2026 NPC & CPPCC Insights

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Technology as the Engine

Strategic Technology and Industrial Transformation at the Start of the 15th Five-Year Plan



FOREWORD

The 2026 Two Sessions represent a defining starting point for China's 15th Five-Year Plan, marking a clear shift from scale-oriented growth toward a development model anchored in technological capability, industrial resilience, and productivity quality. Across policy language and sectoral priorities, technology is no longer framed solely as an enabler of growth, but as the core logic shaping economic governance, industrial upgrading, and China's long-term competitiveness.

This year's signals point to a more mature phase of innovation—one that emphasizes not only breakthroughs, but also commercialization discipline, safety standards, efficiency gains, and systemic integration. Advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, semiconductors, intelligent manufacturing, and digital infrastructure are positioned as foundational assets supporting real-economy transformation, rather than isolated innovation narratives.

For multinational and cross-border businesses, the policy environment increasingly rewards depth over scale. Long-term relevance is measured by the ability to integrate into local innovation ecosystems, contribute to industrial upgrading, develop talent and R&D capabilities in China, and translate global expertise into locally applicable solutions. Compliance, governance credibility, and supply-chain collaboration are elevated as essential components of sustainable participation.

At the same time, the Two Sessions underscore a recalibration of strategic communication expectations. Technology narratives are expected to demonstrate tangible value: reliability, safety, efficiency, and real-world impact—rather than aspirational positioning alone. In the 15th Five-Year Plan era, technology, regulation, and communication are increasingly intertwined, shaping how credibility, commitment, and long-term confidence are established in the China market.

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POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

1

Macro Targets

The 2026 Government Work Report (GWR) sets the **GDP growth target at 4.5%–5%**, with a fiscal deficit rate of 4.0% to support the launch of the 15th Five Year Plan.

2

15th FYP Blueprint

The draft "15th Five-Year Plan" outline proposes **109 major projects** focusing on **"New Quality Productive Forces"** and scientific self-reliance.

3

Fiscal Stimulus

Total public budget expenditure will reach **30 trillion yuan** for the first time, supported by 1.3 trillion yuan in ultra-long-term special national bonds for **"Two Heavy"** and **"Two New"** initiatives.

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IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS

Strategic Communication Imperatives for the 15th FYP Era

High-Quality Development Over Scale

Corporate communications should emphasize contributions to **High-Quality Development** rather than merely pursuing market share or scale. The core lies in Total Factor Productivity (TFP) — evaluated through technological breakthroughs, green transitions, and supply chain empowerment. B2B tech firms must incorporate industrial development, supply chain collaboration, and ESG dimensions.

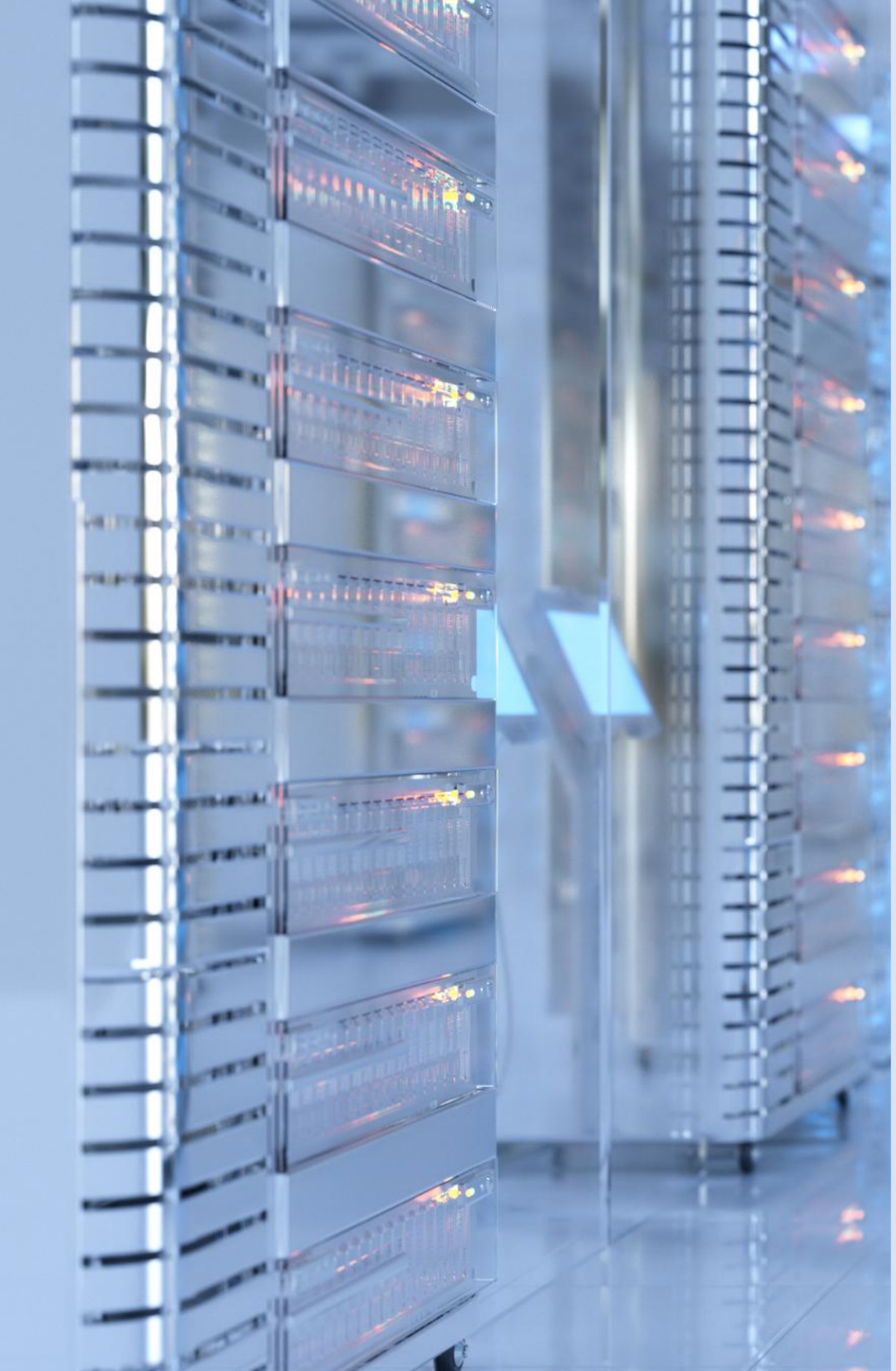
Multinational Corporations: Invest in People as Strategy

Multinational Corporations should highlight **China-based R&D centers**, cultivation systems for local high-end technical talent, and how they empower local employees through global expertise — aligning with the government's "people-centered" fiscal orientation and "population quality" strategy.

"In recent years, an increasing number of tech companies have realized that external communications should not just 'flex muscles' but also 'show substance.' By organically integrating employee development stories with technical narratives and adopting more 'relatable' character-driven storytelling, brands can more effectively resonate with their audiences."

Simon Vericel, Managing Director

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PART 1

High-Tech Sector:
Key Pillars & Future Industry Framework

As China enters the 15th FYP (2026–2030), the industrial focus has shifted from "catching up" to establishing **"Systemic Sovereignty."** China's total social R&D investment surpassed **3.92 trillion yuan** in 2025, with R&D intensity reaching 2.8%.

Six Emerging Pillars

- Integrated Circuits (IC)
- Aerospace
- Biomedicine
- Low-altitude Economy
- New Energy Storage
- Intelligent Robotics

Six Future Industries

- Quantum Technology
- Bio-manufacturing
- Green Hydrogen / Fusion
- Brain-Computer Interface (BCI)
- Embodied AI
- 6G

"AI+" Action

GWR explicitly proposes to 'deepen and expand the AI+ initiative,' promoting large-scale commercialization across key industrial sectors.

Green Infrastructure

New hyper-scale data centers must achieve PUE below 1.25 through renewable energy and liquid cooling, aligning digital growth with "Dual Carbon" goals.

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PART 1

Our Interpretations

Unwavering AI Commitment

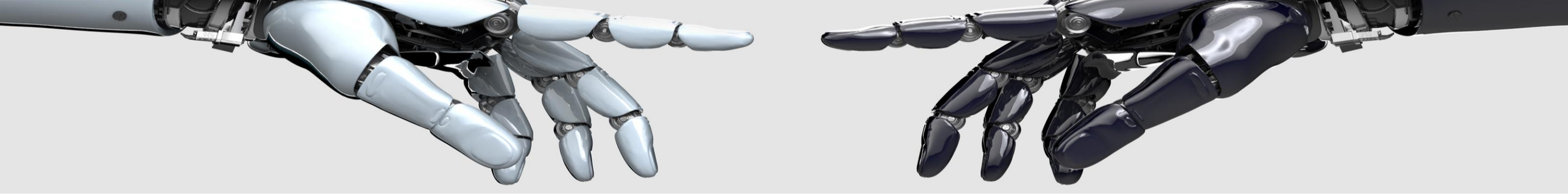
China is leveraging domestic large models to compete in the global AI ecosystem, striving to establish leadership and strategic dominance in the global artificial intelligence arena.

- As the momentum surrounding AI continues to surge—bolstered by policy incentives and government support—the Chinese AI market will unlock more growth opportunities for foreign enterprises. Niche sectors such as Edge AI, Embodied AI, Physical AI, and AI Glasses offer vast market potential, spanning the entire value chain from computing power to algorithms, and from software to hardware.

The Semiconductor Shift

From Catching Up to Leading the Way: The policy orientation for Integrated Circuits (IC) has shifted from "survival-driven" (import substitution) to "development-led" (building a full-stack domestic ecosystem).

- To achieve this leadership, China still requires innovative and highly efficient semiconductor products and technologies from the international community. For instance, RISC-V is identified as a critical track for the Chinese chip industry to achieve "overtaking on a bend" (leapfrog development).



PART 1

Strategic Communication Suggestions

01

Reaffirm Commitment to China

Convey unwavering determination to remain rooted in the Chinese market. For advanced semiconductor and HPC data center companies, focus on product/technology narratives — steer clear of sensitive brand or policy-related discussions.

02

Highlight Innovation

Emphasize performance and efficiency advantages of proprietary products. Focus on driving localized implementation of global technologies to help local customers achieve technological upgrades and high-efficiency innovation.

03

Grow with the Local Ecosystem

Align with China's AI development, digital economy, and green/low-carbon transition trends. Promote deep integration within local application scenarios and support quality upgrades of the local supply chain.



PART 2

Automotive & Industrial Sector: Intelligent Transformation

L3/L4 Legislation

In early 2026, the MIIT released the mandatory national standard "Safety Requirements for Autonomous Driving Systems," providing the legal basis for L3/L4 mass commercialization.

Standardized Licensing

The first batch of official L3 license plates (e.g., "Yu AD0001Z") was issued, signaling a shift from test zones to regional road pilots in cities like Beijing and Chongqing.

Anti-Involution

The government explicitly calls for the rectification of "Involution-style" competition in the NEV sector, pushing for a move from price wars to quality/technology-based competition.

Global Expansion & Manufacturing Spillover

New directives encourage NEV and supply chain firms to transition from "Product Export" to "Capacity and Standard Export," enhancing global competitiveness through overseas localization and navigating trade barriers.

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PART 2

Our Interpretations

Vehicle-Road-Cloud Synergy

Unlike the "single-car intelligence" path, China is doubling down on "Vehicle-Road-Cloud-Integration" to lower costs and enhance safety through 5G-A and smart infrastructure.

Global Expansion & Manufacturing Spillover

New directives encourage NEV and supply chain firms to transition from "Product Export" to "Capacity and Standard Export," enhancing global competitiveness through overseas localization and navigating trade barriers.

"The themes of 'Compliance and Safety' will become a long-term core pillar of communication for the automotive manufacturing industry. Enterprises must proactively identify and showcase substantive compliance and safety case studies, moving beyond mere slogans to demonstrate tangible results."

Freda Li, Account Manager

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PART 2

Strategic Communication Suggestions

01

Safety First

In autonomous driving PR, shift the narrative from "cool tech" to "Safety and Liability Frameworks."

02

Value over Price

Avoid "low price" messaging; focus on "Total Cost of Ownership," "Full-cycle service," and "Technological breakthroughs" (e.g., Solid-state batteries).

03

Integrated Supply Chain Matrix

Structure narrative across: Industrial Ecosystem (symbiotic foreign-domestic relationships), R&D & Localization (China-based centers and talent), and Going Global (leveraging global footprints to empower Chinese automakers internationally).



PART 3

Cross-border Trade: Institutional Opening-up

Institutional Opening-up

The focus is on aligning with international rules (CPTPP, DEPA) and shifting from "commodity flows" to "rule-based opening."

RMB International Settlement

In 2026, the PBOC explicitly supported domestic banking institutions and overseas institutions in conducting standardized RMB cross-border interbank financing business.

Digital Trade Zones & Export Brand

In 2026, the first batch of National Digital Trade Demonstration Zones will be launched to set standards for global digital commerce. The Export Brand initiative elevates China's export brand from "value-for-money" to a national quality strategic brand.

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PART 3

Our Interpretations

Entry vs. Operation

Policy focus shifts from *market entry* to *equal operational access*, ensuring foreign firms' participation in government procurement and standard-setting. Compliance is now a baseline expectation, with heightened scrutiny on data security, financial regulation, and AML under dual compliance standards.

Service Access & Demonstration Zones

Expanded openness pilots in value-added telecoms, biotech, and professional services signal China's push to attract higher-value capabilities. National Digital Trade Demonstration Zones highlight China's ambition to shape global digital and services trade rules.

" The Two Sessions messaging suggests that cross-border services are entering a phase defined by institutional alignment, operational credibility, and regulatory trust. For international service providers, sustained relevance in the China market will depend on demonstrating compliance resilience, contributing to ecosystem development, and embedding services within China's broader high-quality growth agenda."

Emily Xu, Managing Partner

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PART 3

Strategic Communication Suggestions

01

Localization 2.0

Highlight how the company is "In China, for the Global", participating in China's "Dual Circulation" and standard-setting.

02

Financial Compliance as the Bottom Line

Anti-Money Laundering (AML), cross-border data security, and "Look-through Supervision" in finance are now the survival lines for professional service sectors.

03

Institutional Compliance

Use keywords like "Institutional Opening-up" and "National Treatment" to affirm confidence in the Chinese market's stability and transparency.

About Us

Influence Matters is a PR & marketing firm helping B2B tech companies create influence across APAC. We turn complex tech into compelling stories that build trust, spark conversations, and drive growth in engineering as well as business decision making ecosystems.

We are experts in Tech PR, built on years of experience bridging APAC and the rest of the world for technology companies with a particular focus B2B high-tech industries mainly centered around three areas: semiconductors & electronic engineering, ebusiness & ecommerce, smart industry, manufacturing and logistics.

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