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Two Sessions

China Sets Greater Sci-tech Strength Goal

Edited by WANG Xiaoxia

China will accelerate efforts for greater achievements in science and technology in 2026 and build world-class sci-tech innovation engines, according to a draft government work report submitted to the country's top legislature for deliberation on March 5.

The report reviewed that dynamic, innovation-driven, and high-quality development had been achieved over the past year. New quality productive forces grew steadily, and numerous new advances were made in science and technology.

China led the way in the research, development, and application of artificial intelligence (AI), biomedicine, robotics, and quantum technology.

In 2026, China will drive advances in original innovation and breakthroughs in core technologies in key fields, deepen reform of research institutes and the evaluation system, as well as promote sci-tech literacy among the public, according to the report.

Integration of technological and industrial innovation is underscored. The report said China will build three

international centers for sci-tech innovation (Beijing — the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region, Shanghai — the Yangtze River Delta, and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area) and turn them into world-class innovation engines.

The principal role of enterprises in innovation will be reinforced.

The draft outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan was also submitted, detailing the main objectives and major tasks for the 2026-2030 period.

In terms of innovation, China projects an annual average increase of at least 7 percent in nationwide R&D spending.

The leading role of sci-tech innovation is underscored in pursuing high-quality development. Technological innovation will be encouraged in areas including multi-modal AI, AI agent, embodied AI and swarm intelligence, and artificial general intelligence development paths will be explored.

Extraordinary measures will be taken to drive decisive breakthroughs across full chains in integrated circuits, machine tools, high-end instruments, basic software, advanced materials and bio-manufacturing, the plan said.



The opening meeting of the fourth session of the 14th National People's Congress (NPC) is held at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, China, March 5, 2026. (PHOTO: XINHUA)

Minister Highlights Innovation Cultivation for Next 5 Years

By LU Zijian

During the 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026-2030), original and pioneering scientific research will be further strengthened. Efforts will be made to promote the systematic deployment of basic research and advance breakthroughs in frontier sectors such as AI and quantum technology, China's Minister of Science and Technology Yin Hejun said.

He was speaking at an interview after the opening meeting of the fourth session of the 14th National People's Congress (NPC) at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on March 5.

China's sci-tech course has developed rapidly, reaching new heights, with its Global Innovation Index ranking rising to 10th place, Yin said.

In 2025, China's total R&D expenditure exceeded 3.92 trillion RMB, with an R&D intensity of 2.8 percent. Investment in basic research reached nearly 280 billion

RMB, comprising 7.08 percent of total R&D investment. This is the first time investment in basic research exceeded seven percent, setting a new record.

Yin emphasized the role of sci-tech innovation in steering the development of new quality productive forces over the next five years. The focus will be on building a modernized industrial system to drive the transfer and upgrade of traditional industries.

Emerging industries will be fostered to create more trillion-RMB-level industrial clusters, and industries of the future planned to cultivate new economic growth drivers.

The comprehensive efficiency of the national innovation system needs to be enhanced, Yin said. Strategic sci-tech strength and collaborative innovation will be strengthened, as will regional innovation systems.

Yin emphasized the importance of developing a world-class innovation ecosystem. The foundational sci-tech capabilities will be enhanced and the development

of world-class journals and databases bolstered while promoting open access to resources. Intellectual property protection will be strengthened.

China will strengthen international exchanges and cooperation, and lead or participate in international big science projects and organizations.

Regarding the integrated development of sci-tech innovation and industrial innovation, Yin said a new pattern of planning, deployment and advancement of sci-tech innovation and industrial innovation as a unified whole will be formed.

Strengthening high-quality sci-tech supply will be a priority. A batch of national major sci-tech projects will be implemented to provide industrial development with more powerful sci-tech support. Particular emphasis will be placed on achieving breakthroughs in fields such as integrated circuits, AI, biomanufacturing, quantum technology, brain-computer interfaces and nuclear fusion energy. See page 2

Global Spotlight on China's Two Sessions

By LIANG Yilian & QI Liming

As China holds its 2026 Two Sessions — the fourth session of the 14th National People's Congress (NPC) and the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) — in Beijing, international media outlets are closely following the meetings, viewing them as a key signal of China's policy direction.

A defining political moment

This year's sessions are particularly important as 2026 marks the start of the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-2030).

"The Two Sessions usually tell us what Beijing wants to do over the next 12 months. This year, they'll also set out a much bigger strategy for navigating a decisive period of geopolitical and technological change," Ruby Osman, a senior policy adviser at the London-

based Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, told *The Guardian*.

Channel News Asia called the meetings a defining political moment, listing "technology self-reliance" among the central issues to watch. In its analysis titled "five things to watch at China's Two Sessions," the outlet pointed to semiconductors, AI, and next-generation telecommunications as key themes shaping both domestic policy and global expectations.

Malaysia's English-language daily *Malay Mail* described the gathering as unusually significant, writing that the 2026 session "matters more than any in recent memory" due to its connection to the forthcoming development blueprint and long-term industrial strategy.

Technology and innovation take center stage

In international reporting, one area has consistently stood out: technology and innovation.

Reuters reported that China is expected to clarify its strategy to strengthen high-tech industries and reduce external vulnerabilities, especially in areas such as AI chips, robotics and advanced manufacturing. The agency noted that the meetings come roughly a year after Chinese AI developers drew global attention for rapid advances in capability.

DeepSeek, the Chinese startup whose viral AI model release last year triggered a global tech share selloff, is widely expected to roll out a next-generation model in the coming days.

"Now there is an expectation of what China can come up with next," Alfredo Montufar-Helu, a managing director at Ankura Consulting, a global expert services and advisory firm, told Reuters, reflecting the heightened global anticipation of China's technological trajectory.

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KEY FIGURES IN 2026 GOVERNMENT WORK REPORT

Key targets for 2026

- 4.5%-5%** GDP growth
- ≈2%** CPI increase
- ≥12 million** New urban jobs
- ≈3.8%** Carbon dioxide emissions per unit of GDP
- ≈700 million tonnes** Grain output

Major development targets for 2026-2030

- GDP growth** within an appropriate range
- At least 7%** annual average increase in R&D spending
- 17%** drop in CO₂ emissions per unit of GDP
- 12.5% of GDP** value added of core digital economy
- 725 mln tonnes** grain production capacity
- 5.8 bln tonnes (SCE)** energy production capacity

*SCE is standard coal equivalent.

Source: 2026 Government Work Report
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