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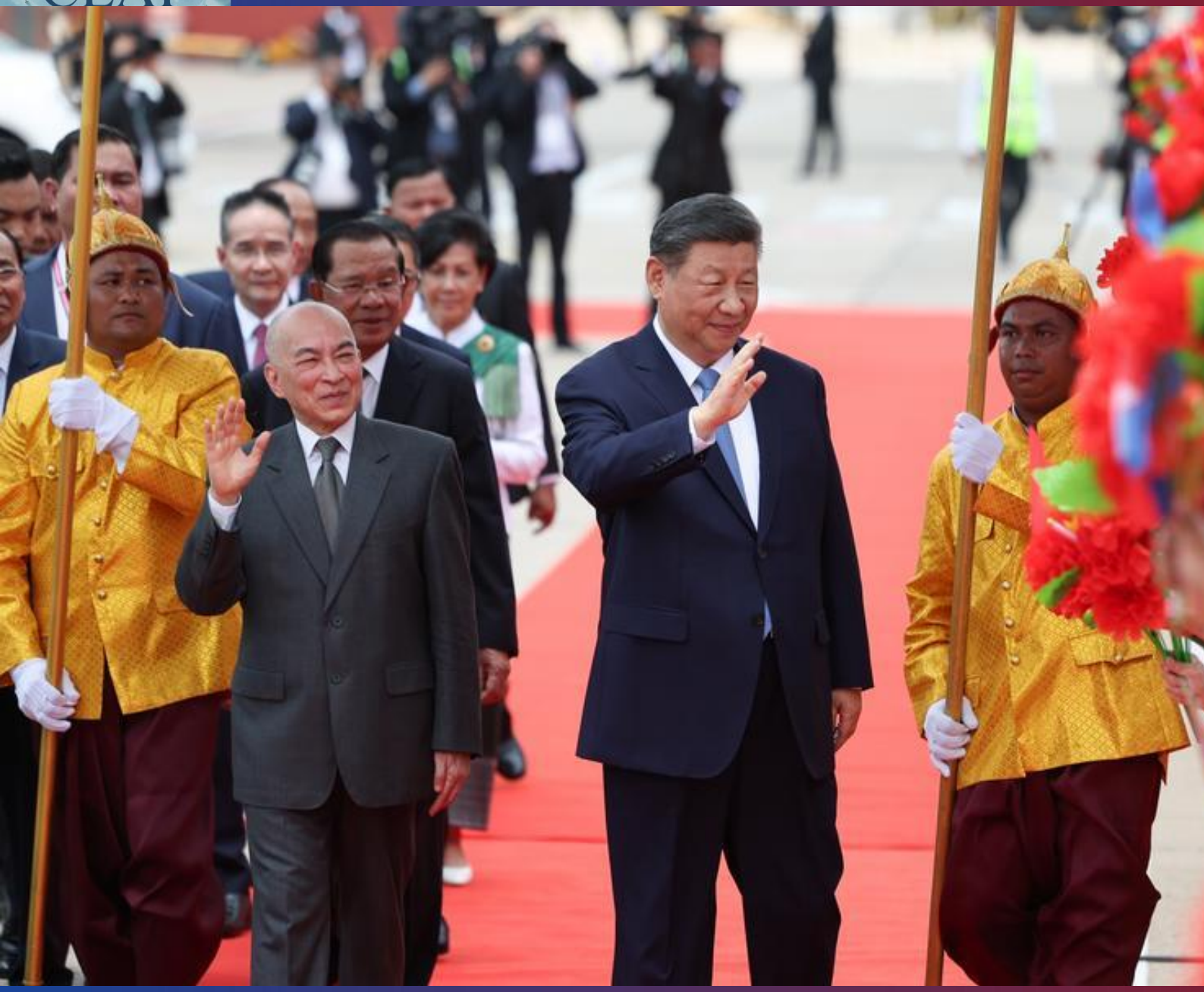

President Xi's Southeast Asia Visit

Dhaka-Beijing: Yunus in China

China's Military Drills Near Taiwan

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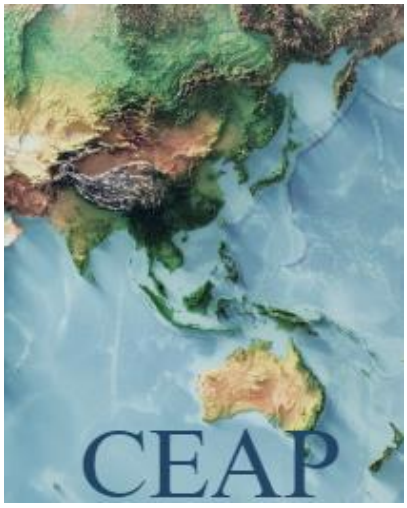

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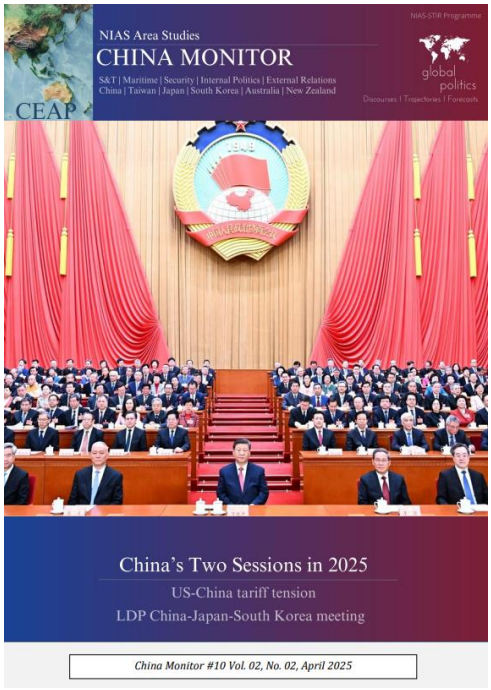

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COMMENTARY

President Xi's Southeast Asia Visit: Vietnam, Malaysia and Cambodia

Femy Francis

(Image Source: Xinhua)

What happened?

On 14 April, China's President Xi Jinping started his Southeast Asian tour and visited Vietnam, Malaysia, and Cambodia. He also published in the respective countries' news media prior to his visit. In Vietnam's Nhan Dan Newspaper, Xi published "Building on past achievements and making new advances in pursuit of shared goals." He reminisced about the shared revolutionary history and noted the historical phrase "The friendship between Vietnam and China is so profound because we are both comrades and brothers." He called to deepen mutual trust, win-win cooperation, people-to-people exchanges, engage in multilateral collaboration, and safeguard regional peace. In a imilar note in Malaysian news media, Sin Chew Daily, "May the Ship of China-Malaysia Friendship Sail Toward an Even Brighter Future" Xi noted their historical friendship since the Silk Road times and called to build strategic communication and follow through with BRI initiatives. Xi noted that China's work in Malaysia and other ASEAN countries is to fight "counter currents of unilateralism and protectionism, in keeping with the historical trend of peace and development." Cambodia's news media, Khmer Times, published "Toward a Stable and Sustainable China-Cambodia Community with a Shared Future in the New Era," where President Xi noted the historical trading partner and the Chinese support for Cambodia to develop infrastructure. He said: "China-Cambodia ironclad friendship, which has been tempered through trials of time and storms of adversity, will stay true to its original purpose."

During his visit, several agreements were signed between China and the three Southeast Asian countries, of which most of the details remain undisclosed. Vietnam signed 45 agreements with China on manufacturing, railway transport, supply chain production of goods, and a cross-border QR code to facilitate payments. Malaysia-China signed 31 agreements on developing AI, R&D technology, green technology intake, visa-free travel, the use of Chinese satellite for agriculture, and building a stable supply chain. With Cambodia, Xi signed 37 agreements on energy, tourism, education, and infrastructure development. Additionally, China affirmed to support for the construction of the canal, the Funan Techo Integrated Water Resources Management Project.

What is the background?

First, the state of China-Vietnam relations. 2025 marked China-Vietnam's 75th year of diplomatic cooperation. Among the ASEAN countries, Vietnam is China's largest trading partner, while China is Vietnam's largest trading partner. In 2024, China traded USD 204.9 billion with Vietnam, which was a 19.2 per cent rise from 2023. Vietnam faced a trade deficit of USD 82.8 billion in 2024, while imports from China hiked by USD 33.35 billion. Vietnam's key exports to China are iron and steel products, fishery, and agricultural products. Chinese exports include electronics, spare parts, machinery, and computers. In 2017, Vietnam joined the BRI bandwagon. Some of the major China-funded projects in Vietnam are the Cat Lin-Han Dong railway project and the Vin Tan power station.

Second, the state of China-Malaysia relations. China is Malaysia's largest trading partner since 2009. In 2024, the bilateral trade was USD 212 billion. Malaysia mainly exports iron ore, refined petroleum, and petroleum gas. China exports electrical control boards, computers, and integrated circuits. Malaysia only exported USD 41 billion to China in 2024, with a trade deficit of USD 171 billion to China. Malaysia signed the BRI agreement in 2013. China has heavily invested in building a deep-sea port in the Strait of Malacca as part of the Melaka Gateway Project. East Coast Rail Link (ECRL) is built under BRI.

Third, the state of China-Cambodia relations. China has been the largest trading partner of Cambodia for over a decade. In 2024, the bilateral trade reached USD 15.19 billion, a 23.8 per cent hike from 2023, of which Cambodia imported USD 13.44 billion worth, while it exported 1.75 billion to China. This showcases a trade deficit of USD 11.69 billion. Most of Cambodia's exports consist of furniture, agricultural products, perishable goods like food, and raw materials. While China exports automated machines, electronics, and machinery. Cambodia signed the BRI in 2013, and China was responsible for key projects like the Phnom Penh-Sihanoukville Expressway, Siem Reap Angkor International Airport, and the Sihanoukville Special Economic Zone.

Fourth, a brief note on the US tariffs on China and Southeast Asia. The US imposed 46 per cent tariffs on Vietnam. While Malaysia was hit with 24 per cent tariffs from the US, and Cambodia was hit by 49 per cent tariffs, the highest amongst the ASEAN countries. China and the US are going on a tariff war after a series of retaliatory tariffs from both sides. The US has now imposed 245 per cent tariffs on China, while China has imposed a 125 per cent tariff on the US. Additionally, China has put tariffs and even restricted the sale of key rare earths. In terms of trade, the US is China's largest trading partner, and China is only third to the US after Mexico and Canada.

What does it mean?

First, China's efforts on solidifying alliances amid trade tensions. China's President's visit to Vietnam, Malaysia, and Cambodia was planned before the tariffs imposed by the US. Therefore, the visit wasn't intended to diversify and build an alliance amid tariff tensions, but was rather serendipitous. Since the wave of tariff imposition, Xi Jinping highlighted the need to curb unilateral protectionism and to support the global trading system in all three visits. The visit came at an optimal time to consolidate support in the region. Though, according to the US President Donald Trump, this visit is "screw" the US.

Second, pledging allegiance. The joint statements released by China and the three host countries, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Cambodia, followed a similar theme. All three affirmed to maintain and march towards peace and stability in the South China Sea, and affirmed to One-China principle. China has been engaging in aggressive posturing in both the South China Sea and around the Taiwan Strait. Amongst the Southeast Asian countries, only the Philippines has been engaged in active tensions with China in the South China Sea. Taiwan has been hindering Chinese influence and presence in Taiwan by removing residents with Chinese residency. The visit aims to consolidate the alliance on the sidelines.

COMMENTARY

Bangladesh and China: What agreements did the Chief Executive Yunus sign during his recent Visit? What do they mean?

Emma Rose Boby

(Image: Indian Express)

During March 2025, Bangladesh's Chief Advisor Prof Muhammed Yunus visited China for four days to attend the Boao Forum Asia (BFA) 2025 and also held a dialogue with President Xi Jinping. On 28 March, China and Bangladesh signed agreements on economic and technical cooperation and eight Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) on various sectors of cooperation. At the BFA, the two countries agreed to maintain the "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence." The two sides also discussed and came to a consensus regarding various projects and future economic investments in Bangladesh.

During his visit, Yunus made a statement relating to India's northeast and the Indian Ocean. He claimed India's Northeast as land-locked and said: "We are the only guardian of the ocean for all this region. So, this opens up a huge possibility…this could be an extension of

the Chinese economy. Build things, produce things, market things, bring things to China, bring it out to the whole rest of the world." He invited China to freely invest in the water of Dhaka as it opens to the Bay of Bengal. 2025 marks the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and Bangladesh.

What agreements did Bangladesh sign with China?

During his visit, Yunus signed multiple agreements with China. The two countries made five announcements on formal negotiations that include the following: first, the launch of the Chinese Industrial Economic Zone in Chattogram (around 30 Chinese companies have committed to investing about USD 1 billion along with USD 350 million for the China Industrial Economic Zone); second, a commercial agreement for the modernization and expansion of Mongla Port in Bagerhat (for which China will loan Bangladesh USD 400 million); third, the building of a robot physiotherapy and rehabilitation centre; fourth, a donation of a cardiac surgery vehicle; and fifth, China to pledge USD 150 million for technical assistance.

Bangladesh has agreed to export fresh mangoes, and agricultural and aquatic produce. It committed to create a "favourable investment environment" for Chinese enterprises. Dhaka invited China to take part in the Teesta River Comprehensive Management and Restoration Project (TRCMRP), a significant project that was previously offered to India. The two have discussed the feasibility of a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) to boost Bangladeshi exports.

China has pledged duty-free and quota-free access to its markets for nearly all Bangladeshi products until 2028. Beijing has invited Bangladesh to make use of various platforms like the China International Import Expo, the China International Supply Chain Expo, and the China South Asia Expo.Both agreed to collaborate further in maritime affairs and cultural exchanges between the youth.

What is the state of China-Bangladesh cooperation, and why are they important to each other?

After the fall Sheikh Hasina's government, Beijing affirmed that it would like to pursue an "all-round strategic partnership" with the new interim government. A term they use to describe close ties with countries like France, Spain, and more. China sees Bangladesh as a gateway into South Asia and is significant for its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Besides the geographic location, China sees Bangladesh as important as access to inexpensive labour. Strategically, Bangladesh may also be geopolitically significant to China as it will serve as a counter to Indian influence in the South Asian region.

For Bangladesh, China is important to improve its infrastructure. 21 bridges, 11 highways, and seven railway lines to better increase connectivity within the country. Additionally, it has also taken up multiple energy projects. On economy and trade, China has become the largest trading partner from 2006. China has loaned and invested in the country through FDIs, loans, and the attention to economic restructuring. In recent years, Beijing has also taken up 27 energy and power generation projects.

The perspective of the youth towards China seems to be positive due to the large amounts of investments, growth of tourism, particularly in terms of medical tourism, technological development, and higher education and employment opportunities, according to findings presented at a seminar titled, "National Image of China in Bangladesh."

What does it mean for India?

This visit comes after the turbulent times post-Sheikh Hasina. During her reign, Hasina favoured India. New Delhi supported her back, and she attempted to balance ties between both India and China. This can be seen through the strategic partnership with China and the signing of 21 MOUs with President Xi Jinping. Additionally, the agreement to elevate their 'strategic partnership' to a 'comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership' in July 2024, just before the uprising.

A few developments within Bangladesh under Yunus's regime has been seen by New Delhi as anti-Indian. Developments relating to minorities, and the new Dhaka-Islamabad axis has an implication for India. With New Delhi recalibrating its approach towards Bangladesh, China is slowly choosing to fill. This may also lead to a strengthening of China's influence in South Asia, where India and China have been struggling to assert dominance.India's relationship with Bangladesh is deteriorating following its refusal of Sheikh Hasina's extradition and their inaction against her allegations against Chief Advisor Yunus. Dhaka's tilt towards Beijing could result in Bangladesh becoming heavily dependent on China and may also lead to closer ties with Pakistan.

COMMENTARY

China's Military Drills near Taiwan Strait: Actions, Responses, and Criticisms

Femy Francis

(Image Source: BBC)

On 01 April, China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) conducted live-fire and long-range drills near Taiwan Strait. A spokesperson of China's Ministry of National Defense, Zhang Xiaogang, backed the drills and stated that Taiwan's independence and peace in the strait are "irreconcilable as fire and water." And if they truly want peace in the strait, they must adhere to the One-China principle and stop sending the wrong signals. China's Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) called Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te a "foreign hostile force" and called out Lai's "17 major strategies" in light of the growing national security threat.

What was China's military drill about?

The Eastern Theater Command of the PLA organized air, navy, army, and rocket force exercises. The drills focused on sea-air combat readiness, maritime assault, and ground targeting. It also rehearsed the blockade of key areas of sea lanes and tested their joint operation capabilities. China's Coast Guard (CCG) also conducted patrols on the water near Taiwan. PLA's spokesperson, Senior Colonel Shi Yi, noted that this is a stern warning against the secessionist forces aiming for the independence of Taiwan and found China's actions as legitimate and necessary.

The PLA, with the Shandong Carrier Strike Group (CSG), conducted a military drill off the east of Taiwan. The CSG included "Aircraft carrier CNS Shandong (17), cruiser CNS Xianyang (108), destroyer CNS Zhanjiang, and frigate CNS Hengshui (572). Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) destroyer JS Onami (DD-111) shadowed the PLAN CSG," reports Japan's Joint Staff Office, closely monitoring China.

Taiwan's response

On 01 April, Taiwan's President Office condemned Chinese drills by the PLA and called China a "troublemaker." It said: "engage in military provocations and gray-zone tactics" in the Taiwan Strait and the Indo-Pacific region, the office said, adding that those activities had "undermined regional security and stability." Taiwan's Defense Minister, Wellington Koo, informed the Legislative Yuan that the Ministry of National Defense (MND) has established a response center to monitor Chinese activities. MND also informed that China had entered their reaction zone, which comprises the area of Taiwan's air defense zone, the median line, and the "contiguous zone." Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs denounced China's actions and called to halt the "unwarranted military provocation." The minister also noted that these drills also violated the international orders and regional status quo, and they practice military intimidation in gray zone areas near South China Sea, New Zealand, Australia, Korea, Japan, and the Philippines.

External response

Both the US and EU criticized China's military drills. The US Department of Defense issued a press release titled "Response to China's Military Exercise Near Taiwan." They noted that, once again, China is engaging in aggressive military tactics and is putting regional and world security at risk. It said: "In the face of China's intimidation tactics and destabilizing behavior, the United States' enduring commitment to our allies and partners, including Taiwan, continues." European External Action Service (EEAS) also expressed concerns over the increased cross-strait tensions. The EESA called for all parties to exercise restraint and avoid any actions that may further escalate the situation. Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi affirmed that Japan will take all measures to be vigilant and surveil Chinese military activities. Germany's Foreign Minister, Annalena Baerbock, noted that the status quo should not change unless it has mutual understanding.

Media's response in China and Taiwan

On 02 April, Global Times, China's flagship news media, published an op-ed titled "PLA drills

'subdue demons and vanquish evils,' send a stern warning to Lai Ching-te." The op-ed highlighted the military drills that happened and Lai's record as a leader. The op-ed noted that Lai has repeatedly supported fallacy by labelling China as a hostile force. Lai is accused of spreading "green McCarthyism," noted the author. This is done by restricting cross-strait exchange as they ramp up military capabilities. He is also accused of hijacking Taiwanese citizens in his Independence bandwagon. The Op-ed concluded with an eerie warning: "We advise "Taiwan independence" advocates to recognize reality as soon as possible and not to wait until the day of reckoning arrives, only to regret their actions. The wheels of history roll forward relentlessly; on the journey of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, any secessionist forces will ultimately be crushed to dust."

An opinion in People Daily titled "Commentary: For separatist agenda, Lai Ching-te resorts to green authoritarianism," called out Lai's administration. The op-ed noted the recent expulsion of Chinese nationals in Taiwan, calling for unification. The Op-ed called the deportation as fostering a climate of fear as they aggressively demonize China. The op-ed also expressed concern that the "Taiwan's independence" call has become acceptable to the locals. And that the DPP is no longer a guardian of democracy but the opposite. The author also noted that the threat of infiltration is used to distract the locals from the real issues facing Taiwan and the failure of the DPP in uplifting the economy.

The news media mostly covered the developments on China's drill in Taiwan and its support by its allies. Taipei Times published an editorial on "US shifts defense focus to Taiwan." This noted the proposal by the US to focus on Taiwan in order to deter China. The editorial called the initiative "an actual combat blueprint," noting the positive pivot of the US towards Taiwan. The memo "Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance," states how the US military will increase its presence and utilize deterrence capabilities. The author concludes that "The US has already placed Taiwan's defense at the core of its national policy — what else is left to question? The only question worth asking is — is Taiwan itself prepared?"

Background developments

On 31 March, the US House of Representatives reintroduced the Taiwan International Solidarity Act. The act called for the US and its allies to oppose Chinese efforts to undermine Taiwan's global relations with other countries. The house noted that the UNGA resolution 2758 that China uses to prove its claim on Taiwan, "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." The bills call to resist any distortion of language, policies, or procedures by China against Taiwan.

On 30 March, the Pentagon came out with "Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance," giving a framework on curbing and preparedness on China's aggression and protecting the US's regional interests. The document was signed by US Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth, who instated the possible threat to Taiwan as a priority and as an "exclusive animating scenario." The memo called for the US military to increase military installations in the Indo-Pacific and stockpile supplies aimed at enhancing logistics. Hegseth said: "China is the department's sole pacing threat, and denial of a Chinese fait accompli seizure of Taiwan, while simultaneously defending the US homeland, is the department's sole pacing scenario."

COMMENTARY

The US-China Tariff War

Femy Francis

(Image Source: Brookings)

What happened?

On 11 April, China's Ministry of Commerce announced 125 per cent tariffs against the US, noting this as their last move against the "unilateral bullying". This comes after on 09 April the US President Donald Trump imposed 145 per cent tariffs on all Chinese goods. This comes after a series of tariffs and duties were imposed by the US since February.

On 09 April, US President Donald Trump also announced a 90-day halt on "reciprocal tariffs" on countries that have not retaliated, unlike China. China's President Xi Jinping said: "There are no winners in a trade war, and going against the world will only lead to self-isolation." China's Ministry of Commerce said: "If the US escalates tariffs, China will resolutely take countermeasures to safeguard its own rights and interests," and warned that "China will fight to the end." While Trump remains optimistic in securing a deal with China, he said: "Think we'll end up working something out that's very good for both countries."

What is the background?

First, a brief not on US-China trade. Trade between China and the US has grown steadily from USD 2.5 billion in 1979 to USD 688.3 billion in 2024. For China, the US is its largest trading partner, while for the US, China is the third, following Mexico and Canada. For China, its exports to the US include transmission equipment, computers, machine parts, batteries, and motor vehicle parts. For the US, its major exports to China are soya beans, crude oil, petroleum gas, cars, vaccines, and machinery.

Second, the trade deficit for the US vis-à-vis China, during the last ten years. Its trade deficit with China is the largest compared to the others. In 2015, the US trade deficit against China was USD 367 billion, which rose to USD 418 billion in 2018. Since then, the US has been working to reduce this gap; the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) signed in 2018, was an attempt to reduce the American trade deficit with China. In 2023, Mexico overtook China as the largest trading partner. In 2020, the US trade deficit against China came down to USD 307 billion. However, the trade deficit remains, in favour if China; in 2023, it was USD 279 billion, and in 2024, it was USD 295 billion.

Third, the American dependency on Chinese goods. China plays a critical role in the production of the global electronics supply chain, producing semiconductors and circuit boards. 90 per cent of the supply of refined rare metals comes from China, vital for smartphones and high-tech military equipment. US firms like Apple, Nvidia, Cisco, Dell, and Intel are all dependent on China's manufacturing industries. In 2023, China exported USD 146 billion worth of electronics to the US, reports the US International Trade Commission. Apparel industries, including MAGA merchandise, are made in China. Major retailers like Gap, Nike, and Walmart also get their products from China. Other industries, like the auto and pharmaceutical industries, face the threat of inflationary prices. On 12 April, Trump announced the possible exemption of smartphones and computers from the tariffs.

Fourth, Beijing's readiness and diversification. China's economy has been reorienting its investments from infrastructure and manufacturing industries to high-tech and AI firms. It now focuses on boosting its domestic consumption so as to not rely on exports. China has been concerned about the unilateral crackdown on the Chinese economy, which came true. Though the US is a major market for China, through BRI, CPEC, CMEC, LMC, and Shanghai cooperation, Beijing has diversified its market to countries other than the West. China is today a major trading partner for most of the countries in South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Africa. China's government subsidy policies are committed to protecting its industries and private firms.

What does it mean?

First, the global repercussions of tariff war. The US-China tariff war has shaken the stock market.

The tariff tension has created differences inside the Trump administration, as his main supporter, Tesla head Elon Musk, heavily relies on Chinese manufacturing. The European Union is worried about the diversion of unsold cheap Chinese products to Europe.

Second, likely new economic formations. Under the threat of unilateral tariffs, countries have formed alliances to protect their economies. Trade and bank heads of China, Japan, and South Korea have affirmed to work together and support each other's economies as they face "unprecedented times." China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi also met with the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, agreeing to continue trade cooperation under the threat of tariffs.

CHINA READER DAILY WIRE

INTERNAL

China issues an orange alert for forest fires

On 30 April, China issued an orange alert in light of forest fires starting from 01 May. The National Forest and Grassland Fire-Control Office informed the Ministry of Emergency Management (MEM). After which, the ministry issued an alert for forest fires in areas of Hebei, Shanxi, and Henan. The emergency department is instructed to closely monitor changes for fire hazards and to implement an early warning system and response measures. An official from MEM said: "Generally speaking, China's forest fires have shown an overall downward trend in recent years," but they are part of the five major disasters. From 1950-1989, China faced 16,000 forest fires, and the numbers dropped drastically to 6,000 in the 1990s and 2020s. China has a four-level warning system, with red being the highest, followed by orange, yellow, and blue. ("China issues orange alert for forest fires," *China Daily*, 30 April 2025)

China plans to establish legislation for a standardized five-year plan, reports SCMP

On 29 April, SCMP reported China's plans to establish legislation for standardized drafting of the five-year plans for their key economic and political goals. The draft on the national planning was submitted for first reading to the National People's Congress and held a four-day session. The legislation aims to improve strategic modernization for national development. The State Council, before this, met and noted that "the scientific, democratic, law-based, and standardised formulation of the national development plan." CPC party worker Zheng Shanjie said: "the rule of law should guide and ensure that national development plans better fulfil their strategic guiding role, thereby more effectively transforming institutional advantages into national governance capacity." ("China mulls law on standards for national 5-year plans," *SCMP*, 29 April 2025)

Release of four Hong Kong pro-democracy protesters after four years

On 29 April, the Hong Kong court released opposition lawmakers detained under the National Security Law (NSL). The four released are Claudia Mo, Kwok Ka-ki, Jeremy Tam, and Gary Fan; they were sentenced to four years in jail. The lawmakers were part of the group called Hong Kong 47 and were accused of anti-state activities and overthrowing the government. This they did by running an unofficial primary as an opposition for local elections. The NSL was imposed by China after the pro-democracy protests in 2019. Hundreds and thousands took to the streets for months over the treaty that would have allowed Hong Kong's extradition to China. China and the current authority in Hong Kong believe that these laws are necessary to maintain peace and stability in Hong Kong. May others were arrested, and this detention was criticized by the international community, including the UK and the US. ("Hong Kong frees four pro-democracy lawmakers after completing jail terms," *BBC*, 29 April 2025)

Speculations of an anti-graft probe against the Central Military Commission's vice chairman

On 28 April, *SCMP* reported that China's top general, He Weidong, was not present at a top political gathering and was not seen in public for a while. Weidong is the second-ranked vice chairman of the Central Military Commission of China (CMC), which is part of one of the 24-member CPC Politburo. He was not present at China's President Xi Jinping's study session. CCTV video showed that the first-ranked Vice President of CMC was present, but not Weidong. He was also not present for the neighborhood

diplomacy meeting and the symposium marking the 20th anniversary of the Anti-Session Law. This absence is being attributed to the anti-corruption drive by Xi Jinping, where recently the party noted that no one is above the purview of anti-corruption investigation. In recent years, there has been an increase in anti-graft probes. Where top-ranking officials were removed from their positions over violations of party policies and self-agency. ("Absence of China's top general He Weidong from Politburo study session fuels speculation," *SCMP*, 28 April 2025)

China's anti-graft commission warns of continued crackdown on corruption

On 25 April, China's Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) informed that they will continue to crack down on corruption activities in China and noted that "no one is untouchable." The commission informed that there are over 50 per cent of officials are facing disciplinary actions. CCDI said: "Fairness and justice are crucial conditions for the healthy development of the economy and society, and corruption is the greatest injustice," and that "Resolutely punishing corruption is a powerful measure to create a market-oriented, law-based and internationalised business environment and to maintain and promote social fairness and justice." It noted that no one has gold-sealed immunity and no iron-hat price or safe zone for anyone. No areas are forbidden from investigation, and there is a common consensus. In the first quarter of 2025, 185,000 officials were punished, which is a substantial increase from 2024. ("China's top graft-buster warns 'no one is untouchable' in corruption fight," *SCMP*, 25 April 2025)

China's Ministry of Education introduces 29 new courses on emerging technology

On 22 April, China's Ministry of Education announced new courses for undergraduate programs, and that they added 29 new majors on AI, low-altitude economy, carbon neutrality science, marine science, healthcare security, and others. These will also be included in the gaokao/college entrance exams. The change in curriculum is aimed at developing cutting-edge technology in areas like intelligent molecular engineering, medical devices, and spatiotemporal information engineering. The education ministry aims to include majors that can adapt to national priorities and align with the CPC's vision for key sectors. The Ministry informed that there are 93 disciplinary categories in 845 collegiate majors and that currently there are 62,800 undergraduates. ("China's Ministry of Education adds 29 new undergraduate majors, covering AI, other cutting-edge technologies," *Global Times*, 21 April 2025)

Chinese manufacturers reveal markup by luxury brands, reports Business Standard

On 14 April, Business Standard reported that Chinese manufacturers were posting videos on social media, revealing that global luxury brands use their services. These videos come in light of the tariffs imposed by US President Donald Trump. The videos noted that they made products for brands like Hermes, Louis Vuitton, Chanel, Estee Lauder, and Bobbi Brown. They offered to sell the same products for a fraction of the price, removing the expensive middlemen. The suppliers also informed how unreasonably the luxury brands charge their consumers. A Hermes brand makes a bag called the Birkin costs USD 34000 for one bag. Chinese suppliers clarify that making such a bag only costs USD 1400. The hefty markup is caused by the brand names, the suppliers are willing to sell the same bag for 10th of the price. Some even offered free global shipping. ("Birkin bag for $1,400, Lululemon for $6: China's clapback at Trump tariffs," *Business Standard*, 14 April 2025)

Deadly fire in nursing home kills 20

On 09 April, twenty people died in a fire at a nursing home in China's northern Hebei province. The fire initially broke out a day before in Longhua County. The remaining elderly people have been evacuated from the nursing home and transferred to nearby hospitals for observation and treatment. Building fires are relatively common in Chinese buildings due to lax building codes. In January, a vegetable market in Zhangjiakou city caught fire, killing eight and injuring 15. Additionally, in March, a delay fire in a construction site killed nine people. ("Nursing home fire kills 20 in north China," *Xinhua*, 09 April 2025)

China's maternal and infant mortality rate drop significantly, reports CGTN

On 08 April, *CGTN* reported on the drop in infant and maternal mortality rates. In 2024, the maternal mortality rate was 14.3 per 100,000 live births, and infant mortality was 4 per 1000 live births. There was only 5.6 per 1,000 children under the age of five mortality. The number showcased that in China, there has been a substantial improvement in maternal and child health care. This is owed to the progress made in the prevention and treatment of major diseases, leading to a lack of birth defects and other issues in birth. There has also been a 21 per cent decline in birth defects such as down

syndrome and neural tube defects in China. Citing the National Health Commission, there are 3,491 treatment centers for critically ill pregnant women, 3,221 centers for critically ill newborns, and 373,000 gynecologists and obstetricians in China. Chinese medical teams are also dispatched overseas as foreign aid and provide healthcare services in 44 countries, and in 2024 delivered 63,800 babies. ("China's maternal, infant mortality rates continue to drop," *CGTN*, 08 April 2025)

EXTERNAL

China's Foreign Minister attends the BRICS ministerial meeting in Brazil

On 28 April, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi attended the BRICS Foreign Ministers meeting in Brazil, Rio de Janeiro. Wang Yi, during his visit and the meeting, noted that today's international landscape is going through profound changes and the cause of peace, stability, and development faces challenges. He noted that this is a crucial point in history, where the world and the future of humanity will be decided by the countries making the right choice. He called the BRICS countries to be a positive and constructive force on the international stage, and that they should spearhead and pioneer global peace and development. The Foreign Ministers meeting was presided over by Brazil's Foreign Minister Mauro Vieira, and the leaders from BRICS countries discussed the future of peace and security. ("Chinese FM Wang Yi attends BRICS Foreign Ministers' Meeting," *CGTN*, 29 April 2025)

Xiangshan Forum on security dialogue to host 31 countries

On 24 April, China's Defense Ministry announced that representatives from 31 countries will participate in the Xiangshan Forum. The security forum for military diplomacy has been held every year since 2006. The ministry informed that the meeting will focus on discussing opportunities and challenges that they face in the current global security. It is expected that 200 defense officials, scholars and state media officials, and representatives will attend the meeting. There will be several multilateral and bilateral meetings being held on the sidelines. The meeting last year had representatives from 90 countries and regions participating. This navigator meeting comes a month ahead of the Shangri-La dialogue that is held in June. ("China to host first-ever preview meeting for flagship annual Xiangshan security forum," *SCMP*, 25 April 2025)

IAEA Director General meets representatives from China, Iran, and Russia

On 24 April, China's representative at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) appreciated its involvement in dealing with Iran's nuclear issue. This comes after the IAEA's Director General, Rafael Grossi, met with Russia's representative, Mikhail Ulyanov, China's representative Li Song, and Iran's representative, Reza Najafi. The three countries jointly called for diplomatic engagement based on mutual respect, and that this is the only way to resolve the nuclear issue. Li said: "China appreciates Iran's commitment not to develop nuclear weapons, respects its right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy, and supports Iran in holding dialogue with all parties, including the United States, to safeguard its legitimate rights and interests through consultation and negotiation." Additionally, he noted that China appreciates Iran's commitment to not developing weapons and respecting the peaceful use of nuclear energy. ("China backs diplomatic path on Iran nuclear issue, supports IAEA role," *CGTN*, 25 April 2025)

China's Ministry of Commerce met with trade and commerce heads of Saudi Arabia, South Africa, and Malaysia

On 10 April, China's Commerce Minister Wang Wentao met with his Saudi counterpart, Majid bin Abdullah Al-Qasabi and South Africa's Minister of Trade, Industry, and Competition Parks Tau, who is the G20 presidency holder. The Ministry of Commerce informed that these separate meetings aimed at strengthening multilateral cooperation as they face the US's reckless imposition of tariffs. Wentao discussed the tariffs with Qasabi, and they agreed to enhance cooperation between them and the Gulf Cooperation Council. They both also discussed how they could leverage the World Trade Organization to uphold the multilateral trading system. Tau also agreed to further China and South Africa's economic relations and trade cooperation and that they should use platforms like G20 and BRICS to their benefit. Wentao also talked to Malaysia's Minister of Investment, Trade, and Industry, Tengku Zafrul Abdul Aziz, who is also the chair of ASEAN. Wentao expressed willingness to further communication and coordination, additionally to safeguard the multilateral trading system. ("China's commerce minister discusses multilateral cooperation with Saudi, South African counterparts amid US tariff threats," *Global Times*, 11 April 2025)

UN Secretary General against tariff wars says "nobody wins the trade war"

On 08 April, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres iterated that "nobody wins the trade war," speaking at the UN. This was the response when asked about the Trump administration-imposed tariffs on nearly all countries. He called the tariffs extremely negative and said that he was particularly worried about the impact the tariffs would have on the more vulnerable and developing countries. Guterres believes that this would be devastating for many countries. He said: "I sincerely hope that we will have no recession, because a recession will have dramatic consequences, especially for the poorest people in the world." Since the imposition of tariffs and China even imposing counter-retaliatory tariffs, there is a larger fear that the world might face recession. Currently US is going the hardest against China, and Trump has announced imposing additional 50 per cent tariffs, making the total to 104 per cent. ("UN chief on U.S. tariffs: Nobody wins in a trade war," *CGTN*, 09 April 2025)

G7 leaders call China drills near Taiwan and provocative and destabilizing

On 07 April, *SCMP* reported on Foreign Ministers of G7 countries calling China's recent military activities near Taiwan as destabilizing and provocative. They called for the peaceful resolution of the issues. The diplomats noted that the frequent destabilizing activities near the cross-strait puts global security at risk. The G7 countries' diplomats called for peaceful resolution by cross-strait dialogue. These statements came after China conducted military exercises near the Taiwan Strait for two days. There has been an international pivot towards Taiwan with the US posing any attempt by China to change the status quo. ("Beijing's military drills around Taiwan are 'destabilising', G7 says," *SCMP*, 07 April 2025)

ECONOMY

China passes law to promote private sector development

On 30 April, Chinese lawmakers voted to adopt their first law to promote the private sector. This aims to underscore support for an essential part of the Chinese economy. China passed the Private Sector Promotion Law by the National People's Congress (NPC). The law will cover fair compensation, investment, financial promotion, technological innovation, protection of rights and interests, and legal responsibilities. A professor at the University of International Business and Economics said: "Although various regulations and measures to support the private economy have been introduced over the years, this is the first time such recognition has been elevated to the level of national legislation." ("China adopts first law promoting private sector, underscoring 'nation's commitment to safeguarding rights of private businesses'," *Global Times*, 30 April 2025)

Chinese ministries to hold press conference on stabilizing employment and economy, reports *CGTN*

On 27 April, *CGTN* reported that China is set to hold a press conference aimed at discussing policies and measures to stabilize employment and ensure stable growth. This will focus on promoting high-quality development. The briefing will be between China's National Development Reform Commission, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, the Ministry of Commerce, and the People's Bank of China. This comes after China's President Xi Jinping vowed to improve policies to stabilize employment. Additionally, to bring in already planned measures for the economy. The main speakers at this press conference will be China's Vice Chairman of NDRC, Zhao Chenxin, Vice Minister of Human Resources and Social Security, Sheng Qiuping, Vice Minister of Commerce, and the Deputy Governor of PBOC, Zou Lan. ("China to Brief on Policies to Stabilize Employment, Growth," *Bloomberg*, 27 April 2025; "China to launch measures to shore up economy, job market: NDRC," *CGTN*, 28 April 2025)

China's first-quarter report shows a 5.4 per cent hike in GDP

On 16 April, *Reuters* reported that China beat its economic prediction for the first Quarter and its gross domestic product (GDP) rose by 5.4 per cent from January to March. The expectation for China's growth in the first quarter was 5.1 per cent. This growth momentum is expected to slow slower and lower amid US tariffs. The rise in the GDP is due to government stimulus that boosted consumption and supported investments. The year-on-year growth for China was revised and is expected to be 4.5 per cent this year as they face US tariffs and duties. An analyst at UBS said: "We think the tariff shock poses unprecedented challenges to China's exports and will set forth major adjustment in the domestic economy as well." ("China Q1 GDP growth beats expectations, but US tariff shock looms large," *Reuters*, 16 April 2025)

China's SOE increase stock holdings aimed to stabilize the market and optimism towards the Chinese market

On 07 April, China's state-owned enterprise (SOE) Chengtong Holdings Group Ltd informed

that they will increase their investments in light of the tariffs faced by China. Chengtong is an asset regulator, it noted that they have increased their holding in exchange-traded funds (ETFs). Additionally, they are investing more in SOE-owned stocks to safeguard the operation of the market. The firm also expressed that it remains optimistic of China's capital market and its prospects, as they continue to increase their holding of SOEs and technological innovation stocks. The firm also stated that it plans to become a long-term investor and provide strong support for high-quality development. ("Chinese state-owned capital operation firm increases holdings of ETFs, SOE stocks," *People's Daily Online*, 08 April 2025)

Goldman Sachs lowers China's growth forecast for 2025 amid US tariffs

On 06 April, Goldman Sachs revised China's growth 2025 forecast after the US imposition of heavy tariffs. They reduced the growth due to the impact after the tariffs can lead to USD 275 billion loss. They brought the 12-month estimate of the MSCI China index to 10 per cent from 16 per cent, and the CSI 300 outlook shifted to 17 per cent from 19 per cent. The average earning per share growth has been reduced to 7 per cent from 9 per cent. Chairman of the Hong Kong Institute of Financial Analyst, Kenny Tang-hing, said: "Hong Kong and mainland stock markets are expected to be more resilient than US stocks because the Chinese government can introduce measures to boost domestic trade and consumption." The Goldman report also suggested that China will dial up its policy initiative to ease the intensity of the tariffs and facilitate consumption through domestic demand. ("Goldman Sachs lowers 2025 growth forecast for Chinese stocks thanks to Trump tariffs," *SCMP*, 07 April 2025)

Stocks fall amid US-China trade tension, reports *SCMP*

On 07 April, *SCMP* reported that the Asian stock market was hit due to the trade tensions between China and the US. Hong Kong's Hang Seng Index went down by 10.7 per cent; this is the biggest decline since the global financial crisis of 2008. Other than that, Japan's Nikkei declined by 6.2 per cent, South Korea's Kospi went down by 4.7 per cent, and Australia's S&P lost 4 per cent. Alibaba, China's biggest retailer, fell by 14.4 per cent, and Xiaomi tumbled by 15.3 per cent. CSI 300 Index that tracks Shanghai and Shenzhen's largest stocks fell by 7.6 per cent. SPI Asset Management's Stephen Inn said: "Traders are bracing for a high-volatility session that could crack the Hang Seng China Enterprises Index into full-blown bear market territory by midweek" ("Developing Hang Seng Index plummets by the most since 2008 amid Asia sell-off in all-out tariff war," *SCMP*, 07 April 2025)

OUTER SPACE

Shenzhou-19 crew mission returns with taikonauts

On 30 April, China's Shenzhou-19 crewed spacecraft mission returns, with taikonauts. They touched down at the Dongfeng landing site of North China, Inner Mongolia region. During the mission, they completed three spacewalks and conducted six payload operations. They also set the world record for the longest single spacewalk. China Manned Space Agency (CMSA) informed that three astronauts spent 183 days in orbit and installed a space debris protection device for the space station. They also conducted multiple cargo transfer missions and repaired both internal and external equipment. ("Shenzhou-19 return capsule touches down, marking the complete success of space mission," Global Times, 30 April 2025)

China launches data relay satellite as part of Long March mission

On 27 April, China launched a data relay satellite from Xichang Satellite Launch Center. The satellite Tianlian II-05 was launched from a Long March-3B carrier rocket, and it entered the planetary orbit. The satellite is China's second-generation geosynchronous orbit data relay satellite. This satellite will be used for telemetry, command, and tracking services of manned spacecraft, spaceships, and space stations in the medium to low Earth orbit. This is part of the 572nd Long Match mission of carrier rockets. ("China launches new data relay satellite," Global Times, 28 April 2025)

China to launch its Shenzhou-20 crewed mission

On 24 April, China's Manned Space Agency (CMSA) will launch its Shenzhou-20 crew mission from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center. The spacecraft will be responsible for conducting an automated rendezvous and docking of the radial port. This will be the Shenzhou-20 fifth crew mission flight and will be China's 35th crewed space flight. The main objective is to complete an in-orbit crew rotation with the Shenzhou-19 crew, conduct space science, perform spacewalks, and transfer cargo. They will also receive Tianzhou-9 cargo spacecraft and the Shenzhou-21 crewed spacecraft. The crew is set to return on 29 April with Shenzhou-19. ("China to launch Shenzhou-

20 crewed mission on April 24," CGTN, 23 April 2025)

China's National Space Administration launches international space cooperation

On 24 April, Global Times reported that China's National Space Administration (CNSA) unveiled the international cooperation project for the Chang'e-8 mission. Ten projects from eleven countries and regions have been selected. Some of them are the Space & Upper Atmosphere Research Commission of Pakistan (SUPARCO) proposed a Pakistani Lunar Rover. Thailand's Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation, and the National Astronomical Research Institute proposed the International Society for Terrain-Vehicle Systems and the Lunar Neutron Analyzer. Other programs are also included from Turkey, Italy, Iran, and Egypt. SUPARCO's Deputy Director, Amjad Ali, said: "That is said very commonly that China-Pakistan friendship is higher than the Himalayas and deeper than the seas. Now we are reaching the moon, beyond the limits of the Earth." Thailand's National Astronomical Research Institute Deputy Director said: "We are very excited about the prospective cooperation between China and Thailand. Because this program has started quite recently, less than three years ago. And now we are on the trajectory to send our payload to land on the moon with the Chang'e-8 mission in 2029." ("CNSA unveils 10 selected international cooperation projects for Chang'e-8 lunar probe mission," Global Times, 24 April 2025)

Shenzhou-19 mission returns after 175 days in orbit, and the longest spacewalk

On 23 April, China's Manned Space Agency (CMSA) informed that the Shenzhou-19 crew completed three spacewalks and six payload transfers while staying at the Chinese space station. They set the world record for the longest spacewalk, which lasted nine hours. The crew had three-members Cai Xuzhe, Song Lingdong and Wang Haoze. They have been orbiting the world for 175 days. Cai completed five spacewalks, making the most out of the Chinese astronauts. Additionally, Wang is the first female aerospace flight engineer to enter the Chinese space station as well. ("Shenzhou-19 mission review: 175 days in orbit, longest spacewalk," CGTN, 23 April 2025)

China launches six new satellites as part of the Long March series

On 19 April, China launched six new satellites from the Taiyuan Satellite Launch Center, located in Shanxi Province. The six satellites called Shiyan 27 are a modified version of the Long March-6 carrier rockets that reached the preset orbits. They will be used to explore the space environment and other technological tests. This marks the 570th flight mission as part of the Long March carrier rocket series. China's outer space presence has developed exponentially over the years; in recent years, its private and government rocket launches compete with the world's international space station in establishing dominance. ("China launches six satellites for tech, space research," CGTN, 19 April 2025)

CAS establishes first three satellite constellations

On 16 April, CCTV reported that China successfully launched the world's first three-satellite constellations in the distant retrograde orbit (DRO). This is in the Earth and Moon region and is connected with stable inter-satellite measurement and communication links. This was done by the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS). CAS said: "Such development has yielded a variety of original scientific and technology outcomes, laying a solid ground for the country's future development." They added: "Developing and utilizing cislunar space holds tremendous strategic significance for lunar resource exploitation, long-term human habitation beyond Earth, interplanetary activities, and the sustainable exploration of the solar system." The DROs A and B were first launched in March 2024, and DRO L was launched in February 2024. They formed a constellation for the first time in August 2024. The plans were to permanently station DRO-A satellite while the B satellite maneuvers in the orbits, reports Center for Space Utilization (CSU). ("China establishes world's first three-satellite constellation in the Earth-moon region of space," Global Times, 16 April 2025)

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

China's President visits AI incubator and calls for sector development

On 29 April, China's President Xi Jinping visited an AI incubator in Shanghai. They called to take a lead on AI development and governance. This comes after Xi held his AI study session, where he called to gain a head start in the strategic sector. Xi pointed out that AI and strategic technology lead the new round of sci-tech revolution and industrial transformation. Xi said: "The Party Central Committee attaches great importance to the development of AI, and has improved top-level design and strengthened implementation efforts in recent years." He also noted that while AI is a nascent industry, it is

also the industry of the young. ("Xi inspects Shanghai large-model incubator, underscoring China's AI ambitions," *Global Times*, 29 April 2025)

Tencent and Alibaba allegedly bought GPUs from ByteDance

On 28 April, SCMP reported that Chinese tech giants Tencent Holdings and Alibaba Group bought graphic processing units (GPUs) of TikTok from their parent company, ByteDance. This is USD 13.7 billion worth of chips. This means billions worth of Nvidia H20 chips are with Chinese firms. This will support the development of AI-like applications. This was refuted by ByteDance, noting that it is untrue. The Information reported that ByteDance, Alibaba, and Tencent ordered billions worth H20 Chips in the first quarter of 2025. Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang visited China and met with Chinese officials. Huang noted that Nvidia will spare no effort to optimize the regulatory market. ("Tencent, Alibaba buy Nvidia GPUs from ByteDance stockpile, report says," *SCMP*, 28 April 2025)

Chinese humanoid robot "Tiangong Ultra" wins a marathon

On 19 April, in a historical first, China sent twenty-one humanoid robots to compete in a marathon with thousands of runners at the Yizhuang half-marathon held in Beijing. The robots were made by DroidVP and Noetix Robotics came in many shapes and sizes. Some of the robots also have human features and even have facial abilities to wink and smile. These robots were tested weeks before the race. The race was compared to a car competition as it needed engineering and navigational support. The robots were accompanied by human trainers who supported the robots physically during the race. And for the first time, a robot named Tiangong Ultra of Beijing Innovation Center won the race, with two hours and 40 minutes left to complete the race. The center is partially an SOE led by Xiaomi. Chief of Technology from the Beijing Center, Tang Jiang, said: "Don't want to boast but I think no other robotics firms in the West have matched Tiangong's sporting achievements." ("China pits humanoid robots against humans in half-marathon," *Reuters*, 19 April 2025)

China held its Zhongguancun Forum 2025 on "New Quality Productive Forces and Global Technology Cooperation"

On 07 April, *People Daily Online* reported on the 2025 Zhongguancun (ZGC) Forum Annual Conference, theme "New Quality Productive Forces and Global Technology Cooperation." The forum focused on AI agents and 100 intelligent robots volunteering throughout the event. The ZGC meeting started in 2007 and aimed for steady growth in scientific and technological innovation. Since then, the ZGC has become the platform for technological exchange and cooperation. The discussion centered on the future of emerging technologies and large AI models, quantum technology, and industrial eco-systems. The event also unveiled "China's National Innovation Index Report 2024" and its top 10 scientific advances. They also introduced 100 new tech products, international tech innovations, and a launched smart service platform. They also signed 11 major cooperation agreements for tech and innovation development. Director General of the World Intellectual Property Organization, Daren Tang expressed hope for stronger collaboration and China becoming the major tech hub. ("China's Zhongguancun Forum 2025: Bridging innovation with industrial ecosystems," *People's Daily Online*, 07 April 2025)

NUCLEAR

China is capable of building 40 nuclear units simultaneously, reports CNEA

On 27 April, China's Nuclear Energy Association (CNEA) informed that China is capable of building more than 40 nuclear power plants simultaneously. CNEA report of 2025 noted that Hualong One nuclear reactors are at the starting stage of mass construction in both China and abroad. The report noted that China's capability to build plants has increased multifold, noted CNEA. In 2024, China's investments in the construction of nuclear power plants were USD 146.9 billion, a record high and a USD 52 billion increase. CNEA's Executive Vice Chairman Cao Shudong said: "China has gradually developed full lifecycle construction and operating capabilities in nuclear power engineering, from design and construction to commissioning and commercial operation. Its construction and management capabilities for multi-unit nuclear power projects are at the forefront internationally." Cao also informed that in 2024, China opened 12 nuclear research facilities and even launched collaborative projects with Bangladesh, Thailand, Hungary, Poland, and Nigeria. ("China can build over 40 nuclear units at once, report says," *CGTN*, 28 April 2025)

China tests a non-nuclear hydrogen bomb, reports *SCMP*

On 20 April, SCMP reported that China blasted a hydrazine-based explosive in a controlled field test. The paper of the same was published a

month prior. This was developed by the researchers of China State Shipbuilding Corporation (CSSC), where a 2kg bomb made a fireball with a 1,000 ° Celsius blast. The device used magnesium-based hydrogen storage. The magnesium hydride material can hold considerably more hydrogen than a pressure tank. The paper noted that "Hydrogen gas explosions ignite with minimal ignition energy, have a broad explosion range, and unleash flames that race outward rapidly while spreading widely." This allows them to have precise control over the blast intensity. ("China tests non-nuclear hydrogen bomb, science paper shows," *SCMP*, 22 April 2025)

ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

China imposes export control on rare earth minerals and metals, reports *CGTN*

On 06 April, China will impose export control of certain rare earth minerals and material, showcasing the commitment to maintain world peace, says China Nonferrous Metals Industry Association. This comes after China's Ministry of Commerce announced the control measures on seven types of medium-to-heavy rare earths. The rare earth materials have both military and civil uses as they play a vital role in the production of technology, machinery, and weapons. The ministry also noted that the firms that do not infringe upon China's national sovereignty, security, and development need not worry. The ministry also informed that they will adopt higher standards of opening up and provide to mutually beneficial countries. The move is largely seen as a repercussion to several tariffs imposed by the US on China and Chinese firms. China has responded with its own sets of tariffs and export control measures. ("Industry body: China's rare earth export control to safeguard security," *CGTN*, 07 April 2025)

MARITIME

Chinese shipping firm condemns the US investigating their maritime logistics and shipbuilding industry

On 21 April, China's COSCO shipping corporation called out the discriminatory practices by the US Trade Representatives, as they investigate China's maritime logistics and shipbuilding industry. COSCO said: "Such measures not only distort fair competition and impede the normal functioning of the global shipping industry, but also threaten its stable and sustainable development. Ultimately, these actions risk undermining the security, resilience, and orderly operation of global industrial and supply chains." They noted that they are a responsible global provider of shipping and other logistics services. China's Ministry of Commerce, in the investigation, noted that the US needs to stop blaming China for its incompetence and industry problems. China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson, Lin Jian said: "uch measures as imposing port fees and levying tariffs on cargo handling facilities hurt the US itself as well as others." ("COSCO Shipping denounces US measures targeting China's maritime, logistics, shipbuilding sectors, saying discriminatory move will distort fair competition," *Global Times*, 21 April 2025)

China sold an LNG dual-fueled ship to France

On 15 April, China's State Shipbuilding Corporation Ltd. (CSSC) delivered an ultra-large 24,000-TEU, LNG dual fuel container ship to France. Hudong-Zhonghua Shipbuilding (Group) was responsible for this sale, this marks the first ultra-large dual-fuel container ship. This ship can be powered through LNG or oil to power the ship. The ship is 61.3 meters wide and can carry 220,200 tons of goods. The ship can sail for 20000 nautical miles, and they produce less carbon dioxide. ("Chinese shipbuilder delivers 24,000-TEU LNG dual-fuel container ship," *CGTN*, 16 April 2025)

Chinese icebreaker returns after 159-day Antarctic expedition

On 08 April, China's research icebreaker Xuelong,/ Snow Dragon, returned to Shanghai after its 41st Antarctic expedition. The expedition involved 516 members and 118 domestic and international institutions. While the cargo ship returned in January, the ice break remained in the Ross Sea. The snow dragon completed a 159-day journey covering 27,000 nautical miles from its departure in Guangzhou. The polar expedition by domestically developed ships and ice breakers is important for innovation, noted Xinhua. This expedition aims to bolster rapid changes in Antarctica. The head of the expedition Wang Jinjui said: "mission primarily focused on establishing a clean energy system, incorporating wind, solar and hydrogen power as well as energy storage facilities at China's Qinling research station in Antarctica." China is collaborating with multiple countries for oceanic survey in the Ross Sea. ("China's icebreaker Xuelong returns to Shanghai after fruitful Antarctic surveyv," *People's Daily Online*, 09 April 2025)

POLAR

China's Qinling station in Antarctica is now operating on clean and green energy, reports *China Daily*

On 22 April, *China Daily* reported on China's Qinling station in Antarctica using a clean energy system modified to be used in the polar region and its natural conditions. This has been noted as the first country to have a large-scale operation on clean energy in Antarctica. Lead scientist Sun Hongbin said that this is China's achievement in green scientific exploration in the polar region. The station has replaced traditional diesel power sources and can provide uninterrupted zero-carbon power. Sun also informed that the primary challenge they faced was the reliability and safety of equipment. He said: "Once the equipment arrives in Antarctica, we have no means to procure a replacement if a single screw malfunctions," and "Before deployment to Antarctica, various new energy devices underwent testing here. Now the laboratory receives and analyzes real-time data transmitted back from Antarctica." ("China's Antarctic station powered by new energy," *China Daily*, 22 April 2025)

China develops undersea detection capability for Alaskan water, reports *SCMP*

On 16 April, *SCMP* reported on Chinese innovation in developing underwater acoustic technology. This innovation will allow scientists to know the depth of low-frequency sound sources and the accuracy to locate the Arctic's Beaufort Sea. This is the focal point for the US naval operations in Alaska. The paper was published by scientists at Harbin Engineering University (HEU). They claimed that in the challenging Arctic oceanography, they have 93 per cent accuracy in detecting underwater targets and a 100 per cent success rating in identifying surface vessels. This marks a significant step towards the undersea capabilities of China. HEU's professor Han Xiao said: "This acoustic trapping capability provides new opportunities for long-range under-ice communication, navigation, and both active/passive detection systems." The researchers from the recent Arctic exploration found that the lower-pitched sounds jump between the ocean layers. So by tracking the sound wave clusters and the measuring the strengths at different depths, they can locate the depth of an underwater target with precision. ("Arctic advantage: China's new tech boosts sub detection capabilities near Alaskan waters," *SCMP*, 16 April 2025)

CHINA & EAST ASIA

South Korea accuses DeepSeek of transferring personal data to Chinese firms

On 24 April, *Reuters* reported that South Korea's Personal Information Protection Commission informed that DeepSeek transferred personal information to Chinese firms without user consent. The AI firm shared the data when the app and its services were still available to download in South Korea's app market. In February, the app was suspended in South Korea, citing its failure to protect personal data. South Korea found that DeepSeek consented to send information to Volcano Engine, a Chinese firm. DeepSeek clarified that it was to improve the user experience and did block the transfer of AI prompts. The commission noted that DeepSeek needs to immediately remove the AI prompts shared and establish a legal basis for transferring personal information. ("South Korea says DeepSeek transferred user data, prompts without consent," *Reuters*, 24 April 2025)

China erects a sea structure in the disputed West Sea region of South Korea

On 24 April, South Korea's Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed concerns regarding China erecting a sea structure at the western coast of the Korean Peninsula. These concerns were shared with the Chinese officials, who stated that these structures were used for fish farming and have nothing to do with territorial rights. The said structure is established at the disputed Yellow Sea/West Sea. This raised alarms in South Korea, noting they are staking claims in the Provisional Maritime Zone. South Korea's Foreign Ministry said: "Through diplomatic channels at various levels, it was decided to closely discuss the stable management of the maritime order in the West Sea and the expansion and deepening of tangible cooperation." China's Embassy in South Korea issued that "The structure is within both Chinese and international law and does not violate the China-South Korea fisheries agreement." ("South Korea expressed concern over Chinese structure in disputed area of sea," *Reuters*, 24 April 2025)

Central bank heads of China-Japan-South Korea discuss the US tariffs

On 11 April, finance and central bank heads of China, Japan, and South Korea met to discuss the US tariffs and the impact of their regional macroeconomy. This comes after the trade ministers of all three countries met recently to discuss the explosive tariffs by the Trump administration. The three sides also agreed that they would help each other and uphold their regional economy by forging partnerships. These three countries are not facing the same kind of tariff pressure, the volatile being against

China with 145 per cent. Both Japan and South Korea were waiting time to renegotiate these tariffs with the US. But for now, Trump administration has announced a pause on all the tariffs for countries who did not retaliate, but to only continue with the base tariff of 10 per cent. They also exchanged their view on the economic situation and called for financial cooperation. China's Central Bank made a statement where they informed that they will implement a moderately loose monetary policy for the smooth operation of financial markets. ("China, Japan, S.Korea central bank deputies discussed US tariffs," *Reuters*, 11 April 2025)

CHINA & SOUTHEAST ASIA

China Seizes a South China Sea reef disputed by the Philippines

On 28 April, *BBC* reported that China's coast guards seized a tiny sandbank in the South China Sea, according to CCTV, a flagship Chinese media outlet. The sandbank is part of the dispute between China and the Philippines in the South China Sea. The CCTV posted images of four Chinese officers holding Chinese flags as they stood on the sand reef in the Spratly Islands. After which, the Philippines announced that they landed three soldiers on the sandbanks with the officers holding the Philippines flag. The Philippines National Task Force West Philippine Sea (NTF-WPS) informed that there is an illegal presence of the Chinese coastguards in the region. The statement by the NTS said: "This operation reflects the unwavering dedication and commitment of the Philippine Government to uphold the country's sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction in the West Philippine Sea." For the Philippines, Sandy Cay in the Spratly Islands is a key military outpost called Pag-asa. The White House also issued a statement where it noted that China seizing the reef is concerning and that actions like these violate international law and regional stability, noted the US National Security Council spokesperson. ("Beijing seizes tiny sandbank in South China Sea," *BBC*, 28 April 2025)

Myanmar hands over 920 Chinese telecom fraud suspects

On 23 April, China's Ministry of Public Security (MPS) informed that the Myanmar law enforcement authorities handed over 920 Chinese telecom fraud suspects back to China. They were apprehended in Tangyan and Mong Husi region in the Shan State of Myanmar. They were transferred to Chinese authorities through Dalou border in the Yunnan Province. MPS said: "This marks a new achievement in the continued efforts of Chinese and Myanmar law enforcement agencies to combat telecom fraud deeper within Myanmar's territory, following the complete dismantling of large-scale fraud operations in northern Myanmar near the Chinese border." China and Myanmar have jointly arrested over 55,000 Chinese nationals suspected through special telecom operations targeting online fraud. The MPS also noted that the Chinese public security authorities intensified their intelligence and provided information to the Myanmar side. ("Over 920 Chinese telecom fraud suspects handed over to China from Myanmar amid deepened joint law enforcement," *Global Times*, 23 April 2025)

China brokers Laisho city's return to the Myanmar military

On 21 April, China's envoy to Myanmar oversaw the handover of the northern Shan State capital to the military regime by the rebel group Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA). The envoy Deng Xijun was responsible for brokering the deal as the MNDAA was forced to give up the Shan State. The MNDAA flags were replaced by Myanmar's national flags in Lashio. The envoy there toured the town. China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Guo Jiaku said that China: "supported various parties in Myanmar in carrying out friendly consultation toward political reconciliation, and support Myanmar in resuming the political transition process." Lashio residents expressed frustration against Chinese involvement, noting that when protestors were killed by the military, China decided to remain neutral, but now they want to actively intervene. ("Chinese Envoy in Lashio to Broker Return of Myanmar Military," *The Irrawaddy*, 22 April 2025)

Mekong River Commission calls Cambodia to submit impact assessment of the China-funded canal project

On 23 April, the Secretariat of the intergovernmental Mekong River Commission (MRC) called on Cambodia to share its feasibility study on the impact of China's China-backed canal project on the Mekong Delta. They signed a deal with China on the Funan Techo Canal when China's President Xi Jinping visited Cambodia. This will be done by the SOE China Communications Construction Company (CCCC), which will have a 49 per cent stake. The secretariat is responsible for overseeing the sustainable development of Southeast Asia's longest river. They said that they only received basic information and that "We hope that further details, including the feasibility study report and other relevant reports, will be

provided." They want to ensure that there are no potential implications for the Mekong-Lancang Basin. The Cambodian government on the canal noted that it will have minimal environmental impact and that it aligns with the 1995 Mekong agreement. ("Cambodia canal's impact on Mekong questioned after China signs deal," *Reuters*, 23 April 2025)

China and Indonesia secure deeper cooperation at the First Ministerial Dialogue

On 21 April, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi and their Defense Minister Dong Jun held the First Ministerial Meeting of the China-Indonesia Joint Foreign and Defense Ministerial Dialogue. This was attended by Indonesia's Foreign Minister Sugiono and Defense Minister Sjafrie Sjamsoeddin. Both countries affirmed to further strategic mutual trust and to maintain a high level of exchange. They also agreed to advance the BRI initiative and to set a benchmark for cooperation in emerging fields. Wang Yi said: "China is willing to strengthen communication and cooperation on platforms such as the United Nations, BRICS, and the G20 with Indonesia to serve as a just force for maintaining world peace and stability." Dong noted the current international situation and called for the deepening of defense security. Sugiono said: "Indonesia will work with China to deepen mutually beneficial cooperation in fields including economy and trade, agriculture and fisheries, energy, medical care, and digital economy, enhance communication and cooperation." China and Indonesia signed a MoU to establish a comprehensive strategic dialogue. ("China, Indonesia vow higher-level ties, deepened security cooperation," *CGTN*, 21 April 2025)

China's PLA warns Philippines' vessel intrusion in the South China Sea

On 20 April, China's People's Liberation Army's (PLA) southern theater command warned the Philippines to cease any provocation in the South China Sea. Southern Theatre Command's senior Captain, Zhai Zhiwei, called the Philippines' entry in the South China Sea under China's jurisdiction an illegal intrusion. The PLA informed that it monitored and issued a warning against the vessels, and it even expelled the vessel. PLA noted that this violated China's sovereignty and Chinese law relevant to international law. Zhao said: "We sternly warn the Philippines to immediately cease its infringements and provocations, or it will bear all consequences arising from its actions." ("China urges the Philippines to stop provocations in South China Sea," *CGTN*, 20 April 2025)

Wang Yi Xi Jinping Southeast Asia tour "China welcomes more high-quality products from ASEAN"

On 18 April, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi spoke on China's President Xi Jinping visit to Southeast Asia. The President concluded his Southeast Asian tour after visiting Vietnam, Malaysia, and Cambodia. On Vietnam, Wang Yi noted that leaders agreed to advance their overarching goal of cooperation and expand their cooperation of railway. In Malaysia, the significant development was the upgradation of their ties to building a high-level strategic China-Malaysia community with a shared future. Both countries agreed to become the pacesetters in the region and to cooperate on quality, productive force, and cutting-edge technology. In Cambodia, the highlight was the establishment of an all-weather friendship. Wang Yi quoted Xi and said: "China's mega market is always open to neighboring countries, and China welcomes more high-quality products from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) members." ("Xi's Southeast Asia tour promotes good-neighborliness, mutually beneficial cooperation, says Chinese FM," *CGTN*, 19 April 2025)

Xi affirms all-weather friendship with Cambodia

On 17 April, China's President Xi Jinping met with Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet, where they agreed to build an all-weather China-Cambodia community. Xi noted their ironclad friendship between the two countries and how that gave a solid political foundation. He affirmed that China will always support Cambodia and will follow the development path that suits their condition. Xi called to maximize the role of their intergovernmental coordinating committee, and to ensure strategic dialogue is conducted regularly. Additionally, he assured that he will encourage more Chinese enterprises to invest in Cambodia and will import high-quality products from Cambodia. Xi said: "China will continue to offer government scholarships to Cambodia, support the establishment of a dialogue and exchange mechanism for youths between the two countries, and encourage more exchanges at the local level, as well as between media outlets and think tanks, to bring the people of the two countries closer together." Manet affirmed that Cambodia adheres to the One-China policy and supports China in safeguarding its sovereignty and territorial integrity. ("China, Cambodia to build all-weather

community with shared future," *CGTN*, 17 April 2025)

China's President calls for mutual high-quality cooperation with Malaysia

On 16 April, China's President Xi Jinping met with Malaysia's Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, where he called for building high-quality development cooperation. Xi noted that both countries are in their golden era and urged them to boost the shared future of both communities. Xi proposed three points in building this community. First, Xi calls for both countries to follow strategic independence and carry out high-level strategic cooperation. Second, they need to build synergy for development and to further cutting-edge cooperation in areas of digital, green, and blue economy. Additionally, to develop AI technology and the industrial chain of supply. Third, Xi called for deepening exchanges and mutual learning through tourism and sub-national exchanges. ("President Xi calls on China, Malaysia to set example for high-quality cooperation," *CGTN*, 16 April 2025)

China's President's article in the Cambodian new media "Toward a Stable and Sustainable China-Cambodia Community with a Shared Future in the New Era"

On 17 April, China's President Xi Jinping published a note on Cambodian news media Khmer Times titled "Together We Strive, Together We Thrive: Toward a Stable and Sustainable China-Cambodia Community with a Shared Future in the New Era." Xi, in his piece, noted that their community has deep rooted historical legacy, due to their geographic proximity. Through the maritime silk route, Chinese ceramics and lacquerware were traded for Cambodian spices and raw silk. He also noted that for many years, China has been the largest trading partner with Cambodia and has the largest source of investment in the country. They have also established a Free Trade Agreement where premium agricultural products reach Chinese households. Xi also expounded that China supported infrastructure projects like the Cambodian first expressway, the largest power plant, and the stadium. He concluded: "China-Cambodia ironclad friendship, which has been tempered through trials of time and storms of adversity, will stay true to its original purpose." ("Full text of President Xi Jinping's article in Cambodian media," *CGTN*, 17 April 2025)

China-Malaysia affirm to support ASEAN as the regional center

On 17 April, China and Malaysia issued a joint statement in support of the Association of the Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Both countries assured to uphold ASEAN as the central support system of the bloc and to further strengthen ASEAN-led mechanisms. Aimed to promote an open and inclusive regional architecture. Both countries agreed to be peaceful, stable, and conducive to regional development. They also agreed to jointly enhance the building of peaceful, safe, secure, and prosperous homes and to build the ASEAN and China community. Malaysia also extended its support for China to host the APEC summit of Economic Leaders 2026, and they expressed that they back Hong Kong's accession to the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. ("China, Malaysia pledge support for ASEAN," *CGTN*, 17 April 2025)

China's President's article on Malaysian news media, "May the Ship of China-Malaysia Friendship Sail Toward an Even Brighter Future"

On 15 April, China's President Xi Jinping published an article in Sin Chew Daily, a Malaysian media outlet, titled "May the Ship of China-Malaysia Friendship Sail Toward an Even Brighter Future." Xi noted that on the invitation of the King of Malaysia, Sultan Ibrahim, he will be visiting the country for the second time in 12 years. China and Malaysia are friendly neighbours across the sea and have noted their historical friendship since the maritime Silk Road. 51 years ago, China and Malaysia established diplomatic relations. Xi expounded that they must build their relations into result-oriented cooperation. In 2024, their trade reached USD 212 billion. China has been Malaysia's largest trading partner for 16 years. He concludes: "China will work with Malaysia and other ASEAN countries to combat the undercurrents of geopolitical and camp-based confrontation, as well as the countercurrents of unilateralism and protectionism, in keeping with the historical trend of peace and development." ("Full text of President Xi Jinping's signed article in Malaysian media," *CGTN*, 16 April 2025)

China and Vietnam publish a joint statement on bilateral cooperation

On 15 April, Vietnam and China released a joint statement after China's President Xi Jinping visited. Both sides agreed to elevate mutual trust to a higher level. They reaffirmed unswerving support for each other in pursuing the socialist path. Vietnam noted that it is committed to the One-China policy and recognizes China as the representative of the

whole of China, including Taiwan. The joint statement called to build more practical pillars of security cooperation. They agreed to work together and consolidate public support for China-Vietnam community for a shared future aimed to enhance multi-strategic coordination. ("China, Vietnam reaffirm commitment to advancing bilateral friendship," *CGTN*, 16 April 2025)

China pledges USD 137 million for earthquake humanitarian assistance to Myanmar

On 10 April, China pledged USD 137 million for emergency humanitarian assistance in Myanmar after the earthquake, according to China's embassy in Myanmar. The earthquake first struck on 28 March of 7.7 magnitude, killing 3,645 people and toppling several buildings. The embassy informed that the fund would give urgent food, medicine, and prefabricated homes for the victims. This will also pay for the medical, epidemic prevention, and disaster assessment needs. China was one of the first responders and even sent personnel for the rescue mission. These included medical workers, earthquake experts, rescue dogs, and field hospital workers. They also sent their own search and rescue team as well. ("China pledges $137 million for Myanmar earthquake relief," *Reuters*, 11 April 2025)

China's rescue team returns from Myanmar after earthquake rescue and relief mission

On 07 April, China's 37-member crew of rescue and medical team that went to Myanmar for rescue efforts came back. The members were from southwest China's Yunnan Province who left for Myanmar after the devastating earthquakes. A 7.9 magnitude earthquake hit Myanmar on 28 March, of which the aftermath was felt in Thailand, China, and even Japan. China also sent aid and other supplies for the victims of the earthquake, and a joint force of local firefighters and rescue teams left immediately. It is estimated that more than 500 Chinese rescue workers were in Myanmar for the relief mission. ("China's Yunnan rescue team completes quake response in Myanmar," *Xinhua*, 06 April 2025)

China detains three from the Philippines on espionage charges

On 03 April, China detained three Philippines nationals on alleged suspicion of espionage. This comes after five Chinese people were arrested in the Philippines on the same charges. CCTV news broadcaster published images of the three detained along with their names. They were David Servañez, Albert Endencia, and Nathalie Plizardo, who were recruited as spies. There were series of arrests made in the Philippines for spying on American and Philippines warships in the Subic Bay naval base. Chinese embassy in Manila issued a travel advisory warning that Chinese nationals in Manila were facing frequent harassment by Philippines law enforcement. CCTV also informed that these individuals were given monthly allowances by the Philippine intelligence and additional bonuses on the quality of information. ("China detains 3 Philippine nationals on suspicion of spying," *SCMP*, 04 April 2025)

China-Cambodia inaugurate Ream joint port

On 05 April, *Global Times* reported that the China-Cambodia Ream Port Joint Support and Training Centre was inaugurated and put into operation, informs to China's Ministry of National Defense. The center will support joint operations for the two militaries of both countries. They will work together on counter terrorism, disaster prevention, and humanitarian assistance. Necessary personnel from both countries will be stationed there to ensure smooth operations. The center follows the domestic laws of both countries and relevant international laws. The center, according to the ministry, is not aimed at any third party but to further their bilateral cooperation. ("China-Cambodia Ream Port Joint Support and Training Center officially inaugurated," *Global Times*, 05 April 2025)

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CHINA & SOUTH ASIA

China calls for restraint by both Pakistan and India amid escalating tensions after the terror attacks

On 27 April, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi held a phone call with Pakistan's Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar on the Pahalgam attack and the rising tensions with India. Wang Yi noted that they are closely monitoring the situation following the terror attack in India. He urged both sides to practice restraint and work together to de-escalate the tensions. Dar informed Wang Yi that Pakistan remains committed to manage the situation and maintain communication with China and the International community. Wang Yi said: "Combating terrorism constitutes a shared responsibility of all nations, and China consistently supports Pakistan's firm counter-terrorism actions." He also called to initiate an impartial investigation and noted that conflict serves neither one's interest. The incident happened in a tourist area of Jammu and Kashmir, where gunmen killed 26 people, understood to be travelers. Since then, India ordered the departure of staff members from diplomatic missions, and Pakistan is set to suspend bilateral treaties. ("China supports impartial investigation on terrorist attack, calls on India, Pakistan to de-escalate tensions: Wang Yi during phone call with Pakistani FM," *Global Times*, 27 April 2025)

China delivers PL-15 missiles to Pakistan, reports *First Post*

On 28 April, *First Post* reported that Pakistan deploys F-17 Block III with Chinese long-range PL-15E air-to-air missiles amid rising tensions with India after the terror attacks. The PL-15E model is supplied by China under a USD 1.525 billion contract. They also delivered 20 J-10CE fighters, 10 spare WS-10B engines, and 240 PL-15E missiles. The PL-15E has a limited range. Pakistan's Defence Minister Khawaja Asif warned that any escalation might lead to an "all-out war" with India. PPP leader Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that if the Indus River flow stops, "Indian blood will flow." Pakistan Air Force (PAF) released the images of fighter jet capabilities on social media, indicating that China made express delivery. ("China delivers PL-15 missiles to Pakistan amid tensions with India: Should New Delhi be worried?," *First Post*, 28 April 2025)

China to take two Pakistani astronauts for an outer space mission under the CSS

On 23 April, the China Manned Space Agency (CMSA) informed that selection for Pakistani astronauts is underway after a cooperation agreement was signed between the two countries. Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressed that Pakistan wants to enhance its cooperation with China in the field of outer space. A Chinese space firm, Galaxy Space, in Islamabad, also noted this keen interest in cooperation. The Chairman of Galaxy Space, Xu Ming said: "expressed keen interest in investing in Pakistan's space technology industry, along with pursuing joint ventures with Pakistani space technology institutions and private telecom companies." Pakistan will send its first manned space mission to China's space station. The agreement signed between the two countries will send two astronauts from Pakistan, one will be trained as a scientific payload specialist. ("Pakistan expresses desire to enhance ties with China in space technology," *Dawn*, 22 April 2025)

India to impose 12 per cent tariffs on steel imports from China, reports *Business Standard*

On 21 April, *Business Standard* reported that India is imposing 12 percent tariffs on steel imports to curb the flow of Chinese steel to India. The government of India aims to enact the law soon, currently, India is the world's second-biggest steel producer and is also a net importer of finished steel products. The shipment of the same reached 9.5 million metric tons for India in 2024. India's Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR) suggested that there be tariffs imposed on steel products for 200 days to halt the import of cheap steel. This comes after concerns that the unregulated imports of steel have hurt domestic steel production. ("India to impose 12% temporary tariff on steel to curb cheap China imports," *Business Standard*, 21 April 2025)

Nepal's parliamentary committee reports on corruption by Chinese contractors for the Pokhara airport

On 20 April, *Business Standard* reported on Nepal's parliamentary committee investigating corruption accusations. Against USD 216 million, Nepal's international Pokhara airport. Pokhara government found irregularities by officials and lawmakers who allowed Chinese SOEs to act as contractors to build the airport. The SOEs charged for the work they never completed. The 36-page report by the parliamentary committee found that the Chinese SOE, CAMC Engineering, did not pay taxes and did not finish projects to the due date. Additionally, they were accused of poor-quality construction and oversight. In 2023, *The New York Times* reported that CAMC increased the

cost of the project; the investigative piece noted that this undermines Nepal's quality control efforts. The international airport is under a 20-year loan from the Export-Import Bank of China, and the airport needs to function soon in order to generate income and profit and pay back the loan. The committee found that the Chinese firm failed to finish digging, refilling, and adding gravel to the runway. They also informed that the firm received payments for parts of projects that were never constructed. The contract noted that the firm was obligated to pay tax and customs duties worth USD 16 million, which were waived by Nepal. Additionally, the contract stated that there would be two functioning runways, while there is only one. ("China-built airport in Nepal littered with corruption, finds inquiry," *Business Standard*, 20 April 2025)

Nepal's Airlines urges Chinese aviation firm to take their planes back

On 19 April, The Kathmandu Post reported that Nepal Airlines asked the Chinese suppliers to take back five aircraft that had been grounded for over a decade. Four Y12e aircraft and two MA60 aircraft came to Nepal between 2014-2018 as China loaned NPR 6.66 billion. Since 2020, the remaining aircraft have been parked unused at the edge of Tribhuvan International Airport, Kathmandu. The airline officials informed that the planes are deteriorating from not being used and are rusting. Additionally, the grounded aircraft cost the airlines significantly with insurance, parking, and maintenance costs reaching NPR 200 million. The aircraft is made by China's Aviation Industry Corporation of China (AVIC), and in 2024, Nepali Airlines Executive Chairman Yubaraj Adhikari requested the AVIC to take the planes back. Adhikari also proposed to sell the aircraft, and the Nepali Airlines seeks AVIC's consent to formally sell it. AVIC did not approve the sale, but informed that Chinese operators must be interested; they also suggested that Nepal's Army or the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal can also use the aircraft. ("Nepal Airlines seeks to send back rusting Chinese planes," The Kathmandu Post, 19 April 2025)

Increase in India's trade deficit with China by USD 99.2 billion

On 16 April, *Reuters* reported that India's trade deficit with China hiked to USD 99.2 billion in 2024. The hike is owed to the increased imports of electronic and consumer durables. In March, China's imports jumped by 25 per cent, worth USD 9.7 billion. The most sales were of electronics, electric batteries, and solar cells. The total imports from China increased by USD 113.5 billion. India's exports to China fell by 14.5 per cent. A think tank founder, Global Trade Initiative, Ajay Srivastava, said: "This is a wake-up call for India, as the rising imports reflect deeper structural dependencies of the Indian economy." Ajay is concerned that under the pressure of new US tariffs, Chinese goods might be diverted to India for a cheap price, dumping the Indian market. ("India trade deficit with China widens to record $99.2 bln amid dumping concerns," *Reuters*, 16 April 2025)

India and China discuss the resumption of direct passenger flights

On 14 April, India and China discuss resuming direct passenger services, says Civil Aviation Secretary Vumlunmang Vualnam. No date has been fixed for the resumption of the next discussion. This was first agreed in January by both countries to resolve the trading and economic issues. The secretary informed that while one round of meetings are completed, some issues need to be resolved. After the 2020 China- India clash, direct flights to China were halted, and popular Chinese apps were banned in India. This has changed since China-India signed the disengagement agreement for the Depsand and Demchok flashpoints. ("India and China discuss resuming flights, no date set," *Reuters,* 14 April 2025)

Chinese delegation interested in establishing donkey farm in Pakistan

On 12 April, a delegation from China showed interest in forming a donkey farm in Pakistan. This was expressed during a meeting held between National Food Security and Research Minister Rana Tanveer Hussain and the Vice President of China's Donkey Industry Zhao Fei. Fei noted that Pakistan has the ideal environment for donkey breeding. Rana noted that the formal agreement will be reached are fulfilling the legal requirements, which would state that the breeding will not affect the population of the local donkeys. He also said: "Chinese industry would be allowed to establish farms in the Gwadar Export Processing Zone, where slaughterhouses and export facilities would also be developed to enable the export of donkey meat to China using the Gwadar Port." Last year, both sides agreed to form the "Protocol on Quarantine Require-ment," aimed to control the export of donkey meat. ("China expresses keen interest in establishing donkey farms in Pakistan citing favourable environment," *Dawn*, 12 April 2025)

China-Nepal Korala border showcases development difference, says an editorial in The Kathmandu Post

On 15 April, an editorial in The Kathmandu Post reported on the difference between the Chinese and Nepali sides of the Korala Border. The border is a vehicle crossing path between China and Nepal, often used as a site for trading. The author noted that Nepal has built modest story buildings or tin-roof buildings at the border. The Chinese side has built full facilities in contrast, while the Nepalis are still trading with pushcarts and tents. Traders from Nepali are allowed to go to the Chinese side and buy goods, but there are no storage facilities to keep them. No customs and security personnel are present at the border, and maybe one police officer comes on a motorcycle. Items like clothing, beverages, electronics, and other daily products are bought by the Nepal side. ("At Korala border, trade thrives on China side, but Nepal lags behind," *The Kathmandu Post*, 15 April 2025)

Chinese embassy in India calls to overcome US tariffs together

On 08 April, the Chinese embassy in India's spokesperson suggested that India and China need to stand together to overcome repercussions faced by the Trump tariffs. The spokesperson, Yu Jing, said: "China-India economic and trade relationship is based on complementarity and mutual benefit. Facing the U.S. abuse of tariffs... the two largest developing countries should stand together to overcome the difficulties." Jing also noted that trade tariffs and war have no winners and that all countries need to safeguard and uphold multilateralism. They need to jointly oppose all kinds of unilateralism and protectionism. This comes after the tariffs imposed by the Trump administration and an additional 50 per cent on Chinese goods, making the total 104 per cent. ("China turns to India after US tariffs 'abuse', says should stand together," *The Economic Times*, 08 April 2025)

China "irreplaceable development partner," says Nepali Congress Party leader

On 08 April, *Global Times* reported on the leader of Nepal's Congress Party, Sujata Koirala, on Nepal-China relations. China-Nepal relations have evolved in a robust and multi-dimensional manner through cooperation and partnership. Koirala asserted that all major Nepalese parties see China as an "irreplaceable development partner." This year marks the 70th anniversary of the two countries' diplomatic relations. Nepal's Prime Minister, KP Sharma Oli, visited China recently after being sworn in. During his visit, Nepal signed two cooperation agreements to advance the BRI and to strengthen practical cooperation in the areas of economy, finance, and transportation. Koirala also led a delegation of the Nepali Congress to visit China on the invitation of the International Department of the CPC. Citing the BRI initiative and the cross-railway projects, she said: "These initiatives can significantly contribute to Nepal's economic growth by enhancing our connectivity not only with China, but potentially with a wider regional network." Sujata expressed that having long-term relations with China has become a "National Consensus," regardless of which political party is in power. She suggested that there are three ways the cooperation can be sustained: project level continuity of agreements, elite consensus by all major political parties, and subnational anchoring. ("Exclusive: Maintaining long-term relations with China a 'national consensus' for Nepal: former Nepali deputy PM," *Global Times*, 08 April 2025)

China and India's presidents exchange congratulatory notes on the 75th diplomatic anniversary

On 01 April, China's President Xi Jinping and his Indian counterpart, Droupadi Murmur, exchanged congratulatory messages on the 75th anniversary of India-China diplomatic relations. Xi noted that both are ancient civilizations are that they both are on a critical stage of modernization and development. Xi said: "The development of China-India relations demonstrates that it is the right choice for China and India to be partners of mutual achievement and realize the Dragon-Elephant Tango, which fully serves the fundamental interests of both countries and their people." He also called for peaceful coexistence and the building of mutual trust and common development. Murmur also noted that they both are major powers and that they house one-third of the world's population. She proposed that the 75th anniversary be an opportunity to jointly promote steady development. ("Chinese, Indian presidents exchange congratulations on 75th anniversary of ties," *CGTN*, 01 April 2025)

CHINA & CENTRAL ASIA

China and Azerbaijan establish a comprehensive strategic partnership

On 23 April, China's Premier Li Qiang met with Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev on his state visit to China. Li noted that they established diplomatic ties 33 years ago, and since then, China and Azerbaijan have always respected each other. They have fostered deep friendship and trust through pragmatic cooperation. Both

countries announced that they will establish a comprehensive strategic partnership. He also noted that China is willing to promote traditional friendship and enhance mutual trust. China is also willing to extend its economic cooperation through the Belt and Road Initiative and advance the construction of the Trans-Caspian International Transport Corridor and establish a safe and stable China-Europe Trans-Caspian Express. Li said: "The two sides should further strengthen people-to-people exchanges, explore cooperation potentials in areas such as culture, tourism, and education, and promote mutual understanding among their peoples." Aliyev expressed that he looks forward to high-level exchanges and to expanding bilateral trade and investments. ("Chinese premier meets Azerbaijani president," *CGTN*, 24 April 2025)

Azerbaijan's President on their relations with China and the future of their strategic partnership

On 21 April, *Aze media* reported on an interview by Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev to Xinhua. Aliyev noted that during his last meeting with China's President Xi Jinping, they signed a joint declaration, which has opened a new page for Azerbaijan-China relations. The head of the state noted that the declaration elevated their relationship to a strategic partnership. He also expressed full confidence in the high-level bilateral ties and that China has already become Azerbaijan's fourth-largest trading partner. He also noted the BRI frameworks and their efforts to modernize Azerbaijan's transport infrastructure. ("President Ilham Aliyev: Azerbaijan-China relations enter the level of strategic partnership," *Aze. media*, 21 April 2025)

CHINA & THE MIDDLE EAST

Syria's Foreign Minister calls to strengthen ties with China

On 28 April, Syria's Foreign Minister Assad al-Shaibani expressed his willingness to build a "strategic partnership" with China. Shaibani met with China's Ambassador to the UN, Fu Cong, as they met for a session in the UNSC meeting. He noted that Syria's new government is willing to work with China to build and long-term partnership. This is the second high-level meeting since the fall of Assad. That is when the interim President, Ahmed al-Sharaa, met with the Chinese ambassador to Damascus. Instability continues in Syria as the state announced that it killed five Kurdish fighters in an attack in eastern Syria's Deir el-Zor. ("Syria's foreign minister wants to 'strengthen relations' with China," *SCMP*, 29 April 2025)

China-Iran Foreign Ministers discuss cooperation and the nuclear issue

On 23 April, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with hi Iranian counterpart Seyed Abbas Araghchi. Both heads discussed the progress on the Iranian nuclear issue. Wang Yi noted that both countries have deepened mutual political trust and that China is willing to work with Iran. He said: "China is also ready to work with Iran to promote the greater influence of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the BRICS mechanism and other multilateral frameworks, and to make more efforts to safeguard the common interests of the two countries, as well as efforts to promote regional and world peace and stability." Araghchi on nuclear issues said: "Talks with the United States are ongoing in the right direction. It's still too soon to judge. We are cautiously optimistic, and if the Americans continue to stay in a constructive mode and avoid any unrealistic, undoable demands, I am confident that we can get somewhere, and we can conclude a good deal at the end." ("Iran FM arrives in Beijing to reaffirm Iran-China's strategic partnership," *Tehran Times*, 23 April 2025; "China, Iran exchange in-depth views on latest progress of Iran nuclear issue," *Xinhua*, 24 April 2025)

China and Saudi Arabia sign an MoU on nuclear safety and security

On 21 April, China and Saudi Arabia signed an MoU to further deepen their nuclear security cooperation. The MoU is on Nuclear Energy Development, Safety, and Security. The conference under the China-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Forum was held in Chengdu, China. The meeting was on the peaceful use of nuclear technology. The MoU was signed between China's Atomic Energy Authority (CAEA), and Saudi Arabia's nuclear regulator. The agreement aims to strengthen cooperation in nuclear safety and non-proliferation. They also aim to develop training programs, provide technical consultation, and creation of joint working groups. The CAEA invited experts and officials from China, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE. They also explored the radiation detection equipment in Saudi Arabia and the UAE. CAEA Director Shan Zhongde noted that China aims to pursue multilateral cooperation and honor commitments towards all its partners to promote international nuclear cooperation. Chief Executive Officer of the Saudi Nuclear and Radiological Regulatory Commission, Khalid Aleissa, said: "China is a leading nuclear nation with the world's second-largest nuclear enterprise, covering the full industry value

chain. It's great that China is willing to cooperate with GCC countries and Saudi Arabia. While the nuclear industry in our region is still young, it is growing rapidly. Good partnerships will ensure rapid progress." ("China, Saudi Arabia strengthen nuclear safety collaboration," *Global Times*, 21 April 2025)

US accuses Chinese satellite firm for aiding Houthis

On 17 April, the US State Department accused a Chinese satellite of supporting attacks by Iran-backed Houthi fighters. The firm is called Chang Guang Satellite Technology, and they noted that this is unacceptable because it is against US interests. The Financial Times reported earlier that the Chinese military was supporting the Houthis with imagery to make attacks. US State Department spokeswoman Tammy Bruce said: "China consistently attempts … to frame itself as a global peacemaker … however, it is clear that Beijing and China-based companies provide key economic and technical support to regimes like Russia, North Korea, and Iran and their proxies." When I inquired about the same with the Chinese embassy in the US, they noted that they were not familiar with the matter and did not respond to comment on the same. ("US says Chinese satellite firm is supporting Houthi attacks on US interests," *SCMP*, 18 April 2025)

CHINA & AFRICA

China to fund and finance roads and railway construction in Kenya

On 25 April, *SCMP* reported that China's President Xi Jinping agreed to construct and finance roads and railways for Kenya, and also to rebuild the accident black spot of Kenya. This comes after Xi met with his Kenyan counterpart William Ruto, where he promised him a high level of connectivity and sustainable trade. This funding will build the Nithi Bridge, which is known as a death trap, claiming hundreds of lives since it was made. Kenya is also part of China's Belt and Road Initiative, which is heavily invested in the transcontinental projects, where it built the rail link between Mombasa and Nairobi, costing USD 5 billion. This project is among the 20 deals signed between the two leaders covering trade, education, infrastructure, and digital economy. China allowed Kenya to explore the option to issue Yuan panda bonds, and they discussed more about a free trade agreement. ("China to fund Kenyan road and rail schemes as it seeks support in opposing Trump tariffs," *SCMP*, 25 April 2025)

China-Kenya issue a joint on technological and cultural exchange

On 24 April, China and Kenya agreed to elevate their ties to the community with a shared future as they issued a joint statement. This came as Kenya's President William Ruto made a state visit to China and met China's President Xi Jinping. During which they also signed 20 cooperation agreements on BRI, high technology, people-to-people exchange, economic and cultural exchange. In the joint statement, they affirmed to oppose the new hegemonic tools used as unilateral sanctions, decoupling, tariff barriers, and technological blockades. Xi said: "In the face of a complex and changing international landscape, China is willing to work together with Kenya to be in line with the trend of history and the times, to create a model for building an all-weather China-Africa community with a shared future for the new era, and to lead the development of China-Africa relations and the solidarity and cooperation of the Global South." ("China, Kenya advance shared future," *China Daily*, 25 April 2025)

Chinese Premier meets Kenya's President on a state visit to China

On 23 April, China's Premier Li Qiang meets Kenya's President William Ruto. Li noted that China will continue to work with Kenya and enrich the comprehensive strategic cooperation. China is also willing to develop major projects under the BRI, in areas of finance, digital economy, agricultural science, and blue economy. Li also informed that China is willing to import high-quality products from Kenya. Li urged that both sides should facilitate personnel exchanges and enhance personnel cooperation. Li said: "In the current international landscape of intertwined challenges, China and Africa, as significant forces in the Global South, should unite more closely to confront difficulties and promote development and prosperity together." Ruto affirmed that Kenya stands by the One-China principle and that it looks forward to aligning development strategies. Ruto said: "The Kenyan side looks forward to aligning development strategies with China under the Belt and Road Initiative, tapping into cooperation potential, and promoting practical collaboration in trade, investment, transportation infrastructure, and social welfare." ("Chinese premier meets Kenyan president," *CGTN*, 24 April 2025)

China and Kenya trade grew by 11.9 per cent in the first quarter of 2025, reports GAC

On 22 April, China's General Administration of Customs (GAC) revealed that the total trade of

China with Kenya grew by 11.9 per cent in the first quarter of 2025. The estimated trade is USD 2.2 billion, which is a record high. Additionally, the imports grew by 13.2 per cent. China's Ministry of Foreign Affair's spokesperson said: "We believe this visit will contribute to deepening China's relations with Kenya, carrying out the outcomes of the Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, building an all-weather China-Africa community with a shared future for the new era, and promoting the solidarity and cooperation of the Global South." Kenyan President William Ruto stated that Kenya looks forward to building cooperation with China on new-energy enterprises and manufacturing. China is Kenya's largest trading partner, while Kenya is the largest partner of China from East Africa. ("China-Kenya trade grows 11.9% in Q1; Kenyan president's visit to boost cooperation," *Global Times*, 22 April 2025)

China urges Rwanda to end its support for the M23 rebels in the DRC, reports *SCMP*

On 20 April, *SCMP* reported that China's UN ambassador, Fu Cong, urged Rwanda to end its backing for the M23 rebel group in DR Congo. Fu said: "China reiterates its hope that Rwanda will heed the call of the international community, stop its military support for M23, and immediately withdraw all its military forces from the [DR Congo] territory." The ambassador has on two occasions asked Rwanda to end this support. China voted in favor of condemning Rwanda's role in the conflict in the United Nations Security Council. China has vast mining interests in the DRC and central Africa. This is also reckoned to be a bid by China to protect its interests in Congo. LSE's Professor of International Relations, Chris Alden, said: "Rather, it demonstrates how serious and worried Chinese authorities are as to the impact of M23 military gains on its economic interests that it would name Rwanda specifically." And that the disruption to the supply chain of minerals will affect Chinese production. ("With African mining interests at stake, China wades into DR Congo-Rwanda conflict," *SCMP*, 20 April 2025)

CHINA & EUROPE

Switzerland's Foreign Minister visits China and calls to form "coalition" against US tariffs

On 24 April, Switzerland's Foreign Minister Iganzio Cassis called for countries to make a coalition to deal with the tariff war imposed by the US President. He also positioned China as an important advocate for the multilateral world. He said: "The difficulty we are having on the tariff matter is something that every other country shares. We have to create a kind of coalition." He made these statements at his two-day visit to China, where he noted China as an important partner in trade. China's Foreign Minister noted that they discussed the support for the multilateral world order and how they could improve bilateral ties and relations. ("Top Swiss envoy calls for 'coalition' to meet US tariff challenge during visit to China," *SCMP*, 25 April 2025)

UK Admiral visits China for the first time in a decade, reports BBC

On 11 April, *BBC* reported that the head of British armed forces for the first time in 10 years in visiting China. UK Admiral Sir Tony Radakin informed that he discussed common issues and concerns with China's Ministry of National Defence. Tony posted on social media X that "We agreed that in an unstable world we must play our part as responsible nations with global interests," and that "we reflected on the importance of military-to-military communications." The last visit of the UK Chief was in 2015. UK's Defence Secretary John Healy expressed that it is always good to have military engagements, noting that this was the motive of Tony's visit to China. The visit comes after UK Foreign Secretary David Lammy, for the first time in six years, visited China. Healey informed that the admiral was firm on the peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region and that they were concerned about any use of military aggression for political ends. ("UK sends military chief to China for first visit in 10 years," *BBC*, 11 April 2025)

China's Premier discusses open trade with EU Commission's President

On 08 April, in a telephone conversation, China's Premier Li Qiang and EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen called for the two countries to maintain free and open trade. Li noted that both countries are staunch advocates of economic globalization and trade liberalization. They both support and defend the World Trade Organization. They should safeguard free and open trade and maintain stability. Li also noted the recent US tariffs and the indiscriminate imposition on all trading partners. He called for a new round of China-EU high-level dialogue on strategic and economic partnership. Li also expressed confidence in China's economy, stating that their macro policies are ready for all kinds of uncertainty. Ursla expressed that the EU always gave great importance to China and looks forward to having stable relations with China. She also

warned against the international impact of US tariffs on international trade. Ursala said: "Europe and China to be committed to safeguarding a fair and free multilateral trading system centered on the WTO, and to maintaining the healthy and stable development of global economic and trade relations, which is in the common interest of both sides and the world." ("Chinese premier calls on China, EU to maintain free, open trade," *CGTN*, 08 April 2025)

Foreign Council concerns on Chinese goods being diverted from the US to the EU, reports *SCMP*

On 08 April, *SCMP* reported on the indirect consequence of Trump's tariffs leading to Chinese goods being diverted to the EU at the Foreign Councils meeting. The policymakers expressed concerns over low-priced Chinese imports flooding the European market. Minister from EU urged to call for actions to protect business from Chinese overcapacity. EU is now facing issues from two sides, One is the unilaterally imposed tariffs, which will affect 70 percent of their export from the US worth USD 405 billion. Second, Chinese goods that are not reaching the US market are diverted to Europe at a discounted price, putting pressure on local firms to compete. France's Trade Minister, Laurent Saint-Martin, said: "We need to rebalance trade relations between the EU and China in line with our industry, our economic security and low carbon agendas." ("EU frets over flood of Chinese imports as Trump stokes tariff war," *SCMP*, 08 April 2025)

China's NPC head meets Finnish parliament speaker to discuss country and party cooperation

On 07 April, Chairman of China's National People's Congress (NPC) Zhao Legi met with Speaker of Finnish Parliament, Jussi Halla-aho. They called for the joint creation of a stable legal environment for cooperation. Zhao expressed that this is the 75th year of their diplomatic relations and that China is ready to work with Finland to implement future orientation and cooperative partnership. China is also willing to have exchanges with the political parties and youth-cultural exchanges. Zhao said: "Their two legislative bodies can engage in mutual learning and exchange, fulfilling their legislative and supervisory functions to create a favorable, stable legal environment for practical cooperation, and enhancing coordination on multilateral platforms such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union." Halla-aho noted the remarkable progress China has made in areas of Science and Technology and that they will adhere to the One-China principle. Finland, according to him, is committed to practical cooperation, and maintaining free trade. ("China's top legislator holds talks with Finnish parliament speaker," *CGTN*, 08 April 2025)

CHINA & RUSSIA

China and Russia's Foreign Ministers affirm bilateral support on the sidelines of the BRICS meeting

On 29 April, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi met his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov during the BRICS Foreign Ministers meeting in Brazil. Both leaders discussed the key issues on bilateral relations and the Ukraine crisis. Wang Yi noted the strategic importance of BRICS unity and the cooperation in the global situation. He noted that both China and Russia are founding members of BRICS and that they should strengthen this coordination with the BRICS framework. He called for deeper cooperation, enhancing the influence of BRICS plus countries, and injecting strong momentum into the global development sphere. Lavrov expressed Russia's willingness to work with China and noted the mutual support. He also noted Russia's commitment to ensure international order, upholding the principles of the UN, and resisting unilateral bullying. He also informed that Russia is ready for unconditional peace talks with Ukraine and to focus on the root cause of the crisis. Both heads agreed to enhance cooperation within the multilateral framework in international platforms like the UN, the Shanghai Cooperation, and the G20. ("Chinese, Russian foreign ministers discuss bilateral ties, Ukraine crisis," *CGTN*, 29 April 2025)

Ukraine's President claims Chinese working at Russian drone production site

On 22 April, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky claimed that Chinese citizens were working at the drone production site in Russia. The comment was made during a news conference in Kyiv after he accused China of supplying weapons and gunpowder to Russia. He also accused China of sending its civilians and military personnel to Russia. Ukraine's Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed that they also summoned China's Ambassador to Ukraine, Ma Shengkun, as they expressed their serious concerns. Zelensky noted that Russia must have obtained the drone capability and technology from China, without China's knowledge. He said: "We believe that it may be that Russia stole – made an agreement with these citizens outside the agreements with the Chinese leadership – stole these technologies." Deputy Foreign Minister Yevhen Perebyinis urged China to halt

its support for Russia and its aggression against Ukraine. ("Ukraine's Zelensky says Chinese citizens working at drone production site in Russia," *SCMP*, 23 April 2025)

Ukraine imposes sanctions on Chinese firms for supplying Russia with Iskander missiles

On 18 April, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskiy imposed sanctions on Chinese firms claiming that they were involved in the production of advanced Iskander missiles for Russia. This comes after Zelensky accused China of supplying weapons to Russia and even prior to that, sending Chinese soldiers and civilians to fight for Russia. China is the second country, alongside North Korea, found supporting Russia in a field war. On the international stage, China has maintained its neutrality and has called for peace between the two countries. Zelensky's administration released a new list of sanctions on entities, which includes Russian and Chinese companies. The Russian firms called Beijing Aviation and Aerospace Xianghui Technology, Rui Jin Machinery Co, and Zhongfu Shenying Carbon Fiber Xining Co are all said to be registered in China. The missiles sold by these companies are used by Russia for their nuclear-capable short-range missile system. Zelensky said: "Today, we have expanded our Ukrainian sanctions against nearly a hundred more entities - natural and legal persons - most of whom are involved in the production of such missiles -Iskanders - like those that struck our Kharkiv." ("Ukraine bans China's firms for helping Russia make missiles," *Reuters*, 19 April 2025)

China refutes Ukraine's claims that they have been supplying weapons to Russia

On 18 April, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs refuted the Ukrainian President's allegations that China has been supplying weapons to Russia. The ministry called the allegations "groundless," and noted that China never made lethal weapons that would be party to Ukraine's crisis, stated the ministry's spokesperson, Lin Jian. Jian said: "China's position on the Ukrainian issue has always been clear," and that "It has been actively committed to promoting a ceasefire and ending the conflict, as well as encouraging peace talks." They refuted these allegations and stated that Zelensky himself had informed that many parts of Russian missiles came from the US and other Western countries. China has suck to neutral stance in the Russia-Ukraine war and has frequently called by peace talks between the two countries, to reach cease fire. ("China dismisses Zelenskiy's claim it is supplying weapons to Russia," *Reuters*, 18 April 2025)

Ukraine's President claims that 155 Chinese nationals are fighting for Russia

On 10 April, *BBC* reported on Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky's claims that 155 Chinese nationals are fighting with Russia against Ukraine. This comes after Ukraine captured two Chinese soldiers after a crossfire with six Chinese soldiers fighting from the Russian front. This is the first time Ukraine found evidence that China was sending personnel to fight in the war. This, they say, stands contradictory to the neutral and peaceful stand China is taking on the world stage when it calls for a ceasefire between the two countries. Zelensky also believes that there are many from China in the Russia- Ukraine conflict. China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson, Lin Jian, advised that the parties should consider China's role and not make hasty remarks. Lin said: "China is neither the creator nor a party to the Ukrainian crisis. We are a staunch supporter and active promoter of the peaceful resolution of the crisis." Lin also informed that China has always required its nationals to stay away from any kind of armed conflict, especially refraining from participating in military operations. Zelensky noted that the Chinese issue is serious and said: "There are 155 people with surnames, with passport data - 155 Chinese citizens who are fighting against Ukrainians on the territory of Ukraine." When interrogated, the Chinese detainee informed that this was their first time in combat and that they had never fired a gun before. Others also mentioned that there were Chinese soldiers who dispersed after the crossfire. ("Zelensky claims 155 Chinese fighting for Russia in Ukraine," *BBC*, 11 April 2025)

Chinese soldiers fighting for Russia captured by Ukraine forces

On 08 April, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky informed that the Ukrainian forces captured two Chinese nationals fighting for Russia. He also noted that intelligence finds that more Chinese nationals are with the Russian army. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha stated that the Chinese soldiers fighting question the peace stance declared by China and that they summoned the Chinese envoy for answers. This is the first official allegation from the Ukraine on Chinese soldiers being captured. Zelensky on social media, X informed that they were captured in the Donetsk region with bank cards and identification documents. The Urkranian forces fought six Chinese soldiers and detained two of them. The post also uploaded a

video of the detained speaking in Mandarin, describing the recent battle. Zelensky said: "Russia's involvement of China, along with other countries, whether directly or indirectly, in this war in Europe is a clear signal that Putin intends to do anything but end the war." He also called for a response from the US, Europe, and all those who want peace. ("Ukraine captures two Chinese nationals fighting for Russia," *BBC*, 09 April 2025)

Russia's President meets with China's Foreign Minister

On 02 April, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with Russia's President Vladimir Putin in Moscow for his three-day visit. He also met with the Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. Putin conveyed his friendly greeting to China's President Xi Jinping and invited him to the 80th anniversary of the Victory in the Great Patriotic War, World War II. He also expressed satisfaction with the way their bilateral relations are developing and the direct support the foreign ministries are giving. Putin noted that China will be our main guest, and this will allow them to discuss the current state of affairs and their interactions in international venues. Wang Yi noted that: "Cooperation between China and Russia is never directed against third parties and does not succumb to impediments coming from outside. We will not tread water when it comes to advancing bilateral relations, and we have broad prospects open to us. Our friendship is not based on fleeting considerations but is of a long-term nature." Russian Foreign Minister Sergie Lavrov also met with Wang Yi where they discussed Iran's nuclear program, and the situation in the Korean peninsula. Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said: "The talks were held in a friendly and open atmosphere, characteristic of Russian-Chinese relations. The overlapping - or closeness - of positions on the main issues of bilateral cooperation and the global agenda was emphasized." ("Meeting with Foreign Minister of China Wang Yi," President of Russia, 01 April 20225; "Russian, Chinese foreign ministers discuss Iran's nuclear program and Korea, Russia says," *Reuters*, 02 April 2025)

CHINA & THE AMERICAS

China creates a list of US firms to be exempted from tariffs

On 30 April, *The Straits Times* reported that China has formed a list of US-made products to be exempted from China's 125 per cent tariffs. They also notified the firms about the same policy decision, which is reckoned to be a way to ease the impact of trade and tariff tensions between the US and China. Before this, China had already exempted certain products from the US as part of tariffs. These are selected pharmaceuticals, microchips, and aircraft engines from the US. The list has not been publicized but rather has been provided by the US firms. The anonymous informant was contacted by Shanghai Pudong. The list of exempted goods is also growing, as China waived tariffs for ethane imports. ("China creates list of US-made goods exempt from 125% tariffs, sources say," *The Straits Times*, 30 April 2025)

US retail firms warn of empty shelves and high prices, reports *Financial Times*

On 28 April, the *Financial Times* reported on US companies warning of empty shelves amid US-China tariff tensions. This is reckoned to be due to container port operators, and air freight managers see a steep decline in shipments from China. US retailers like Walmart and Target have warned of empty shelves and higher prices of goods. The Port of Los Angeles reported that there has been a 33 per cent drop in arrivals from China, and so did the air freight companies report of similar decrease. The International Chamber of Commerce surveyed 60 countries, finding that most people believe that there will be permanent damage to the trade market. Vizion, a container tracking service, found that 20-foot containers booked from China have decreased by 45 per cent to the US. ("Retailers warn of empty shelves as US-China trade war disrupts shipments," *Business Standard*, 28 April 2025)

China-Cuba Foreign Ministers affirm camaraderie between their countries

On 29 April, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi appreciated Cuba's efforts to its national security, sovereignty, and defense. He met with the Cuban Foreign Minister, Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla, in Brazil on the sidelines of the BRICS summit. Wang Yi noted that China and Cuba are good comrades and partners. Additionally, China stands to deepen cooperation with Cuba in all sectors. Rodriguez stressed the friendship between China and Cuba despite the change in the international landscape. He affirmed the steadfast support from Cuba for China and thanked China for its long-standing trust and assistance. ("Chinese FM Wang Yi praises Cuba's anti-hegemony stance, vows continued support," *CGTN*, 30 April 2025)

China's Foreign Ministry refutes claims that Trump and Xi engage in tariff and trade talks

On 28 April, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs refuted claims by US President Donald Trump

that he received a call from China's President Xi Jinping. The Trump administration, for the past week, has been stating that they have engaged in trade talks with China. Trump told Times magazine that "[Xi]'s called. And I don't think that's a sign of weakness on his behalf." The spokesperson of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Guo Jiakun, said: "To my knowledge, there has been no phone call between the two heads of state recently," and that "I would like to reiterate that China and the US have not engaged in consultations or negotiations regarding tariff issues." During his interview, he noted that we all want to make deals and that on behalf of the people, he owns the stores and sets the price. Guo also said: "We will fight, if fight we must. Our doors are open if the US wants to talk. Dialogue and negotiation must be based on equality, respect, and mutual benefit." He also urged the Trump administration to refrain from creating confusion. ("China rejects Trump claims of Xi Jinping tariff phone call," *SCMP*, 28 April 2025)

US Treasury on China tariffs "there is a path" for negotiations

On 27 April, *The Guardian* reported that the US Treasury Secretary, Scott Bessent, noting that "there is a path," to form an agreement with China on tariffs. Bessent informs of his discussion with his Chinese counterpart, which was more about financial stability, the global economy, and early warnings. He also informed that he does not know if US President Donald Trump talked to China's President Xi Jinping. Donald Trump claimed that he had an interview with China on the tariffs, which was refuted by China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which urged him not to create confusion. The Ministry said: "Certain countries adhere to their own priorities, engage in bullying pressure and coercive transactions, and provoke trade wars for no reason, exposing their extreme egoism." Bessent, prior to this, made clear that Chinese tariffs are unsustainable and said: "The first path will be, again, a de-escalation, which I think the Chinese are going to have to have. Then I think there can be an agreement in principle, these 17 or 18 important trade deals that we're negotiating." ("US treasury secretary says 'there is a path' with China over tariff negotiations," *The Guardian*, 27 April 2025)

Increase in soybean exports from Brazil to China

On 28 April, an editorial in Global Times looked into the rise of Brazilian soybean imports, titled "China accelerates shift to Brazilian soybeans, as US agricultural exports plunge amid tariffs." Yuyuantantian, a Chinese media group, reported that in April 2025, 40 Brazilian ships with soybeans docked at the Zhoushan Port. This is the 48 per cent rise in Brazilian soybean imports. This comes after US-China tariff tensions, and it was to mitigate its reliance on US imports. Brazil is now the next alternative. It is projected that 700,000 tons of Brazilian soybeans will be imported, which is 32 per cent more than last year's 530,000 tons. The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) reported that exports of American agricultural products have reduced substantially, provoked by the tariffs. USDA reported a 12,000-ton loss of US pork exports to China, with just 5,800 tons being exported. ("China accelerates shift to Brazilian soybeans, as US agricultural exports plunge amid tariffs," *Global Times*, 28 April 2025)

China waives off tariffs on some semiconductor imports from the US

On 25 April, SCMP reported that China waived off some tariffs on semiconductor imports from the US. Eight of the integrated circuit (IC) related tariffs will be exempted, additionally, any duties paid for these exempted semiconductors will be refunded from 10 April. This was reported by a Chinese magazine called Caijing, no official information has been issued by China's customs office or the semiconductor association. China imported USD 88 billion worth of IC in the first quarter of 2025, these measures will ease the tariff tensions. ("China said to waive retaliatory tariffs on some US chip imports in sign of trade war thaw," *SCMP*, 25 April 2025)

US President informs that tariffs on China to drop substantially but will never be zero

On 22 April, US President Donald Trump announced that the tariffs on China will come down substantially, but they will never be zero. This remark came after US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent called the high tariffs on Chinese goods unsustainable and that he expects a de-escalation. We're doing fine with China, Trump stated, and that the tariffs will not remain that high and will not go higher. Prior to this, China's Ministry of Commerce warned countries establishing a trade deal with the US that it would negatively impact China. They said: "China firmly opposes any party reaching a deal at the expense of China's interests." ("Trump says China tariffs will drop 'substantially – but it won't be zero'," *The Guardian*, 22 April 2025)

Boeing jet return to be sold to China returns to Seattle, US

On 20 April, US aviation firm Boeing landed their jet back intended for China, amid tariff tensions between China and the US. The jet 737 MAX, to be used by China's Xiamen Airlines, came back and landed in Seattle. This is Boeing's selling model, and was ready to be delivered and used in China. US President Donald Trump imposed 145 per cent baseline tariffs on Chinese goods; in retaliation, China imposed 125 per cent tariffs on the US. The CPC asked the airlines to pause the purchase of aircraft and other related equipment from China. China is responsible for 20 per cent of the world's global demand. China ordered 130 planes from Boeing for both commercial and leasing aviation firms. Boeing's chief executive, Kelly Ortberg, hours before the US tariffs to China were announced, noted that Boeing's 80 per cent of its planes are sold overseas, and they do not want a situation where certain markets are closed to them. ("China sends back new Boeing jet made more expensive by tariffs," *The Guardian*, 21 April 2025)

China's Ministry of Commerce condemns the US port fees imposed on Chinese ships

On 18 April, China's Ministry of Commerce opposed the US's newly imposed port fees on Chinese-built ships docking at American ports. The spokesperson of the ministry said: "China has repeatedly reaffirmed its stance on the Section 301 investigation and submitted a non-paper outlining its position, urging the United States to stop blaming China for its domestic industrial issues." The ministry called this action a typical action of unilateral protectionism. They noted that this harms the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese enterprises. Additionally, it disrupts the stability of the global supply chain as it violates the World Trade Organization's rules. It urged the US to respect the facts and multilateral rules to cease wrongful actions. They also informed that this provision will be closely monitored and that they will take necessary measures to safeguard their rights and interests. ("China slams U.S. probe into maritime, shipbuilding sectors," *CGTN,* 18 April 2025)

Chinatown in the US is affected by the tariffs, says an editorial in *Reuters*

On 19 April, an editorial in *Reuters* reported on the repercussions of US tariffs in Chinatown in the US. The title of the editorial is "In US Chinatowns, merchants don't want the trade war to be a war." The author noted that last week the price of a rice cracker in a grocery store in Chinatown was USD 4.9, but now it is USD 6.99. Stores across Chinatown are feeling the heat of the tariff tensions as the prices of household goods imported from China increase, including traditional medicine, dried noodles, and jewelry. The piece noted that these are affecting the medium to small business owners the most, as many immigrants who come from China rely on business for their livelihood. These local businesses in Chinatown are known for authentic Chinese products. New York City's Small Business Services reported that residents of Chinatown spend USD 1.15 billion each year on retail goods and services, and about 80 per cent of the local businesses directly serve the Chinese community in the US. China's Ministry of Commerce noted that after the 245 per cent tariffs by the US urged that they stop putting extreme pressure on the country and that they should engage in trade talks. (Hannah Lang and Judith Langowski, "New York City's Small Business Services," *Reuters*, 19 April 2025)

"We're taking action to address" against Chinese interference in the election, says Canada's Prime Minister

On 18 April, Canada's Prime Minister Mark Carney called China the biggest threat to curbing foreign interference in the upcoming Canadian elections. He noted that Canada will have to hinder Chinese interference and threats, and even criticized China for assisting Russia in the war. Noting that this poses a threat to Asia and even Taiwan. Carney noted that "We're taking action to address" the interference. Currently, Carney's Liberal Party is in the lead, as the country grapples with pressure from retaliatory tariffs imposed by the US. They noted that they will not try to match the US, but stated that the entire global trading system is being reordered. ("Carney says China is a foreign interference, geopolitical threat for Canada," *Reuters*, 19 April 2025)

US President expresses optimism on a tariff deal with China

On 17 April, US President Donald Trump informed that they are talking with China and that he is confident that a deal will be struck on tariffs. He noted that top officials from China reached out to Washington several times and that they had constructive trade talks. Trump also noted that the possible agreement might be reached in three to four weeks. On the tariffs, Trump said: "I may not want to go higher, or I may not want to even go up to that level. I may want to go less, because, you know, you want people to buy." Washington also announced a two-phase plan that would increase tariffs for China. The first one will be in six months, where Chinese-owned or built ships must pay docking

fees at a US port. Second, it will limit the amount of LNG a foreign vessel can transfer. ("Trump says US and China are in trade talks and is confident a deal will be reached soon," *SCMP*, 18 April 2025)

The US imposes fees on Chinese ships docking in American ports

On 18 April, *BBC* reported that the Trump administration will impose port fees on Chinese ships. This is aimed at reviving shipbuilding in the US and curbing Chinese dominance in the shipbuilding industry. S Trade Representative's (USTR) announced a similar plan in February worth USD 1.5 million for each visit to American ports. The fee charged in be hiked in the coming years. USTR said: "China has largely achieved its dominance goals, severely disadvantaging US companies, workers, and the US economy." This might further affect global trade in addition to the already imposed US tariffs on China. The fee will be estimated based on the weight of the cargo and how many of containers they are carrying. Initially, the Chinese ship owner will be charged USD 50 per ton of cargo, and a USD 30 per ton fee will be added per year for the coming three years. Any non-US ship will be charged USD 150 per vehicle. ("US lays out plans to hit Chinese ships with port fees," *BBC*, 18 April 2025)

Trump to impose new tariffs on smartphones and semiconductors, reports *BBC*

On 15 April, *BBC* reported that the US President Donald Trump has reverted and informed that electronics and smartphones from China will not be exempted from the tariffs. He took back his statement of exempting tariffs on some products, after which the European stock market bounced back. The US administration has informed that they will be subjected to special "semiconductor tariffs," which the President will elaborate on later. US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick stated that they would levy new tariffs, as they aim to build medicines and semiconductors in America. Trump said: "We are taking a look at Semiconductors and the WHOLE ELECTRONICS SUPPLY CHAIN in the upcoming National Security Tariff Investigations." ("Trump threatens new tariffs on smartphones days after exempting them," *BBC*, 15 April 2025)

China's Foreign Ministry response to US tariffs of 245 per cent: "China will ignore it"

On 17 April, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs replied to the 245 per cent tariffs on Chinese exports to the US. The ministry said: "We have noticed a relevant report. As for how the figure comes out, you can ask the US side for the specific tax rate figures." They also noted that these excessive tariffs have degenerated into a number game. And that they do not conform to practical economic significance. The ministry noted that it only exposes the US's tactics of using tariffs and tricks as a tool and a weapon to bully and coerce. They concluded that trade and tariff wars have no winners, and that China does not want to fight the trade war, not because it is afraid. They noted that if the US continues to play the number game, "China will ignore it." ("China's response will continue to the end, FM says after White House claims China faces up to 245% tariffs on imports to US," *Global Times*, 17 April 2025)

China's embassy in Canada condemns the cybersecurity advisory issued by Ottawa

On 16 April, China's Embassy in Canada condemned the cybersecurity advisory issued by the Canadian government against China. The statement noted that despite China's solemn representation, Canadians have once again smeared China's image. They called the cyber threat slander and firmly opposed and rejected this. This comes after the Canadian government issued an advisory which said: "has observed increasing levels of China threat actor activity, including activity associated with Salt Typhoon, targeting network edge routers across critical infrastructure sectors." The embassy replied: "China is one of the primary victims of cyberattacks. We have always firmly opposed and cracked down on all forms of cyberattacks by the law, and we are committed to safeguarding cybersecurity." ("China urges Canada to stop politicizing, stigmatizing cybersecurity issue following so-called advisory," *Global Times*, 17 April 2025)

China halts the shipment of Boeing jets amid tariff tensions with the US

On 15 April, *The Guardian* reported that China has ordered the halt of the shipment of Boeing jet to China amid tariff tensions. The CPC is against the carriers purchasing aircraft-related equipment and parts from American companies. This comes after China imposed retaliatory tariffs of 125 percent against the US, following Trump's imposition of tariffs of 145 percent on Chinese imports. Ten Boeing 737 Max jets are prepared to be bought by the Chinese airlines. But since the deal was made before the tariff impositions, the Ten might be allowed to enter China. Ryanair's Chief Executive, Micheal O'Leary, informed that deliveries might be delayed as they become more expensive, hoping that common sense prevails. Boeing already is

facing a market value loss of 7 per cent, and these tariffs might affect the availability of parts from their suppliers. ("China reportedly orders its airlines to halt Boeing jet deliveries amid US trade war," *The Guardian,* 15 April 2025)

US-China tariff war to affect sale of US-made drugs in China, reports

On 15 April, *Reuters* reported on how the tariffs will affect US companies' drugs in China. These include medicines for cancer and diabetes. Big US pharmaceutical companies AstraZeneca, Sanofi, GSK, and Eli Lilly are all US companies that have at least one site only for the drugs sold to China, says China's National Medical Products Administration. AstraZeneca's cancer drug and Eli Lilly's weight-loss drugs are popular in China. China will be very much affected by these tariffs as the sale of these drugs and the production will take some time to find alternatives. This could either lead to limited supply or increased prices of these medicines. ("Tariff wars to hit popular US-made drugs in China, regulator data shows," *Reuters*, 15 April 2025)

Trump increases tariffs on Chinese goods by 145 per cent

On 10 April, US President Donald Trump imposed additional tariffs on Chinese imports, making the total 145 per cent from the last 125 per cent. Trump called the volatility by China as "transition difficulty." This comes after China imposed 84 per cent tariffs on US imports. Trump noted this as a bad deal from the Chinese side. These new tariffs include reciprocal duties as well as the tariffs included by the lack of CPC measures to control fentanyl production. The stock market saw a rise as Trump announced that he would pause the tariff imposition for 90 days for countries that did not retaliate. While further punishing the offenders, which is China. The baseline tariff will remain at 10 per cent for all countries. The tariff on China comes into immediate effect. China's embassy in Washington's spokesperson, Liu Pengyu said: "If the US truly wants to talk, it should let people see that they're ready to treat others with equality, respect and mutual benefit," and that "China does not want to fight these wars but is not scared of them." ("US markets slide as tariffs on imports from China now hit 145%," *SCMP*, 11 April 2025)

China and Latin American countries prepare for fourth ministerial meeting, says China's Foreign Ministry

On 10 April, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson, Lin Jian, informed that they are preparing for the fourth ministerial meeting of the China-CELAC (Community of Latin American and Caribbean States) Forum. Lin noted that CELAC is an important platform for countries to strengthen solidarity further and address global challenges. The first meeting was held in 2015 in Beijing, China. Lin expounded that the forum has come out with mechanisms to enhance political mutual trust, build development strategies, and promote people-to-people exchanges. This forum has played a positive role in building relations between China and Latin American countries. Lin concluded that they will be a collective voice for the Global South, solidarity, and self-reliant in this turbulent world. ("China, LAC countries actively preparing for 4th ministerial meeting of China-CELAC Forum," *CGTN*, 10 April 2025)

China announces reduction in US film imports, reports China's Film Administration

On 10 April, China announced that they will reduce the number of US films imported, and since then, stock performances of the big media houses fell. US firm Walt Disney fell by 6.7 per cent, Comcast Cooperation by 6.79 per cent, Netflix by 2.57 per cent, Paramount Group by 1.97 per cent, and Sony Group by 0.22 per cent. China's Film Administration spokesperson noted that the US imposition of tariffs also impacts the Chinese audience's interest in US films and media outlets. This reflects the market principles and the audience preference, says the Film Administration from China. China is the second largest film market in the world, and they have always pursued a high level of opening to all kinds of films. The spokesperson informed that they will introduce more exciting films from other countries to cater to the Chinese film market demand. ("China to cut U.S. film imports, Hollywood stocks tumble," *CGTN*, 11 April 2025)

Trump announces 50 per cent fresh tariff on China, bringing the total to 104 per cent

On 08 April, US President Donald Trump announced that he would go ahead and impose additional 50 per cent tariffs on China. This will bring the total to 104 per cent tariffs on Chinese goods, The breakdown is 50 per cent fresh tariffs, 34 percent March tariffs, and 20 per cent February tariffs. Additionally, the De Minimis Value is halted for small Chinese goods. Where they will be imposed USD 25 per small item or 30 per cent in duties of export of small items from China. Since the announcement, US stocks have dropped for a fourth day since the tariffs. The index is low by 18.9 per cent. US S&P 500 companies lost USD 5.8 trillion in market value; this is the biggest loss since the 1950s. The

Trump administration has scheduled talks with countries who want to negotiate the tariffs, something Trump aimed to leverage tariffs for a better deal. Currently, Trump is in talks with South Korea, Japan, and Italy. White House economic adviser Kevin Hassett informed that they will not prioritize negotiations with China but will focus on their allies and trading partners like Japan and South Korea. ("Stocks slide again as US forges ahead with 104% tariffs on China," *Reuters*, 09 April 2025)

"Together, we will take back the Panama Canal from China's influence," says US Defense Secretary

On 08 April, US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth announced that the US will take back the Panama Canal from China. He made this statement during his visit to Central America, where he met Panama's government officials. Hegseth vowed the further cooperation and urged that China should not be allowed to weaponize the canal. He said: "Together, we will take back the Panama Canal from China's influence." Hegseth does not want the commercial canal to be used for espionage. He met with the Panama President José Raúl Mulino where Hegseth expounded that either ends of the canals are controlled by Hong Kong which is in process to be sold to US firm BlackRock. He accused Chinese firms of controlling the critical infrastructure for surveillance activities in Panama. He believes that this makes both the US and Panama less secure and less prosperous. ("US will take back Panama Canal from 'China's influence', Trump defence chief says," *SCMP*, 09 April 2025)

China's embassy in Panama condemns US Secretary's remarks: "Take back the Panama Canal from China's influence"

On 09 April, China's Embassy in Panama urged the US to reflect on its history of bullying and smearing China. This comes after the US Defense Secretary, Pete Hegseth, commented on the China threat in Panama while meeting with the government officials in Panama. The embassy stated that US history is riddled with exploiting Latin America, the Caribbean, and Panama. China has never interfered in canal-related affairs, and they have always respected Panama's sovereignty as the "permanently neutral international waterway." The embassy said: "It is clear who is truly upholding the canal's neutrality and prosperity, and who has been clamoring to 'take back' the canal - justice lies in the hearts of the people." China advised the US that instead of spreading false messages and creating discord, it should focus on how it could truly contribute to the well-being of the region. ("Chinese Embassy in Panama hits back US defense chief's remarks over Panama Canal," *Global Times*, 09 April 2025)

Most Americans oppose tariffs on Chinese goods, reveals Pew Research Centre

On 08 April, the Pew Research Centre came out with a poll revealing that most Americans oppose tariffs on allies and Chinese goods. The research found that 52 per cent of Americans oppose the tariffs as they hurt the US, while 24 per cent believe that tariffs will have a positive impact. The survey was conducted with 1,801 American adults after the Trump administration had already imposed tariffs. Additionally, 80 per cent of Democrats found the tariffs on China as bad, while only 24 per cent of Republicans expressed the same sentiments. When asked if the tariffs will benefit them individually, 17 per cent of Republicans thought they would, while 30 per cent expressed the opposite. ("Majority of Americans oppose tariffs on Chinese goods, Pew survey shows," *SCMP*, 09 April 2025)

Trump threatens to impose 50 per cent fresh tariffs on China if not revoke their counter-tariffs

On 08 April, *BBC* reported on the additional 50 per cent tariff imposition threat by Trump on China. Trump warned this if China does not remove the 34 per cent counter-tariffs imposed by China. This comes after the US imposed 20 per cent and 34 per cent "reciprocal tariffs." China retaliated with its own tariffs as part of their "Liberation Day" and set a minimum levy of 10 per cent on all US products. They also imposed export control on rare earth minerals to the US and also imposed tariffs on oil imports from the US. China is the biggest importer and market for oil imports, US exported the most to China. This statement by Trump was made on a social media post threatening that they will impose more tariffs and, if done, the total will come to 104 per cent. China called this "economic bullying" and noted that it will safeguard its interest. In his post on Truth Social, Trump posted: "All talks with China concerning their requested meetings with us [on tariffs] will be terminated!" Spokesperson for China's embassy in the US, Liu Pengyu said: "The US hegemonic move in the name of 'reciprocity' serves its selfish interests at the expense of other countries' legitimate interests and puts 'America first' over international rule." ("Trump threatens new 50% tariffs on China," *BBC*, 08 April 2025)

"China will fight to the end," says China Ministry of Commerce on Trump's tariff threat

On 08 April, China's Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) opposed the US escalation of tariffs after Trump threatened to impose fresh 50 per cent additional tariffs, totaling 104 per cent. The ministry said: "hina firmly opposes this. If the US escalates tariffs, China will resolutely take countermeasures to safeguard its own rights and interests." They called the "reciprocal tariffs" as unilateral economic bullying, and that the counter measures are taken to protect China sovereignty and maintain the interest of international trade system. The ministry stated that the US made a " a grave mistake on top of an existing one, which once again exposes the US' blackmail nature. China will never accept this. If the US insists on its own way, China will fight to the end." They also reiterated that there are no winners in a trade war, and there is no way out of protectionism. Additionally, pressure and threats are not a way to deal with China, and urged the US to immediately rectify their actions and wrong practices. They called on the US to cancel all their tariffs against China and to stop suppressing their economic development and trade. ("If the US insists on its own way, China will fight to the end': Chinese commerce ministry on US threat of 50% tariff," *Global Times*, 08 April 2025)

Canada accuses WeChat of spreading false information about Prime Minister Carney

On 07 April, Canada's Privy Council Office reported that the Chinese social media WeChat is disseminating false information about Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney. The council believes that this is a tactic to infringe on Canadian elections and spread a false narrative. The council said: "The information operation targeting Mr Carney is deliberately amplifying narratives in a coordinated and inauthentic way on WeChat, to Chinese audiences, including communities living in Canada." The Wechat account if accused of targeting Carney's background, experience, and credentials to manipulate Chinese voters in Canada. The account Youli-Youmian was found to have links with the CPC, and the account aims to influence the 28 April elections to be held in Ottawa. China's embassy in Canada expressed ignorance and stated that they had no information regarding it. The embassy expressed that it's unjustified and absurd to attack the Chinese government based on individual remarks and that they firmly oppose it. ("Canada says WeChat news account pushing false narratives about PM Mark Carney," *SCMP*, 08 April 2025)

China imposes 34 per cent tariff on all US imports

On 04 April, China's Customs Tariff Commission of the State Council informed that China will impose an additional 34 per cent of tariffs on all US imports from 10 April. This comes after the US imposed reciprocal tariffs on Chinese products for 34 per cent. This comes on top of the already imposed tariffs of 20 per cent, bringing the total to 54 per cent. This will take effect from 09 April. The commission stated that the US does not follow the international trade rules and undermines Chinese economic rights and interests. This move by the US only harms the interest of the US itself and harms the global economy. They called for the US to lift the unilateral tariffs and resolve the trade dispute through consultation. ("China to impose additional 34% tariffs on all U.S. products from April 10," *CGTN*, 04 April 2025)

The US abusing tariffs for personal gains, says an editorial in *CGTN*

On 06 April, *CGTN* published an editorial on the US tariffs titled "Full text: China states its position on opposing U.S. abuse of tariffs." The piece called out the US for abusing tariffs and that the Chinese government vehemently opposed them. They noted that the US imposed tariffs on all its trading partners, which included China. This has severely violated the legitimate rights and interests of all the countries. The tariffs also violate the rules of the WTO and undermine the rule-based trading system. The editorial noted that doing so is deifying the laws of economics and market principles by disregarding the repercussions. They called this a typical act of unilateralism and protectionism behavior. And that this is economic bullying under the guise of "reciprocity" and "America first" sentiments. This way, they are putting American interest above all of the common good of the international community. ("Full text: China states its position on opposing U.S. abuse of tariffs," *CGTN*, 06 April 2025)

China's embassy in Canada calls Ottawa to work together to safeguard the trading system

On 07 April, China's embassy in Canada expressed that they are willing to work with Canada to protect the global trading system. The embassy noted that there are no winners in trade wars and protectionism, calling on the US to recall the tariffs imposed. The embassy calls on Canada to safeguard multilateral and the multilateral system. The embassy said: "The practice of the US imposing additional tariffs disregards the results of the balance of interests

achieved in multilateral trade negotiations over the years, and also ignores the fact that the US has long reaped substantial benefits from international trade." They called US imposition based on subjective one-sided assessments which seriously violates the rules of world trading system. ("China is willing to work together with countries, including Canada, to safeguard multilateralism and multilateral trading system: embassy," *Global Times*, 07 April 2025)

Trump extends to deadline to decide on the future of TikTok

On 05 April, US President Donald Trump announced that they are extending 75 days to finalize the future of TikTok. This comes as Trump failed to form a deal to sell TikTok. Trump on social media said: "My Administration has been working very hard on a Deal to SAVE TIKTOK, and we have made tremendous progress. The Deal requires more work to ensure all necessary approvals are signed, which is why I am signing an Executive Order to keep TikTok up and running for an additional 75 days." Trump also said that his administration hopes they continue to work in good hope with China and that he understands that China is not happy with the reciprocal tariffs. He also expressed that he doesn't want TikTok to "go dark" and expressed his willingness to work with China and ByteDance. ("Trump extends TikTok deadline to divest, says China is 'unhappy' about tariffs," *SCMP*, 05 April 2025)

ByteDance informs that TikTok negotiations with the US will be under the purview of Chinese law

On 05 April, TikTok's partner firm, ByteDance, informed that the negotiation with the US government will be subjected to the approval of Chinese law. The firm informed that they have not reached an agreement yet. This came after Trump announced a 75 extension to decide on the future of TikTok in America. The Trump administration informed that they are working hard to save TikTok and that significant progress has been made. Currently, Trump is offering to reduce the tariffs if the firms agree to divest the app to a non-Chinese firm. ("Any agreement will be subject to approval under Chinese law, ByteDance says after Trump's additional 75-day extension from ban," *Global Times*, 05 April 2025)

China imposes 34 per cent tariff on all US imports

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Chinese malware discovered in South American countries, says US nominee for Joint of Chiefs Staff

On 01 April, *Defense Scoop* reported on the discovery of the presence of Chinese malware in South American countries by the Cybercom firm. This was reported by the nominee as the Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staffs under the Trump administration Lt Gen Dan Caine. A "hunt forward operation" is going on where the US military is sending their Cyber National Mission Force (CNMF) to foreign countries on invitation to find out malicious activities conducted on their private networks. A spokesperson for Cybercom said: "This strengthens our Allies' and Partners' cybersecurity posture, and makes it more difficult for foreign adversaries to threaten all of us. USCYBERCOM's core mission is to defend the nation in cyberspace. By policy and for operational security, we do not discuss cyber operations, plans, or intelligence. No operation will be publicly disclosed without the partner nation's consent." ("Cybercom discovered Chinese malware in South American nations — Joint Chiefs chairman nominee," *Defense Scoop*, 01 April 2025)

White House to hold an Oval Office meeting to discuss the future of TikTok

On 02 April, *CGTN* reported that the White House would hold a meeting to discuss the final proposal related to the future of Tik Tok. US President Donald Trump will consider the final proposal ahead of the 05 April deadline. In context, Trump proposed that TikTok be divested to a non-Chinese firm. Trump will consider lowering their tariffs on China. The meeting will be held in the Oval Office with US Vice President JD Vance, US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick, US National Security Advisor Mike Waltz, and the US Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard. Private

forms like Blackstone are also discussing joining ByteDance's non-Chinese shareholders group. Other than that, US venture capitalist firm Andreessen Horowitz is also discussing plans to invest in TikTok, additionally, his co-founder Marc Andreessen also plans to buy TikTok. ("White House to hold meeting on TikTok," *CGTN*, 02 April 2025)

US cosmetics firm Estee Lauder faces lawsuits over sale in China's gray market

On 31 March, a US federal judge in Manhattan ruled that a US multinational cosmetics company, Estee Lauder, face a lawsuit against defrauding its investors. The firm is accused of overdependence on gray market sales in China. US District Judge Arun Subramanian noted that the shareholders complained that there were several omissions and half-truths in the company's disclosure. Subramanian said: "What matters is that Estée Lauder touted the reasons for its success while leaving out the parts of the truth it found inconvenient." The firm lost a lot of money as the Chinese government cracked down on the gray markets, which led to an eventual dip in the sale of Estee Lauder products in China. ("Estee Lauder faces US legal challenge over China sales practices," *Reuters*, 02 April 2025)

EAST ASIA & THE PACIFIC READER

TAIWAN

Global Taiwan National Affairs Symposium XIII underscores Indo-Pacific security strategies

On 27 April, the Global Taiwan National Affairs Symposium XIII in Taipei was convened by the Taiwan National Alliance and the World Taiwanese Congress. Vice President Hsiao Bi-khim, former Japanese first lady Abe Akie, and ex-US Assistant Secretary of Defense Randall Schriver also joined the symposium. Domestic and international scholars discussed "Outbreaks in the First Island Chain - Strategies for Indo-Pacific Security." Speakers supported President Lai Ching-te's designation of China as a "hostile foreign force," emphasised building national consciousness, and pledged "value diplomacy" and economic resilience. Abe Akie advocated deepening Taiwan-Japan ties for rapid neighbourly support, while Schriver warned against US cuts to development assistance, and praised Taiwan's defence and trade partnership with the US. Schriver also urged the use of export controls and investment reviews as economic deterrents to rising Chinese military pressure. (Lily LaMattina, "Taipei symposium discusses Indo-Pacific security strategies for Taiwan," *Taiwan News,* 19 April 2025)

Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense to build a new 155 mm shell production line

On 29 April, the Ministry of National Defense plans to allocate USD 431.23 million over the next five years to install an automated 155 mm artillery shell production line at the Armaments Bureau's Factory 202 and upgrade existing facilities. The expansion is due to surging demand amid global supply-chain shifts and a forthcoming US-Taiwan manufacturing pact. The expansion will also enhance the output of 120 mm tank shells and M230 chain-gun ammunition. The Foreign Affairs and National Defense Committee, with Lieutenant General Yang Chi-jung, inspected Factory 202 on 17 April. They assessed production processes and supported legislative oversight of the defence industry's capacity and resilience. (Lo Tien-pin and Esme Yeh, "Artillery shell automated production planned - Taipei Times," *Taipei Times,* 29 April 2025)

Taiwan's Legislator calls to amend the Classified National Security Information Protection Act

On 27 April, Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) legislator Chen Kuan-ting proposed amending Article 14 of the Classified National Security Information Protection Act. He aims to establish a nationwide security clearance system in Taiwan after recent espionage cases exposed gaps in interagency vetting. His draft would require character and loyalty checks for political appointees, civil servants, and intelligence personnel before and during service, and designate a lead authority to set cross-ministerial standards. He said: "Taiwan lacks a unified, in-service clearance mechanism across government agencies, which allows potentially unfit personnel access to classified data, contributing to previous leaks affecting the Ministry of National Defense, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the National Security

Bureau's Special Service Command Center." Professor and International Studies chair at the University of St Thomas in Texas, Yeh Yao-yuan, highlights how US vetting evaluates criminal records, social ties, and online activity. Institute for National Policy Research Deputy Director Kuo Yu-jen compared how Japan's new economic security law balances information protection with civil rights. Kuo warns that Taiwan's patchwork of secrecy laws risks legal ambiguity and urges clear definitions of national and commercial secrets alongside harsher penalties for Chinese espionage. (Huang Ching-hsuan and William Hetherington, "DPP proposes security vetting changes," *Taipei Times,* 28 April 2025)

Taiwan's Premier Cho supports USD 12.6 billion resilience package against US tariffs

On 28 April, Premier Cho Jung-tai met with DPP, KMT, and TPP lawmakers to secure backing for a NTD 410 billion (USD 12.6 billion) special budget bill. The bill is designed to counter impending US tariffs and bolster Taiwan's economic, social, and homeland security resilience using past budget surpluses rather than new borrowing. The proposal allocates USD 2.88 billion for industry and employment support, covering trade-financing interest subsidies, small-business loan guarantees. R&D grants USD 4.65 billion for homeland security measures such as new patrol vessels, critical-supplies storage, and cybersecurity upgrades. USD 5.17 billion is reserved for social welfare, including electricity subsidies and insurance fund injections. KMT legislators expressed conditional support for tariff relief but urged that non-urgent items like Taiwan Power Co. (Taipower) subsidies be handled separately. TPP representatives warned against "smuggling" unrelated spending into the trade-response bill. Cho reaffirmed the government's goal of negotiating tariff rates no higher than those imposed on Taiwan's competitors and safeguarding both industrial competitiveness and consumer interests. (Lin Ching-yin, Liu Kuan-ting, Kao Hua-chien, Chen Chun-hua and James Thompson, "Premier Cho seeks support for NT$410 billion tariff-countering bill," *Focus Taiwan,* 28 April 2025)

Taiwan's cross-party delegation of legislators heads to the US to discuss tariffs

On 27 April, Deputy Legislative Speaker Johnny Chiang led a cross-party delegation of six Taiwanese legislators to the US. The delegation is set to meet with members of Congress, think-tanks, and industry groups on foreign affairs, defense cooperation, and discuss the economic fallout of US "reciprocal" tariffs. Chiang is joined by fellow opposition legislators Chang Chih-lun, Huang Chien-hao, and Lin Yi-chun. On 29 April, they will be joined by DPP members Wang Ting-yu, Chiu Yi-ying and Ngalim Tiunn. In pre-trip consultations with Taiwanese business-sector leaders, Chiang gathered concerns on geopolitical risk, investment needs, and trade impediments. He plans to lobby for the US double-tax relief bill while exploring expanded labor, manufacturing, education, and talent-exchange partnerships during the visit. (Duncan DeAeth, "Taiwan delegation readies for diplomatic visit to DC," *Taiwan News,* 27 April 2025)

Taiwan's Ministry of Labor to probe alleged mobilization of migrant workers at KMT rally

On 26 April, Taiwan's Ministry of Labor, along with the National Immigration Agency, launched a joint investigation following video evidence claiming that migrant workers were bused to a Kuomintang protest on Ketagalan Boulevard. The video displayed participants wearing KMT lawmaker Cheng Cheng-chien's branded caps, admitting they were brought to the rally by an older man. Cheng's office insists they handed out leftover caps without vetting attendees and that those filmed are naturalized Taiwanese citizens or children of Taiwanese parents, not contracted migrant workers. The Labor Ministry warned that employers face fines up to USD 921.64 and revocation of hiring permissions if found to have misused foreign workers for political activities. (Sean Lin and Elly Wu, "Labor ministry to probe claims migrant workers mobilized at KMT rally," *Focus Taiwan,* 27 April 2025)

Taiwan's Deputy Speaker outlines that the US trip agenda is beyond semiconductors

On 27 April, according to an itinerary released by Deputy Speaker Johnny Chiang's office, he will not only support the government's tariff negotiations but also expand bilateral cooperation "beyond TSMC and semiconductors" in his US visit. Chiang will discuss shipbuilding and energy collaboration with US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer and Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, seek timely delivery of US defense arms, and press Congress to pass a Taiwan-US double taxation relief act. Meetings are scheduled with think-tanks, industry associations, and Capitol Hill members to shore up Taiwan's economic resilience and deepen security ties. (Liu Kuan-ting and Matthew Mazzetta, "Deputy speaker to

lead legislative delegation to U.S.," *Focus Taiwan,* 27 April 2025)

Google to launch anti-fraud game in Taiwan

On 25 April, Google announced that it will roll out in Taiwan its interactive anti-scam mobile game "ShieldUp." The game simulates common fraud tactics which will roll out in Taiwan in the second half of this year, following launches in India, Australia, Singapore, and Thailand. The company highlighted its partnership with Taiwan's Ministry of Digital Affairs to share scam intelligence and develop detection technologies. It noted that Asia-Pacific scam losses reached USD 688 billion, equivalent to 86 percent of Taiwan's GDP. Google Vice President of Global Government Affairs and Public Policy, Wilson White stated that gamification can bolster national fraud resistance. Google Taiwan Managing Director Lin Ya-fang promoted hosting cybersecurity forums reflecting Taiwan's growing role in global anti-fraud efforts. Lin said: "Bad actors are always one step ahead." (Michael Nakhiengchanh, "Google to launch scam-fighting mobile game in Taiwan," *Taiwan News*, 25 April 2025)

Taiwan's Ministry of Health defends medical tourism program amid clinic visa-fraud probe

On 24 April, the Ministry of Health and Welfare's Department of Medical Affairs (MOHW) defended its medical tourism program after the owner of a dental clinic was questioned on suspicion of helping illegal Chinese immigrants. The Ministry confirmed that only three out of 129 institutions in its medical tourism visa program have shown irregularities. The Ministry and National Immigration Agency have since tightened entry criteria to 28 acute and severe disease categories, suspended the implicated clinic since May 2023, and refined the program to ensure it serves genuine medical needs while preventing abuse. (Tzeng Yi-ning and Sunny Lai, "MOHW defends medical tourism program amid dental clinic probe," *Focus Taiwan*, 25 April 2025)

TWNIC unveils enhanced cybersecurity measures at annual Engagement forum

On 24 April, the Taiwan Network Information Center (TWNIC) announced strategies to combat cyberattacks at its Engagement Forum. The strategies included a cybersecurity intelligence integration system with daily threat monitoring, collaboration with NetBeacon Institute to track and report Domain Name System (DNS) abuse, and partnerships with domestic and international agencies for real-time abuse tracking. TWNIC had received over 33,000 phishing site reports in 2024 and now automatically investigates domain registrations and, when abuse is confirmed, blocks offending domains and works with ISPs to cut access. TWNIC has also launched a "Green Domain" identity-verification program and a Registry Lock service to prevent unauthorized changes. TWNIC noted that phishing attacks primarily target financial and insurance firms (62.65 per cent), e-commerce platforms (16.45 per cent), and government agencies (5.25 per cent), and cited Check Point data showing Taiwan endures an average of 3,993 cyberattacks per week. (Carol Yang, "Taiwan Network Information Center unveils strategies to combat cyberattacks," *Taiwan News,* 25 April 2025)

Taiwan to build Strategic Oil Reserve Facility project in Eswatini

On 23 April, Taiwan's Minister of Foreign Affairs Lin Chia-lung and Eswatini King Mswati III unveiled the Strategic Oil Reserve Facility project. The project was signed last September between Taiwan's Overseas Investment & Development Corporation and the Eswatini government. It aims to secure a 60-day fuel supply for Eswatini and shield it from global price swings once completed in three years. Lin also presented letters from Pwresident Lai and ceremonial cows as gifts. He met Prime Minister Russell Dlamini, and joined Deputy Prime Minister Thulisile Dladla at a Women's Start-up Microfinance Fund ceremony. There, he pledged an additional USD 500,000 to the USD 1 million revolving fund, already benefiting over 500 female entrepreneurs with near-100 per cent repayment. ("Taiwan, Eswatini unveil oil reserve facility project," *Taipei Times,* 25 April 2025)

Taiwan approves USD 12.6 billion special budget to deal with economic and security challenges

On 24 April, the Executive Yuan adopted a proposal to draw an extra NTD 410 billion (USD 12.6 billion) to meet economic and security challenges facing Taiwan over the next two years. The bill titled "Special Act for Strengthening Economic, Social, and National Security Resilience in Response to International Circumstances," now awaits Legislative Yuan approval. Of the USD 12.6 billion, USD 3.078 billion is earmarked to cover Taiwan Power Company's mounting losses, USD 1.1 billion will bolster the previously announced USD 2.7 billion support package to mitigate US tariff shocks for industry and agriculture, and USD 4.6 billion will be allocated to enhance national

security through Coast Guard upgrades, UAV infrastructure and ICT improvements. The funds will be sourced primarily from fiscal surpluses, with borrowing authorized if needed, and each component will require parliamentary sign-off before release. (Teng Pei-ju, "Cabinet approves NT$410 billion special budget proposal," *Focus Taiwan,* 24 April 2025)

Taiwan's former Military Intelligence Bureau Director warns of increasing Chinese espionage

On 24 April, Former Military Intelligence Bureau Director Liu Te-liang warned that the number of Chinese spies operating in Taiwan surpasses the estimated number of 5,000. He noted that past assessments by successive National Security Bureau chiefs and defense officials pointed to similar figures. Liu and other veterans like former Deputy Minister of National Defense Lin Chong-pin point to frequent leaks of classified information and recent counterespionage successes as evidence that infiltration has grown alongside China's intensifying United Front efforts. He urged a significant expansion of counterintelligence manpower and funding, and called on all political parties, elected representatives, and the media to bolster Taiwan's national security system. (Keoni Everington, "Former intel chief says China likely has over 5000 spies in Taiwan," *Taiwan News,* 24 April 2025)

Taiwan's Foreign Minister appreciates Eswatini's support and economic cooperation

On 23 April, Foreign Minister Lin Chia-lung thanked Prime Minister Russell Dlamini for his steadfast diplomatic backing of Taiwan, during an official visit to Eswatini. He highlighted Dlamini's advocacy at the UN General Assembly and COP29. Lin and Dlamini reaffirmed their countries' "rock-solid" friendship, with Eswatini pledging to resist external pressure. Lin also reviewed results from Taiwan's USD 1 million Women Business Start-up Microfinance Revolving Fund, which has disbursed over 500 loans to rural Eswatini women since September 2023, boosting household incomes and women's economic independence. Lin's visit coincides with King Mswati III's birthday celebrations and will include signing an MOU on combating disinformation. (Kelvin Chen, "Taiwan grateful for Eswatini's diplomatic support," *Taiwan News,* 24 April 2025)

Taiwan's airlines to use sustainable aviation fuel, informs the Ministry of Transportation and Communications

On 23 April, the Ministry of Transportation and Communications announced the availability of sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) in airports to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. Taiwan's three largest carriers, China Airlines, EVA Airways, and Starlux, have started using SAF. CPC Corp imported 400 tonnes, and Formosa Petrochemical produced 5,500 tonnes for use at Kaohsiung, Songshan, and Taoyuan airports. The Ministry of Transportation and Communications stated that the 6,000 tonnes of SAF deployed this year will curb about 15,000 tonnes of carbon emissions. Both CPC and Formosa Petrochemical secured CORSIA certification late last year, and CPC plans to begin domestic SAF production in 2026, while the Taoyuan-based Civil Aviation Administration aims for SAF to account for at least 5 percent of total aviation fuel by 2030. (Shelley Shan, "Sustainable flight fuel added at Taiwan's airports," *Taipei Times,* 24 April 2025)

Philippines President's office eases Taiwan restrictions to boost economic ties

On 15 April, the Office of the President of the Philippines issued Memorandum Circular No. 82, allowing most government officials to visit Taiwan for economic and trade promotion purposes, reversing a 1989 ban. Officials, excluding top national leaders, can now travel on ordinary passports without official titles and must coordinate with the Manila Economic and Cultural Office (MECO). Hosting Taiwanese delegations is also permitted with prior notice. The move is aimed at attracting investments and was praised by Taiwan Foreign Minister Lin Chia-lung as a pragmatic step to deepen ties. Taiwan remains a key trade partner, ranking eighth in Philippine exports and tenth in imports. (Kelvin Chen, "Philippines relaxes restrictions for official exchanges with Taiwan," *Taiwan News,* 22 April 2025)

Taiwan Premier unveils USD 2.67 billion relief package to counter US tariffs

Premier Cho Jung-tai approved a USD 2.67 billion support package to protect Taiwan's workforce amid rising US tariffs. The Ministry of Labor will offer aid to 24,000 businesses through subsidized loans, vocational training, and wage support, particularly for workers in rubber, machinery, and transport sectors. Middle-aged, older, and young job seekers will benefit from hiring incentives, training stipends, and job search subsidies. The initiative seeks to curb unemployment, stabilize the labor market, and equip workers with skills for a shifting economic landscape. (Carol Yang, "Taiwan announces worker support measures in

response to US tariffs," *Taiwan News,* 22 April 2025)

Citizen Congress Watch warns Taiwan of eight legislative security threats

On 21 April, Citizen Congress Watch (CCW) warned that Taiwan's unicameral legislature is beset by eight major national security crises. These include Chinese espionage infiltrating lawmakers' offices, disinformation campaigns, covert election funding, overly lenient espionage punishments, opposition-driven budget cuts, weak information-security safeguards, and leaks of classified military deliberations. CCW director Chang Hung-Lin noted Beijing's influence extends to lawmakers colluding to block bills vital for sovereignty and defense, and lamented that the Kuomintang (KMT) and Taiwan People's Party (TPP) have refused to cooperate with the watchdog's monitoring. In a "worst legislators" roster, CCW chairman Tseng Chien-yuan highlighted KMT's Lin Shih-ming (124 blocked bills), TPP's Lin Kuo-cheng and Huang Kuo-chang (110 each), KMT's Hung Meng-kai (41) and Wang Hung-wei (25), plus KMT at-large members Weng Hsiao-ling (24), Wu Tsung-hsien (23) and Lin Chien-chi (23), for stalling key national security legislation. (Chen Yu-fu and Jason Pan, "Watchdog warns of threat from Chinese infiltration," *Taipei Times,* 22 April 2025)

US security cooperation with Taiwan to continue, says US lawmaker

On 17 April, US Representative Seth Moulton affirmed that the US will maintain and deepen its security cooperation with Taiwan to deter conflict with China. He noted that neither side desires war and praised Taiwan's adoption of asymmetric defence strategies. He also revealed congressional interest in pursuing a US-Taiwan free trade agreement and cautioned against rising isolationist tendencies in US foreign policy, stressing that bipartisan and senior Trump-administration officials largely support ongoing engagement rather than retreat from international partnerships. (Kelvin Chen, "Lawmaker reaffirms US defense commitments to Taiwan," *Taiwan News,* 21 April 2025)

Taipei on the top list for safety and hospitality for female travellers, reports Holidu

On 20 April, *Taiwan News* reported that according to a report by Holidu and Nomads.com, Taipei was ranked the safest city globally for female digital nomads, with Kaohsiung placing seventh. Factors include community safety, legislative protections for women, and a welcoming environment; Taiwan's National Development Council had recently launched a digital nomad visa allowing stays of up to 180 days and is considering Cabinet approval of measures to extend stays to two years and grant one-year eligibility for permanent residency to qualified foreign specialist professionals. (Duncan DeAeth, "Taipei ranks as world's safest destination for female digital nomads," *Taiwan News,* 20 April 2025)

Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council adds security checks for Hong Kong and Macau residency applicants to Taiwan

On 20 April, the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) Minister Chiu Chui-cheng announced that a "national security observation period," will be included for new long-term residency applications from Hong Kong and Macau citizens. Personal work permit similar to foreign permanent residency will also be included, as part of the 17 counter-aggression strategies President Lai Ching-te unveiled on 13 March. Chiu emphasized heightened security thresholds amid China's "reshaping" of Hong Kong's population. He warned of increased risks for Taiwanese traveling to China and outlined tools on the MAC website for risk assessment and travel registration to assist citizens in emergencies. He said: "We've added a national security observation period to ensure comprehensive safety. We are doing defense work and strengthening security checks and national security laws to prevent the Chinese Communist Party from infiltrating Taiwan." (Chen Yu-fu and Sam Garcia, "HK, Macau residency rules tightened," *Taipei Times,* 21 April 2025)

US sanctions on Nvidia and AMD chips risk hurting Taiwanese suppliers, reports Taiwan News

On 16 April, *Taiwan News* reported that the US Department of Commerce had imposed new export licensing requirements on Nvidia's H20 and AMD's MI308 artificial-intelligence chips bound for China. These measures will not only impact the two American firms but are also likely to damage their Taiwanese manufacturing partners. Many Taiwanese companies, including AI server builders Inventec and Mitac Holdings, which supply cloud giants like Baidu, Alibaba, and Tencent, rely heavily on those chips. Analysts warn that, while China has already stockpiled H20 and MI308 units, US sanctions may accelerate Beijing's drive for domestic chip self-sufficiency, leaving Taiwanese suppliers squeezed between US policy and China's import

restrictions. (Lily LaMattina, "Taiwanese suppliers to be affected by new US chip export sanctions," *Taiwan News,* 18 April 2025)

KMT Taipei Mayor accuses Taiwan President of "judicial abuse"

On 17 April, Taipei Mayor Chiang Wan-an of the opposition Kuomintang (KMT) accused President Lai Ching-te's administration of weaponizing the judiciary to target dissent. Chiang led a protest outside the Taipei District Prosecutors' Office and called on the Legislative Yuan to table and pass a vote of no confidence in Premier Cho Jung-tai's Cabinet. He warned that without such a check, "any one of us could be the next victim" of politically motivated investigations, citing recent raids on KMT offices and the detention of party staff over alleged forgery in recall-petition signatures against ruling party legislators. Under Taiwan's Constitution, if a no-confidence motion wins a majority of the 113-member legislature, the premier must resign within ten days and may ask the president to dissolve Parliament. Chiang dismissed the threat of dissolution, arguing that public backlash would strengthen the opposition in any ensuing legislative election. Taiwan People's Party lawmakers also pointed out what they see as politically driven prosecutions, most notably the indictment of their former chairman Ko Wen-je, echoing Chiang's charge that the DPP is overstepping judicial bounds. (Wang Cheng-chung and Chao Yen-hsiang, "Taipei Mayor Chiang calls for no-confidence vote against Cabinet," *Focus Taiwan*, 18 April 2025)

Taiwan and New Zealand agree to deepen trade and strategic ties

On 17 April, President Lai Ching-te hosted a delegation of New Zealand (NZ) parliamentarians in Taipei, underscoring shared interests in "smart agriculture, biomedicine, the digital economy, and clean energy." Lai noted that both democracies face global headwinds, such as shifting trade patterns after the US levies on Taiwanese exports, and called for market diversification. Member of the New Zealand House of Representatives, Stuart Smith, highlighted security cooperation, recalling last September's joint New Zealand and Australian naval transit through the Taiwan Strait to uphold freedom of navigation. The visit, part of a six-day trip by members of New Zealand's All-Party Parliamentary Group on Taiwan, aims to promote bilateral ties between the two sides. (Teng Pei-ju," Lai calls for more trade cooperation with NZ amid global challenges," Focus Taiwan, 17 April 2025)

Taiwan's manufacturing output to shrink by 5 per cent, says the National Development Council Minister

On 16 April, Taiwan's National Development Council's Deputy Minister, Kao Shien-quey, warned that Taiwan's manufacturing output could shrink by five per cent as a result of Trump's tariffs. She explained that Taiwanese industrial exports to the United States might fall by 26 per cent, with many manufacturers considering relocation of production to countries like Mexico. Since roughly 70 per cent of Taiwan's exports to the US comprise electronics and information technology products, and half of those are high-demand items such as graphics cards, servers, and semiconductors sourced almost exclusively from Taiwan, the impact would be particularly severe. Based on estimates from the Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics, the tariffs could reduce Taiwan's GDP growth by 0.5 to 1.5 percentage points. Although the 32 per cent levy was deferred for 90 days, Kao noted that the extension has only triggered a short-term export surge, while uncertainty over long-term demand persists. (Michael Nakhiengchanh, "US tariffs may affect Taiwan manufacturing by 5%," *Taiwan News*, 17 April 2025)

Taiwan's Foreign Ministry refutes Vietnam's upholding One-China policy

On 16 April, Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) denounced a joint statement by China and Vietnam supporting the one-China policy. The statement declared that "Taiwan is an inseparable part of Chinese territory" and opposed "any separatist activity seeking 'Taiwan independence.'" MOFA labelled the declaration a "serious distortion of the facts" and firmly rejected what it called the Chinese Communist Party's attempt to undermine Taiwan's sovereignty. Emphasizing that Taiwan is a sovereign and independent nation never governed by the CCP, the ministry stressed that such assertions cannot alter the internationally recognized cross-strait status quo. MOFA urged the global community to join Taiwan in countering Beijing's misrepresentations and to resist any effort to erode Taiwan's national status. (Keoni Everington, "Taiwan slams Vietnam's acceptance of Beijing's 'one China' claim," *Taiwan News*, 17 April 2025)

Taiwan's Defense Ministry reveals 62 active military personnel holding Chinese residency

On 16 April, at a Legislative Yuan session, Minister of National Defense Wellington Koo

revealed that a recent internal investigation identified 62 serving military personnel who hold Chinese residence permits, including two volunteers. Although none possess Chinese citizenship or passports, those affected have been reassigned away from combat operation centers and sensitive units, such as intelligence, communications and R&D. They also have been barred from roles involving naval or aviation responsibilities, access to classified information, or operation of new weapons systems. Koo highlighted one case in which a sailor surnamed Yang unknowingly received a Chinese ID card through his mother. The ministry has since facilitated his renunciation of Chinese residency and moved him to a non-sensitive post. To prevent future lapses, the military will tighten enlistment protocols, requiring volunteers to declare they hold no foreign nationality or residency. Simultaneously, draft amendments to the Military Service Act propose revoking pensions for service members convicted of insurrection, treason, or national security offenses. On related defense matters, Koo confirmed plans to expand counterintelligence staffing by 54 positions and signaled Taiwan's intent to deepen shipbuilding and ship-repair cooperation with the United States. (Hollie Younger, "Defense ministry says 62 personnel had Chinese residency," *Taipei Times*, 17 April 2025)

KMT offices raided as part of recall fraud investigation

On 15 April, prosecutors from the New Taipei District Prosecutors Office raided 30 KMT locations in New Taipei and questioned 10 people involved with recall campaigns targeting Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) legislators. Boxes of evidence were removed from the KMT's New Taipei offices, and the search focused on alleged recall fraud, with suspicious signatures copied from party membership lists or belonging to deceased individuals. New Taipei KMT Caucus Leader Wang Wei-yuan stated that the KMT's Sanchong party committee leader was questioned. The Central Election Commission referred 39 recall cases for investigation, and DPP Legislator Lee Kuen-cheng also filed a complaint in February alleging recall fraud. (Jono Thomson, "KMT offices in New Taipei searched as part of recall fraud investigation," *Taiwan News*, 15 April 2025)

Taiwan's President signed agreements strengthening Taiwan–Tuvalu relations

On 15 April, President Lai Ching-te, at a meeting with Tuvalu Deputy Prime Minister Panapasi Nelesone, celebrated deepening Taiwan–Tuvalu relations. Lai thanked Tuvalu for its longstanding support of Taiwan's international participation and noted that the two countries will soon sign a labor cooperation agreement and an accord on mutual recognition of seafarer training and certification documents. He emphasized that, as maritime nations sharing the values of democracy and freedom, Taiwan and Tuvalu are working together to protect ocean resources and address climate change for peace and prosperity in the Pacific. Nelesone expressed gratitude for Taiwan's enduring friendship and support. (Kelvin Chen, "President lauds friendly Taiwan-Tuvalu relations," *Taiwan News*, 15 April 2025)

Nvidia to invest in AI infrastructure in the US with Taiwanese firms

On 14 April, Nvidia announced plans to team up with Taiwanese firms to invest USD 500 billion in AI infrastructure in the US over the next four years. Production of its Blackwell AI chips has already begun at TSMC's facilities in Phoenix, and the company will produce AI supercomputers entirely in the US by building factories in Texas, partnering with Foxconn in Houston and Wistron in Dallas. Both sites are expected to begin mass production within 12 to 15 months. Nvidia noted that building the AI chip and supercomputer supply chain in the US will be a complex process requiring cutting-edge manufacturing, packaging, assembly, and testing technologies, partnering with US-based Amkor and Taiwan's SPIL for operations in Arizona. Co-founder and CEO Jensen Huang said: "The engines of the world's AI infrastructure are being built in the United States for the first time," adding that US manufacturing will help meet growing demand, strengthen supply chain resilience, and boost overall resiliency. (Keoni Everington, "Nvidia to invest NT$16 trillion in US AI infrastructure with Taiwanese partners," *Taiwan News,* 15 April 2025)

Taiwan's Foreign Ministry protests Cambodian deportation of Taiwanese fraud suspects to China

On 14 April, Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) expressed solemn protest and concerns to Cambodia for deporting nearly 190 suspects to China. The suspects, comprising Chinese and Taiwanese nationals, were arrested during a crackdown on a scam center on 13-14 April. The ministry noted that Cambodia did not provide exact numbers or a full list of names of the deported Taiwanese suspects. It stated that consultations had been held with judicial authorities and the Mainland Affairs Council. Taiwan's representative office in Ho Chi Minh

City is negotiating with the Cambodian government to obtain further information and to ensure the suspects are returned to Taiwan in accordance with the Cross-Strait Joint Crime-Fighting and Judicial Mutual Assistance Agreement. The ministry reiterated its warning against engaging in illegal telecommunications fraud, stressing that such activities damage both individual futures and the nation's image. It also emphasised continued cooperation with the international community to combat transnational crime. The deportations coincided with Chinese President Xi Jinping's tour of Vietnam, Malaysia, and Cambodia, and followed reports that Cambodian authorities recently detained 186 foreigners at a scam center in Phnom Penh. (Lia I-chia, "MOFA protests against Cambodia sending Taiwanese fraud suspects to China," *Taipei Times*, 15 April 2025)

KMT legislator apologises for wrongful Chinese spy accusation against a government official

On 10 April, KMT Legislator Hsu Chiao-hsin apologized for wrongly identifying a government official as a Chinese spy during a Legislative Yuan session. Hsu accused a personal assistant to National Security Council Secretary-General Joseph Wu of espionage and posted the person's photo on Facebook. Later, it was revealed that the individual was an official from the Foreign Ministry's Department of North American Affairs with the same name. National Security Bureau Director Tsai Ming-yen corrected Hsu during the session, and Foreign Minister Lin Chia-lung later issued a clarification. Hsu amended her post and apologized to the misidentified official and his family, also urging the NSB to thoroughly investigate the actual espionage allegations. (Medwin Hsu, "KMT lawmaker apologizes for misidentifying alleged Chinese spy," *Taiwan News*, 10 April 2025)

Taiwan Premier Cho prepares for direct talks with the US over tariffs

On 10 April, Premier Cho Jung-tai informed that Taiwan is preparing for "direct talks" with the US after Donald Trump placed a 90-day hold on his sweeping tariffs. Cabinet spokesperson Michelle Lee stated that Cho indicated the government would "seize the time and opportunity to engage in direct and effective negotiations with the US" to ensure the interests of Taiwan and its businesses. The Taiwanese negotiation team, led by Vice Premier Cheng Li-chiun, includes members from the Office of Trade Negotiations as well as national security and foreign affairs teams. Trump's "reciprocal tariffs" were paused for 90 days on 09 April, with reduced 10 per cent duties applying to all but China. In response, the Cabinet finalized USD 2.67 billion in support plans to mitigate the tariffs' impact on exporters and the economy, with USD 2.1 billion allocated for measures such as lowering loan interest rates, market diversification, and job stabilization. An additional USD 549 million is earmarked for the agricultural sector. Information on how to access the funds will be announced on 14 April. (Teng Pei-ju, "Taiwan prepared for 'direct' and 'effective' tariff talks with U.S.: Premier," *Focus Taiwan*, 10 April 2025)

Taiwan's 564th Armoured Brigade conducts live-fire drill in Tainan

On 08 April, the Taiwan Army's 564th Armoured Brigade conducted a live-fire training exercise at the Southern Training Center in Tainan. Troops carried out "concentrated fire" exercises with CM-11 tanks by simultaneously firing at both stationary and mobile targets. The drill involved unexpected situations designed to sharpen response capabilities. Brigade Commander Major General Kao stated that successful tank gunnery requires strong teamwork and coordination among all personnel. The exercise was held in parallel with the computer simulation portion of Han Kuang 41, which has been extended to 14 days to account for various Chinese gray-zone tactics, following China's two-day joint military exercises near Taiwan that focused on combat-readiness patrols and blockade operations. (Kelvin Chen, "Taiwan Army carries out live-fire tank drills in Tainan," *Taiwan News*, 08 April 2025)

Taiwan's Premier to present tariff mitigation package to Legislature

On 08 April, the Legislature informed that Premier Cho Jung-tai would brief the Legislature on 11 April on the Cabinet's NTD 88 billion subsidy package. Which is designed to support Taiwanese businesses affected by the 32 per cent US tariffs. Following inter-party negotiations among lawmakers from the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), Kuomintang (KMT), and Taiwan People's Party (TPP), the Cabinet plans to allocate NTD 70 billion. Measures such as lowering loan interest rates, reducing administrative costs, and expanding tax exemptions to help enterprises diversify their markets and invest in research and development. The remaining NTD 18 billion will support the agricultural sector through loans, interest subsidies, equipment subsidies, and related measures. In a pre-recorded address, President Lai Ching-te announced that

Taiwan has no plans to retaliate with tariffs and would negotiate with Washington for bilateral zero-tariff treatment while expanding purchases of American products to reduce trade imbalances and address non-tariff trade barriers. Lawmakers also agreed to hold a revote on recent pension measures for law enforcement and emergency services personnel after the Cabinet raised concerns over the potential impact on the financial stability of the public service pension system. (Chen Chun-hua, Wang Yang-yu and Teng Pei-ju, "Premier to seek support for Cabinet's tariff response plans in Legislature report," *Focus Taiwan*, 08 April 2025)

Taiwan's Tea Industry Affected by US tariffs, says Taiwan Tea Manufacturers Association

On 08 April, The Taiwan Tea Manufacturers Association expressed concern about the 32 per cent US tariffs and pesticides affecting the domestic tea industry. The association warned that stricter testing for the pesticide thiabendazole could disrupt the tea blending process, a specialty of many domestic producers who source teas from various countries. Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te pledged trade negotiations with the US, while the Ministry of Agriculture is actively working to diversify Taiwan's export markets through bilateral agreements on organic equivalence and new trade deals. In 2024, Taiwan exported 6,285 tonnes of tea worth NTD 24.7 billion, including 1,959 tonnes valued at USD 21.98 million to the US, 766 tonnes to China for USD 13.09 million, 609 tonnes to Japan for USD 7.07 million, 589 tonnes to the Philippines for USD 3.38 million, and 429 tonnes to Hong Kong for USD 6.58 million. (Sean Scanlan, "US tariffs and pesticide regulations concern Taiwan Tea Association," *Taiwan News*, 08 April 2025)

Taiwan's president affirms duty to "safeguard the hard-won democracy and freedom"

On 07 April, President Lai Ching-te warned that those who advocate for the elimination of Taiwan are not protected by the freedom of speech. He commented this during a speech commemorating the 36th anniversary of pro-democracy pioneer Nylon Cheng's death. Citing growing concerns over China's media, psychological, and legal warfare, Lai noted that 64 Taiwanese were prosecuted for spying for China last year. He highlighted cases involving retired military personnel and political infiltrators. He pointed out that cyber intrusions have doubled in 2024 and that recent Chinese military exercises are intended to intimidate Taiwan. Emphasizing that democracy hinges on national sovereignty, he stated that any proposal that undermines Taiwan's freedom is unacceptable, asserting that his administration will take resolute action against anyone colluding with China to destabilize the nation. He said: "As president, my mission is to ensure the country's continued survival and development, safeguard the hard-won democracy and freedom, and protect national sovereignty from being violated or annexed." (Keoni Everington, "Lai says calls for Taiwan's destruction not protected by freedom of speech," *Taiwan News*, 08 April 2025)

US supports Taiwan's non-retaliation stance on tariffs

On 07 April, President Lai Ching-te stated that Taiwan will not impose retaliatory tariffs against US President Donald Trump's 32 per cent tariff on Taiwanese goods. Former U.S. diplomat Robert S. Wang believed this move would be welcomed by Washington as a "conciliatory response," especially compared to Beijing's immediate retaliatory actions. He said: "I think Taiwan's response would likely be brought to the attention of high-level U.S. officials, possibly including President Trump who of course personally met with TSMC CEO Wei recently," and added that informal talks might begin focusing on the current tariff issues, such as expanding US imports like petroleum and agricultural products. Vice president of the Global Innovation Policy, Information Technology and Innovation Foundation, Stephen Ezell expressed similar optimism, although he doubted that a United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA)-type deal could be reached due to its complexity. Senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, Derek Scissors, remained skeptical of any such negotiations, emphasizing that tariff rates are determined on an individual basis. (Chung Yu-chen and Joseph Yeh, "U.S. to welcome Taiwan decision not to retaliate on tariffs: Scholars," *Focus Taiwan*, 08 April 2025)

Taiwan's stock market plunges by 9.7 per cent due to US tariffs

On 07 April, the Taiwan Stock Exchange plunged by 2,065 points, a 9.7 per cent drop, marking the largest day-on-day loss in history. According to *CNA*, 1,702 listed companies hit their daily down limit, with the index falling 10 per cent within ten minutes and the daily trading volume shrinking to NTD 166 billion. The Taiwan Stock Exchange dropped from an all-time high of 24,416 points in mid-July to 19,232 points, down 21 per cent. The Over-the-Counter market

also fell by 23 points, 9.6 per cent. Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC) shares dropped by the daily limit, falling NTD 94 to close at NTD 848. The Ministry of Finance's National Stabilization Fund is considering intervention with a potential NTD 500 billion deployment to stabilize the market. (Sean Scanlan, "Taiwan Stock Exchange sees record single-day drop of 9.7%," *Taiwan News*, 08 April 2025)

Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te to not respond to US tariffs

On 06 April, President Lai Ching-te announced that Taiwan has no plans to impose retaliatory tariffs against US President Donald Trump's 32 per cent tariff on Taiwanese products. He noted that while the tariff hike will impact Taiwan, the nation will adopt a cautious and strategic approach to turn risks into opportunities. Lai highlighted that Taiwan's exports to the US last year totalled NTD 3.7 trillion, accounting for 23.4 per cent of its total exports, while over 75 per cent of exports go to markets outside the US, with competitive ICT products and electronic components making up 65.4 per cent of US-bound goods. He outlined a five-point strategy that includes improving tariff parity through negotiations on a "zero tariffs" framework similar to USMCA, supporting domestic industries, developing medium- and long-term economic plans, creating a new "Taiwan plus US" layout, and surveying industries for their needs. Lai stressed that US investments in Taiwan would remain unchanged as long as they aligned with national interests and urged the US to recognize Taiwan's contributions to its economic development. (Keoni Everington, "Lai says Taiwan has no plans to retaliate against Trump's tariffs," *Taiwan News*, 07 April 2025)

Taiwan's stock market plunges on first day of trading after US tariffs

On 07 April, Taiwan's stock market faced crashing stock prices during the first day of trading since US President Donald Trump announced a 32 per cent tariff on Taiwanese goods. *CNA* reported that the market dropped 9.7 per cent, and the weighted index fell 2,086 points. Share prices of TSMC, Foxconn, and MediaTek hit their down limits immediately after the market opened, while nearly 1,000 companies, including Quanta and Wistron, reached their down limit. The stock exchange had been closed from Thursday to Sunday due to the Tomb Sweeping holiday. Cathay Futures Analyst Venson Tsai noted: "The panic selling pressure is very high," attributing the decline to a loss of market confidence. Taiwan Stock Exchange Chairman Sherman Lin said he would coordinate with the government to stabilize the market. Meanwhile, President Lai Ching-te confirmed that Taiwan would not impose retaliatory tariffs against the US and invited technology sector leaders to discuss the tariffs. The Cabinet announced an NTD 88 billion subsidy package for businesses. (Jono Thomson, "Taiwan stocks plunge on 1st opening after US tariffs," *Taiwan News*, 07 April 2025)

Taiwan bans South Korean influencer "Penguin Girl"

On 07 April, Taiwan banned South Korean influencer "Penguin Girl," known as Jinny, from entering the country after authorities determined she had worked illegally in 2023. Despite holding a Taiwan Employment Gold Card, Jinny was denied entry at the airport and informed she was barred for another three years. She speculated that her ban might be related to managing a one-day pop-up store for a video game company without the necessary work permit. Taiwan's National Immigration Agency stated that the ban was imposed after the Ministry of Labor notified them on 25 March that she had undertaken illegal work, following a penalty issued by the Taipei City Government's Department of Labor. Similarly, American YouTuber LeLe Farley, who also held a Gold Card, was denied entry last month after his card was revoked for appearing on Taiwanese political commentary shows. In both cases, the affected Gold Card holders were unaware that their employment visas had been revoked until they attempted to enter the country. (James Thompson and Liu Chien-pang, "Korean influencer 'Penguin Girl' Jinny banned from entering Taiwan," *Focus Taiwan*, 07 April 2025)

Taiwanese firm may move back from Southeast Asia amid US tariffs, reports NDC

On 04 April, National Development Council (NDC) Minister Liu Chin-ching announced that Taiwanese companies may move manufacturing back from Southeast Asia following new US tariffs on Taiwanese imports. Firms in Vietnam, Thailand, and six other countries face higher tariffs than if they operated in Taiwan. Premier Cho Jung-tai unveiled an NTD 88 billion assistance package covering nine areas and 20 measures for risk management and industry support. The government promised to help businesses with supply chain restructuring and market diversification as Taiwan increases its role in non-China semiconductor and AI supply chains. Liu proposed mid- and long-term strategies include expanding investment, boosting high-salary jobs, stimulating

consumption, revitalizing exports, supporting R & D and transformation for companies with mature product lines, and improving the investment environment with better access to land and talent. (Charlotte Lee, "Taiwan eyes manufacturing shift as US tariffs impact Southeast Asia," *Taiwan News*, 05 April 2025)

Head of Taiwan's National Security Council visits US

On 04 April, the *Financial Times* reported that the head of (NSC), Joseph Wu, visited the US for "secret talks" via a special channel with the US government days after China's latest military exercises around Taiwan. The unacknowledged channel, used for years to discuss security issues without provoking China, includes US NSC officials and was previously employed in August 2024 during the Biden administration. The PLA's Eastern Theater Command's recent live-fire exercises served as "a stern warning" to "Taiwan independence" forces, and US Indo-Pacific Command head Admiral Samuel Paparo warned that the drills are "rehearsals for the forced unification of Taiwan." Taiwanese defense and foreign ministers, including Foreign Minister Lin Chia-lung, met their US counterparts outside Washington, DC, due to the lack of formal diplomatic ties. (Elaine Hou and Frances Huang, "Joseph Wu in U.S. for 'secret talks' via special channel: Report," *Focus Taiwan*, 05 April 2025)

Taiwan's Premier announces NTS 88 billion to support sectors affected by US tariffs

On 04 April, Premier Cho Jung-tai announced the allocation of a gross budget of NTD 88 billion to assist its industrial and agricultural sectors from effects of the US "reciprocal" tariff. The industrial sector will receive NTD 70 billion to offset administrative costs, boost competitiveness, diversify markets, offer preferential taxation, and stabilize employment. The agricultural sector will receive NTD 18 billion to aid agriculture and fisheries products such as moth orchids, edamame, tea, tilapia, dolphinfish, and sea bass. Cho stated that the Cabinet's Trade Negotiations Office will continue talks with the US to secure mutually beneficial trade relations, and 20 detailed measures will be rolled out by the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Finance, and Labour, supported by 190 hotlines for guidance. Vice Premier Cheng Li-chun established a Taiwan-US economic and trade task force in November 2024, to monitor ongoing US tariff policy changes, estimate the effects on industries, and plan countermeasures. Cheng said: "Premier Cho has ordered agencies to announce the procedures and timelines by April 14 so industries could apply for the funding." (Esme Yeh, "Cabinet unveils tariff-offset programs," *Taipei Times*, 05 April 2025)

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Foreign Ministry appreciates EU's resolution opposing change in Taiwan's status quo

On 02 April, Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs welcomes two EU resolutions supporting ties with Taiwan and expressing concern over China escalating tensions in the Taiwan Strait. The European Parliament passed the motions under its annual Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). The CFSP resolution criticized China's misinterpretation of UN resolution 2758 and its "increasing breadth and intensity of operations," including cyberattacks and misinformation campaigns, and opposed any unilateral changes to the Taiwan Strait status quo through force or coercion. The CSDP resolution called for "regular exchanges" with Taiwan on security and cooperation in countering disinformation and foreign interference, urging China to cease aggressive provocations such as intrusions into Taiwan's air defense identification zone and maritime operations. Foreign Minister Lin Chia-lung thanked the European Parliament for bolstering Taiwan-EU relations and affirmed Taiwan's commitment to reinforcing democratic resilience. (Kelvin Chen, "European Parliament passes 2 resolutions supporting Taiwan ties," *Taiwan News*, 03 April 2025)

Trump imposes 32 per cent tariff on Taiwanese goods

On 02 April, US President Donald Trump announced a 32 per cent tariff on Taiwanese goods to reduce trade deficits with other nations. The tariff was imposed in response to Taiwan's 64 per cent tariff on US goods. Taiwan's exports to the US rose to USD 116.26 billion, mainly comprising steel, automated data processing equipment, and computer components. Trump's executive order stated that trade disparities threaten US national security and the economy. Other countries, including China (34 per cent), South Korea (25 per cent), Vietnam (46 per cent), Japan (24 per cent), and Thailand (36 per cent), will face higher duties starting 09 April, in addition to a baseline 10 per cent tariff set to take effect on 05 April. Some countries, such as China, South Korea, and Japan, have coordinated responses, while others, like Canada and Mexico, plan retaliatory tariffs. (Kelvin Chen, "US announces 32% tariff on Taiwan," *Taiwan News*, 03 April 2025)

Philippines notes that if Taiwan is invaded, they will "inevitably be involved"

On 01 April, the Armed Forces of the Philippine's Chief of Staff General Romeo Brawner Jr announced that if Taiwan is invaded, the Philippines would "inevitably be involved." This follows the US approval of a sale of F-16 jets and related equipment to the Philippines, valued at USD 5.58 billion, aimed at boosting the Philippine Air Force's maritime domain awareness and suppression of enemy air defenses. China warned Manila that such defense cooperation should not threaten regional peace, while US defense officials reaffirmed the importance of the alliance. Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman, Guo Jiakun, said: "The Philippines' defense and security cooperation with other countries should not target any third party or harm the interests of a third party. Nor should it threaten regional peace and security or exacerbate regional tensions." ("Manila to be involved if Taiwan invaded: army chief," *Taipei Times*, 03 April 2025)

Taiwan's Han Kuang exercises extended to enhance Taiwan's defense readiness

On 02 April, Taiwan's annual Han Kuang military drills will be extended this year, with 14 days of computerized tabletop war games from 5 to 18 April and 10 days of unscripted live-fire drills from 9 to 18 July. Using the US-built Joint Theater Level Simulation platform, the tabletop exercises will test military coordination and

response to a potential Chinese invasion. The live-fire segment, involving all branches of Taiwan's armed forces, will feature new equipment such as unmanned aerial vehicles, M1A2T tanks, M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems, and Harpoon Coastal Defense Systems. Defense Minister Wellington Koo emphasised that revisions this year are to thoroughly test the armed forces "joint operation planning and execution." (Joseph Yeh, "2025 Han Kuang extended to 2 weeks of wargames, 10-day live-fire drills," *Focus Taiwan,* 02 April 2025)

DPP lawmakers block referendum by the opposition KMT

On 01 April, Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) lawmakers occupied the speaker's podium at the Legislative Yuan, blocking proceedings on referendums proposed by the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT). On 25 March, the legislature passed a motion sending two KMT proposals on "opposing the abolition of the death penalty" and "opposing martial law" to a second reading without committee review. The DPP declared that the motion went against procedure and should be considered null. More than half of the DPP caucus camped outside overnight and entered the building, displaying placards with slogans like "Illegal meetings, vote invalid," "No discussion" and "Withdraw fake referendum proposals," and a large blue banner with the Mandarin word "Ba" (罷, "recall") symbolizing recall campaigns against KMT legislators. KMT caucus deputy secretary-general Alicia Wang said: "The DPP's continued efforts to paralyze the legislature offers a bleak outlook for Taiwan's future". In contrast, DPP caucus chief executive Rosalia Wu urged Legislative Speaker Han Kuo-yu to initiate cross-caucus negotiations, which he has agreed to. (Lee Wen-hsin and Jake DPP hold podium and placards at legislature," *Taipei Times*, 02 April 2025)

Taiwan trade barriers, report by US National Trade Estimate

On 02 April, *Taiwan News* reported that the US Trade Representative released the 2025 National Trade Estimate Report, a 397-page document covering 59 trading partners with six pages dedicated to Taiwan. The report details that Taiwan imposes prohibitive trade practices on US imports, including beef, pork, and automobiles. Taiwan has continued its ground beef ban for US beef, restricted bovine blood products and bulk shipments of tallow, and maintained cumbersome port quarantine procedures due to Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy concerns. Taiwan's ractopamine residue detection method for pork is inconsistent with WHO-approved methods, and its country-of-origin labelling implies that US pork has food safety issues. In the automobile sector, Taiwan limits US imports by adopting UNECE 1958 standards and permitting only 75 units per model in 2023. The report also notes bans on biotech food ingredients in school meals, amendments to the National Security Act on misappropriation of trade secrets, and foreign investment restrictions in sectors such as chemical manufacturing, television programming, electricity transmission, and postal services, with direct foreign ownership in telecommunications capped at 49 per cent. (Sean, Scanlan, "US report highlights Taiwan trade barriers," *Taiwan News*, 02 April 2025)

JAPAN

Families of Japanese abductees by North Korea head to the US to seek support

On 29 April, the families of Japanese nationals abducted by North Korea in the 1970s departed to press the US government and lawmakers for help in securing the early return of the remaining victims. Among the delegation are Takuya Yokota, whose sister Megumi was taken in 1977, and Koichiro Iizuka, son of Yaeko Taguchi, abducted in 1978. Before boarding their flight, Yokota warned that "with the international situation fluid, the United States and North Korea may draw closer," and Iizuka stressed the need for the abduction issue "to be taken up at the negotiating table if relations between Washington and Pyongyang move forward." The group carries a letter from President Trump and a photograph of a disappeared family member, entrusted by the late Keiko Arimoto's father, to underscore that "we do not have much time." ("Families of Japanese abducted by N. Korea to seek U.S. aid for return," *Kyodo News*, 29 April 2025)

Japan's Prime Minister and Vietnam's Prime Minister agree to uphold free trade

On 28 April, Japan's Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba and Vietnam's Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh pledged to deepen bilateral trade ties and jointly defend "a free and open international order based on the rule of law." Ishiba said: "The world economy is becoming more uncertain, and the impact on the Southeast Asian region is also becoming apparent." Chinh underscored their mutual commitment to global rules. The leaders signed four cooperation agreements, including on boosting energy-transition products and semiconductor R&D. This reflects Japan's USD 78 billion investment in Vietnam and shared concern over a 10 percent levy on all US imports following

bilateral duties of 46 percent on Vietnam and 24 percent on Japan. (Phuong Nguyen and Francesco Guarascio, "Japan, Vietnam pledge to support free trade as PM Ishiba visits Hanoi," *Reuters*, 28 April 2025)

Japan's policy chief urges Trump to reconsider tariffs

On 28 April, the policy chief of Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party and former defense minister, Itsunori Onodera, called on Trump to reconsider his plans for reciprocal tariffs. He told the Center for Strategic and International Studies that President Trump's proposed reciprocal tariffs could alienate key Southeast Asian partners and weaken regional deterrence. Speaking via interpreter, Onodera warned that "ASEAN may become more distant from the US because of the tariffs," and urged the administration to rethink the measures to avoid damaging not only economic ties but also shared security cooperation. He highlighted Japan's significant US investments and its support for US naval operations in the region. ("Japan policy chief warns of Trump tariff impact on Asian security," *Japan Today*, 29 April 2025)

Japan's Prime Minister visits Vietnam and the Philippines to bolster security and economic ties

On 27 April, Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba began a four-day Southeast Asia tour in Hanoi, aiming to deepen security cooperation and support Japanese businesses. His planned tour comes ahead of talks with Vietnam's leaders and Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. In Vietnam, Ishiba met Communist Party General Secretary To Lam and will hold talks with Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh to discuss "official security assistance," defense-equipment transfers, and the launch of a regular foreign and defense officials ' dialogue. In Manila, he is expected to finalize plans for an intelligence-sharing pact and joint coast-guard drills with the Philippines. Ishiba stressed the need to counter China's "unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force" in the East and South China seas and to address the impact of the US "reciprocal" tariffs. ("Japan PM Ishiba kicks off trip to Vietnam, Philippines to boost ties," *Kyodo News*, 27 April 2025)

TikTok to launch TikTok Shop in Japan soon, reports Reuters

On 27 April, *Reuters* reported that Chinese social media platform TikTok is set to enter Japan's e-commerce market in the coming months with its livestream shopping service TikTok Shop. The firm has begun recruiting sellers to its Japan arm following the March rollout of TikTok Shop in France, Germany, and Italy, where users sell discounted products via livestreams and earn commissions. TikTok's China-based parent, ByteDance, awaits approval of a US divestiture deal mandated by a 2024 law requiring it to spin off its US assets by 19 January. ("TikTok to enter Japan's e-commerce industry, Nikkei reports," *Reuters*, 28 April 2025)

Japan-US trade talks face hurdles as tariffs loom ahead of elections, says an editorial in Japan Today

On 28 April, an editorial in *Japan Today* reported that negotiations between Japan and the US over tariffs face growing challenges as both sides struggle to reach an interim deal ahead of key political deadlines. Trump has imposed a 24 per cent tariff on Japanese exports, paused until July to allow room for negotiations, while maintaining a 10 per cent universal rate and a 25 per cent duty on cars, a critical sector for Japan. Tokyo anticipates US demands for greater access to agricultural and automotive markets but faces domestic resistance, particularly from lawmakers concerned about farming constituencies before July's upper house elections. (John Geddie, Yoshifumi Takemoto and Trevor Hunnicutt, "Japan is test case for Trump's tariff deals, but talks may be tortuous," *Japan Today*, 28 April 2025)

Tokyo District Court orders Amazon Japan to pay USD 243 thousand for counterfeit listings

On 25 April, the Tokyo District Court ruled that Amazon Japan G.K. must pay 35 million yen in damages to Kobe-based distributor Excel Plan Co. The company failed to take effective measures to prevent sellers from offering counterfeit pulse oximeters on its platform, even after being notified. Medical equipment maker Try and E Co and Excel Plan had sought USD 1.95 million in compensation, claiming their genuine oximeter sales collapsed because of a fake product promoted by Amazon's lowest-price algorithm. Excel Plan was awarded damages, but the decision set a precedent by affirming that online marketplaces bear a legal duty to build robust authentication systems to police listings and protect brand owners from counterfeits. ("Amazon Japan ordered to pay ¥35 mil for allowing listing of fakes," *Japan Today*, 26 April 2025)

Russia accuses Japan of treachery over approving USD 3 billion in loans to Ukraine

On 24 April, Russia accused Japan of treachery and complicity in theft for signing an agreement to lend Ukraine over USD 3 billion for reconstruction. On 18 April, Japan signed an agreement to lend USD 3.3 billion to Ukraine under the G7's Extraordinary Revenue Acceleration for Ukraine

(ERA) program, to be repaid from tens of billions of dollars' worth of Russian assets frozen by the EU. At a Moscow briefing, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova labeled Tokyo's participation "complicity in theft" and "treacherous," warning it will inevitably harm Russo–Japanese relations and vowing to view any use of frozen sovereign assets without consent as hostile and illegal. Meanwhile, Russia suspended talks on a post–World War II peace treaty with Japan, citing Tokyo's "unfriendly stance" and continued support for Ukraine. ("Moscow slams 'treacherous' Japanese loan to Ukraine using frozen Russian assets," *Japan Today*, 25 April 2025)

Japan's Finance Minister and the US Treasury Secretary agree to maintain close communication

On 24 April, Finance Minister Katsunobu Kato and US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent agreed to maintain close communications on foreign exchange issues but did not discuss a target for the value of the yen. They reaffirmed that yen-dollar rates must be set by markets and agreed to "close and constructive" consultations on currency matters. They explicitly ruled out any discussion of specific exchange-rate targets or managed-rate frameworks. Bank of Japan Governor Kazuo Ueda underscored that the BOJ will continue to monitor economic data and financial stability while maintaining its commitment to market-determined currency moves. Recent volatility around Yen 140 per dollar highlighted the importance of stability amid ongoing US-Japan trade talks. (Francis Tang, "No discussion of yen target, Kato says after Bessent meeting," *Japan Times*, 25 April 2025)

TEPCO completes second trial debris removal from Fukushima plant

On 23 April, TEPCO finished a second trial operation to extract a sample of radioactive debris from inside reactor units at the stricken Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant. A new location was chosen to gather material and better understand its characteristics and distribution. The work, carried out with a specially developed extendible device over the past week, follows a November trial in which TEPCO removed a 0.7-gram sample for detailed analysis. Government spokesman Yoshimasa Hayashi highlighted that insights from both trials will guide the complex decades-long decommissioning effort, as teams prepare for full-scale molten fuel removal. ("Second Fukushima debris removal trial completed," *Japan Today*, 24 April 2025)

Japan and the Netherlands' Prime Ministers agree to deepen security and economic ties

On 21 April, Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba and Dutch Prime Minister Dick Schoof agreed on a new action plan to bolster security and economic cooperation. They emphasized that unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force must be rejected "anywhere in the world." They reaffirmed that the security of the Indo-Pacific and Europe are inseparable and welcomed the Netherlands' Indo-Pacific engagement, highlighted by last June's deployment of navy frigate HNLMS Tromp to Japan. Schoof said: "As trading nations, free passage (at sea) is crucial for both our countries. In this case, security and protecting economic interest go hand in hand." They pledged to work for a just, lasting peace in Ukraine while voicing concern over Moscow–Pyongyang military ties. ("Japan, Netherlands leaders agree to deepen security, economic ties," *Japan Today*, 22 April 2025)

JMSDF warships make port call at Cambodia's Ream Naval Base

On 19 April, the Embassy of Japan in Phnom Penh announced that two Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) vessels, the destroyer Bungo and the training ship Etajima, visited Cambodia's newly renovated Ream Naval Base. The facility was upgraded with Chinese assistance that Washington fears could host PLA Navy ships. The Japanese embassy in Phnom Penh hailed the visit as "historically significant," noting Cambodia's assurances that Ream remains open to all nations. They called for increased trust and transparency as Japan, the US, and others monitor China's growing regional influence. ("Japanese warships dock at Cambodia's Chinese-renovated naval base," *Japan Today*, 20 April 2025)

Japan and Indonesia engage in frigate co-production talks, reports Japan Times

On 21 April, *Japan Times* reported that Japan and Indonesia have advanced negotiations on jointly developing and producing a customized variant of Japan's Mogami-class frigates for the Indonesian Navy. Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba and Defense Minister Gen Nakatani raised the issue during separate Jakarta visits earlier this year, and Chief of Staff Yoshihide Yoshida is set to follow up later this month, Ambassador Heri Akhmadi reported. Under President Prabowo Subianto's priority project, Japan proposes a USD 2.13 billion plan to build four frigates in Japan and four in Indonesia by PT PAL. This is to resolve Indonesia's requirement to front 10-20 per cent of funding and Jakarta's desire for full technology transfer of advanced systems, including radar and other combat suites, mirroring India's co-development of Japan's Unified Complex Radio Antenna.

Indonesia also considers interoperability with European naval assets, which it has already ordered. Japan's recent relaxation of defense-export controls and broader security cooperation, ranging from coast-guard upgrades and joint exercises like Super Garuda Shield to potential transfers of decommissioned Sōryū-class submarines, have also helped Indonesia, as they seek to bolster regional stability amid rising great-power competition. The countries have also been intensifying joint military exercises and agreed to hold a third round of "two-plus-two" talks between their foreign and defense ministers later this year. Heri also looked forward to working with India to maintain regional stability and increase prosperity. (Gabriel Dominguez, "Japan, Indonesia continue frigate talks looking to boost defense-industrial ties," *Japan Times*, 21 April 2025)

Japan calls for fairness from the US for exchange rate discussion, says Prime Minister

On 20 April, Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba announced Japan would insist on fairness in any exchange-rate discussions with the United States. He announced that detailed talks are to be handled by Finance Minister Katsunobu Kato and US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent in the US. Denying any yen manipulation, Ishiba ruled out using Japan's USD 1 trillion in US Treasury holdings as leverage. He signaled Japan could increase imports of US liquefied natural gas and show flexibility on US concerns over Japanese automobile safety standards as part of broader negotiations on tariffs and non-tariff trade barriers.(Leika Kihara, "Japan seeks 'fairness' in currency talks with US, Prime Minister Ishiba says," *Reuters*, 20 April 2025)

Japan's Finance Minister expresses concern over US reciprocal tariffs

On 17 April, Japan's Finance Minister Katsunobu Kato warned that the "recent US tariff measures affect various industries and heighten uncertainty." He expressed "deep concern" that these levies and the resulting market volatility could drag on both Japan's economic recovery and the broader global economy. Speaking after the first round of Tokyo-Washington trade talks, Kato highlighted risks of downward pressure through disrupted trade flows and financial markets. He pledged to maintain close dialogue with US counterparts, particularly on currency stability, where both sides agree that "excessive volatility and disorderly moves" are undesirable. Kato declined to discuss whether the weakening yen or US demands for a stronger currency were raised in talks, noting instead that exchange-rate issues had been deferred to forthcoming consultations between finance ministers. He reaffirmed that monetary policy remains the sole purview of the Bank of Japan, while the government will continue to monitor the economic impacts of the tariffs. He urged policymakers to frame Japan's role as a source of investment and supply for US manufacturing. (Takaya Yamaguchi, Leika Kihara and Makiko Yamazaki, "Exclusive: Japan finance minister 'deeply concerned' over Trump tariff impact," *Reuters*, 18 April 2025)

Japan to join Balikatan 2025 with the US, Australia, and the Philippines

On 18 April, the *Japan Times* reported that Japan will move beyond observer status and participate in the annual Balikatan exercises. Japan will dispatch about 150 Self-Defense Force personnel and the Mogami-class frigate Yahagi to the Philippines and surrounding waters from 29 April to 09 May. This expanded role will see Japanese forces take part in combined maritime patrols, disaster relief drills, and integrated air and missile defence alongside some 14000 US, Philippine, and Australian troops, while observing amphibious assault and logistics exercises. Tokyo's decision to contribute personnel and equipment reflects its intent to sharpen the SDF's joint operational capabilities and deepen interoperability under the Reciprocal Access Agreement recently signed with Manila. Balikatan 2025, which will also feature advanced US unmanned surface drones and an anti-ship missile system, underscores a growing network of security cooperation involving not just the Philippines' treaty ally, the US, but also Japan, Australia, and other like-minded partners amid rising tensions in the South China Sea and concerns over Taiwan. Philippine Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro said: "We will work very closely, not only with our treaty ally, but also with other like-minded partners in reestablishing deterrence," Canada, Germany, and the United Kingdom have also been invited to attend the large-scale drills as military observers. (Gabriel Dominguez, "In a first, Japan will join major Philippine-U.S. drills as participant," *Japan Times,* 18 April 2025)

Japan welcomes 10.54 million travellers in the 2025 first quarter

On 16 April, Japan welcomed a record 10.54 million international arrivals in the first quarter of 2025, hitting the 10 million mark faster than ever thanks to the weak yen and peak cherry-blossom season. March alone drew 3.5 million visitors, including all-time monthly highs from the United States and Canada. Tourists spent an estimated USD 16.89 billion in January–March, putting total visitor outlays on track to surpass 2024's record 60.26 billion. With tourism now Japan's

second-largest "export" sector after autos, the industry is delivering a powerful boost to the economy. ("Japan crosses 10 million visitors through March at fastest ever pace," *Japan Today*, 17 April 2025)

US-Japan tariff negotiations reach no policy changes, reports Japan Times

On 16 April, Japan's chief tariff negotiator Ryosei Akazawa travelled to the US to press the Trump administration to roll back new reciprocal duties. In meetings with. US Trade Representative Jamie Greer, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, and Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo, both sides expressed a desire to resolve differences "as early as possible," but made little concrete progress beyond scheduling further talks later this month. Akazawa revealed exchange rates were not on the agenda, though defense-cost sharing may have come up. Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba acknowledged significant "gaps" remain, yet noted President Trump considers Japan a top negotiation priority. Trump, after the meeting, said: "A Great Honor to have just met with the Japanese Delegation on Trade. Big Progress!" (Francis Tang, "Japan and the U.S. begin tariff talks on good terms, but without breakthroughs," *Japan Times*, 17 April 2025)

Trump expresses that an alliance with Japan is unfair: "We defend them, but they don't have to defend us"

On 10 April, the US President Donald Trump called the alliance with Japan "one-sided," but Japan refuted this claim. Trump was quoted in a Cabinet meeting announcing, "We defend them, but they don't have to defend us," and that "we pay hundreds of billions of dollars to defend them … they don't pay anything." The Japanese government countered that the security treaty does allow for a joint response to protect Japan and that legislation passed in 2015 greatly expanded the scope of mutual protection under certain conditions, with Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi saying that Japan and the United States "are now able to help each other seamlessly in any situation." Japan hosts more than 50,000 American troops, the largest number of active-duty service members outside of the US. The latest Special Measures Agreement will spend around USD 1.69 billion this year on utilities, facility maintenance, and wages for Japanese staff in the US. Bases, plus about USD 3.39 billion on rents, construction, and "burden reduction" measures. Tokyo has emphasized Article 5 and Article 6 of the revised bilateral security treaty and the right of collective self-defense under the 2015 security-related laws. Ishiba said: "Japan is obliged to provide bases for the United States. How significant a role does it play in the US global strategy? We need to have a proper conversation about it." (Jesse Johnson, "Trump calls the U.S.-Japan alliance 'one-sided.' Tokyo says otherwise.," *Japan Times*, 17 April 2025)

Japan's Economic Revitalization Minister left for the US to discuss tariffs

On 16 April, Japan's chief trade negotiator, Economic Revitalization Minister Ryosei Akazawa, left for the US for talks with US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and Trade Representative Jamieson Greer. According to Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi, the visit is aimed at building a "relationship of trust" and convincing US President Donald Trump to remove tariff measures against Japan. Akazawa said: "I will carefully think what will best serve Japan's national interest," while Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba described the situation as "a national crisis" and stressed that Japan is not retaliating with tariffs. In addition, Ishiba held telephone talks with Singaporean Prime Minister Lawrence Wong and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, and discussions held in March among Japan, China, and South Korea further underscored a commitment to free trade and cooperation. (Mara Yamaguchi, "Korea fails to reverse US 'sensitive country' listing taking effect Tuesday," *Japan Today*, 16 April 2025)

Japan Fair Trade Commission issues cease-and-desist order against Google

On 16 April, *Japan Times* reported that the Japan Fair Trade Commission issued a cease-and-desist order against Google. Google had allegedly violated the Antimonopoly Act by compelling smartphone manufacturers to preinstall its apps on Android devices. The commission stated that since July 2020, Google forced manufacturers to install Google Play and Google Chrome in prominent positions on the home screen, thereby restricting competition from other search engine applications. It further noted that Google paid portions of its advertising revenue to manufacturers under conditions such as designating Google Chrome as the default browser. With such agreements covering around 80 per cent of Android smartphones used in Japan, the order requires Google to halt these practices and compile compliance guidelines. Google Japan expressed "deep regret" over the decision and said it would review the order, while maintaining that its partnering manufacturers choose its apps voluntarily. (Yukana Inoue, "In a first, Japan issues cease-and-desist order against Google," *Japan Times*, 16 April 2025)

Japan to provide Shinkansen trains to India for

free

On 15 April, *Japan Times* reported that Japan plans to provide East Japan Railway E5 and E3 series Shinkansen trains free of charge to India. The trains will act as inspection vehicles for India's national high-speed railway under construction in the western region of the country. One train set from each series will be delivered in early 2026 after being fitted with the necessary inspection equipment. The Japanese and Indian governments also plan to adopt next-generation E10 series Shinkansen trains in the early 2030s for a roughly 500-kilometer high-speed rail link between Mumbai and Ahmedabad. Although the delivery of these advanced trains is unlikely to be in time for the line's partial opening scheduled for August 2027. The project is considered strategically significant for Japan as it underlines the importance of its iconic shinkansen technology, with low-interest yen loans expected to cover about 80 per cent of the overall project costs originally forecast at some USD 12.65 billion. (Jiji, "Japan to give India E5 and E3 shinkansen for free," *Japan Times*, 15 April 2025)

Japan's population shows record decline in 2024, reports Japan's Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications

On 15 April, Japan Today reported that Japan's population fell to 120.3 million, down by a record 898000, as of October 2024. This marked the steepest drop since 1950, amid a shrinking birthrate and aging demographics. The Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications reported that, including foreign residents, the total population declined for the 14th straight year to 123.8 million. Children aged 14 or younger fell to 13.83 million (11.2 per cent), while those aged 65 and older rose to 36.24 million (29.3 per cent). The working-age population (15–64) declined to 73.73 million, making up 59.6 per cent of the population, underlining intensifying demographic and labor challenges. ("Gov't estimate shows record decline of Japanese nationals as of October 2024," *Japan Today*, 15 April 2025)

Japan's Tokyo stock market plunges amid tariff war between US and China, reports Nikkie stocks

On 11 April, Nikkei stock average in Tokyo fell by 5.48 per cent. This drop was tracked by lower US markets, as the United States and China hiked tariffs on each other. This fuelled fears that stagnation in trade between the two economic superpowers would trigger a global economic decline. An official at a foreign capital-backed securities firm noted that stocks did rise after the US halted some reciprocal tariffs for 90 days. However, the US levies on China increased to 145 per cent, reigniting economic concerns and worries about corporate profits. Additionally, the rapid strengthening of the yen contributed to renewed selling pressure, with the dollar briefly dropping below Yen 143 (USD 1) in Tokyo currency trading, settling at Yen 143.32 at 10 AM today after falling from Yen 146.26 at 5 PM on 10 April. (Jiji, "Nikkei sinks over 1,800 points as tariff-fueled selling resumes," *Japan Times*, 11 April 2025)

Increase in air defense activity in 2024, says Japan's Ministry of Defence

On 10 April, Japan's Ministry of Defence announced that the Air Self-Defense Force used fighter jets 704 times in 2024, which is up by 35 from the previous year. Of the total, the most were against Chinese military aircraft accounted for 464, or 65.9 per cent. In August, Chinese military airplanes violated Japanese airspace off the Danjo Islands in Nagasaki Prefecture for the first time. The number of Chinese drones detected more than tripled to 30, exceeding the 26 detected between fiscal 2013 and fiscal 2023. A ministry official said: "China may have developed a system to fully operate drones, upgrading from trial flights." Additionally, a drone was spotted off Amami-Oshima Island in Kagoshima for the first time this fiscal year. Scrambles against Russian military aircraft accounted for 237, or 33.7 per cent, up by 63, and in September, Russian aircraft entered Japanese airspace three times off Rebun Island in Hokkaido, with ASDF fighters using decoy flares as a warning for the first time. (Jiji, "Japan defense force scrambled fighter jets 704 times in fiscal 2024," *Japan Times*, 11 April 2025)

New US Ambassador to Japan

On 09 April, the US Senate confirmed George Glass as the new US ambassador to Japan by a 66 to 32 vote. He is expected to arrive in Tokyo before the 2025 World Exposition in Osaka begins on 13 April. Glass, who previously served as President Donald Trump's ambassador to Portugal, has signaled that he will have "tough conversations" on tariffs and reducing the trade deficit with Japan. During his confirmation hearing, he emphasized the need to press Japan to contribute more towards hosting American troops and to extend the upward trajectory of Japan's defense budget, which is currently aimed at spending 2 per cent of its GDP on defense by fiscal 2027. Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba has been lobbying for tariff relief, urging a comprehensive deal to address trade imbalances and ensure that the bilateral relationship is "one set, one package, one story." Both leaders have underscored the importance of advancing the coproduction of defense equipment, including advanced medium-

range air-to-air missiles, and have expressed their commitment to maintaining robust US-Japan relations. (Jesse Johnson, "Japan gets a new U.S. ambassador — and he has his work cut out for him," *Japan Times*, 09 April 2025)

Japan is interested in joining NATO command for the Ukrainian mission, says its defence minister

On 08 April, Japanese Defense Minister Gen Nakatani announced that Japan is interested in joining NATO Security Assistance and Training for Ukraine (NSATU) based at a US base in Wiesbaden, Germany. During talks in Tokyo with NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte, he stated that Japan wishes to deepen security cooperation with NATO, learn lessons from Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and further solidify ties with the largely European alliance. Although details remain to be discussed, including whether any Japan Self-Defense Force members will be involved, Japanese participation is not expected to involve combat in line with its post-World War II tradition. Rutte remarked that China, North Korea, and Russia are stepping up military exercises that undermine global security, emphasizing that what happens in Euro-Atlantic matters affects the Indo-Pacific and vice versa. Both sides agreed on the importance of crisis response, cyber defense, maritime security, and defense industrial cooperation, with Japan's inclusion seen as a significant boost to regional security ties. (Mayuka Ono and Mari Yamaguchi, "Japan says it wants to join a NATO command for the support of Ukraine," *Japan Today*, 09 April 2025)

Japanese banks begin blocking withdrawals from foreigners expired accounts

On 08 April, the Financial Service Agency (FSA) reported the blocking of withdrawals from foreigners expired accounts by Japanese banks to prevent exploitation. The FSA announced the measure following calls from the National Police Agency in December for all financial institutions to introduce such controls after reports of so-called "special fraud" cases, in which criminals impersonate relatives and officials to swindle victims. Although the FSA did not specify which banks had initiated the measure, *Kyodo News* confirmed that it has begun at MUFG Bank and Mizuho Bank, with more expected to follow as they upgrade their systems. Financial institutions require foreign nationals living in Japan to notify them of any changes or extensions to their residency. However, this condition is not widely understood among foreign communities, and legal residents who fail to report updates may face account restrictions. After discussions with the FSA and the Immigration Services Agency, police said that using accounts after a foreign resident's stay has expired is likely to constitute impersonation, and withdrawals and transfers will be blocked until valid residency can be confirmed. Transfers for some entities, such as public utilities, remain exempt. ("Japanese banks block withdrawals from expired foreign resident accounts," *Japan Today*, 09 April 2025)

Japan's Prime Minister to continue negotiations after failing to secure tariff exemption

On 07 April, Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba said he failed to secure a tariff exemption with US President Donald Trump, but both leaders agreed that the issue should be further discussed at the ministerial level. Ishiba expressed serious concern that the unilateral imposition of tariffs on Japanese products would hurt investment by Japanese firms. He urged that both nations pursue broader, mutually beneficial cooperation, including greater US investment rather than relying on tariffs. Trump indicated that the US would send "a top team to negotiate" over the matter, arguing that the US had been treated "very poorly" on trade. In Parliament, Ishiba ruled out engaging in retaliatory tariffs, insisting that Japan must instead highlight its contributions to the US economy by creating jobs and making investments, and he vowed to present a comprehensive "package" during a potential US visit. Both leaders agreed to continue candid and constructive discussions, with respective ministers to be appointed to further negotiations. ("Ishiba agrees with Trump to continue talks over U.S. tariffs," *Japan Today*, 08 April 2025)

Trump orders review of steel merger between US and Nippon Steel

On 07 April, US President Donald Trump directed the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS) to conduct a second national security review of Nippon Steel's proposed purchase of US Steel. The review aims to determine if any "future actions" are needed. The deal had previously been reviewed, but the outcome was deferred by former President Joe Biden, who blocked the transaction in early January. Under the new order, CFIUS has 45 days to submit its recommendation, after which the president will decide whether to greenlight the merger. Following the announcement, US Steel's share price soared, closing 16.22 per cent higher than the previous weekend. In statements issued early Tuesday, both Nippon Steel and US Steel expressed confidence that an objective, fact-based review would demonstrate that the partnership strengthens American economic and national security. Both companies have also filed a lawsuit

seeking to revoke Biden's decision. (Francis Tang, "Nippon Steel proposal given second look by the Trump Administration," *Japan Times*, 08 April 2025)

Tokyo's Nikkei 225 stock market index fell by 8 per cent

On 07 April, Asian shares nosedived after Friday's Wall Street meltdown, driven by US President Donald Trump's tariff hikes and China's retaliatory measures. Tokyo's Nikkei 225 index lost nearly 8 per cent, Australia's S&P/ASX 200 tumbled more than 6 per cent, and South Korea's Kospi fell 4.4 per cent. Oil prices also dropped, with US benchmark crude falling 4 per cent, or USD 2.50, to USD 59.49 per barrel, and Brent crude declining by USD 2.25 to USD 63.33 per barrel. The downturn followed China's matching of Trump's tariffs, further escalating global trade tensions amid fears that the trade war could trigger a global recession, with the S&P 500 down 17.4 per cent from its record set in February. The chair of the Federal Reserve of the US, Jerome Powell, warned that tariffs could drive up inflation expectations, while Trump announced: "THIS IS A GREAT TIME TO GET RICH." Powell said: "Our obligation is to keep longer-term inflation expectations well anchored and to make certain that a one-time increase in the price level does not become an ongoing inflation problem." US companies that conduct business with China, including DuPont and GE Healthcare, suffered steep losses as the broader market slid. (Elaine Kurtenbach, "Asian markets plunge as Japan's Nikkei 225 index dives nearly 8% after big meltdown on Wall St," *Japan Today*, 07 April 2025)

Japan's Defense Minister Gen Nakatani to strengthen Self-Defense Force's transport capabilities

On 05 April, Japan's Defense Minister, Gen Nakatani, announced the formation of a new Maritime Transportation Group to strengthen the Self-Defense Forces' (SDF) capabilities to deploy troops quickly to remote southern islands. At a ceremony in Kure, Hiroshima Prefecture, Nakatani emphasized the importance of faster and more secure troop deployment to enhance Japan's defense posture in the region. The newly established group, under the direct control of the defense minister, consists of about 100 members and is tasked with operating transport ships. The group aims to acquire 10 ships by March 2028, with two ships already built. The initiative comes as China's pressure on Taiwan escalates, increasing the risk of military conflict in the region. The group's role will also include the transport of personnel and equipment for Japan's Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade, which is poised to respond in emergencies involving Japan's far-flung islands, including the Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea. ("Japan defense chief vows to enhance transport capacity with new unit," *Japan Today*, 07 April 2025)

Japan and NATO to deepen security and defense-industrial ties, reports Japan Times

On 05 April, the *Japan Times* reported that NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte announced that Japan and NATO plan to deepen their partnership through enhanced information-sharing and defense-industrial cooperation. NATO seeks to move beyond joint declarations to practical collaboration with Japan and other Indo-Pacific partners like Australia, New Zealand, and South Korea. Rutte highlighted plans to expand ties in industrial production, innovation, and data exchange. He expressed interest to learn from Japan's efforts to cut red tape in defense procurement, and interlink defense companies, with visits to Yokosuka Naval Base and Mitsubishi Electric's Kamakura Works. The push follows NATO's recent foreign ministers' meeting, where Indo-Pacific Four (IP4) ministers were invited, and reflects lessons from Ukraine and shared concerns over China's military buildup, nuclear expansion, and support for Russia. Foreign Minister Takeshi Iwaya said: "We place importance on 'institutionalizing' this relationship," under the Individually Tailored Partnership Program through 2026. (Gabril Dominguez, "'Let's make it practical': NATO chief eyes greater defense-industrial ties with Japan," *Japan Times*, 05 April 2025)

Japan's Prime Minister Ishiba seeks direct talks with Trump over 24 per cent tariffs

On 05 April, Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba said he will speak with US President Donald Trump "within the next week" to address Washington's decision to impose a 24 per cent reciprocal tariff on Japanese goods. He stressed that any agreement must be negotiated as "one set, one package, one story" rather than through piecemeal deals. Ishiba ruled out retaliatory tariffs against the US, warning that tit-for-tat measures would harm the global economy. Declaring the tariffs a "national crisis," his government has launched a task force at the trade ministry, established over 1,000 consultation desks at financial and business organisations, and prepared cash and advisory support for the hardest-hit exporters while lobbying for an exemption. (Jesse Johnson, "Ishiba says he plans speak to Trump about tariffs in coming days," *Japan Times*, 05 April 2025)

Japan's government considers response to 24 per cent US tariff, says Trade Minister
On 02 April, US President Donald Trump announced a 24 per cent duty for Japan to reduce trade deficits. Trade Minister Yoji Muto said this "requires a careful, yet bold and speedy approach" and that the prime minister has instructed officials to consider all possible responses, including retaliation, while weighing the interests of Japan and the US. The new tariff regime has led to a drop in Japan's Nikkei 225 index below 35,000 and a strengthening of the yen to the ¥147-to-the-dollar level. Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi expressed serious concerns about these measures' consistency with WTO agreements and the Japan-US Trade Agreement, while the trade ministry has set up a task force to assess the impact on affected companies. (Francis Tang, "Japan promises 'bold and speedy' response to Trump's surprise 24% tariffs," *Japan Times*, 03 April 2025)

Japanese auto parts maker Asahi Tekko struggle due to US tariffs, reports Japan Today

On 03 April, *Japan Today* reported that business was already tough for auto parts maker Asahi Tekko, and now US tariffs are adding further strain. Company president Tetsuya Kimura said at the Hekinan factory in Aichi Prefecture, "Give me a break," noting that the announcement came only two or three months in advance. With 425 workers among the 5.6 million employed in Japan's auto sector, there is widespread concern over the future. US President Donald Trump has imposed USD 25 per cent tariffs on all vehicle imports effective from 03 April. Natixis economist Kohei Iwahara claimed this move forces firms like Toyota, Honda, and Nissan to hike prices for US consumers and could prompt some companies to shift production overseas, further impacting smaller auto parts suppliers. President of Hokuriku Light Metal Industry Takeshi Sasaki, said: "The rapid global shift toward electric vehicles has already been forcing some Japanese parts makers to explore opportunities outside of the sector." (Hiroshi Hiyama, "' Give me a break': Trump tariffs threaten Japan auto sector," *Japan Today*, 03 April 2025)

Japan announces emergency aid for Myanmar earthquake victims

On 02 April, Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced emergency aid of USD 6 million for Myanmar earthquake victims as part of its humanitarian response. The magnitude 7.7 quake has killed over 2,700 people. The Japanese government has dispatched a 32-member medical team and delivered emergency relief goods, including sanitary items, water, and water purifiers, via international organizations, and has supplied 240 waterproof tarpaulin sheets and 450 tents, while also reporting two injured Japanese and one Japanese resident missing in Mandalay. ("Japan ready to provide $6 mil in grant aid to quake-hit Myanmar," *Japan Today*, 02 April 2025)

KOREA

North Korea and Russia confirm troop deployment against Ukraine

On 28 April, the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) and the Kremlin officially confirmed that Pyongyang dispatched troops to support Russia's war in Ukraine. KCNA lauded their efforts in "liberating the Kursk area" under Kim Jong-un's direct order, while President Vladimir Putin praised their "solidarity, justice, and genuine camaraderie." South Korea's Ministry of Defence spokesperson Jeon Ha-kyou condemned the admission as "a clear violation of the U.N. Charter and Security Council resolutions" and an outright "confession of criminal activities." University of North Korean Studies president Yang Moo-jin said: "North Korea may have asked Russia to formalize the deployment now that battlefield momentum appears to have shifted in Moscow's favor," and Korea Institute for Defense Analyses analyst Doo Jin-ho called it "a win-win for both sides" that raises Pyongyang's strategic standing. While Kim Jong-un's attendance at Russia's 09 May Victory Day parade remains doubtful, the *Korea Times* and the *Korea Herald* reported that the announcements signal a shift toward long-term defense cooperation and potential technology exchanges. (Lee Hyo-jin, " Why did NK, Russia take months to confirm troop deployment?," *Korea Times*, 28 April 2025; Ji Da-gyum, "NK formalizes troop deployment, signals deeper alliance with Russia," *Korea Herald*, 28 April 2025)

South Korea's Ministry of Defence condemns North Korea's troop deployment in Russia

On 28 April, *Korea Times* reported that South Korea's Ministry of Defense strongly condemned North Korea's admission of troop deployment to Russia to support its war in Ukraine. Ministry spokesperson Jeon Ha-kyou said: "North Korean troops engaging in the Ukraine war is an illegitimate act that clearly violates the UN Charter and Security Council resolutions. By officially acknowledging it, the North has admitted to its criminal acts." North Korea's Central Military Commission claimed its actions, carried out under the mutual defense treaty with Moscow, were in line with international law. South Korea's National Intelligence Service believes around 3,000 additional North Korean troops were sent to the region earlier this year, and is closely monitoring for signs of a possible visit by Kim Jong-un to Russia. (Yonhap, "N. Korea 'admitted to criminal

acts' by confirming troop dispatch to Russia: Seoul," *Korea Times*, 28 April 2025)

South Korean Democratic Party nominee Lee Jae-myung recruits a "conservative" strategist, reports Korea Herald

On 28 April, Rep. Lee Jae-myung appointed former environment minister Yoon Yeo-joon, a "conservative strategist," to lead his campaign's steering committee. Lee emphasized themes of national unity, pragmatism, and meritocracy, distancing himself from divisive policies like universal basic income. Lee said: "The former minister is someone I have counted on for advice in the past. I have asked him if he would be willing to lead the committee, and thankfully, he has accepted the offer." Lee's move signals efforts to woo moderate and conservative voters, illustrated by his visit to honor past conservative presidents at Seoul National Cemetery. Party insiders suggest more non-Lee factions could join his campaign to reinforce his centrist rebranding. (Kim Arin, "Conservative critical of Yoon Suk Yeol to join liberal presidential campaign," *Korea Herald*, 28 April 2025)

Democratic Party presidential candidate promises semiconductor production tax credits

On 28 April, Democratic Party presidential candidate Lee Jae-myung vowed to introduce a production tax credit of up to 10 per cent for domestically manufactured semiconductors if elected. The pledge, made via Facebook, comes amid global efforts to secure chip supply chains and bolster local industries, following US policy shifts on the CHIPS Act. Lee remains the frontrunner heading into the June election. ("South Korea presidential candidate Lee Jae-myung pledges chip tax credit," *Reuters*, 28 April 2025)

South Korea's Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Energy requests US tariff exemptions

On 25 April, the Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Energy requested exemptions from President Trump's 25 per cent "reciprocal" and auto-specific tariffs. In high-level "2+2" consultations, South Korea's Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Choi Sang-mok and Trade Minister Ahn Duk-geun met US counterparts, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer. They proposed that both sides seal a broad "July package" by July 8 when the tariff pause expires. South Korea offered to deepen cooperation on trade, investment, shipbuilding, and energy, and agreed to negotiate four key pillars: tariffs and non-tariff measures, economic security, investment cooperation, and foreign-exchange policy. The proposal signals South Korea's intent to bundle pending economic issues into one deal, to be finalized under the incoming administration before reciprocal duties fully take effect. (Lee Gyu-lee, "Korea, US agree to seek 'July package' aimed at eliminating tariffs," *Korea Times*, 25 April 2025)

South Korea and the US to hold first integrated defense talks under Trump

On 25 April, the *Korea Times* reported that senior officials from South Korea and the United States will convene the Korea-US Integrated Defense Dialogue (KIDD), next week. The meeting aims to reinforce their combined deterrence posture against North Korean nuclear and missile threats and deepen bilateral security policy cooperation. Launched in 2011, KIDD covers a wide range of defense issues and will be followed by a joint press statement. Meanwhile, deliberations of the Nuclear Consultative Group, which coordinates the US "extended deterrence" commitment, including nuclear options, continue on schedule, with a meeting expected as early as June. (Yonhap, "South Korea, US to hold KIDD defense talks in Washington next week," *Korea Times*, 25 April 2025)

South Korea's economy shrinks in quarter one of 2025 amid weak consumption and exports

On 24 April, the *Korea Herald* reported that the Preliminary Bank of Korea (BOK) data showed real GDP fell 0.2 percent quarter-on-quarter in Q1 2025. This was the first quarterly contraction since Q2 2024 and first annual decline since Q4 2020, driven by a 0.1 per cent drop in private and government consumption, steep falls in construction (–3.2 per cent) and equipment investment (–2.1 per cent), and a 1.1 per cent slide in exports amid soft global demand and US tariff uncertainties. Imports also fell 2.0 per cent. The BOK expects a partial rebound in domestic demand in Q2, supported by reduced policy uncertainty and pre-election fiscal spending. Head of the National Accounts Statistics Department at the Bank of Korea, Lee Dong-won, said: "The prolonged uncertainty in domestic politics and shifts in US tariff policies have exacerbated uncertainties in the trade environment, delaying the recovery of consumer and investment sentiment." The government has submitted a supplementary budget proposal worth USD 8.4 billion to the National Assembly. On 24 April, JP Morgan lowered its 2025 growth forecast for Korea from 0.7 per cent to 0.5 per cent. The International Monetary Fund has revised its growth forecast down from 2.0 per cent to 1.0 per cent, while the Asian Development Bank has also lowered its projection to 1.5 per cent. (Park Han-

na, "Korean economy shrinks again in Q1," *Korea Herald*, 24 April 2025)

South Korea's former President Moon Jae-in indicted on bribery charges

On 24 April, Prosecutors formally indicted former President Moon Jae-in on corruption charges for facilitating the hiring of his then son-in-law, surnamed Seo, at Thai Eastar Jet in 2018 in exchange for favorable treatment. Moon, his daughter Da-hye, and ex-lawmaker Lee Sang-jik face accusations that they conspired to secure Seo an executive-director role despite his lack of aviation experience. Investigators contend that Lee's agency appointment was the quid pro quo for Seo's salary and other payments, totaling about USD 151,959. Prosecutors classify it as a bribe benefiting the former president once Moon ceased supporting his daughter's household financially. (Yonhap, "Ex-President Moon indicted over alleged bribery," *Korea Herald*, 24 April 2025)

South Korea to press US on lifting reciprocal and auto tariffs in "2+2" talks

On 24 April, South Korea's Trade, Industry and Energy Minister Ahn Duk-geun stated that eliminating US reciprocal tariffs and resolving auto tariffs are the main priorities in the "2+2" talks. Ahn is to join Deputy Prime Minister Choi Sang-mok with US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer. Ahn noted that the top objectives were to secure the removal of the 10–25 per cent "reciprocal" tariffs paused until July and to resolve the 25 per cent automobile duties weighing heavily on bilateral trade. He ruled out discussions on US troop cost-sharing and noted that no meeting with President Trump is on the agenda. He reaffirmed South Korea's aim to negotiate a sustained tariff deferment and prompt relief for its key export sectors. (Ahn Sung-mi, "Reciprocal tariffs removal, auto barriers top agenda at Korea-US talks," *Korea Herald*, 24 April 2025)

Comfort women survivors press Japan for apology and compensation, reports Korea Times

On 22 April, *the Korea Times* reported that only seven known survivors of Japan's wartime sex slavery are still alive in Korea, including 97-year-old Lee Young-soo. Lee was abducted at 14 and has spoken publicly since 1992. Since then, she has been urging for formal justice as they outlive promises made by successive Korean administrations and unfulfilled pledges by former President Yoon Suk Yeol. Japan had agreed with the Korean government to provide a one-billion-yen fund to a now-dissolved foundation in 2015 called the "final and irreversible" agreement. However, this agreement was negotiated without victim consultation and some six billion won remains unused. Survivors like Lee condemn it as "hush money" and demand its return, insisting that meaningful compensation symbolizes Japan's acknowledgment of the crime. Advocates emphasize that financial redress carries powerful universal human-rights significance and urge Korea to bring Japan before the International Court of Justice to secure the survivors' dignity and a sincere apology before the last voices are silenced. (Jung Da-hyun, "'Don't wait until we are all gone': Former sex slaves demand justice now," *Korea Times*, 22 April 2025)

POSCO and Hyundai Motor Group ally to build a steel mill in the US

On 21 April, POSCO Holdings and Hyundai Motor Group signed an MOU to jointly invest in building a USD 5.8 billion, electric-arc-furnace steel mill in Louisiana. The mill is due for completion by 2029 and aims to supply 2.7 million tons of automotive–grade plates annually. POSCO's contribution remains undisclosed, as part of Hyundai's broader USD 21 billion US investment plan announced at the White House. The two conglomerates will also deepen cooperation in EV battery materials, leveraging POSCO's lithium and cathode/anode production to support Hyundai's target of 3.2 million electric vehicles by 2030. A Hyundai Motor Group official said: "Through our partnership with POSCO Group, we aim to expand our business opportunities in global markets such as the US while further solidifying the foundation for sustainable growth and leadership in future mobility and electrification." POSCO Holdings President Lee Ju-tae said: "Based on the synergy between the two companies, we will be able to find ways for sustainable growth across the group's steel and battery businesses in response to global trade pressures and paradigm shifts." (Park Jae-hyuk, "POSCO, Hyundai Motor groups form a partnership in steel amid US tariff threats," *Korea Times*, 21 April 2025)

South Korea and the US to hold "2+2" trade talks, informs acting President

On 24 April, acting President Han Duck-soo announced that Finance Minister Choi Sang-mok and Trade Minister Ahn Duk-geun will meet US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer in the US. The first high-level "2+2" talks are aimed at easing US reciprocal tariffs and immediately after the joint session, Ahn and Greer will hold separate discussions, with South Korea prioritizing its national interest through focused negotiations on trade balance, shipbuilding, and liquefied natural gas while preparing domestic support measures

and monitoring parallel talks by the EU, Japan, and other partners. Han said: “Our government will direct all of our strength to finding a win-win solution for the two countries by holding calm and serious discussions with the US under the principle of putting top priority on our national interest.” (Yonhap, “S. Korea, US to hold 2+2 trade talks Thursday,” *Korea Times*, 21 April 2025)

South Korea to launch fourth military reconnaissance satellite

On 21 April, South Korea’s Ministry of National Defence confirmed its fourth military reconnaissance satellite from Cape Canaveral on Monday. The synthetic aperture radar (SAR) satellite will lift off on a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket. The launch is part of a plan to deploy five planned launches this year to ensure two-hour revisit imaging of North Korean activity and reduce reliance on US imagery. The first electro-optical/infrared satellite launched in December 2023 and two subsequent SAR satellites deployed last year have already begun enhancing Seoul’s independent surveillance capabilities. (Yonhap, “South Korea to launch 4th military spy satellite this week,” *Korea Times*, 21 April 2025)

South Korea’s former President Yoon attends second insurrection trial hearing

On 21 April, former President Yoon Suk Yeol appeared via underground parking at the Seoul Central District Court for the second hearing of his insurrection trial. He was accused of attempting to subvert the Constitution by deploying troops under his martial law decree. The court permitted press coverage of the session’s opening, and the prosecution reiterated charges that Yoon prepared to obstruct the National Assembly. Two military officers will testify as defense witnesses and be questioned by Yoon's legal team. (Yonhap, “Yoon attends 2nd insurrection trial hearing under flash of press cameras,” *Korea Times*, 21 April 2025)

US State Department consider closing a consulate in South Korea

On17 April, a US State Department spokesperson reported that they continue to assess the US’s global programs and posture. This was following a report by the Trump administration that is looking at closing nearly 30 overseas embassies and consulates, including one in Korea. Yonhap reported that the spokesperson noted that no embassy or consulate closures have been announced. He said: "The State Department continues to assess our global programs and posture to ensure we are best positioned to address modern challenges on behalf of the American people.” (Yonhap, “US State Dept. says it continues to assess global posture amid report on possible Korea consulate closure,” *Korea Times,* 18 April 2025)

Visa blocks the hiring of foreign nationals for white collar jobs in South Korea, reports KITA

On 16 April, a Korea International Trade Association (KITA) survey of 659 small-medium-sized exporters (SMEs) found that just 49.5 percent planned to hire foreign nationals for white-collar roles over the next three years. Employers most value overseas-market analysis and language skills in these hires. However, with rigid visa wage requirements, E-7-1 professionals must earn at least 80 percent of per-capita GNI, meaning they account for only 18.5 percent of foreign white-collar staff. In contrast, F-visa holders (residents, family members, ethnic Koreans) make up 42.1 percent, and D-visa holders (students, job seekers) 29.7 percent. KITA researcher Kim Kkot-byul urges reclassifying certain roles, such as sales workers and IT developers, as E-7-2 semi-professionals to ease wage burdens, while retaining strict standards for executive positions to protect Korean workers’ jobs. Kim said: “The government should ease the burden of paying high wages by categorizing sales workers and IT developers as semi-professionals,” (Park Jae-hyuk, “Visa rules hold back Korean exporters from hiring more white-collar foreign workers,” *Korea Times*, 17 April 2025)

Democratic Party leader Lee Jae-myung named in Time’s influential 100 "Leaders” list

On 16 April, Democratic Party leader Lee Jae-myung was featured in Time magazine’s 2025 list of the 100 most influential people under the “Leaders” category. Editor-at-large Charlie Campbell highlights Lee’s journey from a farming family, where he walked ten miles daily to school and suffered a factory accident, to mayor, governor, and finally opposition figure leading the impeachment push against President Yoon Suk Yeol. Time calls him the “clear favorite” for South Korea’s June 3 presidential election, noting he must tackle threats from North Korea and global trade tensions if elected. Lee had lost the 2022 contest and survived an attack in 2024, but his resilience earned him praise and was quoted as saying: “little chance Lee is cowed.”(Yonhap, “Korea's presidential front-runner ranked among Time's 100 most influential people of 2025,” *Korea Times*, 17 April 2025)

Bank of Korea policy rate at 2.75 per cent due to tariff pressure

On 17 April, the Bank of Korea (BOK) opted to keep its key policy rate at 2.75 percent amid growing headwinds from the United States’

imposition of "reciprocal" tariffs. The central bank's decision reflects concerns over renewed volatility in the Korean won, which slid to a 15-year low of 1,487.6 won per US dollar on April 9 before recovering to around 1,416 won. Such exchange-rate swings, combined with the knock-on effects of higher import costs for energy and raw materials, pose risks to domestic growth and inflation. The BOK is expected to cut its base rate by 25 basis points at its next meeting on May 29. (Im Eun-byel, "BOK freezes base rate as tariff pressures weigh on economy," *Korea Herald*, 17 April 2025)

KMT offices raided as part of recall fraud investigation

On 15 April, prosecutors from the New Taipei District Prosecutors Office raided 30 KMT locations in New Taipei and questioned 10 people involved with recall campaigns targeting Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) legislators. Boxes of evidence were removed from the KMT's New Taipei offices, and the search focused on alleged recall fraud, with suspicious signatures copied from party membership lists or belonging to deceased individuals. New Taipei KMT Caucus Leader Wang Wei-yuan stated that the KMT's Sanchong party committee leader was questioned. The Central Election Commission referred 39 recall cases for investigation, and DPP Legislator Lee Kuen-cheng also filed a complaint in February alleging recall fraud. (Jono Thomson, "KMT offices in New Taipei searched as part of recall fraud investigation," *Taiwan News*, 15 April 2025)

Taiwan's President signed agreements strengthening Taiwan–Tuvalu relations

On 15 April, President Lai Ching-te, at a meeting with Tuvalu Deputy Prime Minister Panapasi Nelesone, celebrated deepening Taiwan–Tuvalu relations. Lai thanked Tuvalu for its longstanding support of Taiwan's international participation and noted that the two countries will soon sign a labor cooperation agreement and an accord on mutual recognition of seafarer training and certification documents. He emphasized that, as maritime nations sharing the values of democracy and freedom, Taiwan and Tuvalu are working together to protect ocean resources and address climate change for peace and prosperity in the Pacific. Nelesone expressed gratitude for Taiwan's enduring friendship and support. (Kelvin Chen, "President lauds friendly Taiwan-Tuvalu relations," *Taiwan News*, 15 April 2025)

Acting President Han Duck-soo to skip People Power Party primaries

On 15 April, the People Power Party (PPP) confirmed that Acting President and Prime Minister Han Duck-soo will not register as a candidate in the party's presidential primary. PPP floor leader Kweon Seong-dong stated during a meeting with lawmakers that Han's involvement in the race "would not help with the party's primary and with the acting president's official duty." He later clarified that his comments were also intended to focus public attention on the ongoing party primary process amid rumors surrounding Han's potential candidacy. Han has neither confirmed nor denied any intention to enter the race. Han is expected to remain as the acting President until the new president takes office after the 03 June election. The PPP and its rival Democratic Party are set to close candidate registration for their primaries on 15 April, with nominees to be finalized by early May. (Son Ji-hyoung, "Acting president won't join PPP presidential primaries: floor leader," Korea Herald, 15 April 2025)

Former South Korean President Yoon defends martial law at his criminal trial

On 14 April, former President Yoon Suk Yeol appeared at Seoul Central District Court to defend himself against charges that his martial law declaration constituted an act of insurrection. Yoon stated that his martial law decree was merely "a message to the public" intended to protect freedom and democracy, not to impose military rule. The prosecution argued that Yoon disrupted the constitutional order by deploying military personnel to the National Assembly and the National Election Commission and by preemptively appointing Kim Yong-hyun as defense minister. Yoon rejected these allegations, asserting he only dispatched troops to inspect server management vulnerabilities reported by the National Intelligence Service and that his actions were consistent with regular martial law drills conducted by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The trial was conducted under strict security measures with Yoon entering via an underground parking lot and photography banned. (Lee Si-jin, "Now a defendant, Yoon again claims martial law was public message," Korea Herald, 14 April 2025)

North Korea's joint archaeology team unveils 10th-century Amitābha Buddha statue

On 13 April, KCNA reported that a joint team from the Archaeology Institute of the Academy of Social Sciences and the National Authority for the Protection of Cultural Heritage uncovered a 1.7-meter-tall stone statue of Amitābha Buddha in Yakjon-ri, Sukchon County, South Phyongan Province. The statue, dating back to the early 10th century, was identified by hand gestures and iconographic features, reflecting the spiritual and artistic legacy of the formative years of the Goryeo

dynasty (918–1392). Though typically accompanied by bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta, no attendant figures were found at the site. The Korean Central News Agency said: "The stone Buddhist image, well-trimmed with delicate and exquisite skills, will be of great help to the study of the history and culture of the period of Goryeo, as it is another precious legacy showing the excellent talents and wisdom of the Korean ancestors." (Dario Radley, "1,000-year-old Buddha statue with stunning details discovered in North Korea," Archaeology News, 13 April 2025)

South Korea's Foreign Ministry establishes diplomatic ties with Syria

On 10 April, South Korea established diplomatic relations with Syria, completing formal ties with all 191 UN member states except North Korea. South Korea also extended relations to three non-UN members, namely the Cook Islands, Niue, and the Holy See. South Korea's Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul travelled to Damascus and met with Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani to finalize procedures and discuss bilateral cooperation. South Korea's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said: "This development opens a new chapter of cooperation with Syria, whose bilateral relations with South Korea had been severed due to its close ties with North Korea." Cho also expressed hope that cooperation would contribute to Syria's development and regional stability, including participation by South Korean companies in reconstruction efforts and the provision of humanitarian assistance such as medicine, medical equipment, and rice. Cho also met with Syrian interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa, who hailed South Korea's support as "crucial for a new Syria embarking on a fresh start." (Yonnap, "S. Korea establishes diplomatic ties with Syria in foreign policy milestone," Korea Times, 11 April 2025)

US military leaders warn against reducing troops stationed in South Korea

On 10 April, US military leaders in the Indo-Pacific, at a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing, presented negative views on the prospects of reducing US troops in South Korea. US Indo-Pacific Command Commander Admiral Samuel Paparo Junior warned that any withdrawal would raise the "higher probability" for a North Korean invasion and reduce the US's ability to curb the conflict. USFK Commander General Xavier Brunson described a troop reduction as "problematic," emphasizing that US forces in Korea are critical for imposing costs on adversaries in both the East Sea and West Sea, and for maintaining enduring partnerships. Their remarks came amid lingering concerns that the Trump administration might seek to curtail overseas military involvement under its "America First" agenda, which has already included criticisms that the US has not been "reimbursed" sufficiently for its defense support. Both leaders underscored the strategic importance of Korea's location in Northeast Asia, asserting that the return on America's investment is measured in access, forward-basing, and deterrence rather than solely in economic terms. (Yonhap, "US military leaders negative about USFK troop reduction," Korea Times, 11 April 2025)

South Korea's Acting President discuss trade, security, and cooperation with US President

On 08 April, Acting President Han Duck-soo had a telephone conversation with US President Donald Trump. The call marked the first dialogue between Korea's acting president and the US president since Trump's inauguration and the subsequent ouster of former President Yoon Suk Yeol. During the call, Han emphasized Korea's commitment to cooperate with the US on shipbuilding, LNG, a joint venture in an Alaska Pipeline, and trade balance. Both leaders agreed to continue constructive ministerial-level discussions and to coordinate closely on North Korea's denuclearization policy. Trump, via his social media account on Truth Social, mentioned topics including Korea's trade surplus, tariffs, shipbuilding, large-scale US LNG purchases, and military protection, suggesting the possibility of a "great DEAL" for both countries. They also expressed support for expanding trilateral cooperation with Japan, emphasizing that strong alliances are crucial for regional peace and security. Trade Minister Cheong In-kyo departed for Washington to further seek ways to lower the reciprocal tariffs imposed on Korean imports. (Anna J Park, "Acting president, Trump discuss cooperation on shipbuilding, LNG, trade balance," *Korea Times*, 08 April 2025; Yonhap, "Trump says he, Han discussed S. Korea's defense payments, 'tremendous' trade surplus in 1st call," *Korea Herald*, 09 April 2025)

Political turmoil makes South Korea unattractive to foreign firms, says AMCHAM survey

On 08 April, *Korea Times* reported on a survey by the American Chamber of Commerce (AMCHAM) on South Korea. They revealed that political instability due to martial law declaration and impeachment trials is seen as the greatest risk to doing business in South Korea. The survey of 1,000 respondents found that 25 per cent identified political instability as the biggest risk, compared with 6.4 per cent for issues such as the doctors' strike and health care policy. The proportion of respondents rating Korea's business

environment as "below average" surged to 40.6 per cent in 2024, while 4.7 per cent rated it as "bad." Additionally, 57.8 per cent felt that government policies and reforms negatively impacted the business climate, and 42.2 per cent remained pessimistic about the outlook for the next three years. The survey, released in the 2025 AMCHAM Business Environment Insight Report: APEC Special Edition, identified roughly 70 unresolved regulatory issues across 12 categories and stressed the urgent need for consultations to address potential trade friction. AMCHAM emphasised strengthening the Korea-US Free Trade Agreement, with AMCHAM Chairman James Kim stating: "We remain confident in the strength and resilience of the US-Korea economic partnership." Amid ongoing disputes over reciprocal tariffs, Trade Minister Cheong In-kyo departed for Washington to meet with US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer. Cheong said: "We have to negotiate on steel and auto tariffs during this US visit as they are both major export items for Korea." (Park Jae-hyuk, "Political instability makes South Korea less attractive to US firms: survey," *Korea Times*, 08 April 2025)

South Korea's interim president and cabinet confirm the election date to be 03 June

On 08 April, the government formally designated 3 June as the date of the next presidential election following the removal of former President Yoon Suk Yeol. The decision was made at a Cabinet meeting four days after the Constitutional Court upheld his impeachment. Under Article 68 of the Constitution, a new election must be held within 60 days of a vacancy, and the date has been set as a temporary public holiday. The National Election Commission began early candidate registration, with candidates required to register by 11 May and the official campaign period starting on 12 May. The law also mandates that any public servant running for president must resign at least 30 days before the election, making 4 May the deadline. (Yonhap, "South Korea formally sets presidential election for June 3," *Korea Times*, 08 April 2025)

Acting President Han Duck-soo appoints new Justice of the Constitutional Court

On 08 April, acting President Han Duck-soo appointed Ma Eun-hyuk as the ninth justice of the Constitutional Court on Tuesday. He also nominated successors, Lee Wan-kyu and Ham Sang-hun, the two retiring justices. In addition, Han appointed Ma Yong-joo as a Supreme Court justice. The decisions were made after careful consultation with Cabinet members amid previous delays in Ma's appointment that had affected the impeachment trial of former President Yoon Suk Yeol. Han explained that the judicial appointments were essential to avoid delays in handling potential additional vacancies and managing important issues such as the presidential election, extra budget preparations, and trade concerns. His actions were taken in the context of political tensions and the possibility of further impeachment motions. (Yonhap, "Acting president appoints 9th justice to Constitutional Court," *Korea Times*, 08 April 2025)

South Korea's Trade Minister to negotiate tariffs with the US to minimise economic impact

On 08 April, Trade Minister Cheong In-kyo announced that Korea will actively negotiate with the US to minimize the impact of new US tariffs on Korean industries and the economy. Cheong is set to meet with US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer during a two-day visit to Washington, where discussions will focus on major export items like steel and automobiles. The government is considering measures to reduce Korea's trade surplus with the US, by increasing imports of American goods, including liquefied natural gas. Cheong said: "I think there is no other nation that has a closer relationship with the U.S. Department of Commerce and the USTR than our country," noting that South Korea maintains an average tariff rate of less than 1 per cent on US imports under the longstanding bilateral free trade agreement. Chong said that preparations are underway for various scenarios, including potential amendments to the Korea-US FTA, although the Trump administration has not yet indicated any changes. (Yonhap, "South Korea to 'actively' negotiate on US steel, auto, reciprocal tariffs: trade minister," *Korea Times*, 08 April 2025)

South Korea's next presidential election on 03 June 2025

On 07 April, according to *Yonhap News Agency*, a government official said the election date will be officially presented at the regular Cabinet meeting on 08 April and will tentatively happen on 03 June. Under Article 68 of the Constitution, if the presidency becomes vacant, a successor must be elected within 60 days, and with the impeachment ruling announced on 04 April, the deadline falls on 03 June. Ruling People Power Party floor leader Kweon Seong-dong said the snap election should reflect public sentiment on Lee Jae-myung, and the main opposition Democratic Party of Korea, said: "The DPK has taken no responsibility for the political turmoil it caused." Meanwhile, DPK lawmaker Min Hyung-bae proposed a bill allowing a president elected in a snap election to establish a transition committee within 60 days of taking

office to promote continuity and stability in governance. (Anna J Park, "South Korea's next presidential election tentatively set for June 3," *Korea Times*, 07 April 2025)

76.9 per cent of South Koreans accept the court's decision to impeach President, says a survey

On 07 April, a Realmeter survey of 1,516 adults found that 76.9 per cent accepted the Constitutional Court's verdict to remove former President Yoon Suk Yeol from office. Seventeen per cent of respondents said they would not accept the ruling, while 15 per cent remained undecided. Support varied by political affiliation, with 86.5 per cent of Democratic Party of Korea supporters accepting the decision, compared to 65.5 per cent of People Power Party backers. Public sentiment shifted before and after the ruling was announced on 04 April; nearly 80 per cent of respondents said they would accept the verdict on 02 April and 03 April, but that number dropped to 71.2 per cent on 04 April, with the share of those unwilling to accept rising from 12.9 per cent to 26.5 per cent. (Yonhap, "South Korea's president removed from office over martial law bid," *Korea Times*, 07 April 2025)

South Korea's stock market and currency plunges triggered by US tariffs

On 07 April, South Korea's currency and stock market plunged amid fears of a global trade war triggered by US President Donald Trump's tariff plans and retaliatory measures by China. The Korean won opened at 1,462.0 won per dollar and weakened to 1,468.65 won as of 10 AM. The Korea Composite Stock Price Index lost 103.56 points, or 4.2 per cent, to 2,361.86 in the first 15 minutes of trading. The bourse operator issued a sidecar order that halted program purchasing for five minutes after the Kospi 200 index shed over 5 per cent for more than 1 minute. The decline coincided with Trump's announcement of reciprocal tariffs, including a 25 per cent duty on South Korean goods to take effect on Wednesday and a 10 per cent baseline tariff on all imports starting Saturday. Global market fears intensified when China announced a 34 per cent tariff on US goods, leading Wall Street to record its worst week since the COVID-19 pandemic, with the S&P 500, Dow Jones Industrial Average, and Nasdaq composite falling 6 per cent, 5.5 per cent, and 5.8 per cent, respectively. ("Korean won and stocks plummet as tariffs spur global recession fears," *Korea Herald*, 07 April 2025)

Former President Yoon to face criminal charges after impeachment verdict

On 04 April, former President Yoon Suk Yeol faced criminal charges of insurrection for the martial law declaration. He may also be charged with abuse of power with his immunity over. He is under investigation for special obstruction of public duty for directing the Presidential Security Service to resist police search and seizure, and could face allegations related to a candidate-nomination scandal involving his wife and rigged surveys ahead of the 2022 parliamentary election. (Yoon Min-sik, "After Constitutional Court loss, Yoon Suk Yeol now faces criminal trial," *Korea Herald*, 05 April 2025)

South Korea's power vacuum may delay response to US tariff issue, reports Korea Times

On 04 April, the Korea Times reported that South Korea's removal of President Yoon Suk Yeol has created a leadership vacuum that experts warn may delay prompt countermeasures against US "reciprocal" tariffs. Acting President Han Duck-soo is responsible till the snap presidential election takes place in 60 days. The Constitutional Court ruled to uphold Yoon's impeachment, leaving businesses, particularly major export-reliant conglomerates, vulnerable to lingering US trade pressure and prompting calls for rival parties to support Han in normalising state affairs. Professor emeritus of law at Sungkyunkwan University, Choi June-sun, said: "It will be tough for Korea to promptly respond to any such external risks due to the continuous leadership vacuum." Industry officials report delayed investment decisions and urge high-level talks between Korea and the US to alleviate fears. The Korea Institute for Industrial Economics & Trade released a report warning that exports to the US could fall up to 13.1 per cent annually under the new tariff regime. (Lee Min-hyung, "Korea faces challenges to navigate Trump's tariff risk without president," Korea Times, 04 April 2025)

The Constitutional Court's verdict on President Yoon Suk Yeol's impeachment, reports an editorial in Korea Times

On 04 April, an editorial in the Korea Times reported the reasons for the Constitutional Court ruling to uphold President Yoon Suk Yeol's impeachment for declaring martial law on 3 December without legal justification or proper Cabinet process. The court rejected his claims that it was a warning to political opponents, within his authority, or necessary to counter "governance paralysis" or alleged election fraud. Justices found the contested bills had not taken effect at the time, that he failed to convene a formal Cabinet meeting, and unlawfully deployed troops to block the National Assembly and the National Election Commission. The court thus deemed that his actions violated parliamentary immunity, warrant requirements and military neutrality, and thus

"abandoned his duty to uphold the Constitution and gravely betrayed the trust of the sovereign citizens of Korea." (Lee Hyo-jin, "Decoding ruling: Why court upheld Yoon's impeachment," *Korea Times*, 04 April 2025)

Former President Yoon to face criminal charges after impeachment trial ruling

On 04 April, former President Yoon Suk Yeol faced criminal charges of insurrection for the martial law declaration. He may also be charged with abuse of power with his immunity over. He is under investigation for special obstruction of public duty for directing the Presidential Security Service to resist police search and seizure, and could face allegations related to a candidate-nomination scandal involving his wife and rigged surveys ahead of the 2022 parliamentary election. (Yoon Min-sik, "After Constitutional Court loss, Yoon Suk Yeol now faces criminal trial," *Korea Herald*, 05 April 2025)

US Announces new tariffs to address trade imbalances

On 02 April, US President Donald Trump to impose a minimum 10 per cent baseline tariff on all imports to the US and reciprocal tariffs of 25 per cent duties. This decision was taken to reduce trade deficits and bolster domestic manufacturing. The tariffs will take effect on 05 April for the baseline measure and 09 April for the reciprocal tariffs. The announcement was made at the White House Rose Garden during the "Make America Wealthy Again" event. The Office of the US Trade Representative report detailed country-specific tariffs for approximately 60 worst offenders. Some goods, such as steel, aluminum, automobiles, and key auto parts, remain exempt, and products under the US- Mexico- Canada Agreement continue at zero tariff. Trump justified the measures under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act of 1977, stating that trade barriers have forced massive imbalances. (Yonhap, "Trump unveils 10% 'baseline' tariff, 25% 'reciprocal' tariff on S. Korea," *Korea Herald*, 03 April 2025)

NATO Chief calls for expanded defense cooperation with South Korea

On 03 April, NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte expressed interest in expanding defense cooperation with South Korea at a "NATO-wide" level. He made the call during a meeting with Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul in Brussels at the NATO foreign ministers' gathering. South Korea was invited as a guest nation among NATO's Indo-Pacific partners, including Australia, Japan, and New Zealand. Rutte hoped South Korea would pursue defense cooperation with NATO as a whole, while Cho suggested starting with practical, achievable measures through working-level discussions and called for NATO's support in expediting a South Korea-NATO intelligence-sharing channel. Cho also emphasized that military cooperation between Russia and North Korea must be stopped immediately, referring to Pyongyang's troop dispatch to Russia in support of the war against Ukraine. Additionally, Cho reaffirmed South Korea's commitment to supporting Ukraine's reconstruction with a long-term USD 2 billion package starting this year, following last year's USD 400 million aid. (Yonhap, "Rutte voices hope for 'NATO-wide' defense cooperation with S. Korea: Seoul," *Korea Herald*, 03 April 2025)

South Korea against US citing of defense offsets program as a trade barrier

On 01 April, the *Korea Times* reported that Defense Acquisition Program Administration officials were baffled by the US Trade Representative's inclusion of Korea's offset defense trade program in its annual National Trade Estimate Report. The report states: "The Korean government has pursued policies that prioritize local technology and products over foreign defense technology through its defense offset program," with an offset obligation arising if a defense contract exceeds USD 10 million. Defense Acquisition Program Administration spokesperson Cho Yong-jin said: "The Korean and US governments are closely cooperating through discussions based on a reciprocal defense procurement agreement aimed at easing barriers in defense acquisition." He added that further analysis is needed to understand the US position. Some defense industry insiders view this listing as a potential warning that the Trump administration may use the offset policy as leverage in future negotiations, possibly affecting arms cooperation. (Lee Hyo-jin, "Korea baffled by US listing of defense offset as trade barrier," *Korea Times*, 01 April 2025)

Diversion of US Forces Korea (USFK) concerns South Korea

On 01 April, the *Korea Herald* reported that South Korea is concerned over a potential shift in the role of the 28,500 US troops stationed there amid evolving nuclear and missile threats from North Korea. Experts note that these worries have been exacerbated following President Donald Trump's return to office in January. There is speculation that the second Trump administration may divert some US Forces Korea (USFK) resources to help defend Taiwan against threats from China, leaving South Korea more vulnerable to North Korean provocations. Director of External Cooperation at

the Korea Institute for Defense Analyses Yu Ji-hoon said: "There are growing concerns over the potential scenario that Washington would leverage part of the US Forces stationed on the Korean Peninsula for broader regional security roles rather than limiting their role to deterring the North." A report by the Brookings Institution noted that South Koreans have expressed increasing concern about the spillover effects of a Taiwan Strait conflict onto the peninsula. Recent developments, including South Korea being placed on the US Department of Energy's Sensitive and Other Designated Countries List and US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth omitting South Korea from his latest Indo-Pacific itinerary, have further fueled these concerns. (Jung Min-kyung, "Concerns rise in S. Korea over potential shift in role of USFK," *Korea Herald*, 01 April 2025)

South Korean President vetoed the Commercial Act Revision and signed pension reform bill

On 01 April, South Korea's acting president, Han Duck-soo vetoed an opposition-led revision of the Commercial Act. The act required corporate boards to act in the interests of company shareholders, and was vetoed citing risks to competitiveness and the national economy amid heightened uncertainty. This veto was criticized by opposition parties who claim it protects vested interests, while the ruling People Power Party plans an alternative revision targeting listed companies only. At the same Cabinet meeting, Han signed a pension reform bill into law that will raise the pension contribution rate from 9 per cent in 2025 to 13 per cent in 2033 and the income replacement rate to 43 per cent starting in 2026. (Son Ji-hyoung, "Acting president vetoes bill to mandate fiduciary duty to shareholders," *Korea Herald*, 01 April 2025)

AUSTRALIA & THE PACIFIC

Solomon Islands parliament delays no-confidence vote against Prime Minister

On 28 April, Prime Minister Jeremiah Manele won a reprieve after the Solomon Islands parliament was adjourned for "lack of quorum." Since only 16 of 49 Members of Parliament (MPs) were present, Gordon Darcy Lilo's motion of no confidence was postponed until 06 May. Manele, who vowed to remain in office until the vote, appealed for public calm and respect for the democratic process, even as reports emerge that Sogavare-led defections within the Government of National Unity may soon threaten his majority. According to *In-depth Solomon*, 10 government MPs - five ministers, including Sogavare, and five backbenchers - resigned on 28 April. ("Solomon Islands PM Manele calls for calm ahead of no-confidence vote," *RNZ*, 29 April 2025)

French Overseas Minister warns of civil war in New Caledonia if no agreement is reached

On 27 April, French Overseas Minister Manuel Valls, on his third visit in two months to New Caledonia, urged pro-independence and pro-France factions to reach a new political agreement to prevent a civil war. He urged them to "take a step towards each other" and forge a new political accord balancing "the right and aspiration to self-determination" with the territory's "link with France." He warned that "economic and political uncertainty can lead to a new disaster, to confrontation and civil war." He pledged to support economic recovery, constitutional amendments, and strengthen provincial powers, and vowed to remain "as long as needed" to secure a deal. The pro-independence FLNKS has agreed only to "discussions" pending review of its revised draft. Anti-independence Loyalists, led by Southern Province President Sonia Backès, refuse any further referendum, declaring, "we don't want to fix the date for civil war." Valls also expressed deep concern over New Caledonia's fragile economy, public health services, rising poverty, and social tensions, noting that some 1,500 gendarmes remain deployed alongside local police "because any time it could flare up again."(Patrick Decloitre, "French Minister Valls wants all parties to own their responsibilities ahead of third trip to New Caledonia," *RNZ*, 29 April 2025)

Save the Children Vanuatu and the Ministry of Agriculture are teaching climate-smart agriculture, reports an editorial in RNZ

On 28 April, an editorial in *RNZ* reported that Save the Children Vanuatu and the Ministry of Agriculture have been training families in climate-smart agriculture under the Tropical Cyclone Lola Recovery Programme. Community members learned to build cyclone-resilient, easily dismantled nurseries, practice seed saving and open-pollination techniques, and diversify their diets. The initiative also established Vanuatu's first community seed bank on Epi Island, stocked with locally selected, high-yield, climate-resilient seeds, and set up early warning systems via improved internet access in remote villages. A complementary Green Climate Fund project is set to expand these efforts across 282 communities, bolstering backyard gardens, food preservation, and disaster preparedness. (Koroi Hawkins, "Vanuatu communities growing climate resilience," *RNZ*, 28 April 2025)

Nauru and Australia conclude multi-year funding deal for refugee processing centre, reports RNZ

On 28 April, *RNZ* reported that President David Adeang announced Nauru has finalised negotiations with Australia on long-term, multi-year funding for the Regional Processing Centre. Of the 93 asylum seekers remaining on the island, four have received refugee status and 89 are still appealing. To address past concerns over lengthy detentions, the government has revised its Refugee Status Determination process to complete initial assessments within months. Once ratified, the new funding arrangement will provide predictable financing for the centre's operations while streamlining refugee processing. ("Nauru and Australia finalise long-term funding for refugee processing," *RNZ*, 28 April 2025)

Solomon Islands Prime Minister vows a cautious approach to the citizenship efforts

On 28 April, *RNZ* reported that the head of the Policy Unit at the Office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, McFaddean Aoraunisaka, pledged that "citizenship is a sacred bond" and will not be commercialised in a way that undermines national sovereignty. Announced as part of Prime Minister Jeremiah Manele's 100-day plan in September, the citizenship by investment programme is still in the legislative and regulatory design phase. The programme was introduced to boost government revenue, attract foreign investment, and stimulate economic growth. Officials are carefully weighing international concerns, particularly from Western partners and regional bodies, and will retain tight sovereign control over any future scheme. The government has warned against fraudulent solicitations and confirmed that no lawful programme is yet operational. ("Solomon Islands' citizenship by investment 'still a long way to go'," *RNZ*, 28 April 2025)

US court orders restoration of Radio Free Asia funding

On 25 April, RNZ reported that a United States court this week ordered the US Agency for Global Media (USAGM) to release congressionally approved funding to Radio Free Asia and its affiliates. The court found that the Trump administration's executive order to defund overseas broadcasters, including Voice of America and the Middle East Broadcasting Networks, was likely illegal and unconstitutional. Former BenarNews Pacific Bureau head Stefan Armbruster welcomed the ruling, noting that while the decision is "very happy" news, much work remains, especially for overseas staff laid off without protections, many of whom now face possible deportation. He highlighted that Judge Royce Lamberth criticized the administration's actions as arbitrary and capricious, emphasizing that USAGM must not only restore funding but also update the court monthly on its compliance. (Koroi Hawkins, "Pacific editor welcomes US Court ruling in favour of Radio Free Asia," *RNZ*, 25 April 2025)

Seabed cable sabotage emerges as a growing gray-zone threat, says an editorial in Defense News

On 25 April, an editorial in Defense News reported that Taiwan's Coast Guard this month charged the Chinese captain of the Togolese-flagged cargo vessel Hong Tai 58 with damaging an undersea communications cable linking Taiwan to the Penghu Islands. Authorities have blacklisted nearly 100 China-linked ships suspected of similar acts, which experts and US Admiral Samuel Paparo characterize as coercive "gray-zone" tactics aimed at isolating Taiwan in a crisis. In US congressional testimony, Paparo called for penetrating the adversary's targeting chain and building resilient, redundant networks, such as low-Earth-orbit satellites, to mitigate disruptions. Meanwhile, defense contractors including Saab, Exail and Thales are marketing autonomous underwater vehicles, subsea sensors and towed-array systems to patrol and protect critical undersea infrastructure, and Australia's Defence Force reports classified capabilities to monitor and respond to such threats. (Gordon Arthur, "With Indo-Pacific undersea cables at risk, companies tout their tech," *Defense News*, 25 April 2025

Former attorney-general says Fiji govt prioritises political survival over people's needs

On 25 April, *RNZ* reported that former Attorney-General Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum accused Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka's coalition of focusing on its political survival rather than addressing Fiji's worsening socio-economic crisis. He denounced Deputy Prime Minister Manoa Kamikamica's claim that the 2013 Constitution "legalises dictatorship" as "factually false," arguing it was drafted only after extensive nationwide consultation and introduced "one person, one vote" and greater freedoms. Sayed-Khaiyum warns the coalition's attempts to amend the constitution without a referendum are "underhanded" and "unconstitutional," and he faults the government's inability to curb rising poverty, crime, unemployment, and emigration. Sayed-Khaiyum has denied his own "bogus" criminal charges, including alleged unlawful carriage of a firearm on a plane. He insists that true political legitimacy derives from effective governance and urges Rabuka to concentrate on tangible social and economic reforms ahead of the 2026 polls. (Margit Staunton, "Fijian government putting politics

before people, says former attorney-general," *RNZ*, 25 April 2025)

Chinese embassy defends concessional loans to Tonga

On 24 April, China's embassy in Tonga defended three concessional loans provided by its Export–Import Bank. One has already been repaid, while two remain outstanding at about USD 58 million. The loans were provided as acts of bilateral friendship and equal cooperation to help rebuild Tonga's capital after the 2006 riots and upgrade national roads. The loans were disbursed between 2009 and 2012 at 2 per cent interest over 21 years with extended grace periods. Tonga's external debt of roughly USD 189 million (38 per cent of GDP), two-thirds of which is to China, places it at high risk of debt distress according to IMF–World Bank analysis. This has prompted calls for objective public discourse, careful debt management, and debate over both the quality of the funded infrastructure and government decisions to forgive portions of private-sector loans. Former Prime Minister Siaosi Sovaleni said: "We took the loan, benefited from it, so we must pay it back. Otherwise, we are just passing this burden on to our children and their children." (PMN, "China defends Tonga loans amid rising debt concerns: A call for fair representation," *RNZ*, 25 April 2025)

Tuvalu commemorates the 82nd anniversary of the Funafuti bombing

On 23 April, Tuvalu commemorated the 82nd anniversary of the Japanese bombing of Funafuti in 1943. Known locally as Te Aso o te Paula (Bomb Day), Wednesday's observances featured memorial services, storytelling, and fatele dances that preserve firsthand wartime memories. Cabinet Minister Simon Kofe stressed that in today's fraught geopolitical climate, the commemoration underscores the need for ongoing efforts toward peace, justice, and the protection of all peoples, however remote. ("Te Aso o te Paula: Tuvalu marks 82 anniversary of Japanese bombing," *RNZ*, 24 April 2025)

Singapore and Fiji Prime Ministers reaffirm commitment to deepen cooperation amid global uncertainty

On 23 April, *PINA* reported that Singapore Prime Minister Lawrence Wong and Fijian Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka met in Singapore from 21–23 April to strengthen bilateral ties. They underscored their shared status as small island states committed to international law, multilateralism, and free trade. During an official lunch on 22 April, Wong highlighted plans to expand collaboration in trade, investment, connectivity, climate resilience, and human capital development. Building on the Singapore Cooperation Programme, which has trained over 1,500 Fijian officials, both leaders committed to continuing their bilateral relations. Both leaders also pledged support for Fiji's leadership of the Pacific Islands Forum, including implementation of its Blue Pacific Continent strategy, and Singapore's tailored Resilience and Knowledge Sharing package in areas such as climate adaptation, cybersecurity, and international law. Wong said: "Individually, our countries are small. But by working together, both bilaterally and with the rest of the Pacific, we can make an outsized impact in the areas that matter most to us." ("Singapore, Fiji lean on close ties to weather 'increasingly turbulent' world," *PINA*, 23 April 2025)

Fiji's Narcotics Bureau warns of looming fentanyl threat

On 23 April, *PINA* reported that Fiji's Narcotics Bureau cautioned that the deadly synthetic opioid fentanyl is poised to enter Pacific markets. Digital Forensics Specialist of the Narcotics Bureau, Jemesa Lave, explained that powerful Mexican and Colombian cartels are already mixing fentanyl into methamphetamine and cocaine, and neighboring Australia and New Zealand have reported its arrival. Lave said: "The fentanyl; it will kill people, or drug users, instantly. It takes only a few grams of fentanyl if the dose is very small. So that is what is in the future." Assistant Commissioner of Police Sakeo Ganivatu urged the current generation to lead a decisive crackdown to protect Fiji's future. ("Fentanyl threatens to hit Fiji next," *PINA*, 23 April 2025)

Tonga's failure to pay China's loan for rebuilding projects

On 22 April, *PINA* reported that difficulty in repayment of a USD 190 million loan from China's Export-Import Bank has sparked political discord. The loan was taken out after the 2006 riots to fund major rebuilding projects, including the royal palace renovation, Nuku'alofa wharf upgrade, and small business loans. With external debt at USD 195 million (35.9 per cent of GDP) and two-thirds owed to China's Export-Import Bank (Exim). The Lowy Institute described it as "a millstone around Tonga's neck," ranking Tonga fourth globally for debt burden. With the loan repayments now due, debate is intensifying over how previous governments handled the funds. Former Prime Minister Siaosi Sovaleni Hu'akavameiliku urged for prompt repayment to prevent burdening future generations. ("Tonga yet to pay off the loan for Nuku'alofa reconstruction of 2006 riots," *PINA*, 22 April 2025)

New Zealand needs the US in the Pacific, says New Zealand's Deputy Prime Minister

On 21 April, an editorial in *RNZ* titled "Why NZ needs the United States to stay committed to the Pacific" reported that New Zealand Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister Winston Peters seeks to reinforce the US–NZ relationship amidst concerns that the superpower is withdrawing from the Pacific region. the author noted that Peters highlighted NZ's Pacific links with the United States are "more important than ever," and that the partnership "remains one of our most longstanding and important, particularly when seen in the light of our joint interests in the Pacific and the evolving security environment." The Democracy Project's geopolitical analyst Geoffrey Miller and security expert Jose Sousa-Santos note that Peters is sending a message to New Zealanders and appealing to officials in the US to remain invested in the Pacific. Peters also met Hawai'i Governor Josh Green, who confirmed that New Zealand's approach to the president "is right" and that "having more friends helps" in "somewhat uncertain times." (Grace Tinetali- Fiavaai, "Why NZ needs the United States to stay committed to the Pacific," *RNZ*, 17 April 2025)

Tuvalu unveils first-ever ATMs

On 15 April, Tuvalu unveiled its first-ever ATMs at the National Bank of Tuvalu in the village of Vaiaku on Funafuti. Prime Minister Feleti Teo, the governor general, traditional leaders, members of parliament, and representatives from the diplomatic and business sectors attended the ceremony. Until now, all banking was cash-based, requiring workers to queue to withdraw salaries before the 2 pm closing, and daily transactions remained cash-only. The ATM and point-of-sale rollout initiated in 2021 at a total cost exceeding USD 1.89 million has installed five ATMs with 30 terminals to follow at multiple Funafuti locations, including the airport and local villages. Customers will use prepaid cards initially, with plans for Tuvalu-issued debit cards and eventual Visa debit and credit functionality. This change is expected to ease long lines for about 6,000 banking customers, reduce reliance on cash, and improve access to financial services across the outer islands. Teo said: "We're providing the service for free until people get the hang of it." (Lagipoiva Cherelle Jackson, "Tuvalu marks 'momentous occasion' with unveiling of its first ATMs," *The Guardian*, 16 April 2025)

Heavy waves drowned and claimes five lives on Australia's East Coast

On 19 April, five people drowned after huge waves hit parts of Australia, with two others missing off the coasts of New South Wales and Victoria. The body of a man was found near Tathra in southern New South Wales, following the deaths of a 58-year-old fisherman and two other men in separate incidents the previous day. Rescuers are searching for a man washed into the water near Sydney. On 18 April, one woman drowned and a man went missing after their group was swept into the sea at San Remo in Victoria. Victoria Premier Jacinta Allan remarked that it was an "awful start" to the Easter weekend and expressed sympathy for the families, warning of "potentially more difficult news to come." Australia's eastern states have been battered by dangerous waves, prompting Surf Life Saving Australia head Adam Weir to advise holidaymakers to visit patrolled beaches. He said "Coastal locations can present dangers, some that you can see and some that you can't, which is why we have some simple advice: Stop, Look, Stay Alive." (Neha Gohil, "Five dead as huge waves hit Australia coast," *BBC*, 19 April 2025)

Commander of US Indo-Pacific conducts symposium to strengthen Indo-Pacific defense coordination

On 17 April, Commander of US Indo-Pacific Command Adm. Samuel J. Paparo convened the Senior Defense Official (SDO) and Defense Attache (DATT) Symposium with senior military and intelligence leaders from across the Indo-Pacific. Representatives included the Defense Intelligence Agency, Defense Attaché Service, US Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) joint directorates, service components, and sub-unified commands. The Symposium aimed to address regional security challenges, improve interagency coordination, and formalize intelligence-sharing arrangements. Participants reviewed regional defense strategies, affirmed commitments to peaceful development, and joint contingency response. (John Bellino, "Indo-Pacific Senior Defense Officials and Defense Attachés Convene at USINDOPACOM for a Symposium," *Pacom*, 14 April 2025

Housing crisis in Australia, reports BBC

On 14 April, the *BBC* reported that for the average Australian, buying or renting a home has become unaffordable. Factors include the astronomical house prices, relentless rental increases, and a lack of social housing. Property analytics company CoreLogic revealed that the average Sydney home costs almost USD 800000, the combined average house price sits at just over USD 600000, and house prices in Australia overall have jumped 39.1 per cent in the last five years. According to a 2024 State of the Housing System report, prospective homeowners now take around 10 years to save

the 20 per cent deposit, and the rental market has provided little relief. According to CoreLogic's latest rental review, rents increased by 36.1 per cent nationally, and median weekly rents of USD 515 in Sydney, USD 463 in Perth, and USD 445 in Canberra. Rise in housing prices in Australia is due to not building enough homes to meet the demands of its rapidly growing population, compounded by restrictive planning laws, a steady decline of public housing, making matters worse, and climate change, making many areas increasingly unliveable. The Labor Party has pledged to invest in building 1.2 million homes by 2029, including 100,000 of the new homes only available to first homebuyers and a shared-equity scheme with a 5 per cent deposit. While the Liberal-National Coalition has vowed to unlock 500,000 homes, allow first-time buyers to use up to USD 33334 from their superannuation and make mortgage payments partially tax-free for up to five years, supported by a USD 3.34 billion boost to infrastructure. Head of the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, Michael Fotheringham, believes neither party's policies are sufficient to solve the housing problem, and it will take years to drag Australia out of a housing crisis that has been building for decades. (Yang Tian, "Australia's looming election brings housing crisis into focus," *BBC*, 14 April 2025)

New Zealand Deputy Prime Minister calls to deepen cooperation with Fiji

On 16 April, New Zealand Deputy Prime Minister Winston Peters said that New Zealand and Fiji share an "indispensable partnership in the Pacific" and must "deliver for our peoples and the region." Peters, who had dinner with Fiji Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka in Nadi, emphasized that the two nations are working to grow two-way trade to USD 2 billion by 2030. He welcomed New Zealand's recent move to make travel easier and cheaper for Fijians and noted that security cooperation, including on issues such as defence, drug trafficking, and people smuggling, remains a key focus. Peters highlighted that during his visit to Honolulu, the "US's significant investment in regional and global security" was reaffirmed, and he stressed the importance of close cooperation with Fiji ahead of the Pacific Islands Forum in the Solomon Islands in September. The delegation is expected to return on 17 April after visiting infrastructure projects in Port Vila, Vanuatu, which is still recovering from a 7.3 magnitude earthquake that struck its capital last December. (Grace Tinetali-Fiavaai, "NZ, Fiji reaffirm 'indispensable partnership', aim for $2b trade goal," *RNZ*, 16 April 2025)

PNG Prime Minister James Marape survives vote of no confidence

On 15 April, Papua New Guinea (PNG) Prime Minister James Marape survived a motion of no confidence after Speaker Job Pomat announced a vote result of 16 in favour and 89 against. The motion, moved by Sir Puka Temu and seconded by Member of Parliament (MP) Lino Tom, nominated Sir Peter Ipatas as an alternative prime minister. Temu described the motion as a "vote of accountability" and "a vote of conscience," insisting that the role of government is "to uplift its people." Despite points of order from opposition MPs citing a Supreme Court order, the Speaker proceeded with the vote. Following the vote, Marape thanked the 89 MPs for their support and vowed to continue leaving "no place and no one behind" as the chief servant of the people. Sir Peter Ipatas also thanked the opposition for his nomination, noting that it stemmed from widespread complaints about the prime minister's performance. Under new laws passed last month, Marape now has an 18-month reprieve from votes of no confidence, giving him a clear run until the 2027 National General Election. Parliament has been adjourned until 27 May 2025. (Koroi Hawkins, "PNG prime minister defeats no-confidence vote," RNZ, 15 April 2025)

New Zealand Foreign Affairs Minister emphasizes on strategic US-Pacific ties

On 15 April, Foreign Affairs Minister Winston Peters stated that New Zealand's Pacific connection with the United States is "more important than ever" following the Hawaii leg of his Pacific trip. Peters emphasized that the partnership remains one of New Zealand's most long-standing and vital alliances, particularly given shared strategic interests in the Pacific and evolving security challenges. His cross-party delegation is heading to Fiji for an overnight stop before proceeding to Vanuatu. He met with Hawai'i Governor Josh Green, who confirmed that New Zealand's approach to the US is right and underscored the importance of strong connections. Peters noted that the Honolulu visit allowed for an exchange of ideas regarding regional cooperation and the need for an active and engaged United States in the Indo-Pacific. He asserted that additional connections with political and community leaders are crucial during uncertain times. The delegation also met with the commander of US Indo-Pacific Command Admiral Samuel Paparo, the interim president of the East-West Center Dr James Scott, and Hawai'i-based representatives for Palau, Federated States of Micronesia, and the Marshall Islands. (Grace Tinetali-Fiavaai, "Winston Peters emphasises growing importance of NZ's Pacific ties with the United States," RNZ, 15 April 2025)

New Zealand eases visa restrictions for Pacific visitors

On 11 April, New Zealand announced that the government would ease visa restrictions for visitors from Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) countries, informs New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Immigration New Zealand. Starting from early July, visitors applying for a visitor visa for Aotearoa may be eligible for a multi-entry visa allowing them to visit as many times as they want for 24 months, an increase from the current 12-month period, while the maximum stay rules remain unchanged. In addition, from November this year, PIF member-country passport holders traveling from Australia with an Australian visa – work, student, or family – would no longer need a visa to visit New Zealand for up to three months. This visa waiver is on trial for 12 months. Travellers will need to complete a New Zealand Electronic Travel Authority (NZeTA) to enter the country. New Zealand Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister Winston Peters informed that the government wants to make it easier and cheaper for people from across the Pacific to visit New Zealand. Immigration Minister Erica Stanford added the measure would simplify the process for those coming from Australia and help facilitate multiple trips, ensuring a stable and predictable immigration system. Pacific leaders have increasingly advocated for the free movement of people in the region, and a petition launched by the Green Party last month calls on the government to extend visa-free travel to visitors from Pacific Island countries. ("'Make it easier and cheaper': New Zealand eases visa restrictions for Pacific Island nations," RNZ, 11 April 2025)

Pacific nations leaders disappointed by US tariffs, reports RNZ

On 09 April, *RNZ* reported that leaders in Pacific nations are expressing disappointment and confusion over the US tariffs. Fiji's Finance Minister described the 32 per cent tariff as unfair, and Tokelau's government spokesperson stated he does not understand how the region threatens the US economy. President Donald Trump's charts claim that Fiji charges the US 63 per cent tariffs, citing currency manipulation and trade barriers, but the Fijian government disputes these figures, noting that the US calculated reciprocal tariffs based on a trade deficit. In 2023, Fiji exported USD 366 million to the US while importing USD 158 million, which resulted in a high tariff since Fiji exports more than it imports from the US. Fiji's Finance Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Biman Prasad explained that 72 per cent of imported US goods have zero tax, while 25 per cent receive less than 5 per cent, contrasting sharply with the US-imposed 32 per cent tariff on goods from Fiji. Rashad said: "We feel that using trade deficit to calculate the reciprocal tariff rate is wrong, a trade deficit is not a tariff." Tokelau spokesperson Aukusitino Vitale remarked that the US appears to know very little about the Pacific region. The University of Auckland's business school, academic Sione Taufa, noted that these tariffs undermine a decade of US goodwill and may drive Pacific nations to seek alternative trading partners, as smaller territories like the Northern Mariana Islands face increasing economic pressures and business shutdowns. (Caleb Fotheringham, "Fiji and other Pacific nations decry 'unfair and disappointing' US tariffs," *RNZ*, 09 April 2025)

New Zealand leased generators to provide relief to Samoa's power crisis, reports RNZ

On 09 April, *RNZ* reported that five generators leased from a company in New Zealand arrived to manage the ongoing power crisis. On 31 March, Prime Minister Fiame Naomi Mata'afa declared a 30-day state of emergency to implement measures for restoring power, protecting public health and safety, and maintaining essential services. Fiame said the economic impact of the crisis is estimated to cost up to 16 per cent of Samoa's GDP. Samoa's government is addressing the problem "bit by bit" as the state of emergency remains in force until 29 April. The five leased generators will be connected to the main power supply at Fuluasou and Fiaga power stations and are expected to be operational by 15 April. Two brand-new permanent generators from China will arrive in August to replace the leased units. Although some areas now receive uninterrupted power, others continue to experience power rationing, and the government is preparing to assist families and businesses with damaged electrical appliances. (Susana Suisuiki, "Samoa power crisis: Hope arrives in the form of leased generators from NZ," *RNZ*, 09 April 2025)

Pacific nations debate global shipping levy at Marine Environment Protection Committee

On 08 April, *RNZ* reported that at the reconvening of the 83rd session of the Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC83). This global shipping levy is to be discussed as last week's talk ended without consensus at IMO headquarters in London. Marshall Islands' special envoy Albon Ishoda said: "The universal levy [for international shipping] is essential." A group of African, Caribbean, Latin American, and Pacific Island climate negotiators has reframed the proposal as the "Zero and Near-Zero contribution." This attracted interest from the EU and Canada but raised concern among Brazil, China and the UAE,

while the UK indicated openness to parts of the Pacific-backed text and the US voiced concerns about fairness and scope. Tuvalu's Minister for Transport, Energy, Communication, and Innovation Simon Kofe noted that over 50 countries representing a majority of the world's shipping fleet supported the world's first flat-rate levy on greenhouse gas emissions but critical details such as pricing, scope and how revenues would be distributed must still be finalised before April. He called on COP30 host, Brazil to "step forward" and "work in solidarity" with the 6PAC+ alliance of Small Island Developing States (SIDS). He advocated for a strong and fair levy that can fund the maritime energy transition and support developing countries. He said: "a moderate levy - of at least USD 150 per tonne of emissions - would result in the lowest long-term costs of all available options." This raises shipping costs by 1 per cent to 9 per cent, with the total increase around 15 per cent to 24 per cent, ensuring that "the cost of pollution is borne by those responsible". ("Pacific nations push for universal carbon levy for international shipping at IMO talks," *RNZ*, 08 April 2025)

PNG's parliament to address no-confidence motion against Prime Minister

On 08 April, the Papua New Guinea parliament will address a vote of no confidence against Prime Minister James Marape and his government. The PNG Supreme Court ruled last week that parliament must be recalled on 08 April to debate a motion of no confidence against Marape. The ruling stems from an incident on 27 November last year, when a notice of motion for a vote of no confidence was submitted to Iguan and found compliant with constitutional requirements under Section 145, but was rejected by invoking Section 165 of the Standing Orders. The Deputy Speaker disallowed the motion and prevented it from being tabled in parliament, triggering legal action from Chuave MP and deputy opposition leader James Nomane. Marape, who commands the support of more than two-thirds of the MPs in the House, 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." ("PNG parliament meets today to address no-confidence motion against Marape," *RNZ*, 08 April 2025)

New Zealand government unveils new defense capability plan of NZD 12 billion

On 07 April, *RNZ* reported that the New Zealand government will invest NZD 12 billion over four years. NZD 9 billion of that is funding to transform the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) into a "modern, combat-capable force" as detailed in its 15-year Defence Capability Plan. This boost will raise defence spending from just over 1 per cent of GDP to over 2 per cent by 2033, matching early 1990s levels. Key 2025–2028 investments include long-range missile systems, enhanced strike and maritime surveillance, including uncrewed vessels and drones, upgraded helicopters and aircraft, anti-tank and counter-UAS systems, cyber and space capabilities, and infrastructure and logistics modernization. The plan, reviewed biennially, reflects a strategic shift toward high-tech, regionally relevant capabilities amid rising Pacific security risks and has cross-coalition support as New Zealand aligns with allies, boosting defence outlays. Defence Minister Judith Collins and Prime Minister Christopher Luxon expressed their interest in securing the security of New Zealand with these investments. Luxon said: "We must be clear-eyed about recognising the risk of conflict in our wider region has risen, and we have to do our part internationally and domestically ... there can be no prosperity without security." (Anneke Smith, "Government unveils $12 billion Defence Capability Plan," *RNZ*, 07 April 2025)

Rising seas and sinking cities threaten New Zealand's coastlines, reports an analysis by The Conversation

On 07 April, *RNZ* reposted an analysis by Jesse Kearse of *The Conversation* about the rising sea level affecting coastal communities in Aotearoa in New Zealand. According to Kesrse, rising seas are already affecting coastal communities, with the global average sea level now 18 cm higher than in 1900 and increasing at 4.4 mm per year, while many shorelines are sinking a few millimetres each year. New research using interferometric synthetic aperture radar tied to global navigation satellite system measurements revealed subsiding coastlines of all major cities like Christchurch at 3.6 mm, Wellington at 2.4 mm, Dunedin at 1.6 mm, and Auckland at 1.5 mm per year. This created a relative sea-level rise close to or above 7 mm per year, which amounts to around 70 cm of sea-level rise per century. Urban hotspots, including coastal suburbs of Christchurch, sank up to 8 mm per year as land adjusted after the 2011 earthquake, and reclaimed waterfront areas such as Porirua Harbour compacted at 3–5 mm per year. The work builds on earlier work by the NZSeaRise project, which measured vertical land movement for every 2 km of New Zealand's coastline. (Jesse Kearse, "New satellite data shows NZ's major cities are sinking," *RNZ*, 07 April 2025)

Australia's Nationals leader urges for a stronger stance against China in the Pacific

On 07 April, Australia's Nationals leader, David Littleproud, said a Coalition government would

urge a stronger stance against China in the Pacific. According to him, if the Coalition wins office, it will urge Pacific nations to take a "more aggressive stance" towards China's climate policies. He defended the Coalition's focus on "practical" ways to help Pacific nations deal with climate change. He argued that pressuring China to reduce emissions would have a "real impact" because Beijing's contribution to global warming dwarfs Australia's. Last week, Opposition Leader Peter Dutton vowed to ditch the Australian Labor Party's plan to co-host a major UN climate meeting with Pacific nations, calling the idea "madness." The Coalition abandoned the government's commitment under the Paris Agreement to reduce emissions by 43 per cent by 2030, saying it was unachievable. The Labor Party warned this would sabotage Australia's strategic position in the region. Clean Energy Finance director Tim Buckley criticised Littleproud's comments as "misdirection," noting China is "by far the largest investor in zero emissions technology." Littleproud insisted the Coalition remains committed to net zero by 2050 and said: "We've signed up to those international (climate) commitments, but I think what the Pacific wants is practical action that can demonstrate we can achieve it." He also added that Australia must balance its commitment to the Pacific to support the "cost of living crisis here in Australia." (Stephen Dziedzic and Lucy Cooper, "Littleproud says Coalition government would urge Pacific to be 'more aggressive' on China," *ABC*, 07 April 2025)

Pacific Island nations face high US tariffs, reports RNZ

On 05 April, *RNZ* reported that the US's new tariff regime is set to impact several Pacific Island economies with rates from 10 per cent to 32 per cent based on their duties on American goods. Fiji faces the highest Pacific rate at 32 per cent, deemed reciprocal to its 63 per cent tariff on US imports. Nauru is charged 30 per cent against its 59 per cent duties, and Vanuatu faces 22 per cent. Norfolk Island, an Australian territory, was hit with a 29 per cent tariff despite Australia receiving only the 10 per cent base rate. Most other Pacific nations, including Tokela, faced the 10 per cent minimum. (Caleb Fotheringham, "Fiji have been slapped with the highest US tariffs in the Pacific," *RNZ*, 03 April 2025)

6.9-magnitude earthquake hit Papua New Guinea's coast

On 05 April, the United States Geological Survey reported a strong 6.9-magnitude earthquake hit Papua New Guinea's coast. The earthquake struck at a depth of 10 km near New Britain island's southern shore, about 194 km southeast of Kimbe. The US Tsunami Warning Center issued a tsunami alert that was later canceled. Residents and resort managers in the Pomio district and Kimbe Province reported only minor tremors, no structural damage, and calm seas despite fish activity. Multiple smaller quakes of magnitude 4.9–5.3 were recorded, The quake was felt as far as Port Moresby, 620 km away, and Kokopo. (Marian Faa and Doug Dingwall, "6.9-magnitude quake hits off Papua New Guinea coast," *ABC*, 05 April 2025)

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Post-conflict Bougainville struggles with trauma, reports RNZ

On 03 April, *RNZ* reported on a blog, "Post-Conflict Bougainville," detailing the lasting trauma in Bougainville following the eight-year civil war from 1989. The blog was written by Australian National University academics Sinclair Dinnen, Miranda Forsyth, and Dennis Kuiai. The report identifies unresolved issues such as the reopening of the Panguna Mine, with concerns over cost and benefit sharing, land ownership, and the unreviewed Bougainville Copper Agreement, and the emergence of sorcery accusation-related violence (SARV) as a new consequence of the conflict. The blog also highlights deep generational trauma, displacement, and substance abuse, which still plague the population. The authors advocate for the establishment of a Bougainville Community Peace and Security Task Unit to build peace at a community level. This unit is intended to operate on principles of state-owned policing and is tasked with investigating crimes and allegations, facilitating peace building, and reintegrating former combatants. The authors also advocate for the community government and community courts to play their own roles to ensure peace and security. (Don Wiseman, "How Bougainville can heal itself from trauma," *RNZ*, 03 April 2025)

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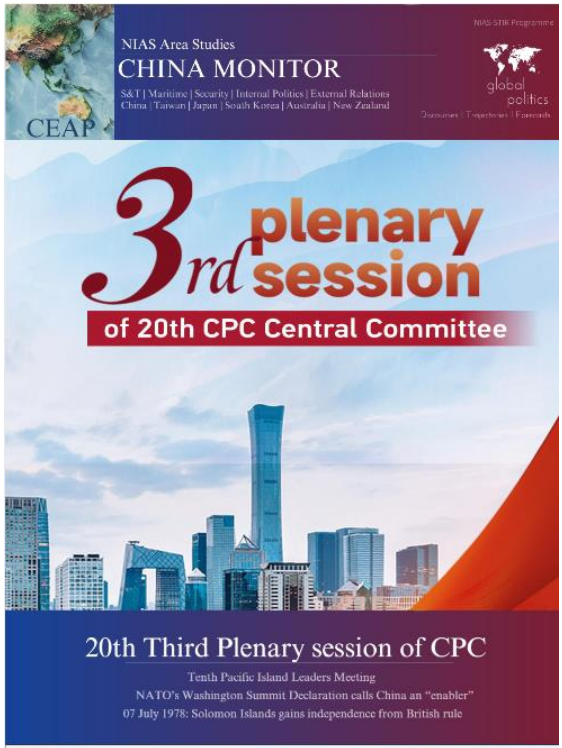

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