

'Chunyun' Carries the Great Reunion of Chinese People

Voice of the World

Edited by QI Liming

China's Spring Festival travel rush is the year's busiest period of mass migration, with a record nine billion domestic trips expected to be made. As the largest periodic migration in human history, about 80 percent of the trips will be self-driving road trips, also a record, with the remainder being by rail, air and water.

The Spring Festival travel rush kicked off on January 26, and nearly 11 million trips were made by rail on the same day. A total of 480 million rail trips are expected to be made nationwide during the 40-day travel period, a 38 percent jump from 2023.

Next-level rail travel

China, originally a latecomer to modern transport, now has the world's largest high-speed railway and expressway network, and world-class port clusters. By the end of 2022, the total length of China's transportation network had exceeded six million kilometers. Key transportation indicators, including passenger and freight volume, and business volume of postal and express services, rank first worldwide.

Evgeny Semaykin, a Russian who has lived in China for two decades and traveled on various types of available public transport, said that transport, in particular, is one of the sectors that



Train attendants in traditional clothes cope with the Spring Festival travel rush with a smile. (PHOTO: XINHUA)

hold great significance to China and the world. "I believe the transition of China's transport [infrastructure] could be [the means by which] to track the country's development progress and its contribution to the world," said Semaykin.

The country's comprehensive transport infrastructure ensures the convenient travel of people and the efficient flow of commodities, turbocharging the entire world's economy. "I am impressed by China's emphasis on infrastructure," he added.

According to *Nikkei Asia*, China's high-speed rail network spanned 42,000 km at the end of 2022, being the longest in the world and 13 times the size of Japan's Shinkansen bullet train network.

Anthony W.D. Anastasi, an American PhD candidate at the School of Politics and International Relations at East China Normal University, said that the U.S. needs to go down China's public transport route. The convenient subway system in big cities like Shanghai, and the country's expansive rail network, make car ownership unnecessary.

"During my years in Shanghai, I have never had the need to own a car.

Shanghai's 19-line, 802 km-long subway system is an incredible way to get around. Not only has it saved me money, when compared to my life in South Florida, but it has also made me healthier, thanks to walking more," said Anastasi.

He said when traveling outside Shanghai, instead of taking a plane or driving an immensely long distance, like he would have done in the U.S., he takes a train. China's traditional train and high-speed rail system is sufficiently developed, quick and very convenient. "My return to the U.S., after spending so much time in China, has made it obvious that the U.S. should take a page out of China's book and invest massively in public transport," said Anastasi.

Many merits of modern transport

In Anastasi's article published in *South China Morning Post*, he concluded with the many merits of a sound and safe public transportation system. Investing in public transport can fuel economic growth, and by expanding public transport infrastructure, a country could generate millions of immediate job opportunities across construction, operations and maintenance sectors.

Additionally, accessible public trans-

port connects low-income earners to employment centers, empowering them to secure jobs they previously could not reach. This inclusivity not only boosts individual livelihoods, but also expands the overall labor force, fostering productivity and driving long-term economic growth.

Embracing a public transport system like China's offers a sustainable solution that would help combat climate change and create a more beautiful environment.

A robust public transport system can profoundly improve mobility, connectivity and overall well-being. Efficient public transport also offers affordable and convenient travel options, enabling families to reunite more easily and fostering connections between communities.

In addition, it encourages domestic tourism, allowing individuals to explore different regions within the country, broadening their horizons and nurtured a stronger sense of national unity. Moreover, prioritizing public transport can lead to safer roads and a reduction in traffic-related accidents and fatalities.

Comment

China's Economic Performance Shows Stronger Resilience

By GONG Qian

China's economy achieved remarkable recovery in 2023, with the GDP growing 5.2 percent year on year to 126.06 trillion RMB (about 17.71 trillion USD), hitting the target of 5 percent annual growth, according to data released by China's National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) on January 17. This powerfully rebuts the argument that the "Chinese economy has collapsed."

According to the NBS, industrial output rose 4.6 percent in 2023 compared to a year earlier. The total value added of industrial enterprises above designated size increased by 4.6 percent. Among the 41 industrial categories, 28 maintained growth, and the average growth rate of the 10 key industries exceeded five percent, said China's Ministry of Industry and Information Technology on January 19.

Driven by a series of steady growth policies and measures, China's industrial economy continues to accumulate internal momentum for good, and the development potential is still huge.

With a strong industrial foundation, China has become the only country in the world to have all industrial categories listed in the UN industrial classification, said Kang Yi, commissioner of the NBS.

According to Kang, the value added of China's manufacturing industry accounts for nearly one-third of the world's, and the proportion of goods exports takes up one-seventh. In addition, China's infrastructure networks including transportation and communications have been improving steadily while other areas such as education and medical care have been strengthened. Capacity building in key areas such as food and energy security, industrial chain and supply chain has also achieved effective results. This enables China's economy to be more resilient and lays a solid foundation for stable and long-term economic development, said Kang.

China's economy will show gradu-

al improvement in 2024, propelled by manufacturing and consumption amid a structural shift towards high-quality growth drivers, according to Liu Peiqian, Fidelity International's Asia economist, the *South China Morning Post* reported.

Liu said manufacturing has become a pillar of the next phase of development. China is one of the world's biggest manufacturing hubs, with its value-added "contributing to close to 30 percent of the global outlook."

This is reflected by the robust export performance of the "new three" — electric vehicles, lithium batteries and solar cells. They have emerged as the new engines for growth and exports, accounting for 4.5 percent of the country's total exports, according to the General Administration of Customs.

Consumption is still the main engine of economic growth. Retail sales of consumer goods grew 7.2 percent, setting a new record of 47.15 trillion RMB, according to the NBS. Final consumption contributed 82.5 percent of overall GDP growth.

"It is expected that consumption will maintain a steady growth trend in 2024," said Xu Hongcai, deputy director at the China Association of Policy Science's Economic Policy Commission. International exchanges including international tourism are likely to increase significantly, which can increase overseas business travel and international trade opportunities and is conducive to expanding exports and creating jobs, Xu added.

This year, the path to world economic recovery is bound to be uneven with geopolitical uncertainties and raging conflicts in some parts of the world. Nevertheless, China will seek new drivers of growth through sci-tech innovation, transformation and upgrading. It will continue to increase investment in the digital economy, artificial intelligence and green technology, while ensuring its policies to stabilize growth, thus providing more certainty and stability to the world.



A train attendant during the Spring Festival travel rush. (PHOTO: XINHUA)

Smart Robots: Good Helper for Travel Rush

Hi! Tech

By QI Liming

In the "great population migration" of the 2024 Spring Festival travel rush, the intelligent robot is indispensable. In recent years, more and more robots have appeared in airports and railway stations to provide passengers with high-quality services and make their travel experi-

ence as comfortable and convenient as possible.

Intelligent service robots for passenger transport have been put into use at some stations along the Beijing-Zhangjiakou high-speed line. The robot not only provides services such as station navigation and checking train arrival and departure times, but also helps passengers carry large heavy luggage.

The intelligent service robot has a closed storage box and can transport

luggage weighing up to about 100 kg for passengers. After putting the luggage in the storage box, passengers can scan a QR code or use face recognition, then the robot carrying the luggage will follow the passenger while in the station. Passengers can also let the robot "lead the way" to the designated ticket gate.

The robot "coworkers" are not only ubiquitous in the waiting hall, but also in the high-speed rail commodity warehouse. Intelligent goods distribu-

tion robots dramatically improve the efficiency of warehousing. They can move and carry specified goods in a planned route.

After all the goods in the warehouse are entered into the system by batch, each batch will generate a different serial number. The goods distribution robot can accurately find goods according to the serial number, and shorten any backlog time, significantly improving the efficiency of high-speed rail goods distribution.

Spring Festival Brings Joy to the World

By Staff Reporters

The Lunar New Year, or Spring Festival, is the oldest and the most important traditional festival in Chinese culture. It's a time for family reunion and new year festivities, which is now celebrated not only in China but also around the world.

On December 22, 2023 (local time), the 78th UN General Assembly adopted a resolution by consensus to officially list the Spring Festival as a UN floating holiday from 2024, which means it will be celebrated at the UN too.

It is estimated that the Lunar New Year is a public holiday in almost 20 countries and is celebrated in various ways by about one-fifth of humanity. Traditional Lunar New Year activities

are organized in nearly 200 countries and regions. The festival has become a global cultural event, bringing joy to people around the world.

Many Asian countries such as Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Thailand set up public holidays during the Spring Festival.

In Malaysia and Singapore, the eating of yusheng/ye sang (raw fish salad) is one peculiar custom. Made with different vegetables, salmon, dumpling wrappers and seasoned with hoisin sauce and other condiments, the salad is delicious, but it is also part of a ritual that families love. The salad is placed on the middle of the table and everyone is supposed to use chopsticks to toss it up in the air to attract good fortune.

Meanwhile, in the U.S., UK, Japan

and other countries, Chinese communities will hold various forms of celebration, attracting many residents to participate.

In London, the Celebration of the Lunar New Year will be held on February 11, in Trafalgar Square, Chinatown and other landmarks, where there will be activities including lion and dragon dances, parade floats, performances, and food stalls. It is expected to attract over 700,000 overseas Chinese in the UK, students, rep-

resentatives from Chinese and British organizations, as well as the British public and tourists from all over the world.



The Chinese Embassy in Laos hosts Lunar New Year reception for overseas Chinese on February 1. (PHOTO: XINHUA)

Bringing Mangrove Forests Back to Life

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Lu Changyi's leadership in the construction of the Xiatanwei mangrove forest faced resistance from local villagers, who were concerned that the construction of the mangrove forest would affect their income and livelihoods.

These fishermen's resistance was not malicious, but stemmed from a lack of understanding of the value of mangroves.

In the eyes of researchers, mangroves are breeding and habitat grounds for various fish species, and building mangrove forests means protecting fishery resources. In the long run, mangroves can provide fishermen with a more stable and sustainable income.

Additionally, as a unique ecosystem, mangroves have high aesthetic value, which is significant for improving the local environment and developing ecotourism.

To address this, Lu volunteered to raise awareness among the locals. Carrying a prepared film projector, he would find a wall in the village and borrow a bedsheet as a makeshift screen.

When villagers came out to cool off in the evenings, he would promote the benefits of mangroves to them. The local villagers have finally changed their minds through these efforts.

Public awareness raised

In August 2020, the Ministry of Natural Resources and the National Forestry and Grassland Administration jointly issued an action plan, stating that by 2025, efforts will be made to create and restore 18,800 hectares of mangroves. It is estimated that China's mangrove area will reach 36,000 hectares by 2025.

Wang Wenqing, director of the Mangrove Ecology Professional Committee at the Ecological Society of China, said that he was pleased to see that most of the suggestions and opinions that have been proposed by many experts were adopted.

"The action plan sets a target of 18,800 hectares of new mangrove areas, with the restoration area of degraded forests reaching 9,750 hectares, which exceeds the afforestation area. This is a positive shift," said Wang. The implementation of this plan marks a transition in China's mangrove conservation efforts from focusing solely on increasing mangrove areas to enhancing the structure and function of mangrove wetland ecosystems.

"China's scientific research achievements in mangroves rank among the top in the world. Four out of the top five institutions, in terms of the number of mangrove papers published globally each year, are from China," said Wang.