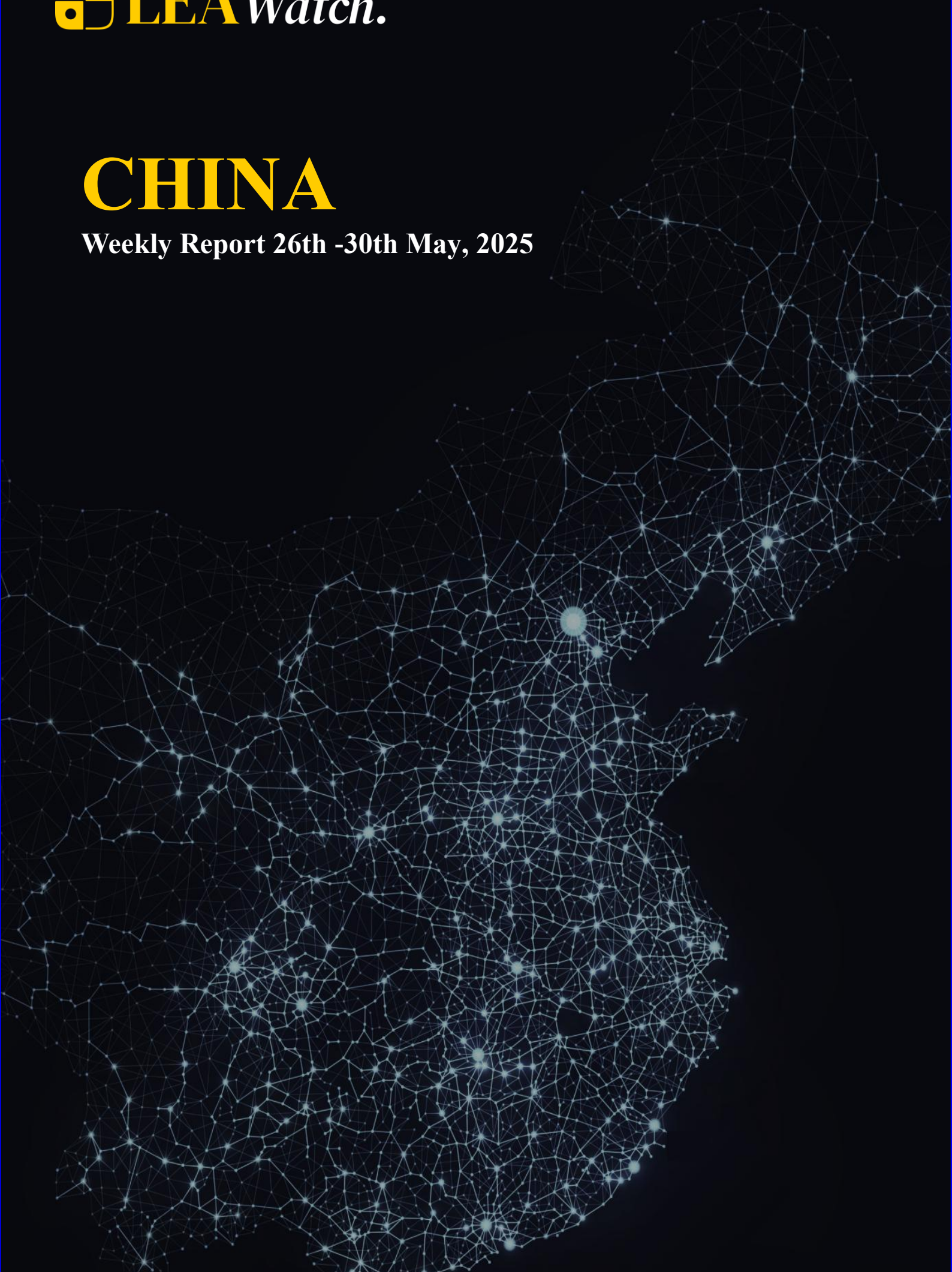
LEA Watch.

CHINA

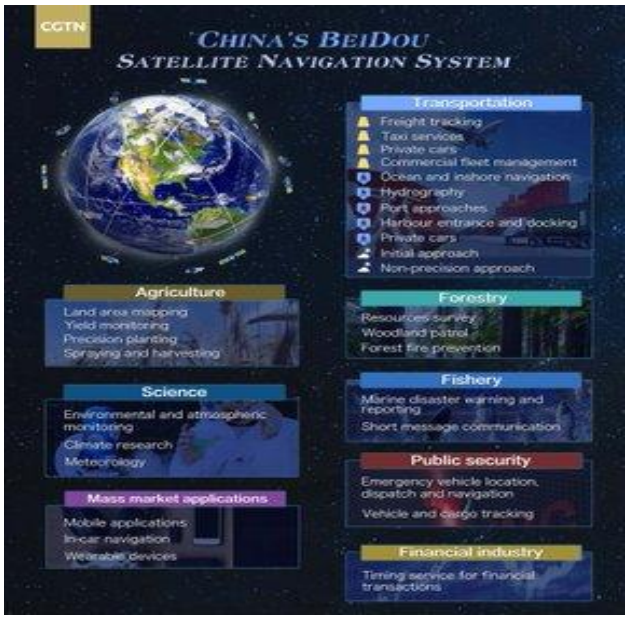
Weekly Report 26th -30th May, 2025



- China launched a satellite called Shijian 16, using a Long March 4B rocket from a remote base in the Gobi Desert. Officially, they say it's meant for space environment research and tech experiments, but many experts think there's more to the story. Based on its unusual orbit and the secrecy surrounding the launch, it's likely this satellite is actually meant for spying—specifically, picking up electronic signals from Earth. This is the second time China has sent up a satellite like this, with the first one launched back in 2013. As usual with missions tied to national security, China kept the launch under wraps until it was already done.

- China's research icebreaker Xuelong 2 returned to Haikou on May 28, 2025, completing the country's 41st Antarctic expedition and its longest-ever single-ship polar mission. Departing Guangzhou on November 1, 2024, the vessel covered over 40,000 nautical miles in 208 days. Onboard were 516 scientists from 118 global institutions conducting climate and ecosystem research in the Amundsen and Ross Seas. The mission also supported the construction of China's new Qinling Station and marked the first time three Chinese vessels Xuelong 2, Xuelong, and Yong Sheng participated in a joint Antarctic mission. The expedition featured advanced tech such as drones and AI tools, strengthening China's polar research capabilities and international collaboration.

- Beidou System - As of 2025, China's Beidou satellite navigation system has become a global force, with applications spanning over 140 countries and strong integration across key sectors like transportation, agriculture, public safety, and consumer tech. According to the 2025 White Paper, the satellite navigation and location service industry reached a total output of 575.8 billion yuan in 2024, driven by independent innovation and expanding mass-market use. Beidou now supports over 2 billion devices, including 288 million smartphones. It is also fueling emerging sectors like the low-altitude economy, with China's drone and eVTOL markets heavily relying on Beidou's precise navigation and timing. International cooperation continues to grow, with partnerships across Asia, Africa, and South America, as well as compatibility efforts with Russia's GLONASS system. With the space-time service industry projected to surpass 1 trillion yuan in value by the end of 2025, Beidou stands at the center of China's vision for a smart, interconnected future



- China-Cambodia "Golden Dragon-2025" Joint Military Drill Concludes the exercise featured coordinated land and air operations, with both nations' forces integrated into joint mission units under a unified command. This marks the seventh time China and Cambodia have conducted the "Golden Dragon" series of joint exercises, aimed at strengthening military cooperation and regional security ties.


- China see Humanoid Robots as the Future of 'Intelligent Warfare' - An article published in China's military newspaper, People's Liberation Army Daily, highlights humanoid robots as a transformative force in the future of warfare. Titled "What are the combat advantages of humanoid robots?", the piece discusses how such robots combine tactical flexibility with strategic deterrence, adapting well to complex battlefield conditions due to their bionic, human-like design.

- China has extended the strike range and precision of its most advanced warship, the Type 055 destroyer Lhasa, by integrating it with airborne early warning systems, according to state broadcaster CCTV. This networked capability enables long-range anti-ship and air-defense operations beyond visual range by fusing data from air, sea, and land sensors in real time.

- China's Fujian Carrier Completes Eighth Sea Trial. The most "intensive" sea trial, signalling progress toward operational readiness. The carrier's fifth-generation J-35 stealth fighters have also begun flight testing, though it remains unclear if they launched directly from the ship. The Fujian, China's first carrier equipped with electromagnetic catapults, is expected to significantly enhance the PLA Navy's long-range combat and air capabilities.

- China Unveils World's First AI-Powered Nuclear Warhead Inspector - Created by the China Institute of Atomic Energy, the system uses deep learning and neutron signal analysis to distinguish real warheads from decoys without exposing classified design details.

- PLA Unveils World's Fastest Coilgun with Record 3,000 Rounds Per Minute Rate.

- Wind tunnel tests by the China Aerodynamics Research and Development Centre showed that high-voltage plasma can improve a drone's lift-to-drag ratio by nearly 88%, potentially allowing high-altitude, long-endurance (HALE) drones to fly significantly longer. The findings, published in a top Chinese aerodynamics journal, suggest this innovation could overcome efficiency challenges at extreme altitudes and extend mission durations for advanced military drones like the CH-9 and the US RQ-4 Global Hawk.

- China is developing a space defense system to protect its Tiangong space station using small robotic thrusters capable of intercepting and redirecting suspicious spacecraft. The system, revealed by scientist Sun Zhibin, aims to counter potential interference from satellites like Starlink, which have previously triggered emergency evasive actions. These robotic bots will assess threats and respond by pushing intruding objects to a safe distance. The move reflects growing global concerns over space security, as nations like the U.S. also advance similar technologies, including the proposed $175 billion "Golden Dome" missile shield.

- China has launched its Tianwen-2 mission, aiming to collect samples from the near-Earth asteroid Kamoʻoalewa—believed to be a fragment of the Moon—and later explore the unusual comet 311P/PANSTARRS. The probe lifted off from Sichuan on a Long March 3B rocket and is expected to reach the asteroid by mid-2026, returning samples to Earth in 2027.