

BUSINESS

No coffee breaks



Humanoid robots work at a booth during a robot pop-up interactive event on Nanjing Road shopping street in Shanghai on Wednesday. The Digital China Summit said the country accounts for 84.7 percent of global humanoid robot shipments, with 14,400 domestic units shipped in 2025 out of the worldwide total of 18,000 units. WANG GANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Debut of full-spectrum hyperspectral satellite to empower commercial aerospace innovation

By REN QI
renqi@chinadaily.com.cn

A significant milestone in China's commercial aerospace sector, the recent successful launch and precise orbital insertion of the Xiguang-1 06 satellite reflect the development of China's industry, underscoring the robust support provided by the local government, experts said.

Developed by Xi'an Zhongke Xiguang Aerospace Technology Group Co Ltd, based in Xixian New Area of Shaanxi province, the satellite was launched aboard the Kuaizhou-11 Y7 carrier rocket from Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in Gansu province.

As China's first and currently the only in-orbit commercial hyperspectral remote sensing satellite with full-spectrum coverage of the 400-2500 nanometers band, the satellite ushers in a new industry era of "full-spectrum precise perception".

Covering the visible to shortwave infrared bands with 26 independent spectral bands, the satellite managed to transmit clear images within 24 hours of entering orbit.

"The satellite functions as if it is performing CT scans on the planet. It doesn't just look at surface morphology, but can analyze material composition, monitor crop health and predict ecological hidden dangers," said Kou Yimin, chief engineer at Zhongke Xiguang Aerospace.

Supported by the Xi'an Institute of Optics and Precision Mechanics of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, the development team achieved independent control over core technologies, adopting an integrated design to significantly reduce weight, lower costs and shorten the development cycle.

The satellite's applications have

already been implemented broadly. In Sichuan and Yunnan provinces, it monitors the growth of characteristic cash crops like tea and traditional Chinese medicinal herbs. In northwestern China's mining areas, it provides early warnings for geological disasters such as landslides, ensuring safe production.

Behind this single satellite's success is the collaborative support of an entire industrial chain. With Zhongke Xiguang Aerospace as the leading enterprise, Xixian New Area has built a complete commercial aerospace ecosystem encompassing upstream new materials, midstream core component manufacturing and downstream data application services.

In the upstream, Shaanxi Pulmei Material Technology Co Ltd focuses on aerospace composite materials.

"We specialize in aerospace-grade heat-resistant and structural materials, with multiple product performances reaching leading domestic levels," said Zhang Xinhang, chairman of the company.

For midstream manufacturing, Shaanxi Weixing Zhihang Technology Co Ltd possesses the capacity to produce 50,000 aerospace boards annually in its 100,000-class clean room. General Manager Zeng Xuan noted their products meet stringent aerospace standards and have supported multiple satellite models with a 100 percent qualification rate.

Downstream, Shaanxi Baota Xingkong Aerospace Technology Co Ltd operates the "Yan'an Constellation" and a big data center, providing standardized products for over 30 industries nationwide and boosting data interpretation

efficiency by over 60 percent.

Such an achievement is inseparable from strong policy guarantees. Xixian New Area has rolled out measures to strengthen policy supply and financial empowerment to back up such projects. Currently, the area hosts 34 enterprises in the aerospace industry chain, achieving an output value of 5.69 billion yuan (\$835.29 million) in 2025.

"The success of this satellite sets another benchmark for the new area to cultivate a more modernized industrial system with new quality productive forces," a spokesperson for Xixian New Area told China Daily.

"We will use this to accelerate the linkage of commercial aerospace, high-end equipment and new materials, contributing the 'Xixian experience' to China's high-quality manufacturing development."

Tech firms spending big on strategic land buys

By CHENG YU
chengyu@chinadaily.com.cn

China's internet giants are ramping up land purchases in major cities, committing more than 15 billion yuan (\$2.2 billion) since late last year in a strategic shift from asset-light leasing to owning property tied to core operations.

Companies including ByteDance and JD have led a fresh wave of land purchases in hubs such as Beijing and Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, signaling a deeper transformation in how China's tech sector manages capital and growth.

The new buying spree is not a traditional real estate play but reflects

a broader move toward heavy-asset ownership. Firms are increasingly seeking to anchor research, data and headquarters functions in self-owned facilities, aligning with long-term industrial strategies rather than short-term property gains, industry experts said.

JD has been among the most active. Last month, a unit of JD spent 1.76 billion yuan to acquire two parcels of land in Beijing E-Town, adjacent to its existing headquarters. The purchase came just one day after its other subsidiary paid 663 million yuan for a commercial site in Hangzhou.

In late 2025, JD secured land in Nanjing and acquired office space in

Hong Kong's Central District for HK\$3.47 billion (\$442.9 million), underscoring a multi-city footprint built in rapid succession.

Other tech majors are following suit. Alibaba Group acquired office space in Hong Kong's Causeway Bay in October 2025 for HK\$7.2 billion, while ByteDance has spent roughly 6.1 billion yuan this year alone on two prime sites in Beijing's Haidian district, a core technology hub.

The pace of investment has accelerated markedly since 2025, with purchases becoming more concentrated and strategic. Unlike earlier, scattered acquisitions of office buildings, the latest deals feature

high self-use ratios, strong links to industrial activity and long-term operational horizons.

Yan Yuejin, deputy head of the E-House China R&D Institute in Shanghai, said: "This is about optimizing balance sheets and hedging against uncertainty. Holding high-quality real estate in core locations can provide stable asset appreciation, especially as property prices have adjusted."

The shift also reflects a redefinition of land use by tech firms. Rather than speculative holdings, companies are developing integrated campuses for research and development, digital industry parks and artificial intelligence computing centers —

High-income status seen around corner

Official data put China's '25 per capita GNI above World Bank's '24 benchmark

By ZHOU LANXU
and OUYANG SHILIA

China is on track to reach high-income status within one to two years, as steady growth and structural upgrading place the country on the cusp of a key developmental milestone, even as external uncertainties add complexity to the outlook, economists said.

"Taking a relatively conservative view, China is likely to reach the threshold of a high-income economy within the next one to two years," said Sun Xuegong, director-general of the department of policy study and consultation at the Chinese Academy of Macroeconomic Research. The academy is affiliated with the National Development and Reform Commission.

Sun said that crossing the threshold would mark "an important milestone" and signal a new phase of development characterized by upgrades to industrial structures and shifts in household consumption patterns, in line with the country's broader push for high-quality growth.

The outlook comes as China is now very close to this key milestone. In the World Bank's classification in July last year, China was ranked as an upper-middle income economy with 2024 per capita gross national income (GNI) at \$13,660, versus the 2024 high-income benchmark of \$13,935.

In 2025, the country's GNI reached 139.4 trillion yuan (\$19.2 trillion), the National Bureau of Statistics said. Using NBS figures, China Daily estimates per capita GNI at 99,109 yuan for 2025, or about \$14,503 at current exchange rates — exceeding the 2024 threshold of \$13,935.

The final classification depends on the updated benchmarks for 2025 and exchange rate adjustments based on the World Bank's calculation method, allowing the next round of income group updates to be released in July to provide a key observation window for assessing whether China formally enters the high-income category.

International institutions share a cautiously optimistic view. Marshall Mills, senior resident representative of the International Monetary Fund in China, said he saw significant potential for further expansion of China's economy as reforms to improve resource allocation and boost consumption could lift annual GDP growth by nearly 0.5 percentage point.

This will help address the challenges of a shrinking labor force and slowing productivity growth and support the country's prospects of reaching high-income status within the next five years, he said.

Beyond headline income levels, economists and policy advisers stressed that sustaining growth after reaching high-income status will be critical. Some economies have struggled with slowing momentum after crossing the threshold.

Sun, from the Chinese Academy of Macroeconomic Research, said

“Taking a relatively conservative view, China is likely to reach the threshold of a high-income economy within the next one to two years.”

Sun Xuegong, director-general of the department of policy study and consultation at the Chinese Academy of Macroeconomic Research

\$19.2 trillion

gross national income of China in 2025, according to the National Bureau of Statistics

the key lies in strengthening innovation capacity, which China has prioritized as a strategic priority. The country's steady rise in the Global Innovation Index rankings — where it ranked 10th in 2025 — reflects significant progress that could help it avoid the so-called middle-income trap.

Equally important is maintaining social stability and improving income distribution, Sun said, adding that advancing common prosperity will be crucial to ensuring long-term, sustainable development after achieving higher income levels.

The outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) has demonstrated China's determination of achieving steady mid-to-long-term growth, reiterating China's goal of achieving "mid-level developed country" status by 2035.

With first-quarter GDP growth resilient at 5 percent despite rising external headwinds, Mao Shengyong, deputy head of the NBS, said that growth driven by technological progress and industrial upgrading will be sustainable going forward.

Zhang Bin, deputy director at the Institute of World Economics and Politics under the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said that given China's current level of industrialization and production capacity, reaching the World Bank's high-income threshold would be a natural outcome.

Crossing the line does not mark the end of development, Zhang said, adding that China's per capita GNI remains far behind the more than \$80,000 in leading advanced economies such as the United States.

"China still faces gaps in frontier technologies and advanced capabilities, requiring continued efforts to catch up with leading economies," he said.

Contact the writers at
zhoulan.xv@chinadaily.com.cn



A file photo shows a horse-themed setup by ByteDance's Douyin in Shanghai on Jan 27. CHEN YUYU / FOR CHINA DAILY

infrastructure viewed as critical to future growth, Yan said.

"Demand from internet companies — often linked to what policymakers called new quality productive

forces — is emerging as a rare source of certainty, particularly in the commercial and R&D segments of major cities still grappling with a property slowdown," he added.