

CHINA

FROM THE GRASSROOTS

Couriers help drive Spring Festival sales

Shipping surge boosts consumption; tech bolsters express delivery sector

By LUO WANGSHU

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As Spring Festival, also known as Chinese New Year, approaches, the roads, rail lines and conveyor belts of China's delivery network are filling with an annual tide of packages — boxes of snacks, flowers, cakes and gifts moving across thousands of kilometers, from megacities to villages, from coastal workplaces to inland homes.

This year, the Spring Festival holiday falls on Feb 17, ushering in a weeklong public holiday from Feb 15 to 23 — a period marked by family reunions, travel and a surge in consumption. For many families, courier services have simplified holiday preparations.

Shao Fang, who works in Hainan province and is originally from Zhumadian in Central China's Henan province, recently sent several boxes of nuts, snacks and cakes back home. On previous occasions, Shao would return to her hometown early to prepare for the holiday. But this year, she ordered everything online.

"There's no need to go back early to prepare anymore," she said. "I just sent everything ahead, and when I get home, I can focus on being with my family."

Across China, similar parcels are moving in massive volumes. In warehouses, conveyor belts run continuously. In residential compounds, delivery workers stack and sort piles of boxes by building and floor, preparing routes that will carry packages to millions of households before the holiday.

At an e-commerce warehouse in the city of Luoyang, Henan, productivity has doubled. Workers pack a variety of boxes as orders flow in from across the country.

"Sales during the Spring Festival shopping season are about twice the normal levels," said Ma Jun, a manager at the warehouse. "As we approach the holiday, volumes keep rising. Toward the end of January, they reached three to four times the usual levels."

On ordinary days, the warehouse processes about 30,000 orders daily. During the peak holiday period, that number rises to 60,000 and is expected to exceed 100,000 in the days preceding the festival, with more than 80 percent of the orders handled by J&T Express.

While packaged food items account for much of the volume, other categories have become increasingly prominent, including fresh flowers and regional specialty products. In Luoyang, the Tuqiao community has become a hub for peonies, a traditional Spring Festival decoration.

Wei Linqiang, 52, a local farmer and livestream seller, once sold his flowers mainly through offline exhibitions, reaching nearby cities like Zhengzhou and Wuhan, Hubei province. Transportation was his biggest obstacle; the flowers were fragile, and long-distance shipping often resulted in damaged buds and wilted leaves.

That has changed. Today, Wei ships peonies nationwide through livestream sales and e-commerce platforms. His greenhouse opera-

tion has expanded from three sheds to eight. Annual output now reaches about 6,000 pots, with online orders accounting for roughly 40 percent of sales. Customers come from more than 20 provincial regions, and some overseas buyers place orders through forwarding services.

The growing scale of Spring Festival deliveries reflects bigger changes in China's logistics and consumption patterns, said Liu Jiang, director of strategic planning research at the State Post Bureau of China.

"In recent years, the scale economies of China's postal and express delivery sector have continued to strengthen," Liu said. "The Spring Festival shipping surge not only directly boosts retail, warehousing and transportation, but has also become an important force in expanding domestic consumption."

Managing the surge has required increasingly sophisticated coordination. In 2025, China processed nearly 199 billion parcels, a 13.6 percent increase from 2024, generating 1.5 trillion yuan (\$216 billion) in revenue. At its peak, more than 777 million packages moved through the network.

At a J&T Express outlet in Luoyang, daily delivery volumes during the 2026 Spring Festival shopping season have risen about 30 percent year over year, according to Li Shaopeng, the site manager. The station has added extra shifts and increased vehicle frequency. Deliveries that once ran twice a day now run three times daily.

The outlet introduced two autonomous delivery vehicles this year to ease pressure on frontline couriers. Driverless carts transport parcels between sorting centers and pickup points, handling more than 3,000 packages a day along fixed routes.

At the national level, the delivery surge is part of a managed seasonal cycle. The bureau has designated the upcoming Spring Festival holiday travel period — from Feb 2 to March 13 — as a key service window, requiring companies to forecast volumes and maintain basic coverage. The plan also emphasizes worker protections, including rest periods, overtime pay and holiday compensation.

"Couriers also deserve their own moments of reunion," said Liu Ying, a spokeswoman for the bureau. "Companies are required to strike a balance between meeting basic delivery needs and respecting workers' expectations to spend the holiday with their families."

When the holiday ends and people return to work, delivery volumes are expected to rebound quickly, prompting companies to prepare staffing in advance.

For the delivery system, Spring Festival now functions as both a stress test and a platform to showcase its capabilities. For families, it has reshaped the rhythm of the holiday itself. As millions of packages move across highways and rail lines, the looming Spring Festival holiday is no longer measured only in train ticket sales — but in tracking numbers and the steady knock of courier workers at the door.

Gallop of winter



Herders ride horses into the opening ceremony of the finals of the Winter Mongolian Horse Super League at Xiliin Gol League, Inner Mongolia autonomous region, on Sunday. The event draws more than 300 riders across Xiliin Gol League, highlighting the region's growing "tourism + horse industry" model, which is driving tourism development, increasing herders' incomes and advancing the modernization of the horse industry. LYU HAOJUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

AI innovations to bolster Xizang's digital economy

By PALDEN NYIMA and DAQIONG in Lhasa

The Xizang autonomous region is poised to accelerate its digital transformation and promote high-tech industries under its ambitious plans for 2026.

The plans were outlined in the 2026 Xizang government work report, released at the region's annual legislative session on Saturday. The report highlights efforts to strengthen the digital economy, expand artificial intelligence applications and preserve Tibetan culture through advanced technology.

Presenting the report, Karma Tsetan, chairman of the region, emphasized efforts to modernize service industries and advance computing power infrastructure. He said the region will focus on integrating digital and intelligent technologies such as AI.

A key contributor to this vision is Xizang Jueluo Digital Industry Management Co, a leading local company specializing in Tibetan-language AI technology and data asset management. The company has played a major role in advancing the "digital Xizang" initiative and promoting the digital preservation of Tibetan culture.

After eight years of development in data integration and high-quality database construction, the company unveiled its flagship product,

"DeepZang", the first large language model in the Tibetan language.

Tenzin Norbu, president of the company and founder of DeepZang, said the project aligns with trends in the AI era. By leveraging Tibetan-language AI technology, the company aims to apply innovations across key areas including healthcare, education and ecological protection.

He also proposed establishing a national open source data center for Tibetan-Chinese bilingualism to safeguard cultural heritage and promote the growth of Tibetan-related big data.

He recommended that the Xizang regional government work with national authorities, including the National Development and Reform Commission, the Ministry of Education as well as the Cyberspace Administration of China, to launch the initiative as part of China's upcoming 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30).

Over the past year, the company has made significant progress in advancing the region's digital economy. Its achievements include registering data intellectual property rights and developing DeepZang, which supports Tibetan-Chinese bilingual interactions across more than 140 languages.

The company has also built a Tibetan-Chinese parallel corpus of nearly 70 million sentences,

“Xizang's specific needs have inspired technological innovations that bring tangible benefits to society.”

Tenzin Norbu, president of Xizang Jueluo Digital Industry Management Co and founder of DeepZang

achieved Tibetan speech recognition accuracy of more than 98 percent, and completed national registration of Tibetan AI generative algorithms.

"Xizang's specific needs have inspired technological innovations that bring tangible benefits to society," Tenzin Norbu said.

Digital solutions such as smart governance and digital education have supported transformation efforts across 14 regional departments, improving efficiency and connectivity, he added.

With strong central government support and assistive policies, Xizang's digital infrastructure has expanded rapidly in recent years. According to Xizang Daily, during the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-25), the region's digital economy

recorded average annual growth of 10 percent.

During the first three quarters of 2025, the region generated 14 billion yuan (\$2 billion) in digital economy output, a figure projected to exceed 20 billion yuan for the year.

As of October, Xizang was home to 62 large-scale digital economy enterprises, which generated 11.44 billion yuan in revenue between January and October.

The region also has 169 national high-tech enterprises and 22 national-level innovation bases, highlighting the role of digital innovation in economic growth and integration into modern technological trends.

"The region aims to establish five large-scale digital economy enterprises and strengthen its position as a hub for cutting-edge technologies in 2026," Karma Tsetan said.

Chakdrol Drolma, a Tibetan student at Xizang University of Tibetan Medicine, said she believes the development of Tibetan-language AI will help promote traditional culture.

"Making the Tibetan language more widely recognized and used will also help preserve the Tibetan script, allowing it to be used more frequently and preventing it from becoming endangered," she said.

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Robotic sector shifts from prototypes to production

By GUO YANQI

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A newly established pilot manufacturing and validation platform for humanoid robots in Beijing marks a significant transition aimed at shifting the industry from small-batch prototyping to large-scale production.

Launched by the Beijing Innovation Center of Humanoid Robotics on Thursday, the first of its kind facility in the capital is fitted with 500 sets of production and testing equipment, and has an annual pilot production capacity of up to 5,000 embodied humanoid robots.

The center provides one-stop services including prototyping, performance and process validation, module and whole-robot assembly, and testing.

The launch comes as the global humanoid robotic industry moves beyond research and development toward commercial trials. However, the transition from innovation to industrialization remains a significant challenge due to a lack of standardized and efficient pilot manufacturing infrastructure.

"Across the industry, the main bottlenecks lie in pilot manufacturing readiness, standardized production and testing, and the lack of data continuity from development to



Staff members adjust and test humanoid robots inside the pilot-scale validation facility of the Beijing Innovation Center of Humanoid Robotics on Thursday. GAN NAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

scale-up," said Liu Yizhang, head of the pilot platform.

Liu noted that research institutes and startup ventures typically rely on self-developed trial lines that are costly and inefficient. Gaps in standardization make it difficult to ensure consistent quality, while incomplete testing systems can leave risks unaddressed before products reach real-world applications.

These concerns reflect a broader shortage of pilot manufacturing capacity across emerging industries. In November 2025, the Ministry of Industry and Information

Technology identified humanoid robots as a priority area requiring faster construction of validation platforms to convert technological advances into productive capacity.

On Jan 4, the Beijing government stated that a tiered support system would be established for pilot testing platforms, with newly established facilities eligible for subsidies of up to 100 million yuan (\$14.39 million).

The Beijing Innovation Center of Humanoid Robotics designed its new pilot platform as an integrated service facility. It features four core

components: small-batch pilot lines, whole-robot and joint manufacturing demonstration lines, and specialized testing laboratories.

Digitization is a central feature of the facility. Built around a unified master data platform, an integrated digital operation system connects information and logistics, enabling data tracking from the design phase through production and test feedback. This digital framework is intended to shorten iteration cycles from prototype validation to small-batch production.

The center, which covers approximately 9,700 square meters, was commissioned and completed last year. It is located in Beijing's Economic-Technological Development Area, also known as E-town.

The center plans to further expand the platform's capabilities by undertaking national research and development projects.

According to data from the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Economy and Information Technology, the revenue of Beijing's robotics industry grew by nearly 40 percent in the first half of 2025.

The city also ranks first in the country for the number of "little giant" enterprises — small and medium-sized enterprises recognized for being specialized and innovative — within the robotics sector.



Employees sort parcels at an express delivery transfer center in Shijiazhuang's Luancheng district, Hebei province, on Wednesday. LI MINGFA / FOR CHINA DAILY