his general policy speech at the National Assembly in Paris on January 14. He said his government will focus on stability, dialogue and profound reforms, especially on pensions



BANGLADESH

A man flies his kite during the Shakrain Festival, also known as the Ghuri Utsob or Kite Festival, in Dhaka on January 14



PALESTINE

Palestinians wave flags in celebration of news on a ceasefire deal with Israel, in Deir al-Balah, central Gaza Strip, on January 15. Earlier that day, Israel and Hamas agreed to a Gaza ceasefire-for-hostages deal following intensive mediation by Qatar, Egypt and the United States



THIS WEEK PEOPLE & POINTS

U.S. ONLINE INFLUENCER TO APPEAR ON NEW YEAR GALA

U.S. influencer **Evan Kail** announced on social platform X that he has received an invitation to the Spring Festival Gala, China's most-watched television show broadcast on Chinese New Year's Eve, which falls on January 28 this year.

Kail gained a large fan base in China after donating a collection of World War II (1939-45) photographs to the Chinese Consulate General in Chicago in November 2022.

Kail owns a pawn shop in Minneapolis and is also an experienced social media influencer with a considerable following on YouTube, X and TikTok. He frequently creates short videos to share his life and the stories behind his collectibles.

The collection he donated was provided by a client of his shop and includes over 30 rare photos documenting the brutal acts of violence committed by Japanese forces in China.

Kail has been traveling across China since November 2024.



More Than Movies

Workers' Daily
January 7

Nowadays, an increasing number of Chinese cinemas are adding new features in an attempt to stay afloat during off-peak seasons and amid rising competition both within and beyond the film market. Some have transformed part of their space into claw machine arcades and cafeterias.

Opponents argue that these movie theaters, by taking on a wide range of new functions, have spread themselves

too thin. Yet these theaters are also being widely praised for their ability to adapt to changes in consumer demand and their willingness to delve into new business territories.

Despite the controversy, cinemas must guard against potential risks and hidden dangers in the process of expanding their services. For instance, any new feature added must operate within the bounds of the law. Furthermore, it is also essential for cinemas to remain focused on their primary function, which is to provide an immersive space for people to enjoy movies together.



The Progressive Evolution of Lingnan

Lifeweek
January 6

The Nanling Mountains, which run from east to west, have long served as a demarcation line between south and central China. The Lingnan area located to the south of the mountains encompasses present-day Guangdong and Hainan provinces, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, and Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions—which are all coastal areas bordering the South China Sea.

“Oceans dictate weather patterns by transferring heat and moisture into the atmosphere, and they also control the pace of climate change.”

Cheng Lijing, a researcher from the Institute of Atmospheric Physics of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, as he, as part of a team of scientists from seven countries, released a study on January 10 showing it has become the new norm for the world's ocean temperatures to consistently break warming records

“U.S. TikTok users are voting with their feet. This demonstrates that suppressing normal business activities of non-U.S. companies is unpopular, as such actions by U.S. politicians are harming the immediate interests of the American public.”

Lu Xiang, a non-resident senior fellow at the Center for China and Globalization, on a sudden influx to Chinese lifestyle platform Xiaohongshu of foreign users who claim to have migrated from TikTok due to concerns about a potential ban by the U.S. Government set to become effective on January 19

Additionally, some historians have extended its definition to include the eastern part of Yunnan Province and the southwestern parts of Fujian Province.

For a long time in the country's vast timeline, Lingnan remained below sea level. It was not until the Song Dynasty (960–1279) that most part of the area began to emerge from the water.

In the centuries that followed, the land remained an underdeveloped wilderness where vast moorlands pervaded—a place where only those convicted of crimes or political misconduct were banished.

That changed, however, when Guangzhou became the only portal for trade between China and the rest of the world in the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911). The flourishing trade in Guangzhou not only attracted merchants from across the globe but also fueled the rise of a slew of local industries, including silk production, ceramics, handicrafts and shipbuilding, as also sparking economic development in the surrounding regions.

Currently, Lingnan has risen to become one of China's most industrially developed and densely populated regions, thanks to the country's reform and opening-up policy. From a remote borderland where exiles once gathered to an ultra-modern industrial hub, Lingnan has come a long way, and its journey of progress will surely continue.

Trafficked in Thailand

Beijing Evening News
January 10

On January 3, Wang Xing, a 22-year-old Chinese actor, also known by his stage name Xing Xing, went missing in the Thai border city of Mae Sot, a notorious hub for criminal activities. Four days later, he was rescued from a scam center across the border, in Myanmar.

The actor later told reporters that he thought he was traveling to a casting call with film producers in Thailand. However, upon entering the country, he was taken to Myanmar, where he was

forced to undergo training on how to scam people over the phone.

Over the past few years, hundreds of thousands of people have been trafficked into the region, where they are held against their will and forced to conduct telecom scams.

Currently, the crime has taken on a new form—fake job offers. Job candidates, often lured by the promise of a well-paying job, find themselves trapped and forced into illegal undertakings.

In the face of new scam tactics, Chinese and Thai authorities should work in tandem to combat this ever-evolving dark web of criminality.

↓ WORLDSKILLS COMPETITION WINNER

On January 10, **Cao Bo**, a lecturer at Wuhan Instrument and Electronics School in Hubei Province, received a provincial honor for his performance at the 47th World Skills Competition in Lyon, France, last September, where he won a gold medal in electronics technology.

The gold medal was Hubei's first at the prestigious event. The 23-year-old was awarded a certificate commending his achievement by the province's Department of Human Resources and Social Security.



Cao graduated from the same school, where he majored in electronics and information technology. Encouraged by his mentors, he began participating in competitions at home and abroad, further fueling his passion for electronics. Now, as a teacher, Cao is dedicated to motivating his students to pursue excellence and become skilled technicians in the future.

“The evolution of living organisms has special properties and artificial intelligence currently finds it difficult to provide a real feeling. But the advantage of robots is that they can understand humans from more dimensions and respond, while they are also more stable.”

Yang Jianbo, founder of Chinese robot company Beijing Keyi Technology, in a recent interview with Xinhua News Agency

“Shanghai offers convenient transportation, mobile payments and a welcoming atmosphere. Even with just a bit of English or Chinese, you can enjoy the city with ease.”

Lee Se-yeong, a tourist from the Republic of Korea, in a recent interview with Xinhua, as Shanghai is becoming one of the country's top destinations for inbound travelers, welcoming over 6 million international visitors in 2024



COVER STORY

TRACKS OF PROGRESS

High-speed railway construction makes headway By Ji Jing

Huang Yue, who works in Hezhou, a city in south China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, opted for a change in her journey home to Changbaishan in Jilin Province in northeast China, a distance of 3,000 km. Instead of her usual flight, she chose a sleeper bullet train this year.

Previously, her flight home was a day-long ordeal involving multiple transfers and overnight stays. This year, she boarded the train in Guangxi on January 13, transferred in Beijing the following day, and arrived in Changbaishan around 7 p.m.

"It was my first time on a sleeper bullet train. It is very comfortable and provides some privacy," Huang told *China Daily*. "I even got a snack box. I recorded a vlog to share with my family." Additionally, the train ticket was 700 yuan (\$95) cheaper than her usual plane ticket.

Liu Dai, a postgraduate student in Harbin, Heilongjiang Province, has benefited from a direct high-speed train between Harbin and his hometown Xiangyang in Hubei Province, which opened in July 2023. "Before, it took me more than 30 hours to get home on a slow train. Since the direct high-speed rail opened, it takes only around 12 hours," he told Xinhua News