

China Business Weekly

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FCCC/EUCBA ACTIVITIES

Luncheon – Ageas in China: Strategy and Outlook – Keynote Speaker: Hans De Cuyper, CEO – 19 March 2026, 12h00 – 'De Warande', Brussels



The Flanders-China Chamber of Commerce (FCCC) is pleased to invite you to a luncheon with **Mr. Hans De Cuyper, CEO of Ageas and Trends Manager of the Year 2025**, recognizing his leadership in transforming the group's strategy and performance. Mr. De Cuyper will share insights on Ageas' positioning in China, including partnerships, growth priorities, and the broader market outlook. The luncheon will take place on **Thursday, 19 March 2026 at 12h00 at De Warande, Zinnerstraat 1, 1000 Brussels.**

Programme

12h00 – 12h30 Registration and networking

12h30 – 12h35 Introduction by **Mr. Philippe Latour, Chairman, Flanders-China Chamber of Commerce**

12h35 – 12h55 Keynote by **Mr. Hans De Cuyper, CEO of Ageas: "Strategy and Outlook of Ageas in China"**

12h55 – 13h30 Q&A session

14h00 End of luncheon

Practical information

Date & time: Thursday 19 March 2026, 12h00

Location: De Warande, Zinnerstraat 1, 1000 Brussels

Price:

- **Members:** €145 excl. 21% VAT (€175.45 incl. VAT)
- **Non-members:** €175 excl. 21% VAT (€211.75 incl. VAT)

Deadline for subscription: 10 March 2026

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PAST EVENTS

Webinar: AI-Driven Digital Ecosystems: Lessons from China's Innovation Practices 26 February 2026



The **Flanders-China Chamber of Commerce (FCCC)** organized a webinar on **AI-Driven Digital Ecosystems: Lessons from China's Innovation Practices** on **26 February 2026**. Mr. **Bo Ji**, Chief Representative for Europe and Assistant Dean of China's leading business school, Cheung Kong Graduate School of Business, shared how pioneering Chinese enterprises such as **Alibaba, Tencent, ByteDance, Huawei, JD.com, Ant Group, and BYD** are building AI-powered digital ecosystems that integrate data, platforms, supply chains, and intelligent decision systems.

A detailed report will follow next week.

INTERESTING STUDY

Study by Silk Road Partners: “From Survival to Success: Adapting Flanders' Business Strategy to the New Reality in China”

Silk Road Partners, in cooperation with the **Flanders-China Chamber of Commerce (FCCC)** and **Flanders Investment and Trade (FIT)**, has published a study in Dutch entitled “**From Survival to Success: Adapting Flanders' Business Strategy to the New Reality in China**”.

This article examines the fundamental challenges that Flemish companies face in China. In addition to the typically cited reasons such as economic slowdown and geopolitical tensions, we emphasize structural changes as the fundamental causes, including the evolution of the labor market, innovation-driven local competition, policy changes, and China's push for outward international investment. We also argue that genuine organizational transformation – rather than traditional strategic responses such as 'exit,' 'hibernation,' 'burrowing in,' or 'risk mitigation' – is the optimal path for Flemish companies to navigate the new reality in and with China. We outline several prerequisites for strategic transformation, emphasizing flexibility, in-depth, information-driven decision-making, a focus on compliance, true localization, and mitigation of geopolitical risks.

Finally, a general framework is provided to define strategic transformation. This begins with a number of fundamental questions and ends with aligning organizational (decision-making) processes with the chosen transformation strategy. As China continues its economic evolution, both European and Flemish companies face a crucial choice: embrace the complexity and opportunities of transformation, or risk being marginalized in and by one of the world's most important markets. The path from survival to success in China's new reality is challenging, but achievable for companies willing to embrace true transformation.

Author: Peter Buytaert, Co-Founder, Silk Road Partners.

A copy of the study is available to FCCC Members by sending an e-mail to info@flanders-china.be

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VIP VISITS

German Chancellor Merz leads business delegation to Beijing and Hangzhou



German Chancellor Friedrich Merz became the first foreign leader to visit China in the Year of the Horse. President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang met and held talks with Merz in Beijing. Together with more than 60 Chinese and German business leaders, Li and Merz also attended the symposium of the China-Germany Economic Advisory Committee. The two countries inked a number of cooperative agreements in green transition, customs, sports and media. They also issued a joint press statement, in which the two sides agreed to properly resolve each other's concerns through dialogue. Speaking to reporters at the end of his trip, Merz said he witnessed and supported the launch of new business partnerships during the visit. "For me, it was important to gain a firsthand impression of the country, including through discussions with government leaders and business representatives," he said, noting that he was impressed by China's high level of technological development, for example "Mercedes-Benz's advances in autonomous driving in China, Unitree's progress in robotics, and companies producing in China for the global market".

Merz said unequivocally that Germany was open to Chinese investment, talked up hi-tech cooperation and made clear that trade barriers would be his last resort. "Because of the sharp increase in Chinese imports, calls for protection are growing louder in Europe. I want to be frank with you, and I already told you this in our conversation earlier: **I want as little protection and safeguarding as possible,**" Merz said in comments directed at Premier Li at a business event. "We want to continue to benefit from open markets. Stronger Chinese domestic demand, perhaps facilitated by a moderate appreciation of your currency, would make it easier to continue trade without such barriers," Merz said, adding

that it is "important to reduce market-distorting subsidies and achieve market consolidation where we see overcapacity. Today, German companies in China are encountering a top-class innovation ecosystem, and we are learning from it. We are also learning from each other. This mutual learning, this mutual improvement, creates growth, creates jobs and creates prosperity on both sides, in both our countries," Merz said.

Chancellor Merz took a special test ride in the new Mercedes-Benz S-Class, experiencing the L2 Urban and Highway Navigation System jointly developed by the German auto company and Chinese technology company Momenta. This intelligent assisted driving system is seamlessly integrated into Mercedes-Benz's proprietary central brain – the Mercedes-Benz Operating System (MB.OS) architecture, connecting driving assistance, the intelligent cockpit, and vehicle control. "China is one of the most important markets for Mercedes-Benz not just in scale but also in its power of innovation," said Oliver Thöne, Member of the Board of Management of the Mercedes-Benz Group responsible for Greater China, noting that over the years, it has established solid footprints in China with its largest production base as well as the most comprehensive research and development (R&D) set-up outside Germany, serving more than seven million customers. "Mercedes-Benz is a traditional manufacturer, while Chinese tech companies have unique strengths in the fields of new energy, artificial intelligence (AI), and driving technologies. The complementary advantages of both sides can effectively revitalize traditional manufacturing," Zhou Mi, Senior Research Fellow at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation commented.

In Hangzhou, Chancellor Merz visited the Chinese robotics company Unitree for a tour and a robotic performance before wrapping up his two-day China visit. Siemens CEO Roland Busch, who was among senior executives from about 30 leading German companies accompanying Merz, said Hangzhou is a highly innovative city – "perhaps the Tech Valley of China". Busch noted that China is seeking to boost productivity through automation and digitalization, areas in which Siemens holds strong global advantages. The integration of industrial software and automation, he said, is fundamental to advanced manufacturing, and Siemens stands ready to support China's high-tech manufacturing agenda. Michael Schumann, Chairman of the German Federal Association for Economic Development and Foreign Trade, said

China's rapid progress in robotics and industrial artificial intelligence – visible during Merz's visit to Unitree – creates significant opportunities to combine German strengths in precision engineering, automation and industrial software with China's scale and speed of technological deployment.

According to China's Ministry of Commerce, in recent years, **annual trade between China and Germany has consistently exceeded USD200 billion**, while two-way investment stock has surpassed USD65 billion. German exports to China have fallen 23% since their 2022 peak, Rhodium Group research found, spearheaded by a 66% drop of German car shipments to the country from 2022 to 2025. At the same time, German companies' investments in China hit a four-year high last year, according to the German Economic Institute, as some big businesses doubled down on Beijing amid global turbulence. China

took over from the United States to become Germany's largest trading partner in 2025, according to Germany's Federal Statistical Office Destatis. China-Germany trade totaled €251.8 billion in 2025, rising 2.1% year-on-year, while trade with the U.S. fell 5% on a yearly basis.

Feng Zhongping, Director of the Institute of European Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said **Merz's visit showed a return to a pragmatic and rational approach in Germany's China policy**. "Merz's visit sent a signal that as the world's third-largest economy, Germany sees broad space for cooperation with China, the second-largest economy, and is seeking to expand cooperation grounded in mutual benefit," Feng said.

This overview is based on reports by the China Daily, Global Times, and South China Morning Post.

AUTOMOTIVE

China becoming strategic focus for German carmakers



China is becoming a strategic focus for German carmakers including BMW, Mercedes-Benz and Volkswagen. These companies have spared no effort in expanding production and R&D capabilities, while strengthening collaboration with Chinese tech companies, universities and supply chain partners. This not only reflects their long-term confidence in the Chinese market, but also promotes mutual benefits between the two countries' automotive sectors. Industry experts said that this collaboration is rooted in complementary strengths: Germany's prowess in precision manufacturing dovetails with China's advantages in intelligent design and electrification, and this synergy is driving the global automotive industry's transformation forward. Even in the face of geopolitical and trade challenges, the Sino-German automotive collaboration remains robust, as evidenced by events such as the IAA Mobility 2025 in Munich, where automakers from both nations demonstrated their unwavering commitment to cooperation and mutual benefit.

BMW has taken a proactive stance in deepening its roots in China. In February at the BMW Group 2026 Media Family Banquet, Jochen Goller, Member of the Board of Management of BMW, reaffirmed the resilience and robustness of the Chinese market. The company's confidence was backed by actions in R&D, production and

partnerships. BMW has established its largest R&D network outside Germany in China, featuring four innovation hubs and three software companies, which enables the group to quickly capture and precisely respond to Chinese customers' needs. For instance, BMW-ArcherMind (Nanjing) focuses on intelligent vehicle software and possesses full-stack development capabilities for intelligent connected vehicles. In 2025, BMW also launched its self-developed AI agent platform, Gaia, in China. By empowering employees and reshaping business processes, Gaia not only ensures superior product quality, but also continuously enhances operational efficiency and customer experience. In terms of production, the BMW Shenyang production base in Liaoning province has seen cumulative investment exceeding CNY116 billion since 2010, setting a benchmark for intelligent manufacturing. In 2025, the base's Lydia Site at the Tiexi plant launched trial production of the BMW iX3 Long Wheelbase, the first mass-production model of BMW's Neue Klasse series.

Meanwhile, preparations for the mass production of the BMW sixth-generation battery project are progressing, supporting production for domestically produced Neue Klasse models. BMW is also advancing collaboration with Chinese partners. It is pushing forward the mass production of large cylindrical cells with suppliers such as CATL and Eve Energy, integrating AI Large Language Models into its vehicles through cooperation with Alibaba, and developing intelligent driving solutions tailored for Chinese road conditions in partnership with Momenta.

Volkswagen Group has also stepped up its localization efforts in China, with a focus on R&D and innovation.

In November, Volkswagen Group China Technology Co put its new test workshops into operation in Hefei, Anhui province. It makes China the first country outside Germany where Volkswagen can conduct end-to-end new vehicle platform development, from early development to validation, compliance approval and production readiness.

Covering around 100,000 square meters and housing more than 100 laboratories, the new Hefei workshops support software-hardware integration, battery and power train testing, and full-vehicle validation, including road-condition simulations and real-world verification on an urban test track. Volkswagen stated that this expanded capacity will cut overall vehicle development time by 30%, accelerate the rollout of the China Electronic Architecture, and enable faster delivery of smart cockpit functions, advanced driver assistance systems, and over-the-air upgrades for China-focused models. Ralf Brandstaetter, the Volkswagen Board Member responsible for China, said: “China is the world’s most competitive automotive market, and our customers here expect rapid innovation and flawless quality. By expanding our footprint in Hefei, we are strengthening our ability to respond quickly to local needs and to shape technologies directly where they will be used.” Volkswagen Group, which is undergoing an aggressive transformation in China, plans to launch over 20 new energy models in 2026. By 2027, its brands will introduce more than 30

electrified models in China, and by 2030, this number is expected to reach approximately 50, including about 30 purely electric vehicles.

Mercedes-Benz has also maintained its commitment to long-term investment in China. At the China Development Forum in March 2025, Ola Kaellenius, Chairman of the Board of Management of Mercedes-Benz, said: “We remain committed to long-term investment in China, which is a main pillar of our global strategy and a key driver of our electric and digital transformation.” Over the past five years, the automaker has invested CNY10.5 billion in China to accelerate the localization of advanced technologies and products at “Chinese speed”. Kaellenius noted that Mercedes-Benz will continue to increase localization efforts, investing more than CNY14 billion with Chinese partners to enrich its localized product portfolio. This year, the brand plans to introduce over 15 new and face-lifted products to the Chinese market, covering entry-level, mainstream and high-end luxury segments, along with various powertrains, the China Daily reports.

ROBOTICS

First 7S humanoid robot store opened in Wuhan



China’s first-ever 7S humanoid robot store officially opened for business in Wuhan, capital of Hubei province, as two 1.3-meter-tall humanoid robots sprang to life, twisting and turning in perfect sync to a rhythmic beat. Much like the automotive 4S shops, this novel concept aims to be a one-stop hub. But instead of cars, it focuses on humanoid robots. The 7S model builds on the traditional automobile **4S concept, namely sales, service, spare parts and surveys, by adding solution, show and school functions**, thereby covering the entire industry chain from components and whole machines to scenario-based applications. Since opening in November 2025, this store in Wuhan, run by the Hubei Humanoid Robot Innovation Center, has become a landmark shopping mall in the Wuhan East Lake High-Tech Development Zone, also known as “Optics Valley of China”, a tech hub in Hubei.

China’s humanoid robot industry saw significant growth

throughout 2025, backed by national and local government mid-to-long-term plans targeting it as a strategic sector. The 7S store represents a pioneering step in exploring viable commercial models and market acceptance for this transformative technology. “In nearly two months, we’ve received approximately 18,000 visits, becoming a popular tech destination in Wuhan for both locals and tourists,” said store manager Hu Longdan. “Cumulative revenue has reached almost CNY615,000. Humanoid robots are very popular for rentals, having served 10 plus commercial events, while experience projects featuring robot dogs and robot soccer have become major attractions for the youth,” Hu said. Inside the bustling store, robots of various sizes and shapes demonstrate their capabilities: some play soccer, others serve as retail assistants, while another group plays musical instruments. **“We have 17 different models of humanoid robots here, priced from CNY149 to CNY700,000.** They can be deployed in over 10 scenarios including industrial manufacturing, cultural tourism guidance, elderly care, and special operations,” said Hu.

China has intensified its efforts to foster future industries like embodied AI, as outlined in the proposals for the formulation of the country’s 15th Five Year Plan (2026-30). The goal is to cultivate new economic growth engines through technological innovation and market exploration. The 7S store in Wuhan is part of a national wave of robot-themed retail experiments to promote real-life application of humanoid robots, a key phase for the development of the industry. A think tank report forecasts that **by 2045, China will have over 100 million humanoid robots deployed across industries**, creating a total market value of approximately CNY10 trillion. In July last year, a 6S robot store, said to be the world’s first, opened in

Shenzhen, a tech hub in Guangdong province.

A month later, Beijing's Robot Mall, a 4,000-square-meter 4S robot showroom, debuted during a robot consumption festival, featuring more than 50 products spanning medical, industrial and companion robotics. The Wuhan store, notably, features a schooling function, addressing the "last mile" of skill development, thus standing out when compared to its peers. This means the Wuhan store is not just a sales venue, but also a "hands-on experience center" offering interactive engagement and skills enhancement. Staff members highlight that the store provides robotics operator training, maintenance technician certification and introductory courses for teenagers. In addition, corporate engineers can acquire practical skills in operating and maintaining humanoid robots on-site, while middle school students can learn programming and logic through hands-on activities. "We've held over 20 sessions, including eight operator training sessions, 12 youth courses and two teacher training events, involving over 1,000 participants," said Hu. About 65% of the trainees are youths, primarily students building foundational skills. Professionals, like engineers and teachers, accounting for 35%, seek operational and maintenance expertise. Over 50 professionals, meanwhile, have gained basic robot

operation skills via the store programs, Hu revealed.

The store exemplifies the region's integrated supply chain. A key attraction near the store entrance is Yuan You, meaning "far traveler" in English, which is a wheel-footed robot standing 158 centimeters tall and weighing 72 kilograms. "It can walk 1.5 meters per second and has been 'working' for nine months at a hospital in Xianning of Hubei, providing guidance, explanations and even moxibustion therapy services." Yuan Chao, General Manager of the Wuhan HandX Innovation Technology Co., developer of Yuan You, noted that a team from the prestigious Wuhan University had provided both solutions for sensors and AI technology for this robot, while Hubei's local industrial chain supplied over 80% of the hardware. "Hubei has roughly 20 core humanoid robot supply chain enterprises and nearly a thousand related firms, allowing us to procure key components like the 'brain,' 'skeleton' and 'electronic skin,'" Yuan added, as reported by the China Daily.

Meanwhile, China took a significant step toward regulating its rapidly growing humanoid robotics industry with the release of the country's first national standard system covering the entire industrial chain and lifecycle of humanoid robots and embodied artificial intelligence (AI).

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CHINA NEWS ROUND-UP

U.S. Supreme Court decision gives China temporary tariff respite

The decision by the U.S. Supreme Court to invalidate tariffs imposed by President Donald Trump has given China a temporary respite, although Trump announced that he would immediately impose a 10% tariff on all countries – later increased to 15%, the maximum allowed under Section 122 of the 1974 Trade Act, and limited to 150 days.

China's sprawling export sector is eyeing a brief window of opportunity to front-load shipments to the United States, even as industry insiders remain wary of potential shocks ahead. All eyes are now on the coming Beijing summit, where U.S. President Donald Trump is set to meet President Xi Jinping in a visit that could prove decisive for the future of bilateral trade, analysts and exporters said. The White House has announced that **President Trump will travel to China from March 31 to April 2**, his first trip to the country since returning to power in early 2025.

U.S. tariffs on Chinese imports comprised five layers – 2.5% most-favored-nation tariffs, 8.4% Section 301 tariffs, 11% Section 232 tariffs, 10% fentanyl tariffs, and 5.1% "reciprocal" tariffs – totaling 37%, according to calculations by Guosheng Securities. The Supreme Court ruling invalidates the fentanyl tariffs and the "reciprocal" tariffs on

China, cutting the baseline rate to 21.9%. But the addition of the new 15% "global tariff" again pushes up the **composite rate to about 28.6%**, Guosheng Securities noted..

Analysts also cautioned that longer-lasting, potentially higher tariffs could still be imposed under Section 301 – used to address trade practices deemed unfair – or Section 232, which invokes national security concerns. China's "small parcel" e-commerce exporters did not stand to benefit from the Supreme Court ruling, as the suspension of the duty-free *de minimis* exemption for low-value shipments remains in place. Chinese exporters are already ramping up production to front-load goods exports to the U.S. China's Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) said it was conducting a comprehensive assessment of the implications of the U.S. Supreme Court ruling. "We have also noted that the U.S. side is preparing alternative measures, such as trade investigations, in an effort to maintain tariffs imposed on trading partners. China will closely monitor this and firmly safeguard its own interests," the Ministry said. Mainland China and Hong Kong stand to benefit the most among Asian economies from the effective decline in U.S. tariffs, as the 10% fentanyl tariff had been applied universally to all exports. By contrast, the new tariff does not apply to "critical goods" sectors, such as critical minerals and pharmaceuticals, according to Goldman Sachs, as reported by the South China Morning

Post.

The Global Times adds that a Spokesperson of the Ministry of Commerce said that China has consistently opposed all forms of unilateral tariff measures and urges the U.S. side to cancel and refrain from imposing any such unilateral tariffs, noting that practice has repeatedly proven that cooperation between China and the U.S. benefits both sides, while confrontation harms both.

Inexpensive EVs from Geely and Wuling dominate the Chinese market

Amid intensifying competition among Chinese electric-vehicle (EV) makers last year, **relatively inexpensive models from Geely Auto and Wuling Motor Holdings topped the sales chart, surpassing sales by BYD and Tesla.** In 2025, Geely sold more than 459,000 units of the Xingyuan EV – priced between CNY68,800 and CNY98,800 – versus 52,570 a year earlier, according to a list of the top-selling battery EV models compiled by the China Automotive Technology and Research Center. It was followed by Wuling's Hongguang Mini EV, whose sales jumped 55% year-on-year to 427,000 units. Tesla's Model Y ranked third, although sales fell nearly 21% year-on-year to 382,300 units, indicating intense rivalry among EV makers. BYD's Seagull, the second-best selling EV in 2024, slid to fourth place in 2025 after sales declined 31% year-on-year to 307,000 units. The car is priced between CNY69,800 and CNY85,800.

China's policymakers have repeatedly urged carmakers to stop resorting to discounts amid deflationary pressures, urging companies to shift to alternatives like pricing upgraded models at lower levels and rolling out subsidized purchase schemes with payment periods as long as seven years. In mid-February, the State Administration for Market Regulation (SAMR) banned carmakers from selling new cars for less than the cost of production, including through discounts and subsidies, signaling a tough stance in tackling deflationary pressures. Demand for EVs in China plummeted to a concerning level at the beginning of the year, according to Nomura. **Monthly sales of passenger EVs stood at 596,000 units in January, a decline of nearly 20% year-on-year,** while EV penetration dropped to 38.3%, according to a report by the Japanese bank on February 16, which noted that the phasing out of tax incentives could be one of the factors.

Since January, Chinese EV buyers are subject to a 5% tax, versus zero previously. In 2028, the tax will return to 10%. The stellar sales of the budget EVs could partly be attributed to the upgrades of the low-priced models, with carmakers luring buyers with higher quality vehicles without increasing prices, according to David Zhang, Secretary General of the International Intelligent Vehicle Engineering Association.

Geely's Xingyuan has a driving range of 310 km to 410 km, versus 305 km to 405 km for BYD's Seagull, though both have a similar price range. "Chinese EV makers are under pricing pressures despite the regulatory directives," said Gary Ng, Senior Economist at Natixis Corporate and Investment Bank. "The phase-out of the purchase tax exemption will force some manufacturers to decrease their inventories faster." But the decline in sales of the Seagull,

BYD's cheapest model, might be a good sign, Ng said, as it seems to be repositioning its business amid a profit squeeze. China's largest EV seller and one of the few profitable EV makers reported a 32% slump in its third-quarter net profit for 2025, the South China Morning Post reports.

China to expand services imports

China has published an updated catalog aimed at expanding services imports. According to details published by the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM), the government will encourage the import of research and development (R&D), design, testing, intellectual property and digital technology services to strengthen innovation capacity, accelerate industrial upgrading and advance the ongoing green and low-carbon transition. The revisions were made by multiple authorities, including the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM), the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) and the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT). Priority is given to services related to urgent domestic demand that can support the development of new quality productive forces and improve people's quality of life, such as services in energy conservation, resource recycling, environmental governance and climate solutions, including pollution control, ecological restoration, carbon reduction and the circular economy. The catalog also promotes the import of consulting, supply chain management, green building, healthcare and rehabilitation services.

China's trade in services reached CNY8.08 trillion in 2025, up 7.4% year-on-year, while its services imports stood at CNY4.46 trillion, rising 2.5% on a yearly basis. Imports of knowledge-intensive services reached CNY1.26 trillion last year, up 1.3% year-on-year. Noting that China's continued expansion of services imports signals its shift from a major goods exporter to a key driver of global value chain collaboration, Denis Depoux, Managing Director of management consultancy Roland Berger, said that producer services are emerging as a key accelerator for the high-quality development of the real economy across China. "In regions with strong industrial foundations, producer services should be leveraged to extend the value chains of leading manufacturing sectors both upstream and downstream, while also facilitating these chains' own transition toward higher-end capabilities and fostering a new wave of horizontal clustering," said Depoux.

Also encouraged by China's latest push to promote trade in services, Poh-Yian Koh, President of FedEx China, said the United States-based express transportation services provider will also deepen its footprint in the country. Operating more than 300 international flights to and from China each week, Koh said that the country serves as one of the key engines of global trade and an integral part of FedEx's global strategy. "We are dedicated to making supply chains smarter for all our customers, and strengthening connections between China and the rest of the world in the logistics sector," she said. "By leveraging our extensive global air and ground networks and smart digital solutions, we look forward to empowering Chinese customers to grow to the next level," Koh said, as reported by the China Daily.

China's first quantum computing OS available for download

China's first domestically developed quantum computer operating system, Origin Pilot, has been made available for online download, the Anhui Quantum Computing Engineering Research Center announced. A Chinese scientist said while several quantum computing operating system efforts are underway worldwide, this is the first developed in China where it is seen as part of China's broad effort to achieve technology independence and to achieve technology advance in quantum computing. The center said the release marks the world's first open-source quantum computer operating system available for public download, which is expected to lower development barriers and support the growth of China's quantum computing ecosystem. Developed by Hefei-based Origin Quantum Computing Technology Co, the company behind China's third-generation superconducting quantum computer, Origin Wukong, Origin Pilot was first launched in 2021 and has gone through multiple rounds of iteration and upgrade.

The developer describes it as an integrated quantum-classical-intelligent computing operating system compatible with major hardware approaches, including superconducting qubits, trapped ions and neutral atoms. It is now deployed on the company's Origin Wukong series and is available to external users, the company said. Guo Guoping, Chief Scientist of Origin Quantum and Director at the Anhui Quantum Computing Engineering Research Center, told the Global Times that a quantum operating system is the soft heart of the quantum computing ecosystem. He said the decision to make Origin Pilot available globally marks a shift in China's quantum computing industry from closed-door tech innovation to broader open-source ecosystem development.

A quantum computer operating system manages core functions such as resource scheduling and hardware-software coordination. According to the research center, Origin Pilot supports capabilities central to practical quantum computing deployment, including parallel execution of quantum tasks and automatic qubit calibration, which will significantly improve overall system efficiency.

Globally, there is not yet a widely adopted quantum computer operating system available for local deployment or download, the center said. Major U.S. companies such as IBM and Google provide quantum programming frameworks and cloud services, but their underlying operating systems have not been made publicly downloadable. Dou Menghan, head of the research team, said that users can download the operating system from the official website. "Users can quickly integrate it with quantum chips of multiple physical types and, using autonomous programming frameworks such as Qpanda, and execute quantum computing jobs across different physical quantum chips to support both research and commercialization needs," Dou told the Global Times.

McDonald's and Yum report growth in China

Fast food restaurant chains McDonald's and Yum China posted growth in the Chinese market in 2025, boosted by aggressive expansion, same-store sales growth, and an increasing reliance on delivery services. McDonald's International Developmental Licensee segment, which covers the Chinese market performance, saw particularly strong growth in comparable sales, increasing by 4.6% for the full year and 4.5% in the fourth quarter. Currently, McDonald's holds a 48% stake in McDonald's China, with the remaining 52% held by the CITIC Consortium led by CITIC Capital. The company saw **over 1,000 new restaurant openings in China in 2025** and plans to open a further 1,000 new restaurants this year. Ian Borden, McDonald's Chief Financial Officer (CFO), said that the company was able to maintain its market share in the country. "We now have a presence in every province," Borden said. As of the end of 2025, McDonald's operated over 7,740 restaurants in China. The company also continues to expand, with plans to reach 10,000 restaurants in the country by 2028. Globally, McDonald's opened 2,275 new restaurants in 2025.

Competitor Yum China posted a 9% increase in total revenue for the fourth quarter of 2025, reaching USD2.8 billion, with systemwide sales growing by 7%. Same-store sales increased by 3% and operating profit surged 25% to USD187 million. For the full year, Yum China's total revenue grew by 4% to USD11.8 billion, with systemwide sales rising by 4% and same-store sales up by 1%. One of the standout trends for Yum China has been the rapid expansion of its delivery business, which grew by 25% year-on-year and now represents nearly 48% of the company's restaurant revenue, up from 39% in 2024. Its KFC and Pizza Hut brands both saw significant delivery growth in 2025, with KFC's delivery sales increasing by 26% and Pizza Hut's by 22% compared to a year earlier.

According to a survey conducted by the China Chain Store and Franchise Association in early January, nearly half of the enterprises in the chain catering industry rely heavily on delivery orders. Among the surveyed companies, 44.6% reported that delivery orders accounted for over 30% of their total orders, while 17.4% even saw delivery orders exceed 50%. An excessively high proportion of delivery orders poses a potential risk of diverting revenue from dine-in services, the report said. Yum's Lavazza coffee chain continued to expand, reaching 146 locations by year-end, up from 112 the previous year. As of December 31, Yum China had a total of 18,101 restaurants in operation and is on track to expand its store count to over 30,000 by 2030, the China Daily reports.

China's Harbour BioMed and Solstice sign agreement to commercialize antibody outside China

China's Harbour BioMed has struck a deal worth more than USD1.2 billion with Solstice Oncology, a clinical-stage biotechnology company, to develop and commercialize the antibody HBM4003 outside China. Under the agreement, Harbour BioMed stands to receive

USD50 million in upfront payments, USD5 million in near-term cash payments and more than USD50 million of equity in Solstice, as well as up to USD1.1 billion for additional development, regulatory and commercial milestones. The partnership reflected Harbour BioMed's "significant reputation in the discovery and development of novel therapeutic antibodies", said Wang Jingsong, the firm's Founder, Chairman and CEO. "The structure goes beyond a traditional licensing transaction," he added. "We are participating in the building of a global biotechnology company alongside experienced investors, focused on the development of HBM4003, one of our leading antibody programs."

The company's antibody program aimed to enable tumor-killing effects and support the development of innovative biologics for immunological and inflammatory diseases, according to a press release. Last month, **Harbour BioMed increased its stake in U.S.-based Spruce Biosciences** by exercising warrants granted under a licensing agreement, giving it about 3.8% of Spruce's total outstanding shares. Analysts said the deals reflected Chinese biotech's push for joint development with global partners. Earlier this month, Innovent Biologics, based in Jiangsu province, reached an agreement to collaborate with Eli Lilly to develop new medicines globally in oncology and immunology.

Under the agreement, Innovent would receive a USD350 million upfront payment and would be eligible to receive development, regulatory and commercial milestone payments of up to USD8.5 billion, according to its Hong Kong stock exchange filing.

Also in February, **Shanghai Henlius Biotech**, a unit of Fosun Pharma, **reached a deal to license its home-grown cancer drug to Japan's Eisai**, which will pay USD75 million for exclusive rights to commercialize serplulimab and co-exclusive rights to develop and manufacture it in Japan. The Fosun unit is also eligible for up to USD80 million in regulatory milestones, as much as USD233 million tied to annual net sales, and double-digit royalties on future revenue. **SanogeneBio**, a clinical-stage biotechnology firm operating in the U.S. and China, **signed a global licensing agreement with Genentech**, a member of Swiss multinational Roche Group, to advance one of its experimental programs targeting disease-related genes. For up to USD1.7 billion in upfront and milestone payments, plus tiered royalties, SanogeneBio granted Genentech exclusive worldwide rights to develop and commercialize the product.

Last year, Chinese drug makers signed a record USD136 billion worth of out-licensing deals across 157 transactions, compared with 94 transactions worth USD51.9 billion in 2024, the South China Morning Post reports.

Comprehensive bonded zone in Xiong'an becomes fully operational

The comprehensive bonded zone in the Xiong'an New Area in Hebei province has begun full operations. "As a special customs supervision area offering the highest level of openness and the most favorable policies, the fully operational bonded zone will serve the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei coordinated development strategy

and promote the construction of Xiong'an New Area as a modern city with high standards and quality," said Zhang Jing, Deputy Director of the Administrative Committee of the Xiong'an Free Trade Zone. The newly launched second phase, covering 0.21 square kilometers, will focus on high-end manufacturing, smart logistics, research and development design, as well as inspection and maintenance. The area will combine the bonded zone and the free trade zone, cultivating "bonded-plus" business models, and building an internationally influential trade hub, according to Zhang.

Established with the State Council's approval in June 2023, the bonded zone consists of two phases. The first phase began operations in January 2024 and has made progress in customs clearance reforms and the development of bonded businesses. The bonded zone recorded more than CNY60 billion in total import and export value last year. It has attracted major enterprises. The zone has also piloted clearance models such as direct loading for exports and streamlined inspection for imports, Zhang said. Yuan Longzhou, Deputy General Manager of Xiong'an Electronic Port Co, which operates cross-border e-commerce businesses in the zone, said authorities have provided support, including warehouse rent subsidies and assistance with local hiring. Li Yufeng, Deputy Director of Xiong'an Customs, said the zone has registered 121 enterprises to date, including 47 customs-registered companies and three subsidiaries of central state-owned enterprises (SOEs). Industrial projects have attracted CNY520 million in investment.

"Customs will upgrade supervision services, implement one-stop clearance procedures, improve logistics connectivity with surrounding ports, and use technologies including the Internet of Things (IoT) and blockchain to build smart customs systems with digital supervision models, further optimizing the business environment," Li said, as reported by the China Daily.

Battery breakthrough paving way for EV upgrade

Chinese scientists have developed a lithium metal battery with an energy density of more than 700 watt-hours per kilogram and stable performance at extremely low temperatures, marking significant progress in the production of high-energy batteries for electric vehicles (EVs). The research paper was published last week in the science journal Nature. Chen Jun, Academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) and Vice President of Nankai University in Tianjin, was among the researchers who led the breakthrough. Chen said the team has replaced oxygen atoms with fluorine ones. It designed and synthesized novel fluorinated hydrocarbon solvent molecules, creating a new electrolyte system based on lithium-fluorine coordination. Laboratory tests showed that the battery could achieve an energy density above 700 watt-hours per kilogram, maintaining nearly 400 Wh/kg at -50°C. Energy density and the performance at low-temperatures are the biggest bottlenecks hindering the widespread adoption of EVs, Chen said.

To address this challenge, his team redesigned the battery

electrolyte at the molecular level. By developing fluorinated hydrocarbon solvent molecules and establishing a lithium-fluorine coordination system, the researchers improved ion transfer and enabled stable operation at ultrahigh energy densities and extremely low temperatures. “High-energy batteries using this electrolyte have vast potential in new energy vehicles, embodied intelligent robots and the low-altitude economy, as well as in polar regions, aerospace and aviation,” he said. Chen’s team has also made significant progress in advancing cutting-edge technologies toward practical applications. Earlier this month, the team collaborated with Chinese automaker Hongqi to release a mass-producible ultra-high energy density lithium-rich manganese solid-liquid battery system. The system has a cell energy density exceeding 500 Wh/kg, which translates into a driving range of more than 1,000 kilometers on a single charge.

Yan Zhenhua, Professor at Nankai University’s College of Chemistry, said that in comparison, current mainstream lithium-ion batteries typically offer energy densities of 160 to 300 Wh/kg, support vehicle driving ranges of up to about 800 kilometers per charge, and operate reliably at temperatures between -20°C and -30°C. He said the vehicle-mounted battery “not only achieves a leap in energy density but, more importantly, solves the high-cost and high-risk challenges associated with lithium metal batteries, significantly enhancing cycle life and intrinsic safety”. Lu Tianjun, Party Secretary and General Manager of China Automotive New Energy Battery Technology Co, said that vehicles equipped with the batteries and capable of exceeding 1,000 kilometers per charge are expected to enter mass production by the end of this year, the China Daily reports.

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