WORLD

Indonesia eyes role of critical minerals hub

Jakarta advances downstreaming drive to move up value chain across globe

By **PRIME SARMIENTO** in Hong Kong and **LEONARDUS JEGHO** in Jakarta

Indonesia is positioning itself as a global hub for critical minerals as soaring oil prices and Middle East turmoil accelerate demand for clean energy and electric vehicles.

The Southeast Asian nation is among the world's top producers of bauxite, copper and nickel, minerals that are essential for the development of clean energy systems and electric cars — the demand for which has been rising in recent months due to rising oil and fuel costs.

Indonesia's downstreaming push is reshaping supply chains for the energy transition, with officials calling on the nation to be not just a producer but also a strategic leader in the minerals ecosystem.

"Our vision is clear. Indonesia seeks to become not only a major producer of critical minerals, we also want to become a trusted partner, a responsible stakeholder, and a strategic leader in shaping the future of the critical minerals ecosystem," said Arif Havas Oegroseno, vice-minister of Indonesia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In a speech delivered at the Indonesia Critical Minerals Conference and Expo held in Jakarta from June 3 to 5, Oegroseno said the world is entering a new industrial era where critical minerals will underpin future geopolitical and economic realities.

Sherly Tjoanda, governor of North Maluku, a mineral-rich region in Indonesia, noted that her province is helping power the energy transition.

North Maluku is home to some of the world's biggest nickel mining and processing facilities and is connected to the global EV supply chain.

Tjoanda said EVs and batteries are 'green products'. But she noted that these products should be manufactured without sacrificing the local community or the environment.

"A battery cannot be truly green if communities are left behind. An electric vehicle cannot be truly sustainable if ecosystems are degraded. The energy transition cannot succeed if local people do not share its benefits," Tjoanda said.

Indonesia is doubling down on its downstreaming push, locally known as "hilirisasi", and has banned raw exports of nickel and bauxite to force companies to process commodities at home and climb the global value chain.

Similar curbs

The government is weighing similar curbs on tin as it seeks to transform the resource-rich nation from a supplier of cheap ore into an industrial powerhouse, according to Indonesia's Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Bahlil Lahadalia.

During a briefing held in February, Lahadalia said the ban on raw nickel ore exports in 2018-2019 had bolstered the value of Indonesia's processed nickel exports to $34 billion in 2024. This was 10 times more than the 2019 figure of $3.3 billion.

Indonesia has likewise extended fiscal incentives to boost EV demand in the domestic market and to encourage foreign companies to set up EV and battery manufacturing plants in the country.

Primus Dorimulu, a Jakarta-based mining company executive, noted that Indonesia has moved forward in the EV global supply chain as it is not only developing a domestic EV market but also positioning itself as a regional production base.

"The government's strategy is quite clear. Investment is only welcome if it generates domestic value-add," Dorimulu told China Daily. He said fiscal incentives are extended selectively, with a focus on EVs and batteries.

Nanan Soekarna, chairman of the Indonesian Nickel Miners Association, pointed to Chinese investments in Indonesia's mining industry. Chinese companies are among the biggest investors in the Indonesian nickel processing and EV production sectors.

Soekarna said Chinese technology transfer and investment inflows to Indonesia will be more effective if the country improves the industrial governance framework.

Shirley Wang, vice-president of industry research for market intelligence firm Shanghai Metals Market, complimented Indonesia's downstreaming policy and how it has helped accelerate the nation's development of its steel and battery manufacturing industries.

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Juicy jamboree

A woman interacts with mascots at the California Watermelon Festival in Los Angeles, United States. The event ran from Saturday to Sunday, welcoming the start of the summer harvest. ZENG HUI / XINHUA

China stories shared at Portugal video awards

LISBON — "Last year, I finally set foot in China and fulfilled a lifelong dream," 78-year-old Portuguese learner Joaquim Albuquerque said in Mandarin Chinese with a noticeable accent.

Albuquerque made the remarks on Saturday at the award ceremony for the "My China Story" short-video competition and the 2026 Chinese Ambassador Scholarship, hosted by the Chinese embassy in Lisbon, Portugal.

Albuquerque's fascination with China began in 2009 when he came across a page of Chinese text. Intrigued by the unfamiliar script, he decided to learn the language. What started as curiosity soon became a long-term commitment.

To mark his journey into the Chinese language, he even adopted a Chinese name for himself — Wang Long.

Last September, he realized his dream of visiting China. From the dramatic sandstone peaks of Zhangjiajie to Beijing's blend of ancient heritage and cutting-edge innovation, the trip left a lasting impression on him.

Albuquerque's story is just one among many featured in the short-video competition. Another contestant, Portuguese theater professional Samuel Pascoal, explained how Chinese language learning shaped his life path.

Years ago, Pascoal's interest in classical Chinese poetry led him to study Chinese and earn a scholarship to study at Nankai University in China.

Now working with a theater company in Porto, he is translating modern Chinese playwright Cao Yu's drama *Thunderstorm* into Portuguese, with the hope of introducing more Chinese theatrical works to local audiences.

If these stories reflect the growing appeal of Chinese language and culture among Portuguese adults, the experiences of siblings Keagan Ivan Oosthuizen, 11, and Skylar Theresa Oosthuizen, 9, suggest that such enthusiasm is also taking root among younger generations.

For them, practicing conversations, writing Chinese characters, watching Chinese cartoons and reading children's books in Chinese have become part of their daily lives. Chinese cuisine, history and traditional culture are among their favorite topics.

Participants at the event offered diverse perspectives on China through personal stories, travel experiences and everyday encounters.

Chinese Ambassador to Portugal Yang Yirui said the competition has attracted broad interest and enthusiastic participation across Portuguese society.

"Although the entries varied in theme and style, they all shared one common quality — sincerity," Yang said. "Through these vivid and personal stories, people from our two countries gain greater understanding of one another, and friendship grows stronger."

XINHUA

US Special

Corporate confidence climbs following landmark summit

New York landmarks, including the Empire State Building, are lit in "Chinese red" for the Chinese New Year of the Snake in January 2025. ZHOU HUANXIN / XINHUA

By **YUAN SHENGGAO**

The constructive and strategic communications between China and the United States have sent a positive signal to global markets against the backdrop of a sluggish economic recovery, officials and business executives said, expressing hopes for expanded cooperation and a more stable business environment.

Michael Miebach, CEO of Mastercard, told Xinhua News Agency that they were greatly inspired and encouraged by the recent summit between the leaders of China and the US.

The Chinese exposition on economic and trade relations sent a clear signal of firm commitment to promoting high-level openness and supporting the long-term development of foreign-invested enterprises. This, in turn, has boosted the confidence of the US and global business communities in the Chinese market and the prospects of China-US cooperation, Miebach said.

Following the summit, Mastercard sees broad opportunities for its development in China, Miebach said.

Strengthening constructive communication and cooperation between China and the US would not only benefit businesses in both countries but inject greater momentum into the stability of global industry and supply chains, as well as world economic growth, he added.

It is exciting to learn that the leaders had reached important consensus on trade relations, said an executive for European and global supply chain strategy at German chemical giant BASF.

For European companies, stable China-US economic and trade ties mean more development opportunities, the executive said.

Jacky Zou, chairman of KPMG China, said that stable China-US relations mean a predictable business environment, unimpeded industry chain collaboration and broad market space, which encourages companies to invest money in technological innovation and market expansion.

"As a US company with long-term roots in China, a stable and forward-moving US-China relationship and an open business environment are precisely what we urgently hope for," said Alex Gu, senior vice-president of Medtronic.

Sean Stein, president of the US-China Business Council, said that the meeting between the leaders had injected a stabilizer into bilateral economic and trade relations, which would help companies from both countries find better cooperation opportunities in many fields.

Eric Zheng, president of the American Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai, said that the meeting between the leaders has created a favorable environment for the healthy and sustainable development of the bilateral economic and trade relations.

He pointed out that the two nations share broad common interests and immense potential for cooperation, adding that "a stable and improving relationship is what US-invested companies in China most look forward to".

According to the latest American Business in China White Paper released by AmCham China in April, the financial performance of most surveyed companies improved in 2025. A total of 52 percent of the respondents expected to achieve profitability, an increase of 6 percentage points from 2024.

More than half of the surveyed companies still consider China one of their top three global investment destinations, and 74 percent of companies believe that foreign-funded enterprises in their industries receive equal or better treatment.

A survey to be released by AmCham Shanghai in September is expected to show similar results, said Jeffrey Lehman, chairman of its board of governors, in an interview with Global Times. He said that for many US companies the Chinese market remains a key component of global business strategies.

Skechers expands its footprint in China

By **TANG ZHIHAO**
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Skechers, a United States-based comfort technology company, maintained steady growth across all aspects of its business in China.

The company said it will continue to strengthen its commitment to serve the evolving needs of consumers and support national initiatives for fitness, striving to be a long-term partner growing with the Chinese market.

"As China's nationwide health and fitness industries continue to expand, Skechers is positioned to capture growth opportunities from the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) dividends," said Willie Tan, partner of Skechers China and CEO of Skechers China, South Korea and Southeast Asia.

"We will accelerate our strategic positioning in professional sports — with 'comfort technology' at our core — to better meet the increasingly upgraded consumption needs and closely align with the national agenda of building a healthier society.

"We are accelerating channel transformation through a full set of initiatives: strengthening our DTC (direct-to-consumer) operations, partnering with quality collaborators for shared success, expanding instant retail and revamping store formats, so as to deliver comprehensive omnichannel upgrades — solidifying the foundation for the brand's long-term, sustainable growth in China."

The two initiatives also marked the latest practices of Skechers in promoting its Chinese development strategy that centers on "in China, for China, with China".

Skechers will further advance its DTC strategy, gradually raising the share of DTC sales.

"We will prioritize the expansion of offline self-operated stores and e-commerce channels, bolster our independent operations and end-to-end management capabilities, and fuel high-quality business growth.

Willie Tan, partner of Skechers China and CEO of Skechers China, South Korea and Southeast Asia. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

"We will leverage omnichannel DTC data to refine product assortments, in-store displays and offline marketing campaigns for greater operational accuracy and efficiency.

"Additionally, we will scale up investment in artificial intelligence and digital solutions, unify internal systems and implement refined operations for existing members and prospective customers. We will also upgrade the membership program, upskill frontline teams and elevate the overall customer experience," Tan said.

So far, progress has been made in promoting these two initiatives, according to Tan.

"Skechers is increasing local research and development and investment in professional sports, covering key categories including running, basketball and pickleball shoes, so that sports enthusiasts in China can enjoy sports more comfortably and perform at a higher level," Tan said.

"'In China, for China, with China' is not merely a slogan — it is the core operating principle that guides every aspect of Skechers' development in China," he added.

"Over the past nearly 20 years, we have established a value chain that encompasses R&D, manufacturing, logistics, channels and operations in China, with over 90 percent of products sold in China being locally manufactured.

"In doing so, Skechers has not only earned the profound trust of consumers and business partners, but also deeply integrated into the broader landscape of China's high-quality economic and social development."

Skechers, which established its presence in China nearly 20 years ago, reported positive and stable market performance in recent years despite global market uncertainties. Tan said Skechers China maintains confidence in the Chinese market and is keen to be a long-term partner to the Chinese market.

"The Chinese market is Skechers' largest overseas market outside the US. Given the strategic significance of China, the Chinese market is not simply a revenue contributor — it is a critical center of gravity for Skechers' global innovation, supply chain development, and long-term brand building. Our deep roots in China directly inform and strengthen our global competitiveness," Tan said.

"Building on continued investment and expansion, leveraging the positive momentum in bilateral economic and trade relations between China and the US, as well as the significant growth dividends anticipated from the 15th Five-Year Plan, Skechers will continue to scale up and optimize its investments and market expansion in China.

"Anchored in a steadfast commitment to long-termism, Skechers will grow in tandem with the Chinese economy and advance hand in hand with local partners, authoring a new chapter of mutual benefit and shared success," Tan said.