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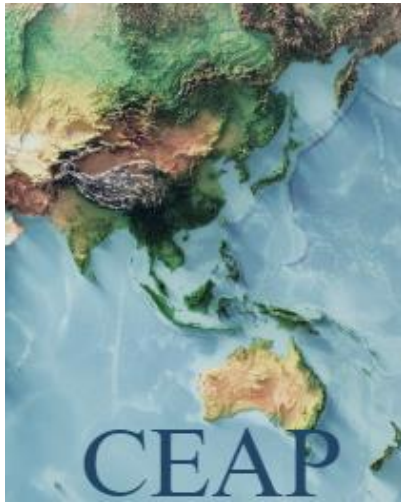
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China Monitor is a Monthly publication by the China, East Asia and the Pacific Area Studies. The Monitor is a comprehensive collection of explainers, commentaries and short notes on contemporary issues and development in the region.



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COMMENTARY

China's Two Sessions in 2025: Focus on Economy, domestic consumption, critical tech, and defence

Femy Francis



(Image Source: Xinhua)

What happened?

On 11 March, China concluded its third 14th National Committee meeting of the Chinese People Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) and the National People's Congress (NPC). This year's discourse focused on economic goals, reviving domestic consumption, defence spending, investing in high-tech innovation, and private enterprises. Chairman of CPPCC, Wang Huning, called to work towards Chinese modernization and said: "CPPCC should keep enhancing its capacity for political consultation, democratic oversight, and participation in and deliberation of State affairs." China's President Xi Jinping called for quality education and said: "To develop a high-quality educational system that meets the people's expectations, the key lies in deepening comprehensive reform of education."

What is the background?

First, a background to the "Two Sessions." Also known as "Lianghui," it is the annual consultative meeting of the CPPCC and the NPC. The Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference with 2,169 members, is the multiparty organ that works as an advisory to the Communist Party of China. It advises the party on non-party concerns and agenda; they are an advisory body with no legislative or executive powers. The National People's Congress of 2,977 members is China's national legislature and "the highest organ of state power." The NPC discusses the Government Working Report from the previous year and sets the agenda for the year ahead.

Second, the internal economic, sociological, and political climate. Since Covid-19, the Chinese economy saw a decline, but also a growth of 4.8 per cent in 2024. The economy is further burdened by the housing bubble crisis, lower domestic consumption, and an aging demography with fewer youth willing to marry. The politburo saw restructuring by removing high-ranking officials who either engaged in corruption or did not follow suit with the party/Xi's ideology.

Third, the external political and economic climate. Currently, China is dealing with high tariffs imposed by the US administration under Donald Trump, the European Union, and Canada. Trump imposed 20 per cent tariffs on all Chinese products. In retaliation, China imposed tariffs on American agricultural produce and 25 per cent on rare metal exports. Recently, the UK also sanctioned 10 Chinese firms for aiding the Russian defence industry.

Fourth, economic agenda and funding 2025. China set the GDP target of 5 per cent for 2025 as it aims to double its economy by 2035. The meeting called to stimulate domestic consumption and funded RMB 300 billion for trade-in funding. The Government working report instated the "new quality productive forces" to be the focus of 2025. They include sectors like quantum technology, AI, and biomanufacturing.

Fifth, high-tech and private enterprises. China has been pioneering in the innovation of high technology. More recently, China's AI firm Deep Seek made waves around the world for formulating a learning model at a fraction of the cost compared to the US firm OpenAI. Huawei was able to make 7 nanometer chips despite sanctions and restricted access to high technology by the US. On the sidelines of the two sessions, China's President Xi Jinping made a rare attendance to the symposium of private firms, attended by representatives of all major firms, BYD, Alibaba, DeepSeek, and Xiaomi. Xi said: "Party committees and governments at all levels must base their actions on local conditions and coordinate efforts to ensure the effective implementation of policies and

measures for promoting the private sector's development.”

Sixth, lower domestic consumption. China's internal consumption accounts for 39.2 per cent of the GDP. After Covid-19, there was an economic slump, housing crisis, and an unemployment issue. China's consumers' purchasing power and confidence have dipped. At the peak of the housing crisis, many people lost their savings over ghost houses. The precarious economic situation has hit the consumer's confidence to purchase.

What does it mean?

First, insulating the economy. In the 2024 GWR, they noted: “Global economic growth lacks steam, unilateralism and protectionism are on the rise, the multilateral trading system is experiencing disruptions, and tariff barriers continue to increase.” The agenda for 2025 pivots to developing their economy to rely on domestic consumption and sales rather than on

export. Aiming to make them shock proof from the changes in the geopolitical climate.

Second, “Neijuan” - recalibrating investments. Neijuan is the self-harming loop where, due to excessive competition, there is an unregulated investment by firms on resources, hoping to receive gains. This has led to a generation of overcapacity with little to no returns. Chinese Premier Li Qiang called for a comprehensive crackdown on neijuan. The government will recalibrate and regulate investments made. As the Premier called to: “eliminate local protectionism and market fragmentation, and remove bottlenecks in market entry and exit as well as resource allocation.” It can be reckoned that more strategic investments will be made in sectors with high chances of returns, which are the high-tech and innovation sectors.

COMMENTARY

US-China tariff tensions

Femy Francis



(Image: Reuters)

What happened?

On 3 March, US President Trump issued an order to amend duties on China's “Synthetic Opioid Supply”. It noted China's failure to “blunt the sustained influx of synthetic opioids” and the “influx of illegal aliens.” The US imposed ad valorem tariffs 10 on products produced in China, making the total 20 per cent in tariffs. Earlier, in February, Trump imposed tariffs, citing a national security threat, noting the influx of fentanyl killed two hundred Americans per day revoked the de minimis policy with China.

China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson warned that: “If the US has other intentions and

insists on a tariff war, trade war or any other war, China will fight to the end.”

On 6 March, Walmart asked Chinese suppliers to cut costs by 10 per cent to balance the burden of tariffs.

What is the background?

First, Trump's executive order and US-China trade equations. Trump's order stated that China is a haven for transnational criminal organizations, laundering money by selling opioids. China was the US's fourth-largest trading partner in 2024; the US imported USD 439 billion in 2024 and exported USD 143 billion, marking a trade deficit of USD 295 billion. China exported electronic equipment, machinery, furniture, apparel, and some critical minerals. The US exports were largely agricultural, poultry, and medical devices. Over the years, the nature of Chinese exports shifted from low-value products to more capital goods, like advanced technology and rare metals. Second, China's retaliation. PRC imposed 15 per cent tariffs on US agricultural imports, poultry, corn, cotton, and wheat. Additionally, a 10 per cent tariff on US produce like beef, dairy, fruits, vegetables, soy, and pork. Fifteen US firms are now under the Export Control List of China, prohibiting Chinese companies from selling dual-use tech to the US. Ten US firms added to

the Unreliable Entity List. It also kick-started the anti-monopoly and anti-competitive investigation against Google and Apple. China imposed export controls on 25 rare metals vital for electronic and military equipment and 15 per cent duties on US coal and LNG products. Third, Trump's China policy. Under Trump's administration, US grew closer to Taiwan and now invited TSMC to open five plants in the US. Under Trump, the Indo-Pacific Command focused on countering China's presence, and the Department of Justice also launched the China Initiative to hinder covert activities by Beijing. In 2018, Trump imposed 30 per cent tariffs on imported solar panels, 80 per cent came from China. In 2020, US-China signed a Phase One Trade deal agreeing to buy USD 200 billion worth of US goods. In 2025, the US Postal Service briefly halted all parcels arriving from China and Hong Kong.

What does it mean?

First, rising trade tension, but not a trade war. Trump's policies focus on protectionism have overarching repercussions for the US market.

But the administration believes that they will bounce back up as they build their domestic market. And find it vital to face trade tension as the only solution to decrease dependence.

Second, the "America First" policy. Trump's America First Investment Policy 2025 aims at welcoming foreign investment, but not at the cost of national security. The initiative cited China as a foreign adversary, "exploiting United States capital to develop and modernize its military, intelligence, and other security apparatuses," notes the policy paper.

Third, the consumer pays the price. Pressurizing both US and Chinese firms, inadvertently leading to consumers paying the price. Walmart urged Chinese suppliers to balance Trump's tariffs and to keep up their competitive edge to sell cheap goods. United States International Trade Commission (USITC) found that: "US importers absorbing the costs of the tariffs through a combination of less favorable margins for sellers and higher prices for consumers."

COMMENTARY

LDP China-Japan-South Korea meeting: "A nearby neighbour is better than a distant relative"

Femy Francis



(Image Source: The Japan News)

On 22 March, Tokyo hosted three foreign ministers – China's Wang Yi, Japan's Takeshi Iwaya, and South Korea's Cho Tae-yul for a trilateral meeting on cooperation, trade, regional tensions, and geopolitical climate. This is the 11th meeting; the last meeting was held in 2023, calling for practical cooperation between the three. On the sidelines, after six years of hiatus, China and Japan held their sixth China-Japan High-Level Economic Dialogue.

Background

Japan's foreign minister, during his welcome remarks, said: "Given the increasingly severe international situation, I believe we may truly be at a turning point in history." The remark is hinting at the policies brought by the Trump administration. Trump's executive order imposed 20 per cent tariffs on Chinese products in light of China's failure to curb fentanyl production, and retaliatory tariffs by China on US agricultural produce and poultry. Chinese students also face an increasing threat of deportation as US representatives are introducing bills calling for background checks and even canceling student visas from China. South Korea has been added to the list of "sensitive countries" by the US Department of Energy. It is now labeled as countries that pose a threat to national security and nuclear non-proliferation. South Korea vehemently opposed the listing and urged the US to reconsider. Both Japan and South Korea are worried about the "Fair and Reciprocal Plan" measure to be imposed by the Trump administration from 02 April 2025. Under which it aims "to counter non-

reciprocal trading arrangements with trading partners by determining the equivalent of a reciprocal tariff with respect to each foreign trading partner," issues the White House.

Major themes of discussion

First, an unstable geopolitical climate. Iwaya noted: "It has become more important than ever to make efforts to overcome division and confrontation through dialogue and cooperation." Cho called for peace and said: "We reaffirmed that maintaining peace and stability on the Korean peninsula is a shared interest and responsibility of the three countries." Wang Yi called to jointly resist risks faced and to have a mutual understanding among their populations.

Second, trade and economic cooperation. Wang Yi focused on avenues of economic collaboration when he said: "Our three nations have a combined population of nearly 1.6 billion and an economic output exceeding USD 24 trillion. With our vast markets and great potential, we can exert significant influence." He called for the need to resume free trade talks and to expand the collaboration to a Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. This comes in light of the heavy tariffs imposed by the US as Trump's claims to strengthen "domestic market and business."

Third, the North Korean threat. Both Seoul and Tokyo condemned Pyongyang's participation in the Russia-Ukraine war. Cho said: "I also stressed that illegal military cooperation between Russia and North Korea should stop immediately, and that North Korea should not be rewarded for its wrongdoings in the course of bringing about the end of the war in Ukraine." Iwaya also noted that the denuclearization of North Korea is a common goal for the three

countries. Recently, North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un expressed unwavering support for Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Kim gave unconditional support to uphold a major defense pact, which requires both countries to provide immediate military assistance in case of conflict.

Fourth, the future of trilateral cooperation. Three leaders affirmed to take the initiative ahead and agreed to focus on knowing each other, cooperation, and joint efforts against mutual challenges. They welcomed the upcoming "Opening ceremony of the Year of Japan-China-ROK Cultural Exchange 2025-2026." During which events will be held throughout the year. They also looked forward to "Protocol Amending the Agreement on the Establishment of the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat." Aimed at promoting peace and cooperative relations.

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SHORT NOTE

Bangladesh & China: Muhammad Yunus's Visit

Nova K



(Image Source: SCMP)

On 26 March, Bangladesh's Chief Advisor left for China to participate in the Boao Forum 2025. During the four-day visit, he is expected to meet with the heads of the CPC as they mark the 50th year of friendship. Before the visit, Bangladesh's Foreign Secretary, Md Jashim Uddin, informed that several agreements would be signed between the two countries on economic cooperation. Yunus said: "Our relationship has been very strong over the years. Our business is very strong, and we benefit from our collaboration with China," and that "Everybody in Bangladesh is inspired by what China has achieved." Bangladesh's Press Secretary, Shafiqul Alam, informed that Yunus wanted to visit India before China and that an official request was made last December, which had no positive response.

Meeting with Xi

On 28 March, China's President Xi Jinping met Bangladesh's Chief Advisor Muhammad Yunus. Xi noted that the two countries have a long-standing history of friendship. This year also marks the 50th anniversary of their bilateral cooperation and China expresses its willingness to work with Bangladesh. Xi pushed for advanced cooperation on the Belt and Road Initiative, aimed at pushing the digital, marine, and green economy. While cooperating on infrastructure development, water conservation, and people-to-people exchanges. Xi also called for an orderly multipolar world and wishes to promote development and coordination in the Global South countries. Yunus also affirmed to One-China principle and stated that they oppose Taiwanese independence. He welcomed Chinese firms to invest in Bangladesh to aid the economic transformation of the country.

Nine Agreements Signed

On 28 March, China and Bangladesh signed nine agreements during Bangladesh's Chief Advisor's visit to Beijing. These agreements were signed after he met with China's President, Xi Jinping. These agreements were on economic and technical cooperation, translation and publication of classics, exchange of cultural heritage, media exchanges and the healthcare sector. They also launched formal negotiations on investments, signed commercial agreements on the modernization and expansion of Mongla Port, built rehabilitation centers, and donations for cardiac surgery vehicles.

Investments in port, economic zone, and technical assistance

On 28 March, *The Business Standard* reported on the monetary amount agreed on by the two countries for investments. China pledged to give USD 400 million for Mongla Port, USD 350 million for the China Industrial Economic Zone, and USD 150 million for technical assistance. China's Ambassador to Dhaka, Yao Wen, informed that 30 Chinese firms have pledged to invest USD 1 billion in the Chinese Industrial Economic Zone. They also agreed to kickstart the discussion on formulating a Free Trade Agreement between the two countries. Yunus welcomed China to participate in the Teesta River Comprehensive Management and Restoration Project.

China's President Xi Jinping also informed Chief Advisor Yunus that China will consider the request to lower interest rates on Chinese loans to Bangladesh. He also affirmed that Chinese firms would be encouraged to invest in Bangladesh and facilitate the relocation of Chinese manufacturing to Dhaka. Currently, China is Bangladesh's biggest trading partner, with the annual trade accounting for USD 25 billion, but with a major trade deficit of USD 1 billion of Bangladesh exports to China despite zero-tariff market access.

Responses from the Bangladesh media

Bangladesh's flagship newspaper, *The Daily Star*, published an op-ed titled "Yunus's China visit can open many doors." The op-ed noted that this visit will serve as a foundation to recalibrate Dhaka-Beijing ties. Therefore, the author notes that this visit will prioritize diversifying export strategies to China in order to lessen the trade deficit. This can be done with the help of the

Bangladesh Embassy in China, as they can exhibit products to Chinese firms and cities to attract buyers. The op-ed further expounded on how this visit could lead to further investments in the healthcare and defense sectors.

An editorial in *The Tribune* titled "Yunus' 4-day visit to China, meeting with Xi and growing closeness between India's neighbours," noted the not-so-warm current relations with its neighbour India since the ousting of Bangladesh's former Prime Minister Sheikh Hassina. It noted that under Hassina's administration, Bangladesh had an India friendly posture. Even during that period, China heavily invested in financial and infrastructure sectors. The ousting and establishment of the current interim regime has widened China's opportunity. The editorial believes that China will try to woo Bangladesh to counter India's influence in the region.

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CHINA READER DAILY WIRE

INTERNAL

China an ideal destination for foreign investors, says China's President

On 28 March, China's President Xi Jinping stated that China will remain an ideal destination for foreign investors, notes a press release by China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He expounded that China is an ideal, secure, and promising destination. China has been advancing towards a high-standard opening up and that they are embracing opportunities. Xi said: "Foreign businesses are important participants in the Chinese modernization drive, in the country's reform, opening and innovation, and its interconnectivity with the world and integration into economic globalization." Additionally, he noted that in the process, the foreign investors have thrived and enjoyed profitable returns. He also expressed that foreign businesses are responsible for maintaining global economic order and safeguarding the multilateral trading system. This comes after China conducted its China Development Forum of 2025 with 40 international executive heads from major firms. ("President Xi: China has been and will remain an ideal, secure, promising investment destination," *CGTN*, 28 March 2025)

Chinese military head removed from CPPCC under anti-corruption probe

On 26 March, Deputy Head of the Chinese military's anti-corruption department, Lt. Gen Tang Yong, was relieved of his position in the CPPCC. Nor was any explanation given for his dismissal, and neither did any information come out on the investigation and the anti-corruption drive. It is reckoned that this decision usually implies that he was suspected of engaging in corruption activities. His last appearance was last March in 2024. Another convicted was the Director of the political work department of CMC, Miao Hua, who was placed under investigation. Prior to this, two defense ministers were removed Li Shangfu and Wei Fenghe. ("Top member of Chinese military anti-corruption unit may be caught up in graft probe," *SCMP*, 27 March 2025)

China kickstarts its Boao Forum 2025

On 26 March, China kickstarted its Boao Forum for Asian Council 2025 in Hainan Province with China's Vice Premier meeting foreign heads of states and leaders. Vice Premier Ding Xuexiang met with leaders from Laos, FSM, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Indonesia, and Portugal. The Boao Forum started in 2001 as a non-governmental and non-profit organization to promote regional economic development. Additionally, it aims to foster economic

integration between Asian countries. The conference theme for this year is “Asia in the Changing World: Towards a Shared Future,” to be held from 25-28 March. (“Chinese vice premier meets foreign leaders attending Boao forum,” *CGTN*, 27 March 2025)

China SOEs refrained from conducting business with Hong Kong firm that sold shares to the US, reports *Bloomberg*

On 27 March, *Bloomberg* reported that China asked its SOEs to not forge any deal with Hong Kong-based business head Li Ka-Shing and his family over the sale of its shares to US-based firms in the Panama Canal and others. CK Hutchison sold its global ports shares to US firm BlackRock, after which the Hong Kong firm was accused of being manipulated by the US. Currently, an investigation is going on the family's assets and investments in China. China's Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office criticized this deal for harming China's national interest and giving in under US pressure. US President Donald Trump lauded the transaction as he wanted to get control of Panama back to the US. (“China Pauses New Deals With Li Ka-shing Family After Panama Ports Plan,” *Bloomberg*, 27 March 2025)

China launches “Sky Net 2025” campaign for anti-graft initiative

On 24 March, China announced a campaign for “Sky Net 2025,” an anti-corruption drive under the Central Anti-Corruption Coordination Group. They vowed to further international anti-graft cooperation aimed at maintaining pressure on international fugitives. The campaign aims to hunt fugitives, recover proceeds, and curb cross-border corruption. The individual crackdown will be carried out by different authorities, like the National Commission will conduct the recovery of illegal proceedings of duty-related crimes. China's People's Bank of China will work with the Ministry of Public Security, to stop illicit fund transfers abroad and to offshore firms through an underground banking system. The anti-graft body reported that over 1597 corruption fugitives have been repatriated to China under the 2024 Sky Net Campaign. (“China to maintain high pressure on corruption fugitives,” *Xinhua*, 24 March 2025)

China's tourism sees 34.9 per cent hike, says an editorial in *CGTN*

On 20 March, *CGTN* published an editorial titled “‘China Travel’ continues to heat up with huge rise in foreign visitors.” The note looked into the surge of visitors traveling to China after the visa-free transit policy was imposed on 17 December

2024. This policy led to 8.885 million foreigners visiting China, which has led to a 34.9 percent hike in tourists compared to last year. The editorial noted that China had advanced its unilateral visa-free policy to welcome global travelers. This policy includes 38 countries with 30 days stay. Beijing Border Inspection Terminal reported that people transiting China's Beijing Daxing International Airport has exceeded by 1 million. In the southwest regions of China, Yunnan has become the hub for China-Laos tourism from the Kunming-Mohan Land Port hub. This has facilitated student exchange, information communication at border checkpoints, and the opening of schools. Harbin Taiping International Airport, in northeast China, has a 240-hour visa-free transit policy. (“‘China Travel’ continues to heat up with a huge rise in foreign visitors,” *CGTN*, 20 March 2025)

China's state security ministry issues death penalty against espionage detainee

On 20 March, China's Ministry of State of Security (MSS) warned against espionage activities in the country, where agencies are using surveys, academic exchanges, and hobby groups to collate intelligence. A former engineer from a Chinese research institute was detained and sentenced to death for selling information to foreigners. MSS informed that the detained carefully planned to sell the intelligence. After being detained from his job, he collected classified information to blackmail the institute. He travelled around the globe for half a year, with compromising information. The MSS called the public to have extra caution when they receive surveys and emails from unknown sources. MSS said: “For personal professional interests, especially those involving core sensitive areas, it emphasizes the need for sound judgment, adherence to security protocols, and caution against being lured by curiosity into compromising national security and strictly adhere to the bottom line.” (“Foreign espionage agencies conduct intelligence collection under guise of surveys and hobby groups: China's MSS,” *Global Times*, 20 March 2025; “Ex-researcher sentenced to death for spying, China says,” *BBC*, 19 March 2025)

Hong Kong leader opposes the “coercion” by external actors in the sale of CK Hutchison shares sale

On 18 March, Hong Kong politician and leader John Lee expressed that his government is against foreign investors' and governments' “bullying tactics.” This was the response to the recent sale of shares by a Hong Kong firm to US

firms giving shares to Panama ports. CK Hutchison sold most of its global port business worth USD 22.8 billion which was strategically situated near the Panama Canal. Lee said: "(Hong Kong) government urges foreign governments to provide a fair and just environment for enterprises," and "We oppose the abusive use of coercion or bullying tactics in international economic and trade relations." CK Hutchison expressed that this deal was purely commercial and unrelated to the political news. ("Hong Kong leader John Lee opposes 'coercion and bullying' by foreign governments," *The Strait Times*, 18 March 2025)

Foreign CEO from Europe to attend annual China Development Forum

On 17 March, Reuters reported that the annual China Development Forum is scheduled to commence on 23 March at Beijing's Diaoyutai State Guesthouse. It is expected that dozens of foreign CEOs will visit China for the flagship meet on development and out of them few will also meet China's President Xi Jinping. Some of the attendees are CEOs of Siemens, FedEx, BMW, Mercedes-Benz, Nestle, Deutsche Bank, Estee Lauder, Standard Chartered and others. This year's European CEO's representation is much higher than the previous year. Executives of top mining and healthcare firms will also take part. This meeting has been analyzed under the recent the recent tariffs imposed by US President Donald Trump, it is believed that in light of these tariffs. There is an increased focus on European Firms and the Chinese government seeks to invite foreign investments. ("Foreign CEOs to flock to China for key summit, Xi meeting, sources say," *Reuters*, 18 March 2025)

China condemns Hong Kong firm's sale of Panama port shares to the US firms

On 14 March, *The Guardian* reported that China's Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office (HKMAO) condemned the deal between CK Hutchison and the US firm BlackRock. CK Hutchison sold its shares in Panama Ports Company to the US firm. After this, the shares of the Hong Kong-based firm fell by 6 per cent. A strongly worded commentary was published in *Ta Kung Pao*; the op-ed noted that this act disregards the national interest of the people of China and called out the firm for not thinking twice and considering whose side they are on. This commentary was reposted by HKMAO. This deal will give BlackRock control of 43 ports in 23 countries. The commentary said: "This deal is an act of hegemony by the US, which uses its state power to infringe upon the legitimate rights and interests of other countries through

despicable means such as coercion, pressure and inducement." The co-managing director of CK Hutchison said: "I would like to stress that the transaction is purely commercial in nature and wholly unrelated to recent political news reports concerning the Panama Port." The deal is under a 145-day negotiation period and has not yet been finalized. ("China criticises Hong Kong firm's sale of majority stake in Panama ports," *The Guardian*, 14 March 2025; "Despicable! : China lashes out at CK Hutchison for Ports Sale to US," *Newsroom Panama*, 15 March 2025)

Dalai Lama announces this successor will be born outside China from the "free world"

On 11 March, Tibet's exiled and spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, announced that his successor will be born in the "free world," outside China. The 89-year-old spiritual leader of Tibet, which is currently an autonomous region in China, stated this during his new book release. In his book *Voice of the Voiceless*: "Since the purpose of a reincarnation is to carry on the work of the predecessor, the new Dalai Lama will be born in the free world so that the traditional mission of the Dalai Lama – that is, to be the voice for universal compassion, the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism, and the symbol of Tibet embodying the aspirations of the Tibetan people – will continue." China considers the present Dalai Lama as separatist and insists on the right to appoint his successor after his death. In 2011, the current Dalai Lama stepped down from his political position and only focuses on his spiritual role. ("Dalai Lama says successor will be born in 'free world' outside of China," *Al Jazeera*, 11 March 2025)

CPPCC concludes its annual session calls for united Chinese modernization

On 10 March, China's People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) and the National People's Congress concluded its annual session. They called the political advisory to contribute to great unity and solidarity for the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation towards the path of modernization. China's President Xi Jinping attended the meeting. Chairman of CPPCC, Wang Huning, delivered a speech where he stated that under Xi Jinping the entire nation and the party worked hard in achieving economic, social and innovation goals. He called: "to unswervingly uphold the overall leadership of the CPC, saying the leadership of the CPC is the fundamental guarantee that the Chinese people will develop and maintain strong cohesion and self-confidence." He noted that the CPPCC serves as a consultative group to

promote democracy, cooperation, and unity. He called to refine the mechanism to enable and encourage in-depth consultation. ("China's top political advisory body holds closing meeting of annual session," CGTN, 10 March 2025)

China's lawmakers discuss the working report by the National People's Congress Standing Committee

On 08 March, China's lawmakers discussed the working report submitted by the National People's Congress (NPC). The Chairman of NPC, Zhao Leji, delivered a speech at the third session of the 14th NPC meeting. The NPC committees have upheld high-quality legislation to strengthen law-based governance. The report noted that China will continue to compile the environmental code of 2025 and draft national parks law. They also plan to revise the cybersecurity law. The committee in the report also affirmed that they will promote private sector and national development. Additionally, they will revise the Unfair Competition Law, Enterprise Bankruptcy Law, Fisheries Law, Agriculture Law, and Banking Regulation Law, notes the report. The standing committee also plans to hear a special report on the climate action plan of 2025 while fostering the new quality productive forces. ("Chinese lawmakers deliberate on work report of NPC Standing Committee," CGTN, 08 March 2025)

Educational institutions need to "align talent cultivation with economic and social development," says Xi Jinping

On 07 March, China's President Xi Jinping call for the strengthening of the education system to further scientific and technological innovation. Xi attended the National Advisory Meeting during the 14th National Committee of CPPCC. He called for a deep understanding of the role of education and technology. Xi said: "The goal is to cultivate a steady stream of talent, unlock their full potential, and ensure their abilities are fully utilized." He expressed that the correct orientation must be important while running schools. There also needs to be moral grounding among students with intellectual ability, physical vigor, and working skills. Xi also said, "It is important to refine the school management system, grant schools' greater autonomy in decision-making, and continuously advance law-based school administration."

Hong Kong Court of Final Appeal overturns pro-democracy group conviction

On 06 March 2025, Hong Kong's Court of Final Appeal overturned the conviction of three pro-democracy groups that organized the

candlelight protest marking the Tiananmen Square crackdown anniversary. This is seen as a rare victory for the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong. Several pro-democracy protestors in Hong Kong have faced a stringent crackdown and have been detained. The court was led by Chief Justice Andrew Cheung, who noted that the government prosecutor redacted key facts and that the prosecutor "deprived the appellants of a fair trial, so that their convictions involved a miscarriage of justice." The convicted group, Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements in China, was accused of being a foreign agent. Several discrepancies were found in the identity of the overseas organization, and the other individual's information was removed. ("Hong Kong's top court quashes convictions of pro-democracy Tiananmen group," Reuters, 06 March 2025)

Hong Kong pro-democracy group conviction overturned in light of discrepancies

On 06 March 2025, Hong Kong's Court of Final Appeal overturned the conviction of three pro-democracy groups that organized the candlelight protest marking the Tiananmen Square crackdown anniversary. This is seen as a rare victory for the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong. Several pro-democracy protestors in Hong Kong have faced a stringent crackdown and have been detained. The court was led by Chief Justice Andrew Cheung, who noted that the government prosecutor redacted key facts and that the prosecutor "deprived the appellants of a fair trial, so that their convictions involved a miscarriage of justice." The convicted group, Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements in China, was accused of being a foreign agent. Several discrepancies were found in the identity of the overseas organization, and the other individual's information was removed. ("Hong Kong's top court quashes convictions of pro-democracy Tiananmen group," Reuters, 06 March 2025)

National People's Congress announces agenda for the two sessions

On 04 March, CGTN reported on the agenda for the 3rd session of the 14th National People Congress. The political advisory meeting adopted the new agenda for the coming session to be held from 05-11 March. The agendas are: to deliberate the working group report of last year; review the implementation of the 2024 plan on economy and social development; draft a plan for economic and social development 2025; review the report on central and local budget and draft a plan of 2025; deliberate to amend the law on Deputies to the National

People's Congress; look at the working report of NPC Standing Committee, Supreme People's Court, Supreme People's Procuratorate. ("Agenda of 3rd session of 14th National People's Congress," CGTN, 04 March 2025)

CPPCC held its tenth advisory body meeting

On 02 March, China's 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) held its political advisory body meeting. This was the tenth session of the standing committee meeting. CPPCC'S Chairman, Wang Hui presided over the meeting. He noted that the CPPCC's National Committee focused on the main tasks of the party and looked into how the country performed the previous year. Wang urged the body that they make contribution in 2025 and advance modernization as they aim to achieve the goal set in the 14th Five-Year Plan. The meeting comes before the annual session to be held this week. ("China's top political advisory body concludes standing committee session," CGTN, 03 March 2025)

CPPCC National Committee holds a press conference

On 03 March, China's People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) National Committee held a press conference. CPPCC is a political advisory body. The 14th CPPCC National Committee's spokesperson, Liu Jieyi, informed us that all the preparations for the session had been completed. They reviewed the 2024 work report and marked the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. Liu said: "They have visited villages, factories and communities, turning grassroots opinions and suggestions into policy options that inform the decision-making of the Party and the government." Additionally, to further high-quality development, the CPPCC kickstarted 42 research projects, held 95 consultative meetings, and processed over 5000 proposals. Liu also said, "China benefits from significant institutional strengths and the advantages of a super-large market where the potential of emerging consumption trends is rapidly being unleashed. It boasts a comprehensive industrial system, with its manufacturing sector ranking first worldwide for 15 consecutive years." ("China's top political advisory body holds press conference ahead of annual session," CGTN, 03 March 2025)

China's President speeches and instructions on economic development now published

On 02 March, CGTN reported that the first volume of selected words of China's President Xi

Jinping has been published and is now available nationwide. The volume has 74 pieces written by Xi on topics like economic development from November 2012 to December 2024. These include speeches and instructions and is the first of its kind. The Volume focuses on Xi's ideas of economic development in the new era and how it has opened new opportunities. The volume is compiled by China's Institute of Party History and Literature under the COC, and it will be published by the Central Party Literature Press. ("Selected works of Xi Jinping on economy published," CGTN, 02 March 2025)

China's President chaired the CPC meeting on government work report

On 28 February, China's President Xi Jinping chaired a meeting of the Communist Party of China to discuss the government work report before the two sessions meeting. It was noted that China's economy has reached overall stability and that they are seeing more steady progress. They also noted that it is important to follow the measures made by the Central Economic Work Conference to implement the new development philosophy. The meeting also called to implement more proactive and impactful macro policies to further increase domestic demand. This way, they integrated scientific and technological innovation with industrial innovation. They also called to promote sustained economic recovery and continuously improve the living standards of the nations, maintain social harmony, and fulfill the goals of the 14th Five-Year Plan. ("Xi Jinping chairs CPC leadership meeting to discuss draft govt work report," CGTN, 28 February 2025)

EXTERNAL

China, Iran, and Russia engage in joint naval drill at the Strait of Hormuz

On 11 March, China, Iran, and Russia conducted joint naval drills in the Middle East. The Maritime Security Belt 2025 drill took place in Oman near the Strait of Hormuz, from where one-fifth of the world's crude oil is traded worldwide. This is the fifth year since the three countries took part in the trilateral drills. The drills invited warning by the British military's Maritime Trade Operation Centre, informing that there were GPS interference in the strait. It is reckoned that this was because of GPS jamming to reduce targeting capabilities of drones and missiles, informs EOS Risk Group analyst Shaun Robertson. He said: "However, electronic navigation system interference has been reported in this region previously during periods of increased tension and military

exercises.” (“China, Iran and Russia hold joint naval drills in Mideast as tensions rise between Tehran and US,” Associated Press, 12 March 2025)

ECONOMY

China's four major banks to raise funds with China's Ministry of Finance economic revival

On 30 March, four commercial banks from China announced that they would raise USD 72.5 billion by issuance of A-share targeting. The major SOEs include the Bank of China, China Construction Bank, Bank of Communications, and Postal Savings Bank of China. They informed that these funds would be raised by reducing issuance-related costs, and this would replenish this respective core tier-1 capital. Additionally, China's Ministry of Finance will also raise funds and will give 500 billion yuan. China Construction Bank said: “The strategic investment by the MOF in the Bank can optimize the layout of state-owned capital, enhance the transmission efficiency of fiscal policies, strengthen the implementation of national strategies through capital ties, promote a sustained recovery and growth of the macroeconomy, and fulfill the responsibility of state-owned capital in serving national development and people's well-being.” (“China to boost 4 major state-owned banks with 500 billion yuan capital injection,” *CGTN*, 31 March 2025)

China's manufacturing PMI rises to 50.5, says NBS

On 31 March, China's National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) informed that China's manufacturing sector's Purchasing managers index (PMI) rose by 50.5. In February, Sub-indices of production rose, and well as production rose to 52.5. This indicates that there is an accelerated manufacturing activity. The NBS also noted that this showcases that manufacturing demand also has risen to 51.8 from 51.1 in the previous report. Additionally, supplier delivery times have also decreased to 50.3 from 51.0. (“China's manufacturing PMI rises to 50.5 in March,” *CGTN*, 31 March 2025)

Foreign CEOs express hope in China's economy at the China Development Forum 2025

On 24 March, *CGTN* reported on foreign executives attending the China Development Forum 2025. Apple CEO Tim Cook visited China as it aims to increase investment. China Council for the Promotion of International Trade noted that it welcomes

smartphone makers to use the opportunities provided by China, as the Chairman, Ren Hongbin met with Tim Cook. China's Vice Premier He Lifeng stated that China will open to a higher level to foreign investors. China's Commerce Minister Wang Wenato met with BMW CEO, Oliver Zipse as they discussed the EU's anti-subsidy investigation and the rise of Chinese EVs. Wang said: “China hopes to work with the European side to become a pillar of the multilateral trading system, injecting certainty and stability into the world. The Chinese market remains committed to opening up, and China's policies are consistent.” Zipse also noted that Europe's green transition cannot happen without China's support and their firm remains confident in China's economic prospects. (“CDF 2025: Global business leaders express confidence in China's future,” *CGTN*, 24 March 2025)

China announces rules for “anti-foreign sanctions list” initiative

On 24 March, China's Premier Li Qiang signed an order to execute rules to further Chinese countermeasures foreign sanctions. The rules implement the anti-foreign sanctions law passed in 2021. If implemented any firm, entity, or individual used discriminatory measures against Chinese firms or citizens will be added to China's anti-sanctions list. Those on the list will be denied entry into China and will be removed from China. The assets of the deported individuals or firms will be frozen or even seized, as they will be restricted from doing any business in China. The restriction will on be education, science and technology, legal, trade, culture, and even the health sector. (“China rolls out new rules to step up countermeasures to foreign sanctions,” *Reuters*, 24 March 2025)

China's Finance Minister offers “world's most promising super-sized market,” to foreign CEOs

On 24 March, China's Finance Minister Lan Fo called to implement proactive fiscal policies at the China Development Forum 2025. He noted that there are economic difficulties and challenges, and China has gained rich experience in economic and fiscal understanding. He expressed full confidence in the Chinese economy stating that it has numerous advantages, strong resilience, and fiscal governance. All the while giving room to respond to possible shocks and challenges. Lan said: “China has the world's most promising super-sized market, with immense potential for consumption growth.” To support

this, China plans to issue an ultra-long special treasury bond in 2025 of USD 181 billion. He also ensured that the executives would be given equal treatment and an environment in which to invest. ("China's finance minister vows more proactive fiscal policy," *CGTN*, 24 March 2025)

Premier Li Qiang says China's economy has "great vitality"

On 23 March, China's Premier Li Qiang addressed the gathering at the China Development Forum 2025. Where he expounded that China will further the market access in all sectors. He noted that the Chinese economy is resilient and has great vitality. The theme of this meeting is "Unleashing Development Momentum for Stable Growth." More than 80 top officials and executives attended the meeting, Li welcomed the business worldwide to China. Heads of Apple, Pfizer, Mastercard, and others attended the meeting. China Council for the Promotion of International Trade informed that it welcomes Apple to further the supply chain operations in China as the council met with Apple CEO Tim Cook. Li said: "We have prepared for possible unexpected shocks, which, of course, mainly come from external sources. Where necessary, the Chinese government will introduce new policies to ensure the smooth operation of the Chinese economy." ("Premier Li Qiang pledges expanded market access for foreign investors," *CGTN*, 23 March 2025)

China's new economic plan to boost consumption, reports SCMP

On 17 March, *SCMP* reported on the economic plan to increase domestic consumption. Where China's General Office of CPC came out with plans to engineer increased consumption and economic growth. They released the 30-point plan on the following to boost demand: lowering childcare costs, supporting senior citizens, stabilizing the stock and property market, small businesses get paid, inviting FDIs, increasing automotive consumption, re-organizing unnecessary business, and AI investments among others. Xinhua (the flagship newspaper of China) noted: "By connecting consumer spending to broader social goals like elderly care improvement, childcare support, and work-life balance, the plan embeds consumption growth within China's wider development objectives, signaling that consumption is being positioned not just as an economic target but as a means to enhance the quality of life." ("What is actually in China's new plan to boost consumer spending?" *SCMP*, 17 March 2025)

China's plans to boost domestic consumption, says China's General Office

On 16 March, China's General Office of the Communist Party of China issued a special initiative to further domestic consumption. This comes after a heavy focus and an agenda was set to boost domestic consumption in 2025. The office aims to boost domestic consumption and stimulate domestic demand. Increase the spending power of the consumer by increasing their earning by reducing financial burdens. The plan will have eight major sections to address factors like income growth, consumption quality, big-ticket consumption and the consumption environment improvement. They plan to expand property income by stabilizing the stock market and developing bonds suitable for individual investors. ("China unveils plan on special initiatives to boost consumption," *CGTN*, 16 March 2025)

ICBC announces USD 11.04 billion to support private economy

On 12 March, the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) announced that it would invest USD 11.04 billion in technology and innovation to support the private economy. The funds want to reinforce the "hard technology" sector like semiconductors and advanced manufacturing over "soft technology" like the internet services. ICBC is the biggest commercial lender in the world by assets. The chairman of the lender, Liao Lin, stated that ICBC will formulate directives from central authority and outline policies with a concrete action plan to support private enterprises in the above-mentioned fields. The bank also called to be "patient capital" rather than rushed/quick profit. The annual parliamentary meeting called for plans to achieve technological breakthroughs and to further invest in technological startups. ("China's ICBC launches \$11 billion technology innovation fund," *Reuters*, 12 March 2025)

China's CPI fell by 0.7 per cent, reports the National Bureau of Statistics

On 09 March, China's National Bureau of Statistics informed that China's consumer price index fell by 0.7 per cent from 2024. Last year it fell by 0.5 per cent. China's consumer price fell way more than expected, with Bloomberg estimating it to be only a 0.4 per cent decline. Goldman Sachs Group said, "Even when adjusted for the effect of an earlier-than-usual Lunar New Year holiday, consumer inflation slowed to among the weakest levels in months." This could be reckoned by a fall in service prices and a negative reading of core inflation. The core CPI saw a decline for the first time since 2021.

("China's Inflation Declines Below Zero for First Time in Year," Bloomberg, 09 March 2025)

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Chinese EV giant BYD's sales in 2024 beat Tesla

On 25 March, *BBC* reported that BYD and EV manufacturing giants surpassed the sales of Tesla in 2024. BYD informed that last year their revenue rose by 29 per cent worth USD 107 billion by selling the hybrid vehicles. While Tesla only sold EVs worth USD 97 billion last year. BYD also launched a cheaper version of the Tesla Model 3, one of the top-selling Tesla EVs. The US firm is facing backlash over the CEO's closeness with the Trump administration, as the Chinese EVs face stringent sanctions. BYD sold 4.3 million hybrid vehicles last year. Additionally, BYD also announced a new supercharging feature, which only takes 5 minutes to charge the vehicles. They are also giving the "God's Eye" driving assistance to all its EV models. ("Chinese electric carmaker BYD sales beat Tesla," *BBC*, 25 March 2025)

China unveils deep-seas cable cutting technology, reports SCMP

On 22 March, *SCMP* reported that China unveiled technology that can cut deep-sea cables. China's Ship Scientific Research Centre (CSSRC), along with the State Key Laboratory of Deep-Sea Manned Vehicles, developed this technology. The tool will be able to cut lines in depths of 4000 meters and has been designated specifically for submersibles like *Fendouzhe*, *Striver*, and *Haidou* of China. The device can cut through armored cables protected with rubber, steel, and polymer sheaths. The tools are used for seabed mining the dual-use potential and sent alarms. The team lead, Hu Haolong said: "The cutting tool's design has overcome several formidable technical challenges arising from the deep." ("China unveils a powerful deep-sea cable cutter that could reset the world order," *SCMP*, 22 March 2025)

Baidu refutes user's intel leak

On 20 March, China's tech giant Baidu refuted claims that there had been an intel leak by their top executive's teenage daughter. The daughter is said to have posted personal details of internet users. Baidu is China's largest cloud provider; a controversy was sparked after the daughter of the Vice President posted private information of the users. Baidu replied that all employees are prohibited from accessing user information and that the teenager's post was through a doxing database from another

platform. The Vice President apologized on his daughter's behalf and informed her that she obtained information from overseas networking sites. On 20 March, Baidu's share fell by 4 per cent in Hong Kong. ("China's Baidu denies data breach after executive's daughter leaks personal info," *Baidu*, 21 March 2025)

BYD to launch "super e-platform," says its founder

On 17 March, *The Guardian* reported that China's EV giant BYD will unveil a new charging system across China with a super-fast charging option, informs BYD founder, Wang Chuanfu. The "super e-platform" will be able to refill as fast as pump gas with a charging speed of 1000kw and the cars will be able to travel for 400km. This will be twice as fast as Tesla cars whose latest version can with a speed of 500kw. Wang said: "In order to completely solve our users' charging anxiety, we have been pursuing a goal to make the charging time of electric vehicles as short as the refueling time of petrol vehicles." The new archetype will be available for the new EV model Han L sedan and Tang L SUV. ("Chinese EV maker BYD says the new fast-charging system could be as quick as filling up a tank," *The Guardian*, 18 March 2025)

DeepSeek employees face travel ban; passports confiscated by parent firm High Flyer

On 15 March, *The Information* reported that DeepSeek has issued travel restrictions on its employees, noting that it could pose a national security threat. Since the launch of the AI firm that made waves around the world, it launched its serially cheap R1 model. The government has now dubbed the firm as a national treasure. DeepSeek's parent company, High-Flyer, is holding onto employees' passports and has prevented them from travelling freely abroad. This is reckoned to be a broader directive from the government as they advised AI researchers to avoid traveling to the US to avoid information leaks. ("DeepSeek, a National Treasure in China, is Now Being Closely Guarded," *The Information*, 14 March 2025; "DeepSeek employees given travel restrictions," *EuroWeekly*, 16 March 2025)

New Hope Groups' Chairman calls for private firms to take forward AI innovation

On 03 March, *CGTN* cited New Hope Group's Chairman's view on the role of private enterprises in technological progress. Chairman Liu Yonghao noted that the private enterprises should seize the opportunity and grab the wave of technological progress. This, he expounded,

came with the boom and progress of AI. Liu is a member of China's People's Consultative Conference. Liu said, "In 2024, China deepened the integration of technological and industrial innovation and accelerated the construction of a modernized industrial system." According to the World Economic Forum's List, 79 per cent of lighthouse factories were from China. ("New Hope Group chairman: Chinese private firms must arm themselves with AI," CGTN, 2025)

Chinese smartphone firm Honor announces to invest USD 10 billion in AI

On 02 March, Chinese smartphone firm Honor announced that they will invest USD 10 billion to develop AI, informs CEO James Li. The Shenzhen-based firm aims to further expand its company to AI-powered PCs, tablets, and other wearables. James made this announcement at the Mobile World Congress trade show. In 2024, the firm slipped from third place to fourth place for smartphones makers with 14 per cent market share. The new competition has led to recalibration within the company's investments. ("China's Honor announces \$10 billion investment in AI devices," Reuters, 02 March 2025)

China's DeepSeek claims to make profit of 545 per cent

On 01 March, DeepSeek Chinese AI startup revealed that they were theoretically making 545 per cent profit per day. They revealed this data based on their V3 and R1 model, while they also cautioned that the actual revenue will be significantly lower. DeepSeek revealed such data for the first time; they also informed of the "inference" tasks, a stage where AI training models are made. This revelation can impact AI stocks of companies outside China, noting that DeepSeek claims to have only spent USD 6 million on making chips using their training model. This was significantly less than its rival US firm, OpenAI. ("China's DeepSeek claims theoretical cost-profit ratio of 545% per day," Reuters, 01 March 2025)

Chinese AI executives advised not to travel to the US

On 01 March, Reuters reported that Chinese authorities had instructed AI entrepreneurs and experts to abstain from traveling to the US. This is done so that these individuals do not divulge confidential information about China's progress. It is also reported that the Chinese authorities fear that the executives can be detained and be used as bargaining chips by the US for negotiations. DeepSeek founder Liang Wenfeng refused to attend an AI summit to be held in

Paris, and another Chinese AI startup founder cancelled his plan to visit the US on the instruction of the government. ("China tells its AI leaders to avoid US travel over security concerns, WSJ reports," Reuters, 01 March 2025)

OUTER SPACE

China's CERES-1 rocket sends eight satellites in the sun-synchronous orbit

On 17 March, China's CERES-1 a commercial rocket launched eight satellites in the sun-synchronous orbit. The carrier blasted from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center; the mission was called: "Auld Lang Syne." One of the satellites Yunyao-1 is equipped with a Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS), it has an occultation detection payload. This payload enables satellites to collect atmospheric temperature, humidity, and pressure. The constellation aims to create a real-time global ionospheric and atmospheric detection system, to aid the global weather forecast. These specific satellites will provide real-time forecasts with a 20-minute difference for countries under BRI. ("China's CERES-1 commercial rocket sends 8 satellites into preset orbit," CGTN, 17 March 2025)

China launches 18 low earth orbit satellites

On 12 March, a group of 18 low earth orbit satellites were launched by the Long March-8 Y6 carrier rocket from the Hainan launch site. The satellites are the fifth of its kind, and they have successfully entered preset orbit, informs China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation (CASC). This also marks the inaugural launch of site No.1 launch pad. The launch pad is 83 meters tall, customized for the Long March-8 rocket. The launch pad has a modular steel structure and design, a deflection cone for cooling and noise reduction. The Hainan commercial launch site was first inaugurated in 2022 and had its first launch mission in 2024. The Long March-8 rocket was developed by the China Academy of Launch Vehicle Technology. ("China launches 18 satellites from Hainan commercial launch site," CGTN, 12 March 2025)

China's retailers adopting DeepSeek models to business, reports Reuters

On 11 March, an editorial in Reuters titled "Chinese retail traders embrace DeepSeek in a nod to quants," looked at retailers adopting DeepSeek in their business. The author noted that investors these days are adopting artificial intelligence tools in their business. Many online crash courses have appeared with training rooms to beat the market using AI models after the popularity of DeepSeek. There has also been

a rapid change in the retail sector dominated by the stock market, and AI has generated new risks for investors. The author expressed that in the future, we will see warfare with drones and robots, and stock markets will be grounds for computers fighting with each other. Chinese social media is now filled with online courses teaching traders how to use DeepSeek to evaluate companies, pick stocks, and code trading strategies. (“Chinese retail traders embrace DeepSeek in a nod to quants,” Reuters, 11 March 2025)

DEFENCE

China’s PLA is using DeepSeek’s AI for non-combative training and support, reports SCMP

On 23 March, SCMP reported that China’s People’s Liberation Army uses DeepSeek’s AI for tactical support. It is largely used for intelligence and decision-making. Currently, DeepSeek’s LLM model is being used at PLA hospitals and the People’s Armed Police. Central Theater Command announced the embedded deployment of the model to support doctors. They are also being used at the elite PLA General Hospital “301 Hospital,” where top brass officials stay and get treated. The paramilitary forces under the Chinese Central Military Commission are using the app for daily physical training and psychological counseling. PLA has plans to utilize AI for military defense. (“China’s PLA is using DeepSeek AI for non-combat support. Will actual combat be next?,” *SCMP*, 23 March 2025)

ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

China National Offshore Oil Corporation discovers oil field in the South China Sea

On 31 March, *Global Times* reported that China founded a large-scale integrated clastic oilfield in the South China Sea for the first time by the China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC). The oil field is 170 km from Shenzhen, Guangdong Province. The test drilling was able to yield 413 barrels of crude oil and 68000 cubic feet of natural gases. Professor at the Shandong University’s School of Oceanography, Wang Yamin said: “Historically, China has had relatively limited oilfield reserves. The current global trend is shifting toward the development of shale and clastic rock oilfields. Therefore, the latest discovery holds significant implications for the future distribution and production potential of oilfields in China.” (“China discovers 100-million-ton oilfield in deep to ultra-deep clastic

rock layers in South China Sea for the first time,” *Global Times*, 31 March 2025)

NUCLEAR

China’s calls for nuclear cooperation benefiting the Global South at the IAEA meeting

On 07 March, CGTN reported on China calling to push for nuclear cooperation at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). China’s IAEA representative, Li Song, called for nuclear cooperation that would benefit the Global South. Li expressed that China looks at nuclear energy as the pillar to security and to address climate change. He said: “China’s support for strengthening international monitoring of Japan’s discharge of nuclear-contaminated water from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant.” Urging Japan to fulfill its commitment while discharging nuclear contaminated water. On Iran, China believes that it is vital to have increased diplomatic efforts and dialogue with the country. He said: “China attaches great importance to this and encourages and supports Iran in its efforts to work with the IAEA to further enhance safeguards cooperation and resolve outstanding issues.” Li also asked the US to take steps to re-engage in international diplomatic efforts and a dialogue with Iran, as it left JCPOA. (“China backs nuclear cooperation, calls for stronger Iran talks,” CGTN, 07 March 2025)

CHINA & TAIWAN

China’s Taiwan Affairs Office online platform reports 323 alleged Taiwanese secessionist activities

On 27 March, China’s Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council informed that 323 reports had been made on the newly launched online platform for reporting secessionist activities. The spokesperson of the office, Chen Binhua, stated that these included influential Taiwanese political figures, sponsors and influencers. Chen said: “Their egregious activities, such as suppression of the opposition party through baseless charges, intimidation to dissolve organizations in support of China’s reunification and blatant infringement on the legitimate rights and interests of mainland-born spouses residing in Taiwan, are exposed in the emails.” He also noted that the authorities will consider the facts and hold the perpetrators accountable. (“Mainland: Online platform for reporting ‘Taiwan independence’ activities receives 323 emails,” *CGTN*, 26 March 2025)

TSMC may have circumvented tariffs, but anti-American legal accusation remains, says

an editorial in SCMP

On 08 March, an editorial in SCMP titled “TSMC may have dodged Trump tariffs but lawsuit over ‘anti-American’ practices presses on” looked at the Taiwan-US deal on TSMC. Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC) is one of the largest semiconductor producers in the world and is a pioneer in the field. Recently, the US and Taiwan announced their plans to open five plants in America to circumvent tariffs and sanctions imposed by the US. TSMC will invest USD 100 billion in the five-factory plan in Arizona over the next four years. This lies in line with Trump’s goal of the “Make in America” agenda. Currently, TSMC has built two factories in Arizona. While this comes, the company still faces allegations of anti-American workforce practices against non-east Asian staff. (“TSMC may have dodged Trump tariffs but lawsuit over ‘anti-American’ practices presses on,” SCMP, 08 March 2025)

CHINA & EAST ASIA

China-Japan-South Korea’s Trade Ministers discuss possible Free Trade Agreement (FTA)

On 30 March, China, Japan and South Korea held their first economic dialogue for the first time in five years. This meeting is aimed at bracing themselves for tariffs by US President Donald Trump. The meeting was attended by Trade Ministers of Japan, South Korea and China, and the meeting was held in Seoul, South Korea. The heads all agreed that they would closely cooperate for comprehensive high-level discussion for a Free Trade Agreement between the three countries. South Korean Trade Minister Ahn Duk-Geun said: “It is necessary to strengthen the implementation of RCEP, in which all three countries have participated, and to create a framework for expanding trade cooperation among the three countries through Korea-China-Japan FTA negotiations.” (“China, South Korea, and Japan agree to strengthen free trade,” *The Straits Times*, 30 March 2025)

Japan protests against China misquoting Prime Minister Ishiba’s

On 24 March, Japan’s Chief Cabinet Secretary protested against China’s false reporting and misquoting Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba’s remarks on the Foreign Minister’s trilateral meeting. China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs noted that Ishiba affirmed that they respect China’s position, as Wang Yi asked: “fulfill important political commitments on historical issues and the Taiwan question,” and that Japan should send “the right signal to the world with a responsible attitude towards

history, the people and the future.” Japan got back and stated that no such statements were made and Japan’s Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi held a press conference. Hayashi noted that Japan protested against the statement and called for immediate removal of the same as it was not factual. He also noted that it is regrettable that a non-factual statement was issued. (“Japan protests Chinese government statement it says misquoted PM Ishiba,” *Reuters*, 24 March 2025)

China imposes anti-dumping duties on Japanese imports of resorcinol

On 22 March, China’s Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) imposed anti-dumping duties on resorcinol from Japan for five years. Noting that the continued imports from Japan are harming their domestic resorcinol industry. This will be initiated from 23 March after being requested by China’s resorcinol industry. Resorcinol is an antiseptic/disinfectant used by pharmaceutical companies. This is used to treat skin disorders, eczema, and other dermatitis issues. (“Anti-dumping duties on Japanese resorcinol extend for five more years: MOFCOM,” *Global Times*, 22 March 2025)

“A nearby neighbor is better than a distant relative,” says Wang Yi at the China-Japan-South Korea meeting

On 21 March, Foreign Ministers of Japan, South Korea, and Japan for a trilateral meeting. China’s Foreign Minister Wang Yi noted that China gives utmost importance to the cooperation between the three countries and that this cooperation started early and has played an important role in enhancing mutual trust. Wang said: “A nearby neighbor is better than a distant relative,” expounding that the world is becoming unstable which underscores the need for their full cooperation. He also said: “As China-Japan-ROK relations develop further, regional peace and stability will be better guaranteed. As their cooperation deepens, countries in the region will be better equipped to respond to various external challenges.” Additionally, he expressed that China is willing to work with Japan and South Korea to uphold multilateralism and safeguard the role of the international system and the United Nations for global peace and prosperity. (“China confident in China-Japan-ROK cooperation prospects: Wang Yi,” *CGTN*, 22 March 2025)

Japan-China-South Korea Foreign Ministers discuss geopolitical tensions and trilateral cooperation

On 22 March, the foreign ministers of China,

Japan, and South Korea held a trilateral meeting on issues such as natural disasters, aging demography, declining birthrate, green economy, and the geopolitical climate. The meeting was attended by all Foreign Ministers, China's Wang Yi, South Korea's Cho Tae-yul, and Japan's Takeshi Iwaya. They agreed on the need to tackle multi-generational concerns and have mutual trust and understanding. Iwaya expressed his concerns regarding North Korean troops' participation in and enlistment in the Russia-Ukraine war and called to push for North Korea's full denuclearization. Iwaya said: "There is no place in the world for unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force, a subtle message about China's growing assertiveness in the region." Wang Yi noted the need to recognize the regional economy and called to resume talks on economic frameworks. Iwaya also urged China to lift the ban on Japan's seafood imports over the Fukushima treated water release. Cho also noted that North Korea must not be rewarded for its wrongdoings by siding with Russia. ("Japan, China and South Korea discuss trilateral cooperation," *AP*, 21 March 2025)

CHINA & PACIFIC

Australia is monitoring Chinese research vessel activities, reports *ABC News*

On 31 March, *ABC News* reported that Australian agencies are monitoring Chinese research vessels operating their deep seas submersible across Australian waters. The Chinese vessel Tan Suo Yi Hao was recorded passing the Victorian coastline. Australia's Prime Minister Anthony Albanese informed that he prefers that Chinese vessels were not there but that they did not break any international law. Albanese said: "I would prefer that it wasn't there. But we live in circumstances where, just as Australia has vessels in the South China Sea and vessels in the Taiwan Strait and a range of areas, this vessel is there." He noted that: "What our task is to do is to make sure that we represent Australia's national interests ... and I have every confidence, every confidence, in our Defence Force and our security agencies to do just that." Shadow Defence Minister Andrew Hastie, expressed that it is imperative that they ask questions regarding Chinese activities and that Albanese should not draw "false equivalence." Hastie said: "The prime minister should be standing up for our sovereignty; he's shown a pattern of weakness about activities in our waters — particularly with the Chinese flotilla." ("Australia

monitoring Chinese research vessel off the south coast," *ABC News*, 31 March 2025)

China and Nauru's foreign ministers affirm bilateral cooperation and rekindling of ties

On 27 March, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with his Nauruan counterpart, Lionel Aingimea. Wang Yi noted that China is willing to cooperate on fields of agriculture, fisheries, marine development and climate change response. He also noted that the resumption talks between the two countries have fostered mutual trust and understanding. Wang Yi also appreciated, Nauru's support for the one-China principle. Aingimea thanked China for the valuable assistance in infrastructure building and socio-economic development. He also reaffirmed that Nauru will not waver from the One-China principle. ("Chinese FM calls for deepened cooperation with Nauru," *CGTN*, 27 March 2025)

China's Foreign Ministry urges Australia to denounce disinformation spread against China

On 11 March, China urges Australia and the international community to denounce the disinformation spread by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI). China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Mao Ning remarked in response to an ASPI posting on social media about the ASPI's inability to have anti-China material due to budget cuts from the US. The research centre urged the US and other relevant organizations to immediately fund the institution. Mao stated that Australia has long been funded by the US to propagate lies against China under "research findings." Mao claims that they lacked factual grounds and they spread disinformation. Mao said: "What the head of the institute revealed on social media further exposes its hypocritical nature of creating falsehoods and spreading disinformation to vilify China under U.S. funding" ("China calls for resisting disinformation campaigns by anti-China institute," *CGTN*, 11 March 2025)

New Zealand's spy agency warns against China's growing presence in the Pacific

On 07 March, Reuters reported that New Zealand's spy warned of the security posed by China's presence and influence in the Pacific Island countries. This was reported by the Security Intelligence Service Director, General Andrew Hampton. He noted that the security issues in the Pacific Island countries have created a vacuum for China to sign security deals with Pacific Island countries. Hampton

said: “create competing regional architectures, and expand its influence with Pacific Island countries.” In the past few years, China has struck a deal with Pacific Island countries, the most recent being the Cook Island Prime Minister signing agreements on economy, fisheries, and seabed mining, among others. He said: “With the Cook Islands developing deeper relationships with other parties, this will necessitate an even stronger focus from my agency on national security risks” (“New Zealand’s top spy warns on China’s influence in the Pacific, backs Five Eyes,” Reuters, 07 March 2025)

CHINA & SOUTHEAST ASIA

China sent the first batch of aid to Myanmar

On 31 March, China’s International Development Cooperation Agency informed that they sent the first batch of aid to Myanmar. They noted that this has been done at the request of Myanmar’s administration, and China is donating USD 13.77 million for emergency humanitarian assistance. The aid includes tents, blankets, first-aid kits, and other essentials. Myanmar was hit by a 7.7 magnitude earthquake the tremors were felt in Thailand and regions of China. China previously also sent 88 personnel for rescue efforts in Myanmar. (“China sends first batch of aid to earthquake-hit Myanmar,” *CGTN*, 31 March 2025)

China stands with Myanmar and upholds the “Paukphaw” friendship, says China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs

On 31 March, *Global Times* reported on China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs statement on support for Myanmar after the earthquake. The Ministry spokesperson, Guo Jiakun noted that China is paying high attention to the earthquake and that China’s President Xi Jinping extends condolences to the victims and the military leader Min Aung Hlaing. He then also noted the support provided by China by sending a medical rescue team and China Search and Rescue Team. Currently, 400 Chinese earthquake experts are participating in the rescue mission, and the civilian rescue teams are on their way. Guo said: “China will uphold the “Paukphaw” friendship between China and Myanmar, stand together with Myanmar in this difficult time, make the most of the critical 72-hour window to search for survivors, treat the injured, and ensure relief supplies reach those in need. We believe that with the support of the international community, the government and people of Myanmar will overcome the disaster and rebuild their home.” (“China to uphold ‘Paukphaw’ friendship, stand together with Myanmar in this

difficult time: FM spokesperson introduces China’s disaster relief assistance,” *Global Times*, 31 March 2025)

China installs long-range bombers near Scarborough Shoal, reports Reuters

On 28 March, *Reuters* reported that China deployed two long-range bombers near the Scarborough Shoal in the contested South China Sea. The bombers are H-6 and were captured by satellite imagery. US Defense Secretary, Pete Hegseth, is set to visit the Philippines soon, and China also did not advertise stationing their bomber near the Philippines. The image was taken by Maxar Technologies and showed two aircrafts on the east of Scarborough Shoal. “The bombers’ second message could be you (the United States) have the potential for long range strike; so do we, and in larger numbers. Clearly not serendipity,” says Peter Layton from Australia’s Griffith Asia Institute. The bomber is based on Soviet-era design but has been remodeled for anti-ship and land attack cruise missiles capable of launching nuclear ballistic missiles. (“Exclusive: Satellite images show fresh Chinese bomber deployment in South China Sea,” *Reuters*, 28 March 2025)

China sends 82 personnel to conduct rescue mission in Myanmar after earthquake

On 28 March, China sent a rescue team of 82 personnel to assist with the earthquake rescue mission in Myanmar. As of 29 March morning, it is estimated that 694 have died. An earthquake of 7.9 magnitude hit Myanmar, and the tremors were felt in Thailand, Laos, and some places in China’s Yunnan Province, informs China’s Earthquake Networks Centre. China’s Embassy in Myanmar urged Chinese nationals to take precautions and that they are sending an emergency response mechanism as they monitor the earthquake closely. Multiple structures in the Mandalay region were heavily damaged after the earthquake. (“China sends 82-person rescue team to Myanmar after deadly quake,” *CGTN*, 29 March 2025; “Update: 7.9-magnitude earthquake strikes Myanmar; Chinese embassy making ‘all-out’ efforts to carry out response work,” *Global Times*, 28 March 2025)

Myanmar rebel group imposes taxes on Chinese mines after taking over

On 28 March, *Reuters* reported on Myanmar’s rebel group Kachin Independence Army (KIA), seizing the northern mining belt, which has led to the halting of mineral supply and the hiking of prices. The rare earth mining belt is a key global resource. It is assumed that KIA will try to

negotiate this with China as they have heavily invested in the region. China's imports of rare earth fell by 311 metric tons in February, which is 89 per cent lower since last year. KIA is one of the oldest militias in Myanmar and is fighting for the autonomy of the Kachin region, which is mostly a Christian group. KIA also imposed taxes on Chinese-operated rare-earth mines. China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said it: "actively promote peace talks and provide all possible support and assistance for the peace process in northern Myanmar." ("Myanmar rebels disrupt China rare earth trade, sparking regional scramble," Reuters, 28 March 2025)

China-Thailand kickstart their sixth "Thailand Blue Strike 2025" joint naval exercise

On 24 March, China and Thailand kickstarted their joint naval exercise at the southern coast of China, according to China's Ministry of Defense. The naval exercise dubbed as "China-Thailand Blue Strike 2025," is held in the Zhanjiang region of the South China's Guangdong Province. The focus of the drills will be on countering terrorism, joint maritime strikes, and anti-submarine exercises. This is the sixth of its kind of exercises between the two countries, The ministry noted that this will be significant in furthering their practical cooperation between the navies of the two countries. China's military affairs expert, Wang Yunfei, said: "This exercise series usually features both non-traditional security aspects, such as counter-terrorism, maritime rescue and humanitarian aid, and traditional security aspects, such as maritime strike and anti-submarine operations." Wang also informed that Thailand's Type 053HT frigate will train with the Chinese counterpart to boost interoperability between Thailand and China. ("China, Thailand to hold Blue Strike-2025 joint naval exercise," *Global Times*, 24 March 2025)

Laos signs a clean energy deal with Chinese firms worth USD 1.45 billion

On 24 March, Laos signed a clean energy deal with China worth USD 1.45 billion. The agreement was with China's Western Power Industrial Co Ltd, a Chinese power plant manufacturer. This deal is aimed at Lao's push to diversify energy sources and its role as a key electricity exporter. The Xekong Thermal Power Plant is the Lao counterpart in this deal. The firms also attested to an additional USD 228.8 million power transmission deal, aimed at enhancing efficiency and reliability of power distribution. In 2022, the same Chinese company signed USD 409 million

supply and service deal with Lao. Last year several Chinese SOEs invested in Laos to further the wind and solar energy base. Lao is a landlocked country with an abundance of water, therefore essentially relying on hydropower. Laos has been dubbed as the "battery of Southeast Asia," for being a significant energy exporter in the region. ("Laos Secures USD 1.45 Billion Clean Energy Deal With Chinese Firm, Bolstering Regional Power Ambitions," *ChemAnalyst*, 24 March 2025)

"Fictional," says the Philippines on Beijing's South China Sea claims

On 24 March, Philippines Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro calls China's claims in the South China Sea "the biggest fiction and a lie." He noted that no Southeast Asian country will accept such claims and China's President's aggressive postulate has undermined the years of goodwill. He also informed of the new incidents involving Chinese forces at Scarborough Island. Philippine's Coast Guard Commodore Jay Tarriela informed that China has installed new floating barriers to prevent fishermen from the Philippines from entering the lagoon. Teodoro called for: "stronger national defense posture," and continued engagement with allied countries posed by China. He also said: "No ASEAN country accepts the legitimacy of that 10-dash line, because that is the biggest fiction and lie that can be sold to any right-thinking person." He also remarked on China's presidential policies and politics and said: "It's caused by Xi Jinping and his abusive ways ... that would possibly destroy the leadership of his party in China and the goodwill that was nurtured by his predecessors." ("Philippine defense chief calls China's claims in the South China Sea 'the biggest fiction and lie'," *AP*, 24 March 2025)

Malaysia faces pressure from the US to curb illegal sale of Nvidia chips to China, reports *Financial Times*

On 24 March, *Financial Times* reported on the pressure facing Malaysia by the US to control Nvidia chips reaching China. Malaysia's Trade Minister Zafrul Aziz noted that the US government demanded tight regulation and close track on the movement of Nvidia chips. Aziz said: "[The U.S. is] asking us to make sure that we monitor every shipment that comes to Malaysia when it involves Nvidia chips," and that "They want us to make sure that servers end up in the data centers that they're supposed to and not suddenly move to another ship." Recently, worries regarding illegal sales escalated as Singapore detainee three men over

USD390 million fraud case of alleged sale of Nvidia chips to China through Malaysia. Aziz also believes that Nvidia chips reached China after passing through Malaysia, he also said: "The US is also putting a lot of pressure on their own companies to be responsible for making sure they arrive at their rightful destination." ("Malaysia to crack down on Nvidia chip flows under US pressure," *Financial Times*, 24 March 2025)

Indonesia to impose anti-dumping duties on China, Thailand, and Taiwan's nylon film imports

On 12 March, Indonesia's Ministry of Finance announced that it will impose anti-dumping import duties on nylon films coming from Taiwan, China, and Thailand. The regulation will take effect by March and will remain as so for the coming four years. The ministry enlisted firms from China, Taiwan, and Thailand, which will face import duties of USD 1.92 per kilogram. The firms are China's Kunshan Yuncheng Plastic Industry and Yuncheng Heshan New Material. Thailand's AJ Plast. The finance ministry justified these anti-dumping duties claiming that the products from these firms have caused losses in the local industries of Indonesia. ("Indonesia to impose anti-dumping import duty for nylon film from China, Thailand, Taiwan," *Reuters*, 21 March 2025)

China's Foreign Minister invites Laos to collaborate with China

On 13 March, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with his Lao counterpart Thongsavanh Phomvihane in Beijing where they pledged to further bilateral community of shared future. Wang Yi noted that over 64 years both countries have stood together through challenges and mutual support and that the comprehensive partnership grew stronger. Wang Yi said: "China firmly supports Laos in strengthening the leadership of its party and is willing to enhance strategic mutual trust, strengthen solidarity and cooperation, and promote the building of a China-Laos community with a shared future." He noted that China welcomes Lao to invest in new opportunities provided by China. Thongsavanh congratulated China for concluding their two-session meeting and the outcomes they came out with. He also lauded China's "leapfrog" development in the face of a complex external environment. He said: "Laos firmly adheres to the one-China policy and is ready to work with China to achieve greater progress in building a Laos-China community with a shared future." ("China, Laos pledge stronger ties for a shared future," *CGTN*, 14

March 2025)

Chinese nationals repatriated from Myanmar in telecom fraud crackdowns

On 14 March, China's Ministry of Public Security reported that Chinese nationals involved in telecom fraud from Myanmar were brought back to China through Thailand. A total of 2,876 Chinese suspects were repatriated to China from Myanmar's Myawaddy region. On 20 February, a joint operation of repatriating and escorting telecom fraud suspects in Myawaddy was launched by China, Myanmar, and Thailand. The first batch of 200 Chinese nationals will land in Nanjing, East China's Jiangsu Province, via Thailand. An official from the ministry said: "Public security authorities will intensify efforts with greater determination to deepen international law enforcement cooperation, further advance joint crackdown operations, resolutely eradicate criminal hubs, spare no effort in apprehending suspects, and safeguard the lives and property of Chinese citizens." ("2,876 Chinese nationals repatriated from Myanmar via Thailand in telecom fraud crackdown: MPS", *Global Times*, 14 March 2025)

Myanmar pushes for Chinese project despite civil-military conflict, says an editorial in *The Irrawaddy*

On 13 March, an editorial in *The Irrawaddy* titled "Myanmar Junta Pushes Chinese BRI projects in Rakhine Amid Fierce Fighting." The author noted that despite the conflict between the Arakan Army (AA) and the Rakhine State, the military wants to develop China-funded projects further. They cited Deputy Chief of Central Committee on Myanmar Special Economic Zones, Soe Win, who noted that Kyaukphyu Special Economic Zone (SEZ) is paramount to Myanmar's geopolitical and economic development and said "the project must succeed." Win stated that the implementation of the Kyaukphyu deep-sea port will further increase cooperation with China under the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC) and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). ("Myanmar Junta Pushes Chinese BRI projects in Rakhine Amid Fierce Fighting," *The Irrawaddy*, 13 March 2025)

After his Russia tour, Myanmar military leader meets China's envoy

On 11 March, Myanmar's military leader Min Aung Hlaing met with China's Special Envoy for Asian Affairs, Deng Xijun, to discuss future election plans. Prior to this, Deng also met Junta's Foreign Minister Than Swe as they

discuss avenues to stabilize the China-Myanmar border and joint cooperation on combating border cyber fraud issues. Min had just come back from Russia; some analysts believe Deng's arrival and meeting with the junta leader signifies concerns regarding the growing closeness between Russia and Myanmar. The two officials also discussed China's intervention in the Shan state as China calls for the ethnic rebels to halt their offensive. ("Myanmar Junta Boss Returns to China's Embrace After Russia Trip," *The Irrawaddy*, 12 March 2025)

Myanmar advocacy group calls for probe into UN envoy's engagement with Chinese firm

On 11 March, Al Jazeera reported on calls by advocacy groups in Myanmar urging the UN to investigate the UN's special envoy for Myanmar's ties with China. The UN envoy for Myanmar, Julie Bishop, also a former Foreign Minister of Australia, was accused of having ties with Chinese SOEs and mining firms. Justice for Myanmar group sent a letter to the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, while citing a report published in Australia's newspaper *The Saturday*. The group on China's link in Myanmar said: "unacceptable conflicts of interest that must be fully investigated." They also called out Bishop and asked the UN to consider: "business activities, consider the appropriateness of her continued U.N. engagement, and disclose the findings." ("UN urged to probe Myanmar envoy Julie Bishop over alleged China firms ties," *Al-Jazeera*, 11 March 2025)

Thailand repatriates Chinese victims and owners of scam centers

On 06 March, Thailand repatriated hundreds of Chinese nationals who flew home from Myanmar through Thailand. The three countries, China, Myanmar, and Thailand, have been clearing out illegal cyber scams run at the Thai-Myanmar border, mostly run by Chinese nationals. Two weeks ago, 600 Chinese nationals were sent back. Thailand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Nikorndej Balankura said, "Another group of Chinese nationals," and that there will be regular Chinese national repatriation every Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. ("Thailand repatriates hundreds more Chinese scam-centre workers freed from Myanmar," *Strait Times*, 07 March 2025)

CHINA & SOUTH ASIA

Bangladesh's Chief Advisor invites China to invest in its ocean

On 01 April, *The Indian Express* reported on Bangladesh's Chief Advisor inviting China to build an economic base in Dhaka and their

ocean. The interim advisor, Muhammad Yunus, pitched to China during the four-day visit that allowed Bangladesh's ocean to be an extension of the Chinese economy. Yunus said: "Seven states of India, eastern part of India, called seven sisters... they are landlocked country, landlocked region of India. They have no way to reach out to the ocean." He also reinstated that Bangladesh is the only guardian of the ocean region. Therefore, he invited China to build, produce, and market things. While wrapping up his visit, he noted that his country must consider China as an important friend and that their relationship has grown over the years. ("Yunus pitch to China: India's Northeast landlocked, Bangladesh is your gateway," *The India Express*, 01 April 2025)

Pakistan to issue "panda bonds"

On 26 March, Pakistan's Minister of Finance and Revenue Muhammad Aurangzeb, informed that Pakistan plans to issue "panda bonds" this year, which is aimed at integrating the market with China. Aurangzeb made these statements on the sidelines of the Boao Forum 2025, where he noted that it is a testament to the deepening cooperation. He said, "Pakistan and China are ironclad friends and strategic partners. We remain grateful to China for helping us in our journey of growth." The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor has now been shifted to monetizing on the infrastructure built by the Chinese. He also noted the unstable geopolitical climate and called to stay committed to globalization. He also lauded BRI cooperation for being an enabler to maintain strong trade flows. ("Pakistan to issue 'panda bonds' this year," *China Daily*, 28 March 2025)

Afghanistan announces plans to open Wakhan corridor to China

On 26 March, Taliban spokesperson Zabiullah Mujahid announced that China and Afghanistan will be connecting through Wakhan Corridor, on a social media post in X. Mujahid noted that through this deal, they would earn USD 6 billion in transit revenue per year. The Wakhan road to the Chinese border is just 60 km, notes Mujahid. The corridor is in the north eastern Badakshan province and is close to China's Xinjian province. Currently, there is construction ongoing; once completed, this will reduce the dependence on Pakistan's Karachi port as a transit trade route. India's former defense attaché to Afghanistan, Major General Sanjay Meston, said: "China has its eye on Afghanistan's mineral wealth estimated at more than \$4 trillion dollars." With the construction completed, China will have land access to Afghanistan without the POK corridor

where many Chinese traders and nationals are targeted. (“Afghanistan-China: New Games Around Wakhan Corridor As US Mulls Return,” *StratNews Global*, 27 March 2025)

China-Nepal teams restore Basantapur Palace ruined in 2015 earthquake

On 27 March, an editorial in *Global Times* titled “China-Nepal teamwork revitalizes palace complex from ruins,” looked at the restoration of the Basantapur Palace complex. This was done by the joint archeological exploration by China and Nepal. The site is iconic to Kathmandu, a nine-storyed palace that was hit by the earthquake. A Nepali worker part of the initiative, Prasad noted that it was not just a job but a way to reconnect with his ancestors. The project was aided by China and used patented technology for relic restoration. China's National Cultural Heritage Administration (NCHA) said: “representative example of international cooperation in cultural heritage.” The complex was built in the 17th- 18th century and was an important part of the Hanuman Dhoka Palace. The Chinese engineers were responsible for salvaging 85 per cent of the original components. They also invited wood carvers from Nepali communities and hired skilled families to aid in the restoration. (Chen Xi and Ji Yuqiao, “China-Nepal teamwork revitalizes palace complex from ruins,” *Global Times*, 27 March 2025)

Bangladesh's Chief Advisor meets China's President, Foreign Minister, and Executive Vice Premier

On 28 March, Bangladesh's Chief Advisor, Muhammad Yunus, met with China's President Xi Jinping. Before this, he met the China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi and China's Executive Vice-Premier Ding Xuexiang. Yunus is on a day visit where he'll be attending the Boao Forum and is expected to sign agreements with China. Ding expressed that Xi Jinping attached importance to his visit to China. Yunus also affirmed how they stand by the One-China policy and take pride in being the first south asian country to have joined BRI. Ding said: “Beijing will extend duty-free and quota-free access to Bangladeshi goods to China until 2028 – two years after Dhaka graduates from a Least Developed Country to a middle-income economy. Beijing is also keen to start free trade negotiations with Dhaka.” Yunus said, “Let us resolve to work together to usher in a new era of friendship, cooperation, and collaboration, reinforcing the strategic ties between our two nations.” (“China, Bangladesh agree to deepen ties,” *Daily Sun*, 27 March 2025)

Bangladesh's Chief Advisor in China to sign MoUs on economic cooperation, reports *Global Times*

On 26 March, Bangladesh's Chief Advisor, Muhammad Yunus, left to visit China to participate in the Boao Forum for Asia 2025. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Guo Jiakun welcomed Yunus and noted the traditional friendship with the neighbor marking the 50th year of their friendship. Bangladesh's Foreign Secretary, Md Jashim Uddin, stated that several MoUs are expected to be signed between the two countries. These will be based on economic cooperation, technological assistance, human resource development, disaster mitigation, establishing a China book center, and collaboration and cooperation in sports and media sector. (“Bangladesh's chief adviser kicks off China visit, to continue traditional bilateral friendship,” *Global Times*, 26 March 2025)

India-China issues persist but can be resolved without conflict, says India's External Affairs Minister

On 26 March, India's Minister of External Affairs, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, expounded that China and India will have issues in the “foreseeable future,” and it should be addressed in ways by not getting into conflict. Jaishankar spoke to the Asia Society, where he said: “We know that, between India and China...at least in the foreseeable future, there will be issues, but there are ways of addressing those issues, and what happened in 2020 was not the way.” National Strategy Institute at Tsinghua University, Qian Feng, noted that India is trying to send positive remarks to improve the ties, noting a strategic pivot in the bilateral relationship. Feng believes it's because of the reassessment of the geopolitical climate as they do not want to risk over-relying on the US. Qiang highlighted that economic and trade cooperation is the driving force of this cooperation. (“China-India issues can be addressed without conflict, says Indian top diplomat; observers see 75th anniversary as chance to restore healthy ties,” *Global Times*, 27 March 2025)

Scholars from China to visit India for the 75th anniversary of bilateral relations

On 27 March, *The Hindu* reported that 20 Chinese scholars will be visiting India to mark the 75th anniversary of their bilateral ties, informs Chinese Consul General in Kolkata Xu Wei. The scholars will visit Visva-Bharti University to participate in the seminar on

Rabindranath Tagore. Xu noted that Tagore visited China in 1924 and was the symbol of China-India relations and friendship; this event also marks the 100 years of Tagore's visit to China. Xu said, "We will hold an international seminar with Cheena Bhavana, Visva-Bharati University, to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Tagore's visit to China and the 75th anniversary of our relationship. Nearly 20 Chinese experts, scholars, and artists will be invited to India to attend the seminar." Cheena Bhavan is the oldest Department of Chinese Studies in the sub-continent established by Tagore and Professor Tan Yun Shan. He also called for the need to increase people-people exchanges and said: "What I know is that in 2024, the Chinese embassy and consulates in India issued more than 280 thousand (or 2.8 lakh) visas to Indian friends, of which more than 80 per cent were business visas." ("Chinese scholars to visit Visva Bharati to mark 75 years of India-China diplomatic ties," *The Hindu*, 27 March 2025)

India-China hold 33 WMCC meeting on border cooperation, transborder rivers, and Kailash-Mansarovar Yatra

On 25 March, China and India met for the 33rd Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination (WMCC) meeting to discuss the border disputes. The meeting aimed to exchange views on the early resumption of cooperation on cross-border issues, focusing on the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra and the transborder rivers. Both sides agreed to work towards the next Special Representatives meeting to be held in India by the end of this year. India's Ministry of External Affairs came out with a statement: "The two sides explored various measures and proposals to give effect to the decisions taken during the 23rd meeting of the Special Representatives on the India-China boundary question in Beijing in December 2024 and to advance effective border management." The meeting was attended by the Indian delegation headed by Joint Secretary (East Asia), Gourangalal Das, and China's Director General of the Boundary and Oceanic Affairs, Hong Liang. This comes after China and India agreed to the disengagement deal in the Demchok and Depsang choke points. ("India, China discuss 'early resumption' of cooperation," *The Hindu*, 26 March 2025)

Pakistan's Ambassador to China affirms protection to Chinese national amid militant attacks

On 26 March, Pakistan's Ambassador to China Khalil Hashmi, expressed that Pakistan

and China are discussing measures to protect Chinese nationals in their country. Chinese nationals have been attacked and in the line of fire of militant groups in Pakistan, with their ports and individuals being attacked. Hashmi noted that it is Pakistan's responsibility to do everything possible. He said, "I think our two countries work very closely in terms of information sharing, in terms of developing the standard operating procedures," and, "We keep our Chinese friends informed of the steps that we are taking, so it's a work in progress." China has also been pushing to protect its nationals working in Pakistan after the string of attacks and loss of lives. Hashmi also noted that this is a complex environment and that Pakistan has the capacity and capability to "resolve, counter, and combat the terrorists." ("Pakistan, China in talks about security for Chinese nationals," *Reuters*, 26 March 2025)

India imposes anti-dumping duties on Chinese products

On 23 March, The Economic Times reported that India imposed anti-dumping duties on four Chinese products. These are Soft Ferrite Cores, vacuum-insulated flasks, aluminum foil, and Trichloro Isocyanuric acid. This was announced by India's Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs, Department of Revenue, and noted that duties will be levied for the coming five years. They imposed USD 276 per ton in imports. The duties imposed are aimed to ensure a level playing field for domestic producers. The duties were imposed on the recommendation of the Directorate General of Trade Remedies, which is the investigative arm of the Commerce Ministry of India. ("India imposes anti-dumping duty on 4 Chinese products," *The Economic Times*, 23 March 2025)

Nepal's Prime Minister on China-Nepal border management agreement and opening 14 border points

On 20 March, *Nepal Monitor* reported on Nepal's Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli's statements on China-Nepal 2019 Boundary Management System, and its plans to reopen 14 border points along the border. Oli while addressing the House of Representatives meeting noted regulations have been instated for entry into China and the pass for Nepali citizens from the districts adjoining China. Oli noted that this agreement plays a major role in their bilateral relations and that since the agreement it has benefited 800,000. This will boost trade and infrastructure, notes Oli. ("PM Oli Explains

Nepal-China Agreement on Border Management," *Nepal Monitor*, 21 March 2025)

Nepal police thwart currency smuggling by China

On 18 March, Nepal thwarted efforts to smuggle NRS 250 million dollars and euros to China, by the Kathmandu Valley Crime Investigation Office. The office is under Nepal police, where they announced that foreign currency was confiscated from a freight truck. The Spokesperson for the Valley Crime Office, Kaji Kumar Acharaya said: "Upon investigation, we found a false button on the upper side of the vehicle's bonnet. From there, we retrieved bundles wrapped with plastic tape. It was suspected that money was wrapped properly using the tapes to hide it clandestinely. We confiscated it all; upon counting, it was a total of 60 bundles, and then we unwrapped the bundles and found Euros and US dollars." ("Nepal Police thwarts foreign currency smuggling attempt to China, confiscate thousands of USD, Euro," *ANI*, 18 March 2025)

Pakistan's Navy launches new Hangor class submarines, built by Chinese shipbuilding firm

On 15 March, Pakistan's Navy conducted a ceremony for the second Hangor-class submarine with the Wuchang Shipbuilding Industry, Shuangliu Base, Wuhan China. Pakistan's Chief of Naval Staff, Vice Admiral Ovais Ahmed Bilgrami in his speech highlighted the importance of maritime security in the geo-strategic environment. Ovais noted that the Hangor Class submarines are equipped with weapons and sensors that would be vital to maintain the balance of power in the maritime domain. He also expressed gratitude for the tireless efforts of China's Shipbuilding and Offshore International Company Ltd (CSOC). Pakistan signed an agreement with the CSOC to acquire eight submarines, out of which four will be built in China and the other half in Pakistan's Karachi Shipyard and Engineering Works Ltd. ("Pakistan Navy Launches Second Hangor-class Submarine in China," *Naval News*, 17 March 2025)

China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs appreciates Modi's statement on India-China relations

On 17 March, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs appreciated India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi's statement on India-China relations. Modi's comments were made to the US podcaster Lex Fridman, where he stated that China-India had achieved normalcy after the

leaders met. He also noted that they hope to restore ties pre-2020 which was the Doklam incident. Modi urged that and said: "Differences don't become disputes." This statement by Modi comes after the recent disengagement agreement signed between the two countries. China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson, Mao Ning noted that both countries: "have earnestly implemented the important consensus of the leaders of the two countries, strengthened exchanges and practical cooperation at all levels, and achieved a series of positive results." Mao also noted: "It is the only right choice for China and India to be partners who contribute to each other's success and to realize the 'Dance of the Dragon and the Elephant'." ("China welcomes PM comments on 'normalcy' at the border after meeting with Xi," *The Hindu*, 17 March 2025)

First commercial flight from Pokhara in Nepal to Chengdu in China

On 17 March, *Radio Nepal* reported that regular commercial flights would be in operation at the Pokhara International Airport. The flights from Chengdu, China, will take flight on the 70th anniversary of bilateral relations between Nepal and China. The first flight takes off on 18 March 2025, Sichuan Airlines is going to operate its commercial charter flight from Pokhara. The Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) is confident that this will expand tourism and said: "Pokhara-Chengdu air service will make it easy for people from mid and western Nepal to avail aviation service as well as provide an opportunity to Chinese tourists to visit a beautiful city, Pokhara." The NTB believes that this will encourage tourism and further the "Visit Nepal 2025" initiative by China and the "Pokhara Tourism Year" by the Nepalese government. For the first flight, a Nepalese delegation will join the "Pokhara-Chengdu Flight Promotion and China (Sichuan) Sales Mission 2025," After reaching Chengdu, they will meet government officials, private firms, and other cities. ("Pokhara-Chengdu chartered flights to commence from Tuesday," *Radio Nepal*, 17 March 2025)

Bangladesh's Chief Advisor Muhammad Yunus to visit China and meet the President

On 16 March, The Tribune reported that Bangladesh's Chief Advisor Muhammad Yunus would meet China's President Xi Jinping on 28 March 2025. Bangladesh's Chief Advisor Press Wing noted that the two leaders would issue a joint statement after the meeting. China's Ambassador to Bangladesh, Yao Wen, met with Yunus. Yao noted that the upcoming meeting

between the leaders will be the most important meeting between the two countries in the last 50 years of their bilateral relations. Yunus is scheduled to deliver a speech on Asia, "Changing World: Towards a Shared Future." He is also set to speak at the Boao Forum, where all CEOs of major firms gather and deliver speeches. Peking University, China's top educational institution will give an honorary doctorate to Yunus. Longi, the largest solar power panel firm, plans to set up a manufacturing office in Bangladesh. Yunus also told the ambassador that: "Bangladesh needs massive investment in healthcare. The Chinese hospital chains now have unique opportunities to construct hospitals here." ("Muhammad Yunus to meet Chinese President Xi on March 28 to discuss bilateral issues," *The Tribune*, 16 March 2025)

China condemns the passenger train hijack in Balochistan

On 12 March, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemned the hijack of a passenger train in Pakistan. The spokesperson of the ministry, Mao Ning, said, "We noted the reports and strongly condemn this terrorist attack." The attack was conducted by the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) on the Jaffar Express. Mao extended support from China to strengthen counter-terrorism operations in Pakistan. Mao said: "China stands ready to strengthen counterterrorism and security cooperation with Pakistan and jointly keep the region peaceful, secure and stable." The 33 militants from BLA targeted a railroad track and hijacked the train. ("Train hijack shocks Pakistan, China says 'ready' to strengthen security in Balochistan," *First Post*, 13 March 2025)

Tibetans in India protest outside the China's embassy, chanting "Free Tibet"

On 10 March, dozens of Tibetans protested outside China's Embassy in Delhi. These protestors even clashed with the police. The protest came in light of the 66th anniversary of the uprising against China that was cracked down by Chinese forces. The Delhi police first blocked the protestors from entering the embassy and even detained some of the protestors. Hundreds also marched the Indian town of Dharamshala, which is the seat of the exiled Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government. Additionally, 100 Tibetan women gathered at Jantar Mantar to protest. The protestors shouted anti-China slogans, played the national anthem of Tibet, and had banners reading "Free Tibet" and "Remember, Resist, Return" ("Tibetans scuffle with police outside the Chinese Embassy

in India as they mark uprising anniversary," AP, 10 March 2025)

China gave USD 2 billion in loans to Pakistan

On 08 March, China gave USD 2 billion in loans to Pakistan, informs Pakistan's Finance Minister Khurram Schehzad. Currently, the Pakistan government is working to further strengthen their finance after securing the USD 7 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The government needs to pay USD 22 billion in external debt by the end of 2025. World Bank reports that China is the biggest creditor to Pakistan, with USD 29 billion in loans given. In total, Pakistan has an external debt amounting to USD130.85 billion. China has the largest share in debt given to Pakistan, amounting to 22 percent. Saudi Arabia is the second largest lender to Pakistan, with a debt of USD 9.1 billion. ("China rolls over \$2bn loan to Pakistan," *Dawn*, 08 March 2025)

Bangladesh delegation culminate their visit to China

On 06 March, a delegation from Bangladesh ended their visit to China, conducted by the International Department of the Communist Party of China Central Committee (IDCPC). The delegation included lawmakers, students, scholars, and journalists. The 21-member delegation visited Beijing, Shaanxi, and Yunnan, touring Chinese firms like BYD, LONGi, and iFLYTEK. During this time Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi held talks with the interim Foreign Adviser of Bangladesh Abdul Moyeen Khan, noting that they have a trusted friendship of years. Khan said, "Bangladesh is currently undergoing a national transformation, and many of its development aspirations align closely with the concept of Chinese modernization. He hopes that China will continue to support Bangladesh's development." ("Bangladesh delegation to China amazed by Chinese modernization, calls for closer cooperation," *Global Times*, 06 March 2025)

China's outer space station to invite first foreign astronaut from Pakistan

On 28 February, China and Pakistan signed an agreement to send a Pakistani astronaut to the Chinese space station. This is the first time China's space station will welcome a foreign astronaut. The agreement was signed by Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Deputy Director of China Manned Space Agency Lin Xiqiang, and the Chairman of Pakistan's Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission Muhammad Yousuf Khan. According to the agreement, a Pakistani

astronaut will join a Chinese astronaut in their space station for a short-term mission. The initiative aims to provide a model for developing countries to participate in international manned space cooperation and to inspire other nations to collaborate in discovering the mysteries of the universe. ("China's space station to welcome first foreign astronaut," *CGTN*, 28 February 2025)

CHINA & CENTRAL ASIA

China-Kazakhstan leaders meet for 12th China-Kazakhstan Cooperation Committee

On 18 March, China's Vice Premier, Ding Xuexiang met Kazakhstan's First Deputy Prime Minister, Roman Skylar for the 12th China-Kazakhstan Cooperation Committee. Ding noted that both sides should implement a consensus reached by both countries and enhance mutual trust. Ding wants to synergize development and deepen practical cooperation. Ding called for four sets of suggestions: the role of head-of-state-diplomacy, high-quality BRI cooperation, furthering the role of law and security cooperation, and promoting people-to-people exchanges. Skylar: "Kazakhstan regards the development of relations with China as a diplomatic priority. It stands ready to work with the Chinese side to fully leverage bilateral cooperation mechanisms, ensure the effective implementation of key Belt and Road cooperation projects, and advance new achievements in Kazakhstan-China cooperation." ("China, Kazakhstan vow to deepen practical cooperation," *CGTN*, 19 March 2025)

CHINA & THE MIDDLE EAST

China's UN envoy calls for Syria to combat terrorism

On 25 March, China's envoy in the UN called for the Syrian interim administration to kickstart an inclusive transition process to combat terrorism. The envoy, Fu Cong, noted that Syria has launched an independent investigation into the indiscriminate killing of civilians in the coastal areas, calling it inhumane. Cong said: "We are following the progress in this regard, and we hope that the Syrian interim authorities will carry out their work in a transparent and responsible manner, which is crucial to the international community's assessment of the credibility of the political transition in the country." Nearly 1500 people and 1000 civilians have been killed in Syria's Latakia and Tartus provinces. Fu also noted the recent progress and efforts taken by the Syrian authorities towards political transition. Fu called for the authorities

to fulfill counter-terrorism obligations and to take decisive measures in combating terrorist organizations. ("Chinese envoy calls on Syria to advance inclusive transition, combat terrorism," *CGTN*, 26 March 2025)

China proposes five-point plan for Iran's nuclear issue, reports *Tehran Times*

On 24 March, *Tehran Times* reported on the China-suggested five-point plan on Iran's nuclear issue. This discussion was held during the trilateral meeting between China's Foreign Minister, Wang Yi, Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Ryabkov Sergey Alexeevich, and Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabad. They were: To be committed to the peaceful settlement of political disputes, the ability to balance rights and responsibility, commitment to Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), cooperation through dialogue, and seek consensus and consultation. China also affirmed that as a permanent member of the UNSC and the JCPOA, China will remain committed to communication and coordination with relevant parties and actors to further peace talks. ("China's five-point proposition on the Iran nuclear issue," *Tehran Times*, 24 March 2025)

China's Ambassador to Jordan affirms bilateral cooperation in Amman

On 16 March, China's Ambassador to Jordan, Chen Chuandong, noted that China will continue to work closely with Jordan to promote common development and contribute to regional peace and stability. This statement was made in a press conference at Amman. The press conference was on the recently concluded Two Session meeting that happened in China. Chen hailed their "strong complementarity," and their partnership. Chen noted that China's development is consistent with Jordan's modernization. Chen said: "China will continue to offer initiatives and solutions for hot-spot issues, promote the political settlement of the Ukraine crisis, and strive for a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Palestinian issue, contributing to peace and stability in the Middle East." ("China will continue to work closely with Jordan to promote common development: ambassador," *CGTN*, 17 March 2025)

Taliban refutes Trump's claim that China controls the Bagram Airfield

On 02 March, the Taliban administration in Afghanistan refuted Trump's claim of Chinese presence in Bagram Airfield. The statement was made by the administration's chief spokesperson, Zabihullah Mujahid, at a state-run televised interview. Where he noted that the

claims were “emotional” and that they “lacked information.” Trump claimed that Bagram, the largest US airbase during the US invasion, was now controlled by China and asked the Taliban administration to return all US-made military equipment. Mujahid stated that there were no Chinese forces present in Afghanistan and that Bagram remains under the control of the Taliban regime. On the issues of equipment, he noted that these were “spoils of war” and that they belonged to the previous regime, and that they will use it to protect their country when under attack. It is estimated that USD 7 billion worth of equipment was left behind when the US left Afghanistan. (“Taliban rejects Trump’s claims about Chinese presence at Bagram Airfield,” SCMP, 03 March 2025)

CHINA & AFRICA

China team visits Nairobi for green cooperation and launch of nature observation program

On 26 March, China’s Chongqing Luhai International Communication Foundation and China-Africa Ecological Civilization Exchange Forum met at the University of Nairobi. The forum hosted diplomats, scholars, and environmentalists. They also launched a nature observation program to be kickstarted for Chinese and African youth. Deputy Governor of the County Government of Nairobi Njoroge Muchiri said, “In collaboration with the Chinese government and Chinese investors, we are working on a major rehabilitation program for Nairobi rivers.” The mayor of Chongqing Municipality, Hu Henghua, said: “We stand ready to leverage this platform to collaborate with African partners in sharing expertise and best practices across urban sustainability, clean energy development, wildlife protection, and cultural heritage restoration.” China’s Ambassador to Kenya, Guo Haiyan, also noted the importance of China’s cooperation and how Chinese firms are embracing green technology. (“China, Africa team up for a greener future,” *CGTN*, 28 March 2025)

Xi attends Namibia’s President inauguration

On 21 March, China’s President Xi Jinping attended the inaugural ceremony of the Namibian President, Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah. China’s Vice President Peng Qinghua also attended the ceremony and met with the newly inaugurated President. Peng conveyed Xi’s warm regards to the new President and the 35th anniversary of Namibia’s independence. Peng also noted the years of traditional friendship between Namibia and China and

expressed that China is willing to give opportunities for a high-level exchange. Aimed at deepening mutual cooperation and international coordination. Nandi also thanked Xi Jinping and spoke highly of their bilateral cooperation. She expressed hope that their cooperation will deepen in various fields. Representatives and dignitaries from 30 countries attended the inauguration ceremony. (“President Xi Jinping’s special envoy attends inauguration of Namibian president,” *CGTN*, 22 March 2025)

China develops quantum-secured communication and South Africa

On 20 March, *CGTN* reported that a Chinese scientist team was able to develop quantum-secured communication for 12,900 km from China to South Africa. This will be done by Jianan-1 micro nano satellites, which have the potential to have secure quantum communication at the global scale. This was done by the team of the University of Science and Technology of China, who were able to develop Quantum Key Distribution (QKD) between satellites of China and South Africa. The paper was published in *Nature*, and peer reviews lauding the achievement noted “considerable progress towards trusted-node constellations for wide-spread satellite QKD services” and shows “the maturity of the satellite QKD technology.” (“Chinese-led team achieves 10,000-km quantum-secured communication,” *CGTN*, 20 March 2025)

Africa Energy Chamber signs MoU with China on “Invest in African Energies Forum in Shanghai”

On 13 March, the African Energy Chamber (AEC) signed MoUs for the “Invest in African Energies Forum in Shanghai.” The agreement aims to support the China-Africa energy sector by furthering partnership and technological exchanges. The first deal was signed with a tech firm, Tima Networks, where the company will bring automated fleet management technology to Africa. The second deal was signed with Yunan County Chuangxing Industrial Investment Group to develop a strategic framework for cooperation between China and the African energy sector and chemical industry. The forum is the first of its kind in scale as well, where it offers African firms to collaborate on the energy sector and Chinese firms to invest in African companies. (“Tima Networks to Create \$100M Fund with African Energy Chamber (AEC),” *Zawya*, 14 March 2025)

CHINA & RUSSIA

Wang Yi noted that China-Russia are “friends forever, never enemies”

On 01 April, China’s Foreign Minister, Wang Yi noted that China-Russia are “friends forever, never enemies.” He made this statement during his visit to Moscow, where he said: “The principle of ‘friends forever, never enemies’ ... serves as a solid legal basis for advancing strategic cooperation at a higher level.” Wang Yi also stated that with the current global atmosphere, big powers are obliged to act as stabilizing factor and therefore called for US and Russia to improve their relationship. He said: “(This) is good for stabilizing the balance of power between major powers and inspires optimism in a disappointing international situation.” (“Friends forever, never enemies’, Chinese foreign minister tells Russia,” *Reuters*, 01 April 2025)

CHINA & EUROPE

China and France’s Foreign Ministers reject unilateralism and decoupling

On 27 March, China’s Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with his French counterpart Jean-Noël Barrot. Both heads affirmed the future of cooperation and rejecting unilateralism, decoupling and trade wars. This is in the context of the growing uneasiness with Trump administration policies. Wang noted: “We must work toward a more just and equitable global governance system and never allow the world to regress to a lawless ‘jungle’ where might makes right. To this end, both sides should strengthen strategic coordination and support each other’s major multilateral initiatives.” Barrot also noted that France supports free trade and opposes supply chain disruptions. He said: “China supports European integration and strategic autonomy. Taking the 50th anniversary of diplomatic ties as an opportunity, both sides should draw on past successes, uphold their partnership, properly manage differences, and pursue mutually beneficial cooperation to jointly open new prospects for China-EU relations.” (“French FM visits China as ‘EU ups dialogue with China,’” *Global Times*, 27 March 2025)

China’s Chairman to NPC affirms bilateral ties with Italy’s Senate President

On 24 March, China’s Chairman for the National People’s Congress, Zhao Leji, met with Italy’s Senate President, Ignazio La. Zhao expounded that the key to healthy China-Italy relations is mutual respect and seeking common ground when facing differences. China appreciates Italy’s adherence to the one-China policy, and

they invite Italy to invest in China’s shipbuilding, new energy, and aerospace industry, stated Zhao. Zhao said: “China is ready to work with the EU to use the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties as an opportunity to promote the sustained, steady, and sound development of China-EU relations, and hopes Italy will continue to play a positive role in this regard.” La expressed that China and Italy should work together to contribute to world peace and stability. And to expand cooperation in the fields of economy, trade, sciences, and technology. (“China’s top legislator holds talks with Italy’s Senate president,” *CGTN*, 25 March 2025)

China’s growth in high-tech industries pulling German firms down, says DW

On 20 March, an editorial was published in *DW* titled “China’s growing grip on key German industries.” This looked into the growth of China’s firms and production and how is it affecting Germany’s technological and innovation development. Centre for European Reform reported that Germany’s industries are facing a five-year decline threatening 5.5 million jobs and 20 per cent of its GDP. This is because of the Russia-Ukraine war and even more because of China’s unprecedented growth in the high-tech innovation sector. Kiel Institute for the World Economy employee, Holger Görg said: “China has caught up in several advanced industries ... they are very strong in these areas ... and that is contributing to Germany’s poor growth performance.” The rise of Chinese EVs threatens thousands of jobs and the closure of production firms. The editorial noted that the reason for the rise has been the policy by the CPC to provide heavy subsidies that allow Chinese firms to manufacture goods at a cheap rate and in large quantities. (“China’s growing grip on key German industries,” *DW*, 20 March 2025)

EU introduces “Steel and Metals Action Plan,” to curb Chinese steel imports

On 18 March, the Europe Commission introduced the “Steel and Metals Action Plan,” aimed at stringent steel imports and a reduction of imports by 15 per cent. The initiative is an extension of the plan of 2018 that will expire in one year. The Europe Commission said Cheap imports from China and India have affected the EU’s steel producers. The plan notes: “The industry remains threatened by global excess capacities and by global distortions from China and other countries that artificially support their domestic industries or circumvent EU trade defence measures and sanctions.”

Brussels also plans to impose the “melted and poured rule,” aimed to reach back countries circumventing the penalties. European Commission’s Executive Vice President Stephane Sejourne said: “Our competitors must not be able to take advantage of gaps in our regulatory framework, and this is why we are planning to make some changes.” China currently produces 55 per cent of the global steel output. (“EU moves to curb steel imports to protect the military industrial base from China overcapacity,” *SCMP*, 20 March 2025)

Five detained in Huawei corruption case in EU parliament

On 18 March, five individuals were acquitted in Belgium over suspicion of being involved in a European Parliament corruption investigation that found traces of Chinese firm Huawei. Dozens of raids took place in Belgium and Portugal. The court found the five guilty of “active corruption and criminal organization” and kept them in pre-trial detention.” Huawei said: “Huawei has a zero-tolerance policy towards corruption or other wrongdoing, and we are committed to complying with all applicable laws and regulations at all times.” (“5 charged, new raids in Huawei corruption probe at EU parliament in Belgium,” *SCMP*, 19 March 2025)

China’s Ambassador to the United Kingdom elaborates on Two Sessions and the bilateral investments

On 17 March, China’s Ambassador to the United Kingdom, Zheng Zeguang called for business firms in both countries to seize the opportunities at hand as China’s economy continues to stabilize. Zheng spoke on the annual Two Sessions that happened recently, as he noted that China is committed to furthering modernization, Zheng said that Two Sessions is: “the secret behind the two miracles of rapid economic development and long-term social stability.” Chairman of the China-Britain Business Council, Sherard Cowper-Coles, said: “It talks about increasing consumption, putting more money in the pockets of the Chinese people, stimulating innovation and opening China up more to investment, and inviting visitors around the world not just commercial businesses, but the tourists and students as well, all very very important.” (“China’s development offers opportunities for China-UK ties: ambassador,” *CGTN*, 19 March 2025)

China and UK pledge to address climate change issues

On 18 March, China’s Vice Premier Ding Xuexiang met with the UK Secretary of State of Energy Security and Net Zero, Ed Miliband to further cooperate on climate change issues. Ding noted that China is ready to work with the UK to implement the consensus reached by the leaders of both countries, consolidate bilateral ties, and deepen cooperation in areas of trade, investments, and low-carbon development while jointly collaborating on climate change issues. Miliband said: “the UK government sincerely hopes to enhance engagement with China, is committed to developing a long-term and constructive bilateral relationship, and stands ready to strengthen cooperation with China on energy security and addressing climate change.” (“China, UK pledge to jointly address climate change,” *CGTN*, 18 March 2025)

Huawei at the center of Belgian anti-corruption and forgery investigation

On 13 March, a hundred Belgian police officers raided the European Parliament to uncover an “anti-corruption and forgery” scandal. The center of this probe is the Chinese tech giant Huawei Technologies. Belgian Federal Prosecutors Office said: “The corruption is said to have been practised regularly and very discreetly from 2021 to the present day, under the guise of commercial lobbying and taking various forms, such as remuneration for taking political positions or excessive gifts such as food and travel expenses or regular invitations to football matches.” The office claimed that the alleged bribing had benefited Huawei. Offices used two parliamentary assistants were blocked as the investigation developed. Huawei said: “Huawei takes these allegations seriously and will urgently communicate with the investigation to further understand the situation.” (“Huawei named by Belgian authorities in brewing European Parliament bribery scandal,” *SCMP*, 13 March 2025)

China’s EV purchase increases by 49 per cent in February, says Rho Motion

On 12 March, Rho Motion, a research firm, informed that China led the purchase of electronic vehicles worldwide. This comes after the European Union imposed several tariffs on Chinese-made EVs. The sales of battery-charged electric vehicles and plug-in hybrid vehicles in China’s purchase grew by 49 per cent. The EU imposed tariffs on Chinese-made cars last October of 2024 after they culminated their anti-subsidy investigation. Overall, February saw the largest sale of EVs with China buying

the most, Europe and North America right behind. Europe's sales grew by 19 per cent and North America's sales grew by 17 per cent. Europe's sales were largely dominated by Germany, which took 40 per cent of the chunk. Rho Motion also noted that Mexico's EV market also doubled as they stocked up on Chinese EV imports. ("China leads increased EV purchases as EU tariffs start to hit," Reuters, 11 March 2025)

China "appalled" by the US's treatment of its European allies, says China's envoy to EU

On 05 March, China's envoy to the European Affairs, Lu Shaye, expressed that they were "appalled" by the way the US President treated its European allies and noted that the peace deal should not be only determined by the US and Russia. Lu said: "When you look at how the Trump administration has implemented a brazen and domineering policy towards Europe, treating its allies in this way, honestly, from a European perspective, it's quite appalling." Additionally, he said, "I believe European friends should reflect on this and compare the Trump administration's policies with those of the Chinese government. In doing so, they will see that China's diplomatic approach emphasises peace, friendship, goodwill and win-win cooperation." Lu also accused the US of not only leaning towards Russia but also supporting Russia. He also expressed that China's foreign policy does not rely on pulling US allies away from each other by rather by cultivating genuine partnership. ("China's envoy to the EU Lu Shaye 'appalled' by Trump's treatment of Europe," SCMP, 06 March 2025)

China's envoy to the EU appalled by the US's treatment of its European allies

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policy does not rely on pulling US allies away from each other by rather by cultivating genuine partnership. ("China's envoy to the EU Lu Shaye 'appalled' by Trump's treatment of Europe," SCMP, 06 March 2025)

UK to investigate TikTok's suggestion to children's accounts

On 03 March, Britain announced that they are launching an investigation into TikTok to safeguard children's privacy. The investigation will be conducted by Britain's Information Commissioner's Office. The watchdog aims to probe into how TikTok's video sharing platform uses 13-17-year-old kid's data and personal info and suggests a certain type of content. This comes as there are concerns regarding the increased number of harmful materials being suggested. The office said: "If we find there is sufficient evidence that any of these companies have broken the law, we will put this to them and obtain their representations before reaching a conclusion." ("UK launches investigation into TikTok, Reddit over children's data practices," Reuters, 03 March 2025)

CHINA & THE AMERICAS

Japan vital deterrent to Chinese aggression and the "cornerstone of peace and security in the Indo-Pacific," says US Defense Secretary

On 30 March, US Defense Secretary, Pete Hegseth, called Japan to be an indispensable deterrent to deal with Chinese aggression. Hegseth told Japan's Defence Minister, Gen Nakatani, that "We share a warrior ethos that defines our forces," and that "Japan is our indispensable partner in deterring communist Chinese military aggression." He also noted that Japan is a cornerstone for peace in the Indo-Pacific region. Additionally, both heads agreed to produce visual-range air-to-air Amraam missiles and to also consider the joint construction of SM-6 defence missiles. Hegseth also asked that Japan should give America greater access to its southwest islands on the edge of the East China Sea. ("Pentagon chief Hegseth says US command in 'warrior' Japan being upgraded to deter China," *The Straits Times*, 30 March 2025)

Hong Kong might not sell Panama port to US firm amid pressure from China, reports Reuters

On 28 March, *Reuters* reported that Hong Kong's CK Hutchison will not sell their two ports shares in Panama Canal to BlackRock due to pressure from China, says an anonymous informer. In context, the Hong Kong-based firm planned to

officially sell their shares to a US firm, and two of the ports were strategically located in the Panama Canal. Once this was out, there was an outrage from China against this deal for yielding to US pressure. After this, China banned any Chinese firms from conducting business deals with Hutchinson's CEO or any of his family members. China is currently conducting an anti-trust review of the port deal. The definitive document is set to be signed by 02 April. US State Department spokesperson Tammy Bruce said: "It's also no surprise that the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) is upset at this acquisition, which will reduce their control over the Panama Canal area." ("CK Hutchison will not sign deal to sell strategic Panama ports next week, sources say," *Reuters*, 29 March 2025)

China condemns US adding Chinese firms to export control entity list

On 26 March, China's Ministry of Commerce expressed that it vehemently opposes Chinese firms being added to the US entity list for export control. The ministry noted that the US wants to suppress Chinese firms and deprive other countries of their development rights. This will harm the legitimacy of the US and undermine the stability of the global supply chain. Additionally, the ministry expounded that this move is detrimental and could only be solved through dialogue and cooperation. It asked the US to reconsider its wrongdoings immediately, or China would take measures to safeguard its interest. ("China opposes U.S. addition of Chinese entities to export control list: commerce ministry," *CGTN*, 27 March 2025)

Trump suggests China's tariff reduction if TikTok is sold to a non-Chinese firm

On 26 March, US President Donald Trump informed that he would be willing to reduce tariffs on China if they struck a deal on TikTok by selling the app for USD 170 million. The administration gave its parent firm, ByteDance, a deadline of April 05 to find a non-Chinese buyer or be banned on national security charges. Trump noted that China will have a role to pay in the sale of the firm and therefore said: "maybe I'll give them a little reduction in tariffs or something to get it done." Vice President JD Vance also informed that the general terms of agreement will be established by 05 April. Since the app had the overwhelming support of nearly half of Americans, it was suggested that ByteDance divest in TikTok. ("Trump says he may give China reduction in tariffs to get TikTok deal done," *Reuters*, 27 March 2025)

China embassy in Ottawa opposes Canada's claims on election interference

On 26 March, China's Embassy in Canada refuted claims of China interfering in their elections. The Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), made these claims as they warned that they face the threat of interference by China and India in the upcoming elections. They noted that they are closely monitoring Russia, China, India, and Pakistan. The embassy noted that China follows the principle of non-interference in other countries' internal matters, and it never has or will. They also noted that Canadian elections are an internal matter for Canada and vehemently oppose China being linked to it. ("Chinese Embassy in Canada refutes allegations of China's interference in Canadian elections," *Global Times*, 26 March 2025)

Canada escalates a dispute against Chinese duties on produce at the WTO

On 24 March, Canada escalated a dispute against China's imposition of additional duties on Canada's produce to the World Trade Organization (WTO). They requested the WTO to consult China over the measure of imposing additional import duties on agricultural and fishery products from Canada. These tariffs were announced this month on rapeseed oil and peas imported with a 100 per cent surcharge. China has been the largest consumer of Canada's canola and rapeseed oil. Additionally, China imposed 25 per cent tariffs on aquatic products and pork. The industry leaders from Canada stated that they will be hit by the new tariffs imposed. Last year, Canada imposed 100 per cent tariffs on Chinese EVs and also imposed surcharges on aluminum and steel imports from China. China's Ministry of Commerce noted that these policies: "disrupted the normal trade order and harmed the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese enterprises." ("Canada files WTO trade action against Chinese agriculture, fishery import tariffs," *SCMP*, 25 March 2025)

US imposes sanctions on Chinese firms and individuals for buying and storing Iranian oil

On 20 March, the US Treasury imposed sanctions on the Chinese "teapot" refinery, and the vessels that supply crude oil, noting related with Iran. This is the fourth sanction of its kind, as the Trump administration aims to put maximum pressure, in order to curtail Iran's ambitions to obtain nuclear weapons. The new sanction targets Shandong Shouguang Luqing Petrochemical Co, Ltd., which allegedly bought

oil from the vessel linked to Yemen's Iran-supported Houthi movement, says the US State Department spokeswoman Tammy Bruce. "Teapots" are refiners that primarily are buyers so Iranian oil, as China is the largest oil imported from Iran. The Treasury also imposed sanctions on other 12 entities for buying oil from Iran. Additionally, sanctions were imposed on Wang Xueqing, linked to the refinery, and added to America's list of prohibited lists of people to do business with. They also flagged Huaying Huizhou Daya Bay Petrochemical Terminal Storage for buying and storing Iranian oil from a sanctioned vessel. ("US slaps Iran-related sanctions on oil tankers, Chinese 'teapot' refinery," *SCMP*, 21 March 2025)

Canadian farmers face the brunt of China-Canada trade tensions, reports Reuters

On 21 March, *Reuters* reported on the Canadian farmer's plight as they get sandwiched between Canada-China trade tensions. The farmers are facing pressure from China's tariffs on canola oil, canned meals, and additional US tariffs. A farmer from Canada Sawyer said: "The seed has already been bought. The inputs have already been bought. We have to seed it. We have no choice but to move forward." China in early March imposed tariffs of over USD 2.6 billion on Canadian produce, as a retaliation against Canada's tariffs imposed last year. They decided to match Canada's duties of 100 and 25 per cent of EVs and aluminum. It is also noted that machinery manufacturers in Canada report that farmers are buying less equipment citing low returns and risk of tariffs. To defend their farms, farmers are taking cheap loans to fund this year's crop, as they steer clear from major purchases. Canadian Canola Growers Association said: "A lot of our customers are very concerned about whether they're going to be able to sell their product this year, and what the prices are going to be." ("Canadian farmers face two-front trade war as China duties take effect," *Reuters*, 21 March 2025)

China's tech supplier firm sells assets worth USD 4.6 billion under US sanctions

On 21 March, *SCMP* reported that China's supplier firm Wingtech Technology sold its 4.6 billion assets Luxshare. The firm was a major supplier for Apple and other electronics companies, which faced heavy losses after US sanctions. The Chinese firm has agreed to sign five of its subsidiaries to Luxshare Precision Industry, reports the Shanghai Stock Exchange. This would mean a full exit from the market and the firms will now only focus on semiconductor production. Wingtech was added to the US

entity list under the Biden administration, as a threat to the US national security and foreign policy interests. Wingtech stated that this has affected their business by: "leading to unfavourable situations such as difficulties in securing new project orders and the loss of existing project orders." ("Wingtech sells 4.6 billion yuan of assembly assets to Luxshare after US sanctions losses," *SCMP*, 21 March 2025)

China condemns calls for information on Chinese students in US universities

On 21 March, China urges the US to halt discriminatory practices against Chinese students, citing a national security threat. This comes after the US congressional panel and the Chair of the House Select Committee, John Moolenaar asked the universities of Stanford, Carnegie Mellon, and others to send detailed information on Chinese students enrolled. The panel believes that the Chinese government has embedded researchers in American institutes to gain access to sensitive technology. China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, spokesperson, Mao Ning, said: "This is in the interest of both parties," Mao told reporters at a daily briefing. "We urge the U.S. to stop overstretching the concept of national security, effectively protect the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese students, and not impose discriminatory restrictive measures on Chinese students." Mao noted that Chinese students account for one-quarter of all international students and that this has promoted economic prosperity and technological developments between both countries. Moolenaar accused institutions of risking American research in exchange for financial gains. ("China calls for protections for students in the US after congressional panel demands data from colleges," *AP*, 21 March 2025)

Canada condemns execution of its citizens in China for drug smuggling

On 19 March, Canada's Foreign Affairs Minister informed that China has executed four Canadians under drug-smuggling charges. The Minister, Melanie Joly, called for clemency for the accused of other drug-related cases and dual citizenship charges in China. China's Embassy in Canada stated that the executions were due to drug crimes and that China does not recognize dual citizenship. Joly condemned the executions and asked for leniency. Spokesperson of Global Affairs, Charlotte MacLeod informed that they are providing consular assistance to the families. She notes that Canada continues to support clemency for Robert Schellenberg, who is

sentenced to death for drug smuggling. China's Embassy in Canada noted: "The facts of the crimes committed by the Canadian nationals involved in the cases are clear, and the evidence is solid and sufficient." ("Canada says China executed four Canadians earlier this year," *AP*, 20 March 2025)

Port fine on Chinese vessels using American ports has led to unsold coal pile up, says Reuters

On 20 March, Reuters reported an exclusive on Trump's plans to impose fines on Chinese ships using American ports. The exclusive noted that this measure has led to coal inventories swelling up as exporters struggle to find ships to export their products. Currently, the Trump administration is drafting orders to levy fines worth USD 1.5 million on Chinese ships and even built. The port fees have limited the options of ships available to export agricultural produce, mining, and construction goods. If the proposal is enacted it would put USD 130 billion worth of shipments at risk. Coal mines in West Virginia are also laying off employees as unsold coals pile up, says the CEO of the West Virginia Coal Association, Chris Hamilton. ("Exclusive: Proposed US port fees on China-built ships begin choking coal, agriculture exports," *Reuters*, 20 March 2025)

China's commerce ministry and Pepsi CEO discuss investments and growth

On 18 March, China's Vice Commerce Minister, Wang Shouwen met with the head of US firm PepsiCo. Wang noted that stable US-China ties are in the fundamental interest of both nations. He met with the CEO of the firm Ramon Laguarta as they exchanged views of the bilateral economic interest and trade ties. Wang said: "A series of policy measures introduced by the country to expand domestic demand and promote consumption will provide more opportunities for foreign-invested enterprises, including PepsiCo." Laguarta thanked China's consumption policies which has led to his firm's growth and pledged to increase investments in local operations to deepen engagement with the Chinese market. ("Stable China-U.S. economic, trade relations will benefit firms worldwide: vice minister," *CGTN*, 19 March 2025)

VOA public funding ban "lamenting the loss of a tool to smear China?" says an opinion in Global Times

On 19 March, Global Times published an opinion titled "VOA a biased lens, never 'an important window' into China." Where is looked into the

cutting of public funding to Voice of America (VOA) media operations? The editorial mocked the mourning of the VOA as they had to send many of its employees to paid leave. The editorial finds VOA as a propaganda tool to manufacture lies, questioning us the press genuinely mourning for the loss of press freedom or the loss of a tool to smear China. Global Times called the VOA's "China reporting manual," as notorious. VOA has been awarded for its reporting on Covid-19, it was the first to report on the condition of detention centers in Xinjiang and even reported on the defectors in North Korea. The editorial decrees "VOA has long viewed China through a lens of prejudice and distortion, fabricating news. How could it have ever opened a "window"? It only forces the world to wear "cognitive sunglasses" clouded by ideological fog." ("VOA a biased lens, never 'an important window' into China," *Global Times*, 19 March 2025)

CPC delegation visits Panama to consolidate bilateral relations

On 14 March, a delegation from the Communist Party of China (CPC) visited Panama, meeting leaders of political parties and scholars from think tanks. The delegation was led by the Vice Minister of International Department of CPC Ma Hui. Ma expressed that China is ready to strengthen exchanges with Panama's politicians, political parties, and think tanks. This is aimed at developing a mutual understanding and trust to consolidate China-Panama relations. The representatives from Panama expressed a commitment to deepen friendly exchanges between the two countries to promote sustainable development between Panama and China. ("Delegation of Communist Party of China visits Panama," *Global Times*, 16 March 2025)

US to introduce bill "Stop Chinese Communist Prying by Vindicating Intellectual Safeguards in Academic Act"

On 14 March, the US House of Representatives introduced a bill to prevent Chinese nationals from getting student visas. They cited that this poses a national threat as they can pose as spies. West Virginia Representative Riley Moore sponsored the "Stop Chinese Communist Prying by Vindicating Intellectual Safeguards in Academic Act." This bill is aimed at halting the issuance of student and research visas for all Chinese nationals. Chinese students are the second largest group of students in the US after Indian students. From 2023 to 2024, 277,398 Chinese students were in the US. Moore

said: "While many of these visa holders came here to study, far too many also served as intelligence gatherers or paid spies for the CCP." He cited that five Chinese students from Michigan University were caught misleading authorities about their presence near a remote military site. He said: "We cannot eliminate this threat by simply devoting more time and money to the visa vetting process," as "many who enter the United States with pure intentions are later recruited or coerced by the CCP." ("US House Republicans set to introduce bill to block Chinese from student or research visas," *SCMP*, 14 March 2025)

Canada will not drop tariffs against China, says Canada's Industry Minister

On 13 March, *CTV News* reported that Canada does not plan to drop off the tariffs against Chinese EVs, aluminum, and steel, says Canada's Industry Minister Francois-Philippe Champagne. In October 2024, Canada imposed 100 per cent tariffs against China-made EVs and 25 per cent on Chinese steel and aluminum imports. In 2025 February, China retaliated an imposed USD 4 billion in tariffs on Canada's agricultural produce. The minister said: "We're going to stand strong," and that "We want to protect our industry. We want to protect our workers. We want to protect our communities." Premier of British Columbia David Eby warned against the tariffs and urged them to rethink, noting that "We don't want to get crushed between the two biggest economies in the world." He also said: "We understood that he was concerned about security issues related to China, and yet he is coming after Canada far more aggressively than he is the government of China." Champagne retaliated and noted that China is dumping cheap products and hurting the Canadian economy and industry. ("Canada won't drop tariffs on Chinese EVs, despite trade war with U.S.: minister," *CTV*, 13 March 2025)

China's Foreign Ministry accuse the US of undermining their counter-narcotics

On 12 March, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs complained that the US undermined China's effort for counter-narcotics operation by imposing tariffs. The ministry called on the US administration not to use the fentanyl issue to "blackmail" China. In context, US President Donald Trump imposed 20 per cent tariffs on China-made goods and products over the production and its failure to stop the shipment of chemicals used for fentanyl production. The Ministry said: "The U.S. should've said a big thank you to up. But regrettably, the United

States doesn't appreciate this kindness. On the contrary, it is using the fentanyl issue to spread all kinds of lies and has been smearing China, shifting the blame, regardless of the progress of the cooperation." The ministry also stated that it made sense that the US was returning kindness with hostility and that this seriously undermines the dialogue between the two countries on drug control. ("China says US has undermined fentanyl cooperation by imposing tariffs," Reuters, 12 March 2025)

Virginia Governor calls for the development of fusion power or fall behind China

On 11 March, the US governor expressed that the US needs to expedite the development of its fusion energy or deal with falling behind China. The Virginia Governor, Glenn Youngkin, noted this at the CERAWEEK energy conference. Reuters noted that Virginia is the hub of energy-hungry data centers, with over 70 per cent of internet traffic routing through the state. Youngkin said: "We've got to drive hard to accelerate fusion, otherwise China will." Commonwealth Fusion System announced that they will open the first utility-scale fusion power plant in Virginia. ("CERAWEEK Virginia governor say US must develop fusion or fall behind China on energy," Reuters, 12 March 2025)

Facebook worked with CPC to censor social media, says former Facebook Global Public Policy Director

On 11 March, an interview was published in BBC titled "Facebook was 'hand in glove' with China," by the former senior Facebook executive Sarah Wynn Williams. Sarah told BBC that Facebook went above and beyond to cater to the Chinese government's request to censor and control content being circulated in China. Sarah was a Global Public Policy Director and was terminated in 20217 for poor performance. She said in turn of obliging to CPC's rules, Facebook wanted access to the Chinese market with hundreds and millions of users. Mark Zuckerberg, founder of Facebook, said in 2019: "We could never come to agreement on what it would take for us to operate there, and they [China] never let us in." Sarah told BBC: "He was working hand in glove with the Chinese Communist Party, building a censorship tool... working to develop sort of the antithesis of many of the principles that underpin Facebook." ("Facebook was 'hand in glove' with China, BBC told," BBC, 11 March 2025)

Missouri court fines China USD 24 billion for concealing information about COVID

transmission

On 11 March, The Washington Post reported that a Missouri Judge ruled that China concealed the knowledge about the merging coronavirus and used the extra time to stockpile protective gear. The decision was handed to Attorney General Andrew Bailey. They charged Chinese agencies and the CPC with USD 24 billion. Senator Eric Schmitt said: “appalling campaign of deceit, concealment, misfeasance, and inaction.” Bailey said they would take every penny back by seizing Chinese assets and Missouri farmland. China’s Embassy in the US said it would: “firmly take reciprocal countermeasures according to international law.” The attorney did not accuse China of being the origin of the virus but accused them of hiding information of the transmission of the virus. More than 21000 Missouri residents died, many over the age of 76, due to complications related to COVID-19. (“Missouri wins \$24B judgment against China over its response to covid,” The Washington Post, 11 March 2025)

The US plans to impose fees on China-built or flagged docking at the US port

On 06 March, Reuters reported that the US plans to levy fees from Chinese-built ships and flagged vessels at the US port. The administration of Donald Trump is currently working on producing an executive order to revive domestic shipbuilding in America. Currently, China’s shipbuilders account for 50 per cent of all vessels used for cargo shipment, notes the Centre for Strategic and International Studies. The draft of the executive order proposes that fees should be imposed on all vessels regardless of whether it was built or flagged as Chinese. The draft order said: “the national security and economic prosperity of the United States is further endangered by the People’s Republic of China’s unfair trade practices in the maritime, logistics, and shipbuilding sectors.” (“Exclusive: US to levy fees on China-linked ships, push allies to do likewise, draft executive order says,” Reuters, 08 March 2025)

China imposes retaliatory tariffs on Canadian imports

On 08 March, China announced that it will impose retaliatory tariffs on Canadian farm and food imports. This was reported by China’s Customs Tariff Commission of the State Council. This comes after Canada imposed duties on China-made electric vehicles, aluminum, and steel products. Additionally, 100 per cent tariffs will be imposed on Canadian rapeseed oil, cakes, and peas. 25 per cent tariffs will be imposed on pork and aquatic imports from Canada. The

council said: “Despite China’s repeated opposition and dissuasion, Canada has taken unilateral restrictive measures on electric vehicles, steel, aluminum and other products imported from China without investigation, undermining China-Canada economic and trade relations.” The measure was announced after an anti-discrimination investigation was taken by China, where they found that Canada’s measures have hindered China’s trade and harmed their legitimate rights to trade. (“China imposes retaliatory tariffs on Canadian farm and food products,” Associated Press, 08 March 2025)

Chinese companies and business associations support anti-discrimination ruling against Canada

On 08 March, Global Times reported that six Chinese firms and business groups voiced support for China’s tariffs on Canadian products. The groups supported China’s Ministry of Commerce’s finding in the anti-discrimination investigation on Canada’s restrictive trade policies. The ruling said: “Canada’s restrictive measures against certain Chinese products constitute discriminatory trade restrictions. The investigation result determined that Canada’s measures amount to discriminatory restrictions, disrupting normal trade and harming the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese companies.” The ruling was supported by the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers (CAAM), China Chamber of Commerce of Metals, China Iron and Steel Association, and China’s Chamber of Commerce for Import and Export of Machinery and Electronic Products, among others. CAAM said: “The development of China’s EV industry is based on its comparative advantages and is a result of open competition” (“Chinese industry groups endorse MOFCOM’s ruling on anti-discrimination probe against Canada,” Global Times, 08 March 2025)

Walmart asks Chinese suppliers to reduce costs to balance Trump’s tariffs

On 06 March, Reuters reported that US retail store Walmart asked Chinese suppliers to cut the prices of their goods. The retail giant aims to shift the burden of Trump’s tariffs imposed. The Chinese firms supply kitchenware and clothing to Walmart, they were asked to reduce the price by 10 per cent, which is in line with the 10 per cent tariff imposed by the Trump administration. The suppliers’ selling costs to Walmart were already low to keep up the competitive edge. These further cuts imposed by Trump put additional pressure on both suppliers and Walmart to provide cheap goods. A Walmart anonymous spokesperson said: “As

we have done in the past, we will continue to work with suppliers to keep prices as low as possible for our customers,” and that “In the meantime, we encourage all parties to work towards finding common ground that will protect consumers from price hikes and continue to grow our economy.” (“Walmart asks China suppliers for price cuts on Trump tariffs, Bloomberg News reports,” Reuters, 2025)

China to “resolutely counter” any pressure by the US, says China’s Foreign Minister

On 07 March, China’s Foreign Minister Wang Yi announced that China will “resolutely counter,” any pressure by US tariffs, at an interview on the sidelines of NPC annual meeting. He said that the major powers should refrain from bullying the weak. Wang Yi said: “If one side blindly exerts pressure, China will resolutely counter that.” This statement was made in light of the tariffs imposed by the Trump administration against Chinese imports. Additionally, he expressed that the US should not repay kindness with grievances and not impose tariffs without any reason. Wang Yi also mentioned the Russia-Ukraine conflict noting that China wants lasting and binding peace where they an agreement agreeable to all parties in this conflict. He said, “China is willing to continue to play a constructive role in the final resolution of the crisis and the realization of lasting peace, by the wishes of the parties concerned, together with the international community.” (“Major powers should not bully the weak, ' China foreign minister says,” Reuters, 07 March 2025)

China is ready to fight any type of war with the US, says China embassy in the US

On 04 March, the Chinese Embassy in the US expressed that China is ready to fight any type of war against the US tariffs. The embassy posted on X, a social media platform, where they said: “If war is what the US wants, be it a tariff war, a trade war or any other type of war, we’re ready to fight till the end.” This came after US President Donald Trump announced that they would impose additional 10 per cent tariffs on top of the previous 10 per cent. This led to China retaliating with 15 per cent tariffs on US farm products that are imported in China. China’s Premier Li Qiang also announced that China will boost their defense spending by 7.2 per cent as they face an unpredictable future. Additionally, Li stated that China will continue to open its economy to foreign investments. (“China says it is ready for ‘any type of war’ with US,” BBC, 06 March 2025)

US firms call for stricter punitive measures

against Chinese firms circumventing tariffs

On 05 March, executives from US-based firms expressed that the government needs to have tougher legislation to prosecute Chinese criminals who circumvent US tariffs by shipping goods from third countries. This was stated at the Capitol Hill event, which had lawmakers and executives attending. They noted that the US business has been losing, and the American companies are losing out of business owing to Chinese firms exploiting trade rules. Vice President of Zekelman Industries, Tom Muth, said: “These imports come not directly from China, but indirectly. They come from countries like Oman, Thailand, Vietnam, and the UAE. These are all major importers of subsidized and dumped hot-rolled steel from China.” A lawmaker, Magnus, said: “Before the ink was dry on the order, China was already evading the order by transshipping through other countries, hopping from country to country, changing the names, shifting shipments, just to stay ahead of us.” (“U.S. firms demand crackdown on tariff-evading Chinese importers,” Reuters, 06 March 2025)

US Republican lawmakers introduce bill to deal with trade-related crimes committed by China

On 05 March, US House of Representative lawmakers introduced a bill on trade crimes committed by Chinese companies. The bipartisan group of lawmakers introduced the bill sponsored by Republican Ashley Hinson of Iowa. They called to establish a task force within the Department of Justice to investigate prosecution on trade crimes. The department will also provide support to other federal organizations of the state. Last year, a similar bill was passed but failed to become law. Hinson expressed that this is about accountability. She said: “Tariffs are a powerful tool in the arsenal to have, but I also believe that they should be backed by strong enforcement of our trade laws and that will stop China from ripping us off.” The bill outline defines trade-related crime as a violation of law, which will be implicated as criminal activity. (“US House revives bipartisan bill to tackle ‘trade crimes’ committed by Chinese companies,” SCMP, 06 March 2025)

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China’s Ministry of Commerce US’s additional 10 per cent tariffs

On 04 March, China’s Ministry of Commerce opposed Trump imposing additional 10 per cent tariffs on imports of goods from China. The Ministry said, “China is one of the countries with the strictest and most rigorously enforced anti-drug policies in the world. China and the United States have engaged in extensive and in-depth anti-drug cooperation, achieving remarkable results.” Regardless, the US has repeatedly shifted the blame on Chinese exports, using the fentanyl issue. The Ministry called Trump’s actions a typical act of unilateralism and bullying, disregarding facts or rules of international trade. (“China firmly opposes U.S. new tariff move, vows countermeasures to safeguard interests,” CGTN, 04 March 2025)

China vows to retaliate with countermeasures against US 10 per cent tariffs

On 28 February, China’s Ministry of Commerce opposed the 10 per cent tariffs imposed by the US and vowed to take countermeasures against it to protect China’s rights and interests. The Ministry spokesperson, Lin Jian, said: “China has repeatedly stressed that unilateral tariffs violate World Trade Organization rules and damage the multilateral trading system. China firmly opposes the U.S.’ move.” They also believe that the US cited the fentanyl issue as an excuse. And that China has the strictest rules against drugs and actively engages in international anti-drug policies. The ministry hopes that the US will not continue on this path and will return to the correct track of resolving differences through dialogue. (“China vows all ‘necessary’ countermeasures after Trump threatens new extra 10% tariff,” CGTN, 28 February 2025)

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US lawmakers reintroduce Taiwan International Solidarity Act

On 31 March, a bipartisan group of American lawmakers reintroduced the Taiwan International Solidarity Act in the US House of Representatives. According to Representative Gerry Connolly's press release, the act "encourages the US to work with allies and partners to oppose the People's Republic of China's efforts to undermine Taiwan's diplomatic relationships and partnerships globally." The legislation "clarifies" that UN General Assembly Resolution 2758 "does not preclude the United States from using its vote, voice, and influence to resist the reckless campaign against Taiwan's place on the world stage." Built on the 2019 Taiwan Allies International Protection and Enhancement Initiative Act, the bill requires the US government to "advocate...to resist the People's Republic of China's efforts to distort the decisions, language, policies, or procedures" of international organizations regarding Taiwan. Co-sponsor of the bill Representative Young Kim, said: "Taiwan's participation in global conversation is the world's gain." The bill is co-sponsored by Democrats Ami Bera, Dina Titus, Steve Cohen, Thomas Suozzi, Dave Min, Josh Gottheimer, Brad Sherman, and Republicans Brian Fitzpatrick and Michael Lawler. (James Thompson and Chung Yu-chen, "Taiwan International Solidarity Act reintroduced in U.S. Congress," *Focus Taiwan*, 01 April 2025)

PLA Eastern Command launches joint exercises near Taiwan

On 01 April, *CCTV* reported that The People's Liberation Army (PLA) Eastern Theater Command began joint exercises involving the army, navy, air, and rocket forces "closing in" on Taiwan in "multiple directions," PLA spokesperson Shi Yi described the drills as a "stern warning and forceful deterrent" against "Taiwan independence" separatist forces and are considered a "legitimate and necessary" action to safeguard China's sovereignty and national unity. In response, Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense condemned the move as disrupting the "status quo" and announced that military vessels and aircraft have been deployed to counter the threats. (Sean Lin, "China conducts joint exercises around Taiwan," *Focus Taiwan*, 01 April 2025)

Two Chinese nationals face deportation for advocating China-Taiwan unification

On 31 March, two Chinese nationals, identified by the surnames Chao and Chang and known online as En Qi and Xiao Wei, were ordered to leave Taiwan for posting videos advocating China's "military unification" with Taiwan. Chao, who used the Douyin pseudonym "En Qi," left Taiwan on Monday, boarding a flight to Chengdu hours before she was forcibly deported. Xiao Wei was expected to leave on Monday but did not board the last flight of the day and is believed to remain at her residence in New Taipei. The National Immigration Agency revoked their family-based residence permits based on the Act Governing Relations between the People of the Taiwan Area and the Mainland Area, which allows for deportation if a Chinese national is considered a threat to national or social stability. Both women denied supporting "military unification" and filed separate appeals against their deportation orders. (James Thompson and Liu Chien-pang, "2nd Chinese 'military unification' influencer leaves Taiwan," *Focus Taiwan*, 31 March 2025)

Taiwan's Red Cross Society announces aid to Myanmar earthquake rescue efforts

On 30 March, The Red Cross Society announced USD 50,000 to support emergency aid and rescue efforts in Myanmar following a magnitude 7.7 earthquake. The areas affected included Naypyidaw and central regions, including Mandalay, Sagaing, Magway, Bago, and Northeastern Shan State. The disaster has impacted around 50,000 families, with the Myanmar Red Cross planning assistance for 10,000-20,000 families. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) has appealed to raise USD 17.03 million for relief and reconstruction, with 30 per cent earmarked for disaster relief. In addition, Fo Guang Shan Monastery's regional branch will purchase USD 31,553.6 worth of supplies for 1,000 families near Mandalay, and its headquarters will set aside USD 30,000 for relief. Dharma Drum Mountain plans to send a delegation to assess needs, while China Airlines will ship disaster relief supplies to Thailand and Myanmar free of charge. The Myanmar government reported 1,700 deaths, 3,400 injuries, and over 300 missing, with the numbers expected to increase. (Chen Chieh-ling, Chang Hsiung-feng, Chang Chih-Liang, Lee Hsien-Feng, and Kay Liu, "Taiwan Red Cross to

donate US\$50000 to earthquake-hit Myanmar," *Focus Taiwan*, 30 March 2025)

TSMC to construct third fab in Arizona

On 29 March, Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company's (TSMC) Vice President Peter Cleveland announced that the company aims to start constructing its third advanced wafer fab in Phoenix, Arizona. The construction requires US government assistance for an environmental permit. TSMC invested USD 65 billion in Arizona to build three wafer fabs. On 03 March, TSMC pledged an additional USD 100 billion, bringing total investments in Arizona to USD 165 billion. Cleveland noted that while the US marketplace has high labor costs, TSMC maintains a good dialogue with the US Department of Commerce. Semiconductor equipment supplier ASML Holding NV's Jonathan Hoganson stressed the need for clearly defined industry rules. (Elaine Hou and Frances Huang, "TSMC seeks to build 3rd fab in Arizona as soon as possible," *Focus Taiwan*, 29 March 2025)

Forced labour allegations on Taiwanese textile firms, reports US-based NGO

On 28 March, an investigation report released by the US-based NGO Transparentem found that migrant workers at nine Taiwanese textile companies were accused of forced labor. The companies supply to international brands like Adidas, Puma, Nike, H&M, and Patagonia. The investigation began in December 2021 and involved interviews with 90 workers from Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam. The report identified forced labor practices such as the collection of recruitment fees of NTD 90,000 and monthly service fees of up to USD 60. They trap workers in debt bondage, which the International Labor Organization calls "withholding wages." Other abuses included forcing workers to continue employment, intimidation, threats, retention of identity documents, wage deductions for minor infractions, and restrictions on switching employers. Transparentem contacted 47 brands and urged them to address the issue; however, only two suppliers had refunded fees, and no comprehensive repayment plans were in place. Chief counsel at YKK's Asia headquarters, Yuki Abe, stated that an audit of a supplier, Lovetex, revealed "potential abusive practices." YKK is now working on reimbursing affected workers. Patagonia reported that it met with its suppliers to create corrective action plans, including the "ultimate elimination" of recruitment fees. Minister of Labor Hung Sun-han announced that the Labor Ministry will carefully investigate and

crack down on any forced labor or human trafficking violations, highlighting measures like the multilingual Online Application and Inquiry Download System for Foreign Workers and migrant worker employment transfer service centers. Director of Migrant Worker, Lennon Wang's policies at the Serve the People Association expressed "disappointment," stating that migrant workers should not be required to pay any fees and that brands should help cover these costs. (Sean Lin, "Migrant textile workers in Taiwan at risk of forced labor: U.S. NGO," *Focus Taiwan*, 28 March 2025)

Taiwan's Supreme Administrative Court rejects deported Chinese influencer

On 27 March, Taiwan's Supreme Administrative Court rejected a second appeal by Liu Zhenya, a Chinese influencer, against the deportation order issued by Taiwan's National Immigration Agency. Liu posted videos on her Douyin account captioned "Yaya in Taiwan", advocating China's "military unification" of Taiwan. This resulted in her residence permit being revoked, and she was ordered to leave Taiwan within 10 days. She is now barred from reapplying for a dependent-based residency permit for five years. The court ruled that the Ministry of the Interior's (MOI) determination that Liu's posts threatened national security and social stability was legally sound. The court stated: "From a procedural perspective, it is difficult to claim that the legality of the [MOI's] order is manifestly in doubt." A lower court rejected an earlier appeal by Liu, and the Supreme Administrative Court's ruling is final. National Chung Cheng University Professor Lo Shih-hung questioned the decision on social media, citing the misapplication of provisions from the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. (Liu Shih-yi and Sunny Lai, "Chinese spouse loses final appeal against deportation order," *Focus Taiwan*, 28 March 2025)

Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te calls for military reforms to enhance combat resilience

On 26 March, Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te called for the military to "improve its organizational structure and enhance combat resilience." He warned against the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) "growing convergence of authoritarian forces and increasing gray-zone intrusions." Lai emphasised the need for Taiwan to leverage "asymmetric strategies and military capabilities" to defend itself and safeguard its democracy and regional peace. Lai urged the newly promoted

officers to focus on “reviewing organizational structure to enhance combat resilience” for the main combat, garrison, and reserve forces. He also reiterated the need to ensure the military’s ability to execute joint operational plans through “annual training exercises.” He noted that the “immediate response” drills, on 17 and 21 March, use “scenario-based guidance.” He announced government support for the military through an updated salary adjustment plan, continued defense reforms, sufficient resources, and modernized management. (Keoni Everington, “Lai calls on Taiwan military to boost combat resilience,” *Taiwan News*, 27 March 2025)

TSMC investment will not revive US chip industry, says former Intel CEO

On 27 March, the *Financial Times* reported that former Intel CEO Pat Gelsinger stated that Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company’s (TSMC) USD 100 billion investment will not revive the US chip industry. US President Donald Trump hailed the investment as a way to bring semiconductor production back to the US and threatened tariffs on chip imports, but later softened his tone. Gelsinger said: “If you don’t have R&D in the US, you will not have semiconductor leadership in the US” and noted that TSMC’s core R&D remains in Taiwan. TSMC has confirmed that its core R&D will stay in Taiwan, and it only plans to develop the process technology it already has in production in the US. Taiwan’s government has said that advanced chipmaking technology, including 2 nm and 1.6 nm processes, will not be moved to the US next year. (Lily LaMattina, “Ex-Intel head says TSMC’s new investment will not resurrect US chip sector” *Taiwan News*, 27 March 2025)

Taiwan’s Navy ship collides with a Chinese fishing boat

On 27 March, the Taiwanese Navy reported that its Chung Ho-class tank landing ship LST-232 collided with the Chinese-registered fishing boat “Min Lien Yu 61756” at 12:38 AM, about 45 nautical miles off the Port of Taichung. The Taiwanese vessel sustained unspecified damage that did not compromise navigational safety. No injuries were reported on either vessel. The Navy requested that Taiwan’s Coast Guard Administration dispatch two patrol vessels to the scene to handle the matter and collect evidence pending an investigation. (Sean Lin, “Taiwan Navy vessel collides with Chinese fishing boat,” *Focus Taiwan*, 27 March 2025)

Taiwan Affairs Office launches reporting column to report the “Taiwan independence” movement

On 26 March, The Taiwan Affairs Office of China launch a reporting column to document and report the acts of “Taiwan independence” and secessionist movement. The office stated that the secessionist DPP authorities/government have repressed and persecuted political dissidents and those supporting peaceful cross-Strait relations and integrated development with the Chinese mainland. Spokesperson Chen Binhua said: “We express serious concern over this and believe that those responsible must be severely punished.” He emphasised that the launch of the column aims to hold those responsible accountable while strictly protecting the rights of whistleblowers in accordance with the law. (“Taiwan Affairs Office launches column for reporting malicious acts of ‘Taiwan independence’ henchmen,” *Taiwan News*, 26 March 2025)

Taiwan-Japan sign MoU on drone testing and supply

On 25 March, the Taiwan Excellence Drone International Business Opportunities Alliance (TEDIBOA) Co-Chair Wu Hsiu-hui and Japan Drone Consortium Chair Nonami Kenzo signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU). This was attended by Taiwan’s Minister of Economic Affairs, Kuo Jyh-huei. The agreement will focus on disaster relief, autonomous flight testing, and developing a Taiwan-Japan drone supply chain. Nonami noted that the Japanese government has allocated over NTD 270 billion for its drone sector. He highlighted Taiwan’s strong manufacturing capabilities and comprehensive Information, Communication, and Technology (ICT) supply chain as key advantages. Kuo mentioned that Taiwan’s strengths in ICT, semiconductors, and system integration complement Japan’s precision manufacturing. Industrial Technology Research Institute (ITRI) President Edwin Liu added that the institute will support key technologies and international cooperation in this sector. (Carol Yang, “Taiwan and Japan drone alliances establish partnership,” *Taiwan News*, 26 March 2025)

Chinese influencer leaves Taiwan ahead of deportation order

On 25 March, Chinese influencer Liu Zhenya left Taiwan hours before her deportation order was to be executed. Liu boarded from Taipei Songshan Airport, accompanied by her husband and three children. The deportation order was issued after Liu posted videos on Douyin

advocating for China's "military unification" of Taiwan. This angered Taiwanese authorities, who accused Liu of violating regulations governing Chinese residents in Taiwan. Liu said: "I don't want to leave behind a stain that might affect me if I ever wish to return," and added she would "return with my head held high." Her husband and children filed a petition with the Taipei High Administrative Court to suspend the deportation order, arguing that her videos posed no threat to national security. However, the court ruled that her actions "sparked significant controversy" and could threaten social stability, and the legal challenge was rejected by the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC). (Huang Li-yun, Chen Chun-hua, Liu Shih-yi and Sunny Lai, "Chinese spouse leaves Taiwan hours before scheduled deportation," *Taiwan News*, 25 March 2025)

Taiwan's Ministry of foreign affairs and agriculture launch "Smart Agriculture Advisory Group"

On 25 March, Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) formed a "Smart Agriculture Advisory Group" to promote agricultural cooperation with diplomatic allies and friendly nations. The group will mobilize public and private sector resources to enhance the use of artificial intelligence and other smart technologies to promote precision agriculture. The goal is to expand Taiwan's agricultural global footprint and help its allies strengthen global food security and sustainability amid climate change challenges. The decision followed a meeting at the MOA's Taipei headquarters between Foreign Minister Lin Chia-lung and Agriculture Minister Chen Junne-jih. They also agreed to continue an aquaculture project in Palau, expand cooperation with the Philippines, explore a regional seeding center in the Caribbean, and plan an agricultural mission to the United States in September. (Joseph Yeh, "Two Taiwan ministries to form 'smart agriculture' advisory group," *Focus Taiwan*, 25 March 2025)

Foxconn invests USD 142 million in Texas for AI development

On 25 March, Taiwan-based manufacturer Hon Hai Precision Industry Co. also known as Foxconn, invested USD 142 million in Texas to expand its artificial intelligence server capacity. The company acquired an 86.34-acre lot in Houston and 1 million square feet building through its cloud solution subsidiary Ingrasys Technology Inc. Foxconn specified that the investment was for operational needs, but industrial sources said it will be used to expand

AI server production for clients in North America. Hon Hai is also expanding its AI server capacity in Taiwan, the United States, Mexico, and Vietnam. At an investor conference on 14 March, it projected AI server sales to exceed NTD 1 trillion in 2025. Chairman Young Liu noted the company spent over NTD 340 billion in capital expenditure from 2022 to 2024 to expand production worldwide. (Chung Jung-feng and Frances Huang, "Hon Hai invests US\$142 million in Texas, likely for AI server capacity," *Focus Taiwan*, 25 March 2025)

Taiwanese surveillance camera manufacturer accused of using Chinese components

On 25 March, Hi Sharp Electronics, was charged with importing components from China for local assembly and falsely labeling its products as "Made in Taiwan." On 19 March, a Taiwan's Ministry of Justice Investigation Bureau (MJIB) press release revealed that the Shilin District Prosecutors Office mobilized 30 investigators to search Hi Sharp's factory and the residences of corporate leaders. More than 2,000 surveillance cameras with false origin labels were seized in the search. Hi, Sharp Chair Jerry Jiang was questioned and released on NTD 1 million bail. The MJIB alleged that the company and its subsidiaries imported over NTD 3.3 billion worth of components from China between 2019 and 2024. The falsification of country-of-origin documents allowed Hi Sharp to win government procurement contracts while posing a national security risk by connecting its products to a cloud server in China. Hi, Sharp denied all charges, stating that it met all relevant regulations and is fully cooperating with the investigation. (Sean Scanlan, "Hi Sharp accused of using China parts in 'Made in Taiwan' cameras," *Taiwan News*, 25 March 2025)

Taiwan-Japan agree to regulate fishing line deployment near Diaoyutai Islands

On 24 March, Taiwan's Fisheries Agency announced that Taiwan and Japan agreed to regulate fishing line deployment in waters near the Diaoyutai Islands. In the overlapping area between the Diaoyutai and Yaeyama Islands, known as the "inverted triangle," Taiwanese fishers are allowed to cast lines in an east-west direction, while Japanese fishers may deploy lines in a north-south direction. A minimum distance of 7.4 km is to be maintained between fishing vessels to prevent line entanglement and operational interference. Fisheries Agency Director-General Wang Mao-cheng, warned fishers who continuously fail to follow the guidelines risk permanent revocation of their

fishing licenses. The new regulations will take effect in April. (Kelvin Chen, “Taiwan, Japan sign deal on fishing line deployment near Diaoyutai Islands,” *Taiwan News*, 25 March 2025)

“CCP Covert Operations Against Taiwan,” report by Global Taiwan Institute

On 24 March, a US-based Global Taiwan Institute (GTI) report stated that China conducts covert operations against Taiwan to undermine its society and annex the country. The report titled, “Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Covert Operations Against Taiwan,” revealed CCP’s operations as intelligence, cyberspace, and United Front work. To gather military intelligence, China has increased financial incentives to recruit military personnel “at operational levels” with targets required to take loyalty oaths and surrender pledges. GTI reported that Taiwan investigated 84 espionage cases in 2024 and prosecuted 39 individuals. China-backed hackers target Taiwan government networks, vital infrastructure, and intellectual property using “living off the land” techniques, and cooperation with Russian counterparts. GTI noted that Taiwan has the highest rate of cyberattacks in the Asia-Pacific region. It also said the CCP intensifies United Front operations through local-level exchanges and cultural activities and seeks to influence political figures, with over 150 organizations in Taiwan connected to the United Front system. GTI recommended harsher penalties for espionage, enhanced cybersecurity protocols, support for independent journalism investigating political warfare, and additional oversight of engagement between Taiwanese officials and Chinese agencies. (Kelvin Chen, “China engaging in covert operations to undermine Taiwanese society,” *Taiwan News*, 24 March 2025)

President Lai Ching-te inspects Taiwan Marines deployed at the airport

On 21 March, President Lai Ching-te and Defense Minister Wellington Koo inspectes the 66th Marine Brigade’s Second Garrison at Songshan Airport to confirm earlier reports of Taiwan Marines’ deployment. Taipei MRT passengers and the *Military News Agency* reported that the Marines were equipped with Stinger surface-to-air missiles, Javelin anti-armor missiles, 20mm autocannons, and 40mm grenade launchers. Military sources reported that over 100 Marines have been stationed at the airport since late last year to augment the Air Force’s Military Police squadron. The Marines are responsible for amphibious warfare, counter-landing, and

guarding key military positions in Taipei, while the Air Force Military Police unit maintains security at the airport’s military facilities. (Keoni Everington, “Taiwan Marines confirmed guarding Taipei Songshan Airport,” *Taiwan News*, 24 March 2025)

US Directorate of National Intelligence reports that China’s plans to invade Taiwan

On 20 March, a US intelligence report stated that President Xi Jinping’s campaign to end corruption in the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) was meant to modernize the military and prepare to invade Taiwan by 2027. The report titled “Wealth and Corrupt Activities of the Leadership of the Chinese Communist Party” was published by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (DNI). The report noted that up to 65 per cent of all government officials in China accept bribes or engage in graft, and nearly 5 million officials have been found guilty of bribery since 2012. The campaign has targeted corruption within the PLA, including a “culture of pay-for-promotion,” and has led to the removal of figures such as General Li Shangfu in 2023 and Admiral Miao Hua in 2024 for Party discipline violations. The report defines corruption as an “endemic feature” of China’s highly centralized political system and claims Xi has amassed more than USD 1 billion in assets through relatives. The report, commissioned under the 2023 National Defense Authorization Act, is the first official US disclosure on Chinese leadership and CCP corruption. (Chung Yu-Chen and Joseph Yeh, “Xi’s anti-corruption effort to help PLA invade Taiwan by 2027,” *Focus Taiwan*, 24 March 2025)

Taiwan’s Central Bank notes that TSMC’s performance relies on external factors

On 20 March, Taiwan’s Central Bank stated that Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company’s (TSMC) future performance will depend on external factors like the direction of US President Donald Trump’s policies, geopolitical developments, and the growth of AI technology. These factors are expected to impact both TSMC and broader trends in Taiwan’s stock market. A report by *CNA* to the bank’s board revealed that TSMC accounts for nearly 40 per cent of Taiwan’s total market capitalization, while the tech sector represents 70 per cent, with semiconductors making up 47 per cent. TSMC announced on March 3 that it would increase its US investments to mitigate risks from Trump’s policies. This triggered a downturn in Taiwan’s stock market as foreign investors reassessed stock valuations and sold off TSMC shares. (Charlotte Lee, “Central Bank

analyzes TSMC impact on Taiwan economy,” *RNZ*, 22 March 2025)

Taiwan President Lai Ching-te increases military allowances for personnel

On 21 March, President Lai Ching-te announced a pay adjustment for military personnel, raising allowances for volunteer service members and combat troops to be implemented on 01 April. The revised policy increases maximum monthly allowances by NTD 7,000 for frontline officers in combat units. Under a new three-tier system, monthly stipend for junior officers (major and below) will increase from NTD 10,000 to NTD 15,000, mid-ranking officers from NTD 10,000 to NTD 14,000, and senior officers (generals) will receive an additional NTD 3,000 on the current NTD 10,000. In addition, combat units with intensive training will have their stipend increased from NTD 5,000 to NTD 12,000, and combat support units from NTD 3,000 to NTD 7,000. Lai emphasized that military pay reform is a long-term initiative, and called on opposition parties to reconsider proposals to freeze or cut the defense budget. (Wu Shu-wei and Lee Hsin-Yin, “Taiwan to increase military allowances starting April 1: Lai,” *Focus Taiwan*, 21 March 2025)

Taiwan's Interior Ministry cracks down on citizens with Chinese ID card

On 20 March, Interior Minister Liu Shyh-fang announced that if a Taiwanese national has a Chinese ID card, their Taiwanese citizenship will be revoked. Liu stated that more than 40 Taiwanese with Chinese ID cards are being investigated, with 14 already having their Taiwan household registration cancelled. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, National Immigration Agency, and household registration offices will revoke their National Health Insurance, ID cards, and passports. Liu also confirmed that Chinese influencer “Yaya in Taiwan” was given 10 days to leave voluntarily and will be deported if she exceeds that period. Deputy Interior Minister Wu Tang-an explained that the Cross-Strait Act covers household registrations in Taiwan and China and noted that reinstating registration “won’t be very easy.” Liu added that a Taoyuan police officer who identified himself as Chinese on Douyin received a demerit, with an investigation ongoing by the National Police Agency. (Keoni Everington, “14 Taiwanese with Chinese IDs lose Taiwan household registration,” *Taiwan News*, 21 March 2025)

Taiwan's Foxconn to broker a deal to produce EVs for Japanese firm, Mitsubishi

On 20 March, *Nikkei Asia* reported that Foxconn Chair Young Liu is set to make a deal to produce electric vehicles for Japan’s Mitsubishi Motors. Under the deal, Mitsubishi would sell Foxconn-produced cars under its own EV brand in its Southeast Asian market, where they have a strong presence. Foxconn seeks to enter the EV industry to drive future growth and reduce dependence on consumer electronics. The deal is expected to cut production costs for Mitsubishi and allow it to focus more on technology development. (Lily LaMattina, “Taiwan’s Foxconn reportedly finalizing a deal to produce EVs for Mitsubishi,” *Taiwan News*, 21 March 2025)

The US FAPA supports the Taiwan Representative Office Act

On 17 March, The US Formosan Association for Public Affairs (FAPA) launched a petition campaign on Monday to support the Taiwan Representative Office Act (TROA). The pro-Taiwan bill aims to rename Taiwan’s de facto embassy in the US from the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office (TECRO) to the Taiwan Representative Office. It was introduced by Senator John Curtis and Senator Jeff Merkley on 12 March. FAPA President Kao Su-mei noted the bill has garnered bipartisan support, citing US Secretary of State Marco Rubio’s backing of a previous TRO proposal. The Biden administration had considered renaming TECRO to TRO but decided against it. Kao argued that the name change would strengthen US recognition of Taiwan’s sovereignty and enhance its international presence. (Medwin Hsu, “FAPA pushes for support of Taiwan Representative Office Act,” *Taiwan News*, 20 March 2025)

Taiwan's Ministry of Economic Affairs reveals record investments in R&D

On 19 March, The National Science and Technology Council met with the Ministry of Economic Affairs (MOEA) revealing foreign technology companies invested USD 805.2 million in R&D in Taiwan last year. At the meeting, MOEA official Chiu Chiu-hui stated that 40 foreign technology companies have set up R&D centers in Taiwan, including Micron, Nvidia, AMD, Infineon, and ASML. They have invested in AI, memory chips, automotive semiconductors, and other critical sectors. Since 2015, MOEA programs have attracted over NTD 520 billion in foreign investment and facilitated partnerships between more than 1,000 Taiwanese companies and foreign firms while training over 4,000 technology professionals a year. The government has promoted five key

sectors, including semiconductors, AI, defense, cybersecurity, and communications. (Carol Yang, "Foreign tech R&D investment in Taiwan hit record NT\$24.4 billion in 2024," *Taiwan News*, 20 March 2025)

EU must warn China against attacking Taiwan, says former NATO Secretary General

On 19 March, former NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen proposed that the EU should make China aware of the repercussions of employing force against Taiwan. He said: "We should tell that in advance so China does not miscalculate but knows exactly what would happen if it tried to change the status quo." He stressed Taiwan to bolster its defense, increase its defense budget to 3 per cent of GDP, and maintain the status quo. Rasmussen also urged NATO nations to raise their defense budgets to 4 per cent of GDP due to concerns about Russia, noting that only Poland has achieved this goal. He accused China of sabotaging the undersea cable and warned that the Chinese economy would be affected if the EU terminated trade ties. Rasmussen urged Europe and Taiwan to cooperate in intelligence sharing (Lily LaMattina, "Former NATO head says EU must warn China against attacking Taiwan," *Taiwan News*, 19 March 2025)

Taiwan-Arizona to strengthen economic cooperation, Taiwan President meets Arizona Governor

On 18 March, Arizona Governor Katie Hobbs met with President Lai Ching-te on Tuesday at the Presidential Office to strengthen Taiwan-Arizona economic cooperation. President Lai noted that Taiwan-Arizona relations have progressed with TSMC's investment of USD 100 billion to expand chip production and R&D facilities in the Greater Phoenix area. He emphasized the importance of signing an avoidance of double taxation agreement to encourage Taiwanese investment, create jobs, and develop a China-free supply chain. Governor Hobbs praised Taiwan's growth as a global center for technology, innovation, and advanced manufacturing. (Keoni Everington, "Lai and Arizona governor tout China-free supply chain," *Taiwan News*, 19 March 2025)

Taiwan orders deportation of Chinese influencer for promoting pro-Beijing content

On 18 March, Taiwan's National Immigration Agency (NIA) orders Chinese influencer Liu to leave Taiwan by 24 March or face deportation for posting pro-unification videos. Liu, also known as Yaya, moved to Taiwan on a

dependent visa after marrying a Taiwanese man. She posted pro-Beijing videos advocating for China's unification of Taiwan, calling the island "Taiwan province." Her remarks sparked condemnation from Taiwanese leaders, with Interior Minister Liu Shyh-fang stating that freedom of speech cannot justify promoting invasion. The NIA said: "Her behaviour advocates the elimination of Taiwan's sovereignty and is not tolerated in Taiwanese society." The NIA's decision is part of broader efforts by President Lai Ching-te to counter Chinese influence amid rising cross-strait tensions. (Koh Ewe, "Taiwan revokes visa of pro-Beijing Chinese influencer," *BBC*, 18 March 2025)

China launches military exercises around Taiwan amid tensions

On 17 March, China conducted military exercises around Taiwan in response to President Lai Ching-te's comments and changes to the US State Department's fact sheet on Taiwan. China's Taiwan Affairs Office spokesperson, Chen Binhua justified the drills as "just and necessary" for regional peace, and accused Lai of promoting separatist "Taiwan independence." China's Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Mao Ning condemned the US for allegedly supporting Taiwan's independence and warned against further provocations. Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs refuted China's claims, denouncing Beijing's military actions as destabilizing and hypocritical. Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense reported detecting 59 PLA aircraft and nine PLAN ships near Taiwan, with 43 aircraft crossing the median line and two balloons spotted north of the country. (Keoni Everington, "China holds military drills around Taiwan in response to 'separatism' and US fact sheet," *Taiwan News*, 18 March 2025)

Taiwan's President calls for closer Taiwan-Japan cooperation at the Yushan Forum

On 17 March, Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te stressed the need for Taiwan-Japan cooperation in countering authoritarianism. He announced this during a meeting in the eighth Yushan Forum which was attended by Japan-ROC Diet Members' Consultative Council Chair Furuya Keiji. Lai stressed the need for democratic nations to strengthen unity, enhance their economies, and bolster self-defense capabilities to promote regional democracy and prosperity. He praised Furuya's support for Taiwan's participation in the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership

(CPTPP). Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company's (TSMC) investment in Kumamoto served as an acknowledgment of the growing Taiwan-Japan partnership. Furuya also highlighted the importance of cybersecurity and resilient supply chains. (Kelvin Chen, "Lai calls for closer Taiwan-Japan cooperation to combat authoritarianism," *Taiwan News*, 18 March 2025)

Taiwan to uphold Indo-Pacific stability in Yushan Forum: President Lai

On 17 March, Taiwan committed to increasing international cooperation to promote Indo-Pacific stability in the eighth Yushan Forum, says Taiwan President. Lai Ching-te aims to bolster supply chains, digital solidarity, and democratic freedom with like-minded nations. Lai highlighted Taiwan's progress as a "silicon and AI nation," with advancements in quantum technology and precision medicine. This year's Forum discussed how the "New Southbound Policy+" seeks to enhance partnerships in the Indo-Pacific. Guest speakers of the Forum included former prime minister of Denmark and chair of the Alliance of Democracies Foundation Anders Fogh Rasmussen and Japan-ROC Diet Members' Consultative Council Chair Keiji Furuya. Defense Minister Wellington Koo confirmed that Taiwan and the US are collaborating on drone technologies, while Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC) plans a USD 100 billion investment in new chip facilities in Arizona. (Kelvin Chen, "Taiwan commits to global cooperation to maintain Indo-Pacific stability," *Taiwan News*, 17 March 2025)

Foxconn reports record returns with an 11 per cent increase in 2024

On 14 March, Foxconn Chair Young Liu announced that strong AI server and cloud computing demand drove the company's annual revenue to a record high. The record annual revenue of USD 216 billion in 2024, reflected an 11 per cent year-on-year increase. AI server revenue, primarily from Nvidia systems, grew over 150 per cent from 2023 and is expected to exceed NTD 1 trillion this year. Overall server revenue rose by 78 per cent. Liu noted that servers and cloud products will soon match revenue from consumer products, as iPhone manufacturing stabilizes. Liu said that the demand for electronic components will be driven by EVs, and Foxconn is planning a deal with a Japanese automaker. (Sean Scanlan, "Taiwan's Foxconn attributes record revenue to servers," *Taiwan News*, 16 March 2025)

NPC legislator vows firm action against Taiwan's independence

On 14 March, Chairman of China's National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee member, Zhao Leji remarked on combating "Taiwan independence" separatist activities and curbing external interference. He made the remarks at the 20th anniversary of the enforcement of the Anti-Secession Law. He stressed the need for advancing national reunification and said, "Resolving the Taiwan question and realizing China's complete reunification is a shared aspiration of all the sons and daughters of the Chinese nation and a natural requirement for realizing the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation," Several high ranking officials were present at the meeting. ("China's top legislator vows firm action against separatist activities", *CGTN*, 14 March 2025)

Five threats from China to Taiwan: President Lai

On 13 March, Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te held a National Security meeting and press conference. He noted that five threats loom over Taiwan: China threat, threats of infiltration and espionage in Taiwanese military, obscuring national identity, united front infiltration through cross-strait exchanges and the use of "integrated development" to lure in Taiwanese business and youth. Lai accused: "They (China) are carrying out activities such as division, destruction, and subversion from within us." Lai informed that many members of the military, both retired and on active duty, have been bought by China, and in turn, they sold intelligence and even organized forces to attack Taiwan. Lai stated that individuals follow instructions from China for the sake of their careers, and the statement by Chinese media has ignited internal opposition. Lai said: "Many people worry that our country, as well as our hard-won freedom and democracy and the prosperity and progress we achieved together, are being washed away bit by bit due to these united front tactics." ("President Lai holds press conference following high-level national security meeting," *Office of the President of Taiwan*, 13 March 2025)

China's Taiwan Affairs Office warns Taiwan's President calling for independence

On 13 March, China warned the Taiwanese "secessionists" that if they crossed the red line, China would take resolute actions in response. The statement was made by China's Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council's spokesperson, Chen Binhua, who replied to Taiwan's president's press conference calling

for Taiwanese independence. Chen called Lai the “saboteur of cross-strait’s peace,” and accused him of being a “cross-strait’s crisis maker.” The office spokesperson emphasized that Taiwan is an inalienable part of Chinese territory and that it never has been and never will be a separate territory. Chen said: “A stern warning to the Lai Ching-te administration: Those who play with fire will surely be burned, and those who forget their roots have never met a good end.” (“Chinese mainland warns of decisive action if Taiwan secessionists cross red line,” *CGTN*, 13 March 2025)

Taiwan’s Water Resource Agency informs stable water supply to semiconductor industry

On 10 March, Taiwan’s Water Resources Agency (WRA) informed that the water supply to Taiwan’s semiconductor industry was stable. The WRA held a meeting that was attended by representatives of TSMC, Micron, and UMC. The agency thanked the rainfall last year and the water management system. Taiwan’s three major science parks were allocated 1.31 metric tons of water but only used 630000 tons of water, says WRA. Since 2015, WRA has been responsible for water supply to semiconductor industries and science parks. Chairman of Environmental Safety and Health Committee. Fang Hanwen thanked the government’s constant support in providing water supply. The meetings are vital to assist industry with water and government to find ways to conserve the water. (“Water for Taiwan’s chip industry remains stable,” *Taiwan News*, 11 March 2025)

Taiwan’s Water Resource Agency informs stable water supply to semiconductor industry

On 08 March, top officials and the President of the US, Donald Trump, were confident that China would not invade Taiwan during his presidency. The US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said: “I follow President Trump’s lead, and he is confident that President Xi will not make that move during his presidency,” Trump has also touted his strong relationship with President Xi Jinping in the past and when asked about, if he would allow the Chinese invasion of Taiwan, he said, “I don’t comment on it because I don’t want to ever put myself in that position.” Secretary of State Marco Rubio and other nominees for senior government positions reiterated that the US would oppose any attempts to change Taiwan’s status forcibly. Taiwan’s Defense Minister Wellington Koo said, “US arms sales help maintain peace across the

Taiwan Strait” (Jono Thomson, “US official says Trump confident China will not invade Taiwan during his term,” *Taiwan News*, 08 March 2025)

Taiwan’s athlete becomes first Asian to finish Arctic foot race

On 07 March, Ultramarathon athlete Chen Yen-po completed a 617 km foot race in the Arctic. Chen became the first Asian to win the 6633 Arctic Ultra foot race, which is also known as the world’s “toughest, coldest, and windiest” race. The race takes place over nine days in Canada, and this year, only nine people registered. Chen finished the race, despite his inflamed feet, in seven days, 23 hours, and 19 minutes. Chen had undergone rigorous training for the race, including dragging a sled from Taipei to Kaohsiung and training in low temperatures atop Yangmingshan. Chen’s Instagram account posted a message after his race, saying, “Yen-po’s determination to outdo himself is obvious to all. Let’s allow him a good rest, and share his achievements with everyone.” (Jono Thomson, “Taiwan’s Chen Yen-po first Asian to finish arctic foot race,” *Taiwan News*, 08 March 2025)

US House of Representatives passes bill allowing Taiwan to join IMF

On 05 March, the US House of Representatives Financial Services Committee passed the Taiwan Non-Discrimination Act of 2025. This bill will allow Taiwan to gain membership in the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Additionally, it will bring employment opportunities, IMF technical training, and assistance to Taiwan. The bill was introduced by Representatives Young Kim and Al Green. They said: “would enhance the IMF’s mission and promote stability. Given the size of its economy, financial reserves, and potential contributions to global economic policy,” and that it was absurd to exclude Taiwan. Kim also said: “We cannot allow the CCP to dictate international financial policy and sideline a key democratic partner”(Jono Thomson, “US House progresses bill supporting Taiwan IMF membership,” *Taiwan News*, 07 March 2025)

Taiwan’s President assures that TSMC’s investment in the US is beneficial for Taiwan

On 06 March, Taiwan’s President Lai Ching-te reassured the public that Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company’s (TSMC) USD 100 billion investment into the US would also benefit Taiwan. TSMC had committed, after pressure from US President Donald Trump, to move production to the US or face tariffs. Lai said, “We have seen every time that with each initiative by TSMC, TSMC has grown even stronger and more

competitive, while also providing Taiwan's businesses with opportunities for international cooperation and contributing to Taiwan's greater strength." The Chief Executive of TSMC, C C Wei, reiterated that the investment in the US would not hurt the company's production in Taiwan. However, politicians and experts within the company criticised the move by questioning what Taiwan gains in return for these investments. According to the plan, TSMC will plant itself in Arizona, creating 25000 job opportunities for research and development in the field of Chip and semiconductor innovation. This proposition by the Trump administration is that TSMC investment will help the Taiwanese firms avoid tariffs. (Chris Buckley, Meaghan Tobin and Amy Chang Chien, "Taiwan President Defends TSMC's \$100 Billion U.S. Chip Investment," New York Times, 06 March 2025)

Taiwanese tourism delegate detained in Hong Kong

On 06 March, the Taiwan News reported that a Taiwanese travel industry operator surnamed Chen was detained upon arriving in Hong Kong last month over an alleged decades-old crime. According to Mirror Media, Chen was accused of being involved in a money laundering case 25 years ago involving USD 10,000, and her bail was denied. On 18 February, KMT legislative caucus whip Fu Kun-chi and Hualien County Magistrate Hsu Chen-wei led a delegation to Hong Kong. Foreign Minister Lin Chia-lung criticised Fu, asking, "If Fu truly represents the central government, why couldn't he protect his delegation member?" Fu later claimed his trip was to support Hualien's tourism at a Hong Kong expo. Then, the Economic Democracy Union accused him of coercion and violating the Anti-Infiltration Act. Lin warned that entering Hong Kong is dangerous because "you don't know what kind of records they have on you," emphasising caution in cross-strait matters. (Keoni Everington, "Taiwan tourism delegation member detained upon arrival in Hong Kong," Taiwan News, 06 March 2025)

Taiwan's fall to China disastrous to US, says member of, Armed Services Committee

On 04 March, Armed Services Committee member Elbridge Colby, warned that Taiwan's fall to China "would be a disaster for American interests." He urged Taipei to raise defence spending to nearly 10 per cent of GDP. However, Taiwan's opposition party raised concerns over the Legislative Yuan's cuts and freezes to the defense budget this year. He described Taiwan's current efforts as showing an "alarming lack of urgency" and noted that the military balance has

deteriorated dramatically from Taiwan's perspective. Colby emphasised that US military power should focus on "denying China regional hegemony." In the Senate Foreign Relations meeting, Nominee Christopher Landau reaffirmed US policy under the Taiwan Relations Act to protect Taiwan's economic and security interests and oppose any changes to the "status quo." Both nominations now await Senate committee votes. (Hollie Younger, "Taiwan's fall would be a 'disaster': Colby," Taipei Times, 06 March 2025)

TPP finds flaws in Taiwan's tax administration and financial model

On 03 March, Experts at a TPP hearing identified flaws in Taiwan's tax administration and financial model and advocated for the return of surplus tax to the public. KMT Caucus Secretary-General Wang Hung-wei and KMT Caucus Leader Fu Kun-chi requested the government to return the tax surplus in the form of NTD 10,000 rebate to the public. Experts noted that repeated annual surpluses could signal deficiencies in the country's financial planning and proposed using the surplus to repay Taiwan's debt and improve healthcare. Experts also suggested amendments to the Budget Act. Ministry of Finance Taxation Administration Director-General Sung Hsiu-ling reported that her ministry had commissioned a report from the Chair of the Department of Public Finance at National Chengchi University, Professor Chen Kuo-liang's team. According to her, the gap between the commissioning of the report and the adoption of its recommendations may have contributed to the current tax surplus. (Medwin Hsu, "Experts discuss Taiwan tax surplus at TPP hearing," Taiwan News, 04 March 2025)

Taiwan submarine to begin mooring tests

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her, the gap between the commissioning of the report and the adoption of its recommendations may have contributed to the current tax surplus. (Medwin Hsu, "Experts discuss Taiwan tax surplus at TPP hearing," Taiwan News, 04 March 2025)

TSMC to invest USD 10 billion to build five plants in the US

On 03 March, US President Donald Trump announced the investment of USD 10 billion by Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co (TSMC) in building five plants in the US. Trump added that the investment would allow Taiwan to avoid the tariffs imposed or to be imposed by Trump. The CEO of TSMC, CC Wei, was along with Trump, the US commerce secretary Howard Lutnick, and Trump adviser on AI and crypto David Sacks when the announcement was made. He added that the new investment brought the company's investment in chip manufacturing in the US to USD 165 billion. Trump claimed that semiconductor manufacturing to the US was a matter of national security and said the investment "will at least give us a position where we have, in this very, very important business, we would have a very big part of it in the United States." (Dara Kerr, Helen Davidson, "Trump announces Taiwanese chip giant's \$100bn investment in US plants," The Guardian, 03 March 2025)

Taiwan sanctions seven Chinese Universities

On 01 March, Taiwan's Minister of Education Cheng Ying-yao announced that seven universities were sanctioned due to national security risks. The universities dubbed the "seven ons of (China's) national defense were founded by the Chinese Ministry of National Defense before they were transferred to the Chinese Ministry of Industry and Information Technology. The seven universities are Beihang University, Beijing Institute of Technology, Northwestern Polytechnical University, Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics, Nanjing University of Science and Technology, Harbin Institute of Technology, and Harbin Engineering University. The sanction prohibits any universities or research institutions of Taiwan from engaging with these universities. The US had also sanctioned these universities, citing technology and information theft. Cheng said, "They serve the aims of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) and united front work" (Rachel Lin and Jonathan Chin, "Seven Chinese universities sanctioned," Taipei Times, 01 March 2025)

Taiwan submarine to begin mooring tests

On 28 February, Taiwan's first indigenous submarine, the Narwhal, began mooring tests in Kaohsiung pier. The submarine had completed the tilting phase of tests. The harbour acceptance tests are expected to be completed in April, following the original testing timetable and delivery schedule. (Matthew Strong, "Taiwan indigenous submarine starts mooring tests in Kaohsiung," Taiwan News, 28 February 2025)

KOREA READER

South Korea's Constitutional Court to rule on President Yoon's impeachment verdict on 04 April

On 01 April, *The Korea Times* reported that the Constitutional Court will deliver its ruling on President Yoon Suk Yeol's impeachment on 04 April in the grand courtroom. This decision follows his impeachment by the National Assembly on December 14 last year, 111 days ago, after his December 3 declaration of martial law. The justices began daily deliberations 38 days ago after completing 11 hearings on 25 March. Live broadcasts and public attendance will be permitted on the day of the ruling. This trial is now the longest impeachment process in Korean history, exceeding the durations of former President Roh Moo-hyun's 63-day and former President Park Geun-hye's 91-day cases. (Anna J. Park, "Constitutional Court to announce ruling on Yoon's impeachment on Friday," *Korea Times*, 01 April 2025)

South Korea's wildfire causes immense damage, reports *The Korea Herald*

On 21 March, *The Korea Herald* reported that Wildfires in southeastern South Korea resulted in 75 casualties, including 30 deaths, and burned up to 48,239 hectares, destroying 3,285 homes. A total of 34,746 people were evacuated, with 29,969 returning home and about 4,700 still in shelters. Acting Interior Minister Ko Ki-dong described the damage as the "greatest" in Korea's history regarding casualties and property loss. The government is converting public institution training centers into lodging facilities, setting up temporary modular homes, establishing 106 temporary shelters, and providing 4,462 instances of mental health support. In Uiseong-gun, where 12,821 hectares were burned, survivor Ma Bu-jin said: "If my house had just been flooded, I could have at least tried to bail out the water. But instead, it's completely collapsed, and there's nothing I can do." In Yeongdeok-gun, recovery is delayed due to ongoing power, water, and communication outages. Finance Minister Choi Sang-mok

announced that the government would request a supplementary budget of 10 trillion won to offset the economic fallout and external instabilities. (Lee Jung-Joo, "Long road to recovery begins in wake of South Korea's worst-ever wildfires," *The Korea Herald*, 30 March 2025)

North Korea's illegal arms trade to Russia threatens South Korea, says acting President

On 28 March, South Korea's acting President and Prime Minister, Han Duck-soo, claimed that North Korea's illegal arms trade with Russia has enabled the regime to "plot new forms of provocations by upgrading its weapons system aimed to threaten us." Speaking at the 10th West Sea Defense Day ceremony at the national cemetery in Daejeon, Han noted that North Korea's "most degenerate regime on earth" continues to threaten peace on the Korean Peninsula and the world. He emphasized that South Korea maintains a full readiness posture, with "young soldiers" prepared to respond "immediately and overwhelmingly" to provocation. The remarks come as international sanctions ban arms trade with Pyongyang, while Moscow has expanded its military ties with North Korea. Reports indicate North Korea has deployed at least 3,000 additional troops to Russia in the first two months of this year. (Jung Min-kyung, "Acting president slams North Korea's 'illegal arms trade' with Russia," *Korea Herald*, 28 March 2025)

Samsung's Chairman met China's President at the China Development Forum

On 28 March, Samsung Electronics Executive Chairman Lee Jae-Yong met with China's President Xi Jinping during a meeting with global business leaders in Beijing. Lee participated alongside executives from Qualcomm, BMW, AstraZeneca, FedEx, and Saudi Aramco at the follow-up China Development Forum. Lee's ongoing China trip also included meetings with CEOs of BYD and Xiaomi, where discussions focused on Samsung Group's car component business, particularly in automobile semiconductors and panels. Samsung Electronics is already investing heavily in China, with its China-bound exports reaching 65 trillion won in 2024. The company currently operates a NAND memory plant in Xi'an, which accounts for approximately 40 per cent of its total output, and a chip packaging plant in Suzhou. While major new investments in Chinese chip plants are unlikely under the US CHIPS Act, facility upgrades remain possible under a waiver. (Nam Hyun-woo, "Samsung

pushes for rebound through China ties," *Korea Times*, 28 March 2025)

Wildfires in South Korea claim 26 dead and burn 36,009 hectares of land

On 27 March, The Central Disaster and Safety Countermeasures Headquarters reported that the wildfires in South Korea's southeastern region have claimed at least 26 lives and injured 30 people since its onset from 14 March. Authorities estimate that 36,009 hectares have been damaged across 10 regions, with the largest fire in northern North Gyeongsang Province burning about 33,204 hectares. A firefighting helicopter pilot died in a crash while responding to the fires. In total, 37,185 residents have been evacuated, and 325 facilities, including homes, factories, and historic sites like Gounsa Temple, built in 681 AD, have been destroyed. The Korea Forest Service stated that fires in North Gyeongsang Province were 44.3 per cent contained overall, with varying containment rates in different areas. 5 millimeters of rain is expected, though unlikely to impact firefighting efforts. (Yoon Min-sik, "Over 36,000 ha scorched, 26 dead in largest forest fire, drizzle unlikely to help," *The Korea Herald*, 27 March 2025)

North Korea sends an additional 3000 military troops to Russia, informs the South Korean JCS

On 27 March, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) reported that North Korea dispatched at least 3,000 additional soldiers to Russia in January and February, adding to a total of approximately 11,000 soldiers previously sent, with 4,000 casualties. The military noted that North Korea continues to supply missiles, ammunition, and artillery equipment to Russia, including a considerable amount of short-range ballistic missiles, around 220 pieces of 170 mm self-propelled howitzers, and 240 mm rocket launchers. The JCS also stated that North Korea appears to be making technological upgrades to launch another military spy satellite and is closely monitoring possible provocations, including launches of a solid-fuel intercontinental ballistic missile, a hypersonic missile, and a submarine-launched ballistic missile. (Yonhap, "N. Korea presumed to send at least 3000 more troops to Russia: JCS" *The Korea Herald*, 27 March 2025)

TRC reveals past South Korean government's failures in the abuse of overseas adoptions

On 27 March, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) found that past governments are responsible for human rights violations in

overseas adoptions from the 1960s to the 1990s. It noted that this was due to falsified records, legislative gaps, and inadequate oversight. The report was based on complaints from 367 adoptees sent to 11 countries, including Denmark, Norway, the United States, and France. It concluded that the government prioritized intercountry adoption as a cost-effective alternative to domestic child welfare and granted private agencies full authority without proper supervision. The TRC urged the government to formally apologize, provide remedies, and support reunions between adoptees and their birth families. Kim Yoo-ree, a Korean adoptee to France, said: "The Korean government and private adoption agencies are flying high, while victims of illegal adoption are left to crawl. I beg you to put an end to this disgraceful situation." The commission's announcement covered 56 of the 367 cases, with plans to review the remaining cases. (Lee Hyo-jin, "South Korean government blamed for human rights abuses in overseas adoptions," *Korea Times*, 27 March 2025)

Eighteen dead as South Korea faces worst wildfire in its history, says acting President

On 26 March, South Korea's acting President and Prime Minister, Han Duck-soo, announced that they were confronting the worst wildfire in its history. He said: "We are confronting the worst wildfire in our history using all available personnel and equipment, but the situation is not looking good," and urged, "All efforts must be concentrated on wildfire containment for the remaining days of the week." Han reported that 128 helicopters, 1,144 military personnel, 3,135 firefighters, 1,186 fire suppression specialists, and 4,652 public officials have been deployed. Strong winds have hindered containment, allowing the fire to consume 17,000 hectares of forest and destroy 209 homes and factories. At least 18 people have died and 19 injured, with over 20,000 residents evacuated as the blaze, which began in Uiseong-gun, North Gyeongsang Province, spread eastward to several towns and cities. Fire officials reported a containment rate of 68 per cent as of 9 AM on Wednesday, with the affected area spanning about 15,158 hectares. (Lee Si-jin, "South Korea battling worst wildfire in its history: acting president," *The Korea Herald*, 26 March 2025)

South Koreans call for the removal of impeachment of President Yoon Suk Yeol

On 25 March, Korean literary figures, including Nobel laureate Han Kang, called for President Yoon Suk Yeol's removal as the Constitutional Court's impeachment decision was delayed. Han

said: "I believe in the values of life, freedom, and peace, which must never be compromised. Removal is about safeguarding universal values." He, among 414 other prominent authors, each issued a statement. Novelist Jung Bo-ra declared, "I wish to live in a democratic world," while Eun Hee-kyung demanded, "Punish the ringleader of rebellion and build a society of equality," and literary critic Oh Yoon-kyung wrote, "Delayed justice is not justice. Impeach Yoon Suk Yeol immediately." In addition, the Writers Association of Korea, with 2,487 signatures, issued an emergency declaration emphasizing that the delay has intensified societal conflict, threatened economic stability, and damaged Korea's international reputation. The association's secretary-general, Poet Song Kyung-dong, who has been on a hunger strike since March 11, was rushed to the hospital after his health deteriorated. (Park Ga-young, "Han Kang and other writers urge immediate impeachment of President Yoon Suk Yeol," *The Korea Herald*, 25 March 2025)

Samsung co-CEO Han Jong-hee passes away

On 24 March, Samsung Electronics Vice Chairman Han Jong-hee died due to a heart attack at the age of 63. He had held numerous key positions at Samsung including head of the LCD TV Lab, vice chairman, and co-CEO, and in charge of the Device Experience division. He joined Samsung in 1988 rose through the ranks for years, and was appointed as the CEO in 2022. Samsung issued that: "Our deepest condolences are with his family and loved ones during this difficult time." (Jo He-rim, "Samsung CEO Han Jong-hee passes away at 63," *The Korea Herald*, 25 March 2025)

Constitutional Court reinstates impeached Prime Minister Han Duck-soo

On 24 March, Han was immediately reinstated as Prime Minister and acting President, taking over from Finance Minister Choi Sang-mok. The impeachment motion by the National Assembly against Prime Minister Han Duck-soo was dismissed by the Constitutional Court. Five of the eight justices voted against the motion, one voted to uphold it, and two dismissed the case. The impeachment motion was initiated 87 days after the Assembly accused Han of playing a role in President Yoon Suk Yeol's 03 December martial law imposition and other actions, including rejecting nominees for Constitutional Court justices and vetoing a bill to appoint a special counsel. The court found no evidence that Han took active steps to justify martial law, and although his delay in appointing justices

violated certain laws, it did not breach public trust. Han welcomed the ruling, describing it as a “wise decision.” (Anna J. Park, “Constitutional Court rules to reinstate PM in impeachment trial,” *Korea Times*, 24 March 2025)

Wildfires in South Korea damage 6300 hectares of forest, reports Korea Forest Services

On 23 March, the Korea Forest Service reported four people dead and six injured in a series of wildfires in South Korea. Over 9,000 staff and 105 helicopters were deployed to combat the fires. The fires damaged residential buildings and a temple and wiped out about 6,300 hectares of forests. More than 1,500 residents have taken shelter. Acting President Choi Sang-mok said: “I request that the Korea Forest Service pay special attention to securing the safety of personnel in charge of extinguishing wildfires in the air or on the ground,” as he vowed to use all available resources to stop the fires. Three of the four fatalities were firefighters, and one was a public servant. (“At least four people dead in South Korea’s wildfires,” *Reuters*, 23 March 2025)

Violence increases in South Korea due to delay in impeachment verdict, reports *The Korea Herald*

On 21 March, *The Korea Herald* reported an increase in violence and threats as the impeachment verdict for President Yoon Suk Yeol is continually delayed. Violent activities include the self-immolation of a 79-year-old Yoon supporter on 07 March near Seoul City Hall and the egging of opposition lawmaker Rep. Back in Hye-ryun on 20 March in front of the Constitutional Court. Back called the attack on her “an unacceptable act in a democratic society” and promised strong legal action. Opposition leader Rep. Lee Jae-myung criticized acting President Choi Sang-mok for not appointing the ninth justice, while the ruling party accused him of “inciting terrorism.” Professor Park Won-ho urged politicians and citizens to “exercise self-restraint” to avoid worsening societal divisions. (Lee Jung-Joo, “Impeachment ruling delay fuels surge in violent rhetoric, actions,” *The Korea Herald*, 21 March 2025)

North Korea’s Missile Administration launches multiple surface-to-air missiles

On 20 March, the *Korean Central News Agency* reported that North Korea’s Missile Administration test-fired its latest surface-to-air missile system from the western port city of Nampho. North Korea’s leader Kim Jong-un,

oversaw the test alongside key *Korean Central News Agency* members of the party’s Central Military Commission. The test of the mass-produced missile system demonstrated the anti-aircraft missiles combat-fast response as “advantageous” and “highly reliable.” Kim stated that the army will have “another major defense weapons system with laudable combat performance.” South Korea’s military reported in real time the launch of multiple surface-to-air missile launches, which took place before South Korea and the United States announced the completion of their annual springtime Freedom Shield exercise. (Yonhap, “N. Korea successfully test-fired latest anti-aircraft missile system,” *Korea Herald*, 21 March 2025)

Democratic Party of Korea calls for the impeachment of acting President, for holding off the appointment of Justices of the Constitution Court

On 21 March, the main opposition Democratic Party of Korea (DPK) announced an impeachment motion against acting President Choi Sang-mok over his non-appointment of a ninth justice at the Constitutional Court. In late December, Choi appointed two justices but held off on the appointment of opposition-recommended Justice candidate Ma Eun-hyuk, citing the need for a bipartisan consensus. The DPK criticized Choi, noting that the Constitutional Court ruled his non-appointment of the candidate as “unconstitutional” and an infringement on the National Assembly’s rights. The impeachment motion will be submitted to the National Assembly at 2 p.m. The move comes as the court delivers its ruling on Prime Minister Han Duck-soo’s impeachment next Monday. (Yonhap, “Main opposition party to propose impeachment motion against acting President Choi,” *Korea Times*, 21 March 2025)

Russia’s Security Council Secretary to meet with North Korea’s leader Kim Jong-Un

On 21 March, *Tass* reported that Russia’s Security Council Secretary Sergei Shoigu arrived in Pyongyang and will meet with leader Kim Jong-un and other officials. The visit marks another step in growing ties as Pyongyang deploys thousands of troops to support Moscow in its war against Ukraine. Earlier this month, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Andrey Rudenko travelled to Pyongyang and met with North Korean Foreign Minister Choe Son-hui to arrange “political contacts at the high and top levels.” South Korea’s National Security Adviser Shin Won-sik speculated that a reciprocal visit by Kim to Russia could not be ruled out, similar to Putin’s visit in June last year. The visit also

comes amid potential shifts in the Russia-Ukraine war following a phone agreement between Trump and Putin on a temporary halt to strikes on Ukrainian energy infrastructure. (Yonhap, "Russia's top security official arrives in N. Korea for meeting with Kim Jong-un: report," *Korea Times*, 21 March 2025)

South Korean court reviews arrest warrant of detainees for attempted obstruction of investigation on Yoon

On 21 March, a Seoul Western District court reviewed arrest warrants for two Presidential Security Service (PSS) officials accused of obstructing investigators' attempt to detain President Yoon Suk Yeol on 03 January. Acting PSS chief Kim Seong-hoon and the chief of the PSS's bodyguard division Lee Kwang-woo, are accused of obstructing the execution of an arrest warrant for Yoon, taking unjust personnel measures against disobedient PSS officials, and instructing subordinates to delete records of phone conversations between Yoon and military commanders involved in his 03 December martial law declaration. Kim said: "I was taught and trained that the highest honor for a security guard is to dedicate my life to the president's safety." The prosecution filed the warrants after a warrant review panel sided with the police's repeated requests. (Yonhap, "Court reviews arrest warrants for 2 presidential security officials," *Korea Times*, 21 March 2025)

Parties agree on pension reform plans

On 20 March, the ruling People Power Party (PPP) and the main opposition Democratic Party of Korea (DPK) agreed to reform the nation's ailing pension system. The agreement was signed by floor leaders from the PPP Representative Kweon Seong-dong and the DPK Park Chan-dae. Their joint statement stated that the pension contribution rate is set at 13 percent and the nominal income replacement rate at 43 percent. The agreement followed a meeting arranged by National Assembly Speaker Woo Won-shik and comes after lawmakers and Health Minister Cho Kyoo-hong agreed on pending issues the previous day. The reform is aimed at addressing concerns that the younger generation may not receive pension benefits, as the current system is projected to go into deficit in 2041 and run out in 2055. (Yonhap, "Rival parties set for last-minute negotiations on pension reform plans," *Korea Times*, 20 March 2025)

South Korea's overall debt reaches USD 4.27 trillion, reports Bank for International Settlements

On 19 March, the Bank for International Settlements revealed that the combined debt of the government, companies, and households in South Korea reached USD 4.27 trillion at the end of the third quarter. According to the data, this figure marks a 4.1 per cent increase from a year earlier and a 0.9 per cent rise from the previous quarter, amounting to 247.2 percent of nominal GDP. Of the total debt, corporate debt reached 2,798 trillion won, up 2.9 percent on-year, household borrowing grew 2.1 percent on-year to 2,283 trillion won, and government debt surged 11.8 percent on-year to 1,141 trillion won. (Yonhap, "S. Korea's total debt hits record high of over W6,200tr," *Korea Times*, 20 March 2025)

Acting South Korean President urges the US to remove 'sensitive country' designation

On 18 March, Acting President Choi Sang-mok urged his government to get an exclusion from the US "sensitive country" list in the energy sector. The designation was listed by the US Department of Energy (DOE) and could weaken bilateral ties and reveal a lack of diplomatic coordination. Industry Minister Ahn Duk-Geun is expected to visit the US Energy Secretary Chris Wright to discuss the removal. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is working to ensure the listing does not affect cooperation in science and technology. The DOE linked the designation to a security breach at the Idaho National Laboratory and broader security concerns. US Charge d'Affaires Joseph Yun downplayed implications for bilateral cooperation and stated he was unaware of the situation until recently. (Lee Hyo-jin, "South Korean government goes all out to overturn US 'sensitive country' designation," *The Korea Times*, 18 March 2025)

UN report reveals 46 per cent of North Korea's population undernourished

On 18 March, a report presented to the UN Human Rights Council revealed nearly 46 per cent of North Koreans are undernourished. The report by UN special rapporteur for North Korean human rights Elizabeth Salmon showed 11.8 million people suffering from undernourishment between 2020 and 2022. The UN defines undernourishment as habitual food consumption that is "insufficient to provide the dietary energy levels that are required to maintain a normal active and healthy life." The report noted that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) faces chronic food insecurity due to "old infrastructure, capacity gaps in technology and skills, natural disasters, and a lack of investment." The government has shifted from accommodating "jangmadang" or

local markets to reasserting control over food distribution by restricting private commercial activities. In addition, inadequate hygiene and sanitation, a drop in national immunization from over 96 per cent to below 42 per cent, and challenges in vaccinating children and pregnant women are exacerbating the crisis. (Kwak Yeonsoo, "46% of North Koreans undernourished, UN report says," *The Korea Times*, 18 March 2025)

Korean conglomerate Hanwha to invest in Australian subsidiary

On 18 March, a Korean conglomerate Hanwha announced plans to invest USD 232.9 million to boost its global market position in its Australian subsidiary, HAA No. 1 PTY LTD. This investment includes 202.7 billion won from Hanwha Systems and 64.2 billion won from Hanwha Aerospace and is aimed at expanding into Australia and the United States. The move comes after Hanwha expressed interest in acquiring Australian shipbuilder Austal after a previous purchase effort failed last year. The acquisition would be consistent with Hanwha's objective of securing warship contracts and providing maintenance, repair, and overhaul services globally. (Yonhap, "Hanwha to invest \$233 mil. in Australian subsidiary, eyeing Austal acquisition," *The Korea Times*, 18 March 2025)

President Yoon urged to accept the verdict on impeachment, says *The Korea Times*

On 17 March, *The Korea Times* reports a public outcry for Yoon to publicly pledge that he will accept the Constitutional Court's impeachment verdict to prevent potential unrest. Yoon, who was recently released from 52 days of detention over his imposition of martial law, remained silent on whether he would honor the court's decision. Political experts argue that Yoon's acceptance of the ruling is critical to maintaining constitutional principles and averting violent protests from both supporters and opponents. A political science professor at Incheon National University Lee Joon-han said: "As the head of state, he must uphold constitutional principles, which he vowed to do when he took office. The president should announce that he will accept the court's decision, or risk plunging the nation into deeper turmoil." A recent poll conducted by Embrain Public, K-Stat Research, Korea Research, and Hankook Research shows 42 per cent of respondents are unwilling to accept a court decision that differs from their views. While ruling party leaders and Yoon's legal team have expressed willingness to respect the ruling, Yoon himself has only promised political reform if reinstated. (Lee Hyo-jin, "Yoon urged to

promise to accept impeachment ruling," *The Korea Times*, 17 March 2025)

Opposition Democratic Party of Korea gains more approval rating of 44 per cent, reports Realmeter

On 17 March, a Realmeter poll showed the main opposition, the Democratic Party of Korea (DPK), had a 44.3 per cent approval rating. DPK's rating surpassed the ruling People Power Party, which fell to 39 per cent. The survey was conducted among 1,510 adults with a 2.5 per cent margin of error, found that 55.5 per cent support a DPK-led administration change, and a 40 per cent favor maintaining conservative rule. A snap presidential election is to be held within 60 days, if the Constitutional Court upholds President Yoon Suk Yeol's impeachment over his failed martial law bid in December. (Yonhap, "Approval rating for main opposition party rises to 44.3% ahead of Yoon's impeachment ruling," *Korea Times*, 17 March 2025)

South Korea seeks to maintain US Energy Cooperation, says acting President

On 17 March, Acting President Choi Sang-mok instructed the government to engage with the US to prevent negative impacts on energy cooperation. This decision was taken after the Biden administration designated Korea as a "sensitive" country in January. The designation followed President Yoon Suk Yeol's brief imposition of martial law in December amid nuclear weapons discussions. Choi directed agencies to explain the situation to the US and ordered the industry minister to meet his US counterpart this week for consultations. The DOE confirmed Korea's addition to the lowest category of its sensitive country list. (Yonhap, "Choi urges efforts to prevent fallout from US designation of Korea as 'sensitive' country," *Korea Times*, 17 March 2025)

South Korea's chips sales to China plunges by 31.8 per cent

On 17 March, *SCMP* reported that South Korea's Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy informed that their chip sales fell from 31.8 per cent since last year. South Korea's semiconductor export to China saw a decline last month, parallel to the imposed tariffs on tech sales to China. This plunge is said to have been affected by the tariffs. SK Hynix and Samsung are the biggest memory Chip makers that also operate through plants in China. China used to receive two/fifth of the sales, but this has reduced exponentially. The Minister noted that this decline is owed to lower prices on conventional chips, and technological

transition. ("South Korea semiconductor exports to China sink as US tightens tech restrictions," *SCMP*, 17 March 2025)

South Korea's acting President warns against civic unrest over former president's impeachment ruling

On 11 March, South Korea's acting President, Choi Sang-mok, informed that they have zero tolerance for any act of violence. This comes as the constitutional court is set to deliver a verdict on the impeachment of President Yoon Suk Yeol. Choi said: "The government will guarantee the right to hold lawful and peaceful rallies to the fullest extent." He also said: "However, any illegal or violent demonstrations, as well as any challenges to public authority, will be dealt with strictly by the law, without exception." Choi asked the public to uphold civic consciousness and the status of the nation, as the international community closely monitors it. South Korean police also informed that they will gather all resources to curb concerns of unrest. ("Acting president vows 'zero tolerance' for any violence amid imminent ruling on Yoon's impeachment," *The Korea Times*, 11 March 2025)

South Korea's women demand greater equality and inclusion from the next government after Yoon

On 08 March, the *Korea Times* reported that a 34-year-old office worker, Park, is awaiting the Constitutional Court's final verdict on President Yoon Suk Yeol's impeachment. She explained she had been attending almost all impeachment rallies. She complained that it was doubtful whether any presidential candidate in a possible upcoming early election this spring would truly represent her interests. A university student, Song, expressed similar concerns to those of Park. She had also led a campus protest last week in support of impeaching the president. Both women worried about the alarming rate of violence and discrimination against women in their daily lives, which sharply contradicts Yoon's claims that structural gender discrimination no longer existed in the country. Park, Song, and several speakers at the impeachment rallies shared their expectations that the next government will build a society where social minorities, including women, can live safely and freely without facing discrimination. To achieve this, they added that a comprehensive anti-discrimination law, which Korean politicians have ignored for over a decade, needs to be implemented. A professor of cultural anthropology at Yonsei University Kim Hyun-mee, said, "The new government should set gender equality and gender justice in its

agenda for Korean society after impeachment, knowing who acted to develop democracy in Korea," Park also commented that, "We will criticize and monitor whether they properly reflect women's voices in the presidential election after the impeachment verdict, We will exercise our rights to vote properly." (Lee Hae-rin, "Korean women demand greater equality, inclusion as post-Yoon Suk Yeol era looms," *Korea Times*, 08 March 2025)

South Korean accidental fighter jet bombing of civilians affected migrant workers the most

On 07 March, two South Korean KF-16 fighter jets mistakenly dropped eight MK-82 bombs on a civilian area in Pocheon, injuring 15 civilians and 14 soldiers, including 6 migrant workers. The bombs were dropped during a live-fire drill conducted by South Korean and U.S. forces for their annual Freedom Shield exercise. Son Joy, a Bangladeshi worker living a 20-minute walk from the affected village, expressed concern for migrant workers, many of whom are from the Philippines, Bangladesh, and Myanmar. He worried about the lack of compensation for injured workers. Rev. Kim Dal-sung, head of the Migrant Workers Center in Pocheon, demanded an end to military training in or near areas where foreigners live, along with a thorough investigation and proper compensation. The incident also shocked the Royal Thai Embassy in Seoul after four Thai nationals were injured, prompting the Thai Ambassador to plan a visit to an injured victim. The residents also reported significant property damage and disturbances in their daily farming practices. They also expressed concern for the migrant workers who worked on their farms and were essential. (Kwak Yeon-soo, "Migrant workers reel from accidental airstrike northeast of Seoul", *Korea Times*, 07 March 2025)

South Korea and US to formulate a North Korea policy

On 06 March, South Korean National Security Advisor (NSA) Shin Won-sik remarked that South Korea and the US would coordinate the formulation and implementation of North Korea Policy. His comments come after he meets with US National Security Advisor Mike Waltz. They also reaffirmed their shared goal of the "complete denuclearisation of North Korea." The two agreed to promote bilateral cooperation in the shipbuilding industry and bring peace and stability to the Korean peninsula and the broader Indo-Pacific region. They concurred to strengthen "extended deterrence" to deter North Korean nuclear threats. (Yonhap, "S.

Korea, US agree to closely coordinate on NK policy formulation, implementation: senior Seoul official," The Korea Times, 07 March 2025)

Polish President seeks to buy K2 tank from South Korea

On 07 March, the South Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported that Polish President Andrzej Duda expressed hope for progress in finalising a contract with South Korea to buy K2 battle tanks. On 06 March, the Korean Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul met with Duda as part of a courtesy call in Warsaw. The two countries signed a USD 12.4 billion agreement in July 2022, where South Korea was to supply K2 tanks, K9 self-propelled howitzers, FA-50 light attack aircraft, and Chunmoo multiple rocket launchers. During Cho's visit, he also met Polish Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Wladyslaw Kosiniak-Kamysz. Both countries hoped to foster mutually beneficial defense cooperation. (Yonhap, "Polish president voices hope for swift progress in K2 tank deal with Korea: Seoul," The Korea Times, 07 March 2025)

Seven people were injured in an accidental bombing by fighter jets in South Korea

On 06 March, seven people were injured when two Air Force KF-16 fighter jets accidentally dropped eight bombs during live-fire drills in Pocheon. The bombs were "abnormally" released outside a training range, injuring seven individuals with minor injuries and two seriously, and caused damage to a church, six buildings, and a cargo vehicle. The Air Force apologised and promised compensation. They launched an investigation led by Vice Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Park Ki-wan. Earlier in the day, South Korea and the United States conducted joint live-fire drills near the inter-Korean border in a show of force against North Korean threats. (Yonhap, "7 injured after KF-16 fighter jets accidentally drop bombs outside training range," The Korea Times, 06 March 2025)

Captured NK soldier reveals mock-ups of South Korean facilities in Pyongyang training camps

On 06 March, a captured North Korean soldier, identified by his surname Ri, revealed that North Korea's training camps included mockups of South Korean facilities and buildings. According to Rep. of the People Power Party Yu Yong-weon, Ri described that the Armed Forces Training Ground in Koksan Country was designed to simulate raids on South Korea. The buildings were modeled after Seoul's Jongno

District, Busan, Daegu, Jeonju, and Jeju Island. Yu added that while similar facilities have been noted before, replicating Jeju Island is a new revelation, and such sites exist in multiple locations. In response to a question, Yu said, "The training camps can be seen as training in preparation for contingencies." Another captured soldier stated he was simply following orders to "help Russia" as they were allies. (Yonhap, "Captured NK soldier says mockups of Seoul, Jeju facilities in North's training camps," The Korea Times, 06 March 2025)

South Korea's National Security Adviser expects "good" outcome from tariff talks with the US

On 06 March, South Korea's National Security Adviser, Shin Won-sik, anticipated a "good" outcome from consultations with US officials over tariffs and other trade issues. The talks covered security, economy, shipbuilding, and other areas. This came after Trump claimed that South Korea's tariffs are four times higher than those of the US. Shin noted that discussions on stationing costs for the 28,500 US troops in Korea have not yet taken place. North Korea, South Korea, and Japan's potential participation in the Alaskan natural gas pipeline project are on the agenda. (Yonhap, "Top S. Korean official expects 'good' outcome from tariff talks between Seoul, Washington," The Korea Times, 06 March 2025)

PMI rating shows decline in South Korean factory activity

On 04 March, S&P Global released a Purchasing Managers Index (PMI) for manufacturers in South Korea, which reported a decline in factory activity due to uncertainty over economic conditions domestically and overseas. Economist at S&P Global Market Intelligence Usamah Bhatti said, "Another muted month of data provides evidence that domestic industrial activity remained subdued midway through the first quarter." The survey showed output and new orders rose marginally in February, and new export orders also rose mildly with sub-indexes at 50.5 and 50.1, respectively per cent. Employment and stock input prices fell in the last four months. (Jihoon Lee, "S.Korea factory activity shrinks as demand concerns weigh, PMI shows," Taiwan News, 04 March 2025)

South Korea's acting President calls for "national unity" on the 106th anniversary of the Independence movement

On 01 March, South Korea's acting President, Choi, in a ceremony commemorating the 106th anniversary of the March 1 Independence

Movement, called for “greater national unity.” His remark came amid the deepening division with South Korea risking the nation's stability. He pointed out ideological disputes, generational tensions, regional disparities, and economic inequalities as core challenges undermining South Korea's unity. Choi said, “To overcome the current crisis and establish a nation future generation can proudly inherit, restoring national cohesion must be our top priority.” He also called for increasing relations with Japan given the rapidly changing and unstable international realm. (Yonhap, “Acting President Choi emphasizes 'national unity' amid deepening political, ideological division,” *The Korea Herald*, 01 March 2025)

North Korea launches Strategic Cruise Missile, reports KCNA

On 28 October, Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported that a missile unit of the Korean People's Army test-fired strategic cruise missiles in its west coast. The test was supervised by North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, and he was accompanied by a member of the Central Military Commission of the Workers' Party of North Korea, Kim Jong-sik, and director of the Missile General Bureau Jang Chang-ha. The missiles reportedly precisely hit their targets after travelling a distance of 1587 kilometers in 7,961 to 7,973 seconds. Kim said: “What is guaranteed by powerful striking ability is the most perfect deterrence and defense capacity.” The Joint Chiefs of Staff of South Korea and South Korea's military responded, claiming it had detected these tests beforehand and it was closely monitoring various North Korean activities. A senior researcher at the Korea Institute for National Unification, Hong Min, said, “It's a counteraction message against the North Korea policy that has been taking shape under the Trump administration,” This launch took place ahead of a springtime military exercise between South Korea and the United States, named Freedom Shield. (Jung Min-Kyung, “North Korea fires strategic cruise missiles from its west coast this week,” *The Korea Herald*, 28 February 2025)

JAPAN READER

A megaquake in the Nankai Trough projects 298,000 deaths

On 01 April, a revised estimate by Japan's earthquake task force projected up to 298,000 deaths in a potential megaquake in the Nankai Trough, about a 10 per cent reduction from the 2012 estimate. The report forecasts 12.3 million evacuees, up from 9.5 million, and significant damage in 764 municipalities across 31

prefectures, with tsunami waves of at least 3 meters and seismic shaking at a lower 6. Economic losses could reach up to 270 trillion yen, and up to 2.35 million buildings might be destroyed. It estimates 215,000 deaths could result from tsunamis if only 20 per cent evacuate immediately, and increasing evacuation to 70 per cent could lower that toll to 94,000. Additionally, 26,000–52,000 disaster-related deaths are projected. The government plans to revise its disaster prevention plan and develop a national resilience plan for fiscal 2026–2030, with a new disaster prevention agency to be established in fiscal year 2026. (“Gov't estimates up to 298,000 could die in Nankai Trough megaquake,” *Japan Today*, 01 April 2025)

Japan's Fair Trade Commission subjects Apple and Google to IT regulation and competition law

On 31 March, Japan's Fair-Trade Commission announced that Google and Apple will be subject to the Act on Promotion of Competition for Specified Smartphone Software. This act is aimed at regulating IT giants and enhancing competition in the app market. Enacted in June last year, the law targets firms with over 40 million monthly users per category and prohibits restricting alternatives in app stores and search engines. The Fair Trade Commission announced that Apple, its subsidiary, iTunes, and Google will face restrictions in the app store sector, preventing them from blocking alternative stores and in-store payment systems. Google will also be restricted in search engines, prohibiting it from prioritizing its services in search results without justification. The commission will release guidelines before the law takes effect by December 2025. (“Japan subjects Google, Apple to new smartphone apps law,” *NHK world*, 01 April 2025)

Osaka holds World Exposition to boost Japan's consumption, reports *Japan Today*

On 31 March, *Japan Today* reported that, according to the Resona Research Institute, the World Exposition in Osaka, running from April 13 to October 13, could boost Japan's consumption by 1 trillion yen. Of the 28.2 million visitors expected, 3.5 million will be from abroad, and are projected to spend approximately 293 billion yen on transportation, hotels, and other expenses. The Japan Association for the 2025 World Exposition estimates that per-person spending by overseas visitors will exceed that of Japanese attendees, benefiting Osaka's shopping, dining, nightlife, and nearby tourist destinations such as Kyoto

and Nara. However, a surge in hotel demand, exacerbated by the need to accommodate expo security and management staff, may tighten room availability. Experts recommend promoting hotels in neighboring prefectures and 'minpaku' private lodging to accommodate an estimated 360,000 foreign visitors, as shortages or high prices could reduce the expo's economic impact. ("Osaka Expo to boost consumption by ¥1 trillion: think tank," *Japan Today*, 31 March 2025)

Japan's Prime Minister Ishiba criticizes Trump's tariff policy

On 29 March, Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba criticised Trump's views on tariffs, and that they were "difficult to understand" after the US president announced 25 per cent levies on imported cars and parts. The tariffs, scheduled for next week, have already sent Japanese auto shares down, with Toyota, Honda, and Nissan all experiencing steep losses. Trump said: "Friend has been oftentimes been much worse than foe," adding that America's trade partners were "taking our jobs, taking our wealth." Canada's Prime Minister Mark Carney declared the era of deep bilateral relations "over." Ishiba warned that the impact on the Japanese economy would be "extremely significant" and noted that one in 10 Japanese jobs are tied to the automotive industry. Government spokesman Yoshimasa Hayashi stated that these measures could significantly affect the economic relationship between Japan and the US, the global economy, and the multilateral trading system. Meanwhile, trade officials from South Korea, Japan, and China are set to meet in Seoul to discuss economic cooperation. ("Ishiba says Trump's tariff views hard to understand," *Japan Today*, 29 March 2025)

US-Japan-Philippines conduct joint naval drills in the South China Sea

On 28 March, the US, Japan, and the Philippines conducted joint naval drills at the Scarborough Shoal in the South China Sea as part of the "Multilateral Maritime Cooperative Activity." According to Philippine Navy Commander Irvin Ian Robles, a Chinese frigate attempted to approach the area but was warned off by a Philippine frigate via radio. The drills involved the BRP Jose Rizal, the US Navy guided-missile destroyer DDG Shoup, and the Japanese multi-mission frigate JS Noshiro, with US and Philippine helicopters and a speedboat used for inter-vessel discussions. US Navy Lt. Alexander Horvath stated, "We are here to support our allies and support a free and open Indo-Pacific for everyone." Armed Forces of the Philippines

Chief of Staff Gen. Romeo Brawner Jr. noted the exercises improved coordination, tactics, and maritime awareness, reinforcing allied security cooperation against Chinese assertiveness in the disputed sea. (Aaron Favila, "U.S., Japan, Philippines stage navy drills in disputed South China Sea as Chinese ship keeps watch," *Japan Today*, 29 March 2025)

Japan's 900 hectares of land burned in wildfire

On 27 March, the *Japan Times* reported that wildfires that began on Sunday in Ehime and Okayama prefectures have burned through over 900 hectares of land. In Ehime city of Imabari, 417 hectares had been burned as of Wednesday afternoon, while the fire in the city of Okayama swept through 559 hectares. The Ehime Prefectural Government designated Imabari and its neighboring Saijo as eligible for aid under the disaster relief law. Evacuation orders were issued for 3,848 households in Imabari and 1,091 households in Okayama and the neighboring city of Tamano. Although the city of Okayama lifted its evacuation order on Monday evening, it reissued the order on Tuesday night due to a lingering blaze. At Mount Kasamatsu in Ehime, a resident noted that the area destroyed this time was larger than that of a wildfire in 2008. In Imabari, several buildings, including a factory owned by a local home construction company, were destroyed. One local relative said: "It was too late when I came," adding that the local fire department did not expect the fire to spread. (Jiji, "Over 900 hectares destroyed in Ehime and Okayama wildfires," *Japan Times*, 27 March 2025)

Japan-Brazil signs action plan to deepen cooperation for the next five years

On 27 March, Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and Japan's Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba signed an action plan to boost cooperation across security, economy, trade, and climate change for the next five years. Lula stressed the importance of free trade, multilateralism, and defending democracy amid rising protectionism and global tensions. He noted that now is a perfect time to reactivate their strategic partnership. Ishiba emphasized that it is "indispensable for Japan to cooperate with Brazil as partners" to lead international society toward harmony. The two leaders acknowledged the impact of U.S. tariff threats, with both Brazil and Japan facing a 25 per cent duty. A 100-member Brazilian business delegation met with Japanese counterparts, and the two sides agreed to 80 public and commercial projects, including elevating

economic cooperation with Mercosur to a strategic partnership. (Mari Yamaguchi, "Leaders of Brazil and Japan stress importance of multilateralism and agree to strengthen ties," *Japan Today*, 27 March 2025)

Japan admits injured Palestinian woman from Gaza for medical treatment

On 26 March, the Foreign Ministry of Japan admitted one female Palestinian injured in the Gaza conflict to a Self-Defense Forces hospital in Tokyo, with plans to accept a second patient in the coming days. This is the first time Japan has treated patients from Gaza since the war between Israel and Hamas began in October 2023. The first patient, who was previously treated in Egypt, was transferred to Japan after an arrangement between the governments of Japan and Egypt at the request of the World Health Organization. Defense Minister Gen Nakatani stated that both patients are expected to return to Gaza after receiving medical care and that the government will continue to assist with humanitarian needs and long-term reconstruction in the region. (Francis Tang and Himari Semans, "Japan takes in Palestinian woman injured in Gaza war for treatment," *Japan Times*, 26 March 2025)

Japan's Tokyo District Court orders dissolution of Unification Church

On 25 March, the Tokyo District Court ordered the dissolution of the Unification Church in Japan following a government request by Japan's Education Ministry in 2023. In its request, the ministry cited manipulative fundraising and recruitment tactics that harmed followers and their families. The dissolution order will revoke the church's legal status and tax-exempt privileges and require the liquidation of its assets. The court ruled that the church's problems were extensive and continuous and that it was unlikely to voluntarily reform. In response, the church, which is South Korea-based and officially known as the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification, stated that it was considering an immediate appeal. Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi confirmed that the government will continue efforts to support victims, while the church criticized the decision as a threat to religious freedom. (Mari Hamaguchi, "Court orders dissolution of Unification Church in Japan," *Japan Today*, 26 March 2025)

Japan establishes a permanent Joint Operations Command for integrated SDF command

On 24 March, Japan formally established a permanent Joint Operations Command (JOC) by the Defense Ministry in Tokyo. The new command will centrally oversee the three branches of the Self-Defense Forces (SDF), enabling smoother integration of operations across domains to prepare for and respond to possible emergencies, including over democratic Taiwan. JJOC is staffed by 240 personnel and is headed by Gen. Kenichiro Nagumo, previously vice chief of staff for the SDF's Joint Staff Office. Nagumo will command the Ground Component Command, the Self-Defense Fleet, the Air Defense Command, the Cyber Defense Command, and the Space Operations Group, and is expected to serve as a counterpart to the head of the US military's Indo-Pacific Command while coordinating with an upgraded US Forces Japan. (Jesse Johnson, "Japan launches new Joint Operations Command to unify SDF branches," *Japan Times*, 24 March 2025)

Wildfires continue to spread in Okayama and Ehime

On 24 March, Local governments ordered 2,800 residents to evacuate as wildfires in Okayama and Ehime prefectures continued to spread despite overnight firefighting efforts. Ground Self-Defense Force helicopters were deployed at the request of the local governments. On 23 March, a fire that broke out in Okayama burned 250 hectares across Okayama and Tamano. As of 7 AM Monday, a blaze in Ehime engulfed 119 hectares in Imabari. Several houses in Okayama have been destroyed, although no injuries have been reported. Both areas remain on high alert as authorities continue to monitor the situation. (Matsuyama, "Wildfires spread in western Japan; SDF joins firefighting efforts," *Japan Today*, 24 March 2025)

Chinese Coast Guard ship stays in Japanese territorial waters for a record time

On 21 March, the Japanese Coast Guard (JCG) reported that Chinese Coast Guard (CCG) vessels entered Japanese territorial waters off the Senkaku Islands in Okinawa Prefecture. Their continuous stay surpassed the previous record of 80 hours and 36 minutes. The JCG's 11th regional headquarters in Naha reported that two vessels entered on Friday and two more entered on Saturday, with two vessels remaining on Monday as of just after 10:30 AM. The record was set after the nationalization of the islands in 2012. Two of the vessels were equipped with naval guns. (The Yomiuri Shimbun, "Chinese Ships Stay in Japanese Territorial Waters for Record Time," *Japan News*, 24 March 2025)

Bank of Japan data reveals household assets grew by 4.0 per cent in 2024

On 21 March, the Bank of Japan (BOJ) revealed that household assets in Japan totalled 2,230 trillion yen at the end of December, growing 4.0 per cent from a year earlier. Assets boosted by investment trusts jumped 27.4 per cent to 136 trillion yen after the revamp of Japan's tax-free investment program. Stockholdings rose 9.5 per cent to 298 trillion yen, while cash and deposits increased 0.6 per cent to 1,134 trillion yen. However, cash declined 3.4 per cent to 105 trillion yen amid higher prices and more cashless payments. The proportion of Japanese government bonds held by the BOJ fell to 52.05 per cent from 52.64 per cent at the end of September. The central bank, which held 559 trillion yen worth of bonds at the end of December, has been reducing its purchases in a shift away from a decade of ultra-easy monetary policy. ("Japan household assets total ¥2,230 trillion at end of December on rising stocks," *Japan Today*, 22 March 2025)

Online hate targets Japan's Kurdish community, reports *Japan Today*

On 22 March, *Japan Today* reported that Ethnic Kurds in Japan face increasing daily online hate and unwanted photography. Around 2,000 to 3,000 Kurds live in cities like Kawaguchi and Warabi in southern Saitama Prefecture. Kurds who have settled in the region since the 1990s work in the demolition industry, doing jobs not preferred by native Japanese. A Kurdish family's gathering was disrupted when a visitor's camera was turned towards them, reminding them of past experiences of being photographed without consent. Online posts have accused Kurds of alleged crimes and of being "fake refugees," though official figures show Turkish nationals, including Kurds, account for only 5.9 per cent of foreign arrests in Saitama. Mamo, a 35-year-old Kurdish businessman, said, "Hate speech has just become part of life, we're used to it now." To support their youth, the community established FC Kurd, a soccer team for about 60 school kids. Their coach Metin, a 51-year-old former professional footballer, emphasized the team's role in offering hope. The head of the Japan Kurdish Cultural Association Vakkas Colak, called for legislation to eliminate discrimination and disinformation, and for Japan to make top-down changes. Cloak noted that the issue of online hatred toward Kurds is a symptom of a wider societal ill in Japan. (Kawaguchi, "Hate speech bringing unwanted focus on Japan's Kurdish community," *Japan Today*, 22 March 2025)

Russians queue to visit Japan, says *Japan Times*

On 21 March, the *Japan Times* reported that hundreds of Russians queued at the Japanese embassy in Moscow to obtain free visas. Most of Europe has banned direct flights to Russia, leaving Russians to explore new holiday destinations, taking advantage of a strengthening rouble, rising real wages, and lower prices. According to the Vice President of the Russian Union of the Tourism Industry Dmitry Gorin, the number of Russians visiting Japan is set to double from 100,000 in 2024. The visa process now takes only four to five days, with return tickets starting from around USD 477.64. The simpler process and affordable flights have attracted many, leading to long queues at the embassy. (Lev Sergeev and Dmitriy Turlyun, "Cherry blossoms, free visas, and stronger ruble see Russians flock to Japan," *Japan Times*, 21 March 2025)

North Korea warns Japan against deployment of long-range missiles in Kyushu

On 20 March, the *Korean Central News Agency* (KCNA) reported that North Korea warned Japan against its recent deployment of long-range missiles in the Kyushu region. *Kyodo News* reported that Japan deployed these missiles to acquire "counterstrike capabilities" for emergencies. Pyongyang accused Tokyo of a history of aggression through the continuous strengthening of the Japan-U.S. military alliance and collusion with NATO forces. The KCNA said: "All military means and various forms of movement directly targeting North Korea are an object to be wiped out." North Korean leader Kim Jong Un also warned last month that trilateral military cooperation among the United States, Japan, and South Korea was raising regional tensions and vowed countermeasures, including further nuclear development. ("North Korea warns Japan against deploying long-range missiles in Kyushu," *Japan Today*, 21 March 2025)

Japan's Former Prime Minister caught under gift voucher scandal

On 19 March, party sources revealed that Former Prime Minister Fumio Kishida gave gift vouchers to lawmakers in the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) while in office. Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba has also been criticised for distributing gift certificates worth 100,000 yen each to rookie LDP lawmakers. The office of former PM Yoshihide Suga also confirmed that he gave gifts to LDP lawmakers, while the office of former PM Taro Aso stated that he never

distributed gift vouchers. LDP officials also confirmed that the late former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe gave away gift certificates. Constitutional Democratic Party leader Yoshihiko Noda described it as “a structurally deep-rooted problem.” Sources noted that during Kishida’s tenure, LDP lawmakers were invited to meetings at the prime minister’s official residence as they became parliamentary vice ministers or state ministers, where staff prepared paper bags containing sweets and gift certificates. Kishida justified these practices as being conducted in accordance with laws and regulations. (Jiji, “Kishida among several ex-PMs who gave gift vouchers to LDP lawmakers,” *Japan Today*, 20 March 2025)

Kyoto Family Court dismisses gender change petition in the family register

On 20 March, The Kyoto Family Court dismissed a petition by a married person to have their gender designation changed in the family register. Under the gender dysphoria special law being unmarried is one of the five requirements for changing one’s gender. Presiding judge Akiko Nakamura said: “It cannot be said outright that (the law provision) violates the Constitution and is invalid.” The petitioner, aged between 50 and 59, was born a man and diagnosed with gender dysphoria in 2015 after getting married. The petitioner discussed the matter with the petitioner’s wife before marriage and currently lives as a woman. The petitioner claimed that the law provision forces a choice of divorce or continuing marriage while accepting disadvantages. The petitioner has appealed the ruling, stating, “We will continue to fight.” (Jiji, “Kyoto court rejects married person’s petition for gender-designation change,” *Japan Times*, 20 March 2025)

Japan’s Prime Minister introduces “Tourism Nation Promotion Basic Plan”

On 29 March, Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba instructed his Cabinet at the Ministerial Council on the Promotion of Japan as a Tourism-Oriented Country to finalize a national tourism plan for fiscal 2026-2030 by March next year. The “Tourism Nation Promotion Basic Plan” aims to increase foreign visitors to Japan to 60 million and consumption to 15 trillion Yen in 2030. At the meeting, officials reported that last year about 37 million foreign visitors came to Japan and consumption totalled about 8.1 trillion Yen. Ishiba proposed improvements be made to the attractiveness of local regions, accelerate the introduction of the Japanese version of the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA), and prevent overtourism.

(“PM Ishiba orders finalisation of national tourism plan; 60 million visitors to Japan targeted for 2030,” *Asia News*, 20 March 2025)

Women are underrepresented in Japan’s news media, reports Reuters Institute survey

On 20 March, a Reuters Institute survey found that women remain underrepresented in the Japanese news media industry. Japan’s traditional workstyle values employees willing to work long hours, hindering reforms to working styles and reducing career opportunities for female journalists. The survey found that in Japan none of the surveyed news outlets had a female top editor in the five years through 2024, compared with 43 per cent in the United States and 40 per cent in Britain. Female executives accounted for over 10 per cent of all executives at listed companies, but only 5.7 per cent at national and local newspapers and 3.0 per cent at commercial television stations. Journalists have described experiences such as senior colleagues being reassigned to desk jobs after getting pregnant and facing harassment. Media leaders like Mariko Shibatani and Kazue Yonamine are working to create a more diverse and comfortable work environment, believing that having editorial and news bureaus with diverse perspectives will lead to more sincere discussions of social problems. (Jiji, “Women remain underrepresented in Japan’s news industry,” *Japan Times*, 20 March 2025)

China-South Korea-Japan trilateral diplomatic meeting to be held in Tokyo

On 18 March, China, South Korea, and Japan announced a trilateral meeting between top diplomats in Tokyo will take place to discuss future-oriented cooperation and the regional climate. Foreign Minister Takeshi Iwaya will meet his South Korean counterpart Cho Tae-yul, and China’s Wang Yi, before the talks. The discussions will cover people-to-people exchanges, economic cooperation, measures to combat the falling birthrate, and arranging a trilateral summit by the end of the year. Additionally, Japan and China will hold their first “high-level economic dialogue” in six years and address the issue of fishery products imports. The trilateral meeting is expected to prioritize economic issues in light of recent US protectionist measures. (Jiji, “Japan, China, and South Korea’s top diplomats to meet in Tokyo,” *Japan Times*, 19 March 2025)

Bank of Japan keeps currency rates unchanged amid rising inflation, reports Japan Times

On 19 March, the *Japan Times* reported that

Bank of Japan kept rates unchanged at 0.5 per cent to prioritize threats to growth over the dangers of inflation. “Standing pat” was expected, as economists saw back-to-back rate increases as unlikely given the uncertainty in the global economy. Concerns centered on the rout in the Japanese bond market, with long-dated security yields spiking. The two-day policy board meeting resulted in increased rates by 25 basis points to 0.5 per cent, the highest levels since 2008. The spring offensive wages increased to 5.46 per cent from 5.28 per cent last year. US duties on steel, aluminum, and potentially auto imports, along with broader global instability, further complicate the economic outlook. (Kazuaki Nagata, “Bank of Japan holds steady at 0.5% as trade war escalates, inflation rises,” *Japan Times*, 19 March 2025)

Japan to deploy long-range missiles in Kyushu, East China Sea as Taiwan strait tensions rise

On 18 March, *Kyodo* reported that Japan plans to deploy long-range missiles on its southwestern island of Kyushu near the East China Sea. This move is done to strengthen “counterstrike capabilities” in the event of an emergency amid growing fears of conflict in the Taiwan Strait. The deployment is likely to begin at the end of March next year. Assessment of possible deployment sites in Kyushu is underway, with the Japanese ground defence force’s surface-to-ship missile regiment garrisons in Yufu in Oita prefecture and the city of Kumamoto cited as the two likely locations. The missiles are an upgraded version of Japan’s Type-12 surface-to-ship guided missile with an extended range of 1,000km. (Seong Hyeon Choi, “Japan to deploy long-range missiles near the East China Sea as fears over Taiwan grow: Kyodo,” *SCMP*, 18 March 2025)

Poll reveals approval rating of Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba’s Cabinet drops, says Asahi Shimbun poll

On 17 March, public support for Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba’s Cabinet plummeted to its lowest point since he took office last October, reports Asahi Shimbun poll. This was following revelations that he distributed gift vouchers worth USD 671 each to 15 newly elected Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) lawmakers earlier this month. An Asahi Shimbun poll released Monday showed a 14-point drop in approval to 26 per cent, with 75 per cent of respondents calling the gift vouchers “problematic.” While 60 per cent said resignation was “unnecessary,” other polls by Yomiuri Shimbun and Mainichi Shimbun also

reflected record-low approval rates of 31 per cent and 23 per cent, respectively. Ishiba defended his actions as legal, claiming the vouchers were purchased with his own money to reward lawmakers for their election efforts, not as political donations or gifts to constituents. However, critics argue that the move contradicts his promise to clean up political corruption and raises ethical concerns. Opposition leaders, including CDP leader Yoshihiko Noda and DPP chief Yuichiro Tamaki, have called for Ishiba to testify before a parliamentary ethics committee to clarify the matter, but have not yet pushed for a no-confidence motion or his resignation. (Himari Semans, “Approval rates for Ishiba’s Cabinet plunges amid gift voucher snafu,” *Japan Times*, 17 March 2025)

Liberal Democratic Party of Japan faces youth membership crises, reports Japan Times

On 17 March, *Japan Times* reported that the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) of Japan is struggling with a youth membership decline. The party lost over 60,000 members in the past year, bringing the total to 1,028,662. The LDP celebrates its 70th anniversary on 15 November 2025. The LDP’s credibility suffered after a political funds scandal led to a coalition loss in the October Lower House election, dropping from 256 to 194 seats. Factors of membership decline include Japan’s aging, declining rural population and competition from opposition parties like Nippon Ishin no Kai and the Democratic Party for the People in urban areas. Efforts to attract younger voters via social networking and community outreach have been hindered by the party’s traditional, hierarchical structure. Hokkai-Gakuen University political science professor Kentaro Yamamoto said: “I don’t think many young people today would accept joining a top-down organization like the LDP, where they would be forced to act as subordinates to their elders.” (Eric Johnston, “As it turns 70, LDP struggles to find its fountain of youth,” *Japan Times*, 16 March 2025)

Japan and Britain affirm commitment to develop next-generation fighter jet

On 06 March, Japan and Britain affirmed that they would continue to collaborate on the trilateral project with Italy aimed at developing fighter jets by 2035. This was affirmed by Japan’s Defense Minister Gen Nakatani and British Foreign Secretary David Lammy. Nakatani expounded that both countries are each other’s closest partners in Asia and Europe and that he welcomes the jet development program. Lammy noted that stable bilateral ties

are key for global security. . (Japan affirms fighter jet cooperation with British foreign secretary," Japan Today, 07 March 2025)

Japan's Prime Minister says Japan to decide its defense budget, rejects suggestion by the US

On 05 March, Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba stressed that Japan would determine its defense budget. He rejected calls from US nominee for undersecretary of defense for policy Elbridge Colby for Tokyo to increase spending to counter China. In 2022, Japan unveiled a 43 trillion-yen military build-up plan, doubling its budget to about 2 per cent of GDP amid regional threats. Colby argued for boosting spending to at least 3 per cent of GDP to enhance denial and collective defense, while Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi emphasized that Japan prioritizes the quality of its defense capabilities over the budget's size. ("Ishiba says Japan will decide its defense budget, not other nations," Japan Today, 06 March 2025)

Japanese Judge New ICJ President

On 04 March, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) elected Judge Yuji Iwasawa as the new president to complete the current president's term. The current President Nawaf Salam's term ends on 5 February 2027, but he resigned in January to become Lebanon's Prime Minister. Iwaasa, before being a member of the World Court since 2018, was a professor of international law at the University of Tokyo and chairperson of the United Nations Human Rights Committee. The ICJ had recently gained fame by accusing Israel of genocide in the Gaza war. ("International Court of Justice elects Japanese judge as new president," Japan Today, 04 March 2025)

Russia bans entry to Japanese foreign minister

On 04 March, the Russian Foreign Ministry banned nine Japanese citizens, including Japanese Foreign Minister Takeshi Iwai, the president and representative director of carmaker Isuzu, Shinsuke Minami, and Shohei Hara, senior vice president of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). The ministry announced the decision was made in response to Japan's sanctions against Russia related to the Russia- Ukraine conflict. Entry bans are a common measure adopted by Russia, and similar lists exist for several countries, including the U.S. and Canada, and include hundreds of people. ("Russia adds Japan's foreign minister and eight others to entry

ban," Japan Today, 04 March 2025)

Wildfire rages on in Japan

On 01 March, the Government of Japan announced that the wildfire in Ofunato, Iwate Prefecture, had spread across at least 1200 hectares. The Fire and Disaster Management Agency classified it as the largest forest fire in Japan. So far, one person has died, more than 80 homes were burned, and over 3000 residents and more than 1300 households are still under evacuation. The agency under the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications also requested emergency assistance from local governments, including Gunma, Saitama, and Tokyo, bringing the number of responding prefectures to more than 10. Fifteen helicopters have been deployed to fight the fire. ("Japan wildfire burns largest area in over 30 years as blaze rages on," Japan Today, 01 March 2025)

PACIFIC READER

Court orders the return of PNG parliament to vote on non-confidence motion against Prime Minister

On 01 April, Papua New Guinea's Supreme Court ruled that parliament must be recalled on 08 April to debate a motion of no confidence against Prime Minister James Marape. The court found actions by the Private Business Committee and Deputy Speaker Koni Iguan in November 2024 unconstitutional and in breach of parliamentary democracy. Following this, legal action was initiated by Chuave Member of Parliament James Nomane. The court emphasized that parliamentary democracy relies on the executive's accountability to the people through such mechanisms as motions of no confidence. Pine Minister James Marape, commanding the support of over two-thirds of MPs, pledged to respect the ruling and comply with the court's directives. He said: "We are a government that respects the courts. The Supreme Court reads and interprets the Constitution better than all of us, and we will honour its ruling." (Scott Waide, "Supreme Court orders a recall of Papua New Guinea parliament," *RNZ*, 01 April 2025)

Rally in Saipan for the return of former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte's

On 28 March, a rally and road-waving event in Saipan was held to appeal to the International Criminal Court (ICC) for the return of former Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte to the Philippines. Organisers Marie Zayko and Roderick Lopez said over 250 supporters attended the event, which also doubled as a celebration of the 17th Philippine president's

birthday. Zayko said: “This is in support for Duterte (also known as Tatay Digong) who right now is in the Netherlands because of Bong Bong Marcos (Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr).” Zayko also appealed to the ICC in The Hague, stating: “I hope Bong Bong Marcos and the [Philippine] government will realise what they did to Duterte... [My] message to ICC: Duterte is a good president. Please, he helped a lot of people. So many people that he helped, please release him.” Lopez also claimed that it was illegal to hold Duterte since the Philippines has not been under ICC since 2019. The Philippine National Police and Interpol arrested Duterte in Operation Pursuit under an ICC warrant, charging him with crimes against humanity related to the Philippine drug war. Critics of Duterte said: “The ICC had every right to arrest him due to the crimes against humanity.” Darwin Gonzales said: “ICC through the Interpol did it in a most lawful process as possible given that the Philippines is no longer a member of the ICC.” (“Supporters of ex-Philippines president in Saipan call for ICC release,” *RNZ*, 01 April 2025)

Samoa declares 30-day state of emergency amid severe power crises

On 31 March, the Samoan government declared a 30-day state of emergency as the main island of Upolu faced a severe power crisis. Prime Minister Fiame Naomi Mata’afa said faults in the underground cable between the Fiaga and Fuluasou power plants, severe weather damaging power lines and poles, and the failure of three key backup generators have led to major disruptions. Power rationing has been in place since February, and the crisis is estimated to cost up to 16 per cent of Samoa’s GDP. Finance Minister Lautimuia Uelese Vaaio supported the declaration to allow development partners to assist. Temporary large generators will arrive on 5 April, with permanent generators expected in August. The state of emergency is effective until 29 April. (Grace Tinetali-Fiavaai, “Samoa declares state of emergency amid severe power crisis,” *RNZ*, 31 March 2025)

French Overseas Minister in New Caledonia

On 29 March, *RNZ* reported that French Minister for Overseas Manuel Valls is returning to New Caledonia from 29 March - 01 April to advance talks on the territory’s political future. During his previous visit from 22 February to 01 March, Valls brought together both pro-France and pro-independence parties, publishing a “synthesis paper” summarizing their views as a basis for further discussions. The upcoming talks, held

behind closed doors at the French High Commission in Nouméa, will address issues including New Caledonia’s future links with France, possible transfer of powers, future citizenship, voter eligibility, and the territory’s overall status ranging from shared sovereignty to full independence or free association. Pro-independence groups, such as FLNKS, have demanded that their President Christian Ténin be included in the talks and have called for UN supervision, while pro-France voices insist that any compromise remain within the framework of the French Republic. (Patrick Decloitre, “French overseas minister back in New Caledonia for fresh round of talks,” *RNZ*, 29 March 2025)

Tonga holds its first strategic planning meeting, “A Resilient Tonga through Transformative Action: Safeguarding Our Heritage”

On 20 March, Tonga hosted its first strategic planning meeting in ten years, titled “A Resilient Tonga through Transformative Action: Safeguarding Our Heritage.” The summit was chaired by Prime Minister Aisake Valu Eke. The summit provided a forum for civil society, NGOs, and the media to discuss national issues, including government service delivery, good governance, and infrastructure improvements. On 27 March, *RNZ* reported a meeting with Tonga correspondent Kalafi Moala. She noted that participants aired both constructive ideas and complaints. One example cited was a private sector proposal to better utilize a domestic wharf built with Japanese government support, which is currently underused for its intended purpose. While some concerns were raised about the effectiveness of a 10-year plan in a changing government landscape, the meeting was seen as an opportunity to generate “some very good” ideas and foster dialogue ahead of the upcoming election cycle. (Don Wiseman, “Tonga’s development summit: ‘Some good ideas’ mixed with ‘a waste of time’ discussions,” *RNZ*, 27 March 2025)

Papua New Guinea shuts down Facebook to halt online inciting of terrorism

On 27 March, Papua New Guinea’s police commissioner revealed that the government shut down Facebook nationwide to track down two men attempting to incite an act of terrorism. The move cut off about 1.4 million users, the total number of people accessing Facebook in PNG. Papua New Guinean academic Michael Kabuni from the Australia National University expressed concern about government control over social media. Kabuni said: “It’s a bit scary ...

it's the first time the government [has] shut down any form of media nationwide ... this has never happened before." ("Facebook blackout has many in PNG worried about the future," *ABC*, 27 March 2025)

Australia to redirect USD 100 million to Indo-Pacific amid US aid cuts, reports *The Guardian*

On 25 March, *The Guardian* reported that Australia is set to redirect more than USD 100 million in foreign aid toward the Indo-Pacific region after President Trump decides to cancel around USD 54 billion in overseas development assistance programs. The official development assistance budget for 2025-26 will total USD 5.1 billion, reprioritizing economic, health, humanitarian, and climate responses in the region. Australia's Foreign Affairs Minister Penny Wong stated that "hard strategic decisions" are needed following the US aid pause. Funding for three institutions will be affected, including reduced payments to the Global Partnership for Education and the Global Fund to Fight HIV, Malaria, and TB. Core funding for the UN Development Program will drop by USD 13 million, though Australia will still contribute USD 189.5 million to UN agencies. Three-quarters of the overseas development assistance budget will support the Indo-Pacific, with USD 1 billion targeted over five years to build economic resilience and a USD 370 million package over three years for the humanitarian crisis in Myanmar. Additional measures will support regional health resilience and climate action. (Sarah Basford Canales, "Australia to redirect \$100m in foreign aid to Indo-Pacific region after Trump pulls funding," *The Guardian*, 25 March 2025)

New Zealand and Papua New Guinea renew "Statement of Partnership"

On 25 March, New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon and Papua New Guinea (PNG) Prime Minister James Marape signed a new "Statement of Partnership" at the Beehive in Wellington. The agreement, effective until 2029, focuses on education, trade, security, agriculture, and fisheries and replaces the previous pact signed in 2021 with then-Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern. Luxon announced a USD 1 million allocation to support PNG's aspirations to strengthen public sector institutions, including initiatives for disaster preparedness and governance of state-owned enterprises. Marape's visit includes meetings with Foreign Affairs Minister Winston Peters, opposition leader Chris Hipkins, and engagements with the NZ-PNG Business Council

and scholarship recipients at Waikato University. ("Politics: Papua New Guinea PM and Christopher Luxon hold media conference after meeting," *RNZ*, 25 March 2025)

Opposition leader calls to block mining license for Hong Kong firm

On 25 March, Solomon Island opposition leader Matthew Wale called on the Minister for Mines, Energy & Rural Electrification to block a mining license for Hong Kong-based Far East Resources Company Ltd on San Jorge Island. Wale said: "The company has reportedly failed to submit a satisfactory commercial discovery report or an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)" to mine for nickel, resulting in no development consent. He noted that tribal leaders and landowners raised concerns that the company failed to meet minimum operational standards, disregarded labour laws, and engaged in discriminatory practices against local workers regarding food and safety equipment. Wale added that reports indicate the Mines & Minerals Board rejected both documents, but Tovosia "has no power to overturn decisions made by the Board." ("Solomon Islands opposition leader calls for suspension of the mining license for Hong Kong-based company," *RNZ*, 25 March 2025)

Papua New Guinea Prime Minister on a three-day visit to New Zealand

On 25 March, Papua New Guinea's (PNG) Prime Minister James Marape arrived in New Zealand for a three-day state visit. Marape will meet New Zealand's Prime Minister Christopher Luxon in Wellington to discuss trade, investment, agriculture, fisheries, education, and security, among other areas. Marape said: "I am looking forward to meeting with Prime Minister Luxon to further entrench our relationship with New Zealand." A "refreshed" statement of partnership for 2025-2029 is set to be signed after their meeting, updating the 2021-2024 agreement signed under former Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern. This is Marape's first official visit to New Zealand since his re-election in 2022. The visit signals a growing relationship, particularly in trade and investment, and cultural exchange, and the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme has been extended to Papua New Guineans. ("Papua New Guinea PM Marape arrives in NZ today," *RNZ*, 25 March 2025)

Fiji's Deputy Prime Minister endorses Prime Minister candidature to rebuild Fiji

On 24 March, Deputy Prime Minister Manoa Kamikamica stated that Prime Minister Sitiveni

Rabuka is “the best man to rebuild Fiji” after “sixteen years of dictatorship.” Kamikamica made the remarks in response to Labour leader Mahendra Chaudhry’s criticism of Rabuka’s reversal on restoring MP Lynda Tabuya to Cabinet. Former Minister for Women, Children and Social Protection Lynda Tabuya, was removed after appearing in a private video dancing naked on Christmas Eve. Kamikamica noted that the entire coalition government completely supports Rabuka. He emphasized that the focus is on executing the changes Fiji urgently needs, including reforms to the inadequate health system, rather than on the next election. (Margot Staunton, “‘Fiji is in a mess’: Rabuka needs to be supported ‘wholeheartedly,’” *RNZ*, 24 March 2025)

West Papua Action Aotearoa gains Pacific Islands support over human rights violations concerns

On 24 March, *RNZ* reported that a New Zealand human rights group, West Papua Action Aotearoa, garnered support from several Pacific Island nations for Indonesian-occupied West Papua. The group claims the occupation has led to serious human rights violations, including restricted press freedom and displacement of many West Papuans. In an interview, spokesperson Catherine Delahunty said: “Most people don’t know much about West Papua because there’s virtually a media blackout.” Leaders from Vanuatu, Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, and Sāmoa recently issued a joint statement at the UN Human Rights Council, urging global support for West Papua’s displaced people. Delahunty called for Indonesia to allow a visit from a UN human rights commissioner, a request that has been consistently denied. The group criticized the lack of support from larger regional powers like New Zealand and Australia, while smaller island nations have publicly supported West Papua. (Christine Ravoï, “Pacific island nations unite to support West Papua amid human rights violations,” *RNZ*, 24 March 2025)

The Metals Company accused of shifting from green transitioning to defense production

On 21 March, *RNZ* reported that environmental groups claimed that The Metals Company (TMC) has changed its focus from supporting the green transition to backing security and defence production. TMC denied these claims, although its recent press release praised a US defence study on nodule refining. It also applied for a USD 9 million military defence grant to study a domestic refinery for deep-sea nodules. CEO Gerrard Barron said TMC is leading in deep sea

mining and investing in domestic capabilities is needed to outcompete China in critical minerals. TMC’s stakeholder engagement head Corey McLachlan, explained that while the company dropped a contract with a Kiribati state-owned enterprise, it did so for commercial reasons and is not in financial trouble. TMC plans to apply for a mining license in June, utilising a legal loophole. They urged the International Seabed Authority to speed up the rule-making process. (Caleb Fotheringham, “Mining company and campaigners clash over deep sea mining’s role,” *RNZ*, 21 March 2025)

Australian government offers loan of AUD 2 billion to banks in the Pacific

On 20 March, The Australian government announced a decade-long loan guarantee of more than AUD 2 billion to support big banks operating in the Pacific and avoid reliance on China. The government announced it will give ANZ Bank an AUD 1.3 billion loan guarantee to support its branches across small island nations. The move aims to ensure financial stability and the continued operation of banking services amid increasing regional competition with China. The Bank of China signed a deal with Nauru and is set to establish its first branch in Papua New Guinea’s capital, Port Moresby. ANZ operates 50 branches in nine countries and is set to invest an additional AUD 50 million into its Pacific operations to expand digital banking capabilities. (Christine Ravoï, “Over \$2 billion lifeline for Pacific banks amid rising challenges,” *RNZ*, 20 March 2025)

Australian government assesses impact of US aid freeze on the Pacific, reports *The Guardian*

On 20 March, the Australian government consulted Pacific nations to assess the impact of the US foreign aid freeze and what additional support it can provide ahead of next week’s federal budget. Foreign Affairs Minister Penny Wong’s letter to Liberal MP Warren Entsch revealed that Australian diplomats are discussing the impact with US government officials and engaging with regional partners. Entsch warned that the 90-day freeze caused “irreversible” damage by halting tuberculosis services, and organizations laying off staff. Opposition leader Peter Dutton criticized the aid pause as “detrimental to the collective interests in the region.” A Lowy Institute report noted that China has renewed its efforts to engage Pacific island nations through a “more competitive, politically targeted model of aid engagement.” (Henry Belot, “Australia in discussions to avoid ‘devastating consequences’

of US aid cuts for Pacific nations," *The Guardian*, 20 March 2025)

Bougainville independence talks to continue before June deadline

On 20 March, *RNZ* reported that the leaders of Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Bougainville involved in talks on resolving an impasse over Bougainville's push for independence are planning more meetings before a deadline in June. Both parties have been meeting in Port Moresby, with former New Zealand Governor-General Sir Jerry Mateparae serving as moderator. The challenge lies in conditions for tabling the results of the 2019 Bougainville referendum in the PNG parliament, with PNG demanding an absolute majority of MPs and Bougainville arguing for a simple majority. Bougainville's President Ishmael Toroama has suggested a solution outside of parliament, while PNG Prime Minister James Marape questioned Bougainville's readiness. One of the upcoming meetings is expected to take place in Burnham, New Zealand. Bougainville is holding elections in September, and its leaders have declared independence by 01 September 2027. (Don Wiseman, "PNG and Bougainville to hold more talks on the independence issue," *RNZ*, 20 March 2025)

Pacific Islands Forum seeks alternative amid US aid freeze

On 19 March, the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) secretary general Baron Waqa urged member countries to work together and identify "other alternatives for cooperation" amid the US freeze on development assistance. He stated that President Trump's decision to halt US aid is set to affect the work of the Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific (CROP). Heads of CROP agencies are already discussing how to deal with the withdrawal's impacts. Waqa noted that Joe Biden-era pledges, including USD 200 million in new funding, are on hold. His deputy, Desna Solofa, stressed that the US has been a valued dialogue partner since 1989, although PIF partners are expected to align with regional priorities. Former PIF director and Auckland University of Technology's senior law lecturer Sione Tekiteki claims the US is asserting its power over the Pacific countries, while they seek to keep a low profile and hope for eventual easing from the US. (Lydia Lewis, "Pacific's top diplomat urges new cooperation amid US aid freeze," *RNZ*, 19 March 2025)

New Zealand Security Intelligence Service director warns Cook Island about China

On 19 March, New Zealand Security Intelligence

Service (SIS) director-general Andrew Hampton warned that China's strategy of blending economic and security cooperation in the Pacific could lead to foreign interference and espionage threats. Hampton said he visited the Cook Islands to share classified intelligence with Prime Minister Mark Brown and that the SIS would intensify its monitoring of the Cook Islands' relationship with China. China's embassy in New Zealand rejected Hampton's claims as "totally baseless, all fabrication." Cook Islands Opposition Leader Tina Browne stated that the SIS comments "should not be taken lightly" and called for "transparency, robust scrutiny, and balanced diplomacy." She criticized the Government for failing to provide a "clear public assurance or strategy" amid shifting geopolitical dynamics. Brown assured the Pacific nations about Cook Islands' relationship with China despite the risks associated with it. (Talaia Mika, "Concerns mount over Cook Islands' 'national security' amid China's influence," *RNZ*, 19 March 2025)

Papua New Guinea Prime Minister assures peace in Bougainville

On 18 March, Papua New Guinea's Prime Minister James Marape announced his government has an "unwavering commitment to the Bougainville Peace Process." Bougainville and Papua New Guinea (PNG) have not yet agreed on how to table the results of a historic referendum on independence in which 97.7 per cent of Bougainvilleans said they wanted independence. Joint moderation talks began in Port Moresby, chaired by former New Zealand Governor-General Sir Jerry Mateparae. The impasse centres on the number of MPs required to support tabling the referendum results. PNG wants two-thirds, while Bougainville wants just a simple majority. Alternatively, Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG) President Ishmael Toroama suggested deciding on a bilateral relationship outside of parliament. Marape said: "It is a constitutional matter that requires parliament's deliberation and decision-making" Marape urged consideration of economic independence, noting Bougainville generates only 5 percent of its budget. Marape also warned of similar movements leading to the fragmentation of PNG. (Don Wiseman, "Bougainville needs 'serious conversation' about its economic readiness - James Marape," *RNZ*, 18 March 2025)

Papua New Guinea declared itself as a Christian nation

On 18 March, *RNZ* reported that last week, the Papua New Guinea (PNG) parliament amended

the nation's constitution and declared itself a Christian nation. The declaration in its preamble said: "(We) acknowledge and declare God, the Father; Jesus Christ, the Son; and Holy Spirit, as our Creator and Sustainer of the entire universe and the source of our powers and authorities, delegated to the people and all persons within the geographical jurisdiction of Papua New Guinea." In addition, Christianity will be reflected in the Fifth Goal of the Constitution, with the Bible recognised as a national symbol. Father Giorgio Licini of Caritas PNG believed that creating "a Christian confessional state" in the 21st century is "a little bit anachronistic." He warned "a cosmetic change that will not have a real impact" on the lives of the people, and that it may offer "the impression or the illusion" that things will improve, but "PNG society will remain basically what it is." Prime Minister James Marape said it "reflects, in the highest form" the role of Christian churches in the country's development, though it is "not an operational law." Marape is a vocal advocate for the amendment and expressed happiness about the amendment, despite criticism from the Catholic Church about the constitutional change. (Caleb Fotheringham, "Catholic priest calls PNG's Christian state declaration 'cosmetic' change," *RNZ*, 18 March 2025)

Kiribati terminates deep sea mining deal with The Metals Company, looks towards China

On 18 March, *RNZ* reported that Nasdaq-traded The Metals Company (TMC), surrendered a third of its Pacific Ocean exploration area after a breakdown in cooperation with Kiribati. According to a US Securities & Exchange Commission filing, TMC terminated an agreement with a Kiribati state-owned company that granted exploration rights to a 74,990 square kilometer seabed area in the northeastern Pacific. The termination appears to be at the instigation of Kiribati, whose Ministry of Fisheries and Ocean Resources held talks with China's ambassador to "explore potential collaboration for the sustainable exploration of the deep ocean resources." TMC's CEO Gerard Barron said the single exploration mission costing about USD 15 million revealed fewer nodules than areas in Nauru and Tonga, while environmental groups and other deep-sea miners report similar industry troubles. TMC is finalizing an ISA application for mining in Nauru's area. This breakdown paves the way for China to add to its regional foothold in the contentious industry. (Stephen Wright, "Kiribati explores deep sea mining deal with China," *RNZ*, 18 March 2025)

New Zealand's Prime Minister visits India to discuss trade, diaspora, and economy

On 17 March, *The Diplomat* reported that New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon is visiting India from March 16-20 at the invitation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to strengthen bilateral relations in economics, trade, diaspora, education, and the strategic front. Luxon is accompanied by a delegation from business, academia, media, and diaspora sectors and is serving as the chief guest at the Raisina Dialogue on March 17. India-New Zealand trade is currently valued at USD 2.83 billion. One of the key focus areas of Luxon's visit is the potential signing of a Free Trade Agreement (FTA). However, it faces challenges due to India's long-standing high tariffs on agricultural and dairy products. India's evolving trade posture, demonstrated by FTAs with Australia (2023), the UAE (2022), and Mauritius (2021), offers optimism. Despite historical skepticism over India's nuclear policies, those worries have been alleviated due to India's consistent track record in arms control and disarmament. Both India and New Zealand share geopolitical concerns over China's assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific, and its growing military presence in the Bay of Bengal and Indian Ocean. Potential areas of cooperation between India and New Zealand include climate change, clean energy, higher education, research on Pacific Island nations, and cultural preservation initiatives. Strengthening ties with India allows New Zealand to diversify its diplomatic and security partnerships while reinforcing a rules-based regional order. (Rahul Mishra and Shubhamitra Das, "With Luxon Visit, India-New Zealand Ties Scale New Heights," *The Diplomat*, 17 March 2025)

China gifts state-of-the-art sports complex to Tonga

On 12 March, *RNZ* reported that China officially handed over Tonga's National Sports Complex in Nuku'alofa. The USD 25 million complex was funded by Beijing, and it includes the Tonga High School Indoor Stadium, an international-standard rugby field, netball and tennis courts, and an aquatics center. The indoor stadium was inaugurated by Crown Prince Tupouto'a 'Ulukalala, and it hosted the 53rd Pacific Islands Forum in August. Prime Minister Dr. Aisake Valu Eke stated the facility will inspire Tongan athletes for the 2031 Pacific Games and serve as a hub for community and cultural events. He said, "The impressive facility stands as a remarkable testament to the enduring friendship and partnership between Tonga

and China.” (“China hands over state of the art sports complex to Tonga,” *RNZ*, 17 March 2025)

Vanuatu to revisit security agreement with Australia

On 12 March, *the Guardian* reported that Vanuatu’s Prime Minister Jotham Napat, announced his government’s intentions to “revisit” a security agreement with Australia and negotiate issues like climate change and travel mobility. Napat said: “climate change for us is a security issue that is not reflected in the security agreement” and called for an “official waiver-free agreement.” He spoke with Deputy Prime Minister Richard Marles, who is “happy for the two countries to revisit the security agreement.” Napat also noted that his government’s priority is recovery after the devastating 7.3-magnitude earthquake in December 2024, as Port Vila’s main central business district remains closed. (Prianka Srinivasan, “New Vanuatu PM says he will ‘revisit’ 2022 security agreement with Australia,” *The Guardian*, 12 March 2025)

Green Party petitions for visa-free travel within the region

On 08 March, New Zealand’s Green Party launched a petition to allow Pacific Island nations visa-free travel to visitors from Pacific Island nations.. The Greens’ Pacific Peoples spokesperson Teanau Tuiono complained that while 60 countries can access Aotearoa visa-free, not a single Pacific Island nation is on that list. He said the Greens’ petition calls on the Government to start building an immigration system “that values community, connection and fairness”. He called for the removal of unfair barriers to allow visa-free travel to Pacific Island countries. Many Pacific leaders have also called for the freer movement of people within the region. New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon announced nearly NZD 27 million for projects in Fiji and removed the need for transit visas for Fijians entering New Zealand. There are ongoing calls for Australia to adopt a similar visa-waiver programme, with critics questioning why Australia offers open access to Europeans and Americans but not to Pacific peoples. (NZ Green Party calls for visa-free travel for ‘Pacific whānau’”, *RNZ*, 08 March 2025)

Green Party petitions for visa-free travel within the region

On 07 March, as part of the government’s 100-day plan, a key reform allows only indigenous Ni-Vanuatu to contest in provincial and national elections. The opposition criticised this reform plan by calling it racism by the government. The 100-day plan for this electoral reform expects

stronger oversight of citizenship programs, increased public trust through safeguarding national identity, and enhanced cultural representation in governance. The reform specifies that only third-generation citizens will be included in contest elections. (Terence Malapa, “Vanuatu govt to allow only indigenous citizens to contest elections,” *RNZ*, 07 March 2025)

Samoa Prime Minister defeats second no-confidence motion

On 06 March, Samoan Prime Minister Fiamē Naomi Mata’afa defeated a second no-confidence motion against her minority government. 32 votes were against and 19 were in favor of the motion. The motion was initiated by FAST chairman Laauli Leuatea Schmidt and opposed by HRPP leader Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi. The motion failed as HRPP sided with Fiamē this time, a reversal from last week. The debate, marked by criticisms of Fiamē’s leadership and calls for a united Parliament, took place despite internal party splits following recent cabinet dismissals. Parliament will now continue with pending bills and a budget review scheduled for June. (Grace Tinetalī-Fiavaai, “Samoan PM defeats second no-confidence vote in two weeks,” *RNZ*, 06 March 2025)

Pacific leaders ask to be excluded from New Zealand visa waiver

On 04 March, Green party MP Teanau Tuiono called for visa waiver access for Pacific Islands. Tuiono, along with other Pacific Island leaders, has strongly protested for the visa waiver. New Zealand Deputy Prime Minister Winston Peters had shelved such a request in 2023 and argues that it is unfair for the waiver to be implemented. Tuiono argued that it was unfair for distant countries to be granted visa waivers while the Pacific Islands did not receive them. Tuiono said, “The last Parliament, we had where Prime Minister Fiamē Naomi Mata’afa pushing for visa waiver access, and also the Prime Minister from the Solomon Islands pushing for visa waiver access. (Susana Susuiki, “Green Party MP advocates for visa waiver access for Pacific nations,” *RNZ*, 04 March 2025)

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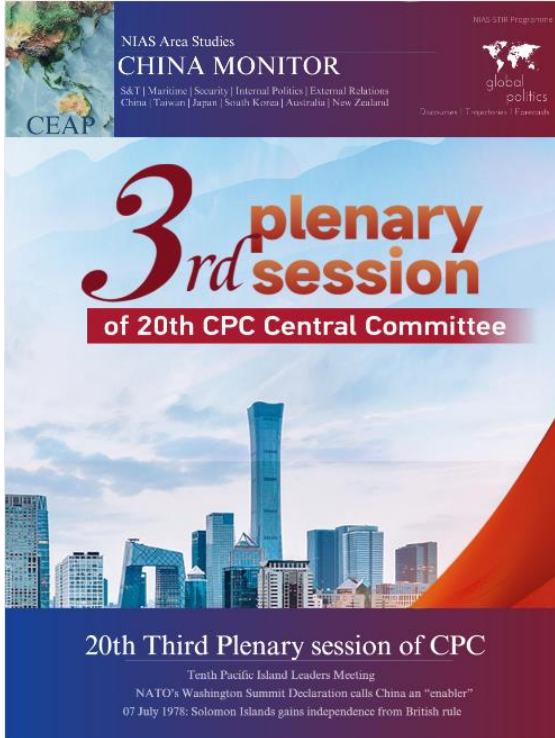
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