

COMMENT

Editorials

Racing line in Shanghai F1 showcases economic momentum and dynamism

The engines began to howl in Shanghai on Friday as the 2026 Chinese Grand Prix roared to life at the Shanghai International Circuit.

But the sound echoing across the grandstands wasn't just that of high-revving engines. It was also the voices of eager spectators, roughly 230,000 of whom were expected to stream through the circuit gates this year. Around the track, hotels were packed, restaurants hummed with late-night diners, and pop-up stalls selling official F1 merchandise glittered under the neon lights along the Huangpu River.

The Grand Prix is not just a sporting event. It is the driver of a small economic ecosystem.

And in many ways, it offers a window through which to view China's newly adopted 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) as the country is revving up new engines to power high-quality development — innovation, domestic demand, green development and global cooperation — that also create their own economic ecosystems. Looking at the choreography of the Shanghai race weekend — the technology, logistics, tourism, consumption — you get a glimpse of how policymakers hope to power the next laps of the country's development.

Think of it as the economics of velocity.

Shanghai hosted 182 domestic and international sporting events in 2025, generating 13.5 billion yuan (\$1.9 billion) in direct economic output and stimulating 35.8 billion yuan in related economic activity. That includes hotels, airlines, ride-hailing apps, restaurants, retail and digital services. During the Grand Prix, 70 percent of spectators come from other parts of China and 15 percent from overseas, turning a weekend race into a miniature version of global trade flows.

One ticket doesn't just buy a seat in the stands. It unlocks what economists call a consumption chain: sports + tourism + culture + retail. A visitor might watch the race, take a river cruise, buy an F1 jacket, and post it all on a livestreaming platform powered by Chinese cloud computing.

Multiply that behavior by hundreds of thousands of people and you begin to see the engine at work. This is precisely the kind of consumption-driven, innovation-powered growth model the 15th Five-Year Plan hopes to scale nationally. China's 1.4-billion-person market remains one of the most powerful demand engines in the global economy. When domestic consumption expands, it pulls global supply chains with it.

Consider Formula 1 cars. Featuring advanced aerodynamics, hybrid engines, data sensors and

materials science — they are laboratories on wheels. China's new five-year blueprint similarly emphasizes technological innovation — from semiconductors and artificial intelligence to renewable energy and smart manufacturing — that it is putting on the track of a unified national market open to the global economy.

And, returning to the drivers of miniature economic ecosystems, China's accelerating transition toward renewable energy, electric transport and energy efficiency will reverberate across the pits of its supply chains. The global economy today feels a bit like a race in heavy rain: geopolitical tensions, supply chain disruptions and climate risks make the driving conditions hard to master. In that environment, having the ability to read the track conditions and the experience and ability to deal with them matters more than ever.

China's development planning — coordinating industrial policy, infrastructure investment and social development — sets the racing line while institutional guidance fine-tunes its implementation during the race — what policymakers call "certainty amid uncertainty".

Some might mistake such planning for rigidity. They fail to see it is a carefully considered race strategy: a carefully plotted sequence of pit stops, fuel management and tire changes designed to keep cars and drivers competitive in the race.

The international dimension matters too.

Look around the paddock at the Chinese Grand Prix and you will see a microcosm of Italian engineers, Japanese suppliers, US sponsors and drivers of many different nationalities, as well as the multinational identity of the cars themselves. The entire spectacle depends on cooperation that crosses borders.

The new five-year plan reaffirms that China remains a strong supporter of multilateralism and rules-based trade, participating in global institutions while promoting sustainable frameworks for economic cooperation. Whether through trade agreements, infrastructure financing or green technology partnerships, the country has increasingly positioned itself at the forefront of inclusive globalization.

If the Grand Prix is a snapshot of Shanghai's dynamism, the 15th Five-Year Plan is the blueprint behind its continuing momentum. And not just Shanghai, but nationwide. In Formula 1, victory rarely belongs to the fastest driver alone. It belongs to the team that manages the entire system — technology, people, cooperation.

This is what China's five-year plans coordinate.

Song Chen



Opinion Line

Lai's 'anniversary' speech shows he's blindly rushing toward abyss

Anniversaries are supposed to be a time for reflection. But when the secessionist-minded leader of China's Taiwan region, Lai Ching-te, addressed a forum marking the 30th anniversary of the island holding a "direct election" to elect a regional leader, reflection didn't exactly seem to be on top of his mind. He delivered what sounded more like a hard-sell of "Taiwan independence", a flimsily constructed product that has long proved to be combustible.

In what was a neat rhetorical trick, Lai falsely declared that the advent of "direct elections" proved Taiwan was already a so-called "sovereign and independent country". But as Chen Binhua, a spokesperson for the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, pointed out, regional elections may choose local leaders, but they cannot rewrite geography, history or international law. The fact is both sides of the Taiwan Strait belong to one China, and Taiwan is part of China.

As Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi recently told the media, Taiwan's status was settled decades ago through documents such as the Cairo Declaration, the Potsdam Proclamation and United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2758. The island's return to China after World War II was not a subplot — it was the conclusion.

Still, Lai appears determined to audition for the role of geopolitical daredevil.

What makes Lai's speech particu-

larly revealing is that he is simultaneously pushing for a proposed special military budget of about NT\$1.25 trillion (\$40 billion) over eight years, along with a massive arms purchase from the United States.

The pitch sounds simple enough — "security" requires spending. But opposition parties in Taiwan's regional "legislature" have repeatedly blocked the proposal, questioning whether they are being asked to sign what amounts to a blank check for catastrophe.

At the same time, the Lai authorities have been deepening "economic engagement" with Washington that risks hollowing out Taiwan's industrial base. A recent trade arrangement with the US includes massive investment commitments by Taiwan companies in US semiconductor and technology industries. In exchange, the island gets certain tariff "concessions".

The deal effectively pressures Taiwan companies to move core industrial capacity to the US, potentially draining the island of its economic lifeblood. The arrangement looks less like a partnership, more like a clearance sale.

In doing so, Lai is pushing the island to become a pawn for the US military-industrial complex.

And here lies the irony of Lai's soaring rhetoric about "sovereignty". A regional leader who insists he is defending Taiwan's "autonomy" is simultaneously tying the island more

tightly to US strategic priorities.

That's not exactly the brochure voters are being presented with.

Lai's speech was carefully packaged to stir confrontation across the Taiwan Strait and frame cross-Strait relations as a battle between two "systems" — a narrative designed to inflame public sentiment rather than stabilize the region.

The danger of that narrative should not be underestimated at a time when the world has already seen multiple geopolitical flash points ignite. One might imagine a prudent regional leader drawing lessons from these crises about the costs of miscalculation.

Instead, Lai seems blindly heedless.

The Taiwan question is China's internal affair and core interest that cannot be compromised. The pursuit of separatism by secessionists on the island is the root cause of tensions across the Strait.

History tends to be unkind to politicians who mistake theatrical defiance for strategic wisdom. If Lai continues down the path he has chosen, the consequences could reach far beyond his rhetorical tricks.

Anniversaries are supposed to be a reminder of the past, but they are also signposts to future. Lai should recognize in which direction they point — inevitable reunification of the Taiwan island with the motherland.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

Tomahawk rips off Tokyo's 'pacifist' mask

Japanese Defense Minister Shinjiro Koizumi announced on Friday the official delivery — for the first time in history — of US Tomahawk cruise missiles and Norwegian-made Joint Strike Missiles to the Self-Defense Forces. This move represents a bold step toward the country's remilitarization and a challenge to the stability of East Asia and beyond.

Japan claims to be pursuing "counterstrike capabilities", a euphemism for the ability to launch preemptive attacks on targets in its neighborhood. This is not defense; it is offense. The Tomahawk missiles, with a range of up to 1,600 kilometers, can reach deep into the territories of Japan's neighbors, and their deployment will likely trigger an arms race.

The decision to integrate these high-end offensive systems into Japan's arsenal is a reckless provocation. The result will be a dangerous escalation of tensions, increased military spending and a heightened risk of catastrophic miscalculation.

Moreover, the move is a direct betrayal of Japan's "pacifist" Constitution and a continuation of the "salami-slicing" strategy — incremental changes in defense spending and policy — that the Sanae Takaichi government is using to erode the war-renouncing Article 9 of the Constitution, which prohibits Japan's militarization.

This move is driven by a resurgence of right-wing revisionism in Japan, exemplified by Takaichi's overt push to revive a militarist Japan. As of late 2025, Takaichi had pledged to increase Japan's defense budget to 2 percent of GDP by the end of this month, two years ahead of schedule.

Tokyo also recently approved the creation of a so-called National Intelligence Council and an operational National Intelligence Agency. These new entities, spearheaded by the prime minister, aim to centralize intelligence operations and formulate Japan's first-ever National Intelligence Strategy by the end of the year.

Tokyo frames this as "a necessary step" to enhance "national security", but in fact it serves to significantly consolidate power under the prime

minister's office, a dangerous sign of excessive concentration of power in the hands of a right-wing politician. Takaichi's victory in last month's snap election for Japan's House of Representatives has only exacerbated this trend, allowing her to frame her personal will as that of the people.

The push to expand Japan's intelligence capabilities is also a response to the United States' call for closer "intelligence gathering" coordination. Through closer cooperation with the US, Tokyo is actually trying to bind Japan tighter to the US. Japan's new capabilities, combined with its hosting of US military bases, could embolden the exercise of the "right of collective self-defense" in ways that further destabilize the region.

This is extremely concerning as it creates the potential for Japan to be used as a pawn in the US' moves to assert its hegemony.

History has shown that the excessive concentration of power among individual right-wing politicians in Japan can easily lead to unchecked military expansion, which in turn helps those politicians further consolidate their grip on power, forming a vicious cycle. The Asia-Pacific has learned to its bitter cost the consequences of Japan using "self-defense" as a pretext for militarization.

Hence, the Takaichi government's attempts to pour old wine into new bottles today constitute not merely a dangerous trend, but a blatant and tangible threat that seriously undermines the postwar international order in the region.

While the Middle East crisis and other hot spot issues command global attention, the international community must not overlook the overt and covert moves of the Takaichi government. Since taking office, it has moved swiftly to rearm Japan, while feeling no qualms about portraying the country as a "victim" both historically and in the present day.

Peace in the region was hard-won. It must not be sacrificed at the altar of Tokyo's renewed military ambitions. The world is watching, and history will be a harsh judge of those who trade stability for the tools of war.

What They Say

Agility key to effective artificial intelligence governance

Editor's note: In an interview with *China Youth Daily*, Wang Jiangping, former vice-minister of industry and information technology, highlighted the importance of developing a governance approach to artificial intelligence technologies that both ensures safety and facilitates innovation. Below are excerpts of the interview. The views don't necessarily represent those of *China Daily*.

Currently the most significant challenge to AI governance is the speed at which governance systems need to be updated. Technology is advancing at full tilt, and regulations lag behind. Specifically, efforts are needed to urgently address three major issues during the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period.

The first is the renewal of the governance philosophy. Strict regulation and fast development of AI should not be viewed as two opposing options. Instead, agile governance is needed. Governance is not about "stepping on the brakes", but about "putting up road signs" and "installing guardrails". It is necessary to define the red lines of safety while leaving sufficient room for trial, error and the evolution of innovation.

The second is the breakthrough in governance technology. Key technologies are needed to carry out effective governance and promote "human-AI alignment" to ensure that the goals, behaviors and outputs of AI systems are consistent with human values, intentions and social norms. It is necessary to invest heavily in the research and development of alignment technologies, and establish national-level evaluation standards and laboratories, so that one can effectively keep

an eye on the development of AI technologies.

The last is the improvement of governance laws and regulations. Efforts should be accelerated to develop a hierarchical, categorized, precise and effective regulatory system. There should be mandatory standards and continuous monitoring for high-risk applications such as autonomous driving and smart healthcare. There should also be mechanisms which ensure corporate self-regulation and third-party supervision. This way, the government, enterprises and society will be able to jointly participate in AI governance.

A great difficulty in international coordination over AI governance lies in profound differences in governance philosophies, something that is further complicated by geopolitics.

On the one hand, some developed countries attempt to establish technology standards centered on their own values through "minilateralism". This may lead to fragmentation of regulations and the exclusion of most developing countries. On the other hand, more than 90 percent of the world's computing power is concentrated in a small number of regions. Many countries lack infrastructure and talent, creating devel-

opment inequality and making it difficult for them to participate effectively in dialogue on AI governance.

An ideal and effective international coordination mechanism for AI governance should feature at least three elements. The first is inclusiveness. It is essential to make the United Nations the main channel for governance, so that all countries can participate on an equal footing. Second, the mechanism should focus on urgent global risks on which consensus can be reached, such as deep-fakes, AI weaponization, and loss of control of AI systems. Basic international norms and response frameworks should be developed for these "red alert" issues.

Third, AI governance should not shun countries' need for growth. The coordination mechanism should include concrete technical assistance, capacity-building and knowledge-sharing programs to help developing countries bridge the intelligence divide and ensure that technological dividends are shared by all.

In the future, global collaboration on AI governance should follow the spirit of respecting sovereignty and cultural diversity, and aim to achieve the greatest balance between security and development, so that AI will serve the interests of all humanity.

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