

CHINA

Festival delicacies



People purchase *kasai* and other items for the forthcoming Tibetan New Year at Barkhor market in Lhasa, Xizang autonomous region, on Monday. *Kasai* is a traditional fried food made of flour, butter and salt to greet Tibetan New Year, or *losar*. As the holiday approaches, the aroma of freshly made *kasai* fills the ancient city of Lhasa. KUNGA LESANG / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Workspace decor helps ease post-holiday blues

By ZOU SHUO in Changsha
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With the Spring Festival holiday over, many office workers grappling with “post-holiday blues”—a mix of low spirits and reduced productivity—have turned to quirky and auspicious items to shake off lethargy and boost morale.

They have decorated their workspaces with lucky cats, fortune-bringing toys, divine protectors, osmanthus-scented candles and lucky couplets. According to e-commerce platform Tmall, sales of such “fortune-attracting” office decorations have surged more than 50 percent recently, as young people look to add a sense of ceremonial luck to their return to work.

On social media, users are sharing their workspace makeovers, along with design plans and shopping guides. From decorative items to practical gadgets such as keyboards, mini fans and teapots, creativity in workspace decor appears limitless. Tools such as daydreaming timers have

become essential for young workers looking to ease anxiety and transition smoothly back into work mode.

Zhu Xiaofan, who works in the gaming industry in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, recently added a special pair of couplets to her workstation that read “thriving and prosperous” and “wealth pouring in from all directions”.

For her, the Chinese New Year’s office decorations are more than just a ritual—they are a way to “remove the monotony of work”.

“It gives me the illusion that I’m still celebrating the Chinese New Year,” the 22-year-old said.

In the new year, Zhu hopes the couplets will bring her good fortune.

“Become rich overnight! Make a fortune daily! Win the five-million-yuan lottery! Or maybe my parents will suddenly tell me they’re billionaires!” she joked.

While these wishes might seem far-fetched, she said optimism and humor are key to maintaining a positive attitude and high efficiency at work.

On Lu Siyu’s desk, a set of blind-box figurines symbolizing “attracting good fortune” stands out. Next to them, she placed three toys representing the zodiac signs of her family of three.

For the 32-year-old office worker, preparing these items was a “must-do” for Chinese New Year, catering to her perfectionist tendencies.

“These decorations are full of ritual significance, representing my hopes for the new year. Every time I see them, it’s like a shot in the arm,” she said.

Her colleagues are also captivated by the decorations, which often become a topic of conversation and help create a lively office atmosphere.

On the first day of Chinese New Year, Li Xiaolu, a coach for the Hunan synchronized swimming team, had already switched to “preparation mode” for the national games.

To boost morale and bring good luck for the upcoming event, she purchased a set of Qing Dynasty Five Emperor Coins online, which are believed to attract good fortune and

improve feng shui, and placed them on her workstation.

“Smooth work and a full wallet” is her simple yet heartfelt New Year’s wish, the 32-year-old said.

The Five Emperor Coin pendants she chose are no ordinary items: each coin carries historical significance, she said. The gathering of the five emperors not only symbolizes wealth and prosperity, but also serves as a group of “guardian deities”, warding off misfortune for her and her team.

For some young people, however, these New Year decoration items are mainly for fun.

Xiao Yuan, a 26-year-old office worker in Changsha, Hunan province, said his company gave each employee three cartoon snack figurines before Spring Festival. Xiao brought them home and placed them on his desk. “I put them there mostly because I think they’re cute, not because I believe they will bring me luck or money,” he said.

Xu Ziya and Qi Jinfei contributed to this story.

Article sparks discussion on Nanjing vs Hangzhou

By CANG WEI in Nanjing
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A provincial government-affiliated newspaper in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, has sparked debate with a series of articles examining why the provincial capital lags behind Hangzhou in the artificial intelligence age, while startups such as DeepSeek and Unitree in Zhejiang’s provincial capital garner significant attention.

The two cities are often compared with each other, given that they are both provincial capitals in the Yangtze River Delta and are considered major economic hubs in East China.

The newspaper, Xinhua Daily, published the first installment of a three-part series, “Why Did DeepSeek Appear in Hangzhou?” on Friday, praising Hangzhou for fostering innovation and providing a strong industrial chain and favorable environment for entrepreneurial teams.

The second part, “Why Can’t Nanjing Develop ‘Hangzhou’s Six Small Dragons?’” was released on Saturday morning, directly comparing Nan-

jing with Hangzhou in terms of development, industry and business climate.

The term “Hangzhou’s Six Small Dragons” refers to six technology companies that have emerged in recent years and are at the forefront of new technology fields, including DeepSeek, which captured global attention this year for its cost-efficient artificial intelligence models.

The others include robotics firms Unitree and Deep Robotics, video game studio Game Science, brain-machine interface innovator BrainCo and 3D interior design software developer Manycore.

The article emphasized Hangzhou’s higher tolerance for failure and greater risk-taking in venture capital, which has empowered young innovators.

It also urged Nanjing to address its shortcomings swiftly, fostering a more tolerant and inclusive urban atmosphere that supports private enterprises and prioritizes small businesses.

On Saturday afternoon, the third

article, “Hangzhou Has DeepSeek, What Does Nanjing Have?” was published, highlighting the GDP disparity between the two cities. Last year, Nanjing’s GDP reached 1.85 trillion yuan, maintaining its position as China’s 10th-largest GDP city, but widening the gap with Hangzhou to 336 billion yuan.

On Monday, the newspaper released a fourth article, “Observations on Nanjing”, continuing its exploration of DeepSeek and “Hangzhou’s Six Small Dragons”.

The article stated that in the wake of economic transformation driven by AI, Nanjing is grappling with two major concerns: whether it can take a leading role in innovation-driven development or maintain its position among China’s top 10 GDP cities. It argued that the city must shed its deeply ingrained “institutional flavor” and cultivate a more dynamic urban culture.

Chen Anqing, founder of the Southern Media Institute, stressed the need for Nanjing to pivot from its reliance on traditional manufactur-

ing and focus on industries such as semiconductors and AI. He also called for market-driven reforms in State-owned enterprises and improvements in the business environment, suggesting Nanjing emulates Hangzhou’s strategies by reducing administrative interference and attracting young entrepreneurs.

Chen highlighted the importance of strengthening collaboration with cities such as Shanghai and Hefei, Anhui province, to prevent Nanjing from being overshadowed by the Hangzhou and Shanghai metropolitan areas.

Zhou Hongbo, Nanjing’s Party secretary, acknowledged during the city’s first meeting of the Year of the Snake that the rise of “Hangzhou’s Six Small Dragons” was not accidental, attributing it to the city’s strong innovation atmosphere, industrial ecosystem and business environment.

At the end of January, Nanjing issued the “Key Points of Optimizing the Business Environment in 2025”, outlining 10 areas of focus to create a top-tier development environment.

Courts to focus more on online extortion crime

Major cases disclosed to highlight efforts against cyber bullying, scams

By CAO YIN
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Chinese courts have pledged to step up efforts to combat online extortion, aiming to uphold justice in cyberspace and clearly define the boundaries of internet behavior.

The announcement came after the Supreme People’s Court, China’s top court, disclosed six significant cases on Tuesday to highlight its ongoing crackdown on such crimes.

“With the deep integration of information and social life, criminal activities have increasingly spread into cyberspace,” the top court said, noting that cases involving individuals using the internet to extort others by fabricating and disseminating false information have become more frequent.

The court urged judges nationwide to prioritize these cases, emphasizing that online extortion has severely harmed individuals and businesses by damaging reputations, infringing on property rights and threatening cybersecurity, social stability and economic growth.

In one case, a defendant surnamed Sun was sentenced to eight years and seven months in prison and fined 100,000 yuan (\$13,685) for creating and spreading false information about a woman online and demanding money from her.

In June 2022, Sun, a follower of a livestreamer, insulted another woman, Hou, in a livestreaming room, falsely claiming that Hou had an inappropriate relationship with the streamer. When Hou, who worked at a training institution, asked Sun to stop, Sun demanded 1 million yuan in exchange.

After Hou refused, Sun escalated her harassment by calling and messaging Hou’s colleagues and students, spreading false allegations about her personal life. Sun also reported Hou’s company to authorities for alleged violations, including lacking proper educational credentials and tax evasion, and posted false claims on various websites and forums.

Unable to bear the harassment, Hou attempted suicide but survived. Sun continued demanding money and posted online that Hou

“In recent years, cross-border telecom and cyber extortion crimes involving nude chats have significantly increased.”

Supreme People’s Court

had “committed suicide out of guilt”. Hou then reported Sun to the police, leading to her arrest.

“Sun’s actions constituted extortion and warranted severe punishment because they caused significant harm to Hou’s reputation and subjected her to intense physical and psychological distress,” the top court said.

The court underscored that online rumors often cause greater harm than offline ones and encouraged victims to seek help from law enforcement and judicial authorities.

The top court also urged courts at all levels to focus on extortion involving “nude chats”, a growing online scam.

In one case from 2020, a defendant surnamed Li led a group of people operating from Myanmar who persuaded victims to undress during nude video chats. They secretly recorded the conversations and used the footage to extort more than 700,000 yuan from over 30 victims.

Li, identified as the ringleader, was sentenced to 12 years and six months in prison for extortion and concealing illicit gains. He was also fined 105,000 yuan.

“In recent years, cross-border telecom and cyber extortion crimes involving nude chats have significantly increased,” the top court said, urging the public to stay vigilant and enhance their legal awareness.

The Ministry of Public Security reported in April that more than 250 Chinese nationals suspected of engaging in cross-border nude chat extortion and telecom fraud were handed over to Chinese authorities.

Fresh from the field



Villagers load freshly harvested radishes onto trucks in Hexi town in Nanchong, Sichuan province, on Monday. Leveraging the fertile land and abundant water resources along the Jialing River, the area has developed the vegetable industry in recent years to help increase residents’ incomes. LI XIANGYU / FOR CHINA DAILY

La Nina hindering rainfall in South China

By ZHAO YIMENG
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La Nina conditions in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean have contributed significantly to reduced rainfall across southern China this winter, meteorologists said.

The phenomenon, characterized by cooler-than-average sea surface temperatures, is expected to persist through early-to-mid spring before weakening to a neutral state, accord-

ing to the latest monitoring data from the National Climate Center of the China Meteorological Administration.

Since the onset of winter, southern China has experienced a sharp decline in precipitation, with most regions in provinces such as Jiangsu, Fujian, Guangdong, Yunnan and Hainan recording rainfall levels more than 80 percent below average.

Nationwide, average precipitation has dropped by over 50 percent com-

pared to normal levels, according to the administration.

“La Nina is a major factor behind the current dry conditions in southern China,” said Gu Wei, a researcher at the center. “It alters atmospheric circulation patterns over the northwestern Pacific, reducing the flow of warm, moist air into southern China and leading to prolonged periods of low rainfall.”

La Nina and its counterpart, El Nino, occur in cycles lasting between

two and seven years, shifting oceanic and atmospheric conditions in the Pacific. La Nina occurs when stronger trade winds push warm surface waters toward the western Pacific, allowing cooler waters to rise in the eastern Pacific.

This disruption influences global weather patterns, causing droughts in regions such as parts of South America and Africa while increasing rainfall in areas such as eastern Australia and India.

In China, La Nina typically brings cooler winters and alters summer rainfall patterns the following year, often leading to drought in the south and flooding in the north, Gu said.

According to China’s meteorological standards, La Nina is identified when the three-month moving average of sea surface temperatures in key monitoring areas drops more than 0.5 C below the long-term climate average.

The current La Nina pattern, which began in December, is expected to last one to two months, with its influence likely to persist through the spring.

“Although this La Nina event is relatively short, its impacts may linger, affecting weather patterns for at least one to two subsequent seasons,” Gu said.

A full-fledged La Nina event is declared when the pattern lasts for more than five months, according to the meteorological administration.

Since 1986, China has recorded La Nina conditions in 15 years, with 10 of them associated with colder-than-average winters. However, global warming has complicated this trend in recent years, as the winters of 2021 and 2022 were notably warmer, Gu said.