

OPINION: POWER, TRUST, TRADE P.22 | FEATURES: CIG ORCHID AWARDS P.34

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The BRICS Summit 2026 and a new vision for cooperation



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EDITOR'S DESK



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Twenty Years of BRICS

The 18th BRICS Summit in New Delhi, India, not only reviewed the achievements made by BRICS over the past 20 years, but also was a pivotal event for bringing the Global South more stability and positive energy amid a turbulent international landscape.

BRICS is the acronym for an emerging market cooperative mechanism that initially comprised Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. Over the two decades since its inception, the BRICS mechanism has expanded to 11 member countries and 10 partner countries.

On September 12-13, within just 24 hours in the Indian capital, Chinese President Xi Jinping attended nearly 10 events, joining other BRICS leaders to discuss major development plans and chart a new course for cooperation. He also conducted in-depth talks with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on shaping the future of China-India relations.

Efforts by BRICS countries to increase unity and strength are major drivers of progress for the entire Global South and have a steadily increasing impact on the international order. The New Delhi Declaration adopted at the summit reaffirmed the commitment to reforming and improving global governance by promoting a more just, equitable and representative international

and multilateral system. From the proposal to empower new industrialization through AI to deploring attempts to unilaterally undermine the work of global multilateral institutions, the declaration has addressed many of the shared concerns of the Global South with a pragmatic agenda for action and sent a powerful message of BRICS solidarity, cooperation and joint development.

Particularly noteworthy is the fact that Chinese and Indian leaders held bilateral meetings for the third consecutive year, which is of strategic importance for ensuring regional stability and exerting a positive influence on the broader landscape. During his meeting with Modi, Xi proposed calibrating the direction of bilateral relations with an objective and rational strategic perception, emphasizing that China and India are partners rather than rivals. Modi made a clear response that India hopes to be a partner, not a rival, of China. This consensus consolidates the positive momentum that exists in China-India relations and clears key obstacles for practical cooperation within the BRICS framework.

Next year, China will host the 19th BRICS Summit. It will seize the opportunity to build consensus and work with all parties to usher in a third golden decade of BRICS cooperation. **BR**



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CANAL CONNECTIONS

A cargo vessel prepares to depart for Yangpu Port in Hainan Province via the newly opened Pinglu Canal from an operation area in Nanning Port, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, on September 16. The 134.2-km canal, costing 72.7 billion yuan (\$10.8 billion), connects Nanning, capital of Guangxi, to the Beibu Gulf, the closest maritime outlet for much of southwest China. This vital waterway provides landlocked southwest China with a shortcut to the coast and overseas markets, particularly those which are members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the country's largest trading partner.



Visionary Growth

A staff member inspects contact lenses at a manufacturing facility in Fengjie County, Chongqing Municipality, on September 15. By cultivating a robust eyewear industry, Fengjie has created over 3,500 local jobs and successfully expanded its reach to markets in more than 30 countries and regions.

Tourism Growth

China will further develop its tourism industry by exploring the combined supply of natural resource assets, including land and forests, according to a policy guideline made public on September 15.

The guideline, jointly issued by the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR), the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MCT), and the National Forestry and Grassland Administration, introduced policies covering fields such as innovating land supply models and improving regulations for the tourism sector.

China will increase spatial resource supply to support tourism growth, the guideline said, adding that spatial needs for developing scenic areas will be integrated into the country's overall territorial and space planning during the 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026-30).

According to the document,

eco-tourism activities such as camping, hiking, sightseeing, study tours and forest wellness will be supported in areas outside the core protection zones of nature reserves while upholding the red line for environmental protection.

To address difficulties in implementing small tourism projects, supportive policies will be introduced for the construction of public service facilities such as gas stations and service areas in remote or rural areas.

Childcare Services

China will take further steps to support childbearing, including making childcare more accessible and affordable, Lei Haichao, head of the National Health Commission, announced at a media conference on September 14, as the country seeks to ease costs of raising children and boost its birth rate.

Lei said that continuous

efforts will be made to promote the integrated development of services at kindergartens and nursery centers and to support communities and employers in setting up childcare facilities.

The commission will work to raise coverage of childcare services among young children to effectively reduce families' costs of having, raising and educating children, he said.

The country will also work to improve access to pediatric care at grassroots medical institutions, according to Lei.

By the end of this year, 1,000 more community-level medical and health institutions will be capable of offering pediatric care compared with last year, Lei said, adding that by that time, more than 95 percent of the country's township-level clinics and community health service centers are expected to have the capacity to provide relevant services.

Mineral Deposits

A total of 200 non-oil and gas mineral deposits were discovered in China in 2025, according to a report released by the MNR on September 11.

The report, titled China Mineral Resources 2026, was launched at the 28th China Mining Conference and Exhibition 2026 held in Tianjin Municipality on September 10-12.

It showed that China's investment in geological exploration registered positive growth for the fifth consecutive year in 2025 and that important progress continued to be made in mineral exploration.

Of the 200 newly discovered mineral deposits, 16 are gold deposits and 11 are iron deposits, making them the most frequently found types.

The report noted that, in terms of conventional oil and gas exploration, major breakthroughs had been made in new layers and new zones in places such as the Tarim and Junggar basins in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region.

In 2025, China's coal output was 4.85 billion tons, up 1.4 percent year on year, while crude oil output was 216 million tons, up 1.5 percent, maintaining positive growth for seven consecutive years. The report also showed natural gas output stood at 262.06 billion cubic meters last year, up 6.3 percent.

Pterosaur Museum

A science museum focused on the pterosaur, a winged reptile closely related to dinosaurs, opened on September 13 in Xinjiang.

The world's first of its kind, this museum is located in a national geopark in Hami, Xinjiang, a location renowned for abun-

dant pterosaur fossil discoveries.

With an exhibition area of about 4,600 square meters, the Hami Pterosaur Museum consists of six oval-shaped halls in a staggered layout. Seen from above, it resembles a clutch of pterosaur eggs resting in the desert.

Fossils on display include specimens recovered during more than two decades of rescue excavations by researchers from the Institute of Vertebrate Paleontology and Paleoanthropology under the Chinese Academy of Sciences. Also on display are the world's first three-dimensionally preserved fossilized pterosaur eggs and embryos, along with large pterosaur specimens making their public debut.

This is the first time all of these specimens are on display together. The exhibits present a panoramic recreation of pterosaur life and evolution during the Cretaceous period roughly 130 million years ago.

Rail Transit Line

The Jing Xiong Express, a landmark project for a one-hour metropolitan circle linking Beijing and Xiongan New Area in Hebei Province, kicked off full-line trial operation on September 12.

The express starts at the Xiongan Terminal Station in the new area, reaches the Beijing Daxing International Airport in about half an hour, then connects to the Daxing Airport Express, heading for the Caoqiao subway station in Beijing's Fengtai District. Passengers can transfer to subway lines 10 and 19 from Caoqiao.

The express will further stretch to the Lize Financial Business District subway station. The whole travel time on the Jing Xiong Express is about one hour.

With a length of about 86 km, it is China's first rapid rail transit line designed for a top speed of 200 km per hour and operated under a bus-style frequent service model.

Passengers only need a single ticket or QR code to enjoy seamless cross-regional transfers.

The express aims to provide stable and efficient transport for people commuting between Beijing and Xiongan and to boost integrated development.

Digital Villages

China unveiled a five-year action plan on September 11, aimed at advancing the integrated development of digital rural industries, rural digital infrastructure and



Bridging Borders

Russian visitors shop in the border city of Heihe, Heilongjiang Province, on September 15. Since the launch of optimized visa-free policies last year, cross-border travel and people-to-people exchange between China and Russia have substantially increased.

smart rural governance.

The action plan for the high-quality development of digital villages was jointly issued by the Cyberspace Administration of China, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, and the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology.

According to the plan, rural Internet penetration is set to increase from 69.5 percent in 2025 to 75 percent in 2030. Additionally, online activities at county-level cultural centers are

expected to rise from 151,600 in 2025 to 170,000 in 2030.

The plan emphasizes not only upgrading rural network infrastructure but also expanding efforts in areas like smart agriculture, agricultural science and technology innovation, and rural e-commerce.

The construction of comprehensive village-level delivery and logistics service stations will be bolstered, with strong support for new-energy vehicles and green smart home appliances in rural areas.



Celebrating Cooperation

People visit a new "theater village" in Minning Town of Yinchuan, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, on September 11. The "theater village" features 36 original plays, recounting the 30-year anti-poverty journey of Ningxia with help from Fujian Province. Beyond its cultural impact, the project, which debuted this July, has provided employment for 2,500 local residents.

Cross-Border Receipts, Payments

China's cross-border receipts and payments by non-bank entities, including enterprises and individuals, totaled \$1.5 trillion in August, extending a relatively swift growth since the beginning of 2026, latest data showed.

Cross-border receipts and payments data reflect the level of activity in a nation's cross-border trade, investment and financing.

Cross-border capital recorded a net inflow of \$62.4 billion in August, rising by 4 percent month on month, according to data released by the State Administration of Foreign Exchange (SAFE) on September 15.

Li Bin, deputy head of and spokesperson for SAFE, attributed the net inflow of cross-border capital mainly to a large inflow of funds under trade in goods. Meanwhile, increased travel by Chinese nationals for overseas studies and tourism purposes during the summer vacation had expanded the service trade

deficit, which grew by 6 percent month on month in August.

That same month, cross-border two-way direct investment was basically stable, Li said.

The spokesperson also said the trading value in China's foreign exchange (forex) market was \$3.9 trillion in August, maintaining a fairly large scale.

The country reported a surplus of bank settlements and sales of forex that month, which stood at \$48.5 billion, mainly due to the net inflow of forex funds, Li said.

Retail Sales

China's total retail sales of goods and services, a major indicator of the country's consumption strength, increased by 2.5 percent year on year in the first eight months of 2026, according to official data released on September 15.

Retail sales of services rose by 4.9 percent year on year during the January-August period, outpacing the 1-percent growth in goods sales, according to the National Bureau of Statistics.

Among service categories, retail sales of communication and information services, tourism consulting and rental services, and cultural, sports and leisure services posted relatively rapid growth.

In the first eight months of this year, retail sales of consumer goods totaled 32.76 trillion yuan (\$4.8 trillion), up 1.1 percent year on year, the data showed.

Online retail sales of goods and services reached 13.48 trillion yuan (\$2 trillion), up 4.6 percent. Of the total, online sales of goods rose by 4.3 percent to 8.42 trillion yuan (\$1.3 trillion), while online sales of services increased by 5.1 percent to 5.06 trillion yuan (\$754 billion).

In August alone, retail sales of consumer goods stood at 3.98 trillion yuan (\$593 billion), up 0.4 percent year on year.

Innovative Drugs

Innovative Chinese drugs have gained wider global reach this year, reflecting growing international recognition of the country's homegrown pharmaceutical innovations, the National

Medical Products Administration (NMPA), the country's drug regulator, said on September 14.

The total value of overseas licensing deals for innovative Chinese drugs has surpassed \$120 billion this year, up 36 percent year on year. Upfront payments in these deals have exceeded \$10 billion, while the average value per deal has continued to rise, according to figures published by the NMPA.

China's drug regulator has in recent years accelerated reforms to bolster the quality of the pharmaceutical industry and boost innovation, an NMPA official noted.

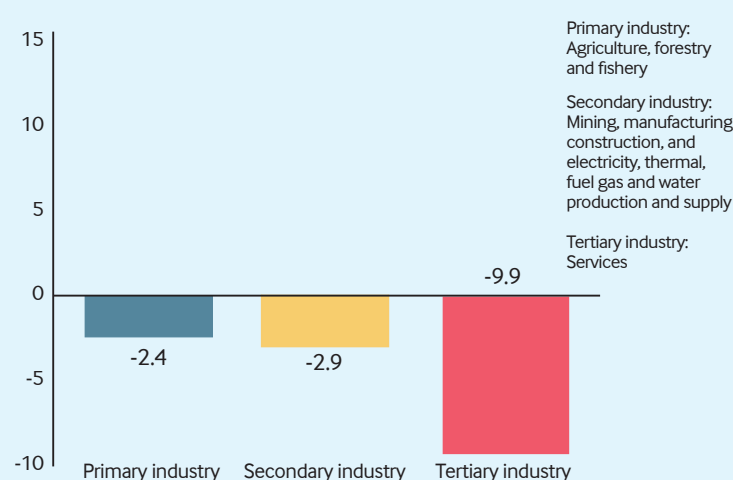
In 2025, more than 2,900 clinical trials for new drugs were registered nationwide, a rise of 18 percent year on year and a record high in scale. The number of clinical trials of cell and gene therapies grew by about 30 percent last year, highlighting strong activity in cutting-edge areas of drug development.

Regulatory reforms have also helped deliver more in-

NUMBERS

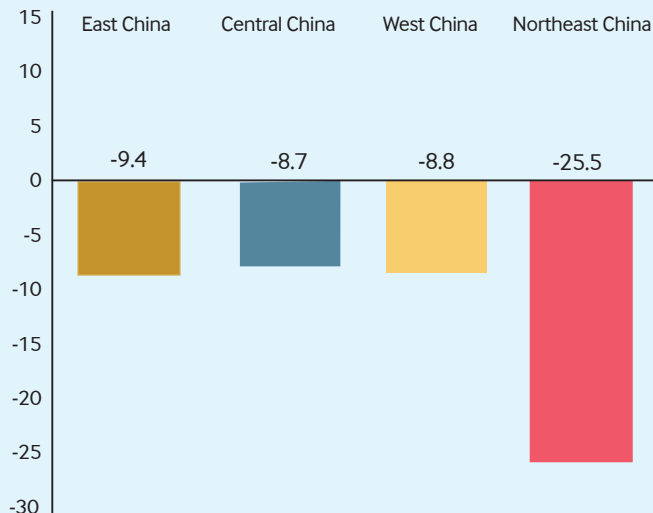
Fixed Assets Investment Growth by Sector

January-August (%; y.o.y.)



Fixed Assets Investment Growth by Region

January-August (%; y.o.y.)



novative products to the market. Since the beginning of 2026, 59 innovative drugs and 51 innovative medical devices have been approved for market, including 13 first-in-class drugs featuring new mechanisms or targets.

Private Investment

The National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) has recommended 36 investment projects to private enterprises in a bid to further stimulate private investment.

These 36 projects, spanning transportation, logistics, water conservancy and energy, were presented at an NDRC symposium involving private enterprises and industry associations on September 10.

With a combined estimated investment of 61.4 billion yuan (\$9 billion), the projects are expected to attract 15.6 billion yuan (\$23 billion) in private capital. They cover railways, warehousing, wind power, energy storage, charging facilities and water diversion projects.

Private capital can participate through wholly-owned investment,

controlling stakes or equity participation in related companies.

The NDRC said it will make full use of its regular communication and problem-solving mechanism in working with private enterprises. It will also work with related parties to improve services, strengthen the supply of capital, land and other factors of production, and coordinate efforts to resolve key issues to ensure early project implementation.

It will also establish a regular project recommendation mechanism to expand opportunities for private enterprises to participate in high-quality projects and better facilitate private investment growth.

Software Sector

China has unveiled a dedicated action plan to accelerate the integration of AI into its software and information technology services industry, aiming to reshape the sector's core competitiveness.

The plan, released by the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, lays out a two-stage roadmap.

By 2028, China aims to significantly raise the intelligence level of its software industry, by cultivating high-standard coding tools and development platforms, and by extending their use to more than 20,000 major software enterprises.

Meanwhile, the plan also calls for building 100 benchmark applications for agent-based software across key industries and incubating at least five high-quality open-source projects.

The plan envisions a step-change in the integration of AI with the software sector, with full intelligent upgrades across critical software systems by 2030. AI-powered programming, agent software and intelligent services are expected to emerge as new growth engines, supported by internationally competitive open-source communities and industrial clusters.

Cost Accounting Rules

China has issued a notice clarifying cost accounting rules

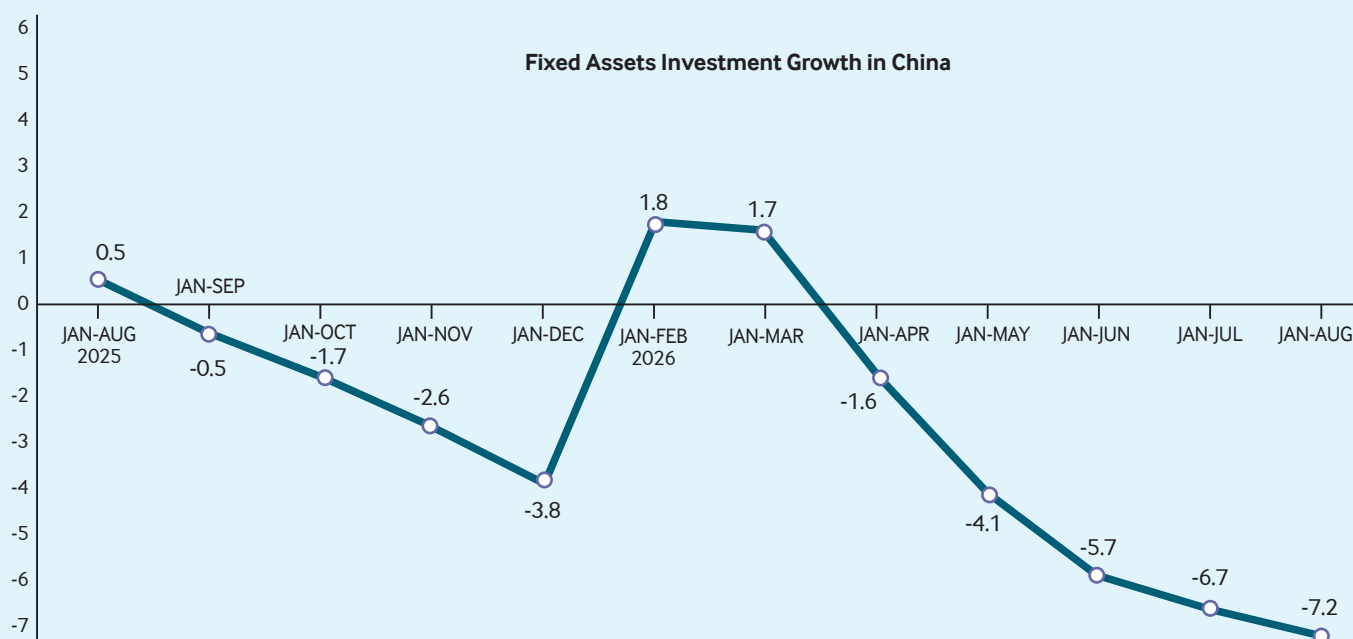
to address disorderly low-price competition in key industrial products. This move is part of broader efforts to curb irrational price wars and ensure fair competition.

The notice, jointly issued by the NDRC and the State Administration for Market Regulation, clarifies the form and requirements of cost accounting, providing clear guidance for industry and regulators.

The notice says cost accounting should in principle be based on a business operator's individual cost for producing a specific product. If individual cost cannot be calculated, the industry average cost should be referenced, allowing for a certain downward margin.

While current law and rules prohibit low-price dumping and require accounting for individual and industry average costs, they lack detailed provisions on how such accounting should be done. The notice aims to fill that gap and strengthen the institutional foundation for governing disorderly low-price competition.

Fixed Assets Investment Growth in China



(Source: National Bureau of Statistics)



AUSTRALIA

Kites fill the sky during the annual Festival of the Winds at Bondi Beach in Sydney on September 13



SOUTH AFRICA

The site of a road accident in Western Cape Province on September 14. At least 21 people were killed



SAUDI ARABIA

A display board at the Fourth Global Forum on the Ethics of AI in Riyadh on September 15. Participants discussed aligning AI development with safety and responsibility requirements



SWEDEN

A polling station in Stockholm on September 13. Four days later, on September 19, the results showed that the center-left opposition secured a narrow majority



MEXICO

President Claudia Sheinbaum (left) and First Gentleman Jesús María Tarriba Unger attend celebrations for the upcoming Independence Day in Mexico City on September 15. The country's annual Independence Day falls on September 16



UNITED STATES

A Chinese cultural relic returned by the country in New York City on September 17. The U.S. returned 64 cultural relics and paleontological fossils to China on September 16-17



THIS WEEK PEOPLE & POINTS

↓ FLAG BEARERS AT 20TH ASIAN GAMES

Basketball player **Hu Mingxuan** (right) and boxer **Wu Yu** served as flag bearers for China at the opening ceremony of the 2026 Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games in Japan on September 19.

Hu, 28, is a guard for the Guangdong Southern Tigers in the Chinese Basketball Association. He helped the Chinese team take bronze at the Hangzhou Asian Games in 2023, and captains the team at this year's games.

Wu, 31, is the reigning Olympic champion in the women's 50-kg division. She won gold at the 2024 Paris Olympics and claimed the Asian Games title in the same weight class in Hangzhou in 2023.

The 2026 Asian Games will run through October 4. More than 800 Chinese athletes, including 36 Olympic champions, are competing in the games.



A Major in Micro-Dramas

Gmw.cn

September 14

In September, Zhengzhou, capital of Henan Province, issued an official document encouraging universities to establish programs specializing in AI-generated micro-dramas. The move could bring about an important transition: What is now a nascent industry may soon become an academic discipline.

The domestic market for AI-generated micro-dramas is projected to be worth 400 billion yuan (\$60 billion) in 2026, up 138 percent from 2025. But a fast-growing market is not necessarily a mature one. Many AI micro-dramas still fall short in storytelling and character development. Universities could

provide something the industry currently lacks: a solid foundation in literature, film, art and communications, while helping develop more rigorous creative and aesthetic standards for the industry.

There are, however, risks in building a degree program around an emerging industry. Data suggest that only 1.3 percent reach the 50-million-view threshold reportedly needed to break even. More importantly, a degree takes four years to complete. A job that looks promising today may no longer exist by the time students graduate.

Universities should embrace new trends without surrendering to them. The purpose of higher education is to prepare students for the future, not simply chase the jobs of the moment.



Rivers Reborn

Oriental Outlook

September 3

China's waterfront restoration efforts are becoming a test of how its cities manage growth. For decades during rapid urbanization, many Chinese cities treated rivers as infrastructure: Channels to be straightened to fit the urban development agenda and polluted stretches to be cleaned only when

"The plan will help build a more open, inclusive, liberal, prosperous and safer Hong Kong."

Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) Chief Executive **John Lee**, as the SAR unveiled its first five-year plan for economic and social development on September 16

"As AI develops at an incredible speed, it is all the more important to stay committed to developing AI for the positive, for good and for the benefits of the people, to calibrate regulation and governance on AI, and to promptly strengthen safeguards to prevent it from getting out of control."

Guo Jiakun, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson, at a regular news briefing on September 15

they became intolerable. That model, however, has become obsolete.

Guided by national planning policies, cities are shifting from simple river management toward integrated river-city governance, transforming waterfronts into public spaces that combine ecology, culture and everyday life.

Chinese cities are testing distinct restoration models. The Yongding River offers a landmark case of this paradigm shift. In the 1990s, its Beijing reach dried up entirely. Decades of water replenishment efforts have not only restored groundwater level and biodiversity along its banks, but also reconnected the waterway with busy urban quarters. Along Shanghai's Suzhou Creek, once lined with factories and choked by raw sewage, the waterfront has been completely transformed. Derelict docks have become public waterfront walkways. Disused industrial plants have been repurposed into art museums and urban libraries.

Urban planners must remember that such transformations do not happen overnight. Rivers ought to be shared civic spaces, not merely engineering projects. The most successful regeneration may therefore be the least spectacular: quiet, gradual and designed to weave into the urban fabric.

Robot Skin

Guangzhou Daily
September 14

As humanoid robots become ever more capable and move from prototypes toward mass production, textile makers and sensor companies are joining forces to develop a new layer of technology around them: robot skin.

In Changshu, Jiangsu Province, a textile manufacturer has developed a seamless, high-strength outer skin tailored to a robot's complex body structure. Made using advanced techniques, the material can conduct heat, prevent static electricity buildup and absorb friction.

The more ambitious goal is to give robots a sense of touch. Flexible pressure sensors can detect the force exerted on an object, allowing a robot to adjust its grip accordingly. That could make the difference between crushing an egg and picking it up safely, or between damaging a machine component and tightening a screw with the right amount of force.

Yet there is still a long way to go before robot skin can be produced at scale. Robot models vary widely in their shapes, joint structures and intended applications, meaning that robot skins often have to be customized for individual machines. Overcoming this will require textile makers, sensor companies and robot designers to work together on common standards and more modular designs.

↓ FIRST CHINESE NATIONAL TO WIN WLF PRIZE

Shao Feng, a researcher at the National Institute of Biological Sciences in Beijing, became the first Chinese national to win the World Laureates Foundation (WLF) Prize on September 10.

Shao, born in Jiangsu Province in 1973, is a member of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, the highest academic accolade in the field of science and technology in China. His team uncovered the molecular mechanism of pyroptosis, a type of programmed cell death. This breakthrough provides new targets for treating sepsis, inflammatory illnesses and cancers. He shared the WLF Prize in Life Science or Medicine with three other scientists.



The WLF Prize is an international science award established in Shanghai in 2021. It aims to recognize and support outstanding researchers worldwide for their contributions.

“China’s services trade expansion creates a new engine for growth and represents its next stage of internationalization... I believe trade in services represents one of the strongest opportunities for the next phase of the China-UK economic relationship.”

John McLean, Chairman of the China United Kingdom Business Development Center, in a recent interview with Xinhua News Agency

“The museum not only highlights China’s leading role in global pterosaur research but also offers the public a window to experience scientific discovery up close and appreciate the wonders of ancient life.”

Xu Xing, head of the Institute of Vertebrate Paleontology and Paleoanthropology, Chinese Academy of Sciences, as the world’s first museum devoted to prehistoric flying reptiles opened in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region on September 13



COVER STORY

A BOLDER VOICE

Twenty years on, the Global South speaks louder By Xu Feibiao