

# TOP NEWS



Guests unveil the plaque for the School of Space Exploration at the University of Chinese Academy of Sciences on Tuesday in Beijing. zou SHUO / CHINA DAILY

## School launched for interstellar travel

By ZOU SHUO  
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The University of Chinese Academy of Sciences unveiled its School of Space Exploration on Tuesday in Beijing, marking a key step in cultivating talent for China's endeavors in deep space exploration and space science.

The inauguration ceremony was held at the Chinese Academy of Sciences memorial hall for the "Two Bombs, One Satellite" project on the university's campus.

Zhu Junqiang, an academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and director of the CAS Bureau of Strategic High-tech Development, was appointed dean of the newly founded school.

The decision to establish the school was made in November 2025. It will develop a curriculum covering 14 first-level disciplines and special-

ties, including aerospace science and technology and planetary science.

Building upon 97 existing courses, the school will add 22 new core subjects such as interstellar dynamics and propulsion principles, space environment perception and utilization, planetary dynamics and habitability, and interstellar sociology and governance.

UCAS President Zhou Qi emphasized that the school's establishment responds to a new era in space exploration. "We have already stepped beyond Earth — building a space station, exploring the far side of the moon, and launching missions to Mars. It is time to think strategically about building the interstellar travel enterprise of the future," he said.

Zhou acknowledged the widespread public interest that followed the school's initial announcement, noting that its delayed inauguration reflected a desire to move beyond

"the glamour of the moment" and focus on substantial long-term planning. He paid tribute to the pioneering spirit of the "Two Bombs, One Satellite" generation, whose work in harsh conditions laid the foundation for today's achievements.

The school is designed to be inherently interdisciplinary and institutionally collaborative. Zhou highlighted that over 100 CAS research institutes are connected to its mission. "When we embark on the journey of interstellar travel, we will face every kind of scientific and practical challenge — from navigation and space weather to spacecraft engineering, space agriculture and even interstellar diplomacy. No single institution or discipline can accomplish this alone," he said.

He also stressed that the school must look beyond existing academic boundaries. "We cannot merely follow in the footsteps of others to the

moon, Mars, or beyond the solar system. We must develop our own strategic vision and build a scientific system that serves the future common needs of humanity," Zhou said.

A key focus of the school will be talent development. "We have established not just a project, but a school, and the heart of a school is nurturing people," Zhou said. He called on all participating institutes and experts to prioritize students' growth and provide them with platforms to "see farther and go farther."

Zhu, the academician, said the school is positioned to support the country's long-term interstellar navigation development, serving as an innovation source and talent training base.

"Interstellar navigation is a complex, systematic engineering task. Breakthroughs in a single discipline cannot support the overall progress of the endeavor," Zhu noted. The school integrates aerospace engineering, physics, chemistry, biology and materials science around the grand goal of interstellar travel.

# Profit rebound boosts foreign industrial firms

Resumed growth points to sector's momentum, rising global confidence

By ZHOU LANXU, ZHONG NAN and OUYANG SHIJIA

Foreign industrial companies' profits on the Chinese mainland resumed growth in 2025 after three years of contraction, signaling renewed industrial sector momentum and rising foreign business confidence, official data showed on Tuesday.

As the profit growth of industrial enterprises overall also turned positive, experts and executives said the industrial economy has moved past the trough and is entering a phase marked by improving quality and efficiency, setting the stage for further recovery in 2026.

The National Bureau of Statistics said on Tuesday that foreign-funded industrial enterprises, and those from the Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan regions of China, posted total profits of 1.74 trillion yuan (\$250 billion) in 2025, up 4.2 percent year-on-year.

The growth reversed a three-year contraction — following declines of 1.7 percent in 2024, 6.7 percent in 2023 and 9.5 percent in 2022 — as part of a broader recovery in industrial profits.

In 2025, nationwide industrial enterprises above a designated size recorded total profits of 7.3982 trillion yuan, up 0.6 percent year-on-year, ending three consecutive years of decline, the NBS said.

"The rebound in foreign industrial profits reflects China's appeal in advanced manufacturing, high-tech industries and new energy supply chains, as well as the benefits from the country's opening-up," said Liu Chunsheng, an associate professor at the Central University of Finance and Economics.

Policy guidance has also encouraged foreign investment to flow toward central and western regions and high-tech sectors, leading to an improved investment structure, Liu said.

He added that the profit turnaround of the overall industrial sector was driven by both a demand-side recovery — supported by trade-in programs and resilient exports — and supply-side improvements, including the momentum of high-tech sectors and efforts to curb destructive price competition, alongside a low base in 2024.

According to the NBS, profits in

high-tech manufacturing areas such as intelligent unmanned aerial vehicle manufacturing, integrated circuit production and semiconductor equipment manufacturing all surged by more than 100 percent in 2025.

The rising quality and efficiency of China's industrial development is attracting more foreign businesses. Covestro AG, a German manufacturer of polymers and high-performance plastics, will increase investment in China, following the start of operations last week at its manufacturing facility for thermoplastic polyurethane in Zuhai, Guangdong province.

"For multinational companies, China's innovation ecosystem has become a growing investment magnet," said Monique Buch, chief commercial officer of Covestro.

Looking to 2026, Wen Bin, chief economist at China Minsheng Bank, said industrial profits are likely to continue the recovery as steady consumption, stabilizing investment and resilient exports are poised to underpin demand, while efforts to prevent excessive price competition further support profitability.

However, Su Jian, director of Peking University's National Center for Economic Research, said the outlook for industrial profits in 2026 may depend on policy support and exports, which are exposed to sustained external uncertainty.

Su said the profit divergence across companies shows that recovery may remain fragile, adding that large domestic enterprises may be less agile in transformation and upgrading than smaller ones and should strengthen product innovation.

Official data showed that profits of industrial small and medium-sized enterprises rose 1.4 percent year-on-year in 2025, reversing a 1.9 percent decline in 2024. By contrast, profits of State-controlled and shareholding industrial enterprises fell 3.9 and 0.1 percent, respectively.

Privately owned industrial companies also came under pressure, with profits remaining flat from a year earlier, down from growth of 0.5 percent in 2024.

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## Ties: Visit aims to establish stabilizing mechanisms

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On Tuesday, Peter Wilson, the UK's ambassador to China, said the visit aims to increase contacts and establish stabilizing mechanisms, including structured dialogues and concrete, commercially meaningful outcomes, to support bilateral relations.

"Two countries like ours not talking to each other is a problem," Wilson said at a briefing in Beijing. He emphasized that keeping channels open allows both sides to have hon-

est conversations about differences. "We don't see everything in the same way — and that is precisely why we need to talk."

Against what he described as the world facing a period of "radical uncertainty", Wilson said the UK and China need to find areas where they can "make common cause", help stabilize the international system and contribute to conflict resolution.

Zheng Zeguang, China's ambassador to the UK, wrote in *The Times* on Monday that closer collaboration with China will benefit Britain in

attaining its development goals. He called for expanded dialogue, coordination and cooperation in many areas, including trade and investment, financial services, clean energy, fighting cross-border crime, education and culture, scientific and technological innovation, climate change and public health.

British Trade Commissioner for China Lewis Neal said on Tuesday in Beijing that sustained, government-level engagement is critical to underpinning long-term and strategic business relationships.

"The UK is open to investment from Chinese companies," he said, adding that more should be done to help British businesses better understand the export and cooperation opportunities that China offers.

Cui Hongjian, director of Beijing Foreign Studies University's Center for European Union and Regional Development Studies, said that as transatlantic relations are under strain, the UK should strengthen dialogue with China, uphold strategic autonomy and take a pragmatic, long-term view of bilateral ties.

## World champions lead Winter Olympics quest

By SUN XIAOCHEN  
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Led by a glittering cast of champions, China's 126-strong contingent is ready to prove its athletic prowess on ice and snow at the Milano-Cortina Winter Olympics, which kicks off on Feb 6 in northern Italy.

Four years after making the country proud by winning a record nine gold medals at the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, the Chinese sports delegation is determined to maintain the momentum by competing for its best-ever medal haul at an overseas edition of the Games.

The 286-member Chinese delegation, including 126 athletes whose average age is 25, was officially launched on Tuesday. The team will compete in 91 of the total 116 medal events across 16 sports disciplines at the Games, which will be held for more than two weeks next month across three Italian regions — Lombardia, which includes Milan; Trentino; and Veneto, which includes Cortina d'Ampezzo.

The Chinese delegation also includes 32 foreign coaches, trainers and technical staff from 21 countries and regions, such as the United States, Canada and Finland, who have been hired to help hone the competitive skills of Chinese athletes in Western-dominated events such as freestyle skiing, snowboarding and bobsleigh.

The contingent of athletes is led by nine Olympic champions, including women's freestyle skiing superstar Gu Ailing, men's snowboarding prodigy Su Yiming and five-time Olympian in women's freestyle skiing aericals Xu Mengtao. It also includes 67 young athletes who will make their Winter Olympic debuts.

Sixteen athletes on the team are from China's ethnic minority groups, with young talent born and developed in the high-altitude areas of the Xizang and Xinjiang Uygur autonomous regions expected to challenge the world's best in endurance disciplines, such as cross-country skiing and ski mountaineering, which will debut on the Olympic program this year.

This will be the largest delegation China has ever assembled for an overseas Winter Olympics since the country debuted in the Games at Lake Placid, New York, in 1980.

Speaking at the delegation launching ceremony, Gao Zhidan, director of the General Administration of Sport of China, said that Milano-Cortina 2026 is "a significant window to showcase the achievements of China's winter sports development and the positive image of Chinese athletes."

The Chinese delegation's goal is to achieve excellence in both athletic performance and sportsmanship, Gao added.

During the Beijing Games, 176 Chinese athletes competed in 104 events,



Athletes sing the national anthem on Tuesday in Beijing at the inaugural meeting of China's delegation to the 2026 Milano-Cortina Winter Olympics. WEI XIAOHAO / CHINA DAILY

winning nine gold, four silver and two bronze medals to finish fourth on the overall medal tally and achieve the team's best-ever Winter Olympics result at home.

China's previous best at overseas Winter Games was achieved in 2010, when the team claimed five gold medals in Vancouver, Canada.

Boasting a blend of youth and experience, the Chinese delegation for Milano-Cortina is relying on its strength in multiple events, such as freestyle skiing aericals, freestyle skiing halfpipe, snowboarding big air and short-track speed skating, to power its medal ambitions.

However, tougher international challenges are expected, according to delegation secretary-general Wang Lei, who urged both fans and the media to take the team's "Olympic prospect without home advantage" into perspective.

"The fact that we have qualified

in over 70 percent of the events, compared with about 50 percent the last time we competed at an overseas Games (in 2018), serves as a strong testament to our overall improvement at the elite level," said Wang, who is also director of the National Winter Sports Administrative Center.

Speaking of events in which impressive breakthroughs are anticipated, Wang highlighted the sliding sport of skeleton, the ice game of curling and the Nordic-discipline ski jumping, among others.

"We will make the best out of the final stretch of preparations and strive for the best possible outcome to build on the festive vibe for Chinese people during the holiday," he added. The Games are scheduled to close on Feb 22 in Verona, a historical city in the Veneto region, with the second-week program overlapping with the Spring Festival holiday in China.

## Relations: Companies in Finland welcome to China

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Finnish companies are welcome to "take a swim in the vast ocean of the Chinese market" to enhance their global competitiveness, Xi said, adding that the two countries should strengthen exchanges and cooperation in winter sports, and more Finnish people are welcome to visit China and experience its blend of ancient heritage and modern vitality.

Orpo is the second EU country leader to visit China within three weeks, as several world leaders, including Taoiseach, or prime minister, of Ireland Micheal Martin and Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney, have visited China in the first month of the new year to engage with Chinese leaders for bilateral cooperation as well as exchanging views on international affairs amid growing global uncertainties.

During the meeting with Xi, Orpo hailed the profound traditional friendship between Finland and China, saying that Finnish enterprises have a strong interest in coming to China for cooperation.

Finland is willing to work with China to deepen pragmatic cooperation in trade, investment, the digital economy, clean energy and agriculture to enhance the well-being of both peoples, he said.

While emphasizing that Finland

firmly adheres to the one-China policy, Orpo said that Finland admires China's outstanding achievements in development and appreciates its significant and constructive role in international affairs. Finland is willing to strengthen communication and coordination with China to jointly safeguard world peace and stability, he said.

Noting that the sound development of Europe-China relations is very important, Orpo said that Finland advocates Europe's strategic autonomy and supports free trade.

Finland is willing to play a positive role in helping properly resolve trade frictions between Europe and China and promote the healthy development of their ties, he added.

When Xi made a state visit to Finland in April 2017, the two countries declared the promotion of a future-oriented new-type cooperative partnership.

In talks with Orpo, Premier Li said that with the global economy currently under strain, China and Finland should work together to uphold an international economic and trade order featuring openness and cooperation.

Zhao Leji, chairman of the National People's Congress Standing Committee, China's top legislature, also met with Orpo on Tuesday in Beijing.