

News on China | No. 32



About 10 min read.



Geopolitics

China, ASEAN Aim to Seal South China Sea Code of Conduct in 2026, Rejecting Bloc Confrontation

On 23 July, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi attended a ministerial meeting with Southeast Asian counterparts on the sidelines of the 59th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in Pasay, the Philippines. As China-ASEAN trade surpassed US\$1 trillion in 2025, Wang called for accelerating the Free Trade Area 3.0, implementing the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) at a high standard, and strengthening regional food, energy and supply-chain security. He also urged countries to reject external interference and bloc confrontation. Participants reaffirmed their goal of concluding the South China Sea Code of Conduct in 2026 and adopted a joint statement on the regional impact of the Middle East situation and energy cooperation.

Read More:

- CGTN, 23 July 2026
- Global Times, 23 July 2026

Thailand and China Pledge to Expedite High-Speed Railway Extending China-Laos Line to Bangkok

Thai Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul visited China from 16 to 20 July, where he met with President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang, reaffirming the countries' comprehensive strategic partnership. During the visit, the two sides signed 15 cooperation agreements and memorandums covering trade, investment, education, technology, security and sustainable development. They also pledged to accelerate Phase 1 and launch Phase 2 of the Thailand-China high-speed railway, a flagship Belt and Road Initiative project extending the China-Laos Railway to Bangkok. Since opening in 2021, the China-Laos line has contributed to average annual GDP growth of around 4% and indirectly created 120,000 jobs.

Read More:

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, 20 July 2026
- Mekong Institute, 19 August 2025

China Accuses Philippine Vessel of Provoking South China Sea Clash, Urges Dialogue

China said the Philippines had taken provocative actions near Ren'ai Jiao in the South China Sea on 20 July, following a maritime incident involving the two countries. Beijing urged Manila to resolve disputes through dialogue and negotiation between directly concerned parties. China's Coast Guard said Philippine personnel harassed a Chinese patrol vessel after ignoring repeated warnings, while Beijing lodged serious diplomatic protests. Ahead of the ASEAN foreign ministers' meeting in Manila, China also warned against external interference and said the July 2024 provisional resupply arrangement regarding Ren'ai Jiao remains unchanged.

Read More:

- China Daily, 20 July 2026
- CGTN, 20 July 2026



National Politics

Beijing Unveils 19 Domestic Services Measures, Expanding Social Insurance for Flexible Workers

Issued by the Ministry of Commerce and eight other departments on 20 July, the package pairs vocational training and credit verification with improved social insurance coverage for domestic workers in flexible employment, after China's per-order, platform-funded occupational injury scheme, covering nearly 30 million

workers, went nationwide to all 31 provincial-level regions on 1 July – a state-led extension of social protection to more than 200 million flexibly employed people, offering direct reference points for Global South platform-economy labour debates.

Read More:

- Xinhua, 20 July 2026
- Sixth Tone, 6 July 2026

China Begins New Round of Grassroots People's Congress Elections with Over 1 Billion Voters

Around 95 percent of China's more than 2.77 million lawmakers sit in county- and township-level legislatures, chosen directly on a one-person-one-vote basis, and during a 15–17 July tour of Gansu – taking in grassroots legislative outreach platforms – the chairman of the National People's Congress Standing Committee instructed local authorities to conduct the coming elections in an orderly, law-based manner in line with Communist Party of China Central Committee arrangements, after the latest round drew over 1 billion voters.

Read More:

- Xinhua, 17 July 2026
- China Economic Net, 8 March 2025



Economy

Equipment Manufacturing Drives Nearly 50% of China's Industrial Export Growth in H1 2026

Overseas sales of wind turbine generators and lithium batteries rose 35.6% and 37.6% year-on-year in the first half of 2026, while automobile exports reached 5.096 million units (up 65.3%), the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology reported on 20 July, with Chinese shipyards capturing 1,131 of the 1,481 vessels ordered worldwide in the period – about 72% of the global market, according to Clarksons data.

Read More:

- Xinhua, 20 July 2026
- The Maritime Executive, 8 July 2026

C919 Jetliner Built with China's Own Intellectual Property Makes Its International Debut

From 12 August 2026, Air China will fly a daily Beijing–Ulaanbaatar round trip with the homegrown trunkliner that rolled off the assembly line in 2015, won type certification in 2022 and has logged more than 42,000 commercial flights, while Washington's suspension of engine sales from May to July 2025 – exposing

the programme's remaining reliance on overseas suppliers – underscores why propulsion is the next frontier of the aircraft's technology self-reliance drive.

Read More:

- Global Times, 18 July 2026
- The Straits Times via Asia News Network, 5 January 2026



Agriculture and Environment

Xinjiang First-Half Green Power Trading Hits Record 15.92 Billion kWh, Nearly Double 2025 Total

Weekly market openings, multi-level contracts and east-west time-difference matching that aligns exports with daytime demand in Jilin, Jiangsu and Zhejiang lifted trades within the region by 412% year-on-year to 9.98 billion kWh and cross-provincial deals by 41% to 5.94 billion kWh in January–June, backed by 173 million kilowatts of new energy capacity – over 60% of the regional total – as compulsory green-certificate purchases announced in March 2025 require energy-intensive industries to match China's renewable share of about 35% by 2030.

Read More:

- Xinhua, 11 July 2026
- Eco-Business, 25 June 2025

China's Concentrated Solar Power Climbs to 2.1 GW, Second Worldwide Behind Only Spain

Mirror-based plants that capture sunlight as storable heat, delivering stable, dispatchable electricity, now number 24 in operation with 26 more totalling 3.2 gigawatts under construction, the China Electricity Council announced on 16 July, crediting over 95 percent equipment localisation and construction costs halved in a decade to 15,000 yuan (US \$2,200) per kilowatt – a state-led drive towards 15 gigawatts by 2030 under a December 2025 roadmap targeting generation costs on par with coal-fired power.

Read More:

- Xinhua, 16 July 2026
- SolarPACES, 31 December 2025



Science and Technology

Quantum Technology Pioneer Pan Jianwei Becomes First Chinese

Winner of UNESCO Mendeleev Prize

A Paris ceremony on 17 July 2026 honoured the University of Science and Technology of China physicist whose team launched the world's first quantum satellite in 2016, the UNESCO citation crediting quantum key distribution and teleportation over thousands of kilometres, alongside demonstrated quantum computational advantage, with bringing 'the prospect of a global quantum network from theory to reality'.

Read More:

- South China Morning Post, 13 July 2026
- UNESCO, 17 July 2026

China Takes Digital Sovereignty Case for the Global South to UN's First Permanent Cyber Forum

A new index from Tricontinental researchers, decomposing command over data, infrastructure, governance and capability into four dimensions and sixteen indicators, scores BRICS members from China's 4.25 down to South Africa's 1.94 – quantifying the structural dependence that China's position paper to the new UN cyber mechanism's first session (20–24 July) addresses by asserting every country's right to choose its own digital and AI development path without being forced to take sides.

Read More:

- Tricontinental, 3 July 2026
- Global Times, 22 July 2026



People's Life and Culture

Minors Protection Campaign Takes Aim at 'Toxic AI Cartoons' as China's AI Rulebook Expands

With artificial intelligence (AI) letting anyone splice gory or vulgar scenes into children's animation within minutes and spread them in bulk at low cost, the Cyberspace Administration of China opened a four-month, two-stage operation shielding minors from malicious cartoon parodies, grotesque mass-produced AI clips and vulgar chatbot personas, complementing a parallel rectification drive that has removed more than 14,000 non-compliant AI products and handled over 26,000 offending accounts since April to steer the industry toward orderly development.

Read More:

- Global Times, 20 July 2026
- Cyberspace Administration of China, 6 July 2026

Childcare Subsidies Reach 25.16 Million Children as Life Expectancy

Hits Record 79.25 Years

Introduced in 2025 as part of efforts to build a 'birth-friendly society' – now a key focus of the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-2030) – the monthly payments of 300 yuan (US \$44.17) per child under age three accompany birth numbers rising in 2024 for the first time since 2017 amid nationwide birth-support efforts, while average longevity has climbed 3.85 years since 2012, wellbeing gains central to Beijing's goal of stabilising newborn numbers and long-term balanced population development.

Read More:

- **Xinhua, 21 July 2026**
- **China Daily, 21 July 2026**