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CHINADAILY

中國日報

THURSDAY, March 19, 2026

chinadaily.com.cn RMB ¥2

China, Turkmenistan pledge deeper ties

Key role of mutual support stressed at Beijing meeting

By MO JINGXI
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China and Turkmenistan pledged on Wednesday to strengthen the alignment of their development strategies, expand natural gas cooperation and broaden practical collaboration in non-resource sectors such as connectivity, as President Xi Jinping met in Beijing with National Leader of the Turkmen People Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov.

Berdimuhamedov, who is also chairman of the Halk Maslahaty of Turkmenistan, served as the country's president from 2007 to 2022.

His three-day trip, which runs through Thursday, marks the first visit to China by a foreign leader since the conclusion of this year's national two sessions, during which the outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) for national economic and social development was reviewed and approved.

Xi said that implementation of the plan will lay a solid foundation for China to basically realize socialist modernization and also benefit the rest of the world.

Noting that this year is the Year of the Horse in the Chinese calendar and is also being observed in Turkmenistan under the motto "Independent Neutral Turkmenistan — the Homeland of Purposeful Winged Horses", Xi said he is ready to work with Berdimuhamedov to "advance China-Turkmenistan relations in the spirit of the Akhal-Teke horse — always pressing ahead and taking the lead".

China and Turkmenistan established diplomatic relations in 1992. In 2023, they elevated bilateral ties to a comprehensive strategic partnership and decided to develop a China-Turkmenistan community with a shared future.

Xi stressed that mutual support is at the core of the China-Turkmenistan comprehensive strategic partnership. Regardless of how the international landscape evolves, China will remain committed to



President Xi Jinping shakes hands with National Leader of the Turkmen People and Chairman of the Halk Maslahaty of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov during their meeting in Beijing on Wednesday. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

supporting Turkmenistan in safeguarding its national independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, supporting its policy of permanent neutrality, and remaining a trustworthy partner.

He called on the two sides to accelerate the alignment of the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative with Turkmenistan's strategy to revive the Great Silk Road, expand the scale of natural gas cooperation, raise trade and investment, and broaden cooperation in connectivity, agriculture, artificial intelligence, the digital economy and clean energy.

Xi also urged faster progress in the development of the Luban

Workshop and the traditional Chinese medicine center as well as the establishment of cultural centers in each other's countries, to foster a new pattern of all-around cooperation.

The two countries should step up efforts to combat the three evil forces of terrorism, separatism and extremism in order to reinforce the security shield for the development of the two countries, he said.

Facing mounting global challenges, Xi said that China is ready to work with Turkmenistan to firmly safeguard the status and authority of the United Nations, practice true multilateralism, uphold the vision of global governance featuring

extensive consultation and joint

contribution for shared benefit, and steer global governance reform under the principles of fairness, justice, openness and inclusiveness.

Berdimuhamedov said that he was pleased to visit China and that the country's prosperity and development benefit the whole world.

He said that under Xi's personal leadership, Turkmenistan-China relations have enjoyed rapid and steady growth, with close exchanges between legislative bodies and political parties and fruitful cooperation across a wide range of fields.

Berdimuhamedov said Turkmenistan will continue to firmly abide by the one-China principle and is willing to strengthen the

alignment of development strategies with China, expand practical cooperation in energy, trade and connectivity, and work together for development, prosperity, security and stability.

He thanked China for supporting Turkmenistan's permanent neutrality, highly praised the four global initiatives put forward by Xi, and commended China for upholding a just position in international affairs.

He added that Turkmenistan is ready to enhance coordination with China in multilateral platforms including the UN and the China-Central Asia mechanism to jointly safeguard regional and world peace and stability.

ADB bullish on prospect of nation's steady growth

By JIANG XUEQING
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China is well positioned to sustain steady growth over the next five years, underpinned by rapid advances in technological innovation, a deepening shift toward green and low-carbon development, and continued improvements in people's livelihoods, said a senior official of the Asian Development Bank.

"We remain very optimistic about China's growth potential," said Asif S. Cheema, ADB's country director for China. "We believe the 4.5 to 5 percent growth target is very reasonable. As long as the government's priorities and macroeconomic policies are well coordinated and effectively implemented, there is a strong opportunity for success in achieving this target."

According to the Government Work Report, approved on March 12 at the annual session of China's top legislature, the nation has set an economic growth target of 4.5 to 5 percent for 2026, while pledging to strive for better results in practice.

A key indicator the ADB will be watching closely is the strength of China's domestic economy, particularly household consumption.

Cheema highlighted that strengthening the domestic market and expanding household consumption represent one of the most critical structural reforms for China's next level of development. An increasingly consumption-driven growth model would not only improve living standards, but also support more sustainable economic growth, he said.

One way to unlock that potential is through stronger social protection systems, he said, adding that measures such as improving pension coverage, lowering healthcare costs and raising overall income levels could help boost household confidence and encourage spending.

Beyond consumption, Cheema said China's transition toward high-quality development will also depend on improving the allocation of resources, increasing investment in research and development, and strengthening links between research institutions and industry to accelerate the commercialization of new technologies.

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Experts: Too soon to predict El Nino effect

By ZHAO YIMENG
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Dire social media warnings about record-breaking heat and extreme weather conditions this year may be drawing widespread attention, but experts have said that it is too early to predict if a super El Nino — a climate phenomenon marked by warmer-than-average sea surface temperatures in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific — will develop this year.

Online discourses have suggested that this year and the next could be the hottest on record, raising concerns that a powerful El Nino weather phenomenon capable of triggering global climate disruptions is approaching.

Experts from the administration's National Climate Center said the current monitoring data suggests that lingering La Nina conditions — cooling of ocean surface temperatures in the central and east-central equatorial Pacific — are weakening, and the tropical Pacific could shift toward an El Nino state later this year.

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OVERSEAS VISITORS OFFERED VISION OF THE FUTURE

Smart glasses and AI integration are the big draws at country's top consumer electronics expo

By WANG YING in Shanghai
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Flying all the way from Australia to Shanghai to attend his first Appliance & Electronics World Expo, distributor Simon Cuff was impressed by the scale and, most important, the spectacle of the event.

Surrounded by hundreds of humanoid robots and thousands of artificial intelligence systems and smart cars, it was a product from Chinese augmented reality company Xreal that, quite literally, caught his eye.

Called Project Aura, it is the latest Android XR eyewear developed by Google in collaboration with the Shanghai-based company.

"This is leading-edge," he said. "That's exactly what we want to find: new brands with huge market potential, new technology, innovation and growth potential."

Although the product is currently only a prototype, Cuff said that if it actually works when it officially launches later this year, it would be amazing.

Notably, almost all the core hardware for Project Aura was developed domestically, signaling that Chinese manufacturing is



Customers try on the Qwen Glasses G1 at the Appliance & Electronics World Expo on March 12 in Shanghai. GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY

becoming a key force behind next-generation computing platforms, according to Zhang Chao, head of communications at Xreal.

Smart glasses were a highlight of this year's expo, with numerous options from various domestic producers on display. For instance, the Qwen Glasses G1, deeply integrated with the Alibaba

ecosystem, offers seamless functionality with apps like Alipay, while the Xiaodu AI Glasses Pro unveiled by Baidu, weighing just 39 grams, features first-person perspective recording as well as real-time translation and note-taking during meetings.

"Smart glasses are seemingly on the verge of an era similar to that experienced by smartphones



— GIFTS —

about two decades ago," said Xu Chi, founder and CEO of Xreal, on March 12 in his keynote speech at the opening ceremony of this year's AWE.

According to Xu, although technologically smart glasses are yet to reach their "iPhone moment", a growing number of Chinese companies are exploring the sector in a bid to gain a competitive edge in the global marketplace.

"It is highly likely that more AI glasses will be developed in China, leveraging the country's manufacturing capabilities and rapid iteration to compete in global markets," Xu added.

Tao Xiaonian, chairman of the China Household Electrical Appliances Association, said that the biggest takeaway from this year's AWE, one of China's largest exhibitions for home appliances and consumer electronics, was the deep integration of AI across the industry.

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国内统一连续出版物号:
CN 11-0091
国际标准连续出版物号:
ISSN 0253-9543
代号: 1-3

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Vol. 46 — No. 14297

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