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China urges EU to assess impact of additional fees on low-value imports

On 5 November, China's commerce ministry (MofCom) expressed concern over the European Union's new import charges on low-value goods, urging Brussels to carefully assess their impact on cross-border e-commerce and China-EU trade cooperation. Since 1 November, the EU has imposed a EUR 2 processing fee per product tariff category on goods shipped directly to EU consumers from overseas, adding to a temporary EUR 3 customs duty introduced on 1 July 2026. The EUR 3 duty is scheduled to remain in place until July 2028, when the EU aims to introduce a simplified five-tier tariff system with rates of 0%, 5%, 8%, 12% and 17%, supported by new customs data infrastructure.

However, implementation could be delayed if the necessary systems are not operational by 2028. MofCom spokesperson Huang Ling emphasized the importance of cross-border e-commerce in providing diverse choices for businesses and consumers, calling on the EU to create favorable conditions for bilateral cooperation.

The additional charges could increase compliance costs and pricing pressures for Chinese cross-border e-commerce exporters, reinforcing the need for businesses to reassess their EU market strategies, optimize supply chains, and prepare for evolving customs regulations amid growing trade frictions.

Li Qiang calls for human-centered AI development and greater global cooperation at World Internet Conference

On 3 November, Chinese Premier Li Qiang delivered a keynote speech at the opening ceremony of the 2026 World Internet Conference Wuzhen Summit in Zhejiang province, attended by approximately 1,800 representatives from governments, international organizations, technology companies, and academia. Li highlighted the accelerating integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and the internet as a transformative force for economic and social development, while stressing the importance of human-centered technological progress, AI ethics, cybersecurity, and equitable access to digital technologies.

Reaffirming President Xi Jinping's 2015 vision of a "community with a shared future in cyberspace", Li outlined China's commitment to promoting international technology transfer, knowledge sharing and cooperation on digital security, while opposing the creation of a "digital iron curtain". He also pledged support for digital infrastructure and technological capacity-building in Global South countries, alongside efforts to establish a more inclusive and equitable multilateral internet governance framework.

Li's remarks reinforce China's ambition to shape global AI and digital governance norms, positioning technological openness and cooperation with the Global South as strategic priorities while signaling opposition to growing international technological fragmentation.

China's marriage registrations decline nearly 10%, raising concerns over future birth rates

On 5 November, figures from China's Ministry of Civil Affairs showed that marriage registrations fell by nearly 10% y/y in the first nine months of 2026, with 4.648 million couples registering, down 504,000 from the same period last year. Demographers projected that full-year registrations could range between 5.88 million and 6.46 million, below the 6.765 million recorded in 2025, when marriages rebounded by 10.8% following government incentives and streamlined registration procedures. The decline continues a long-term downward trend from a peak of 13.469 million marriages in 2013, raising concerns about further reductions in births in 2027, given the strong correlation between marriage and childbirth in China.

To encourage marriage, local governments have introduced measures including extended marriage leave of up to 30 days, simplified registration services, and financial incentives ranging from RMB 3,000 (USD 450) in Fujian province to RMB 40,000 (USD 5,997) in a village in Guangzhou.

The renewed decline in marriages despite government incentives highlights the difficulty of reversing China's demographic trajectory, potentially intensifying long-term pressures on its labor force, domestic consumption, and economic growth.

ByteDance founder Zhang Yiming tops China's rich list as AI drives record wealth creation

On 27 October, the Hurun Research Institute released its 2026 China Wealthy List, naming ByteDance founder Zhang Yiming China's wealthiest individual for the second time, with a record fortune of RMB 670 billion, up RMB 200 billion from the previous year, driven by rising company valuations amid advances in artificial intelligence (AI).

The list featured a record 1,529 entrepreneurs with wealth exceeding RMB 5 billion, up 6.6% y/y, while their combined wealth increased 7% y/y to RMB 32 trillion. AI emerged as a major driver of wealth creation, with DeepSeek founder Liang Wenfeng debuting in seventh place with RMB 280 billion, while Unitree Robotics founder Wang Xingxing entered the list with RMB 69.5 billion.

Entrepreneurs in AI, semiconductors, robotics and new energy recorded particularly strong gains, contrasting with declining fortunes in consumer sectors, including Nongfu Spring founder Zhong Shanshan, whose wealth fell RMB 120 billion to RMB 410 billion, placing him second.

The ranking highlights a structural shift in China's private-sector wealth creation towards AI and advanced manufacturing, reflecting growing investor confidence in emerging technologies.