



A view of BYD's automobile plant in Zhengzhou, capital of central China's Henan Province. — IC

## Robots fuel city's smart factory plan

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SHANGHAI officials announced this week the city will create 70 smart factories this year with increased adoption of industrial robots and financial support to establish the "Shanghai Format" for smart manufacturing.

Shanghai currently boasts 100 smart factories and produces more than 100 billion yuan (US\$14.1 billion) in smart manufacturing industry output annually. Zhang Ying, vice director of the Shanghai Commission of Economy and Informatization, stated that it places the city at the forefront of the country in terms of the development of smart manufacturing, a national strategy intended to promote digital transformation and industrial upgrading.

In an effort to promote smart manufacturing, local officials said the city will create its own "Shanghai Format" for the industry.

The city plans to construct 200 smart factories by 2025, with 70 new ones planned for the year. With a robot density of 383 robots per 10,000 people, industries will employ almost 10,000 more robots.

## Tesla loses EV sales crown to BYD

UNITED States carmaker Tesla has lost its crown for most sales of all-electric vehicles to Chinese firm BYD.

The US-based car manufacturer run by billionaire Elon Musk delivered a record 484,507 vehicles in the fourth quarter of 2023, according to a company filing on Tuesday — up more than 11 percent from the previous quarter.

But this impressive increase was not enough to maintain Tesla's title as the world's top maker of battery electric vehicles, as Chinese rival BYD reported sales on Monday of

526,409 for the same period.

In addition to delivering fewer vehicles, Tesla also trailed BYD in vehicle production in the fourth quarter.

The figures underscore the challenges Tesla is likely to face this year, from competitors keen to capitalize on the growing demand for EVs.

Tesla's stock slipped after the news was announced, before regaining ground to finish broadly flat.

BYD began life in 1995 as a battery manufacturer, and later turned its attention to producing plug-in hybrid and all-electric vehicles.

Last year BYD became the first manufacturer to pass the 5-million milestone in new energy production.

Many foreign auto giants — including Tesla, BMW, Mercedes and Audi — depend on BYD for their batteries.

Despite strong sales, the firm does not sell its vehicles in the US, where it would face costly import tariffs.

As well as besting Tesla in pure electric sales, BYD sold more than 400,000 plug-in hybrid electric vehicles in the fourth quarter.

In total, it sold more than 3 million passenger vehicles

last year.

Last month, it said it would build a new EV plant in Hungary — in a move described by the country's foreign minister as "one of the largest investments in the history of the Hungarian economy."

Despite losing its quarterly sales crown, Tesla was still top on an annual basis, delivering more than 1.8 million EVs to customers in the year to December, up 38 percent.

This was well above BYD's sales figure of just under 1.6 million, posting a 73 percent year-on-year increase.

(AFP)