



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

CHINA

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY REVIEW

May 2026

- **China hosts Conference on Digital Education**
- **Scientific Collaboration Projects**
- **Scientific Research Breakthroughs and Discoveries**
- **China Science Diplomacy**

China hosts Conference on Digital Education

Based on the theme “AI+Education: Transformation, Development and Governance”, the 2026 edition of the World Digital Education Conference was [held](#) in Hangzhou from 11 to 13 May. During the three-day conference, education ministers from several countries, representatives of international organisations, officials from Chinese ministries and provincial education authorities, heads of universities, vocational schools, and primary and secondary schools from China and abroad, leading AI experts and representatives of major technology companies assembled to explore how AI can drive systemic educational transformation and promote high-quality educational development.

In his keynote address at the conference, Chinese Minister of Education Huai Jinpeng [told](#) the gathering that the Chinese government has prioritised education and technological advancement and that, by 2035, it aims to establish itself as a leading country in education. Huai called on countries to work together to address the opportunities and challenges posed by AI, based on mutual trust. Huai also proposed three initiatives, i.e. increasing international cooperation to build consensus on AI-empowered educational transformation; jointly developing new models for educational development; and jointly building a new ecosystem for educational governance. He expressed hope that

countries would join hands to create a better future for education worldwide.

Several digital education-related roadmaps were released during the conference. One noteworthy document is *Ethics of Digital Education: A Reference Framework*, which [outlined](#) four principles: First, decision-making should rest with humans, with AI serving only as a supplementary tool; Second, human–AI collaboration should build on complementary strengths of both humans and AI systems while avoiding overreliance on AI; third, AI systems should be adapted to specific learning environments and be used for the greater good and fourth, differentiated governance should be adopted to address various AI-related ethical risks.

Another roadmap, called *The Initiative for Digital Literacy Enhancement of Global South Teachers*, which [focuses](#) exclusively on the Global South, defines three features: filling a gap in coordinated international action on teachers’ digital literacy in the Global South; creating a new multi-stakeholder cooperation model; and emphasising practical, locally adapted implementation. The Institute of Global Teacher Development's Africa Division, based at Zhejiang Normal University, will coordinate the implementation of this particular plan.

Meanwhile, at the end of the conference, two reports were [released](#), i.e. *China Smart Education Development Report (2025–2026)* and the *Global Digital Education*

Development Index (GDEI) 2026. The former report reviews China's policy measures and practical experience in advancing smart education, with a focus on national planning, the Smart Education of China platform and a series of pilot programs. The report also discusses emerging forms of smart education and identifies key issues for future global dialogue. The latter report offers a comparative assessment of the development of digital education across 82 countries. Based on multimodal evidence tracking national progress in digital education, the report found that 43 per cent of countries are actively planning AI-enabled educational transformation, 78 per cent highlight the importance of higher-order thinking skills, and 76 per cent have set goals for developing students' thinking abilities. The index also finds that global digital education is becoming more clearly structured, with the overall level of development rising by 3.52 per cent. It identifies the United States, China, the Republic of Korea and Finland as among the countries that have entered a new stage of AI-enabled education.

Scientific Collaboration Projects

The Solar Wind Magnetosphere Ionosphere Link Explorer (SMILE) mission, a collaborative effort between the European Space Agency (ESA) and the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), successfully [launched](#) on May 19, 2026. The Vega-C rocket lifted off from Europe's spaceport in French Guiana, placing the satellite into its

planned orbit with all systems operating normally. The SMILE mission aims to revolutionise the understanding of the interaction between the solar wind and Earth's magnetosphere through the first-ever panoramic imaging of this coupling process. SMILE sets a new paradigm for international space collaboration, representing a bottom-up, mission-level and full-lifecycle partnership between CAS and ESA. The project follows an equal, mutually beneficial, and complementary approach.

Spearheaded by Liu Chenli of the Shenzhen Institute of Advanced Technology (SIAT) of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, it [unveils](#) Asia's first 10-year roadmap for synthetic cell research, involving over 100 laboratories from six Asian countries, including Japan, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand. This blueprint is the first systematic development strategy in Asia for creating artificial single-cell life forms. The research focuses on assembling life from biological macromolecules to create basic single-cell systems, aiming to address the fundamental question of life's origin from non-living matter.

While Europe and the United States have made progress in individual functional modules, integrating them into a fully functional, self-replicating cell remains a global bottleneck which this Asian consortium, initiated in 2023, aims to overcome through enhanced international cooperation and shared benefits.

Scientific Research Breakthroughs and Discoveries

Scientists from the Chinese Academy of Sciences have [developed](#) “Aeye-1”, the world's first AI-driven transmission electron microscope (AI-TEM) system. This innovation marks a significant advancement from manual to fully autonomous AI operation in microscopy. The key features and benefits are that it enables fully uncrewed, AI-powered operation across the entire workflow, including sample transfer, imaging, and analysis. Image analysis is over 300 times faster than manual processing. In practical applications, it can analyse 168 samples and acquire over 4,000 images daily of molecular sieve catalysts.

Aeye-1 is anticipated to provide large-scale, high-quality structural data across fields such as energy, chemical engineering, advanced materials, and life sciences, thereby transforming scientific research by enabling clearer, more precise exploration of the ultra-microscopic world.

China Science Diplomacy

The 13th Advanced Training Course on Mechanisms and Quality of Traditional Chinese Medicine was [held](#) in Macao from 11 to 16 May, attracting participants from mainland China, Macao, Brazil, Portugal, Australia, Singapore, and Malaysia. During the training programme, the delegates shared their views on innovative

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) drug development, TCM quality control, AI-enabled TCM research and development and pathways to the modernisation of TCM. Since its inception in 2011, it has completed 13 sessions, successfully training 469 professionals in Chinese medicine, including trainees from Belt and Road Initiative countries. The program has effectively built a bridge to promote scientific and technological exchanges and cooperation in Chinese medicine, fostering connections between domestic and international markets and significantly contributing to the high-quality development of Macao's Chinese medicine and health industry.

Further enhancing cooperation in public health, a seven-member expert team from the National Institute of Parasitic Diseases (NIPD) of the China Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, led by Chief Expert Zhou Xiaonong, [held](#) a meeting with the Cambodian National Centre for Parasitology, Entomology and Malaria Control (CNM) in Cambodia from 5-11 May. The visit aimed to advance South-South cooperation in combating schistosomiasis through workshops and field investigations, providing a comprehensive understanding of Cambodia's schistosomiasis situation, including local prevention systems, diagnostic capacity, and requirements for international cooperation.