CHINA

Harbin surprise



People forge ahead despite being caught off guard by a short but intense sudden snowfall outside the Harbin International Convention and Exhibition Center in Harbin, Heilongjiang province, on Wednesday. Harbin was hit with snowfall that day following a drop in temperature caused by a cold front. LIU YANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

DPP actions lack public support

Official condemns island authorities for blocking cross-Strait exchanges

By LI SHANGYI
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Taiwan's ruling Democratic Progressive Party is obstructing cross-Strait exchanges despite public support for peace and cooperation, a mainland official said on Wednesday.

Chen Binhua, spokesperson for the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, accused the DPP of restricting academic exchanges by banning cooperation with Jinan University and two other mainland institutions. Recently, Taiwan expanded the blacklist to include seven more universities, including Beihang University and the Beijing Institute of Technology.

"The DPP authorities are the main obstacle to cross-Strait cooperation and a destroyer of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait," Chen said.

Chen also criticized the DPP for refusing to lift its ban on group tours to the mainland and delaying the comprehensive resumption of direct passenger flights. He said Taiwan authorities have obstructed travel for residents from Shanghai and Fujian province seeking to visit the island.

In January, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism announced plans to allow group tours to Taiwan for residents from Shanghai and Fujian, with preparations underway.

Chen accused the DPP of intimidating Taiwan residents seeking mainland identity documents and requiring public officials to sign declarations stating they do not hold them.

He also criticized Taiwan for banning the use of DeepSeek, restricting mainland telecom products in public schools and blacklisting over 100 mainland institutions, including the Chinese Academy of Sciences, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and the Confucius Institute.

"The desire of people on both sides to grow closer cannot be suppressed, and the trend of cross-Strait exchanges and cooperation cannot be stopped. Reckless actions will lead to self-inflicted consequences," he added.

China's 2025 Government Work Report proposed refining mechanisms to strengthen cross-Strait economic and cultural ties, which Chen said underscores Beijing's commitment to deeper engagement.

"Chinese modernization is a shared endeavor for people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait. Taiwan people have every reason to take part in this process," he said.

Fujian province has introduced 17 policy measures to support Taiwan residents and businesses, including allowing such residents to establish radio and television production companies in the province and expanding cooperation with marine aquaculture and biomedical industries.

In Yunnan province, Taiwan residents applying for a mainland travel permit for the first time as of this month are eligible for one year of free entry to 320 tourist attractions, including Lijiang Ancient Town and Jade Dragon Snow Mountain.

Green assets growing with afforestation projects

By XU NUO
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With over 25 percent of its land surface covered by forests, China is the fastest and largest contributor to land greening efforts in the world, according to an official from the National Forestry and Grassland Administration.

On Wednesday, which marked the 47th National Tree Planting Day, the National Afforestation Commission released a communique on China's land greening status in 2024, highlighting progress made over the past year.

According to the document, China completed afforestation of 4.446 million hectares, improved 3.224 million hectares of land by planting grass, and reclaimed 2.783 million hectares of desertified and sandy land in 2024. The forest coverage rate surpassed 25 percent, while the forest stock volume exceeded 20 billion cubic meters, it said.

Zhang Liming, director of the ecological protection and restoration department at the National Forestry and Grassland Administration, said, "Continuous efforts have been made by the country to expand forest areas, enhance forest quality and benefits, and manage forest resources, thereby increasing the nation's green assets."

Afforestation of a cumulative total of 77.3 million hectares has been completed nationwide since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2012, making China the fastest and largest contributor to global greening efforts, he added.

According to the communique released by the National Afforestation Commission, significant achievements were made last year in the Three-North Shelterbelt Forest Program, which began in 1978 as a strategic project to establish large protective forests in key areas affected by sandstorms and soil erosion in Northwest, North and Northeast China.

With 32 billion yuan ($4.4 billion) of funding from the central government, more than 3.8 million hectares of land in these regions were restored last year, it said.

Notably, the Taklimakan Desert in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, which is the largest desert in China, has been encircled by a sand-blocking green belt stretching 3,046 kilometers.

The document also praised the progress made in the systemic treatment of mountains, rivers, forests, fields, lakes, grasslands and deserts. A total of 176 projects on ecological protection and restoration in key regions and on ecological restoration support systems, as well as 27 projects for the integrated protection and restoration of the environment, have been carried out, with a cumulative treated area exceeding 5 million hectares, it said.

Moreover, ecological industries have brought increased benefits to the people, according to the document. The total output value of the forestry and grassland industry reached 10.17 trillion yuan, up 9.6 percent year-on-year. The production of forest food exceeded 200 million metric tons, making it the third-most important agricultural produce after grains and vegetables. Forest food refers to edible items produced in forests or woodlands, including fruits, flowers, leaves and branches.

The document highlighted that economic forests cover 46.667 million hectares in China, with an annual output value exceeding 2 trillion yuan, while 40 million hectares of forest land have been used for the under-forest economy, with an annual output value of about 1 trillion yuan.

The under-forest economy involves eco-friendly activities conducted under forest canopies, such as planting, breeding, wild produce gathering and ecotourism. Among these activities, ecotourism alone attracted 2.76 billion visitors last year, a 9.1 percent increase compared with 2023, the document said.

Foshan to hasten traditional sectors' efforts to go digital

By QIU QUANLIN in Guangzhou
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> "We will make greater efforts in digital transformation for more companies in the traditional manufacturing industries."
>
> **Bai Tao,** mayor of Foshan

Foshan, a manufacturing hub in Guangdong province, plans to accelerate the digital transformation of its traditional industries to boost innovation and efficiency, a senior government official said.

Bai Tao, mayor of Foshan and a deputy to the 14th National People's Congress, said digital upgrades are crucial for the city's established sectors, which include seven of its 10 100-billion-yuan ($13.8 billion) industry clusters.

"By enhancing production efficiency through intelligence reform and digital transformation, we are driving the smart evolution in traditional advantageous industries," Bai said.

The city has implemented a wave of technological reforms, including launching Guangdong's first city-level artificial intelligence application platform, to drive digital transformation.

According to local government statistics, over 7,400 industrial enterprises above designated size — companies with annual operation revenue exceeding 20 million yuan — in Foshan have undergone digital transformation, more than 72 percent of the total.

"Enterprises that have completed their digital transformations have seen a 16 percent increase in production efficiency on average, and a 17 percent reduction in costs," Bai said.

Foshan Haitian Flavoring and Food Co, a soy sauce producer, exemplifies this trend. Known as a "lighthouse factory", the company has improved efficiency through fully digitized management, reducing product order delivery cycles by over 38 percent and increasing profit margins.

"We will make greater efforts in digital transformation for more companies in the traditional manufacturing industries, aiming to achieve an 80 percent digital transformation rate among industrial enterprises above designated size this year," Bai said.

The city also plans to integrate artificial intelligence into manufacturing, leveraging its data resources and diverse application scenarios.

"By embedding AI into research and design, production and operation management, we will expand AI application scenarios in industries such as household appliances, furniture, ceramics and textiles, accelerating the shift from traditional toward intelligent manufacturing," the mayor said.

Foshan will also focus on developing emerging industries, promoting the integration of innovation, industry, funding and talent.

Leveraging its equipment manufacturing industry cluster, Foshan has built a robotics industrial chain, with about 3,000 related companies and the country's largest industrial robot production base. Midea Group, a local company, is among the world's top industrial robot manufacturers.

The city is also developing its pharmaceutical and health industries, including traditional Chinese medicine manufacturing and medical devices.

According to local government statistics, the city's pharmaceutical and health industry revenue exceeded 100 billion yuan in 2024, maintaining double-digit growth for three consecutive years.

"In the future, we will accelerate the construction of key industrial platforms, focusing on breakthroughs in emerging industries such as new energy storage, new power systems, equipment industrial robots and new energy vehicles," Bai said.

Competent drones



Agricultural drones equipped with high-precision GPS positioning systems and intelligent spray devices soar above wheat fields, spraying pesticides to combat crop diseases and pests in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, on Tuesday. NI YANQIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Hainan seeks global nod for cultural, natural heritages

By YANG RAN and **CHEN BOWEN**

Hainan province is ramping up efforts to qualify its Hainan Tropical Rainforest and Traditional Settlements of the Li Ethnic Group for inclusion in the World Heritage List, with an emphasis on both protection and economic development.

Lyu Yan, a deputy to the 14th National People's Congress and deputy head of Baoting Li and Miao autonomous county in Hainan, said the province must safeguard its natural environment while revitalizing its cultural heritage. "We need to protect our lush mountains while revitalizing our intangible cultural heritage," Lyu said. "Beyond protection, we must foster development by using our cultural heritage."

Located in the central and southern parts of the island province, the tropical rainforest centered around Wuzhishan is a sanctuary for endangered species and island-specific flora and fauna. It is also home to the Li people, who have cultivated a distinctive island tribal culture for thousands of years.

In 2022, the Hainan Tropical Rainforest and Traditional Settlements of the Li Ethnic Group were included in the tentative list of UNESCO's World Heritage sites. Authorities are now seeking the prestigious "cultural and natural dual heritage" status.

As of August last year, China has 59 World Heritage sites, including 15 natural heritage sites and four mixed cultural and natural heritage sites.

"The Hainan rainforest is the only habitat of the Hainan gibbon and one of the world's 34 biodiversity hot spots," Lyu said. "It's the most intact continental island-type tropical rainforest in China, with immense ecological value. The Li people have lived here for over 3,000 years. Their boat-shaped houses, Li brocade and the March 3 Festival are like cultural time capsules. These treasures are like family heirlooms — precious to us and worthy of global recognition."

A legal framework for protecting the Li traditional settlements took effect in Hainan in December, giving ancient villages a legal safeguard.

"We must not only protect but also develop and revitalize intangible cultural heritage," Lyu said. "The Binglanggu Li and Miao Cultural Heritage Park in Hainan is a prime example, turning Ganza village from a struggling community into a thriving one with annual collective income in the millions."

Baoting Li and Miao autonomous county is an integral part of the heritage bid.

"Baoting will leverage its rich Li and Miao cultural traditions to create a hub for cultural preservation and experience," Lyu said.

"By showcasing the intangible heritage, hosting cultural festivals and developing creative products, we aim to convert ethnic culture into a tourism draw, establishing a model for ecological value transformation and green economic growth," she added.

Lyu outlined plans to advance the heritage bid, including refining application materials, enhancing rainforest ecosystem monitoring and restoration, and promoting Li brocade at Paris Fashion Week and cultural exhibitions overseas. The province also plans to accelerate tourism infrastructure development and train more intangible cultural heritage bearers.

During the two sessions, Lyu called for stronger policy support for the integrated development of ecological and cultural tourism in ethnic regions.

"Despite strides in cultural tourism, ethnic group areas face challenges in meeting high-quality development standards," she said. "Greater efforts are needed to strengthen policy and financial support in this aspect."

She also emphasized the importance of balancing conservation and economic growth.

"Achieving the transformation of lucid waters and lush mountains into valuable assets requires coordinated development of natural and cultural resources," Lyu said.

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