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Leaders' visits give ties fresh momentum

Policy consistency reassures global community amid rising unilateralism

By ZHANG YUNBI  
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In the new year, leaders of nations in Asia, Europe and North America have traveled to China to discuss reinforcing bilateral ties and expanding pragmatic cooperation, and countries such as Finland have confirmed or planned visits to China by their leaders in the near future.

Observers said one major reason behind the visits is that Beijing projects great predictability and consistency in its domestic and foreign policy, signaling tangible and continued mutual benefit in a world plagued by soaring geopolitical tensions, unilateralism and hegemony.

The next guest will be Finnish Prime Minister Petteri Orpo, who is scheduled to make a four-day official visit to China starting on Sunday.

The first head of state and the first foreign minister that Beijing received in 2026 both came from neighboring countries — Republic of Korea President Lee Jae-myung and Pakistani Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar.

After President Xi Jinping's meeting with Lee on Jan 5, the two heads of state jointly witnessed the signing of 15 cooperation documents covering fields including scientific and technological innovation, the environment, transportation and trade.

The official visit by Taoiseach of Ireland Micheal Martin, from Jan 4-8, was the first by an Irish prime minister in 14 years, giving fresh momentum to both bilateral and China-EU ties.

Last week, Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney made an official visit to China, and the two sides issued a joint statement of the China-Canada leaders' meeting, vowing to advance outcomes in areas including trade, energy, public security, culture and multilateralism.

As reported by the Canadian newspaper Toronto Sun, Melanie Joly, Canada's industry minister,

told reporters in Beijing that "the conversations here have been more predictable and stable than sometimes with other countries, including our neighbor".

Recently, media outlets in Britain and Germany have reported that British Prime Minister Keir Starmer and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz may visit China later this year.

The visits to China have helped nations, and will help more countries, improve their perception of China and rediscover the vast potential of the Chinese market, experts said.

Vice-Foreign Minister Sun Weidong told a symposium on Monday that this year marks the first year of China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period and that China "will further step up its high-level opening-up".

Wang Huiyao, president of the Beijing-based Center for China and Globalization, said the visits to China took place as unilateral bullying practices "have sparked widespread concern in the international community", and "the momentum of unilateralism is on the rise in transatlantic relations".

Taking Canada as an example, Wang said the rebound in China-Canada relations "is both a testament to the strategic wisdom of both sides and a natural choice that aligns with public opinion and market realities".

Gao Fei, president of China Foreign Affairs University, said countries clearly know who are serving as stabilizers in this volatile world, and "China is the most predictable one among the major countries".

As many countries speak positively of China's role in peace, stability and growth, some of their leaders visited in the new year to learn more about China's wisdom and solutions, he added.

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Taste of Chinese New Year



Visitors take photos on Thursday of exquisitely crafted multilayered buns resembling blooming flowers at the China Intangible Cultural Heritage Museum in Beijing. As part of an ongoing exhibition themed on Spring Festival, the displayed buns, or *huamo*, are an intangible cultural heritage item that originated in northern China and are usually made for major events, including festive celebrations. Hundreds of intangible cultural heritage items are on display at the exhibition, which runs until March 20, allowing visitors to immersively experience the cultural charm of the Chinese New Year. GUO JUNFENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Ancient pressure cooker making a stir

By ZHANG YU in Shijiazhuang  
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The pressure cooker is a modern kitchen marvel that slashes cooking times for favorite stews. But the technology was developed in China more than 2,000 years ago — and it was a lot cuter back then, because the pot had feet.

Recently, an ancient artifact — the Tripod with Bear-Shaped Feet — at the Hebei Museum in Shijiazhuang, the capital of Hebei province, has taken social media by storm. Unearthed in 1968 from the tomb of Liu Sheng, a prince of the Western Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 24), the ancient pressure cooker with feet stands a modest 18.1 centimeters tall, but it carries a legacy of ingenuity. Its sealed design sped up cooking and made food more tender.

When visitors view it through glass at the museum, the first thing that catches the eye is its three feet — chubby little bears in a cheerful squat, wide-eyed and grinning, their finely detailed fur patterns still visible.

The feet don't just add cuteness. Experts said that during the Han Dynasty, bears symbolized good fortune.

But the real genius lies in the lid. The tripod has two handles, each with a flip-down animal-shaped latch. The lid itself is crowned with four standing animal figures.

After putting the lid on, the cook would simply flip the latches down and give a slight twist. Then, click! The latches locked under the figures, creating a remarkably tight seal.

"The design is truly ingenious,"



**Top:** The Tripod with Bear-Shaped Feet at the Hebei Museum  
**Above:** A modern stainless steel pressure cooker  
PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

said Chen Jianli, from Peking University's School of Archaeology and Museology, during a recent program on China Central Television.

The tight fit, aided by raised patterns on the rim and lid, significantly reduced the escape of steam, thereby raising the pot's internal pressure, which cooked food faster.

The method still works. Chen mentioned tests conducted by researchers with a replica pressure pot. Chicken pieces inside became deliciously tender after just half an hour of cooking.

The pressure method not only saved time for Han Dynasty cooks,

but, in an era when culinary choices were expanding, likely helped preserve the flavors of precious ingredients, he said.

The innovation was centuries ahead of its Western counterpart. It wasn't until the late 1600s that French physicist Denis Papin invented a "steam digester" — some 1,700 years after China's version.

"Its innovative spirit is undeniable," said Chen Jing, a researcher at the Hebei Museum. "The ancient designers created this locking structure similar to a modern pressure cooker. Its clever scientific design is truly admirable."

Fabricating the pressure cooker demanded exceptional bronze-casting skill, a testament to the advanced craftsmanship of the era, she added.

"The tripod connects ancient ingenuity to modern life, and it reminds us that some clever ideas are truly timeless," Chen said.

Netizens have gone crazy over the relic. "Please share a purchase link," one wrote in a post on Sina Weibo. "This is much cuter than my pressure cooker at home."

Another marveled: "It seems we're just using what our ancestors perfected long ago."

All that's needed now is bear-shaped feet.

Zhao Rixi in Shijiazhuang contributed to this story.



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Panelists: China, US lean toward practical risk control

By ZHAO HUANXIN in Washington  
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After last year's economic measures and countermeasures, the United States and China are leaning toward practical risk management, strengthening communication channels and crisis guardrails to keep frictions over trade, technology and other flashpoints from escalating, experts said on Wednesday in Davos, Switzerland.

They made the remarks at a panel discussion on the topic "US and China: Where Will They Land?" held as part of the ongoing World Economic Forum annual meeting.

Graham Allison, the Douglas Dillon professor of government at Harvard University, who coined the term "Thucydides Trap" — a situation in which a rising power sparks fear in an established power, which escalates toward war — cautioned that any near-term easing in US-China tensions should not be seen as a permanent settlement.

"A landing point, as if we had a permanent place to land, is not likely," he said.

Last year, the US launched a series of economic sanctions on China, imposing steep tariffs on Chinese goods and adopting measures to block Chinese products and investments. China was compelled to take countermeasures, and a truce was reached only after five rounds of high-level economic and trade negotiations.

Looking ahead to 2026, Allison said that the US-China relationship is shaped by "mutual deterrence", as both sides have demonstrated the ability to inflict "significant harm" on each other, noting that this awareness could have a stabilizing effect.

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In the spotlight



Unitree G1 robotic humanoid models and a Unitree Go2-W wheeled robot (right) walk along a street in Davos, Switzerland, on Wednesday, during the World Economic Forum annual meeting, attracting the attention of passersby. The WEF is taking place in Davos from Monday to Friday. INA FASSBENDER / AFP **See story, page 13**

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