

INSIGHTS

'Ice City' Harbin Lifts Optimism in China's Economy

Voice of the World

Edited by TANG Zhexiao

After "southern little potatoes" — "Ice City" Harbin's affectionate nickname for visitors from the warm southern cities — went viral on domestic social media, the capital of Heilongjiang province in China's cold northeast became an Internet celebrity city at the beginning of 2024.

When the annual International Ice and Snow Festival kicked off in Harbin on January 5, it added steam to the city's burgeoning ice and snow tourism.

Frozen in real life

Dubbed "Ice City", "Oriental Moscow" and "Oriental Paris", Harbin has built its landmark theme park, the Harbin Ice and Snow World, this year with 250,000 cubic meters of ice.

The park's ice sculptures such as bridges, fairy-tale castles and towers are built from ice blocks from the frozen Songhua River nearby. When it gets warmer, they melt and flow back into the river without any pollution.

The park also uses an advanced inflatable membrane construction technology, which is green and environmentally friendly, and has good fire resistance and strong thermal insulation.

This incredible ice city in China is "raising the brrrrr for a tourist attraction," the *Daily Mail* wrote.

Harbin tourism in vogue

Pakistan's Samaa TV reported that Harbin's ice and snow festival has bro-



Visitors have fun at the Ice and Snow World in Harbin, northeast China's Heilongjiang province, January 5, 2024. (PHOTO: XINHUA)

ken records and the ice city experienced a tourism boom over the New Year.

The festival has become a winter wonderland illuminated by vibrant lights at night, said Geo TV, another Pakistan-based TV station, adding: "The festival's success marks a crucial revival for Harbin's 'ice and snow' economy, with this year's winter proving to be a pivotal season for the city's tourism industry."

The Harbin Ice and Snow World has also successfully made it to the Guinness World Records as the largest ice and snow-themed amusement park.

According to their official statement, "The largest ice and snow theme park (temporary) measures 816,682.50 square meters and was achieved by Harbin Ice and Snow World (China) in Harbin, Hei-

longjiang, China, on December 31, 2023."

India's private TV station NDTV said this icy wonderland "features more than 2,000 carefully made ice and snow sculptures that capture the imagination of those who visit. The park's greatness is highlighted by the fact that it took a huge team of over 10,000 builders working hard for over a month to create this icy spectacle."

Besides infrastructure, Harbin's authorities have improved the city's accommodation and are holding a variety of activities including live performances, fireworks displays, and parades by ethnic minorities in their colorful traditional clothes to enhance the tourist experience.

Ice and snow economy surges
Heilongjiang's Culture and Tourism

Department called Harbin's tourist boom an "ice and snow miracle." Official data shows that in the three-day New Year holiday, Harbin attracted a record number of more than three million tourists, and achieved a total tourism income of 5.9 billion RMB (824.5 million USD), another record high.

"The tourism boom occurred as China's services activity expanded at the fastest pace in five months in December, lifting optimism in the sector to a three-month high," Reuters reported.

Over the years, Harbin has been discovering new economic growth in cold resources and developing the industrial chain of its ice and snow economy.

The winter season is always a peak tourist period in northeastern China. Especially after the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, according to *South China Morning Post*, "domestic ice and snow tourism has experienced an incredible surge."

Harbin has a unique geographical location that enables it to have a five-month ice and snow carnival. Here, ice and snow are a natural resource, cultural symbol, economic power and innovation engine, PR Newswire commented. According to data from the culture and tourism department, the scale of Harbin's ice and snow economy exceeded 70 billion RMB (9.8 billion USD) from 2022 to 2023.

As the ice and snow economy achieves a breakthrough and sustains it, Harbin's success in turning natural resources into economic gain provides a good lesson to promote the revitalization of not only northeast China in the new era, but other places in East Asia as well.

Comment

Roll Booster for Global IP Progress

By Staff Reporters

This year marks the 30th anniversary of China's entry into the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT). China has been top-ranked in international patent applications through the PCT for four consecutive years, confirming its place as one of the world's leading countries in the area of IP and innovation.

Meanwhile, according to the Global Innovation Index 2023, a report issued by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), China overtook the U.S. for the first time to top the list of countries with the highest number of science and technology clusters among the top 100.

China has 24 such clusters, while the U.S. follows with 21 and Germany ranks third with nine, according to the WIPO report. It also showed that the highest climbers in the ranking last year were three clusters in China. Shen Changyu, commissioner of China National Intellectual Property Administration, said, "Over the past year, China's international cooperation in intellectual property deepened and expanded, and its role in serving high-level opening-up became increasingly prominent."

In the past three decades since China became a member of the PCT, China has actively participated in the revision and improvement of the PCT and concerned international rules, improved its own legal system on IP, and engaged in productive cooperation with WIPO.

IP protection serves as a major pillar for innovative development. Building on its rich reservoir of patent technologies, China has enhanced the quality and efficiency of its work on IP to unleash creativity at a faster pace. Currently, China has filed 126,400 global patent applications for solar panels, ranking first in the world. Top 10 NEV makers in China by sales have over 100,000 global patents in force, leading the green and low-carbon sector and providing a strong impetus for global sustainable development.

China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Wang Wenbin, said at the regular press conference on January 3, "China attaches high importance to international patent cooperation and intellectual property protection." China has expanded opening up in IP protection and fostered a world-class business environment that is market-oriented, law-based, and internationalized. This has resulted in more and more foreign applicants are looking to do business and plan their patent layout in China.

Over the past decade or so, applicants from 115 Belt and Road partner countries filed applications for 253,000 patents in China, an annual increase of 5.4 percent. As of the end of 2022, a total of 861,000 invention patents were in force for overseas applicants in China, a year-on-year increase of 4.5 percent. This speaks to the foreign-funded companies' recognition towards China's effort in IP protection.

Shen said China has taken an active part in international IP cooperation last year, and its IP progress has been recognized by the WIPO. The commercialization of IP achievements were also accelerated, with optimization of IP-related public services, which provided stronger support for industrial development and rewarded innovators.

"Specific rules for better implementation of the Trademark Law are expected to be amended, and the review standards for new fields and emerging businesses, including big data, artificial intelligence and gene technology, will be improved," he added.

Looking forward, China will continue to uphold the principle of openness, inclusiveness, balance and benefits for all, strengthen exchanges and cooperation on IP with all countries, and advance a fairer and more just global governance on IP to deliver more benefits of innovation to people around the world, and build a community with a shared future for mankind.

Efforts to Suppress Chinese Students Damage U.S. Image

Opinion

By GONG Qian

Florida's public universities are prohibited from hiring Chinese graduate students and postdocs to work in their labs due to a new state law, Science website reported.

Several Chinese students holding valid visa have recently claimed that they suffered lengthy interrogation upon entering the U.S. border. Some of them saw their visa revoked and were even slapped with a five-year ban from entering the U.S. None of them were told why their visa applications were rejected.

Such bullying goes against the two presidents' agreement in San Francisco on education cooperation, encouraging the expansion of student and youth exchanges. The U.S. should act on its commitment and stop its selective, discriminatory and politically motivated law enforcement in the name of national security.

al security.

The unjust act of blocking Chinese students from U.S. universities can be described as the "afterquakes" of the unjust Executive Order 10,043 by former President Trump in 2020, which prohibits the entry of or issuance of visas to Chinese students enrolled in graduate-level programs in the U.S. if Washington deems that they have ties with China's "military-civil" universities. But the list of such universities has not been made public yet, which makes the presidential executive order seem all the more arbitrary.

Since then, the proclamation has been casting a shadow over China-U.S. academic exchange. Some American politicians have suggested widening bans on Chinese students, and the *New York Times*, quoting a Pew Research Center survey, reported that many Americans back limiting the number of Chinese students in the U.S.

The unfavorable policy and unwelcoming environment have led to a decrease in the number of Chinese students studying in the U.S. However, the

U.S. does not seem to realize that it is risking losing a valuable talent pool which has made financial and scientific contributions to U.S. universities and indeed, the whole country.

"My colleagues in STEM disciplines have felt the drastic decline of the applications from top Chinese universities, hindering their research productivity. Moreover, this has also influenced undergraduate education as these students often take on teaching and research assistant roles," Professor Ma Yingyi at Syracuse University wrote in an article published on the website of U.S. think tank Brookings Institution.

Jack Corrigan, a research analyst at Georgetown University's Center for Security and Emerging Technology, pointed out that U.S. science and technology education and innovation heavily depend on foreign STEM talents staying in the U.S. after earning their degrees.

In a report published in 2022, Corrigan and his colleagues found that over three-quarters of the roughly 180,000 foreign nationals who earned STEM Ph.D.

between 2000 and 2015 were still living in the U.S. in early 2017. Among them, 31 percent of those were from China.

Between 2010 and 2021, the number of Chinese scientists leaving the United States increased steadily, according to a research article published by PNAS, a peer reviewed journal of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences.

"It's absolutely devastating," said David Bier, associate director of immigration studies at the Cato Institute, a think tank based in Washington, D.C. So many of the researchers that the United States depends on in the field of advanced technology are from China, or are foreign students, and this phenomenon will certainly have a negative impact on U.S. companies and research in the future, said Bier.

Since the U.S. portrays itself as open, inclusive and a heaven for academic freedom, it should take concrete steps to support and facilitate people-to-people exchanges and cross-border travel as it has promised, in order to live up to that image.



Bing Dwen Dwen, the mascot of the Beijing Winter Olympics, unveiled a special version of the Year of the Dragon called "Long Dwen Dwen", which was officially on sell on December 7, 2023. (PHOTO: XINHUA)

British Businesses Positive About Their Investment in China

Research Box

The British Business in China: Sentiment Survey 2023-24 captures the perspective and needs of British businesses operating on the ground across the Chinese mainland.

For almost two-thirds of companies, projected revenues for this year have either increased (45%, up 12%) or remained on par with last year.

In keeping with last year, the majority of British businesses expect to either maintain (42%) or increase (35%) their investment in their Chinese mainland operations next year.

Government-industry dialogue: British businesses are positive about

China's push to attract foreign investment, which has seen increased communication with businesses and trade bodies alongside the 24 Point Guidelines for Attracting Foreign Investment which covers many regulatory challenges raised in previous editions of the Sentiment Survey.

R&D opportunities for British business in China: Interest has been identified in R&D in areas such as sustainability, AI and technological advancement, with many companies encouraged by China's growth objectives in such sectors.

— *The British Business in China: Sentiment Survey 2023-24, British Chamber of Commerce in China, 12-12-2023.*

Smart Tool Processes Ancient Book Language

Hi! Tech

By TANG Zhexiao

A smart language tool for processing and research of ancient books was launched recently, making it easier to read and understand difficult ancient Chinese language.

The tool named after Xunzi, a renowned Chinese philosopher, is a language model which has collected a corpus of more than two billion words, including the "Siku Quanshu," also known as "Complete Library in the Four Branches of Literature." It can perform func-

tions such as natural language understanding, automatic translation, poetry generation, and automatic indexing.

Thanks to its high-quality data and super computability, users can understand ancient texts without punctuation and translate the ancient expressions into modern Chinese language.

Currently, the tool is available as an open source and public welfare research result on GitHub, ModelScope and other websites.

Besides providing convenience for readers of ancient books and researchers, the "Xunzi" language model will be applied to AI writing and teaching, digital entertainment and other fields in the future, according to researchers.



Schematic diagram of the ancient language processing model "Xunzi". (PHOTO: College of Information Management of Nanjing Agricultural University)