

CHINA

Opera as a bridge



International entrepreneurs starting their businesses in Wenzhou, Zhejiang province, learn Ouju Opera — a traditional form of Chinese opera originating in Wenzhou — in costume under the guidance of Ouju teachers on Thursday. The event was held to promote cultural exchanges while showcasing the unique charm of the national intangible cultural heritage. SU QIAOJIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

BLUEPRINT INTO ACTION

Beijing eyes 4.5-5% GDP growth

City will focus on modern industrial clusters, enhance role as sci-tech hub

By YANG CHENG and GUO YANQI

Beijing has set an ambitious annual GDP growth target of 4.5 to 5 percent during the 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026-30), with aspirations for even better outcomes, Beijing Mayor Yin Yong said on Friday.

To achieve this goal, the capital will continue to accelerate the development of its competitive, modern industrial clusters, leveraging its technological strength and significant industrial scale advantages, he noted.

The city's initiatives include the upgrading of key industries and quality enhancement in integrated circuits, robotics and intelligent manufacturing, internet-connected vehicles, and space technology, he specified.

Beijing is also anticipating breakthroughs in core technologies of future industries, and scaling their applications in quantum technol-

gy, superconductivity, brain-machine interfaces, and bio-manufacturing, Yin said.

The city will beef up its efforts to promote the coordinated development of innovation, industrial, and supply chains in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region and enhance its role as China's technological and science hub, he added. Its high-tech sectors are expected to benefit not only the region, but the entire country and even overseas.

Li Tianlei, deputy director of the commercial operations division at the Beijing E-Town Robot Technology Industry Development Co, which opened the world's first embodied robot 4S store in the city last year, said, "We are expanding our presence in China and worldwide."

Li said the company has established strategic partnerships in places like Yancheng in Jiangsu province, Shaoxing in Zhejiang province, Xiamen in Fujian prov-

ince, Nanning and Liuzhou in the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, as well as Kashgar in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, aiming to replicate its 4S store model in different places.

"We're also advancing the launch of our 4S stores overseas in Seoul, South Korea, and Singapore, promoting our domestic technology and brand robots internationally," he added.

Yin highlighted that Beijing is also continually optimizing the living environment, and creating a cityscape that better merges ancient historical richness and modern atmosphere.

The city, for instance, is focusing on high-level development of its municipal administrative center in Tongzhou district, eastern Beijing, which began construction 10 years ago.

Li Xiaojiang, an expert from the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei coordinated development expert advisory committee, suggested that in the next five to 10 years, the center should offer a more cost-effective living environment compared to

Beijing's central urban area.

"It should match the central urban area in terms of public services, fully leverage its transportation and location advantages, and continuously create and accumulate urban spaces that offer both cultural quality and experiential appeal," said Li, who is also former president of the China Academy of Urban Planning and Design.

"The center should become a benchmark destination that meets the spiritual and cultural needs of young people and satisfies the public's experiential consumption demands, beyond its value in science innovation and services," he added.

Additionally, Xia Linmao, executive vice-mayor of Beijing, emphasized significant potential and ample space for private capital to join the building of the city, adding that the sector is a fundamental investment need in urban development and a highly valuable policy opportunity.

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Govt pledges to tackle pollution at local levels to build Beautiful China

By HOU LIQIANG

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The Ministry of Ecology and Environment has pledged sustained efforts to tackle environmental problems at people's doorsteps, even as China records continued overall improvements in environmental quality.

At a news conference on Friday, the ministry's spokesman Pei Xiaofei said the country's environmental protection work has made "remarkable progress".

In 2025, the national average concentration of PM2.5 particulate matter reached 28 micrograms per cubic meter, while the proportion of days with fairly good air quality — defined as an air quality index below 100 on a 0-500 scale — rose to 89.3 percent, the best level since monitoring began in 2013.

The water quality of the main stream of the Yangtze River has remained at or above Grade III for six consecutive years, while the Yellow River's main stream has maintained that level for four consecutive years, he said. Water at Grade III quality is considered good enough for most aquatic organisms to live in.

"The achievements are clear for all to see, but the problems cannot be overlooked," Pei said. "At present, many pressing environmental issues still exist right at people's doorsteps."

He said media reports in recent years have exposed pollution in some tributaries and small water bodies, as well as indiscriminate garbage dumping.

"We must view these issues objectively and rationally, neither allowing achievements to overshadow the problems nor denying overall progress because of localized issues," he said.

Pei added that such pollution not only affects people's physical and mental health and quality of life, but also undermines efforts to build a Beautiful China.

He said the ministry has taken a series of measures to address the problems.

So far, it has guided local authorities in addressing violations at about 41,000 sewage outfalls leading into small water bodies, he said.

It has also expanded its surface

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Together with all sectors of society, we will tackle problems one by one and work collectively to turn the grand blueprint of building a Beautiful China into a splendid reality, step by step."

Pei Xiaofei, spokesman of the Ministry of Ecology and Environment

water monitoring network to more than 200 sections, covering poorly performing second- and third-tier tributaries of major rivers, as well as small water bodies.

Since 2021, more than 16,000 heavily polluted water bodies nationwide have been identified and placed under a special rectification program.

By the end of last year, 98.7 percent of 5,042 large rural black and odorous water bodies had been treated. The ministry said it expects such water bodies near rural communities to be essentially eliminated by 2027.

Pei said the ministry will accelerate the release of action plans for protecting and treating water bodies near communities and for improving small rural water systems.

He added that, together with other government departments, the ministry will launch five targeted campaigns, including efforts to address industrial park water pollution and to comprehensively manage livestock and poultry waste.

The ministry will also aim to ensure that water bodies near communities have no abnormal color, no foul odor and no visible floating debris.

"Together with all sectors of society, we will tackle problems one by one and work collectively to turn the grand blueprint of building a Beautiful China into a splendid reality, step by step," he said.

Beating the heat



Residents are clad in protective clothing amid ongoing high temperatures in Liwan district of Guangzhou, Guangdong province, on Friday. A weather station in the district recorded a scorching 41.6 C, the city's highest on that day. CHEN CHUHONG / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Xizang to deepen opening-up, promote foreign trade

By PALDEN NYIMA and DAQIONG in Lhasa

The Xizang autonomous region will deepen reform and opening-up and accelerate efforts to build itself into an important gateway connecting China with South Asia during the 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026-30), regional officials said on Friday.

Speaking at a news conference in Lhasa outlining the region's development blueprint for the next five years, Karma Tsetan, chairman of the regional government, said Xizang will further integrate into both domestic and international markets and actively participate in the high-quality development of the Belt and Road Initiative.

"Xizang will strengthen international cultural exchanges, expand foreign economic and trade cooperation, and strive to establish an open pattern centered on Lhasa, with Chamdo and Shigatse serving as the eastern and western wings,

and multiple ports working in coordination," he said.

Ren Wei, executive vice-chairman of the regional government, said Xizang will improve infrastructure cooperation and people-to-people exchanges with neighboring countries while promoting the high-quality development of cross-border e-commerce.

"We will intensify the construction of ports such as Gyirong, and advance the development of open platforms, including the Lhasa Comprehensive Bonded Zone and the China (Lhasa) Comprehensive Cross-border E-commerce Pilot Zone," Ren said.

He added that the region will also work to enhance the international influence of major events including the Forum on the Development of Xizang, China, and the China Xizang Tourism and Culture Expo.

According to the region's latest annual government work report, by 2025, Xizang had established five border trade zones, while the num-

ber of open counties, districts and cities increased to 45. Trade partnerships now extend to 155 countries and regions.

Lhasa Customs informed that during the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-25), foreign trade expanded across all seven prefecture-level cities in the region. One new land port was added, the region's first comprehensive bonded zone was established, and three new international or regional air routes were launched.

Fa Tima, an official of Lhasa Customs, said the total value of Xizang's imports and exports in goods trade exceeded 40 billion yuan (\$5.9 billion) during the period, with an average annual growth rate of 21 percent.

The scale of foreign trade increased by 78.5 percent compared to the five years previously, "demonstrating the strong resilience and endogenous driving force of Xizang's foreign trade development," said Fa Tima.

Fa Tima added that exports of the "new three" products — electric

vehicles, lithium batteries and photovoltaic products — rose sharply during the period, while locally distinctive products also expanded overseas. Products including saffron from Nyingchi and local honey have entered overseas markets, helping increase incomes for local farmers and herders.

The region's growing openness has also benefited local enterprises. Xizang Alajabao Spirits Co launched its highland barley liquor export business in 2023, with its products now sold in markets including the United States and Canada.

Wang Zhaoji, president of the company, said the streamlined customs procedures and strong policy support have helped drive rapid growth in exports over the past five years, adding that the export volume has increased by 40 percent year-on-year, and total export volume has doubled.

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Shaolin ex-abbot gets 24 years for embezzlement

By CAO YIN caoyin@chinadaily.com.cn

Shi Yongxin, former abbot of the world-famous Shaolin Temple in Central China's Henan province, was sentenced to 24 years in prison on Friday for multiple crimes, including embezzlement and bribery, a local court said.

Shi was also fined 3.5 million yuan (\$517,000), according to the Xinxiang Intermediate People's Court.

The court found that between 2003 and 2025, Shi, whose birth name is Liu Yingcheng, used his positions as abbot of the temple and president of the Shaolin charity and welfare foundation to embezzle more than 131 million yuan.

From 2012 to 2022, he misappropriated more than 151 million yuan from the organizations for personal use and failed to repay the money for more than three months.

Beginning in July 2006, Liu

sought benefits for others in matters including temple construction projects and business operations, and accepted bribes totaling more than 11.63 million yuan in return.

From 1995 to 2022, he also offered more than 5.67 million yuan in bribes to State officials in exchange for illicit gains.

The court said Liu's actions constituted embezzlement, misappropriation of funds and bribery. He deserved severe punishment because

the amounts involved were "particularly large"; the bribery offenses were "particularly serious"; the crimes lasted for a "long duration"; the consequences were "severe"; and the social impact was "extremely negative".

It added that Liu confessed after being apprehended and voluntarily disclosed additional criminal activities previously unknown to investigators. The judgment, the court said, was based on the facts, nature and circumstances of his offenses, as

well as the degree of harm caused to society.

After the verdict was announced, Liu said he accepted the ruling and would not appeal to a higher court.

The Buddhist Association of China stated on Friday that the ruling demonstrates the principle of equality before the law and serves as a strong warning to the Buddhist community. It emphasized that members of the Buddhist community must strengthen their legal awareness and clearly recognize that no religion is above the law. The verdict also encourages Buddhists to voluntarily abide by the law,

uphold ethical conduct, and act with discipline and integrity, it added.

On July 27, 2025, the temple announced that Shi was under investigation. The Buddhist Association of China said the following day that it had revoked Shi's ordination certificate, which serves as proof of admission into the monastic community.

A native of Anhui province, the 60-year-old became a monk in 1981 and had served as the temple's 30th abbot since 1999. As a world-renowned Buddhist sanctuary and the birthplace of kung fu, the temple attracts thousands of disciples from around the world each year.