

INSIGHTS

Absurdity! Blaming Northvolt's Collapse on China

Clear Voice 

By LIANG Yilian & HU Dingkun

Recently, some Swedish media outlets have claimed that untested Chinese-made machinery was responsible for the bankruptcy of the country's well-known battery maker Northvolt. In response, a spokesperson for the Chinese Embassy in Sweden said that attributing Northvolt's bankruptcy to a Chinese equipment supplier is baseless, completely untenable, and a typical case of scapegoating and shifting blame.

Northvolt traces its origins to 2015, when former Tesla executives founded SGF Energy to develop batteries for electric vehicles. In 2017, it was renamed Northvolt. Over the following years, it raised more than 15 billion USD in funding, secured 50 billion USD in orders, and announced plans to build six gigafactories across Europe and North America. Its rise was meteoric, and its fall abrupt. In November 2024 and March 2025, Northvolt filed for bankruptcy protection in the United States and Sweden, respectively.

Rumors linking Northvolt's collapse to Chinese machinery first surfaced in September 2024. Lars Wilderäng, a best-selling Swedish author, alleged in his personal blog that the lithium-ion battery production equipment supplied by the Chinese company Wuxi Lead Intelligent Equipment suffered from major defects and had effectively "brought Northvolt down." Wilderäng even speculated that Chinese firms had deliberately sabotaged Northvolt in order to acquire it after bankruptcy. Such conjecture, it must be said, aligns more with his professional background as a science-fiction novelist than with industrial reality.

Even a basic application of common sense shows how implausible it is to attribute Northvolt's failure to Chinese equip-



The road to Northvolt's stalled battery plant in Heide, Schleswig-Holstein, Germany, October 2025. (PHOTO: VCG)

ment suppliers. Wuxi Lead Intelligent Equipment is a global leader in new-energy manufacturing equipment. In 2024, its orders accounted for 22.4 percent of the global market, with certain products holding a market share exceeding 65 percent worldwide. All equipment exported to the European Union strictly complies with international standards and has passed CE certification by independent third-party agencies, fully meeting EU safety and technical requirements. Claims of "untested" machinery or "technical defects" therefore simply have no validity.

Wuxi Lead Intelligent Equipment's equipment is sold across multiple countries and regions, and has long served leading new-energy companies in Germany, France, Hungary, and beyond. It maintains long-term partnerships with nearly all major global battery manufacturers, including CATL, BYD, Tesla, and Samsung SDI. Additionally, its production lines operate stably worldwide, recognized by international markets.

Notably, a Northvolt engineer with the username "circuspabygget" wrote on the U.S.-based forum Reddit that there was no evidence of deliberate sabotage, calling Wilderäng's claims pure conspiracy theory. In his view, the primary cause of Northvolt's collapse was poor decision-making by management, especially the persistent expansion projects made despite output falling far below expectations.

The facts support this assessment. From its inception, Northvolt devoted enormous energy to media promotion, fundraising, and aggressive expansion, while failing to establish even the most basic manufacturing capabilities. Manufacturing performance relies on far more than machinery alone. According to an investigation by Swedish newspaper *Norran*, Northvolt's production lines were plagued by management chaos and chronic inefficiency. Insiders also revealed that up to 80 percent of its products failed to meet quality standards, largely due to fundamentally flawed process design.

The resulting soaring costs and revenue losses were inevitable. As financing dried up, the company collapsed. Statistics show that between January and September 2023, Northvolt lost over 100 million USD per month, yet delivered only 79.8 megawatt-hours of batteries — less than 0.5 percent of its planned 2024 capacity.

In fact, Northvolt's fate was clear from the very beginning. According to *The Aleph Report*, a European technology news outlet, for a company claiming to revolutionize green energy cells, Northvolt's leadership team had no actual experience in this field. Not a single senior executive had built a battery factory before, let alone a competitive cell manufacturing business.

This raises an obvious question: how did a company with no expertise secure tens of billions of dollars in funding? Here, too, the "China factor" played a role. Northvolt consistently promoted its mission as helping Europe achieve battery self-sufficiency and reduce reliance on China. By politicizing industrial development, it successfully attracted backing from several European governments and investment institutions.

The irony is striking. A company that championed independence from China in fact imported large quantities of machinery and raw materials from China — only to have some media outlets then blame its collapse on Chinese equipment.

Northvolt's bankruptcy has inflicted heavy losses on investors and dealt a serious blow to the development of Europe's new-energy industry. Sweden can draw lessons from this fiasco, abandon protectionist and one-sided thinking, and stop spreading misinformation. Only by adopting a rational and pragmatic approach can China and Sweden advance mutually beneficial cooperation in the new-energy sector and jointly safeguard the stability and smooth functioning of global industrial and supply chains.

Voice of the World

China Moves Ahead in Humanoid Robotics

By Staff Reporters

During the annual Spring Festival Gala this year, one of the most-watched television programs in the world, humanoid robots captivated audiences with performances that included synchronized martial arts, acrobatics and cultural choreography.

Robots manufactured by domestic companies such as Unitree Robotics, Galbot, Noetix and MagicLab executed complex moves alongside human performers.

According to Al Jazeera, the performance showcased China's rapid progress in humanoid robotics, a field whose long-term potential is seen primarily in industrial and agricultural applications.

"People should absolutely be taking these robots seriously," Reyk Knudtsen, an analyst at SemiAnalysis, told CNBC. "After this Spring Festival Gala demonstration, they're becoming visibly more lean, fluid, and capable."

In an online CNBC report, Sam Altman, CEO of the U.S.-based OpenAI, described the progress of Chinese technology companies as "remarkable" and "amazingly fast" across many fields, including AI and robotics, speaking about competition in emerging technologies.

Altman said Chinese firms are advancing quickly and in some areas are "near the frontier" of innovation.

These comments come amid intense global competition to develop general AI and integrate advanced AI into industry, services, and national infrastructure.

According to research firm Omdia, China accounted for about 90 percent of

global humanoid robot shipments in 2025 and Morgan Stanley projects that China's humanoid sales will more than double to 28,000 units this year. This indicates that China will continue to dominate this sector worldwide.

Scholars say China's advantages in hardware supply chains, application scenarios, and policy support make it well prepared for a new wave of technological revolution represented by embodied intelligence.

"The fundamental advantage that China has is a nearly vertically integrated robotics value chain: from the rare earths and high-performance magnets to the physical components, and the batteries," Zornitsa Todorova, head of thematic FICC research at Barclays, told CNBC.

As Chinese manufacturers push technological boundaries, the government is promoting frameworks for global AI governance, advocating international cooperation on safe and ethical deployment of AI.

China has put forward initiatives such as the Global Artificial Intelligence Governance Initiative and proposals for international AI cooperation organizations to develop global norms around the technology.

A recent editorial in *Nature* said that an AI arms race will not guarantee greater safety or prosperity for people. All parties need to reach a consensus on AI safety and its use. The article also emphasized that China's proposal to establish a World Artificial Intelligence Cooperation Organization should be welcomed, and researchers and authorities around the world should engage.

China Injects Momentum into APEC Cooperation

Opinion

By Staff Reporters

The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) is the premier forum for economic cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region, boasting the broadest membership and greatest economic influence. China, as an important member of APEC, a leader in regional cooperation, a defender of multilateralism, and the main engine of the world economy, will host the 33rd APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting in Shenzhen, Guangdong province in November 2026, fully demonstrating the responsibility of a world leader.

China will not only inject strong momentum into regional cooperation but also enhance certainty, stability, and confidence in global economic recovery and international collaboration.

This year also marks China's third hosting of the APEC meeting. Chen Xu, chair of the 2026 APEC Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM), said that China hosted APEC meetings in 2001 and 2014, leaving an indelible mark on APEC's history.

In 2014, China advocated for jointly building an Asia-Pacific partnership featuring mutual trust, inclusiveness, cooperation and mutual benefit. In 2020, China systematically expounded on jointly building an open, inclusive, innovative, interconnected and mutually beneficial Asia-Pacific community of shared future.

China has actively participated in practical cooperation across various fields under the APEC framework, and cooperated with all parties to foster an open economy in the Asia-Pacific, Chen said.

From geopolitical tensions to economic fragmentation, today's world is facing complex challenges. Unilateralism and protectionism are on the rise, and the international economic and trade order is facing severe challenges. The Asia-Pacific region is facing decisions about its future direction, and international cooperation is also facing the test of either advancing or regressing.

Against this backdrop, China's role as the host of the APEC 2026 meeting carries significance that extends far be-

yond APEC itself, and even beyond the Asia-Pacific region, Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Ma Zhaoxu said.

For the 2026 APEC "China Year," openness, innovation and cooperation are three priorities. "Openness" refers to developing an open economy, opposing protectionism, and promoting trade and investment liberalization and facilitation.

"Innovation" indicates upholding an innovation-driven development model, advancing new quality productive forces, and creating new growth drivers for APEC cooperation.

"Cooperation" involves leveraging the comparative strengths of APEC economies, enhancing policy synergy and experience exchanges to achieve mutual benefit.



On February 13, 2026, a bionic robot performs a dance in the carriage of Train T48. (PHOTO: XINHUA)

APEC 'China Year' to Boost Regional Prosperity

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Digital, smart and green transformations driven by innovation represent new growth drivers for APEC economies and the sure path to sustainable development, Wang said, calling on APEC members to actively build science, technology and innovation partnerships and foster an open innovation ecosystem.

The strength of digital technologies to advance practical cooperation in cross-border e-commerce, data flows, and smart customs should be fully leveraged. Efforts should also be made to promote people-centered AI and AI for good, and build greater consensus on how AI can empower growth and on AI governance rules. In addition, green and low-carbon development should be accelerated, and more cooperation initiatives put forward in clean energy, green minerals, environmental protection and related fields, according to Wang.

He also said there is a need to deepen practical cooperation across wide-ranging areas of governance that are integral to development, while bearing in mind the diversity among APEC members. In response to the common

development challenges confronting the entire Asia-Pacific region, practical cooperation in fiscal, transportation, tourism, public health, aging, food security and other fields should be deepened, Wang said.

China will host approximately 300 related activities throughout the year, including SOMs and ministerial meetings. The 33rd APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting will be held in Shenzhen, Guangdong province in November.

SOMs are the main channel for advancing APEC cooperation and preparing deliverables for the Leaders' Meeting, and will be held in Guangzhou, Shanghai and Dalian in February, May and August, respectively.

Meanwhile, ministerial meetings will be responsible for driving pragmatic cooperation processes in various sectors of APEC. From May to October, there will be around 10 ministerial meetings held in cities across China, covering fields such as energy, transportation, digital economy, food security, human resources, trade, finance, tourism, small and medium-sized enterprises and women's affairs.

Shield Machine Boasts 'Smart Brain'

Hi-Tech

By QI Liming & YU Huiyao

Researchers of Hunan University together with China Railway Construction Industry Co., Ltd., have developed an intelligent system for shield tunneling operations, risk prevention and control. Installed in the super-large diameter shield equipment, the system offers the shield machine a "smart brain" capable of precise control and risk prevention.

During underground excavation, it is difficult for humans to precisely control the operating parameters of the

shield machine, which can easily lead to risks such as instability of the excavation surface, excessive surface subsidence, and imbalance of the shield machine's structure. With this intelligent system, the shield machine learns to autonomously identify the geological conditions and predict risks, ultimately achieving precise decision-making.

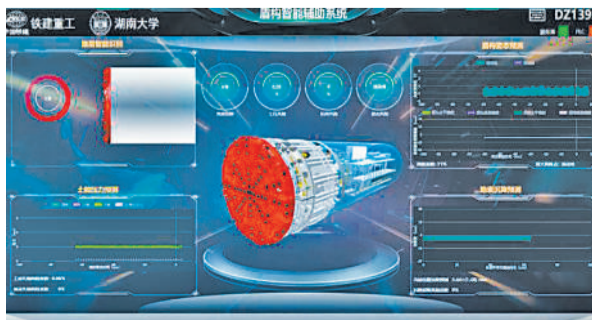
The system can also provide real-time warnings for potential hazards to the shield machine, offer intelligent decisions on excavation parameters, and make excavation operations in complex geological conditions more stable and efficient.

Currently, in the Shanghai metro construction project, the accuracy of pa-

rameter-assisted decision-making of this intelligent system exceeds 90 percent, and it can control the deviation of the shield machine's excavation position to within 30 millimeters.

In the Guangzhou intercity rail project, equipment fault diagnosis and intelligent operation and maintenance efficiency have increased by 20 percent because the system, compared to the traditional method of troubleshooting by referring to documents.

This has helped to increase equipment utilization by 12 percent and boost the monthly progress of typical working conditions by five percent.



Intelligent operation interface display of the shield machine. (COURTESY PHOTO)