



Global events light up UN Chinese Language Day

Cultural events worldwide are marking the 2026 UN Chinese Language Day, with a special celebration set for Monday at UN Headquarters **4**

CunBA offers example of rural governance

CunBA is not just a sporting spectacle; it proves that when governance empowers, even the smallest village can stage its own kind of glory **7**

A correct understanding of governance performance

In this installment of the series "Decoding the Book of Xi Jinping: The Governance of China," we explore the significance of establishing and practicing a correct understanding of governance performance **8-9**



The Robotics D1 humanoid robot, developed by Chinese smartphone maker HONOR and nicknamed "Lightning," crosses the finish line in 48 minutes and 19 seconds in the remote-control category at the second Humanoid Robot Half Marathon in Beijing on April 19, 2026. Photo: VCG

▶ Drastic leap reflects 'systemic advances in China's robot technologies'

Humanoid robot breaks human half-marathon record

By Tao Mingyang, Chen Qingrui and Niu Yingbo

Just a year ago, humanoid robots stumbled awkwardly across the pavement, tripping mid-stride as human handlers rushed in to steady them. But on Sunday at the second Humanoid Robot Half Marathon in Beijing, robots didn't just keep their balance – they re-

wrote expectations. The winning robot outpaced the human half marathon world record, while the top three finishers completed the course entirely autonomously, signaling a stunning leap in capability.

Charging through the 21-kilometer route in southern Beijing's E-Town, the Robotics D1 humanoid robot – developed by Chinese smartphone mak-

er HONOR and nicknamed "Lightning" – crossed the finish line in 48 minutes and 19 seconds in the remote-control category.

However, under the competition rules, the time posted by remote control robots is multiplied by 1.2, so the ultimate winner was another robot of the same type in the autonomous navigation group, which posted

a winning time of 50 minutes 26 seconds, an enormous improvement from last year's winning time of 2 hours and 40 minutes. It also outpaced the man's half marathon world record of 57 minutes 20 seconds recorded by Ugandan runner Jacob Kiplimo in 2026 at the Lisbon Half Marathon.

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Competition
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Iran flips Hormuz from open to close in 24 hours; shift suggests 'deep mistrust'

By Sun Langchen

In a volatile and dizzying 24-hour reversal, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Navy has announced, again, to close the Strait of Hormuz. In a statement via Telegram on Saturday evening, the IRGC warned that any vessel attempting to navigate the vital global chokepoint will be treated as a military target until Washington lifts its naval blockade on Iranian ports. The sudden escalation prompted an immediate pushback from US President Donald Trump, who declared that the US would not be "blackmailed" and insisted the American maritime siege will "remain in full force."

The policy shift suggests a rapid strategic recalculation in Tehran, which had declared the waterway "completely open" to commercial shipping just a day prior. According to Chinese analysts, the brief reopening yielded little tangible benefits for Iran. Instead, it served primarily to artificially depress global oil prices and temporarily buoy US stock markets, a narrative the Trump administration eagerly amplified.

Experts point out that Tehran's initial gesture was strictly conditional; with Washington consistently failing to honor any reciprocal commitments, the Islamic Republic has opted to re-close the key waterway.

Iran and the US on Sunday accused each other of ceasefire breach, Xinhua reported. Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baghaei said the US so-called "blockade" of Iran's ports and coastlines violated the ceasefire, calling it "unlawful and criminal."

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Competition to promote research, industry, application

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The marked improvement in the finishing time highlights systemic breakthroughs in China's humanoid robot technologies, including power systems, control, perception and decision-making. Wang Peng, an associate research fellow at the Beijing Academy of Social Sciences who focuses on the tech sector, told the Global Times on Sunday. "The technology has moved beyond barely functional to rapidly approaching practical usability," he said.

Global Times reporters watching along the route saw that when the robots set off alongside human runners, spectators burst into cheers, many recording the moment on their phones.

Compared with the inaugural event in 2025, the speed and the running postures of the robots have seen significant improvement. While many robots last year struggled to maintain balance at the starting point, nearly all entrants this year launched steadily and were able to adjust their speed smoothly on the bends, the Global Times noted.

The top three teams all deployed HONOR's "Lightning" model, featuring autonomous perception and navigation as well as high-speed locomotion. Its speed and explosive power proved decisive, according to the company.

Du Xiaodi, a test and development

engineer from the championship team "Qitian Dasheng," told the Global Times on site that the robot's design drew on elite human athletes, with leg length approaching one meter. The robot's joints are equipped with a liquid-cooling system adapted from consumer electronics such as smartphones. "The system can provide continuous cooling for the entire race," Du said.

Zhao Guoming, a research fellow from the Department of Automation, Tsinghua University, told the Global Times that both completion times and finish rates of robot runners had improved significantly from last year. "Transferring navigation technology to robots requires extensive adaptation. This race verified the feasibility, so most autonomous teams completed the course, showing that current technology can support reliable outdoor navigation," he said.

Despite multiple sharp turns, autonomous robots maintained strong performance, navigating bends at high speed with minimal deceleration and stable posture, Zhao said, highlighting integrated navigation and motion capabilities.

Industrial strength

Reuters reported on Sunday that this year's event for Chinese-made humanoid robots "highlights the sector's rapid technical advances," noting that the

surge in participating teams showed a "stark contrast" with last year.

A report from the Associated Press described the significantly shortened record as a "significant step forward" from the inaugural race.

A German team completed the race using the Tiangong Ultra robot from Beijing Innovation Center of Humanoid Robotics in collaboration with Chinese robotics maker UBTECH. Team member Julio Rogelio Guadarrama Olvera told the Global Times the robot performed well and proved durable, with no overheating even in hot and humid weather.

The Tiangong series previously won the inaugural robot half marathon and also claimed the 100-meter title at last year's World Humanoid Robot Games held in Beijing in August 2025. This year, the team only upgraded the control system but made almost no hardware modifications, while equipping the robot with size-44 running shoes, according to another team member Simon Armleder.

In the first edition, only six robots from 20 teams completed the race. This year, 47 of 102 robot teams finished the course with significantly faster times. Zhao said overseas teams' choice of Chinese robots underscores the strength of China's hardware supply chain.

Liu Dingding, a veteran industry observer who watched the event on-site,

told the Global Times that HONOR's victory reflects both its own capabilities and the strength of hundreds of suppliers, underscoring the competitiveness of China's manufacturing ecosystem.

Zhang Zihao, a representative from Chinese startup HighTorque Robotics, drew crowds with his remotely operated Pi+ robot, a modified cartoon character, at the event's exhibition area.

"Two years ago, humanoid robot joint modules were prohibitively expensive, but rapid iteration over the past year has driven costs down significantly. Individuals can now build humanoid robots themselves, spurring a wave of open-source projects," Zhang said.

Olvera was impressed by the scale of the robot industry in Beijing E-Town. "You can see a lot of people dedicated to developing humanoid robots. This industrial cluster is really important and has been driving development extremely fast," he said.

An official from Beijing E-Town said the event aims to promote research, industrialization and application through competition. Zhao emphasized that robotics is not a single-point technology, adding that motors, software and hardware integration, testing and understanding of competition scenarios all matter. "Improvements in China's industrial ecosystem have made today's results possible," he said.

Both sides build leverage for future negotiations as stalemate persists: expert

► Iran, from Page 1

Meanwhile, Trump has accused Iran of committing a "serious violation" of the ceasefire, according to Jonathan Karl, ABC News' chief Washington correspondent, who wrote on X on Sunday that Trump told him so.

The accusations came after Iran reimposed control on the Strait of Hormuz. The IRGC said in a statement on Saturday evening that "No vessel of any kind should move from its anchorage in the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman. Approaching the Strait of Hormuz will be considered cooperation with the enemy, and the offending vessel will be targeted."

Trump was also reported to have convened a meeting in the White House situation room to discuss the escalating crisis around the Strait of Hormuz and ongoing negotiations with Iran, reported Axios.

Tensions escalated further as reports emerged that Iranian forces had opened fire on multiple commercial vessels near the strait.

The latest developments underscore how quickly the situation has deteriorated from tentative diplomatic signaling into a volatile military standoff. Tehran appears unwilling to be swayed by what it sees



A security personnel stands guard near the Serena Hotel in Islamabad on April 19, 2026. A second round of US-Iran talks is reportedly to be held in Islamabad this coming week. Photo: VCG

as Washington's use of media narratives to claim success, particularly after the US president highlighted the reopening without acknowledging its conditions – moves that benefited US markets but not Iran, Li Haidong, a professor at China Foreign Affairs University, told the Global Times on Sunday.

According to Business Insider, after the move, ship-tracking data showed that only a lim-

ited number of vessels passed through the Strait of Hormuz, while others turned away.

Mixed messages

Al Jazeera reported Sunday, citing two Pakistani security sources, that negotiations between the US and Iran will likely be held before Friday, as "both the Serena and Marriott hotels in Islamabad are being cleared of guests with no new

bookings allowed until Friday," and the Serena hotel was the venue for the first round of negotiations between the US and Iran on April 11.

President Trump also said US negotiators will be in Pakistan on Monday to hold a second round of talks with Iran, Xinhua reported.

Prior to the news, Iranian officials indicated on Saturday that no date had been set for the

next round of negotiations with the US, adding that a framework of understanding must first be established, as reported by Reuters.

The fundamental issue between the US and Iran remains a deep lack of mutual trust, which leads to repeated swings and persistent uncertainty. It resembles a 'red light, green light' game – any slight movement can trigger an intense reaction, Ding Long, a professor at the Middle East Studies Institute of Shanghai International Studies University, told the Global Times on Sunday.

Li noted that while the current stalemate may persist for some time, it should not be mistaken for a genuine move toward ending the conflict.

Both sides are likely to use this period to build leverage for future negotiations – strengthening military capabilities, sharpening information warfare strategies, and consolidating alliances in preparation for the next round of confrontation, Li added.

The complexity of the situation and accumulated mistrust determined that there is no easy, quick way out of the muddle, analysts said.

