

News on China | No. 21



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Geopolitics

China Delivers 650 Tons of Humanitarian Aid to Lebanon as Israeli Strikes Kill over 2,600 and Displace More Than 1 Million

China delivered 650 tons of humanitarian aid to Lebanon on 4 May 2026 through two shipments handed over at the Port of Beirut. The assistance includes tents, blankets, mattresses, food and medical supplies that will be distributed by Lebanon's Higher Relief Committee to families displaced by Israeli attacks. Lebanese authorities report that Israeli operations have killed more than 2,700 people and injured over 8,300 since March, while more than one million people have been displaced across the country. Beijing's aid arrives amid continuing attacks despite the ceasefire announced on 17 April.

Read More:

- teleSUR, 6 May 2026
- Lebanese National News Agency (via AMAN), 5 May 2026

Beijing Calls US-Israel War on Iran ‘Illegitimate’ as Wang Yi and Araghchi Press for Comprehensive Ceasefire

Iranian Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi held talks in the Chinese capital on 6 May 2026 during his first visit since the 28 February US-Israeli strikes triggered the war. Meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, Araghchi secured Beijing’s renewed support for Iran’s sovereignty and endorsement of Xi Jinping’s four-point Middle East peace proposal. China also publicly called for a comprehensive ceasefire and the swift reopening of the Strait of Hormuz ahead of the 14–15 May Trump-Xi summit, warning that continued escalation threatens regional stability and global trade routes.

Read More:

- Brasil de Fato, 6 May 2026
- Press TV, 6 May 2026



National Politics

Two Former Defence Ministers Sentenced to Death with Reprieve as Anti-Graft Drive Reaches Highest PLA Ranks

A Chinese military court on 7 May sentenced former defence ministers Wei Fenghe and Li Shangfu to death with two-year reprieve for accepting bribes (Li also for offering them), with deprivation of political rights for life and confiscation of all personal property; the suspended sentences will convert to life imprisonment with no commutation or parole. The verdicts are the heaviest imposed on senior PLA officers since China’s 2012 anti-corruption campaign began, demonstrating the campaign’s reach into the highest military ranks and confirming death-with-reprieve as the standard alternative to immediate execution in senior graft convictions.

Read More:

- Xinhua, 7 May 2026
- The Standard, 7 May 2026

China Advances Healthcare Security Reform, Extending Maternity Insurance to 200 Million Flexible Workers

The 22nd session of the Standing Committee of China’s National People’s Congress, held on 27 April 2026, reviewed in second reading a healthcare security law draft that merges the maternity insurance fund with the urban employee basic medical insurance system and further deepens provincial-level pooling. The proposal also encourages commercial health insurance, charitable donations, and mutual aid as complementary layers to public coverage. The reform aims to extend maternity insurance benefits to up to 200 million flexible workers within a system that already covers around 255 million people, strengthening protection for non-standard forms of employment.

Read More:

- Xinhua, 27 April 2026
- CGTN, 30 April 2026

Communist Youth League of China Reaches 78.34 Million Members by End-2025, Reversing a Decade of Contraction

Annual organisational statistics released on 3 May 2026 show that the Communist Youth League of China reached 78.34 million members by the end of 2025, after adding 9.14 million new members during the year. Grassroots units expanded by approximately 753,000 to 5.15 million nationwide, while about 41.83 million members are concentrated in schools, colleges and universities. This represents a year-on-year increase of 3.02 million in the youth segment, marking a return to overall organisational growth after a period of contraction.

Read More:

- Xinhua, 3 May 2026
- China Daily, 3 May 2026



Economy

Commerce Ministry Issues First-Ever Blocking Order Against US Sanctions on Five Petrochemical Refineries over Iran Oil

China's Ministry of Commerce issued on 2 May 2026 its first blocking order under the Rules on Counteracting Unjustified Extraterritorial Application of Foreign Legislation and Other Measures, in force since January 2021. The move nullifies within Chinese jurisdiction US Treasury sanctions targeting Hengli Petrochemical (Dalian) and four Shandong-based independent refiners accused of purchasing Iranian crude. The decision represents the first operational use of China's anti-foreign sanctions blocking mechanism, signaling Beijing's readiness to deploy legal countermeasures against long-arm jurisdiction practices. Ahead of President Trump's forthcoming Beijing visit.

Read More:

- ICIS, 4 May 2026
- Asia Times, 5 May 2026

Indonesia–China Cross-Border QR Payments Go Live, Expanding Regional Local Currency Use

Indonesia and China have launched cross-border QR code payment interoperability, making China the sixth foreign partner connected to Indonesia's QRIS system. The initiative allows payments in Indonesian rupiah and Chinese yuan under the Local Currency Transaction Framework between the People's Bank of China and Bank Indonesia, upgraded in September 2025. Chinese visitors can now pay Indonesian merchants using domestic mobile apps, while Indonesian travellers can do the same in China. The system strengthens bilateral

financial integration and supports broader ASEAN efforts to expand local-currency settlement and reduce reliance on third currencies in cross-border transactions.

Read More:

- South China Morning Post, 4 May 2026
- Xinhua, 1 May 2026



Agriculture and Environment

Q1 Electricity Demand Climbs 5.2% as Renewable Capacity Reaches 2.4 Billion kW, Approaching Half of Power Mix

The China Electricity Council reported on 30 April that China's electricity demand rose 5.2% year-on-year in the first quarter of 2026, while total installed renewable energy capacity reached 2.4 billion kW, approaching half of the country's power mix. Power-sector investment surged 33.4% to 313 billion yuan (US \$45.6 billion), driven by rapid growth in EV charging and battery swapping (+53.8%), internet data services (+44%), and high-tech manufacturing (+8.6%). Non-fossil energy sources now account for around 62% of installed capacity, advancing the 15th Five-Year Plan's dual-carbon transition goals.

Read More:

- People's Daily Online, 30 April 2026
- Carbon Brief, 30 April 2026



Science and Technology

Xi Calls for 'Greater Efforts' on Basic Research as Top Priority of 15th Five-Year Plan

Convening eight leading scientists at a symposium in Shanghai on 30 April, Chinese President Xi Jinping called for intensified efforts on basic research as a central priority in the implementation of the 15th Five-Year Plan. The agenda outlines reforms including failure-tolerant evaluation mechanisms, greater support for younger researchers, diversified funding channels, expansion of major scientific infrastructure, and enhanced international cooperation. The initiative builds on a 2025 baseline in which basic science accounted for 7.08% of total research and development expenditure, a continued push to strengthen China's innovation capacity and scientific self-reliance.

Read More:

- China Daily, 2 May 2026
- South China Morning Post, 1 May 2026

Digital China Summit Reports National AI Compute Reaches 1.88 Million PFLOPS as Inference Data Overtakes Training for First Time

Held in Fuzhou from 29 April to 1 May, the National Data Administration's keynote presented 2025 figures showing China's total data output reaching 52.26 zettabytes, up 27.28% year on year and accounting for 27.44% of global volume. AI-related workloads totaled 199.48 exabytes, while daily AI token processing rose from over 1 trillion at the start of 2025 to around 140 trillion by March 2026. The report also indicated that national AI computing capacity reached 1.88 million PFLOPS, with inference workloads surpassing training for the first time, reflecting a structural shift in China's AI deployment ecosystem.

Read More:

- ECNS, 30 April 2026
- South China Morning Post, 29 April 2026



People's Life and Culture

Hangzhou Court Voids AI-Based Layoffs as Beijing Expands Injury Insurance to 31 Provinces for Platform Workers

A quality-assurance employee – formerly earning 25,000 yuan (US \$3,571) a month before his role was automated and a reassignment cut his pay 40% – won wrongful-dismissal compensation after judges held that adopting AI is a strategic management choice that cannot satisfy Article 40 of the Labor Contract Law's 'major change in objective circumstances' test, dovetailing with the labour ministry's 28 April rollout of pay-per-order injury insurance to all 31 provincial-level regions, a judicial-administrative pairing easing tech-driven displacement anxiety.

Read More:

- Caixin Global, 30 April 2026
- Xinhua, 28 April 2026

Shenzhen's Outdoor Smoke-Free Regime, Backed by Citizen-Reporting App, Faces National Pushback After Bus-Stop Fine Goes Viral

On 24 April a 33-year-old smoker was penalised and reconciled the same night after a Guangming-district dispute, reopening debate over the city's strictest-in-China rules extending bans to outdoor queueing areas and a WeChat tool letting any citizen photograph offenders, splitting opinion between non-smokers cheering progress toward the Healthy China 2030 goal of a 20% adult smoking rate and critics warning of one-size-fits-all enforcement, even as 24 provincial-level units and 254 cities now adopt similar regimes.

Read More:

- Shenzhen Government Online, 25 April 2026
- The State Council of China, 26 May 2024

