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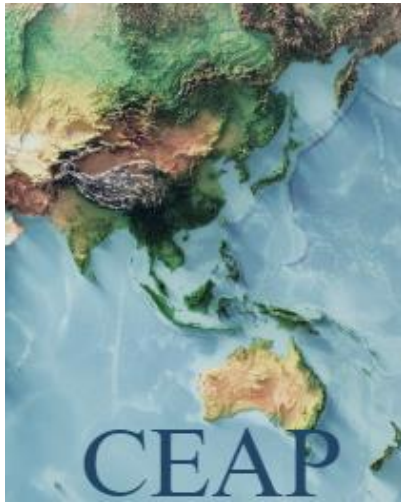


China-Latin America-Caribbean

US-China tariff negotiations

Tianwen-2 mission

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About NIAS Global Politics

Global Politics is a primary focus of the NIAS Programme on Science, Technology, and International Relations (STIR). The primary focus is on contemporary world affairs. The Programme publishes *The World This Week*, and *NIAS Fortnightly on Science, Technology and International Relations*.

About NIAS China East Asia & The Pacific Reader

The CEAP aims to provide a daily brief on contemporary developments within China and its external engagements. Daily developments are categorized under the following sections: Internal (Politics, Economy, S&T), Regional (China's interactions primarily with East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, the Pacific, and also with other regions including Europe, the Americas, Africa, and the Middle East), Big power politics and China's global power projections.

The CEAP aims to build an online database on China by collating information from different regions and divergent sources. The objective is to capture different narratives and make sense of information and disinformation.

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About China Monitor

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



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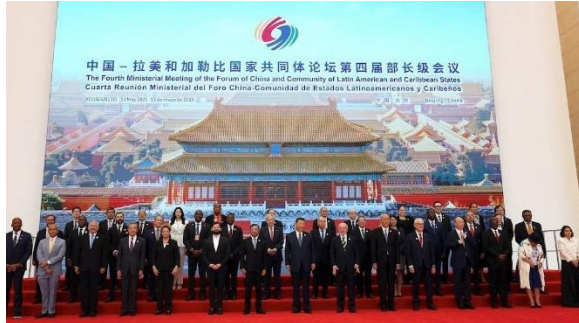
Focus Note

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China Reader Daily Wire

S & T | Maritime | Security | Internal | External | China | Taiwan | Japan | South Korea | Australia | New Zealand



EXPLAINER**China-CELAC forum: Strengthening ties with Latin America and Caribbean***Gauri Gupta**(Image Source: CGTN)***What happened?**

On 13 May, China's President Xi Jinping delivered a keynote address titled "Writing a New Chapter in Building a China-LAC Community with a Shared Future" at the Fourth Ministerial Meeting of the China-CELAC Forum. He was joined by Colombia's President Gustavo Petro, the current CELAC chairperson, Brazil's President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, Chile's President Gabriel Boric, and other heads of delegations from LAC countries and regional organizations. Xi emphasized "independence and autonomy is their glorious tradition, development and revitalization is their inherent right, and fairness and justice is their common pursuit."

President Xi launched five major cooperation programs: Solidarity, Development, Civilization, Peace, and People-to-People Connectivity. Under the Solidarity Program, China pledged continued support on matters of core interest and invited 300 CELAC political party members annually to China for three years. The Development Program focused on implementing the Global Development Initiative, expanding Belt and Road cooperation, and increasing imports and investments. The Civilization Program will enhance civilizational dialogue and uphold human values through the Global Civilization Initiative. The Peace Program aims to deepen cooperation in security, cybersecurity, anti-corruption, and transnational crime under the Global Security Initiative. The People-to-People Connectivity Program announced 3,500 scholarships, 10,000 training opportunities and 300 small livelihood programs.

On 14 May, China and Colombia signed a deal on BRI. The deal emphasizes jointly building the

Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st century Maritime Silk Road. Xi also pledged USD 9.2 billion in credit towards "development."

On 15 May, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi announced free visa exemptions for five LAC countries: Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Peru & Uruguay for up to 30 days from 01 June, 2025 to 31 May, 2026 for non-commercial purposes.

What is the background?

First a brief note on China-CELAC Forum. Established in July 2014 at the China-Latin America and Caribbean Summit in Brasília, the Forum today covers the entire Latin America and Caribbean region. During January 2015 its first ministerial meeting was held in Beijing. It has served as the principal channel and has evolved into an essential multilateral tool driving robust cooperation among China and CELAC's 33 member nations. The Forum has hosted over 100 major events, including 31 thematic sub-forums and three ministerial engagements, reflecting a sustained commitment to institutional dialogue and cooperation.

Second, Beijing's political and economic investments in the region. China had announced a USD 35 billion financing package in 2014, comprising a USD 10 billion Preferential Loan, a USD 20 billion Special Infrastructure Loan, and a USD 5 billion China-LAC Cooperation Fund. More than 200 infrastructure projects have been effectively executed employing over one million people and significantly increasing regional and industrial capacity connectivity. China has signed five free trade agreements with Latin American countries: Chile, Peru, Costa Rica, Ecuador, and Nicaragua, opening up market access and reducing tariff barriers, marking trade as a corner-stone of cooperation. In 2024 trade between China and LAC countries exceeded USD 500 billion for the first time, an increase of over 40 times from the beginning of this century.

China has voted for 32 United Nations resolutions against the US embargo of Cuba and has demonstrated its solidarity with local causes. China and Brazil jointly issued a six-point common understanding on the political

settlement of the Ukraine crisis, which has been endorsed by more than 110 countries, contributing wisdom and strength to resolving international hotspot issues.

Third, the BRI inroads. The Belt and Road Initiative has also been aligned with national development plans. For example Peru's Chancay Port, making strategic infrastructure synergy stronger. China has been proactively engaged in MERCOSUR, CARICOM, and ALBA-TCP as an observer, and contributed to climate, biodiversity, and satellite cooperation frameworks, including offering 80 percent of its Special Infrastructure Loan undertakings. These actions demonstrate the greater strategic confidence and all-around cooperation between China and CELAC.

Fourth, cooperation on non-military issues. China has collaborated on disaster prevention, mitigation and relief and on joint response to hurricanes, earthquakes and other natural disasters. China has donated 300 million doses of vaccines, 40 million units of medical supplies and equipment, and dispatched 38 medical teams to the Caribbean States. Additionally, China has also signed 26 educational

agreements with 19 LAC countries, granted 17,000 scholarships and 13,000 professional training slots, and 68 Confucius Institutes were opened across Latin America and Caribbean states.

What does it mean?

The China-CELAC Forum is a comprehensive framework for institutionalized cooperation between China and the Latin American and Caribbean region with a view to withstanding the test of time and adapting to emerging global challenges. The Forum's flexible structure allows each country to participate based on its needs and priorities, encouraging tailored development. It also helps in diversifying regional partnerships, reduces dependence on traditional powers, and empowers CELAC countries to pursue strategic autonomy. It expands soft power through education, culture, and digital infrastructure outreach. Its long-term relevance lies in making China a consistent and responsive partner in regional modernization and governance reform.

COMMENTARY

Tough Tariff Negotiations with the US

R Preetha and Brighty Ann Sarah



(Image Source: CGTN)

What happened?

On 1 May, the second round of US-Japan tariff negotiations ended without breakthroughs. Tensions persisted as Japan opposed the US refusal to reduce tariffs on automobiles and key auto manufacturing metals. This marks the second rejection of Japan's request, with the US citing its unwillingness to grant "preferential treatment." A fresh 25 per cent tariff on selected auto parts, imposed on Saturday, added pressure. Japanese PM Shigeru Ishiba called

additional auto tariffs "absolutely unacceptable."

On 1 May, South Korea concluded two days of working-level trade talks in Washington. While details remain undisclosed, the discussions aim to shape a "July package" covering tariffs, economic security, investment, and currency policy. USTR Jamieson Greer praised South Korea's proactive stance, though Vice Minister Park Sung-taek dismissed speculation of a deal before the election.

On 30 April, President Donald Trump claimed that Samsung Electronics' plans to build "massive" facilities in the US due to his tariff policy, citing it as a key achievement. This week, Taiwan also concluded its first round of "substantive" tariff talks and proposed a USD 10 billion addition to its USD 12.6 billion post-tariff economic aid package.

What is the background?

First, Trump's tariffs on Japan, Taiwan and South Korea. On 2 April, Trump declared "Liberation Day" and unveiled sweeping tariffs

on all US imports. A 10 per cent universal tariff on all imported goods took effect on 5 April, with additional tariffs on specific countries starting 9 April. A 25 per cent tariff was imposed on car and truck imports, along with a 24 per cent tariff on all Japanese goods, a 25 per cent duty on imports from South Korea, and a 32 per cent tariff on Taiwanese products—excluding semiconductors. However, these tariffs were temporarily suspended for 90 days for countries that chose not to implement retaliatory measures. The suspension is set to be lifted on July 8.

Second, the US trade deficit with Japan, Taiwan and South Korea. Japan, the US's largest foreign investor and fifth-largest trade partner, reported a USD 84.8 billion trade deficit in 2024, up from USD 68.0 billion in 2022—driven mainly by imports of vehicles, machinery, and appliances. US exports to Japan were USD 80.3 billion in 2022, while imports hit USD 148.3 billion. South Korea–US trade reached USD 197.1 billion in 2024, with a USD 66.0 billion US trade deficit. Auto and semiconductor imports drove this gap. Taiwan, now the US's seventh-largest trade partner, saw a record USD 73.9 billion trade deficit with the US in 2024, with semiconductors exempt from tariffs, reflecting their strategic value

Third, the significance of the US trade for the three countries. The tariffs strain US alliances with Japan and South Korea, key partners in countering China and North Korea. Taiwan facing Chinese military pressure risks weakened US. These countries rely on the US for security and as a key export market; Japan is the fifth-largest US trade partner, Taiwan the seventh, and South Korea a major player. Escalating trade tensions could destabilize their economic positions. Japan, grappling with inflation from rising energy and food costs, depends on US imports like natural gas and agricultural products (25 per cent of its food imports). Retaliatory tariffs risk exacerbating inflation and economic stagnation, a “self-defeating” outcome for Japanese consumers and businesses. South Korea and Taiwan, similarly export-dependent, face potential disruptions to

their US market access, threatening economic stability and complicating their balancing act between US alignment and regional dynamics.

What does it mean?

First, the ongoing negotiations signal Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan's strategic recalibration to navigate Trump's aggressive tariff regime. Japan's push for tariff reductions on autos and metals, paired with offers to boost US agricultural imports, reflects a pragmatic bid to protect its automotive sector while addressing US trade deficit concerns. South Korea's proactive engagement, despite election uncertainties, underscores its intent to secure economic stability through a comprehensive “July package,” balancing tariffs with investment and currency policies. Taiwan's substantial economic aid package aims to cushion tariff impacts and maintain US goodwill, leveraging its semiconductor dominance.

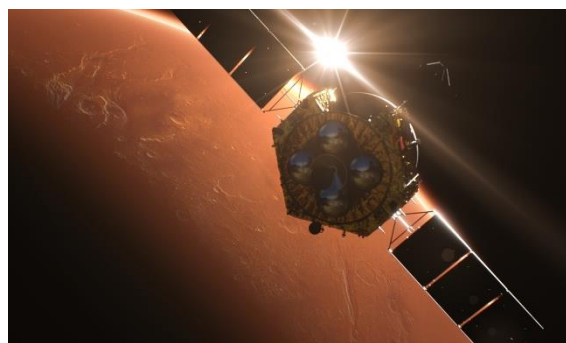
Second, the willingness to negotiate reflects economic interdependence and the 8 July tariff deadline which risks severe disruptions. Third, it highlights Trump leveraging the tariffs and the deadline to push favorable projects like Alaska LNG as part of the negotiations.

Third, the East Asian responses highlight the balancing act of these countries - safeguarding domestic industries, maintaining US alliances, and resisting decoupling from China. The negotiation outcomes will shape the US -East Asia relations moving forward, and may push Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea toward trade diversification.

COMMENTARY

China's Tianwen-2 mission

Gauri Gupta



(Image Source: Global Times)

On 28 May, China's Tianwen-2 spacecraft successfully launched a Long March 3B/E rocket from the Xichang Satellite Launch Center in China. The spacecraft deployed its solar arrays 18 minutes after liftoff and entered a trajectory to escape Earth's gravitational pull, creating a significant advancement in the country's deep space exploration efforts.

Background to Tianwen

Tianwen's program comprises a set of interplanetary missions that aim to improve the capabilities of space exploration in China. The Chinese philosophy and poetry "Qu Yuan" pose a classical poem that encapsulates the essence of China's scientific goals in space exploration. The excerpt "Heavenly Questions" is the equivalent of "Tianwen," which serves as the title of the poem.

In 2018, Tianwen-2 was proposed as part of the deep space exploration program by the Chinese Academy of Sciences. Subsequently, Zhouzhai Orbiting Center underwent a series of scheduling adjustments, which called for a programmatic change to its launch schedule from 2022 to 2025. The China Academy of Space Technology (CAST) was responsible for the construction of the spacecraft, which developed a 2100 kg mass space vehicle designed to operate for 10 years after its deployment. It is the first time a Long March-3B rocket has been used to reach the second cosmic velocity (over 11.2 km/s), enabling the spacecraft to escape Earth's gravitational field. The China National Space Administration (CNSA) executed advanced autonomous guidance and terminal correction systems to maintain the spacecraft's precise trajectory and to meet the demand for high precision.

It is China's first trial of high-speed atmospheric reentry. The return capsule is expected to withstand reentry speeds of up to 12.1 km/s. This mission builds on the achievements of Tianwen-1, which successfully orbited and landed on Mars in 2021. The future missions include Tianwen-3, which will focus on returning samples from Mars, and Tianwen-4 is aimed at exploring Jupiter and Uranus.

What are its Objectives?

First, asteroid sample collection from Kamo'oalewa. It aims to collect at least 100 grams of material, which includes organic compounds and minerals, from the surface of Kamo'oalewa, a small asteroid measuring approximately 40 to 100 meters in length. It is considered to be a "living fossil" of the solar system. The asteroid has a unique orbit, and its composition suggests it could be a fragment of the Moon.

Second, reaching comet 311P/PANSTARRS. After the sample return, Tianwen-2 will journey to 311P/PANSTARRS, a main-belt comet between Mars and Jupiter, exhibiting both asteroid and comet characteristics. The spacecraft will conduct remote sensing to analyze the comet's composition, activity, and potential for harboring volatiles, contributing to the understanding of the early solar system and the origins of water on Earth.

Third, testing technological innovation. The mission will test innovative sampling techniques, including the anchor-and-attach method, which involves the spacecraft anchoring itself to the asteroid's surface to collect samples. This technique requires precise autonomous navigation due to the time delay in communications between Earth and the spacecraft.

Fourth, carrying scientific payloads. It carries 11 scientific instruments, which include multispectral and infrared spectrometers, high-resolution cameras, a radar sounder, a magnetometer, and dust and gas analyzers. These instruments will study the surface composition, geological features, subsurface structures, magnetic fields, and interactions with solar wind at both Kamo'oalewa and 311P/PANSTARRS.

SHORT NOTE**Trump on foreign students enrolled in Harvard: Chinese students awry***Ananya Dinesh**(Image Source: Reuters)***What happened?**

On 22 May, US President Donald Trump issued an order to revoke Harvard's longstanding tradition of accepting foreign student enrolments, especially Chinese students. This provision was proposed under the accusation that it fosters antisemitism and that they are a threat to national security, alleging their coordination with the "Chinese Communist Party." The decision came with an ultimatum forcing current foreign students to transfer to other schools or lose their legal status.

Former Harvard President, Larry Summers, called Trump administration's move to block foreign students the most serious attack on the university to date. The Trump administration revoked Harvard's certification under the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP), effectively banning the university from enrolling international students. The Department of Homeland Security expressed concerns over campus safety and alleged noncompliance with federal policies as reasons for this revocation. In retaliation, Harvard filed a lawsuit challenging this decision, claiming it violated the university's First Amendment rights and was an act of political retaliation. A federal judge subsequently issued a temporary restraining order blocking the enforcement of the ban, allowing international students to remain enrolled at Harvard while the legal proceedings continue. Several US Republican lawmakers expressed concerns regarding China's manipulation of Harvard, and in turn, using this

to gain access to US advanced technology. Allegations towards Harvard have gone so far as to hold the school responsible for "turning a blind eye to vigilante CCP-directed harassment on campus." Harvard issued no comment on this and firmly believes that the administration's decision blatantly violates the right to free speech as guaranteed by the US Constitution.

On 23 May, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs declared that China would "safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of its overseas students and scholars." The Ministry, Communication and Public Diplomacy, Director-General of the Department of Press, Mao Ning, said: "US actions will undoubtedly affect its image and credibility," additionally stating that China and the US benefit from the educational cooperation equally.

On 26 May, *Reuters* reported on the Hong Kong Education Bureau's decision to assimilate "top talent" into universities in China in light of Trump's decision to ban all foreign students. Universities in Hong Kong have taken the administration's decision in their favour and are working on lateral admission entries to make the transition smoother for Chinese students. The Education Bureau went further and called upon all universities in Hong Kong to introduce facilitation measures for all those eligible. The bureau contacted the Harvard Club of Hong Kong to offer support for students who have been admitted to Harvard for further studies.

Harvard enrolled 6,703 international students across all of its schools in 2024, according to the school's data, with 1,203 of those coming from China. In a statement by US Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem said: "It is a privilege, not a right, for universities to enrol foreign students and benefit from their higher tuition payments to help pad their multibillion-dollar endowments." More Republicans made similar statements. White House spokesperson Abigail Jackson said Harvard has become: "a hotbed of anti-American, anti-Semitic, pro-terrorist agitators."

IN FOCUS

China-Caribbean-Latin America's 10th CELAC Forum



(Image Source: CGTN)

On 13 May, *CGTN* reported that China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with foreign ministers Caribbean nations at the China-CELAC (Community of Latin American and Caribbean States) ministerial meeting in Beijing. The delegation included ministers from Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago. Wang highlighted the 10th anniversary of the China-CELAC Forum, noting significant progress in China-Caribbean relations, including enhanced political trust, cooperation in various sectors, and active cultural exchanges. He emphasized China's commitment to supporting Caribbean countries in addressing climate change, promoting sustainable development, and strengthening multilateral cooperation. Caribbean ministers expressed appreciation for China's ongoing support, particularly in infrastructure, and reaffirmed their commitment to the one-China principle. They also expressed hope for deeper South-South cooperation through the forum. He said: "China will provide more government scholarships and training opportunities to promote cultural and people-to-people exchanges between the two sides."

On 13 May, *Reuters* reported that China's President Xi Jinping pledged nearly USD 10 billion to Latin America in new credit lines, denominated in yuan, aimed at supporting development and enhancing regional engagement. This move aims to boost the global use of the Chinese currency while deepening strategic ties in trade and investment. Xi also revealed plans for visa-free travel for five Latin American and Caribbean states. In 2024, trade between China and Latin American countries reached a record high of USD 515 billion, highlighting the growing relationship. However,

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva cautioned against overdependence on any major power, stressing the need for regional autonomy amid global tensions. The forum also focused on cooperation in sectors like clean energy, AI, 5G, and cybersecurity, reflecting China's broader Belt and Road ambitions. (Liz Lee, Joe Cash and Eduardo Baptista, "China commits \$10 billion in fresh credit to Latin America," *Reuters*, 13 May 2025)

On 13 May, *SCMP* reported that China's President Xi Jinping urged over 30 Latin American and Caribbean nations to unite against rising unilateralism and trade protectionism, warning that tariff wars bring no winners. Stressing shared goals of development, equity, and global stability, he announced five cooperation programmes over the next three years, including deeper engagement through the Belt and Road Initiative, cultural and diplomatic exchanges, and joint action on global governance. Bilateral trade between China and the region has surged to over USD 500 billion, which is 40 times higher than in 2000, supported by more than 200 infrastructure projects that have created over a million jobs. Chile's President Gabriel Boric welcomed the new programmes and praised the Belt and Road Initiative's contributions to regional development. Leaders from Brazil, Colombia, and Chile echoed support for multilateralism. Colombia joined the Belt and Road plan, signaling deeper engagement despite its US ties, while Chile emphasized the importance of trade sovereignty and strategic independence. Chinese officials contrasted their cooperation-driven approach with what they described as the politicization and weaponization of trade by major powers, urging CELAC countries to stand with China in defending fairness, globalization, and the multilateral trading system.

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CHINA READER DAILY WIRE

INTERNAL

Four pro-democracy Hong Kongers release after trial

On 30 May, four people jailed in the landmark Hong Kong national security trial of the “47 democrats,” accused of conspiracy to commit subversion, were freed after more than four years behind bars. They were the second group to be released in a month. Among the released was long-time political and LGBTQ activist Jimmy Sham, who led one of the largest pro-democracy groups, the Civil Human Rights Front, which was disbanded in 2021. Coming back home after four years, Sham said that he wanted to spend some time with his family. In a comment, he also said: “I don’t know how to plan because, to me, it feels like today is my first day of understanding the world again.” The Civil Human Rights Front was one of the largest pro-democracy groups in Hong Kong and helped organise a million-strong march during the 2019 pro-democracy protests. Kinda Li, Roy Tam, and Henry Wong were the other three who were released. In early 2021, 47 pro-democracy figures in Hong Kong were arrested and charged with conspiracy to commit subversion under the Hong Kong National Security Law (NSL), which was imposed by Beijing in mid-2020. The charge carries a maximum penalty of life imprisonment. The case centred around their involvement in organizing and participating in an unofficial primary election in July 2020, which aimed to coordinate pro-democracy candidates for the then-upcoming Legislative Council (LegCo) election. The primary was viewed by authorities as part of a broader strategy—the so-called “35+ plan”—to secure a legislative majority and potentially veto government budgets, thereby forcing the Chief Executive to resign, as allowed under the Basic Law. The prosecution argued that this amounted to a plan to paralyze the government, which they classified as subversive activity under the NSL. Following a protracted trial, 45 of the 47 defendants were convicted. Sentences ranged up to 10 years imprisonment, though not all have been sentenced yet as of late May 2025. Only 2 were acquitted. The trial drew widespread criticism from Western governments and human rights organizations, who viewed the case as politically motivated and indicative of a shrinking space for dissent in Hong Kong. In contrast, the Hong Kong and Chinese central governments maintained that the legal proceedings were conducted fairly

and by the rule of law, emphasizing that national security laws apply equally to all citizens.

(“Second group of Hong Kong democrats freed after 4 years in jail,” *Reuters*, 30 May 2025)

China’s Foreign Minister meets the chairman of the Asian Peace and Reconciliation Council

On 29 May, China’s Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Thursday met with the chairman of the Asian Peace and Reconciliation Council (APRC) Surakiart Sathirathai at the signing ceremony of the Convention on the Establishment of the International Organization for Mediation (IOMed) in Hong Kong. Wang said: “the IOMed provides a new option for the international community to resolve disputes and achieve reconciliation voluntarily.” China reaffirms its stance to work together with Asian countries in order to continue safeguarding the hard-won peace and stability in Asia. The China-ASEAN partnership, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation, and the Asia Cooperation Dialogue all serve as strong evidence of this commitment. (“Chinese FM meets chairman of Asian Peace and Reconciliation Council,” *CGTN*, 30 May 2025)

China’s C919 celebrates its second anniversary with two million passengers flown

On 28 May, the C919 celebrated its second anniversary of operation, with over two million passengers having flown on the airplane. The Chinese-made aircraft competes with the more narrow-bodied Airbus and Boeing airplane manufacturers. Eighteen of these aircraft were given to China Eastern Airlines, Air China, and China Southern Airlines, serving 24 routes across 16 cities and carrying more than 2 million passengers to date. As of 27 May, China Eastern Airlines’ C919 fleet logged more than 28,000 safe flight hours and conducted more than 11,400 commercial flights. The model has been appreciated for its dependability, operational reliability, and strong safety performance. The model’s first commercial passenger flight flew from Shanghai to Beijing on 28 May 2023. The C919 is regarded as a model to enhance China’s competitiveness in the global aviation market. (“C919 carries over 2m passengers in two years of operation,” *Global Times*, 28 May 2025)

Chemical plant explosion in Shandong province kills five and injures nineteen

On 27 May, a chemical plant in China managed by Shandong Youdao Chemical exploded in the city of Weifang, Shandong Province. Five people were reportedly killed and nineteen injured. The plant was located in an industrial park and manufactured chemical components for use in pesticides and pharmaceuticals. Local authorities dispatched around 230 responders to the scene in response to the explosion and the resulting blaze. A drone video posted by *The Beijing News* showed smoke emerging from the chemical plant and a second, unidentified facility nearby. Blasts at chemical plants in China in recent years have included one in the northwest region of Ningxia in 2024 and another in the southeastern province of Jiangxi in 2023. A statement issued by China's emergency response authority urged response crews to quickly contain the fire and establish the number of people affected. ("At least five reported killed in large explosion at China chemical plant," *Al Jazeera*, 27 May 2025)

President Xi congratulates the Ninth National Congress of the Chinese Young Pioneers

On 27 May, China's President Xi Jinping sent a congratulatory letter to the ninth national congress of the Chinese Young Pioneers (CYP). In his letter, he urged the CYP to follow the Party and cultivate "qualified builders for the cause of socialism with Chinese characters." With International Children's Day approaching, Xi also extended his warm greetings to all children across the country. He believes that "children represent the future force in building a strong nation and rejuvenating the Chinese nation." He also implored the CYP to educate and guide its members to become exemplary examples, love the party, and be diligent in their academics and well-rounded in their development. Among the 3000 people who attended the meeting, a member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and head of the CPC Central Committee's Organization Department, Shi Taifeng, was also present. He urged the CYP to keep in mind Xi's teachings. A member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and a member of the Secretariat of the CPC Central Committee, Cai Qi was present at the opening meeting of the Congress. ("President Xi sends congratulatory letter to Chinese Young Pioneers national congress," *CGTN*, 27 May 2025)

China holds its 20th Western China International Fair

On 26 May, the 20th Western China International Fair opening ceremony was held in Chengdu, southwest China's Sichuan Province. Hosted by the Sichuan provincial government and will run till 29 May. The fair showcases several cutting-edge technologies and diverse products, attracting more than 3,000 companies from 62 countries and regions. This year's fair hosted two guest countries of honour, Laos and Hungary. People visited Laos' pavilion, spotlighting tea, coffee, furniture, and handicrafts. Hungary, on the other hand, presented 17 firms specializing in wine, medical devices, and eco-friendly water treatment technology. Indonesian exhibitor Fransisca Pauline Tjandra showcased handmade accessories, including conducting workshops on manual handicrafts such as shell necklaces. Lao's Deputy Prime Minister Kikeo Khaykhamphithoune said: "The fair provides valuable opportunities for business matchmaking, investment cooperation and information sharing for enterprises from Laos and other countries, effectively enhancing connectivity and integration in regional commodity markets." ("International expo in western China draws over 3,000 companies," *CGTN*, 25 May 2025)

COVID-19 cases in China are expected to see a decline by June, reports SCMP

On 25 May, a report reviewed by the *SCMP* stated that the rise in COVID-19 cases in China should see a decrease by June. The country's best-known respiratory diseases specialist, Zhong Nanshan, advised that people with symptoms, the elderly in particular, should seek medical treatment within 48 hours. Nanshan stated that the current virus was similar to the general influenza virus, but with a more obvious sore throat. According to the data collected from Hong Kong, Singapore, Britain, France, Brazil, and Norway, the cases of coronavirus saw a sharp rise. Zhong stated that tests on outpatients with flu symptoms and hospital patients with severe symptoms had seen an increase in the number of positives from 7.5 per cent to 16.2 per cent between 31 March and 04 May. According to the Chinese Centres for Disease Control and Prevention CDC report released on 08 May, the number of positive cases in southern provinces was higher than in the north. Additionally, a total of 168,507 cases were diagnosed nationwide. 5 per cent of those cases were of the omicron variant. Despite the low probability of another such major outbreak,

experts and medical professionals have urged the public to take precautions. Zhong said those over 65 or with chronic diseases should wear masks and take protective measures in crowded places with poor ventilation. Studies lack the effectiveness and safety of drugs on children below 5 years of age, and so in such cases, “medical professionals should increase nursing care and observation.” (“Covid cases reaching a peak in China and will start falling next month: leading expert,” *SCMP*, 25 May 2025)

China’s anti-graft committee to investigate big data firms, reports SCMP

On 25 May, *SCMP* reported that a recent anti-corruption investigation in Guizhou province has removed several officials connected to its important big data industry. In early May, the director of the province’s National Defence Science and Technology Industry Office and former chief engineer at the Guizhou Big Data Development Administration, Li Gang, was investigated for suspected corruption. Following a similar probe was held on the retired former head of the Big Data Development Administration, Jing Yaping, and Ma Ningyu., Guizhou attracts tech giants like Apple and Huawei, with big data investment reaching 28 billion yuan in Jan–Sept 2023. Experts say this reflects China’s push for tech self-reliance amid US tensions. Political scientist Vivian Zhan Jing noted that these cleanups show the importance of high-tech to national security. Singapore’s Nanyang Technological University assistant professor, Stefanie Kam, noted that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) now ties legitimacy not just to growth, but to public trust and morality. The internet sector is also under scrutiny, with over 305 million yuan in corruption cases noted by a Beijing court. China’s anti-graft body is using AI and big data to track crimes. Similar drives are targeting the chip and metals industries in regions like Guangxi and Shanxi. (Meredith Chen, “China’s corruption busters eye key tech sectors as Beijing gears up to challenge US,” *SCMP*, 25 May 2025)

Six dead and two missing after a mountain torrent’s in South China

On 23 May, a mountain torrent hit Sanshe Village in Longsheng County, Guangxi, killing six people. Local authorities confirmed this on 25 May. Three more bodies were found, and two people are still missing. Rescue efforts remain intense, with nine teams conducting high-intensity searches. Officials stated that operations are progressing “orderly” and in a determined manner. (“Death toll rises to 6 in

south China mountain torrent,” *CGTN*, 25 May 2025)

China’s centuries-old historical monument’s roof collapse, reports BBC

On 21 May, *BBC* reported that hundreds of tiles fell off the roof of the Drum Tower from the Ming Dynasty, located in China’s Anhui province, a centuries-old historical monument. Online footage showed sections of the roof collapsing, narrowly missing several people. A statement from the Fengyang County Culture and Tourism Bureau stated there were no injuries. The towers were built in 1375 during the Ming Dynasty and rebuilt in 1995. County officials stated an investigation was underway and they will be looking at the repair project’s design and construction, a statement seen by local media added. (Tarik Habte, “Roof of historic Ming Dynasty tower collapses in China,” *BBC*, 21 May 2025)

The Smithsonian returns valuable silk manuscripts to China’s National Cultural Heritage Administration

On 16 May, the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Asian Art returned the “Wuxing Ling” and “Gongshou Zhan” (Zidanku Silk Manuscript volumes II and III) to China’s National Cultural Heritage Administration. The manuscripts were illegally taken to the United States in 1946, and the handover ceremony took place at the Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in Washington, D.C. The silk manuscripts are currently the only known silk manuscripts from the Warring States period (475-221 BC). These volumes are significant to the study of ancient Chinese script and literature, and the history of Chinese thought. Vice Minister of Culture and Tourism and the head of the National Cultural Heritage Administration Rao Quan said: “The repatriation of Wuxing Ling and Gongshou Zhan ensures that these invaluable artifacts can now be fully and rightfully protected and studied in the soil from which they came.” (“U.S. museum returns ancient silk manuscripts from Warring States period to China,” *CGTN* 16 May 2025)

China’s construction industry adopts environmentally friendly and intelligent machinery

On 15 May, China held its fourth Changsha International Construction Equipment Exhibition (CICEE) in the capital city Changsha of central China’s, Hunan Province. The exhibition brought together more than 1,800 exhibitors, including global industry leaders like “Caterpillar” and “Hitachi Construction Machinery.” The exhibition highlighted the

construction industry's move toward environmentally friendly and intelligent machinery. The focus is on building machines in a cleaner, more efficient, and high-tech way. SANY, China's multinational company that manufactures construction machinery, showcased its concept electric excavator robot "E-Mover," which garnered a lot of attention. SANY also presented 25 electric and new-energy products, including electric wheel loaders, mixer trucks, and hydrogen-powered heavy trucks, making up about 40 per cent of its exhibits. Hitachi Construction Machinery showcased electric rigid dump trucks and intelligent industrial solutions, emphasising "Zero Emission" initiatives. Hitachi is accelerating research and development to meet the rising global demand for intelligent, electric, and large-scale construction machinery. Lastly, the president of the China Machinery Industry Federation, Xu Niansha, emphasised the importance of adopting AI, new energy, and digital technologies to drive the industry's transformation and meet global economic challenges. ("China construction machinery expo highlights industry's green, smart shift," *Global Times*, 17 May 2025)

China launches AI curriculum, spanning, informs China's Ministry of Education

On 13 May, China's Ministry of Education unveiled a comprehensive AI education framework spanning primary to senior high school, aiming to cultivate students' cognitive, technical, and innovative capacities in artificial intelligence. At the primary level, students will gain AI literacy through exposure to core technologies like voice recognition and image classification. Junior high students will deepen their grasp of AI logic and machine learning, with an emphasis on critical thinking to assess generative AI outputs. At the senior secondary level, the curriculum emphasizes applied innovation, guiding students in designing and optimizing AI algorithm models while promoting interdisciplinary thinking. To support this initiative, the ministry will enhance teacher training with AI teaching competencies and require developmentally appropriate curricula. While highlighting the role of generative AI in creating immersive, interactive learning environments, the policy also bans AI-generated content in academic submissions, urging educators to foster students' critical evaluation skills of AI-generated information. ("China advances AI curriculum to cover full basic education," *CGTN*, 13 May 2025)

China's inbound tourism increases by 173 per cent

On 01 May, *CGTN* reported on the rise of China's inbound tourism. TripGroup.com informs that during the May Day holiday period, there was a 173 per cent surge. Shanghai, being a popular site for inbound tourism, further supported this through a tax refund consumption environment. China also launched a series of visa-free entry and transit policies, which have led to several tourists entering Shanghai. In 2025, the first quarter, Shanghai received 1.743 million international tourists, which was a year increase of 37.1 per cent. The minimum purchase threshold for departure tax refund has been reduced by USD 27. Shanghai Municipal Commission of Commerce, Deputy Director, Liu Min, said: "In recent years, Shanghai's departure tax refund sales have always been among the highest in the country." Bloomberg reported that China's tourist travel will reach USD 968 billion in 2025. Travel and Tour World magazine reported that China is beating the US in global tourism by offering visa-free travel. ("China's inbound tourism trips for May Day holiday surge to 173%," *CGTN*, 01 May 2025)

China's anti-graft commission removes CMC head from the National People's Congress

On 30 April, *SCMP* reported that China's top general of the Central Military Commission (CMC), Miao Hua, has been removed from his position in the National People's Congress. China's Standing Committee of NPC issued that Miao Hua has been removed. He was under investigation over charges of serious violence of discipline. China's Ministry of Defense announced in November 2024 that it had been suspended over disciplinary actions. This is part of the anti-corruption campaign under Xi Jinping. Miao was last seen publicly on October 7 at the 70th anniversary of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps in the far western autonomous region. ("Senior PLA ideology official Miao Hua removed from China's top legislature," *SCMP*, 30 April 2025)

EXTERNAL

400 representatives from 85 countries attend the signing of the International Organisation for Mediation

On 30 May, *CGTN* reported that about 400 high-level representatives from 85 countries and nearly 20 international organisations took part in the signing ceremony of the Convention on the Establishment of the International Organisation for Mediation (IOMed). Thirty-three countries signed the convention on-site,

making them the founding members of the IOMed. China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi has remarked that IOMed is designed to mediate, voluntarily, disputes between states, between states and foreign investors, as well as international commercial disputes. He further added that the IOMed will fill the institutional gap in international mediation. He further added that China expects all signatory countries to ratify the convention as soon as possible and welcomes more countries to actively join. ("World's first intergovernmental mediation body set up in Hong Kong," *CGTN*, 30 May 2025)

ASEAN- GCC- China summit in Kuala Lumpur

On 27 May, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) kicked off its first-ever three-way summit with China and the six-member Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Malaysia is the current chair of ASEAN. The annual summit is taking place in Kuala Lumpur, the capital, and its participants include Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. The meeting was followed by further talks between the ASEAN, China, and the GCC, which comprises Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim addressed the opening ASEAN-GCC summit and said: "I believe the ASEAN-GCC partnership has never been more important than it is today, as we navigate an increasingly complex global landscape marked by economic uncertainty and geopolitical challenges." He also addressed the current crisis that has left economies under strain, with the recent imposition of US unilateral tariffs. China's Premier Li Qiang was also present at the summit and used the terms "protectionism" and "multilateralism" to describe the sluggishness of the growth of the world economies. China pledges its support and willingness to work with Malaysia to "promote closer economic cooperation among the three parties" and respond to global challenges. Six of the bloc's members were among the worst hit, with tariffs between 32 per cent and 49 per cent. Al Jazeera's Rob McBride, reporting from Kuala Lumpur, said ASEAN members are "very much looking at building ties with other parts of the world, in particular China, but also the Middle East" to strengthen their economic resilience. Hence China, ASEAN and the GCC have come together to fight the tariff war imposed on them by the US. Prime Minister Anwar also said that he had written to Trump to request an ASEAN-US summit this year, however, Washington hasn't responded. ("ASEAN kicks off summits

with China, Gulf states amid US tariff threat," *Al Jazeera*, 27 May 2025)

Pope Leo calls for the unity of Chinese Catholics with Rome

On 25 May, Pope Leo made his first public comments on China, calling for the Chinese Catholics to remain in communion with the church of Rome. He prayed that the Chinese Catholics "obtain the grace to be strong and joyful witnesses of the Gospel" and continue to "promote peace and harmony" even in difficult times. He stated that during the celebration of the feast day on 24 May, "prayers have been raised to God" in China and around the world to show "solicitude and affection" for Chinese Catholics and their unity with the universal Church. This was first initiated by Pope Benedict XVI, calling to unify China's 12 million Catholic community. Additionally, to bridge the divide between the state-controlled church and the underground church loyal to Rome. In 2018, the Vatican made a secret deal with China allowing the state to help choose bishops, while the pope kept final approval; critics say it gave too much power to Beijing. Now Pope Leo must decide whether to keep renewing the deal, as China has at times appointed bishops without Vatican consent. ("Pope Leo prays for Chinese Catholics to be in communion with Rome," *SCMP*, 26 May 2025)

China to give additional USD 500 million to WHO

On 19 May, China announced that it will give an additional USD 500 million (SGD 648 million) to the World Health Organization at the World Health Assembly for over five years, as the UN agency seeks extra funding to counterbalance the expected loss of its top donor, the United States. China's Vice-Premier of the State Council, Liu Guozhong, made the official announcement in a speech in Geneva. "The world is now facing the impacts of unilateralism and power politics bringing major challenges to global health security. Multilateralism is a sure path to addressing difficulties," Mr. Liu stated to the delegates. ("China to give \$648m to WHO in next 5 years," , official says, *The Straits Times*, 19 May 2025)

China's Foreign Minister meets with the President of the Asia Society

On 20 May, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with the President of the Asia Society, Kyung-wha Kang. Wang stated that progress had been made in the high-level economic and trade meeting between China and the United States, proving that equal dialogue, mutual respect, and "addressing legitimate concerns" aligns with the

common interests of both countries. He encouraged both countries to achieve positive interactions in the Asia-Pacific region first by establishing proper methods "to get along with each other." Kang, noting that the Asia Society has a great understanding of China's thousands of years of cultural heritage, expressed the willingness to continue sharing fact-based and objective insights about China and build a dialogue with people with vision in the United States. ("Chinese FM meets president of Asia Society," *Global Times*, 21 May 2025)

China slaps 74.9 per cent import duties on Polyoxymethylene products from US, Japan and Taiwan

On 18 May, China imposed anti-dumping on imports of POM copolymers (a type of engineering plastic) on United States, the European Union, Japan and Taiwan. Polyoxymethylene is a high-performance engineering thermoplastic known for its strength, rigidity, and excellent dimensional stability. Following the anti-dumping probe China retaliated with after US' increased tariffs. The Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China imposed steep anti-dumping duties on these countries for the next five years. According to the announcement, "the highest anti-dumping rates of 74.9 per cent were levied on imports from the United States, while European shipments will face 34.5 per cent duties." Japanese imports incurred 35.5 per cent duties except the Asahi Kasei Corp, which received a company-specific rate of 24.5 per cent. Similarly, Taiwan incurred General duties of 32.6 per cent, except Formosa Plastics, which received a 4 per cent tariff and Polyplastics Taiwan 3.8 per cent. ("China slaps anti-dumping duties on plastics from US, EU, Japan, Taiwan," *Reuters*, 18 May, 2025)

UN and European Commission extend support for China-US tariff de-escalation

On 12 May, United Nations and European Commission spokespersons strongly supported the recent agreement between China and the United States to reduce major trade tariffs. The UN spokesperson stressed the importance of dialogue over conflict, quoting UN Secretary-General António Guterres' stance that "no one wins in a trade war" and expressing concern about economic decoupling. They noted, "We've always said that we don't need any escalation in the trade war." European Commission spokesperson Olof Gill also appreciated the temporary easing of tariffs for 90 days while talks continue. The news triggered a global market surge, with the S&P 500 hitting its highest point since early March. However, US

Federal Reserve Governor Adriana Kugler warned that despite the agreement, the remaining tariffs are still high and will continue to affect the economy. ("Decision by China, US to slash tariffs 'very positive' for global economy: UN spokesperson," *Global Times*, 13 May 2025)

China's Vice Premier discusses multilateralism with the WTO Director

On 11 May, China's Vice Premier He Lifeng met the World Trade Organization's Director General, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala. Lifeng stated that all parties should resolve differences and disputes through dialogue under the framework of the World Trade Organization to promote stability and smooth functioning of supply chains. He also reaffirmed China's commitment to the WTO in upholding a multilateral trading system and being a "stabilizer" of global trade. In the light of recent challenges, he also urged the WTO to strengthen dialogue and cooperation on international trade issues. Iweala also called for an open multilateral trading system, with the WTO playing a larger role in furthering trade liberalization. ("Chinese vice premier voices China's strong support for WTO, multilateralism," *Global Times*, 12 May 2025)

ECONOMY

Three per cent growth in China's major enterprises, reports NBS

On 27 May, China's National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) reported that profits of major industrial firms grew by 3.0 per cent year-on-year in April. From January to April, profits rose by 1.4 per cent. Of the 41 major industrial sectors, 23 posted profit growth, with nearly 60 per cent seeing improved revenues. The high-tech manufacturing sector emerged, saw the most gains with profits soaring by 9.0 per cent in the first four months. Notable growth was seen in bio-medicine, aircraft manufacturing, and semiconductor equipment, driven by the "AI Plus" initiative and nationwide digital transformation in China. The semiconductor equipment sector surged by 105.1 per cent, while electronic circuits and integrated circuits saw gains of 43.1 per cent and 42.2 per cent, respectively. Smart automotive equipment profits spiked 177.4 per cent, drones 167.9 per cent, and wearables 80.9 per cent. Equipment manufacturing grew by 11.2 per cent, supported by government policies like equipment upgrades and consumer trade-in programs. Specialized and general equipment profits rose 13.2 and 11.7 per cent, while home appliances gained over 15 per cent. NBS statistician Yu Weining said: "Given the uncertainties in the

external environment and domestic constraints like insufficient demand, in the coming months, we need to promote integrated development of scientific and industrial innovation, optimize and adjust industrial structure, accelerate the transformation and upgrading of traditional industries, while cultivating and strengthening emerging industries.” (China’s major enterprises report steady growth in profits in April, led by high-tech manufacturers: NBS, *Global Times*, 27 May 2025)

China’s economy maintains steady growth in April 2025

On 19 May, CGTN reported that China’s economy showed stable growth in April, with industrial output rising 6.1 percent year-on-year and services expanding by 6.0 percent. Retail sales hit 3.7 trillion yuan (USD 515.6 billion), up 5.1 percent, indicating strong consumer demand. Fixed-asset investment grew 4.0 percent to 14.7 trillion yuan, driven by high-tech and infrastructure sectors. The unemployment held steady at 5.2 percent. Despite external pressures, coordinated macro policies supported resilience, with officials prioritizing employment, market stability, and high-quality development to sustain economic momentum. (“China’s economy shows stable growth in April,” *CGTN*, 19 May 2025)

Xi Jinping calls for inclusive planning in the 15th Five-Year Plans

On 19 May, *CGTN* reported China’s President Xi Jinping emphasized the importance of creating a high-quality 15th Five-Year Plan (2026–2030) for the country’s economic and social development. Xi highlighted that China’s five-year plans are crucial tools for guiding the nation’s progress. He stressed that the new plan should be developed through thorough research, democratic participation, and adherence to the law. Xi said: “The formulation and implementation of the 15th Five-Year Plan holds immense significance for fully realizing the strategic initiatives outlined at the 20th CPC National Congress and advancing Chinese modernization.” China is looking to implement the 15th Five-Year Plan for economic and social development, starting 2026. This approach reflects China’s commitment to careful planning and inclusive decision-making in shaping its future. (“President Xi stresses high-quality compilation of 15th Five-Year Plan,” *CGTN*, 19 May 2025)

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China’s Central Bank reduces reserve ratio requirements for banks

On 15 May, China’s Central Bank reduced its reserve requirement ratio (RRR) by 0.5 per cent, marking its first RRR cut annually. The policy, which took effect on 08 May, also saw the interest rate on seven-day reverse repo operations fall from 1.50 per cent to 1.04 per cent. The cut in the reserve ratio is expected to inject approximately 1 trillion yuan (USD 138.77 billion) into China’s financial structure. People’s Bank of China (central bank of China) Governor Pan Gongsheng stated that the RRR cut would improve the structure of liquidity provided by the banks. Director and chief economist of the Guangkai Chief Industry Research Institute, Lian Ping, told the *Global Times* that the cut should boost domestic demand and accelerate structural adjustments. (“China cuts banks’ reserve requirement ratio on Thursday, injecting 1 trillion yuan liquidity to shore up economy,” *Global Times*, 15 May 2025)

Chinese real estate firm Vanke receives a USD 215 million loan from Shenzhen Metro

On 14 May, Chinese firm Vanke secured another USD 215 million loan from Shenzhen Metro to bear its already due loan of USD 3.4 billion. Vanke is real-estate property developer. The loan has a 36-month term and may be extended or repaid early upon mutual agreement. Shenzhen Metro has given Vanke loans totalling 10.3 billion yuan this year. Along with the financial aid, several changes were

made to the developer's management team, including appointing 10 new executives, replacing former CEO Zhu Jiusheng and chairman Yu Liang, who stepped down in January. ("Debt-laden China Vanke gets US\$215 million loan from state-owned stakeholder," *SCMP*, 15 May 2025)

China launches the International Consumption Season 2025

On 01 May, China's Ministry of Commerce organized International Consumption Season 2025, which is the sixth Shanghai 5-5 Shopping Festival. This is done by the ministry in collaboration with China Media Group (CMG) and the Shanghai Municipal Government, aimed at expanding the foreign market and investments. China's Ministry of Commerce also called to support the international consumer cities and to proactively align with the government policies. Vice Minister of Commerce, Sheng Qiuping, said: "Setting benchmarks and effectively leveraging various policies to upgrade product consumption at the launching ceremony." Sheng informed that in 2024, retail sales of consumer goods in Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou, Tianjin, and Chongqing accounted for one-eighth of the national growth. ("Launch of International Consumption Season 2025 looks to further expand foreign investment," *CGTN*, 02 May 2025)

"Greater emphasis on development and security," says Xi, for the next five-year plan

On 30 April, China's President Xi Jinping called for sound plans for China's economic and social development from 2026-2030. He called on China to manage its affairs well to ensure that development and security are both steady. This comes as China gears up to establish its 15th five-year plan, Xi said: "The planning must focus on the goal of basically realizing socialist modernization, with a view to building a great country and advancing national rejuvenation." He also said: "Greater emphasis should be placed on ensuring both development and security, with a comprehensive assessment of domestic and external risks and challenges." The first five-year plans were established in the 1950s and have worked as a blueprint for China's overall development. The formulation involves centralized, unified leadership of the CPC Central Committee ("Xi stresses sound planning for economic, social development in 2026-2030," *State Council of China*, 01 May 2025)

OUTERSPACE

China plans to arm the Tiangong space station

On 29 May, SCMP reported that China is developing a rapid-response space defence system to intercept suspicious spacecraft and push them away. The Beijing National Space Science Centre scientist Sun Zhibin stated that if an unidentified object approaches China's Tiangong space station or other critical space infrastructure, a small robotic thruster could be deployed to latch onto the intruder and push it to a safer distance. He said: "Sometimes another spacecraft may deliberately come close – maybe just to take a look – but it can still interfere with our operations," and added that, "In such cases, we first try to assess their intent. Then we choose how to respond – whether by dodging, adjusting our orbit, or releasing a small robot to grab and redirect the object." In December 2021, China reported to the United Nations that its space station did two evasive manoeuvres to avoid potential collisions with SpaceX Starlink satellites. A note to the UN said the events "constituted dangers to the life or health of astronauts aboard the China Space Station." (Ling Xin, "China plans to arm Tiangong space station with self-defence bots, scientist says," *SCMP*, 29 May 2025)

China signs convention to establish the "International Organisation for Mediation"

On 30 May, China signed a convention setting up an international organisation for mediation in Hong Kong in hopes that Beijing might be on par with the International Court of Justice and the Permanent Court of Arbitration of the United Nations in the Hague. This, in the backdrop of the Trump tariff trade war, is significant amid growing geopolitical tensions. The mediation body aims to "cement Hong Kong's presence as a top centre to resolve disputes between countries," said the current Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), John Lee Ka-chiu. Countries that attended the signing ceremony were Indonesia, Pakistan, Laos, Cambodia, and Serbia. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, said the scope of cases that would be handled include disputes between countries, between a country and nationals of another country and between private international entities. The mediation group also aims to advance China's influence internationally and promote a more assertive role in global governance. ("China sets up international mediation body in Hong Kong," *Reuters*, 30 May 2025)

China to equip Tiangong with small robotic devices, reports SCMP

On 29 May, *SCMP* reported that China is developing a rapid-response defence system for its Tiangong space station to protect against potential threats from nearby spacecraft. This system involves deploying small robotic devices capable of intercepting and redirecting unidentified objects that approach the station. The initiative follows incidents in 2021 where Tiangong had to manoeuvre to avoid close encounters with SpaceX's Starlink satellites, highlighting the need for enhanced space safety measures. In 2021, China reported to the United Nations that its space station had to perform two evasive manoeuvres that year to avoid collisions with SpaceX's Starlink satellites. ("China plans to arm Tiangong space station with self-defence bots, scientist says," *SCMP*, 29 May 2025)

China to launch its Tianwen-2 mission

On 26 May, China National Space Administration informed that China is set to launch its Tianwen-2 asteroid probe on 29 May from the Xichang Satellite Launch Center in Sichuan Province. The Long March-3B rocket will soon be fueled for the mission. Ground systems such as the Beijing Aerospace Control Center, Xi'an Monitoring Center, Yuanwang tracking ships, and tracking stations have conducted joint control operations and system checks to ensure mission success. The launch aims to advance China's deep space exploration capabilities. ("China to launch Tianwen-2 asteroid probe and sampling mission on May 29: CNSA," *Global Times*, 26 May 2025)

China successfully tests next-generation satellite-to-ground data transmission system

On 26 May, China's Aerospace Information Research Institute (AIR) successfully tested a next-generation high-throughput satellite-to-ground data transmission system. This was conducted jointly by AIR and Beijing Rong Wei Tech at the Lijiang Station. The experiment simulated satellite data transmission using advanced protocols and achieved a record-breaking X-band single-channel data rate of 2100 Mbps using 128QAM modulation—75 per cent higher than previous speeds. Traditionally, civilian satellites rely on standard X-band transmission rates, which are now inadequate to handle high-volume remote sensing data. The new system enhances transmission speeds through high-order modulation and improvements to key ground infrastructure components, and incorporates artificial intelligence, integrating a deep neural network. According to China Remote Sensing Satellite

Ground Station, Director Huang Peng stated that this achievement paves the way for faster, more efficient satellite data relay and establishes a strong foundation for China's continued leadership in space technology.

(China successfully tests new-gen satellite-to-ground data transmission technology, *Global Times*, 27 May 2025)

US warns of escalating space tensions amid China's satellite manoeuvres and Russian electronic warfare

On 15 May, in a commentary published on Thursday by the PLA Daily, an expert from the People's Liberation Army Space Engineering University pointed to a recent USD 60 million contract awarded by the US Space Force to develop an orbital transport craft. The PLA believes that this action could intensify the militarisation of space and escalate into an arms race between the two nations. The "orbital carrier" is designed to deploy multiple manoeuvrable space vehicles within hours, rather than days or weeks, using conventional launch systems. The system is expected to be demonstrated as early as 2026 and is intended to enhance the U.S.'s ability to respond rapidly to potential threats in space. At a defence conference held in March, US Space Force vice-chief of space operations Michael Guetlein raised concerns about China's 2024 low-orbit "dogfighting" drills using five synchronised satellites, Russia's use of jamming and laser systems, and the potential deployment of nuclear-armed satellites. ("US Space Force's 'orbital carrier' risks escalating arms race, China's PLA warns," *SCMP*, 16 May 2025)

China kickstarts building "Three-Body Computing Constellation"

On 14 May, China deployed the initial 12 satellites of its space-based "Three-Body Computing Constellation." Both satellites, launched on a Long March 2D rocket from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre, possess intelligent computing devices and high-speed laser communication links to enable data transfer at 100 gigabits per second. Zhejiang Lab has developed it with the assistance of companies like Guoxing Aerospace and HiStarlink. It is set to achieve a combined computing power of 1,000 peta operations per second (POPS), and the El Capitan supercomputer in America reports it at 1.72 POPS. The satellites also possess an AI model with 8 billion parameters to process raw data in orbit directly, reducing Earth-based infrastructure dependency. Jonathan McDowell, an astronomer at Harvard University and space

historian, noted that cloud computing is increasing in space due to its ability to utilize solar power and dump heat into space, minimizing environmental traces. Since the world's data centres are likely to consume over 1,000 terawatt hours of power by 2026, China's investment could be a more environmentally friendly and efficient alternative. (Ling Xin, "China launches satellites to start building the world's first supercomputer in orbit," *SCMP*, 15 May 2025)

Seismic study reveals possible water beneath Mars' crust

On 13 May, *SCMP* published a recent study that uncovered seismic evidence of the presence of water beneath Mars' surface. NASA's InSight lander collected data between 2018 and 2022, scientists from the Chinese Academy of Sciences, the Australian National University, and the University of Milano-Bicocca detected a mysterious zone in the Martian crust lying between, which is likely consisting of water-saturated rock. This layer, if confirmed, could contain as much water as a global sheet up to 780 metres thick, potentially accounting for Mars' "missing" water not found in space, rocks, or ice. Findings were based on three key seismic events, including the strongest marsquake recorded, showing a notable drop in wave speed indicative of porous rock filled with liquid water. While earlier 2024 research theorized mid-crustal water at 11-20 km depth, this new study led by Sun Weijia presents more direct seismic evidence for shallower underground water, which researchers describe as a possible "last refuge" for liquid water on modern Mars. However, the water is currently inaccessible due to technological limitations, and findings are limited to the region beneath the InSight lander. (Ling Xin, "Marsquakes point to liquid water in red planet's crust, study finds," *SCMP*, 13 May 2025)

China deploys new satellite for communication tech testing

On 13 May, China launched a new communication technology test satellite from the Xichang Satellite Launch Center in Sichuan Province. The satellite was sent into its planned orbit using a Long March-3C rocket and will mainly be used to test high-speed and multi-band communication technologies. This launch was the 575th mission of the Long March rocket series. ("China launches new communication technology test satellite," *Global Times*, 13 May 2025)

DEFENCE

China's Defence Minister to not attend Shangri-La Dialogue

On 30 May, *SCMP* reported China's downgrade of its representation at the Shangri-La Dialogue this year. In doing so, it will miss its chance of meeting its US and Asia counterparts at the Singapore Forum. However, China's defence minister Dong Jun's absence is justified in the backdrop of the US tariff war and waning interest in a 'Western-centric' forum. The forum, scheduled to take place from 30 May to 01 June, will feature only a "delegation from the National Defence University," according to a statement from the Ministry of National Defence of the People's Republic of China. Jun's absence will be particularly striking this year, given his consistent presence at the forum over the past three years. The event will be headlined by notable leaders, including French President Emmanuel Macron and the European Union's top diplomat, Kaja Kallas. ("China's Dong Jun to skip Singapore forum – and a chance to meet US, Asian defence chiefs," *SCMP*, 29 May 2025)

China develops world's first AI nuke detector, reports SCMP

On 30 May, *SCMP* reported on China's development in AI that can now detect decoys from actual nuclear warheads. They are ahead in "marking the world's first AI-driven solution for arms control verification." According to a reviewed paper published in April by researchers with the China Institute of Atomic Energy (CIAE), the technology could prove to bolster Beijing's stance in stalled international disarmament talks. This feat wasn't so easily achieved, the project jointly proposed by Chinese and American scientists more than a decade ago, faced three monumental hurdles-training and testing the AI using sensitive nuclear data, persuading the Chinese military leaders that the system would not leak tech secrets and persuading a sceptical United States to abandon Cold War era verification methods. In a statement submitted by the CIAE in their Atomic Energy Science and Technology paper, it said: "Due to the classified nature of nuclear warheads and component designs, specific data cannot be disclosed here." While this innovation could bolster global disarmament efforts by providing a more reliable verification method, it also raises concerns regarding the handling of sensitive nuclear data and the potential for technological espionage. The integration of AI into such critical areas underscores the need for international collaboration to establish guidelines and ensure that advancements in technology contribute positively to global

security. (“China unveils world’s first AI nuke inspector,” *SCMP*, 30 May 2025)

Satellite images detect China's bombers stationed on the disputed Paracel Islands

On 28 May, *Reuters* reported on a satellite image of China’s most advanced bombers stationed in Woody Island of the disputed Paracel Islands in the South China Sea. This comes in light of the region’s biggest defence forum that is scheduled to take place over the weekend. This is the first time the long-range H-6 bombers have landed on Woody Island in the Paracels since 2020. Singapore’s S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Defence Scholar, Collin Koh said: “China’s long-range bombers don’t need to be on the Paracels, so it does appear to be omnidirectional signalling by Beijing - against the Philippines and against the U.S. and other things that are going on.” (“Exclusive: China’s most advanced bombers seen on disputed South China Sea Island,” *Reuters*, 28 May 2025)

President Xi sets regulations to protect military-industrial facilities

On 26 May, China’s President Xi Jinping signed an order to promulgate a set of regulations on protecting China’s important military-industrial facilities. The regulation, jointly published by China’s State Council and CMC, aims to protect the security of important military-industrial facilities, ensure their effective use and standard operations to modernize the country’s national defence. This will apply to buildings, sites, and other facilities used for the research, production, testing, and storage of important weaponry and equipment. It mandates security measures such as the establishment of protection zones without authorisation from relevant management authorities, and activities like photography, videography, or documentation will be prohibited. The violation of the rules may result in criminal penalties. This regulation comprises 51 articles in seven chapters and will take effect on September 15, 2025. (“Xi Jinping signs order on protection of military-industrial facilities,” *CGTN*, 26 May 2025)

China’s Fujian aircraft carrier completes intensive eighth sea trial

On 25 May, *SCMP* reported that China’s most advanced aircraft carrier, the Fujian, completed its eighth intensive sea trial. The carrier, the largest conventionally powered warship at over 80,000 tonnes, is equipped with cutting-edge electromagnetic catapults designed to launch heavier planes like the fifth-generation J-35 stealth fighters. While J-35 jets have conducted test flights, it’s unclear if they launched from the

Fujian. The catapults allow more frequent, fully loaded aircraft launches, boosting China’s naval defense and long-range operations. The PLA’s second carrier, Shandong, actively patrols the South China Sea to protect China’s sovereignty, often confronting foreign naval forces. A CCTV report emphasized that Fujian’s technology will significantly enhance China’s air and sea combat capabilities. (“China’s advanced Fujian carrier conducts ‘intensive’ eighth sea trial,” *SCMP*, 25 May 2025)

China’s PLA conducts a landing drill near the Strait of Taiwan, reports SCMP

On 21 May, *SCMP* reported that China’s People’s Liberation Army (PLA) conducted an amphibious landing drill in the Taiwan Strait. The 73rd Group Army, stationed in Xiamen and closest to Taiwan’s offshore islands like Kinmen, spearheaded the exercise on the Fujian coast. State broadcaster *CCTV* reported that troops practiced near-shore driving and landing with Type 05 amphibious assault vehicles, manoeuvring through barriers for 1.5km before making a beach landing. The drill happened at the same time as Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te’s one-year administrative speech, during which he reaffirmed Taiwan’s commitment to strengthening self-defence and deterring aggression. In response, Beijing’s Taiwan Affairs Office accused Lai of promoting a pro-independence agenda. Taiwan’s Defence Ministry reported 15 PLA aircraft and eight naval vessels operating around the island during the same timeframe. The U.S., while officially adhering to the One China policy, continues to arm Taiwan and opposes any use of force. (Liu Zen, PLA conducts amphibious landing drill in strait as Taiwanese leader marks first year, *SCMP*, 21 May 2025)

China establishes new military schools to further PLA’s modernisation

On 16 May, *SCMP* reported on People’s Liberation Army (PLA) and China’s Ministry of Defence announced the establishment of a new military academies, curated for its newly reorganized service branches. The action is intended to facilitate the PLA’s reform for modern, high-technology warfare by 2027 and the creation of a world-class army by 2049. Ministry spokesman Jiang Bin stated that these academies will assist in adapting to the restructuring requirements and enhancing the training of military talent. The new units are the PLA Ground Force Service Academy in Hefei, the PLA Information Support Force (ISF) Engineering University in Wuhan, and the PLA Joint Logistics Support Force (JLSF) Engineering University in Chongqing. These will enroll high

school graduates. Current academies are being affiliated to create new ones, while the PLA Ground Force will keep running a number of specialist academies. (Liu Zhen, "China announces new military academies as part of PLA modernisation drive," *SCMP*, 16 May 2025)

PLA Navy uses AI to enhance magnetic capabilities, reports SCMP

On 13 May, *SCMP* published a report stating, the PLA Northern Theatre Command recently conducted an exercise using artificial intelligence (AI) to enhance warship degaussing. This exercise improved degaussing efficiency by 60 per cent, with an AI-assisted system optimizing the process to reduce the warship's magnetic signature and boost its stealth capabilities. By adjusting electric currents in degaussing coils based on real-time data from magnetic detectors, ocean temperature, vessel speed, and other factors, the system can help warships evade magnetic sensors and sea mines, crucial for survival in combat. The drill simulated an emergency, with the Type 054A guided-missile frigate Yantai requesting urgent degaussing after simulated damage. According to Colonel Sun Hui, the exercise signals a broader shift in PLA training towards forming elite, efficient units. He also noted that all 12 recruits joined the emergency support unit, tested in high-risk scenarios, and prepared for frontline roles from day one. The AI-driven technology is expected to significantly enhance the stealth capabilities of China's expanding submarine fleet, challenging Western anti-submarine warfare systems, particularly in the Pacific. Senior analyst Malcolm Davis highlighted the need for the AUKUS alliance to accelerate counter-AI developments to maintain naval dominance. (Enoch Wong, "PLA Navy drill uses AI to trim warship's magnetic field, gets 60% more efficient," *SCMP*, 13 May 2025)

Huawei unveils HarmonyOS-powered laptops in major tech milestone

On 19 May, *CGTN* reported that Huawei launched its first HarmonyOS-based laptops, the MateBook Pro and the foldable MateBook Fold Extraordinary Master. This has marked a major step for China's domestic software ecosystem. The foldable model is touted as the world's lightest and largest commercial foldable-screen laptop. The launch, held in Chengdu, also featured the new Nova 14 smartphone series, reinforcing Huawei's commitment to innovation and self-reliance in advanced tech. ("China's Huawei launches HarmonyOS-powered laptop," *CGTN*, 19 May 2025)

Xiaomi invests 50 billion yuan in manufacturing microchips

On 19 May, Chinese smartphone and electric vehicle maker Xiaomi announced plans to invest at least 50 billion yuan (USD 6.93 billion) over the next decade to develop its computer chips. This move aims to reduce reliance on foreign chipmakers and enhance the performance of Xiaomi's smartphones and electric vehicles. The company has already spent 13.5 billion yuan developing its advanced mobile chip, the Xring01, and employs over 2,500 people in its chip design unit. Xiaomi's strategy mirrors that of competitors like Apple and Huawei, who design their chips to better integrate hardware and software, leading to improved device performance and user experience. By investing in chip design, Xiaomi aims to strengthen its position in the competitive tech market and ensure greater control over its core technologies. ("Xiaomi to invest at least \$6.9 billion in chip design, founder says," *Reuters*, 19 May, 2025)

China Telecom Quantum Group pioneers the world's first "unhackable" quantum-encrypted phone call

On 18 May, *SCMP* reported an announcement made by the China Telecom Quantum Group on the launch of the world's first unhackable quantum encrypted phone call. The company declared its success in making the "world's first cross-regional" phone call using the principles of quantum physics. This integrated system would cover a distance of more than 1,000km (600 miles) between Beijing and the city of Hefei. China Telecom said this combination forms an end-to-end quantum-secure architecture for core uses such as "real-time communication, data protection and trusted identity authentication." Chief quantum scientist at China Telecom, Peng Chengzi said: "Public key-based encryption systems would face increasing threats as global quantum computing advanced." The company has set up quantum communication networks in 16 major Chinese cities like Hefei, Shanghai, Beijing, and Guangzhou. Out of all of them, the Hefei Quantum Network is the biggest and most advanced of its kind in the world. China Telecom has also introduced a few high-tech tools. The Quantum Secret is the world's first carrier-grade (meaning large-scale and super reliable) messaging and teamwork platform that uses quantum encryption to keep communications ultra-secure. Quantum Cloud Seal is a digital platform that uses quantum tech to safely handle things like government approvals, financial checks, and business process

management. ("Chinese firm launches 'unhackable' quantum cryptography system," *SCMP*, 18 May 2025)

China's Chutian Project advances a low Earth orbit satellite network

On 14 May, *SCMP* published China's advancement in very low Earth orbit (VLEO) satellite technology with its Chutian project. The project aims to build a 300-satellite constellation for high-resolution remote sensing and communications, providing continuous global coverage. The first satellite, Chutian-001, launched in 2023, demonstrated key technologies, including real-time target detection, satellite control in low orbits, and multi-sensor environmental monitoring. The Chutian constellation will be deployed in three phases: an initial technology verification with one satellite, followed by nine satellites for Earth observation, and a large-scale deployment from 2026 to 2030. The system will offer various imaging types and rapid response times, eventually reaching under 10 minutes. The constellation will support disaster response, agriculture, and public services like navigation and crowd monitoring. Zhang Chuan, the project leader at China Aerospace Science and Industry Corp (CASIC), emphasized that the system would enable real-time updates and mission dispatches during emergencies. (Ling Xin, "China's bullet-shaped satellite test paves the way for very low orbit surveillance network," *SCMP*, 14 May 2025) NUCLEAR

China's nuclear power plants have a capacity of 120 kilowatts, reports NEA

On 02 May, *CGTN* reported on National Energy Administration (NEA) claims that operational nuclear power plants and those under construction have exceeded their capacity to 120 kilowatts. An official of NEA, Zhang Xing, noted that China's nuclear power plant development has always adhered to principles of safety, and that few countries possess the complete nuclear power industrial system. In 2024, China's nuclear power generation reached 450.9 kilowatt, which is a 3.7 per cent rise and a year-on-year increase. This has resulted in the fall of standard coal consumption, with 370 million tons being produced. Xing said: "China's operational nuclear power units have consistently maintained an excellent safety record, with key performance indicators remaining at internationally advanced levels." ("China nuclear power installed capacity tops 120 million kilowatts," *CGTN*, 02 May 2025)

ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

China's Ministry of Ecology and Environment unveils plan to protect rivers and lakes

On 22 May, China's Ministry of Ecology and Environment unveiled an action plan to protect and create beautiful rivers and lakes from 2025 to 2027. With a focus on improving the quality of aquatic ecosystems. They set the goals of achieving notable progress in creating beautiful rivers and lakes by 2030 and completing the initiative by 2035. China's Deputy Director of the Department of Water Ecology and Environment, Liu Jing, stated that beautiful rivers and lakes generally need to meet several criteria. In terms of water resources, they should have a stable source of replenishment, good water flow, and adequate ecological water use, thus steadily achieving the goal of "rivers with flowing water," Liu explained. The plan outlines 19 specific measures, focusing on consolidating and deepening water environment management, guaranteeing basic ecological water use, and comprehensively advancing protection and construction efforts. ("China unveils action plan to protect rivers, lakes," *CGTN*, 22 May 2025)

China's new measures for urban renewal to improve infrastructure

On 19 May, China announced a new round of measures to accelerate its urban renewal drive, to improve city infrastructure, bolster urban functions, and boost high-quality development. High ranking officials from the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, the National Development and Reform Commission, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Natural Resources, and the National Financial Regulatory Administration outlined this new evolving urban strategy at a press conference held by the State Council Information Office. The objective of the campaign is to stimulate investment and consumer spending, helping to expand domestic demand. Vice Minister of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, Qin Haixiang, stated that the urban renewal initiative is vital for improving city life in addition to enhancing China's long-term economic vitality. ("China unveils new measures to boost urban renewal, eyes high-quality growth and stronger domestic demand," *CGTN*, 19 May 2025)

China's made significant progress in protecting endangered wildlife, reports NFGA

On 22 May, China's National Forestry and Grassland Administration (NFGA) reported that China has made significant progress in biodiversity conservation with the increased

population of rare and endangered wild animals. It noted that over 70 percent of the wild giant panda population is effectively protected, the population of the Siberian tiger, also known as the Amur tiger, now exceeds 70, Amur leopard, also called the Far East leopard, over 80. In recent years, China has made steady progress in wildlife conservation. The country has established national research centers for the protection of flagship species such as the giant panda, Asian elephant, and crested ibis, strengthening scientific and technological support for conserving these species and their ecosystems. Rescue-oriented conservation projects have been launched for 48 critically endangered wild animal species, including in-situ protection, rescue and rehabilitation, artificial breeding and reintroduction of wild animals, promoting the growth of wild populations. ("China steps up efforts to restore rare wildlife, with over 70% of wild giant pandas effectively protected," *Global Times*, 21 May 2025)

MARITIME

China's "XLUUV" submarine drone reveal, reports Naval News

On 14 May, *Naval News* reported on a previously unseen submarine drone being transported through the Chinese city. Naval News cross-referenced with various unpublished sources and found that the vessel has been declared as an extra-large uncrewed underwater vehicle (XLUUV), a secretive armed underwater drone. China is investing heavily in new underwater naval technology, the XLUUV being one of them. The vessel may be related to the UUV-300, a type first revealed at the DSA 2024 exhibition in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in May 2024. ("Candid Image Gives First Evidence of China's Secretive Armed Underwater Drone," *Naval News*, 14 May 2025)

China develops advanced ocean microscope, reports SCMP

On 13 May, *SCMP* reported on China developing LICOMK++, the world's most advanced ocean simulation system with a 1 km resolution. This breaks through computational limits for modeling global ocean dynamics and climate patterns with incredible accuracy. The "ocean microscope" is created by the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Institute of Atmospheric Physics and Computer Network Information Centre. The microscope will help improve predictions for extreme weather events like typhoons and marine heatwaves. *SCMP* notes that despite US semiconductor export controls, this system marks a significant advancement in high-

performance computing, aiding global climate research and disaster response strategies. The ocean plays a crucial role in regulating energy and carbon in the climate system, absorbing over 90 percent of the additional heat from global warming and more than 30 percent of human-caused carbon dioxide emissions. LICOMK++ won the best supercomputing application prize at HPC China 2024 and was a finalist for the prestigious Gordon Bell Prize. According to Xinhua News Agency and the China Meteorological Administration, this breakthrough supports coastal disaster prevention, resource management, and climate adaptation planning. (Dannie Peng, "Amid US chip sanctions and climate pressure, China builds mighty ocean simulation system," *SCMP*, 13 May 2025)

China develops first high-speed typhoon-proof submersible "Blue Whale"

On 30 April, *SCMP* reported that China launched its first high-speed uncrewed submarine. The vessel can operate underwater for 30 days, under extreme weather conditions, and even launch research rockets. The submersible is called "Blue Whale" and it is 11 meters long and weighs 12 tons. Xinhua reported that: "It can reach surface speeds of up to 36 knots – similar to a destroyer or a US Navy torpedo – and can sail hundreds of kilometers before rapidly diving up to 60 meters underwater to avoid storms." Chinese Academy of Sciences Project Head Chen Dake reported that this is a milestone in marine technology and innovation. ("China launches 'Blue Whale' – world's first high-speed typhoon-proof uncrewed submersible," *SCMP*, 30 April 2025)

CHINA & EAST ASIA

PLA encounters 11 close aerial standoffs with foreign aircraft

On 21 May, PLA reported on 11 close aerial encounters with an unspecified foreign military for the past 10 consecutive days above the East China Sea. The operations were conducted by the People's Liberation Army Ground Force aviation corps under the Eastern Theatre Command, which is responsible for operations around the East China Sea and Taiwan Strait. According to *CCTV*, PLA pilot Wang Ling was ordered to take off in a combat-ready state in response to what the PLA called "provocations by a foreign force" nearing China's coastline. Wang described the engagement as part of China's mission to defend its maritime frontier. Although close encounters between PLA and foreign forces are not uncommon in the region, such interceptions involving ground

force helicopters are rare, as these aircraft have limited range and usually operate near the coast. (Liu Zhen, "PLA helicopter in close encounters with foreign aircraft over East China Sea," *South China Morning Post*, 22 May 2025)

Nissan considers Global Factory sharing with China's Dongfeng

On 19 May, BBC reported that Nissan is open to integrating Chinese state-owned partner Dongfeng into its global production system as part of a sweeping restructuring effort. The automaker announced 11,000 new job cuts and seven factory closures, adding to 9,000 layoffs in November 2024, amounting to 15 percent of its global workforce. Despite losses of ¥670 billion (USD 4.6 billion), Nissan reassured that its Sunderland, UK plant remains secure in the short term, with new car launches planned. The company aims to cut global output by 20 percent after poor sales in the US and China. Nissan's long standing partnership with Dongfeng, centered in Wuhan, could expand globally to reduce costs. Meanwhile, tensions rise as the UK-US trade deal prompts Chinese concerns. A Chinese embassy spokesperson warned against deals "at the expense of China's interests" and demanded clarification from the UK. Amid these shifts, Nissan's battery partner AESC secured £1 billion from the UK government for a new EV battery plant in Sunderland. (Adam Hancock, "Nissan says it could share global plants with Chinese state firm," *BBC*, 19 May 2025)

China sentences Japanese man for 12 years on espionage charges

On 14 May, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed the arrest of a Japanese man in his 50s who was found spying in Shanghai and was sentenced to 12 years. The Ministry's spokesperson Lin Jian stated that the case is being handled "following legal procedures, ensuring the legitimate rights and interests of the person concerned." This is not the only case of a Japanese national being charged with espionage by Chinese authorities in recent years. Lin calls on Japan to "respect China's judicial sovereignty" and "educate and guide its citizens in China to abide by Chinese laws and regulations, and refrain from engaging in illegal activities." ("China confirms Japanese citizen has been jailed for spying in Shanghai," *SCMP*, 15 May 2025)

Four Chinese nationals caught at the India-Nepal border with invalid visas

On 08 May, *ETV Bharat* reported that four Chinese nationals were detained at the

India-Nepal border in the East Champaran district of Bihar by the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB). The foreigners belonged to the Hunan province and were accompanied by two Nepalese tourist guides. FIRs were lodged, and a fine of NPR 8,000 was issued. They were further taken for interrogation on the purpose of their visit without a valid visa. Haraiya Police Station in charge, Kishan Kumar Paswan said: "The people were speaking in Mandarin. When their passports and visas were checked, it was found that they did not have visas for India. Based on this, they were arrested. Rs 8,000 in Chinese currency and Chinese passports have been seized from them. They are all being interrogated to know their motive behind entering India without a valid visa." ("Four Chinese Nationals held at Indo-Nepal Border in Bihar", *ETV BHARAT*, 08 May 2025)

China's Foreign Minister wants India and Pakistan to resolve differences through dialogue

On 11 May, as reported by *CGTN*, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi spoke with India's National Security Advisor Ajith Doval expressing hope that India and Pakistan resolve differences through restraint and calm dialogue. Wang hopes that both nations agree to a lasting ceasefire, reflecting on the will of the international community. He reiterates China's opposition to any and all forms of terrorism, condemning the terrorist attacks in Pahalgam. Seeing outbreak of violence, Wang noted that peace and stability in Asia was hard-won and must be cherished. However, Doval stated that India must take counter-terrorism action. War is not desirable on either side, and so dialogue is necessary to restore regional peace and stability. ("Wang Yi speaks to India's Doval. Urges 'calm and restraint' after days of fighting", *CGTN*, 11 May 2025)

China's PLA to host 100 African military officers from 40 countries

On 10 May, *SCMP* reported that China will train 100 mid-career African military officers from 40 countries. This is part of PLA's long-term strategy to deepen its defense ties across the continent, notes *SCMP*. The delegation will stay till 15 May, learning China's military systems and technology. Stimson Centre, Director of China programme Sun Yun, called the officers the "future pillars of military leadership in African countries." This programme is the fourth of its kind organized by China's Ministry of National Defence with the National University of Defense Technology in Changsha, Hunan province. ("China hosts delegation of 100

African military officers to strengthen defence ties," *SCMP*, 10 May 2025)

CHINA & SOUTHEAST ASIA

"Red Wa" ethnic group safeguarding Chinese investments in the Shan state, reports *The Nation*

On 27 May, *The Nation* reported on the "Red Wa" Army and its activities in Myanmar. The "Red Wa" refers to the United Wa State Party (UWSP) and its military wing. The United Wa State Army (UWSA) is an ethnic armed group based in Myanmar's Shan State. They control a semi-autonomous region along the China-Myanmar border and are heavily supported by China. Thai civil society groups are demanding action against the Red Wa for involvement in drug trafficking and mining operations. Due to the flash floods in Mae Sai, NGOs have raised alarms over toxic contamination in the Sai and Kok rivers. They are now urging the government to intensify negotiations to pressure Myanmar authorities and the Red Wa forces to shut down mining activities. The Red Wa poses not only a security challenge but also a public health threat. China's involvement owes to the fact that the Chinese Communist Party is a major patron of the United Wa State Party (UWSP) and the United Wa State Army (UWSA). Additionally, Greenpeace Thailand has urged the Thai government to take a firm stance with Myanmar's government, the Chinese government, and the Red Wa forces to permanently halt mining activities. ("Red Wa": China's shadow army controlling Shan State power," *The Nation*, 27 May 2025)

China and Malaysia affirm to maintain high-level exchanges

On 26 May, Malaysia's Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim and China's Premier Li Qiang met in Kuala Lumpur on the sidelines of the ASEAN, GCC, and China inaugural summit. They discussed their willingness to maintain high-level exchanges, strengthen strategic communication, and enhance cultural cooperation with Malaysia. The discussion focused on the digital economy, the green economy, and artificial intelligence. Qiang urged the two countries to expand trade and investment cooperation. Qiang said: "China is ready to work closely with Malaysia to take the event as an opportunity to push for closer economic cooperation among the three sides, build a model of global cooperation and development, jointly safeguard free trade and the multilateral trading system, and address global challenges together, to contribute greater

stability, certainty and positive energy to a turbulent world." (Dewey Simin, Shi Jiangtao, "China's Li Qiang urges Malaysia to safeguard free trade and multilateral ideals," *SCMP*, 27 May 2025)

China and Indonesia celebrate 75 years of diplomatic relations

On 25 May, China's Premier Li Qiang visited Indonesia to celebrate the 75th anniversary of diplomatic ties. Both countries noted that they are committed to the Bandung Spirit. Li emphasized upholding the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and called for deeper cooperation in trade, industry, finance, AI, new energy, and infrastructure, especially the Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Railway. Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto expressed readiness to expand collaboration in agriculture, education, and the green economy. Several cooperation agreements were signed to strengthen strategic cooperation. ("China, Indonesia reaffirm Bandung Spirit, pledge closer cooperation," *Xinhua*, 25 May 2025)

China and Indonesia banks sign local currency settlement partnership

On 25 May, China's Central Bank Governor Pan Gongsheng and Bank Indonesia's Governor Perry Warjiyo signed a new MoU to broaden their local currency settlement partnership. Building on a 2020 agreement, this expanded cooperation now covers not only current accounts and direct investments but also capital and financial account transactions. This emphasis is to boost the use of local currencies in trade and investment. This will strengthen financial ties and market cooperation between China and Indonesia. The PBOC highlighted that this framework will support deeper bilateral economic integration and reduce reliance on third-party currencies. ("China, Indonesia sign MoU to expand local currency settlement cooperation," *Xinhua*, 25 May 2025)

China and ASEAN countries conclude CAFTA 3.0 negotiations

On 21 May, China and the 10 ASEAN nations successfully concluded negotiations on the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area (CAFTA) 3.0. The announcement was made during a special virtual meeting of economic and trade ministers. Negotiations began in November 2022 and concluded in October 2024 after nine rounds of formal discussions. CAFTA 3.0 aims to modernize and deepen economic ties, introducing nine new chapters focused on the digital economy, green economy, and supply chain connectivity. These updates reflect

evolving global trends and aim to enhance industrial cooperation and supply chain integration between China and ASEAN, two of the world's leading developing economic blocs. The Ministry described the upgraded pact as a model of openness, inclusiveness, and win-win cooperation, reinforcing commitment to free trade and regional stability. CAFTA 3.0 is expected to boost certainty in global trade, while supporting the creation of a mega-market and a China-ASEAN community with a shared future. Both parties will now proceed with domestic ratification procedures, aiming to formally sign the upgraded protocol by the end of 2025. ("China, ASEAN complete CAFTA 3.0 negotiations," *CGTN*, 21 May 2025)

China's carmaker Changan opens its first overseas factory in Thailand

On 16 May, China's carmaker Changan opened its first overseas vehicle factory of Changan Automobile in Thailand's eastern Rayong Province. The plant represents a total investment of approximately 10 billion Thai baht (about 300 million USD) and features comprehensive production capabilities, including welding, painting, assembly, engine assembly, and battery assembly workshops. The facility has an initial annual production capacity of 100,000 vehicles, aiming to bolster Changan's global expansion and support Thailand's ambition to become a major hub for electric vehicle (EV) production. Over the next three years, Changan plans to launch 12 new energy vehicle models in Southeast Asia and establish a spare parts warehouse for right-hand drive markets, aiming for 24-hour order delivery. ("Chinese carmaker Changan opens Thailand plant," *Xinhua*, 16 May 2025)

"China does want to flex its muscle", says a Cambodian political analyst

On May 14, *EurAsian Times* reported that China and Cambodia are conducting their largest-ever joint military exercises, dubbed "Golden Dragon," at the Beijing-renovated Ream Naval Base. Approximately 900 Chinese and over 1,300 Cambodian troops are participating, utilising advanced equipment including artillery, warships, drones, and robotic battle dogs. A Chinese naval vessel, the *Changbai Shan*, docked at the base on 12 May with military supplies for the drills. Cambodia, a long-standing ally of China, has received billions in investments and supports China's Belt and Road Initiative. While Cambodia maintains a neutral foreign policy, analysts suggest that these exercises signal China's growing influence in Southeast Asia. Cambodian political analyst Ou Virak noted, "China does want to flex its muscle"

and to send a message that "it's a superpower" through the exercises. The drills follow a visit by Chinese President Xi Jinping to Cambodia in April, aiming to deepen bilateral ties. The exercises are scheduled to conclude on 28 May. ("Chinese Warships Dock At Beijing-Funded Ream Naval Base As China, Cambodia Begin Their 'Largest-Ever' Military Drills: OPED," Nitin J Ticku from *EurAsian Times*, 14 May 2025)

Colombia joins China's Belt and Road Initiative

On 14 May, China and Colombia signed a cooperation plan on the Belt and Road Initiative in Beijing. By forming new ties, China is gaining influence in Latin America and the Caribbean, a region of strategic importance for the US. Colombia's foreign minister, Laur Sarabia, called the deal the country's "boldest step in decades." Signing of this deal opens new avenues for Colombia in terms of trade, investment and tourism. China's president Xi Jinping committed to increasing imports from Colombia and investing more in Colombian firms. ("China, Colombia sign Belt and Road cooperation pact," *Reuters*, 14 May 2025)

President Xi discusses cooperation with Myanmar's military leader

On 16 May, an editorial in *SCMP* reported on China's President Xi Jinping first high-level summit with Myanmar's junta ruler Min Aung Hlaing in Moscow. Xi called for safeguarding Chinese investment and people in Myanmar and push for more vigorous anti-crime cooperation. Regional security specialist Jason Tower pointed out that this is evident of Beijing's more active role in Myanmar's internal politics, such as putting pressure on ethnic armed groups to relinquish land back to the junta and assisting the rebuilding after heavy battlefield losses. Currently, the regime, however, has lost 86 percent of the country and is still heavily dependent on China. National War College, Washington, Professor Zachary Abuza expounded that although China is oblivious to regime type, it is looking for stability and security for its economic interest. The USD 15 billion China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC) is currently disrupted by conflict and Arakan Army has control in the Rakhine region. He also stated China could be pushing towards a political solution, viewing elections as a way out for the junta. (Maria Siow, "Xi Jinping's meeting with Myanmar's junta leader in Moscow signals China's backing of regime," *SCMP*, 16 May 2025)

Columbia to ratify Belt and Road Initiative, informs President Gustavo Petro

On 12 May, Colombia's President Gustavo Petro confirms that the country will officially join China's Belt and Road Initiative, a vast development project that funds infrastructure developments across various countries. In an interview conducted at the Great Wall of China, Petro referred to the initiative by its original name, the "Silk Road," and expressed Colombia's plans to utilize the funds for artificial intelligence projects and create employment opportunities for the youth. ("Colombia to sign onto China's Belt and Road initiative, Petro says," *Reuters*, 12 May 2025)

Xi Jinping offers support to Myanmar for post-earthquake reconstruction

On 10 May, according to *Global Banking and Finance Review*, China's President Xi Jinping pledged support for Myanmar's recovery after its deadliest earthquake. Xi's meeting in Moscow with Myanmar's junta leader, Min Aung Hlaing. He discussed several disaster rehabilitation and reconstruction plans. Since the earthquake, Min Aung Hlaing's position has been strengthened, which had been weakened by diplomatic isolation following the junta's ousting of a democratically elected government, leading to a civil war. The disaster has allowed the junta leader to reconnect with regional nations, with countries like China, India, and Russia offering millions in aid and resources. Min Aung Hlaing expressed Myanmar's gratitude for China's three global initiatives and their vision of building a community with a shared future, stating Myanmar is ready to collaborate with China on common challenges. ("China's Xi pledges to help Myanmar rebuild post-earthquake, Xinhua reports," *Global Banking and Finance Review*, 10 May 2025)

China and Cambodia to participate in joint military exercise "Golden Dragon"

On 09 May, as reported by *SCMP*, China and Cambodia will hold their annual joint military exercise "Golden Dragon." The drill will showcase new military technology, including several drones and robotic dogs. The Golden Dragon joint military exercise will commence on 14 May and last till 28 May. Cambodia's Royal Air Force Major General Thong Solimo emphasized on a substantive improvement in "the scope, troop participation and use of advanced equipment." Cambodia and China will deploy 1,331 and 845 military personnel, respectively. ("China- Cambodia drills to showcase more tech and troops as military ties grow", *SCMP*, 09 May 2025)

China's PLA participates in Vietnam's 50-year celebration to the end of civil war

On 01 May, China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) participated in Vietnam's annual celebration of the fall of Saigon. This marks the 50-year celebration of the end of the Vietnamese Civil War. Vietnam's Ministry of National Defense invited the PLA for a joint military parade in Ho Chi Minh City. Chinese media houses called the Chinese presence symbolic of brotherhood. The marks the end of the decade-long Vietnamese war, where China and the Soviet Union backed the communist North regime that won from US US-backed South Vietnamese regime. Vietnam's Communist Party General Secretary To Lam appreciated China's support in the international arena. Other than China, the Lao People's Army and the Cambodian Armed Forces also attended the event. ("Chinese PLA soldiers make first-ever appearance at Vietnam's fall of Saigon parade," *SCMP*, 01 May 2025)

CHINA & THE PACIFIC

China and the Pacific Island countries' Foreign Ministers meeting reach five consensus

On 28 May, the Third China-Pacific Island Countries Foreign Ministers' Meeting reached a five-pronged consensus. The meeting was held in Xiamen, southeast China's Fujian Province. During the meeting, China and the Pacific Island Countries engaged in in-depth discussions on advancing bilateral cooperation and international and regional issues of common concern. The five-point consensus reached was to promote common development, including treating each other as equals, reaffirming the one-China principle, upholding fairness and justice, advocating mutual learning and civilizational exchanges, and embracing openness and inclusivity. ("Wang Yi: China and Pacific Island countries FMs' meeting yields five-point consensus," *CGTN*, 28 May 2025)

China hosts 11 Pacific Island countries in Xiamen

On 28 May, China convened high-level diplomats from 11 Pacific Island nations in Xiamen. This a two-day summit chaired by China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi aiming to deepen regional engagement and foster a "closer community with a shared future" with Pacific Island nations.. The gathering includes President Taneti Maamau of Kiribati and senior officials from Niue, Tonga, Nauru, Micronesia, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea, Cook Islands, Fiji, and Samoa. The discussions focus on enhancing cooperation in trade,

infrastructure, poverty alleviation, sustainability, and climate action. It is the third such meeting, but the first time held in China. Al Jazeera's Katrina Yu noted this is a chance for Beijing to "extend its influence" as the U.S. shows "very little interest," with many Pacific nations now "aligned with China." ("China hosts Pacific Island nations in bid to bolster diplomatic, trade ties," *Al Jazeera*, 28 May 2025)

CHINA & SOUTH ASIA

China warns citizens against travelling to the Nepal-India border

On 30 May, China's embassy in Nepal repeatedly reminded Chinese travellers in Nepal to avoid going to the Nepal-India border area, as several incidents of Chinese citizens being arrested by Indian border forces on the excuse of illegal entry. To ensure the safety of Chinese citizens travelling in Nepal, the Chinese embassy issued an alert note in a statement via its official WeChat account. The notice further stated that India has strict penalties for illegal entry. Even unintentional border crossings into Indian territory can result in arrest and prosecution, potentially leading to imprisonment for 2-8 years and fines, with no possibility of bail. Despite warnings, Chinese citizens are going to the Nepal-India border at their own risk. ("Chinese embassy issues alert advising against travel to Nepal-India border area following several incidents of Chinese citizens being arrested by Indian border forces," *Global Times*, 31 May 2025)

Magnet shortage from China threatens Indian car output, reports Reuters

On 29 May, *Reuters* reported that India's car production could stop by early June due to China's new export restrictions on rare earth magnets, which are essential for electric and traditional vehicles. These magnets are used in EV motors, power windows, and speakers. China controls over 90 per cent of the global processing capacity for magnets used in automobiles, clean energy, and home appliances. In April, it introduced new rules requiring companies to obtain import permits from Beijing. In a meeting with the commerce ministry, the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) stated that auto part inventories may run out by the end of May. SIAM, representing automakers like Maruti, Tata, and Mahindra, urged Prime Minister Modi's government to help release magnet shipments stuck at Chinese ports since 4 April. In April, China's magnet exports dropped 51 per cent year-on-year to 2,626 tons. The low- and high-end magnet shipments are affected due

to regulatory confusion. (Aditi Shah, "China's magnet curbs risk halting Indian car production - industry documents," *Reuters*, 29 May 2025)

India tightens rules over testing of China-made CCTVs

On 28 May, *Reuters* reported on India's heightened hardware testing rules for all CCTVs. Under the new security rules, manufacturers are required to submit hardware, software, and source code for assessment in government labs. This has been an ongoing rift between global surveillance makers and the Indian regulators in recent weeks. Foreign companies now view these over-regulatory issues as "protectionism" and have issued warnings of supply disruptions. According to a top Indian official involved in policymaking, New Delhi's approach is driven in part by its alarm about China's sophisticated surveillance capabilities. Under the new requirements applicable from April, manufacturers such as China's Hikvision, Xiaomi, and Dahua, South Korea's Hanwha, and Motorola Solutions of the U.S. must submit cameras for testing by Indian government labs before they can sell them in India. ("India's alarm over Chinese spying rocks the surveillance industry," Aditya Kalra, *Reuters*, 28 May 2025)

BYD signs an MoU to expand its market to Sri Lanka

On 27 May, at a press conference held in Sri Lanka, representatives of Build Your Dream (BYD) and John Keells signed an MoU to facilitate DENZA's entry into the local market in Sri Lanka. Denza is a Chinese premium electric vehicle (EV) brand that originated as a joint venture between BYD and Mercedes-Benz in 2010. Chairperson of the John Keells Group Krishan Balendra said BYD's rapid success in Sri Lanka's New Energy Vehicle (NEV) segment "reflects the strength of our partnership and our shared vision for the future of mobility." Due to Sri Lanka easing import restrictions in early 2025, BYD has swiftly captured consumer interest with a range of electric vehicles and plug-in hybrid vehicles. This surged the demand for more BYD vehicles. Liu Xueliang, general manager of BYD Asia-Pacific Auto Sales Division, said Sri Lanka is a key market for BYD in South Asia. "While the scale of business in Sri Lanka is not on the same level as other markets we have entered in the region." ("China's BYD gains ground in Sri Lanka's auto market," *Global Times*, 28 May 2025)

China-Pakistan-Afghanistan trilateral meeting

On 21 May, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi hosts trilateral talks in Beijing with its Pakistan and Afghanistan counterparts, Ishaq Dar and Amir Khan Muttaqi. China pledged support for both countries in defending sovereignty, security, and national dignity. The three sides agreed "in principle" to exchange ambassadors soon. Wang emphasized strengthening diplomatic ties and cooperation under China's Belt and Road Initiative, particularly in Afghanistan's reconstruction. The ministers also agreed to boost collaboration on law enforcement, counterterrorism, and safeguarding against foreign interference. These developments come as military tensions escalate between India and Pakistan, further highlighted by a recent school bus bombing in southwestern Pakistan. China, while not formally recognizing the Taliban, has supported the regime economically since 2021 despite not extending formal recognition and urged to curb terrorism affecting Chinese interests. Wang reaffirmed China's "ironclad" support for Pakistan and vowed to deepen economic, security, and diplomatic ties with Afghanistan, promoting peace, stability, and mutual development across the region. (Dewey Sim, "China urges trust, cooperation with Pakistan, Afghanistan as regional; tensions mount," *SMCP*, 21 May 2025)

Top think tanks of China and Nepal meet

On 20 May, top think tanks of Nepal and China met and deliberated on the prospects for bilateral strategic partnership of cooperation marking the 70th anniversary of diplomatic ties. Government officials and experts from the two countries also attended the seminar organized jointly by Nepal's Policy Research Institute and the National Institute of International Strategy under the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Counselor at the Chinese Embassy in Nepal, Wang Xin, stated that he hopes the two think tanks will serve as national teams, using the seminar to deepen China-Nepal exchanges and consistently offer policy recommendations and intellectual support for strengthening bilateral relations. (Huaxia, Think tanks of Nepal, China highlight strategic partnership of cooperation, *Xinhua Net*, 21 May 2025)

China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning questioned about China's air defense support to Pakistan

On May 19, China's Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Mao Ning presided over a regular press briefing where she responded to a

question raised by a Bloomberg reporter regarding the Indian military's claim that China provided Pakistan with air defense support. Mao stated that for specific details, it is advisable to consult the competent Chinese authorities. According to Beijing Daily reports, Mao noted that both India and Pakistan are important neighbors of China, and China attaches great importance to relations with both the countries. Since tensions between India and Pakistan escalated, China has always maintained an objective and impartial position, calling on both sides to remain calm and exercise restraint to avoid further escalation. We support and welcome India and Pakistan realizing ceasefire and are willing to continue playing a constructive role in promoting a comprehensive and lasting ceasefire and in safeguarding regional peace and stability. ("Chinese FM responds to Indian military's claim that China provided Pakistan with air defense support," *Global Times*, May 19, 2025)

China accelerates Mohmand Dam construction in Pakistan

On 19 May, *SCMP* reported that China is accelerating the construction of the Mohmand Dam in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. The Mohmand dam is designed to serve as a multi-purpose facility for power generation, flood control, irrigation and water supply. This was in response to India's warning to suspend the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty following the Pahalgam attack. The construction of this dam started in 2019, designed to produce 800 MW electricity and provide 300 million gallons of water to Peshawar, "the capital and largest city of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province." The infrastructure project also incorporates Diamer-Bhasha Dam, being built on the Indus River, which aims to boost Pakistan's ability to store water. Pakistan, depending on the Indus system for 80 per cent of its farmland, threatened it would retaliate against water diversion as an act of war. Despite tensions, China urges Pakistan to "restraint" to maintain regional "peace and stability." (Vaneesa Cai, "China says it will speed up Pakistan dam construction after Indian threat to cut supplies," *SCMP*, 19 May 2025)

Nepal's Prime Minister discusses China-Nepal future cooperation with Chinese envoys

On 14 May, China's Vice Chairman of National People's Congress (NPC) Xiao Jie along with 15-member China delegation met Nepal's Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli in Kathmandu. The talks covered the discussion on bilateral relations and the forthcoming Sagarmatha Dialogue, which

will be organized in Kathmandu from 16 May. Jie reiterated China's readiness to strengthen its age-old friendship with Nepal. The delegation also extended warm greetings from China's leadership, remembering Prime Minister Oli's official visit to China in December. Oli reiterated Nepal's support for the One-China policy and emphasized focusing on the implementation of past understandings. ("Chinese delegation meets PM Oli in Kathmandu," *The Week*, 15 May 2025)

China's military arsenal in India-Pakistan conflict, reports *The Guardian*

On 14 May, an editorial by *The Guardian* reported on Pakistan's use of China's military arsenal. Used in retaliation to the airstrikes by India in the recent conflict between India and Pakistan in the backdrop of the Pahalgam terror attack. This was the first time the Chinese arsenal, including the J-10c and PL-15 missiles, was used in combat. This marked a significant discovery, showing military analysts of the world what the Chinese defence arsenal was capable of. The Chinese-made J-10 C jets were used to counter India's French-made Rafales. China is a crucial ally of Pakistan. China is Pakistan's biggest military weapons supplier, providing more than 80 per cent of its stock from fighter jets to navy vessels and missiles. SIPRI's senior researcher Siemon Wezeman said: "Any state producing or buying weapons is keen to see how the product does in real conflict. Tests and exercises can tell most about capabilities of weapons, but the ultimate test is often combat." ("Pakistan's use of J-10C jets and missiles exposes potency of Chinese weaponry," *The Guardian*, 14 May 2025)

India rejects China renaming territories of Arunachal Pradesh

On 14 May, India's Ministry of External Affairs commented that any attempt made by China to rename territories in Arunachal Pradesh wouldn't change the fact that they are under Indian jurisdiction. MEA's official spokesperson, Randhir Jaiswal, called China's "creative naming" as "vain and preposterous" after China claimed to rename some territories as the southern part of Tibet. India categorically rejects such attempts, which it states shall not alter reality. China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Lin Jian informed that China earlier has "standardised" the rename. Similar attempts were made in 2023, when China released a map, listing areas of Arunachal Pradesh as their own. ("India rejects China's 'preposterous' attempts to

rename places in Arunachal Pradesh," *The Hindu*, 15 May 2025)

Lull in the Hilsa crossing despite Nepal-China border reopening, says an opinion in ANN

On 02 May, Asia News Network published an opinion on the state lull in the China-Nepal border after reopening titled "Hilsa crossing on Nepal-China border quiet for fifth year as Manasarovar pilgrimage stays closed." The author, Krishna Prasad Gautam, notes that despite the reopening of the Hilsa border at the Nepal-China border last year. The Kailash-Manasarovar pilgrimage route is quiet. The borders were officially opened last year in April, but the Chinese did not lift the restriction on their pilgrimage travel to Mt Kailash and Manasarovar. Since Covid, China shut down the holy site, which has 15,000 pilgrims coming mostly from India. The op-ed notes that this has had a profound impact on the economy and tourism in the region. The locals have made repeated appeals to the administration and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but the pleas fall on deaf ears. ("Hilsa crossing on Nepal-China border quiet for fifth year as Manasarovar pilgrimage stays closed," *ANN*, 02 May 2025)

Chinese firms are accused of using fake documents to secure the Nepali Hydroelectricity project, reports *The Kathmandu Post*

On 02 May, *The Kathmandu Post* reported that a Chinese firm used fake documents to get the Jagadulla Hydroelectric Project in West Nepal. This has now opened an investigation in Nepal's Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority and the Public Procurement Office. The project is a 106-megawatt runoff river hydroelectricity project in the Dolpa district. The bidders were first informed of this when they accused the qualifying firm. Complaints are also registered by Sinohydro Corporation Limited and SEW Infrastructure Limited. The complaint issued that: "Jiangxi Construction Engineering (Group) Corporation Limited has no verified history or prior experience in hydropower projects, despite claiming otherwise in the bid documents. The company has never been granted a license by the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) or the Ministry of Ecology and Environment of the People's Republic of China to undertake any hydropower project within China or abroad." ("Nepal hydro tender hit by fraud claims against Chinese firm," *The Kathmandu Post*, 02 May 2025)

Bangladesh plans to establish SEZs exclusive for Chinese firms and investments

On 28 April, the Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority (BEZA) informed that they plan to set up additional economic zones exclusively to be used by China. This will be part of the Chinese Economic and Industrial Zone in Anwara, Chattogram. This comes after China wants to increasingly invest in Bangladesh. This meeting by BEZA was chaired by Chief Advisor Muhammad Yunus. The State-owned Power Construction Corporation of China Ltd (PowerChina) will be responsible for building Chandpur Economic Zone-1. The second one, Bhola Eco-Development Economic Zone, will be built by the Chinese firm Leez Fashion Industries. The upcoming meetings will finalize and allocate land and mills to be used, and BEZA will be responsible for fast-tracking foreign investments. Chandpur Economic Zone-1 area lacks water infrastructure and will connect with the mainland, while the Bhola Zone will attract investments (“Bangladesh plans 2 new exclusive economic zones for Chinese investors,” *FibertoFashion*, 28 April 2025)

CHINA & THE MIDDLE EAST

China allows four Gulf countries visa-free travel for up to 30 days

On 28 May, *SCMP* reported that China now allows passport holders from four Gulf countries- Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait, and Bahrain for a visa-free stay for up to 30 days. This decision was announced a day after the landmark summit China had with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the Association of Southeast Asian Countries (ASEAN). Starting 09 June, this policy should be put in place, allowing citizens from the Gulf countries to extend their stay in China for up to 30 days for business, tourism, family visits, or cultural exchanges. Foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said: “On top of the comprehensive mutual visa-exemption policy implemented for the United Arab Emirates and Qatar in 2018, China’s latest visa-free measures now extend to all six GCC member states.” (“China offers visa-free travel to 4 Gulf countries following landmark meeting,” *SCMP*, 28 May 2025)

China’s UN envoy calls for all parties to exercise “restraint” in the Red Sea region

On 14 May, China’s Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Sun Lei, called on all parties to de-escalate tension in the Red Sea region, scale up humanitarian aid and resume political dialogue in Yemen. In his address, Lei called on the Houthis to “Stop

assaulting commercial vessels and maintain the safety of the Red Sea shipping lanes.” He stated that the sovereignty, security, and territorial integrity of Yemen should be respected, and the ceasefire agreement should be implemented. China underscored that the crisis in Yemen must ultimately be resolved through political means and urged the international community to support Yemen amidst its hard times. (“China calls for calm in Red Sea, political resolution in Yemen,” *Global Times*, 15 May 2025)

China’s Foreign Minister affirms support for Iran’s pursuit of the peaceful use of nuclear energy

On 30 April, China’s Foreign Minister Wang Yi noted that he welcomes a dialogue between Iran and IAEA with other relevant parties on the nuclear issue. Wang Yi met with Secretary of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council, Ali Akbar Ahmadian. Wang Yi stated that China values Iran’s commitment to not pursue and develop nuclear weapons, and respects its right to have peaceful nuclear energy. He said: “China supports Iran in safeguarding its sovereignty, security, and national dignity and opposes external interference in Iran’s internal affairs.” Ahmadian said: “Iran is willing to strengthen high-level exchanges with China, deepen cooperation in economy, trade, science, technology, and connectivity, and elevate bilateral relations to a new level.” He also noted that Iran is ready to work with China and oppose any external interference or arbitrary actions. (“Foreign Minister Wang Yi: China welcomes Iran’s pursuit of dialogue on nuclear issue,” *CGTN*, 01 May 2025)

CHINA & AFRICA

China’s Foreign Minister meets 50 African envoys for Africa Day

On 26 May, China’s Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with over 50 African envoys in Beijing to commemorate Africa Day. Wang emphasised that China-Africa ties have entered their strongest era, marked by an “all-weather community with a shared future.” He noted that the outcomes of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), including six modernisation proposals and 10 partnership actions, provide a solid framework for future cooperation. He called for the upcoming coordinator-level FOCAC meeting to serve as a platform to advance Belt and Road Initiative projects, Global Development Initiative implementation, and shared modernisation goals. He reaffirmed China’s support for Africa’s

increased global role. The African envoys praised China's initiatives and pledged to uphold the one-China principle, support China's sovereignty, and jointly defend Global South interests. They expressed strong confidence in continued Africa-China cooperation and alignment with the UN Charter's principles. ("Chinese FM meets African envoys in Beijing - CGTN," *CGTN*, 27 May 2025)

China and South Africa create a high-precision observation telescope

On 27 May, *CGTN* reported that China's astronomers with international collaborators completed high-precision observations of the Milky Way's globular clusters. They used China's five-hundred-meter Aperture Spherical Radio Telescope (FAST) and South Africa's MeerKAT array telescope. This has refreshed the limits for the Galactic observation. The "FAST" is adept at capturing the faintest cosmic ripples while MeerKAT's 64-antenna array focuses on tracking signals across a broader sky area. The initiative is led by Tsinghua University, it marks the first deep collaboration between the two world-leading telescopes in the study of globular clusters, which successfully obtained polarisation rotation measurements of 43 pulsars from eight globular clusters. Tsinghua University's Professor, Li DI, said: "By combining equipment from the Southern and Northern Hemispheres, which are of different capabilities, we have more than doubled our observational sample." ("Chinese, South African telescopes expand galactic horizons," *CGTN*, 27 May 2025)

China adopts the Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) model to finance African infrastructure initiatives

On 18 May, *SCMP* reported that China is moving away from direct loans to Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) to finance African infrastructure, minimizing financial risks and alleviating African debt. In this model, Chinese companies finance, construct, and manage projects such as Kenya's SGR and Zambia's Lusaka-Ndola road, recovering costs through long-term toll revenues. China has provided 1,306 loans amounting to USD 182.2 billion to Africa between 2000-2023, but the lending reached a peak in 2016 with increasing debt defaults. PPPs are regarded as more sustainable, although there are forebodings from experts of concealed long-term expenditures and restricted accessibility for low-income individuals. (Jevans Nyabiage, "China turns to PPPs as a 'yellow brick road' solution to fund big projects in Africa," *SCMP*, 18 May 2025)

China invests in Nigeria in military ammunition production

On 16 May, *SCMP* reported that Nigeria has struck a major deal with a leading Chinese defence company to begin local production of military-grade ammunition, upgrade military hardware, service battle tanks and train defence personnel for Nigeria. Nigeria's Minister of State for Defence, Dr. Bello Muhammed Matawalle, said: "This collaboration is a cornerstone of our ambition to achieve self-reliance in defence production." A high-level Norinco delegation visited Nigeria in March to discuss local arms production through collaboration and technology transfers. Nigeria used to depend mostly on Western countries for military equipment. Now, with help from China, it's trying to build more of its weapons and gear at home to counter security threats. The deal is seen as part of a broader shift in Nigeria's defence strategy, strengthening ties with Beijing while reducing reliance on Western defence partners. In a statement by a China-Africa specialist and professor at George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs, David Shinn states: "China wants to expand its security cooperation and influence throughout Africa and this is a significant step in that direction." A professor of military science at Stellenbosch University, Francois Vrey, added that China is capitalising on the lull in US-African relations to deepen its defence partnerships, and Nigeria is a strategic foothold for this broader regional influence. The agreement also underscores China's growing role in arms supply across the continent, especially in states facing restrictions or delays in acquiring Western-made defence systems. ("Chinese defence firm strikes arms deal with Nigeria, deepening ties with West Africa," *SCMP*, 16 May 2025)

China's investment in the renewable energy sector in Africa increases, reports *ODI Global*

On 11 May, *SCMP* reported on a report by UK UK-based think tank, *ODI Global*, where it noted that China invests more in the renewable energy sector in Africa. The report stated that China's investment in solar and wind energy projects constitutes 59 per cent of its energy projects on the continent. Africa is the key market for Chinese solar and wind technology, with exports surging 153 per cent between 2020 to 2024. The exports have increased due to Africa's "growing needs" and China's ability to meet those demands amidst its "global competitiveness." In contrast to the US's USD 117 million and the European Union's USD 11

billion in exports, China exported solar panels and wind turbines worth USD 13.8 billion in 2024. Due to lower trade barriers in African markets as compared to Western markets, China is able to export more to emerging economies. ODI Global informs that China has also adopted a mixed strategy of concessional and commercial bank loans in gas-rich Mozambique. China has been the dominant supplier of clean tech, with Chinese firms making the most profit since 2022. ("More Chinese energy investments in Africa are going to renewables, report finds", SCMP, 11 May 2025)

CHINA & RUSSIA

Russia and China to collaborate on 80 projects worth USD 200 billion

On 30 May, *News. AZ* reported that Russian Ambassador to China Igor Morgulov announced that Russia and China are working on over 80 major joint projects worth around USD 200 billion. These projects incorporate sectors like industry, transport, agriculture, logistics, and mineral resources. In 2024, bilateral trade between the two countries hit a record USD 245 billion. Morgulov noted at the event that China has been Russia's top trading partner for 15 years. He also emphasized ongoing efforts to shift trade to national currencies and expressed optimism about increased investments following a new intergovernmental agreement signed in May to protect mutual capital investments. ("Russia, China collaborate on over 80 major joint projects worth \$200 billion," *News. az*, 30 May 2025)

Russia's Foreign Minister calls for the revival of the Russia-India-China (RIC) dialogue

On 29 May, Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov expressed strong support for restarting the Russia-India-China (RIC) dialogue at an international conference on Eurasian security cooperation. Lavrov stated Russia is "genuinely interested" in resuming the RIC format, which was initiated by former Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov and has held over 20 ministerial-level meetings. The RIC dialogue has been inactive since the 2020 Galwan Valley clash between Indian and Chinese troops. Lavrov also stated that recent progress in India-China border talks emphasises the right moment for revival. He also alleged NATO is trying to involve India in anti-China strategies, stating, "Our Indian friends see this trend as a major provocation," based on private discussions. ("Russia backs RIC revival, Lavrov says India-China ties show improvement," *Business Standard*, 30 May 2025)

Ukraine confirms Chinese military supplies to Russia

On 26 May, Ukraine's Foreign Intelligence Chief, Oleh Ivashchenko, reported that China is supplying a range of goods used for defence manufacturing to Russia. He said: "There is information that China supplies tooling machines, special chemical products, gunpowder, and components specifically to defence manufacturing industries." He further stated that Ukrainian Intelligence had information on at least five cases of Russia-China cooperation in the aviation sector in 2024-2025, including the supply of equipment, spare parts, and documentation. Without providing details, he noted that there were six cases of "large shipments" of specialty chemicals. Last month, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskiy accused Beijing of providing direct military assistance to Moscow, to which Beijing retaliated as "groundless". (Yuliia Dysa, Pavel Polityuk, Liz Lee, "Ukraine confirmed Chinese supplies to 20 Russian military plants, intelligence chief says," *Reuters*, 26 May 2025)

Russia and China sign a new space deal to build a power plant on the moon

On 14 May, *Live Science* reported on a deal signed between Russia and China to build a power plant on the Moon. According to the MoU signed between the two countries, a Russian reactor will be used to power the International Lunar Research Station (ILRS) jointly led by China by 2036. According to the Director General of the Russian Space Agency Roscosmos, Yury Borisov, the construction will be carried out "without the presence of humans". Following the signing of the MoU, Roscosmos stated that the space station will carry out tests and research "with the prospects of a human being's presence on the Moon." ("China signs deal with Russia to build a power plant on the moon — potentially leaving the US in the dust," *Live Science*, 14 May 2025)

President Xi attends Russia's Victory Day commemorations

On 09 May, the *BBC* reported on China's President Xi Jinping's 11th visit to Moscow, timed with Russia's Victory Day commemorations. Xi met his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin. China and Russia's troops marched together at the Red Square, marking an "unbreakable" bond between the two nations, noted Xi. *BBC* noted that the two leaders appear to share a strong relationship and that China remains neutral on Putin's actions in Ukraine. Additionally, China must be cautious about its closeness to Russia, especially

given Moscow's recent actions in Ukraine. ("Xi shows he wants to be close to Putin - but not too close," *BBC*, 09 May 2025)

CHINA & EUROPE

China calls for peace talks and warns against escalation in the Ukraine conflict

On 30 May, at the UN Security Council meeting, the deputy permanent representative to the United Nations, Chinese envoy Geng Shuang, warned that increasing the supply of lethal weapons in the Russia-Ukraine war would only prolong the conflict and worsen destruction. The accusations by the US about China's role in the Russia-Ukraine conflict were strongly condemned by him. He stated that the US was spreading false information and unfairly blaming China. He also stated these claims are false, not based on facts, and are just part of a political agenda. It has no real intention to solve the crisis. Geng emphasized that China has not supplied any lethal weapons and has promoted dialogue from the beginning. They have also supported recent peace talks in Istanbul. He has urged both sides to continue negotiations and called for respect for international humanitarian law to protect civilians. ("More weapons on battlefield will only protract Ukraine crisis: Chinese envoy," *CGTN*, 31 May 2025)

Czech Foreign Ministry blames China for cyberattacks

On 28 May, *SCMP* reported that the Czech Republic had accused China of launching a cyberattack targeting the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs' unclassified network since 2022. The attack was allegedly carried out by a hacker group known as APT31, which is linked to China's Ministry of State Security. Czech Foreign Minister Jan Lipavský responded strongly and said: "China is interfering in our society through manipulation, propaganda, and cyberattacks." As a result, the Chinese ambassador was summoned to Prague to receive an official protest. The incident has sparked international concern. The EU's foreign policy chief, Kaja Kallas, condemned the cyber campaign, calling it "a clear and unacceptable violation of international norms." Meanwhile, the Chinese Embassy in Prague rejected the accusations as "groundless" and reiterated China's official stance that it opposes all forms of cyberattacks. This event highlights growing tensions between China and Europe over cybersecurity and diplomatic trust. ("China accused of 'malicious cyber campaign' targeting Czech foreign ministry," *SCMP*, 28 May 2025)

The EU accuses China of a "malicious cyber campaign"

On 28 May, *SCMP* reported that the European Union accuse a group associated with China's Ministry of State Security of a "malicious cyber campaign" against the country's foreign ministry. It named the "cyberespionage actor APT13" associated with the Ministry of State Security as the culprit. The EU's diplomat Kaja Kallas said: "This is a clear and unacceptable violation of international norms." The Czech Foreign Minister Jan Lipavsky stated that the attack was "detected during the intrusion," and "China is interfering in our society through manipulation, propaganda, and cyberattacks." China's ambassador has been summoned "to make clear that such hostile actions have serious consequences for our bilateral relations." (Finbarr Bermingham, "China accused of 'malicious cyber campaign' targeting Czech foreign ministry," *SCMP*, 28 May 2025)

Alashankou port handles over 3,000 China-Europe freight trains

On 29 May, *Global Times* reported that the Alashankou Port in northwest China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region handled over 3,000 China-Europe freight train trips this year. According to railway authorities, it provided a boost to the stability and smooth operation of the global industrial and supply chain. Currently, 123 China-Europe freight trains operate via Alashankou port, connecting 21 countries, including Germany and Poland. The trains transport more than 200 categories of goods, ranging from new energy vehicles to daily consumer goods. Alashankou railway station staff member Yang Peng said: "We operate a 24/7 'green channel' to ensure the smooth operation of China-Europe freight trains," and added that the station handled an average of over 21 China-Europe freight train trips daily, with a peak of 30 trips in a single day. ("Xinjiang's Alashankou port handles over 3,000 China-Europe freight trains in Jan-May," *Global Times*, 29 May 2025)

Chinese cargo port collaborates with European ports for low-carbon maritime cooperation

On 27 May, Ningbo-Zhoushan Port announced three initiatives undertaken in collaboration with three major European ports. It includes Hamburg and Wilhelmshaven in Germany and Valencia in Spain. It aims to construct a green shipping corridor and advance low-carbon cooperation between China and Europe. To decarbonise international shipping, ports will

collaborate with shipping lines, cargo owners, energy providers, research institutions, and other stakeholders to promote zero-carbon technology, clean fuels, and smart management systems on designated routes. The key actions to create corridors with net-zero carbon emissions from start to terminal port include the construction and utilisation of shore power infrastructure, optimising freight distribution networks, the adoption of renewable energy solutions, and scaling up clean fuel bunkering. Ningbo- Zhoushan Port Group chairman, Tao Chengbo, said: "We aim to work closely with ports and shipping companies under the Belt and Road Initiative to support the global green transformation of ports and shipping." ("Top Chinese cargo port partners with 3 European hubs for low-carbon maritime cooperation," *Xinhua*, 27 May 2025)

European Parliament accuses 5 lawmakers of the Huawei bribery scandal, reports SCMP

On 22 May, *SCMP* reported that the European Parliament named five lawmakers under investigation by Belgian prosecutors in a bribery scandal involving Chinese tech giant Huawei. The lawmakers stand accused of accepting gifts from Huawei in exchange for lobbying on the company's behalf within the parliament. In response to the investigation, Belgian authorities have formally requested that the European Parliament waive the immunity of these members to allow for a full legal probe. European Parliament President Roberta Metsola identified the lawmakers on 21 May: Daniel Attard (Maltese Socialist), Nikola Minchev (Bulgarian centrist), and three Italian members of the centre-right European People's Party – Salvatore De Meo, Fulvio Martusciello, and Giusi Princi. Huawei, at the center of the allegations, has denied any wrongdoing. The company stated it has a "zero-tolerance policy towards corruption or other wrongdoing" and maintains strict compliance with laws and regulations. The probe has heightened concerns about foreign influence in EU institutions and the integrity of parliamentary decision-making. (Finbarr Bermingham, "European Parliament names 5 lawmakers targeted in Huawei bribery scandal," *SCMP*, 22 May 2025)

China launches its first direct air cargo route to the Baltic Sea

On 21 May, a direct cargo flight from northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region to Tallinn, the capital of Estonia, marked the region's first air cargo route to the Baltic Sea area. The weekly route is operated by a Boeing 767 freighter, which carries around 51 tonnes of goods per flight with a travel time of

approximately 11 hours. With 30 percent more cargo capacity than conventional aircraft, the route significantly reduces logistics costs for exporters. The cargo primarily consists of light industrial products such as garments and daily-use goods. According to Feng Liang, general manager of Xinjiang Wanshengtong Supply Chain Management Co., the route strengthens connections between Chinese sellers and e-commerce platforms in northern Europe, enhancing the consumer experience in the region. Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang, now operates 20 international cargo routes, including 12 to major European cities. From January to April this year, Urumqi airport handled 1,584 cargo flights, marking a 1,157.1 percent year-on-year increase. Cargo throughput reached 26,000 tonnes, up 522.2 percent. Zhao Beijing of Urumqi Customs highlighted that the regular operation of such routes supports Xinjiang's cross-border e-commerce sector and boosts exports of competitive products under China's Belt and Road Initiative. ("Xinjiang launches first direct air cargo route to Baltic Sea area," *CGTN*, 22 May 2025)

The EU imposes a USD 2.25 fee on the imports of cheap parcels

On 20 May, the European Union (EU) decided to slap a flat USD 2.25 on billions of cheap product imports. This is aimed at relieving the burden the EU faces from the massive influx of inexpensive items, especially coming from China. The fee would remove the "customs-free status" of packages worth less than USD 168.75 that consumers import from platforms like the Chinese-funded Temu and Shein. The EU expects the margin of imports to rise. Brussels deems that platforms like Shein and Temu don't do enough to prevent the sales of products that don't meet European standards. ("EU to impose US\$2.25 fee on cheap parcels, mostly from China," *SCMP*, 21 May 2025)

China's investments in Europe increases, reports SCMP

On 21 May, *SCMP* reported that Hungary remains the region's leading hub for Chinese capital, as China's investments in Europe skyrocketed in 2024 for the first time in nine years. A recent joint report from the Rhodium Group and Rhodium Group and Mercator Institute for China Studies, a 47 percent increase from the previous year, to €10 billion (USD 11.23 billion). This is the first rise since 2016, back when European governments' serious concerns over Chinese investments first turned up. The report found that 53.2 percent of China's investments in high-income

economies flowed into Europe, with the EU and Britain jointly accounted for 19.1 per cent of all foreign direct investment from the country. Hungary is seen as China's closest partner in Europe. Greenfield investments in Europe – meaning Chinese companies launching new ventures by constructing new operational facilities from the ground up – rose 21 per cent compared to 2023, the third straight annual increase. (Finbarr Bermingham, "Chinese investments in Europe have increased for first time since 2016," *SCMP*, 21 May 2025)

China and Denmark marks 75 Years of diplomatic ties

On 19 May, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Danish counterpart Lars Løkke Rasmussen met in Beijing to reaffirm commitments to high-level exchanges, green development, and mutual respect. Wang urged Denmark to support China's sovereignty, including Taiwan and Greenland, while highlighting opportunities for Danish investment in China. Rasmussen reiterated Denmark's support for the one-China policy and openness to Chinese investments. Both sides pledged to defend multilateralism and free trade, aligning against decoupling and protectionism. Rasmussen emphasized that "trade wars help no one," while Wang noted that "respect and equality among nations" are vital for healthy bilateral ties. They also discussed enhancing EU-China ties and coordinating on global challenges like the Ukraine crisis. ("Chinese, Danish FMs vow to enhance ties, cooperation in Beijing talks," *CGTN*, 19 May 2025)

Wang Yi urges China-Germany unity against unilateralism and protectionism

On 19 May, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi in a phone call with newly appointed Germany's Foreign Minister Johann Wadepuhl, emphasized the need for China and Germany to jointly oppose unilateralism and protectionism. Wang stressed adherence to the one-China principle and warned against disruptions under the guise of "de-risking." He urged Germany to enhance China-EU cooperation, especially as both mark 50 years of diplomatic relations. Wang also called for resolving the EV anti-subsidy dispute and upholding free trade and global supply chain stability. Wadepuhl reaffirmed Germany's commitment to constructive China relations and EU-China dialogue, including peaceful resolution efforts for the Ukraine crisis. ("China urges Germany not to undermine cooperation in name of 'de-risking'," *Reuters*, 19 May 2025)

China's Defence Minister concludes his European tour

On 16 May 2025, China's Defence Minister Dong Jun concluded a significant European tour, marking the first visit by a Chinese defence minister to the continent in over four years. The trip included meetings in France and Germany, culminating in Dong's participation at the sixth UN Peacekeeping Ministerial in Berlin. During his engagements, Dong emphasised Beijing's intent to enhance security exchanges with European nations and to bolster its role in United Nations peacekeeping operations. In discussions with French Defence Minister Sébastien Lecornu, topics included maritime navigation freedom, nuclear non-proliferation, Indo-Pacific stability, Middle East security, and efforts toward a "just and lasting peace" in Ukraine. Lecornu described the dialogue as "frank," highlighting the shared responsibilities of both countries as nuclear-armed states and permanent members of the UN Security Council. This tour plays a significant role in China's ongoing efforts to position itself as a proponent of global stability and a key player in international security affairs. ("China's defence chief forges Europe ties in Paris, Berlin plus UN peace pledge," *SCMP*, 16 May 2025)

China and France commit to strengthening economic cooperation

On 15 May 2025, during the 10th China-France High-Level Economic and Financial Dialogue held in Paris, Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng and French Minister of Economy, Finance, and Industrial and Digital Sovereignty Eric Lombard agreed to enhance bilateral economic ties, focusing on trade, investment, and addressing global challenges such as climate change. Vice Premier He emphasised China's dedication to advancing the consensus reached by both nations' leaders, fostering an open global trade environment, and deepening economic and financial cooperation to invigorate the China-France comprehensive strategic partnership. Minister Lombard expressed France's willingness to collaborate with China on multilateralism, free trade, and climate change initiatives. He pledged to provide Chinese consumers with high-quality French products and to improve France's business climate to attract more Chinese investment. The dialogue concluded with the signing of cooperation agreements on poultry meat, breeding poultry, and hatching eggs, reflecting a commitment to practical collaboration. Vice Premier He also visited French family farms and met with representatives from the cosmetics, medicine,

and aviation sectors, indicating a broad scope of economic engagement. This meeting was significant in the backdrop of establishing mutual interest between China and France in reinforcing their economic partnership and addressing shared global concerns. ("China and France vow to deepen economic cooperation," *CGTN*, 16 May 2025)

China's Defense Minister meets with French and German counterparts, first time in four years

On 14 May, China's Defence Minister Dong Jun visits France and Germany. This marks the first-ever such European tour by a Chinese Defence Minister in over four years. In his meetings with French Defence Minister Sébastien Lecornu and his German counterpart Boris Pistorius, Dong highlighted strengthening bilateral security cooperation and increasing China's participation in United Nations peacekeeping missions.

Lecornu spoke of the importance of the dialogue between two nuclear powers and UN Security Council members, navigation at sea, nuclear non-proliferation, the Indo-Pacific, Middle East security, and the Ukrainian crisis. In context at the sixth UN Peacekeeping Ministerial in Berlin, Dong pledged to enhance China's peacekeeping mission, revealing modernisation for China's 8,000-strong standby force and a new headquarters unit. Retired PLA officer Zhou Bo, now a senior fellow at Tsinghua University, noted that China's growing role aims to boost its image as a responsible international power, especially as the US reduces its UN peacekeeping budget. (William Zheng, "China's defence chief forges Europe ties in Paris, Berlin plus UN peace pledge," *SCMP*, 16 May 2025)

China's Vice Chairman of NPC visits Austria

On 14 May, a Chinese delegation led by the Vice Chairman of the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee Li Hongzhong visited Austria. During his stay, Li was present at the welcoming ceremony of a new pair of giant pandas in Austria, along with Austrian President Alexander Van der Bellen and Chancellor Christian Stocker. Li acknowledged that China and Austria should account for each other's core interests and major concerns to promote mutual benefits and win-win results. Austria, in turn, reaffirms its support for the One-China principle. ("Senior Chinese legislator visits Austria," *Global Times*, 15 May 2025)

China's plug-in hybrid EV exports rise in the UK, reports an editorial in SCMP

On 11 May, an editorial in *SCMP* titled "While China's EV exports to UK are down, plug-in hybrids are bucking the trend," by Mia

Nulimaimait, reported on China's increased exports of hybrid EVs to the United Kingdom. This comes in light of the EU imposing a 45.3 per cent tariff on Chinese car manufacturers. The author notes that Chinese vehicles remain more affordable in the UK, where the import tariff is only 10 per cent. According to Chinese customs data, the UK is the second-largest importer of Chinese-manufactured electric vehicles and the fifth-largest for hybrid EVs. China saw a 33.6 per cent fall in EV exports in the first quarter of 2025, while the hike in hybrid vehicles surged by 600 per cent. China's SAIC Motor, British-based firm MG-HS, whose plug-in hybrid car became the seventh bestselling car in the UK in 2025. (Mia Nulimaimait, "While China's EV exports to UK are down, plug-in hybrids are bucking the trend," *SCMP*, 11 May 2025)

CHINA & AMERICAS

Chinese students flee back to China after being accused of illegal voting in the 2022 elections

On 31 May, *SCMP* reported that a Chinese student from the University of Michigan, accused of voting illegally in the 2022 elections, has fled to China, the FBI reported. Though he had surrendered his Chinese passport and was ordered to stay in Michigan, he allegedly used a second passport to fly out from Detroit in January. He was charged with perjury and voting as a non-citizen, and he missed court hearings. This has to be a federal arrest warrant in April. Federal Bureau of Investigation spokesperson Mara Schneider said: "Only US citizens are allowed to vote in federal elections." The US does not have an extradition relationship with China, so this means that his return is unlikely. ("Student flees to China after being charged with voting illegally in Michigan," *SCMP*, 31 May 2025)

US Defense Secretary vows to protect Taiwan against China

On 31 May, US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth addressed the gathering at Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, Asia's premier forum for defence leaders, militaries, and diplomats. He warned the US's allies in the Indo-Pacific to revamp their military expenditure, saying that "the threat from China was real and potentially imminent." Hegseth said: "Beijing is credibly preparing to potentially use military force to alter the balance of power in the Indo-Pacific". Hegseth also addressed the fact that if China were to conquer Taiwan, it would lead to devastating consequences for the Indo-Pacific region and the world. He vowed that a Chinese takeover of Taiwan would not occur under President

Trump's watch. Earlier in February this year, he warned Europe against treating America like a "sucker" while addressing a press conference at NATO headquarters in Brussels and calling out Europe for not spending more on their defence. Many, including US Democratic Senator Tammy Duckworth, co-leading a bipartisan delegation to the Shangri-la Dialogue, called the language Hegseth used in his speech "patronising". Asian nations spent an average of 1.5 per cent of GDP on defence in 2024, a figure that has remained relatively constant over the last decade. Hegseth expressed that the intention was "not to pressure other countries to embrace or adopt US politics or ideology", rather to work together in areas of common interest. ("Pentagon chief warns of imminent China threat, pushes Asian allies to boost defence spending," *Reuters*, 31 May 2025)

US to "aggressively" revoke visas for Chinese students, says US State Secretary

On 29 May, the *BBC* reported that US President Donald Trump will "aggressively" revoke the visas of Chinese students studying in the US. On 28 May, US State Secretary Marco Rubio said: "Under President Trump's leadership, the US State Department will work with the Department of Homeland Security to aggressively revoke visas for Chinese students, including those with connections to the Chinese Communist Party or studying in critical fields. He added: "We will also revise visa criteria to enhance scrutiny of all future visa applications from the People's Republic of China and Hong Kong." Beijing has not responded to this move specifically. According to US state department data, the pandemic-era restrictions and worsening relations between the two countries have resulted in Chinese student enrollment in recent years. (Sakshi Venkatraman, "Trump administration to 'aggressively' revoke visas of Chinese students," *BBC*, 29 May 2025)

Brazilian prosecutors sue BYD over slave-like labour conditions

On 27 May, a Brazilian prosecutor sued Chinese electric vehicle giant BYD and two of its contractors over alleged slave like labour conditions for workers and engagement in human trafficking. The labour prosecutors' office in Bahia state stated that it is seeking USD 257 million in damages from BYD, China JinJiang Construction Brazil, and Tecmonta Equipamentos Inteligentes. This lawsuit stems from an investigation last year that led to the rescue of 220 Chinese workers from the construction site of BYD's new factory in Camaari. It revealed that workers were brought

to Brazil under false pretences and with visas that did not match their jobs. BYD stated that it is collaborating with the investigations from the start and will speak about the case during the course of the probe. It also said it respects Brazil's laws and international labour regulations. ("Brazilian prosecutors sue China's BYD over allegations of slave-like labor conditions," *The Associated Press*, 28 May 2025)

North Carolina official denounces WeChat for complicity in the fentanyl crisis

On 27 May, North Carolina Attorney General Jeff Jackson accused the Chinese social media app WeChat of facilitating cross-border money laundering that aids the fentanyl abuse crisis in the US. He alleged that Mexican drug cartels have been using WeChat to coordinate cash pickup cities, arrange currency swaps with Chinese brokers, and quietly move drug profits across borders. He further called on the company to detail how it planned to prevent criminal use of its platform. He said: "This isn't speculation. This is based on real cases, convictions, investigations, and public reports." (Igor Patrick, "WeChat denounced for complicity in US fentanyl crisis by North Carolina official," *SCMP*, 28 May 2025)

Peru pushes for talks with China and Brazil on the bi-oceanic railway

On 26 May, Peru's Economy Ministry Raul Perez Reyes announced plans to seek a high-level meeting with China and Brazil to move forward on the proposed bi-oceanic railway project. He also met with China's ambassador to Peru, who emphasised a leadership-level discussion to set a clear joint roadmap for the regional rail corridor. The project aims to create a trade route with China connecting Brazil to a new port on Peru's Pacific coast. This will boost trade and regional integration. The ministry emphasized the importance of coordinated planning among the three nations to make real progress on the initiative. ("Peru seeks high-level meeting with China, Brazil to advance bi-oceanic railroad," *Reuters*, 27 May 2025)

China's Foreign Ministry criticizes the US 'Golden Dome' missile defense plan

On 21 May, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Mao Ning expressed strong opposition to the US "Golden Dome" missile defense project. They describe it as a serious threat to global strategic stability. The program aims to create a worldwide, multi-layered missile shield by 2029, which is viewed by China as a violation of international agreements. Chinese military expert Song Zhongping warned that the project, which may

cost over USD 831 billion according to the Congressional Budget Office, could provoke a new arms race in space. He stated the initiative reflects a US desire for military dominance, similar to a more advanced version of Ronald Reagan's "Star Wars" program. China's Ministry of National Defense also criticized the plan and urged the US to abandon Cold War thinking and stop exaggerating foreign threats. A joint statement by China and Russia rejected any use of outer space for military conflict or confrontation. (Xu Keyue and Liu Xuanzun, "Chinese FM expresses grave concern over US 'Golden Dome' missile defense system; program violates intl consensus: expert," *Global Times*, 21 May 2025)

China slams US over AI chip ban, warns of retaliation

On 19 May, Beijing urged Washington to "immediately correct its wrongdoings" after the US warned firms against using Chinese-made AI chips, including Huawei's Ascend series. China's Ministry of Commerce condemned the move as discriminatory and damaging to the progress made during recent high-level talks in Geneva. The US Commerce Department issued the guidance citing potential violations of export controls. China criticized the move as a misuse of control measures based on "unfounded accusations," warning it could harm US industrial competitiveness. Following a 90-day tariff truce, China has vowed resolute countermeasures if the restrictions persist. (Ethan Wang, Shi Bu and Liz Lee, "China urges US to correct 'wrongdoings' on AI chip curb," *Reuters*, 19 May 2025)

US-China Trade After Truce: Local Production, higher tariffs

On 19 May, *Reuters* reported that after a recent 90-day pause on the 34 percent US tariffs on Chinese imports and China reversing some of its own tariffs, the effective US tariff on Chinese goods is still very high at 31.8 percent, according to Fitch (May 13). This includes earlier tariffs from Trump's first term and a 20 percent tariff related to fentanyl, with some temporary exemptions on electronics like phones and computers. However, a new review on semiconductor imports could close these exemptions, making trade talks before the July deadline more complicated. The trade pause hasn't brought clear benefits with other US allies either. Meanwhile, big companies are moving their production out of China: Apple is moving most of its iPhone production for the US market to India, and VTEch plans to move all US manufacturing out of China by the end of 2026. While some hope for a quick trade deal, these

big changes show that ongoing trade tensions may continue for a long time. (Hudson Lockett, "The post-truce state of US-China trade looks dire," *Reuters*, 19 May 2025)

Brazil's first bird flu case triggers ban on Chinese import

On 16 May, Brazil officially confirmed its first highly infectious bird flu case on one of its commercial poultry farms in the country's southern region. This prompted China, its biggest poultry trade partner, to temporarily suspend imports. According to the Brazilian Animal Protein Association (ABPA), Brazil has recorded chicken meat exports of 5.294 million metric tons in 2024. The export revenues amounted to USD 9.928 billion, a record as well. China was the leading importer, purchasing 562,200 metric tons of Brazilian chicken in 2024, then the United Arab Emirates (455,100 metric tons), followed by Japan (443,200 metric tons) and Saudi Arabia (370,800 metric tons). The avian flu confirmation is challenging for trade interruptions for Brazil's robust poultry market. (Ana Mano, "Brazil's first bird flu case on commercial farm triggers Chinese ban," *Reuters*, 16 May 2025)

China-US ocean cargo bookings jump by 300 percent after tariff rollback

On 15 May, *CGTN* reported China-US ocean cargo bookings have increased sharply, after tariff negotiations. China to US container cargo booking surged by 300 percent, reports Vice President of Strategic Business Development, Ben Tracy. Bookings had previously slowed down after 02 April tariffs by US President on Chinese imports, but business rebounded from the tariff shock following a decision between the two nations to lower tariffs. German shipping company Hapag-Lloyd informed 50 percent week-on-week growth in China-US traffic bookings. ("China to U.S. ocean cargo bookings surge 300% after tariff rollback, Vizion says," *CGTN*, 15 May 2025)

China offers visa-free travel to five Latin American countries

On 15 May, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that it will give visa-free entry for Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Peru, and Uruguay from 01 June 2025, valid for 30-day. This action comes after a Beijing summit between China and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC). China's President pledged to deepen ties with the region, calling this move the start of a "golden decade." China's Foreign ministry spokesperson Lin Jian highlighted that China is dedicated to opening

and promoting cross-border contacts, inviting even more foreign visitors. (Meredith Chen, "China expands visa-free travel to 5 Latin American nations after summit with regional bloc," *SCMP*, 15 May 2025)

China condemns at US rule against the use of Ascend Chinese computer chips

On 15 May, China's Ministry of Commerce condemns at the US policy against the use of Ascend computer chips made by Huawei Technologies. The ministry spokesperson He Yongqian said: "not conducive to long-term, mutually beneficial, and sustainable cooperation and development between the two countries. The Chinese side urges the US side to immediately correct its erroneous practices." The US Department of Commerce has long been concerned about Huawei, citing national security risks, such as potential spying or cyber threats. Beijing lifted its retaliatory measures after US President Donald Trump raised tariffs on Chinese imports to 145 per cent. Despite the deal struck between the two, frictions remain. The timing of this is sensitive because the US and China have been on a temporary truce to ease trade tensions and negotiate on better terms. The US Commerce Department's Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) issued a new guideline subjecting Huawei's semiconductor to US export controls. The department said: "These chips were likely developed or produced in violation of US export controls," and that "the use of such PRC advanced computing ICs risks violating US export controls and may subject companies to BIS enforcement action." Hence, any country or company that wants to sell, ship, or transfer those chips internationally (especially if US tech is involved) may need a special license from the US. ("China blasts new US rule banning use of Huawei's Ascend advanced computer chips," *AP NEWS*, 15 May 2025)

Presidents of Chile and China affirm bilateral cooperation

On 14 May, China's President Xi Jinping met with Chile's President Gabriel Boric in Beijing during the fourth ministerial meeting of the China-CELAC Forum, marking 55 years of diplomatic ties. Xi welcomed Chilean exports and encouraged Chinese investment in Chile. He called for deeper cooperation through the Belt and Road Initiative and urged both countries to advance partnerships in agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry and fishery, industrial investment, infrastructure, green minerals, and emerging sectors such as artificial intelligence, biomedicine, polar regions, astronomy, and the

digital economy. Xi also stated that, as strong advocates of multilateralism and free trade, China and Chile should strengthen multilateral cooperation to protect the shared interests of the Global South. Boric affirmed Chile's commitment to the one-China principle, highlighted China as Chile's top trading partner, and stressed the importance of free trade, dialogue over conflict, and joint efforts to protect the authority of the United Nations. The visit concluded with the signing of several cooperation agreements in areas like economy, publishing, inspection and quarantine, media and think tanks. ("Xi Jinping calls on China, Chile to enhance multilateral collaboration to safeguard interests of Global South," *CGTN*, 14 May 2025)

US sanctions China and Hong Kong firm for aiding Iran's oil exports, reports SCMP

On 14 May, *SCMP* reported that the United States has imposed sanctions on two dozen firms from Hong Kong, China, and Singapore, abetting Iran's secret export of billions of dollars' worth of oil to China. This move targets a network allegedly working for Iran's Armed Forces General Staff and its front company, Sepehr Energy. The sanctioned firms are accused of disguising Iranian crude oil by falsely certifying its origin and selling it to China's independent "teapot refineries." The US Treasury Department stated that the oil revenue supports Iran's ballistic missile and drone programs, nuclear development, and attacks by the Houthi group in the Red Sea, the US Navy, and Israel. US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent emphasized continued efforts to target Iran's oil trade. Tammy Bruce, spokesperson for the US State Department, highlighted that these sales directly fund destabilizing military actions. In response, Chinese embassy spokesperson Liu Pengyu criticized the sanctions as an abuse of power and warned that China would protect the legal rights of its companies. (Zhao Ziwen, "US sanctions network of companies it says helped ship Iranian oil to China," *SCMP*, 14 May 2025)

China-France Defense Ministers discuss strengthening military ties

On 13 May, China's Defense Minister Dong Jun visited France and met his French counterpart, Sébastien Lecornu, marking the first official visit by a Chinese defense minister to a major Western country in several years. The talks, held in Paris, focused on bilateral military relations, European and Indo-Pacific security, and regional issues. This visit reflects shifting European attitudes toward China in defense and security, according to experts cited by the *Global Times*. Wang Yunfei, a Chinese military affairs expert,

highlighted the importance of building trust and avoiding misunderstandings through deeper exchanges. The visit is also symbolically significant, coinciding with the upcoming 80th anniversary of the end of World War II, where both nations played key roles. Zhuo Hua from Beijing Foreign Studies University noted a steady warming of China-Europe defense ties, supported by growing political and diplomatic engagement, particularly as 2024 marked 60 years of China-France diplomatic relations. The trend also includes UK-China military exchanges, as shown by Admiral Tony Radakin's recent visit to China. Zhuo added that Europe's pursuit of strategic autonomy, driven by security challenges and strained transatlantic ties, has led to more diversified defense partnerships. (Liu Xuanzun, Guo Yuandan and Liang Rui, "Chinese Defense Minister meets with French counterpart in France; carries positive significance in bilateral military ties: expert," *Global Times*, 13 May 2025)

US reduces "de minimis" tariffs on China

On 14 May, *Reuters* reported that the US reduced tariffs on low-value shipments from China under the "de minimis" rule as part of a 90-day easing in trade tensions between the two countries. According to a White House executive order and industry experts, tariffs on direct-to-consumer postal packages valued up to USD 800 will be lowered from 120 percent to 54 percent, while the flat USD 100 fee per package remains, cancelling a planned hike to USD 200. For packages handled by commercial carriers like FedEx, UPS, and DHL, the tariff drops from 145 percent to 30 percent, which includes a 10 percent global duty and a 20 percent fentanyl-related charge. US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer stated that the 10 percent global rate is expected to stay to support US manufacturing. About 90 percent of all small packages entering the US have used the de minimis exemption, with 60 percent from China, contributing USD 240 billion in exports and 1.3 percent to China's GDP. Despite the cut, Hu notes that a 54 percent tariff is still steep and may affect Shein more, as it relies on air freight for fast delivery. (Farah Master, Casey Hall, and Lisa Baertlein, "US slashes 'de minimis' tariff on small China parcels to as low as 30%," *Reuters*, 14 May 2025)

China lifts Boeing delivery ban amid easing trade tensions

On 13 May, China lifted its ban on receiving Boeing aircraft after a US-China agreement to temporarily reduce mutual tariffs, according to Bloomberg News. This decision

allows Chinese airlines to resume taking delivery of planes made in the US, a move not publicly confirmed by China's Civil Aviation Administration or Boeing. Boeing had earlier stated that China refused to accept new aircraft due to high tariffs, forcing the company to reconsider selling dozens of jets. In April, Boeing repatriated at least three aircraft from its Chinese delivery center back to the US. Although there was no formal ban announced, senior industry sources were unaware of any official directive halting deliveries. China accounts for around 10 percent of Boeing's commercial backlog, making it a vital aviation market. Boeing had expected to deliver 50 jets to China in 2025, with 41 already built or in production. Of the remaining 30 pre-2023 built 737 MAX jets, Chinese airlines are now anticipated to take 25. Additionally, four 777 freighters are being produced for Chinese carriers, according to Aviation Flights Group. ("China lifts Boeing delivery ban as tariff war cools, Bloomberg News reports," *Reuters*, 13 May 2025)

Brazil's President discusses strengthening cooperation on state visit to China

On 13 May, China's President Xi Jinping met with Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who was on a state visit to Beijing on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of China-Brazil diplomatic relations. During the talks, Xi called on both countries to expand strategic cooperation and deepen Brazil's engagement in the Belt and Road Initiative. He also expressed a desire to align development strategies more closely with Brazil-specifically in infrastructure, agriculture, and energy, and to expand cooperation in energy transition, aerospace, and artificial intelligence. Xi stated that China and Brazil should enhance cultural and people-to-people exchanges, provide more convenience for personnel movement between the two sides, and strengthen cooperation in culture, education, tourism, and media at the sub-national level. Lula responded that Brazil is willing to promote the construction of a Brazil-China community by further deepening strategic cooperation. Lula stated, "Brazil will work with China to safeguard the common interests of the Global South and safeguard international fairness and justice." ("Xi Focus: Xi holds talks with Brazilian president," *Xinhua*, 13 May 2025)

China-US substantially reduce tariffs after negotiations in Geneva

On 12 May, the US and China agreed to reduce tariffs in a move aimed at easing economic tensions. US President Donald Trump called the

deal as a “total reset,” which led to a surge in the stock market. The deal notes that US will reduce its imposed tariffs on China from 145 per cent to 30 per cent, and China agreed to reduce its retaliatory tariffs to 10 per cent from 125 per cent. Trump also told reporters that while some tariffs had been suspended for 90 days, they had not been fully removed and “may rise in three months’ time.” Investors welcomed the de-escalation, with the S&P 500, Dow Jones, and Nasdaq stocks hiked by 3.2 per cent, 2.8 per cent, and 4.3 per cent, respectively. Following the Liberation Day announcements, the *BBC* also informed that the US will maintain a 20 per cent tariff on illegal fentanyl imports “to pressurize Beijing.” (Nick Edser, Jonathan Josephs & Lucy Hooker, “Markets rise as US and China agree to slash tariffs,” *BBC*, 13 May 2025)

China and the US issue a joint statement after the de-escalation of tariff tensions

On 12 May, a joint statement was issued by the US and China, informs China’s Ministry of Commerce. The joint statement emphasized their shared commitment to resolving differences and strengthening cooperation through peaceful dialogue and consultation. Acknowledging the importance of US-China economic and trade relations, both sides agreed to significantly reduce bilateral tariffs, recognizing their impact on the global economy. As part of this agreement, the US will remove 91 per cent of tariffs on Chinese imports, while China will suspend a 24 per cent “reciprocal tariff” on US goods. The statement noted that the initiative is expected to benefit both consumers and manufacturers in the two countries. (“Commerce ministry: China-U.S. joint statement an important step toward resolving differences,” *CGTN*, 12 May 2025)

US-China culminate their first tariff negotiations, Trump notes a “total reset” in relations

On 11 May, *BBC* reported on recent trade talks between the heads of China and the US in Switzerland. The US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessant met with China’s Vice Premier He Lifeng. Bessant described their discussions as “productive and constructive.” *BBC* informed that a joint statement is yet to be released, sources anticipate its arrival by Monday. This was the first high-level engagement since US President Donald Trump imposed a sweeping 145 per cent tariff on Chinese imports. Since the meeting, the stock market in mainland China and Hong Kong posted gains a similar rise is expected for US stocks future. Additionally, there is an appreciation of

the Chinese yuan against the US dollar. The potential deal could lead to a reduction in trade tariffs between the two nations. Trump hailed the meeting as a “total reset” in US-China relations. (“US says ‘deal’ reached with China after trade talks”, *BBC*, 11 May 2025)

“Fruitful” discussion between the US-China tariff deal, informs China’s Vice Premier

On 12 May, *Global Times* reported on the China-US trade and tariff talks held in Geneva, highlighting progress between the two countries on multiple fronts. China’s Vice Premier He Lifeng stated that both sides appear to have established a new economic and trade consultation mechanism. While the details have yet to be formally announced in a joint statement, the talks were described as “fruitful” by Lifeng. He emphasized the need to resolve differences through meaningful dialogue and consultation. Chinese Academy of Social Sciences scholar Gao Lingyun noted that the outcomes of the talks, including the creation of the consultation mechanism, lay the groundwork for future discussions on trade and economic issues. Both China and the United States only stand to gain from mutual cooperation. (“China, US make substantive progress in Geneva trade talks; ‘meeting injects stability to world economy’, *Global Times*, 12 May 2025)

China’s President to attend the fourth China-CELAC ministerial meeting

On 11 May, *Global Times* reported that China’s President Xi Jinping will address the fourth ministerial meeting of the China-CELAC Forum in Beijing. The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) will be chaired by the China’s Foreign Minister Wang Yi and attended by the CELAC foreign ministers and regional organization heads. Vice Foreign Minister Miao Deyu stated that the meeting will yield two key documents-First, the Beijing Declaration, reaffirming the commitment to peace, development, and cooperation; Second, a Joint Action Plan outlining concrete steps for collaboration in innovation, trade, finance, infrastructure, agriculture, energy, and BRI. Xi welcomed all CELAC member states to join China in addressing global challenges, reforming governance, and ensuring world peace and stability. Brazil’s President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva is attending the China-CELAC Forum. Both countries have signed over 16 agreements, while 32 are under negotiation. They also lifted soybean restrictions from five Brazilian firms. China also signed agreements

with Argentina for soybeans and oil. (Deng Xiaoci, "Xi to attend opening ceremony of fourth ministerial meeting of China-CELAC Forum," *Global Times*, 11 May 2025)

China to evaluate US proposal to kickstart tariff negotiations

On 02 May, China's Ministry of Commerce informed that China is considering the US proposal to kickstart negotiations for trade tariff discussions. The ministry said: "Recently, through relevant channels, actively conveyed messages to China, expressing a desire to engage in talks." And that they are evaluating this proposal. China's state media houses informed us that the Trump administration had reached out to them. Last month, the International Monetary Fund lowered the global growth forecast to 2.8 per cent after the tariffs. Gavekal Dragonomics, Research Director, Christopher Beddor, said on China: "They're ready to stimulate to blunt the damage to economic growth. But policymakers also clearly understand that it would be a lot better if they didn't have to use those tools because there was a de-escalation." Prior to this, US President Donald Trump informed that there is a very good chance of reaching a trade deal with China. China's Ministry of Commerce said: "The tariff war and trade war were unilaterally initiated by the US, and if the US wants to talk, it should demonstrate sincerity by preparing to correct its erroneous actions and rescind the unilateral imposition of additional tariffs." ("China says it is 'evaluating' Trump administration's outreach on tariffs," *Al-Jazeera*, 02 May 2025)

EAST ASIA & THE PACIFIC READER

TAIWAN READER

TSMC reaches over 1.8 million shareholders

On 31 May, *Taiwan News* reported that Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC) now has over 1.8 million shareholders, a milestone driven by Taiwan's rising public enthusiasm for tech investment. Most new investors are small-scale buyers, reflecting both national pride and growing confidence in Taiwan's chipmaking dominance. The company's stock climbed 15 per cent, adding NT 3.3 trillion (approx. USD111 billion) in value. A finance analyst noted, "Retail investors see TSMC not just as a company, but as Taiwan's economic backbone." ("TSMC tops shareholder rankings in Taiwan stock market," *Taiwan News*, 31 May 2025)

Strong opposition against Taiwan's unification with China, survey by Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council

On 29 May, a survey by Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council shows strong public opposition to China's unification claims. Nearly 80 per cent of respondents reject the idea that Taiwan's unification with China is inevitable, while 73 per cent oppose recognising the "1992 Consensus" as a precondition for talks. A majority also support fair participation in global health organisations and call for dialogue without conditions. The results highlight Taiwan's firm public stance on maintaining autonomy and pursuing equal international recognition. ("Survey finds 79% dispute notion Taiwan will inevitably be ruled by China," *Taiwan News*, 31 May 2025)

Taiwan's cabinet approves easing work visa rules to attract global talent

On 29 May, Taiwan's Cabinet approved a draft amendment to attract foreign nationals to live and work in the country. The changes include longer digital nomad visas and fewer work experience requirements. The head of the National Development Council's Human Resources Department, Hsieh Chia-yi, stated that graduates from the world's top 200 universities within the past five years can enter Taiwan to perform a job hunt without a prior job offer. The proposed changes to the Act for the Recruitment and Employment of Foreign Professionals aim to attract more skilled workers to Taiwan amid global talent competition. Since the act began on February 8, 2018, over 73,000 foreign professionals have

come to Taiwan. One revision would allow graduates from the world's top 1,000 universities, instead of just the top 500, to work in Taiwan without needing two years of experience. The Ministry of Education will set the list of eligible universities based on global rankings. However, they must still get a work permit from the Ministry of Labor before arrival. Digital nomad visas could be extended to two years, up from the current six months. Foreigners who will be earning over NT\$6 million annually may get permanent residency after one year. Overseas Taiwanese with degrees from Taiwan may shorten residency requirements. More foreigners would qualify for labor benefits and long-term care. The amendment now awaits legislative approval. ("Draft foreign work visa rules advanced," *Taipei Times*, 30 May 2025)

Taiwan considers regulating Chinese social media apps

On 29 May, Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) announced that they are considering regulating Chinese apps like Xiaohongshu (Rednote). They also gave a warning that these apps might be used by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) for "united front" influence campaigns. MAC Minister Chiu Chui-cheng stated that the app promotes pro-unification messages, and this may pose a threat to Taiwan's sovereignty. He urged caution while using Xiaohongshu and Douyin (Chinese TikTok). He also called for media literacy education to alert students about risks like data exposure and propaganda. Deputy Minister Liang Wen-chie stated that there is a lack of specific web regulation, and national security is facing a struggle in stopping the spread of such content. The MAC is working with other agencies and plans to propose legal amendments soon, in line with President William Lai's 17 national security strategies to counter China's growing infiltration efforts. (Shelley Shan, "MAC mulls regulation of China's social media apps", *Taipei Times*, 30 May 2025)

China's Liaoning aircraft carrier detected in Taiwan's southeastern waters

On 28 May, Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense informed that China's Liaoning aircraft carrier was detected in Taiwan's southeastern waters, indicating possible military exercises. Accordingly, Japan's Ministry of Defense reported that the Liaoning carrier group was spotted sailing southeast between Okinawa and

Miyako Island towards the western Pacific on 27 May. Fighter jets and helicopters were spotted taking off and landing on the carrier roughly 190km southeast of Miyako Island. The Ministry of National Defense's Office of the Deputy Chief of General Staff for Intelligence, intelligence officer Colonel Hu Chung-hua, confirmed that the Liaoning is in waters southeast of Taiwan and that the military is monitoring its movements. The Ministry of National Defense's General Staff Operations and Planning Department deputy head, Colonel Su Tung-wei, stated the military has already completed operational plans to counter various possible invasion scenarios. (Keoni Everington, "Taiwan tracking China's Liaoning for possible military drills," *Taiwan News*, 29 May 2025)

Loans offered for Taiwan's scholarship holders at Harvard

On 28 May, Taiwan's Ministry of Education stated that Taiwan's students who depend on a scholarship to study at Harvard University can apply for government-based loans. The ministry announced that students whose family annual income is below USD 66685, or with more than two people studying abroad, can apply for student loans from seven domestic banks. Master's students can apply for up to NT\$1.2 million in overseas student loans, while PhD students can apply for NT\$2.4 million. According to one Taiwanese student at Harvard, the Trump administration's decisions have caused financial hardship for students who depend on scholarship money for daily expenses such as food, transportation, and housing. Taiwan's Ministry of Education reported that 52 Taiwanese students, both current and recently enrolled, are affected by the US's decision to block international students. (Lily LaMattina, "Taiwan offers loans for Harvard students after Trump suspends grants," *Taiwan News*, 29 May 2025)

Application for the Taiwanese Employment Gold Card increases

On 25 May, Taiwan's National Development Council informed the issuance of Employment Gold cards for 13,191 people from 101 countries. This four-in-one Employment Gold Card combines a work permit, resident visa, Alien Resident Certificate (ARC), and re-entry permit. Following the card's introduction in 2018, only 188 cards were issued. Post-COVID-19 pandemic, Taiwan's effective response and resilience of its economy resulted in a card application surge. It is reckoned that Americans account for 25 per cent, followed by Hong Kong residents and Japanese, respectively. The

visibility of the Employment Gold Card improved significantly, with 10,000 cards issued by the end of last year. The card aims to attract foreign professionals with special expertise in various fields, including technology, economics, education, arts and culture, sports, law, finance, national defence, architecture, and the digital industries. (William Hetherington, "Gold Card applications rising: NDC," *Taipei Times*, 26 March 2025)

America Institute of Taiwan calls for deeper US-Taiwan economic ties

On 25 May, America Institute in Taiwan's (AIT) Director, Raymond Greene, stated that Taiwan-US relations are built on deep economic ties and shared values. He further added that strengthening supply chain security in critical industries, enhancing societal resilience through cooperation, and deepening partnerships are key to ensuring peace and stability in the years ahead. At the National Security Youth Forum organised by National Taiwan University's National Security and Strategy Studies Institution in Taipei, he added that the three industries- AI, semiconductors and drones- are important as they align with AIT's mission to promote security and resilience as well as the US President Trump's administration to make the US and Taiwan stronger, safer and more prosperous. ("US-Taiwan ties are key to peace, AIT chief says." *Taipei Times*, 25 May 2025)

Taiwanese court extend detention of TPP's former chair Ko Wen-je

On 28 May, *Taiwan News* reported that the Taipei District Court extended former Taiwan's People Party Chair Ko Wen-je's and his cohorts' detention by two months for corruption charges associated with a real estate deal. His cohort included Core Pacific Group founder Sheen Ching-jing, Ko's former mayor's office head Lee Wen-tung, and KMT Taipei City Councillor Ying Hsiao-wei. They are held incommunicado for fear of evidence tampering and collusion. The court also stated that they were suspected of committing serious crimes and posed a flight risk. The TPP expressed anger over Ko's continued detention in a statement, saying that the court ruling did not cite any specific evidence to justify the continued detention. (Sean Scanlan, "Taipei Court extends detention of Ko Wen-je and three others," *Taiwan News*, 28 May 2025)

Taiwan's president calls for an economic partnership with the EU

On 27 May, Taiwan's president William Lai called on the European Parliament to support

the signing of an economic partnership agreement between Taiwan and the EU. During a meeting with European Parliament members Reinis Poznaks and Beatrice Timgren in Taipei, Lai said: “An EPA would not only yield mutually beneficial win-win developments, but also consolidate economic security and boost international competitiveness on both sides.” He highlighted strong complementarity between Taiwan and the EU in areas such as semiconductors, artificial intelligence and green energy. While the European Parliament voiced support for EPA with Taiwan, the European Commission has remained hesitant on the issue. He thanked the European Parliament for recognising them as a key democratic partner in the Indo-Pacific region and reaffirming support for Taiwan amid ongoing “provocative military actions” from China. (“Lai calls for EU economic agreement,” *Taipei Times*, 28 May 2025)

US Senator Tammy Duckworth visits Taiwan for the fourth time

On 28 May, US Senator Tammy Duckworth arrived in Taiwan, marking her fourth visit since joining Congress in 2017. Her visit underscores the deepening US-Taiwan relationship, with a focus on regional security, defense cooperation, and cross-strait affairs. Taiwan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) announced that during her stay, Duckworth will meet with President Lai Ching-te, Vice President Hsiao Bi-khim, and Foreign Minister Lin Chia-lung to exchange views on key strategic and economic issues. Duckworth, an Iraq War veteran and former Assistant Secretary of the US Department of Veterans Affairs, is well-regarded in Taiwan for her consistent support. Notably, during her 2021 visit, she announced a critical US donation of COVID-19 vaccines amid Taiwan’s pandemic crisis. Her visit follows her May 2024 trip after President Lai’s inauguration, further affirming bipartisan US backing for Taiwan. Her presence coincides with two other US delegations: one led by House Committee on Natural Resources Chairman Bruce Westerman, and another by Guam Governor Lourdes A. Leon Guerrero. The American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) said: “The delegation will engage in a series of high-level meetings with senior Taiwan leaders to discuss U.S.-Taiwan relations, regional security, trade and investment, and other significant issues of mutual interest.” (“American senator Duckworth in Taiwan as part of Indo-Pacific tour”, *Focus Taiwan*, 28 May 2025)

Taiwan screens public servants to identify links with China

On 27 May, *SCMP* reported that Taiwan is

vetting over 747,000 public servants, educators, and military personnel for links to mainland China, including ID and residency documents, to counter Beijing’s growing influence. The first phase screened 371,203 high-ranking personnel, with 99.87 per cent denying mainland ties. Only 2 had Chinese ID cards, and 75 held residence permits, all now cancelled. A second phase now includes local officials and school staff. The Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) warned that Beijing’s “integrated development” efforts threaten Taiwan’s national identity. Like Kuomintang’s Weng Hsiao-ling, critics call the checks unconstitutional “loyalty pledges.” Beijing condemned the move as fear-mongering. MAC Chair Chiu Chui-cheng defended it as lawful and cost-effective, stating that those with a Chinese ID will be dismissed. Taiwan’s Defence Ministry also reported 62 military personnel with Chinese residence permits. (Lawrence Chung, “Taiwan cracks down on public servants with mainland ID and residency,” *SCMP*, 27 May 2025)

Taiwan uninstalls lithium battery-powered air quality sensors over safety concerns

On 24 May, the National Science and Technology Council stated that it had removed 16 air quality sensors with built-in lithium batteries across Taiwan over safety concerns. The council minister Wu Cheng-wen added that the council will strengthen the inventory of electronic research equipment across the country and implement management and monitoring mechanisms. This measure is taken in the background of a wildfire on Qixingshan Hiking Trail caused by built-in batteries in the air quality sensor device. It resulted in the loss of 4.5 hectares of national park vegetation. Taiwan’s Interior Ministry stated that instruments to monitor weather sensors, ecological survey tools, disaster monitoring equipment, and infrared cameras. The ministry added that the National Park Service will conduct a comprehensive review and inspection of the monitoring devices installed at national parks. (Carol Yang, “Taiwan removes lithium battery-powered air quality sensors over safety concerns,” *Taiwan News*, 26 May 2025)

Rising illegal sea crossings from China to Taiwan, reports SCMP

On 22 May, *SCMP* reported that Taiwan has now formed a special team and plans to improve its coastal defences and response systems. Taiwan’s Coast Guard’s Deputy Director, Hsieh Ching-chin, stated there has been a rise in small illegal sea crossings from mainland China. He stated that these are part of China’s “grey-zone”

tactics, which are quiet actions meant to test Taiwan's defences without starting a war. One major case happened in September 2023, when a man named Li left Fuzhou, China, using a smuggling network. He boarded a ship and arrived in Kaohsiung. Li moved around Taiwan without being caught for over a month before turning himself in. He was fined or given 30 days in detention. Experts think he might have been collecting information secretly, which shows Taiwan's coastal defences have serious weak points. Other similar incidents followed, like two men using foam boards and a small boat to reach Taiwan's Kinmen islands, and others using inflatable boats to land on beaches. One person even claimed to plant China's flag on a beach. Taiwan's long coastline and many islands make it hard to monitor everything. Even with new radar and cameras, there aren't enough people to watch all areas. Taiwan has now formed a special team and plans to improve its coastal defences and response systems. (Lawrence Chungin, "Illegal entry from mainland China raises alarms about Taiwan's maritime security," *SCMP*, 22 May 2025)

Taiwan's officials reject call for publicly broadcast of security briefing, reports Taiwan News

On 22 May, *Taiwan News* reported that Taiwan refused a suggestion to live-stream parts of an upcoming security briefing. Taiwan's People's Party Chair Huang Kuo-chang asked that non-sensitive sections be shared publicly, but Deputy Secretary-General Hsu Szu-chien stated the topics involve defense strategies and grey-zone threats, which are classified. Hsu added that if the information could be made public, it wouldn't need a special briefing. DPP lawmaker Wu Szu-yao criticized the request as a political tactic, while Huang insisted transparency was key. Scholars and experts noted that national security could be an area where President Lai shows leadership despite his party's minority in the legislature. (Medwin Hsu, "Taiwan National Security Council rejects call to live-stream security briefing," *Taiwan News*, 22 May 2025)

Taiwan receives the Beacon Award from Freedom House

On 21 May, Taiwan was awarded international recognition by the US-based Freedom House for its strong commitment to democratic values and its support for global freedom. The award was accepted in Washington, DC, by Taiwan's US representative Alexander Yui and civil society leader Chiang Min-yen. Freedom House praised Taiwan's government and people for staying united and peaceful in their democratic journey.

President Lai Ching-te's message, quoted at the event, emphasized unity through citizen participation rather than hate. The same event also honored US Senators Jeanne Shaheen and Roger Wicker for their leadership in defending democracy worldwide. Venezuelan opposition leader Maria Corina Machado received the Freedom Award, while Crimean Tatar activist Server Mustafayev was honored for his courage as a political prisoner. This recognition highlights Taiwan's growing role in global democratic efforts. (Keoni Everington, "Taiwan wins 1st Freedom House Beacon Award," *Taiwan News*, 22 May 2025)

Taiwan's exclusion from WHO sparks debate at World Health Assembly

On 19 May, Taiwan's exclusion sparked a diplomatic clash at the 78th World Health Assembly in Geneva. Belize and St. Vincent was against China and Pakistan's stance, arguing that UN Resolution 2758 cannot apply to Taiwan's observer status in international health assemblies. Beijing's delegation representative Chen Xu recited Beijing's sovereignty claim over Taiwan and referred to the proposal as an infringement on Chinese sovereignty, a view held by Pakistan. On the other hand, Belize's Health Minister Kevin Bernard criticized Taiwan's exclusion as unjust and harmful to global health, explaining that Taiwan has been politically limited in participating in WHO meetings, not on the grounds of health concerns. St. Vincent's Health Minister St. Clair Prince pointed out that Taiwan previously participated as an observer until political reasons ended this participation in 2016. Despite all these allegations, the WHA chair continued the Secretariat's move of refusing Taiwan observer status. Taiwan's Health Minister Chiu Tai-yuan plans to protest officially, executing Taiwan's persistent efforts to participate in global health deliberations. Bernard's comments underscore the persistent politicization undermining international health cooperation. (Michael Nakhiengchanh, "Taiwan allies confront China at WHO over exclusion," *Taiwan News*, 19 May 2025)

Taiwan profits surge in foreign investments reaching USD 2.83 billion

On 15 May, *Taiwan News* reported that Taiwan's foreign investment inflows reach nearly NTD 85.44 billion (USD 2.83 billion) from January to April, a 67 per cent increase compared to 2024, driven largely by clean energy projects like the CIP Fengmiao and Haineng wind farms. Despite a 7.4 per cent decrease in the number of approved foreign investment projects, the total

investment amount rose significantly. Key investments included NTD 22.08 billion from CI Fengmiao SCSP, NTD 8.75 billion from Stonepeak Oceanview, NTD 7 billion from Google Engineering UK, and NTD 3.59 billion from Orsted. Additionally, outbound investments from Taiwan increased by 12.3 per cent, while investments in China fell by 60 per cent to NTD 13.06 billion over 58 cases. ("Clean energy lifts foreign investment in Taiwan to NT\$85.44 billion," *Taiwan News*, 15 May 2025)

Taiwan president William Lai announces plans to set up a sovereign wealth fund

On 21 May, Taiwan President William Lai announced plans to set up a sovereign wealth fund for foreign investment "to connect with the world." On the first anniversary, Lai stated that "The government will set up a sovereign wealth fund to build a national-level investment platform." He also stated that "The fund would take advantage of the strengths of Taiwanese businesses and be led by the government, while harnessing the power of the private sector to build a global presence and connect with major target markets in the AI era." He also emphasized that the proposal was raised as part of the government's strategy to deal with challenges in the global economy and not only focus on investing in the US. According to the International Monetary Fund, Sovereign wealth funds are "government-owned investment funds, set up for a variety of macroeconomic purposes. Ministry of Finance of the People's Republic of China further stated that deliberation on this proposal was yet to reach a consensus. ("Lai announces sovereign wealth fund plan," *Taipei Times*, 21 May, 2025)

MediaTek and Alchip technologies are among the first to adopt the NVLink Fusion

On 19 May, Taiwan's MediaTek and Alchip Technologies were the first to adopt Nvidia's latest connectivity solution, NVLink Fusion. The NVLink Fusion enables chipmakers to connect their processors with Nvidia's GPUs using the same high-speed interconnect technology that powers Nvidia's hardware. By adopting NVLink Fusion early, companies can develop more advanced and efficient products, giving them a market advantage. Access to this technology allows firms like MediaTek to create customised solutions for various applications. Working with Nvidia's open-system architecture encourages partnerships and shared advancements in the tech industry. According to UDN Money, MediaTek played a key role in advancing this approach through its work with Nvidia on the compact AI supercomputer DGX Spark. DGX

Spark integrates a MediaTek-designed CPU and a Nvidia GPU in a single package. MediaTek CEO Rick Tsai said: "The company aims to develop custom application-specific ICs that integrate Nvidia's NVLink Fusion technology." ("Taiwan firms lead early adoption of Nvidia's NVLink Fusion technology," *Taiwan News*, 21 May 2025)

Palau's President Surangel Whipps Jr. visits Taiwan to strengthen ties

On 19 May, Palau President Surangel Whipps Jr. arrived in Taiwan for a week-long state visit, accompanied by key ministers and officials. During the visit, he will receive military honors, attend a state banquet, and sign agreements on technical cooperation and diplomatic training with President Lai Ching-te. The delegation plans to engage with Taiwanese industries to boost bilateral cooperation. Taiwan and Palau, celebrating 26 years of diplomatic relations, aim to deepen friendship and economic collaboration, with Taiwan supporting Palau's sustainable development and regional stability. (Kelvin Chen, "Palau president in Taiwan for state visit," *Taiwan News*, 19 May 2025)

Taiwan celebrates White Terror Memorial Day

On 19 May, Taiwan commemorated White Terror Memorial Day at the National Human Rights Museum in New Taipei City to commemorate the victims of persecution under martial law. Presidential Office Deputy Secretary-General Ho Chih-wei, Culture Minister Li Yuan, Museum Director Hong Shih-fang, human rights activists, and victims' families, attended the ceremony. White Terror Memorial Day is observed annually on 19 May, marking the self-immolation of Taiwanese independence activist Chen I-hua. While not a public holiday, the day is dedicated to fostering a deeper public understanding of democracy and human rights. Ho stressed the need to preserve and pass down this history, frequently leading foreign visitors to the Monument for the Victims of the White Terror. Minister Li highlighted the importance of the year ahead, with new memorial installations at Jingmei and Green Island on the agenda, as he pledged to promote transitional justice during his tenure. The remembrance serves to affirm Taiwan's commitment to coming to terms with past abuses and strengthening democratic values. (Michael Nakhiengchanh, Taiwan reaffirms commitment to justice on White Terror Memorial Day," *Taiwan News*, 19 May 2025)

KMT legislator condemned Taiwan's nuclear phase-out in the wake of the thermal power boom

On 18 May, KMT lawmaker Weng Hsiao-ling condemned Taiwan's nuclear phaseout as thermal energy surged to 96.5 per cent of the power load, posing air pollution concerns. Green groups and doctors warned of increased health hazards from pollution. Some experts called for reviving nuclear power, while others emphasized Taiwan's exposure to nuclear disasters. Taipower asserted cleaner thermal energy and future power improvements. Premier Cho Jung-tai and Environment Minister Peng Chi-ming gave assurances that power supply and air quality would continue to be stable despite the closure of the final nuclear reactor. (Medwin Hsu, "KMT legislator criticizes nuclear phaseout amid thermal energy spike," *Taiwan News*, 19 May 2025)

Taiwan envoy greets Pope Leo XIV, strengthening diplomatic relations

On 18 May, Taiwan's former Vice President Chen Chien-jen represented President Lai Ching-te as his special envoy at the inauguration of Pope Leo XIV. Chen met international leaders such as Ursula von der Leyen, Ukraine's Zelenskyy, Germany's Chancellor Merz, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, and Japan's Aso Taro at the Vatican, and they talked about cooperation in technology and diplomacy. He offered the pope gifts representing Taiwan-Vatican relations and extended the invitation to visit Taiwan. The pope received Chen warmly, thanking Taiwan for its previous humanitarian aid. The visit underscored Taiwan's increasing international outreach and focus on peace, technology, and religious diplomacy. (Keoni Everington, "Taiwan envoy meets Pope Leo at inauguration," *Taiwan News*, 19 May 2025)

Lai credits China with reversing Taiwan strategy; KMT denounces his metaphor

On 19 May, *Taipei Times* reported that President William Lai called upon China to change course regarding its Taiwan strategy, inquiring into the profitability of this approach. Lai said, "Taiwan is a friendly and well-intentioned society; China should re-evaluate its policies." This was in response to the US's increased activity and presence in the Indo-Pacific. Lai commented on Taiwan's democratic ideals and strategic ties to the US, further stating that ongoing talks are hoping to avoid jarring tariffs. He compared China to a big business pressuring a small business (Taiwan) to merge. KMT spokeswoman Yang Chih-yu questioned whether Lai's metaphor implied an invitation

for China to propose a "merger and acquisition" plan, suggesting it portrays Taiwan as open to annexation under certain conditions. She argued that national sovereignty is not a negotiable commodity and said Lai's remarks contradict his stance on "pragmatic Taiwan independence," raising international concerns about his cross-strait policy. (Su Yung-yao and Sam Garcia, "China should review Taiwan policy: Lai," *Taipei Times*, 19 May 2025)

Migrant workers protest to lift the cap on employment term restrictions

On 18 May, *Focus Taiwan* reported a coalition of migrant worker groups rallied outside the Ministry of Labor (MOL) to call for the elimination of a rule that limits the number of years they can work in Taiwan to 12 or 14 years. The chairperson of the migrant caregiver union SBIPT Fajar, stated at the rally that limiting migrant workers' time in Taiwan is discriminatory and shows the government views them merely as "guest workers," ignoring their contributions. In 2022, the MOL's Workforce Development Agency (WDA) launched the Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program, to try to give migrant workers a pathway to permanent residency. According to SBIPT director Arrey, it lifted the restriction on how long an "intermediate skilled" foreign worker could work in Taiwan. He also stated that the program has been plagued by problems. Arrey stated that under the program, industrial workers and long-term care facility workers are promised monthly salaries of at least NTD 33,000 (USD 1,092) and NTD 29,000, respectively, higher than the minimum wage of NTD 28,590. SBIPT director argued that the program also failed to address the issue of manpower broker fees, throwing light on the fact that Taiwan's government allows manpower brokers to charge intermediate-skilled workers a one-time handling fee equal to one month's salary, which could range from NTD 1,500 to NTD 1,800 per month and is reduced to NTD 2,000 per year when a worker gains "intermediate-skilled" status. The government has overlooked that if their contract is terminated, the handling fee will be wasted, forcing the worker to pay another handling fee to find a new job, Arrey stated. The groups delivered a petition to WDA section chief Tseng Chien-ta in which they demanded that restrictions on how long migrant workers can work in Taiwan be removed. ("Migrant worker groups urge lifting of employment length restrictions," *Focus Taiwan*, 18 May 2025)

Taiwan Legislature approves bill against abolishing death penalty

On 16 May, The Legislative Yuan approved a bill proposed by the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) against the abolition of the death penalty in a 54:48 vote. The bill questions the constitutionality of mandating unanimous court decisions for capital punishment, invoking Constitutional Judgement No. 08, which ruled in favor of the death penalty but set strict conditions rendering it de facto inapplicable. The bill was initiated by KMT Legislator Wu Tsung-hsien on 25 March and it went ahead after a cross-party consensus failed. Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) legislators, such as Rosalia Wu and Chung Chia-pin, voted against the motion, stating it wasted taxpayer money and deceived the public. In accordance with the Referendum Act, such legislator-initiated proposals must be turned over to appropriate authorities within 10 days of ratification for subsequent action. (Chen Cheng-yu & Jake Chung, "Legislature passes bill opposing end of death penalty," *Taipei Times*, 16 May 2025)

China demands removal of Taiwan flag at a Prague Book Fair

On 17 May, *Taiwan News* reported that Chinese officials at the Book World Prague exhibition demanded that Taiwan's national flag be removed from Czech publisher Mi:Lu Publishing's booth, which showcases Taiwanese literature. The request was refused by fair Director Radovan Auer on grounds of Czech democracy and freedom of expression. China also complained about references to Taiwan as a "country" and demanded the withdrawal of the fair catalog's listing of Taiwan's Ministry of Culture. Chinese officials also asked the Czech Ministry of Culture to replace Auer, which was not done. Auer explained that such political pressure is a routine procedure but reasserted the fair's commitment to free speech and democratic values. (Charlotte Lee, "China requests removal of Taiwan flag at Book World Prague," *Taiwan News*, 17 May 2025)

Chinese father and son detained after illicit landing on Taiwan

A Chinese father, Song (41), and his 17-year-old son were detained by Taiwan's Coast Guard after landing unseen in Taoyuan aboard a 3.3-meter inflatable vessel originating from Fujian. Song stated he escaped persecution in China to be free in Taiwan. The authorities are probing the motive, suspecting alleged Chinese gray zone actions especially the non-military actions

designed to put pressure on Taiwan. Song was charged for breaking Article 74 of the Immigration Act (that prohibits unauthorized entry by mainland Chinese), and prosecutors asked for his detention. His son, considered to have limited control, was referred to a juvenile court and subsequently dispatched to the National Immigration Agency's Taoyuan task force for further handling. (Charlotte Lee, "Father and son from China arrested after illegal landing in north Taiwan," *Taiwan News*, 17 May 2025)

"It is a testing time for democracy around the world," Tsai calls for increased cooperation with the UK

On 15 May, former Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen called for increased security cooperation between Taiwan and the UK to counter threats to democracy. Tsai addressed both houses of Parliament in the UK. She stated that anti-democratic forces are taking advantage of the "openness of free societies" to "sow division." To counter disinformation and bolster defensive arsenals, Taiwan is sharing how it uses rapid-response mechanisms and collaborative networks to promote the dissemination of accurate information. Tsai is grateful for the UK parliamentarians' support and stressed that Taiwan-UK cooperation is more important than ever. ("Tsai urges increased Taiwan-UK security cooperation at British parliament," *Taiwan News*, 16 May 2025)

TSMC to open nine factories in response to increase in consumer demand

On 15 May, Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. (TSMC) said it was building nine new advanced wafer manufacturing chips and packaging factories in 2025. This would boost its expansion of high-performing chips and Artificial Intelligence applications. TSMC vice president of advanced technology and mask engineering T.S. Chang shared that he aimed to build more factories "To support customers' business growth" and open branches both in Taiwan and overseas. Aside from building factories, the plan to build "eight wafer fabrication plants and one advanced chip packaging factory is also underway." Their newest project, called "Fab 25," is set to produce next-generation chips using process technology beyond 2 nanometers. While construction of the Fab in Taichung is expected to begin by the end of the year, volume production of 2nm chips is slated to kick off in the second half of this year at two new facilities in Hsinchu and Kaohsiung. ("TSMC outlines work on nine new advanced factories," *Taipei Times*, 16 May 2025)

US proposes “PORCUPINE Act” to accelerate arm sales to Taiwan

On 13 May, US Senators Pete Ricketts and Chris Coons have introduced the bipartisan PORCUPINE Act (Providing Our Regional Companions Upgraded Protection in Nefarious Environments) to expedite arms sales to Taiwan. The bill aims to grant Taiwan the same status as NATO Plus countries such as Japan, South Korea, Israel, Australia, and New Zealand. The bill proposes reducing the waiting period for congressional notification from 30 to 15 days for arms deals above USD 25 million and raising the financial threshold, streamlining the process under the US Arms Export Control Act. It also allows the US Secretary of State to create a faster approval process for transferring US defense articles and services through grants, foreign military sales, and direct commercial sales. Senator Ricketts, after visiting Taiwan, criticized the outdated arms transfer process and industrial delays. Senator Coons emphasized the need for swift support, calling Taiwan the frontline of a free Indo-Pacific. The Act supports Taiwan’s “porcupine strategy,” developed in 2017 by former Chief of the General Staff Lee Hsi-ming, which uses layered, mobile defenses like anti-ship missiles, mines, and portable air defense systems to deter a Chinese invasion by increasing its military cost. (Keoni Everington, “US senators introduce PORCUPINE Act to expedite Taiwan arms sales,” *Taiwan News*, 15 May 2025)

Taiwan inaugurates over 250 AI projects

On 15 May, *Taiwan News* reported that CPC Corporation announced it has implemented more than 250 artificial intelligence (AI) projects aimed at improving operations across Taiwan. The company has used AI in areas such as process optimization, equipment monitoring, workplace safety, environmental protection, and operational management, expecting benefits over USD 32.26 million, according to CNA. AI is currently being used at Kaohsiung and Taoyuan refineries to reduce energy use and carbon emissions, and to detect equipment faults by analyzing current motor pattern images. In partnership with academic institutions, CPC has applied AI for rapid underground pipeline leak detection, cutting the detection time from hours to under two minutes on the Minxiong–Xinying pipeline. Since 2023, the firm has developed drone inspection systems for solar panels, which earned a patent and an award at the Taiwan Innotech Expo and has trained over 5,000 employees through AI courses and it plans to continue talent development until 2029. (Carol

Yang, “CPC Corporation launches over 250 AI projects to boost Taiwan operations,” *Taiwan News*, 15 May 2025)

Taiwan’s Legislation approves 20-year extension of nuclear reactor

On 13 May, Taiwan’s Legislative Yuan, a unicameral legislature, passes an amendment called the Nuclear Reactor Facilities Regulation. This now allows the nuclear reactor operating licenses to be extended by 20 years. The decision has sparked public concern, with cabinet spokesperson Michelle Lee said: “Ensuring nuclear power safety is the country’s most basic responsibility.” Despite the amendment’s passage, the affected reactor must still overcome several obstacles, including rigorous safety inspections conducted by the Nuclear Safety Commission in accordance with international standards. (“Taiwan legislature allows extension of nuclear reactor operating licenses,” *Taiwan News*, 13 May 2025)

Taiwan’s President calls for a global supply chain not dependent on China

On 13 May, *Taiwan News* reported that Taiwan’s President Lai Ching-te called for a global supply chain that doesn’t rely on China. He accused China of using unfair trade practices, like copying products, stealing ideas, and using government support to flood markets with cheap goods. President Lai also warned about five growing threats from Beijing, including exploiting free trade through plagiarism, counterfeiting, intellectual property theft, and government subsidies that lead to global dumping of cheap goods. Lai also called for a bilateral trade agreement with Japan and urged continued support for Taiwan’s CPTPP membership bid despite China’s diplomatic pressure. Lai acknowledged Trump’s proposed tariffs on Taiwanese goods as a “major challenge,” but emphasized negotiation over confrontation, stating, “We aim to start negotiations from the proposal of zero tariffs and seek to establish a bilateral trade agreement with the US.” Lai also proposed a “Global Semiconductor Democratic Supply Chain Partnership Initiative,” emphasizing collaboration with the U.S., Japan, and the Netherlands. (“Lai calls for China-free supply chain to combat Beijing’s ‘unfair’ trade,” *Taiwan News*, 13 May 2025)

Taiwan detects Chinese military aircraft and naval vessels near the strait

On 13 May, Taiwan’s Ministry of National Defense tracked 31 Chinese military aircraft, seven naval vessels, and one office ship. In

response, Taiwan sent its naval ships and aircraft to monitor PLA activity. China has been seen to increase its use of gray zone tactics around the Taiwanese border. (“Taiwan tracks 31 Chinese military aircraft, 8 ships”, *Taiwan News*, 13 May 2025)

Nvidia CEO to visit Taiwan and meet supply chain partners

On 12 May, according to *Taiwan News*, Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang is expected to arrive in Taiwan as early as 14 May to meet with Taiwanese supply chain partners ahead of his Computex 2025. He is scheduled to visit the TSMC firm and a banquet for suppliers on 18 May. Huang’s highly anticipated keynote will focus on breakthroughs in AI and accelerated computing. The widespread use of AI, including its adoption by traditional industries such as Formosa Plastics, has drawn interest from government officials for potential applications in governance. As stated by TAITRA, Huang is also scheduled to participate in a global media Q&A session hosted by Computex on 21 May. (Sean Scanlan, “Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang to visit Taiwan ahead of Computex,” *Taiwan News*, 12 May 2025)

Taiwan to deactivate last Nuclear Reactor amid energy transition, reports Taiwan News

On 12 May, *Taiwan News* reported, Taiwan will shut down its last Nuclear Reactor, No. 2 at the Maanshan Nuclear Power Plant in Pingtung. This marks the end of nuclear power plants in the country. In 2016, nuclear energy made up over 10 percent of Taiwan's electricity, but by early 2025, it dropped to 3.6 per cent. To ensure a stable power supply, the government is adding nearly 5 million kW of gas-fired power from plants in Datan (3.16 million kW), Hsinta, and Taichung. Two Datan units are already online, and a third will start this summer. Meanwhile, solar energy reached over 10 million kW in a day, and wind power topped 3 million kW in April, together covering about one-third of Taiwan's electricity. Despite calls from opposition parties to extend nuclear plant operations, officials highlight the lengthy restart time and unresolved nuclear waste issues. Taiwan aims for a stable, nuclear-free energy future through gas and renewable power. (Carol Yang, “Taiwan prepares to decommission last nuclear reactor,” *Taiwan News*, 12 May 2025)

US legislators warn Somalia over Taiwan passport ban

On 01 May, two US Representatives, Tom Tiffany and Andy Ogles, sent a letter to Somalia’s

ambassador in Washington, Dahir Hassan Abdi, urging Mogadishu to reverse its decision to bar Taiwan passport holders. They warned that failure to do so could trigger “severe retaliatory consequences.” This included revocation of Temporary Protected Status for Somali nationals in the US, suspension of US visa issuances to Somali citizens, non-recognition of Somali passports for US entry or transit, a freeze on bilateral aid, even the closure of Somalia’s embassy in Washington, and a full diplomatic rupture. The lawmakers closed by calling on Somalia to “immediately reverse its arbitrary and misguided edict regarding the validity of Taiwanese passports” to avoid these outcomes. (Keoni Everington, “US Congress members urge Somalia to reverse Taiwan passport ban,” *Taiwan News*, 02 May 2025)

Taiwanese manufacturer Wiwynn to build Texas production facility

On 01 May, Taiwanese server contract manufacturer Wiwynn announced a USD 59.6 million acquisition of 392,000 sq ft of land and buildings in Socorro, Texas. It is set to establish its first US-based production lines under its subsidiary WYMUS. The site, comprising warehouse and maintenance facilities, will be converted into server-assembly lines with operations slated to begin within three months. Wiwynn, CFO Chen Chang-wei, announced that the Texas facility will complement rather than replace its Mexican operations, providing customers with diversified options and strengthening its North American manufacturing resilience. (Michael Nakhiengchanh, “Taiwan's Wiwynn invests NT\$1.9 billion to launch 1st US factory,” *Taiwan News*, 02 May 2025)

Taiwan Health and Welfare Minister to send a delegation to the WHO assembly

On 01 May, Taiwan’s Health and Welfare Minister Chiu Tai-yuan announced that despite Taiwan not receiving an invitation to the World Health Assembly (WHA), it will dispatch a delegation. The World Health Organization holds its 78th annual session in Geneva from 19–27 May. Chiu announced Taiwan will engage other country representatives and hold side events, media campaigns, forums, and press briefings, underscoring that “the right to healthcare should not be restricted by political motives.” He highlighted Taiwan’s COVID-19 cooperation, supplying masks and vaccines, and pledged to use the WHA platform to demonstrate Taiwan’s capacity and willingness to contribute high-level healthcare despite exclusion from formal proceedings. (Matthew

Strong, "Taiwan launches annual campaign to attend World Health Assembly," *Taiwan News*, 01 May 2025)

Taiwan plays an important role in US security, economy, and AI collaboration, says Taiwan's Vice President

On 30 April, Taiwan's Vice President Hsiao Bi-khim emphasized in a pre-recorded address to The Hill and Valley Forum, that Taiwan is indispensable to the United States in three key areas: regional security, economic revitalization, and joint development of AI. She said: "Taiwan is situated at the intersection of world trade, technology, and geopolitics, so any events occurring there would affect the global economy and the free world." Economically, Taiwan's advanced technology ecosystem helps spur US growth, while its semiconductor prowess and emerging AI platforms offer critical support for American innovation. On security, Taiwan has been bolstering its defence capabilities, developing drones, missile components, radar systems, and next-generation communications, with US arms transfers enhancing the island's deterrence. Hsiao concluded that deepening the US-Taiwan partnership will accelerate the translation of ideas into real-world applications, safeguarding freedom for future generations. US Interior Secretary Doug Burgum, senior members of Congress, and Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang also spoke at the 2025 edition. (Matthew Strong, "Hsiao touts Taiwan's importance to US on defense, economy, AI," *Taiwan News*, 01 May 2025)

Majority of Americans support Taiwanese independence, says Remington Research Group poll

On 28 April, a Remington Research Group survey, commissioned by the Humanity for Freedom Foundation, revealed that of 800 US voters, the majority supported Taiwan's independence. Eighty-two percent of respondents regard Taiwan as an independent country, and 58 percent favour formally recognising Taiwan and establishing full diplomatic relations, compared with just 5 percent who oppose it. Sixty-eight percent hold a favourable view of Taiwan, and 88 percent consider Taiwan very or somewhat important to US national interests, technology, security, and foreign policy. On defence policy, 32 percent would like the United States to make a clear commitment to defend Taiwan, while 39 percent prefer maintaining "strategic ambiguity." Foundation president Dane Waters noted that the results demonstrate bipartisan consensus and urged US policymakers to align official

policy with public sentiment by abandoning ambiguity and formally recognising Taiwan. (James Thompson and Hou Tzu-ying, "82 percent of Americans view Taiwan as an independent country: Poll," *Focus Taiwan*, 30 April 2025)

KOREA READER

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

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

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

On 21 March, *The Korea Herald* reported that Wildfires in southeastern South Korea resulted in 75 casualties, including 30 deaths, and burned up to 48,239 hectares, destroying 3,285 homes. A total of 34,746 people were evacuated, with 29,969 returning home and about 4,700 still in shelters. Acting Interior Minister Ko Ki-dong described the damage as the "greatest" in Korea's history regarding casualties and property loss. The government is converting public institution training centers into lodging facilities, setting up temporary modular homes, establishing 106 temporary shelters, and providing 4,462 instances of mental health support. In Uiseong-gun, where 12,821 hectares were burned, survivor Ma Bu-jin said: "If my house had just been flooded, I could have at least tried to bail out the water. But instead, it's completely collapsed, and there's nothing I can do." In Yeongdeok-gun, recovery is delayed due to ongoing power, water, and communication outages. Finance Minister Choi Sang-mok announced that the government would request a supplementary budget of 10 trillion won to offset the economic fallout and external instabilities. (Lee Jung-Joo, "[Long road to](#)

recovery begins in wake of South Korea's worst-ever wildfires," *The Korea Herald*, 30 March 2025)

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

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

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

On 28 March, Samsung Electronics Executive Chairman Lee Jae-Yong met with China's President Xi Jinping during a meeting with global business leaders in Beijing. Lee participated alongside executives from Qualcomm, BMW, AstraZeneca, FedEx, and Saudi Aramco at the follow-up China Development Forum. Lee's ongoing China trip also included meetings with CEOs of BYD and Xiaomi, where discussions focused on Samsung Group's car component business, particularly in automobile semiconductors and panels. Samsung Electronics is already investing heavily in China, with its China-bound exports reaching 65 trillion won in 2024. The company currently operates a NAND memory plant in Xi'an, which accounts for approximately 40 per cent of its total output, and a chip packaging plant in Suzhou. While major new investments in Chinese chip plants are unlikely under the US CHIPS Act, facility upgrades remain possible under a waiver. (Nam Hyun-woo, "Samsung pushes for rebound through China ties," *Korea Times*, 28 March 2025)

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

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

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

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

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

On 27 March, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) found that past governments are responsible for human rights violations in overseas adoptions from the 1960s to the 1990s. It noted that this was due to falsified records, legislative gaps, and inadequate

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

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

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

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

On 25 March, Korean literary figures, including Nobel laureate Han Kang, called for President Yoon Suk Yeol's removal as the Constitutional Court's impeachment decision was delayed. Han said: "I believe in the values of life, freedom, and peace, which must never be compromised. Removal is about safeguarding universal

values." He, among 414 other prominent authors, each issued a statement. Novelist Jung Bo-ra declared, "I wish to live in a democratic world," while Eun Hee-kyung demanded, "Punish the ringleader of rebellion and build a society of equality," and literary critic Oh Yoon-kyung wrote, "Delayed justice is not justice. Impeach Yoon Suk Yeol immediately." In addition, the Writers Association of Korea, with 2,487 signatures, issued an emergency declaration emphasizing that the delay has intensified societal conflict, threatened economic stability, and damaged Korea's international reputation. The association's secretary-general, Poet Song Kyung-dong, who has been on a hunger strike since March 11, was rushed to the hospital after his health deteriorated. (Park Ga-young, "[Han Kang and other writers urge immediate impeachment of President Yoon Suk Yeol](#)," *The Korea Herald*, 25 March 2025)

Samsung co-CEO Han Jong-hee passes away

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

Constitutional Court reinstates impeached Prime Minister Han Duck-soo

On 24 March, Han was immediately reinstated as Prime Minister and acting President, taking over from Finance Minister Choi Sang-mok. The impeachment motion by the National Assembly against Prime Minister Han Duck-soo was dismissed by the Constitutional Court. Five of the eight justices voted against the motion, one voted to uphold it, and two dismissed the case. The impeachment motion was initiated 87 days after the Assembly accused Han of playing a role in President Yoon Suk Yeol's 03 December martial law imposition and other actions, including rejecting nominees for Constitutional Court justices and vetoing a bill to appoint a special counsel. The court found no evidence that Han took active steps to justify martial law, and although his delay in appointing justices violated certain laws, it did not breach public trust. Han welcomed the ruling, describing it as a "wise decision." (Anna J. Park, "[Constitutional](#)

Court rules to reinstate PM in impeachment trial, *Korea Times*, 24 March 2025)

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

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

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

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

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

On 20 March, the *Korean Central News Agency* reported that North Korea's Missile Administration test-fired its latest surface-to-air missile system from the western port city of Nampho. North Korea's leader Kim Jong-un, oversaw the test alongside key *Korean Central News Agency* members of the party's Central Military Commission. The test of the mass-

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

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

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

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

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

to strikes on Ukrainian energy infrastructure. (Yonhap, "[Russia's top security official arrives in N. Korea for meeting with Kim Jong-un: report](#)," *Korea Times*, 21 March 2025)

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

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

Parties agree on pension reform plans

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

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

On 19 March, the Bank for International Settlements revealed that the combined debt of the government, companies, and households in

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

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

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

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

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

sanitation, a drop in national immunization from over 96 per cent to below 42 per cent, and challenges in vaccinating children and pregnant women are exacerbating the crisis. (Kwak Yeonsoo, [“46% of North Koreans undernourished. UN report says,”](#) *The Korea Times*, 18 March 2025)

Korean conglomerate Hanwha to invest in Australian subsidiary

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

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

On 17 March, *The Korea Times* reports a public outcry for Yoon to publicly pledge that he will accept the Constitutional Court's impeachment verdict to prevent potential unrest. Yoon, who was recently released from 52 days of detention over his imposition of martial law, remained silent on whether he would honor the court's decision. Political experts argue that Yoon's acceptance of the ruling is critical to maintaining constitutional principles and averting violent protests from both supporters and opponents. A political science professor at Incheon National University Lee Joon-han said: “As the head of state, he must uphold constitutional principles, which he vowed to do when he took office. The president should announce that he will accept the court's decision, or risk plunging the nation into deeper turmoil.” A recent poll conducted by Embrain Public, K-Stat Research, Korea Research, and Hankook Research shows 42 per cent of respondents are unwilling to accept a court decision that differs from their views. While ruling party leaders and Yoon's legal team have expressed willingness to respect the ruling, Yoon himself has only promised political reform if reinstated. (Lee Hyo-jin, [“Yoon urged to promise to accept impeachment ruling,”](#) *The Korea Times*, 17 March 2025)

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

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

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

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

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

On 17 March, *SCMP* reported that South Korea's Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy informed that their chip sales fell from 31.8 per cent since last year. South Korea's semiconductor export to China saw a decline last month, parallel to the imposed tariffs on tech sales to China. This plunge is said to have been affected by the tariffs. SK Hynix and Samsung are the biggest memory Chip makers that also operate through plants in China. China used to receive two/fifth of the sales, but this has reduced exponentially. The Minister noted that this decline is owed to lower prices on conventional chips, and technological transition. ([“South Korea semiconductor exports to China sink as US tightens tech restrictions,”](#) *SCMP*, 17 March 2025)

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

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

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

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

criticize and monitor whether they properly reflect women's voices in the presidential election after the impeachment verdict, We will exercise our rights to vote properly." (Lee Hae-rin, "Korean women demand greater equality, inclusion as post-Yoon Suk Yeol era looms," Korea Times, 08 March 2025)

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

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

South Korea and US to formulate a North Korea policy

On 06 March, South Korean National Security Advisor (NSA) Shin Won-sik remarked that South Korea and the US would coordinate the formulation and implementation of North Korea Policy. His comments come after he meets with US National Security Advisor Mike Waltz. They also reaffirmed their shared goal of the "complete denuclearisation of North Korea." The two agreed to promote bilateral cooperation in the shipbuilding industry and bring peace and stability to the Korean peninsula and the broader Indo-Pacific region. They concurred to strengthen "extended deterrence" to deter North Korean nuclear threats. (Yonhap, "S. Korea, US agree to closely coordinate on NK policy formulation, implementation: senior Seoul official," The Korea Times, 07 March

2025)

Polish President seeks to buy K2 tank from South Korea

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

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

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

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

On 06 March, a captured North Korean soldier, identified by his surname Ri, revealed that North Korea's training camps included mockups of South Korean facilities and buildings. According to Rep. of the People Power Party Yu Yong-weon, Ri described that the Armed Forces Training Ground in Koksan Country was designed to simulate raids on South Korea. The buildings were modeled after Seoul's Jongno District, Busan, Daegu, Jeonju, and Jeju Island. Yu added that while similar facilities have been noted before, replicating Jeju Island is a new

revelation, and such sites exist in multiple locations. In response to a question, Yu said, "The training camps can be seen as training in preparation for contingencies." Another captured soldier stated he was simply following orders to "help Russia" as they were allies. (Yonhap, "[Captured NK soldier says mockups of Seoul, Jeju facilities in North's training camps](#)," The Korea Times, 06 March 2025)

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

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

PMI rating shows decline in South Korean factory activity

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

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

On 01 March, South Korea's acting President, Choi, in a ceremony commemorating the 106th anniversary of the March 1 Independence Movement, called for "greater national unity." His remark came amid the deepening division with South Korea risking the nation's stability.

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

North Korea launches Strategic Cruise Missile, reports KCNA

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

JAPAN READER

Japan grants USD 1.06 billion in aid to Bangladesh

On 30 May, *Reuters* reported that Japan has announced a USD 1.063 billion support package for Bangladesh during interim leader Muhammad Yunus's visit to Tokyo, aiming to strengthen bilateral relations. The aid includes a USD 418 million development policy loan intended to support Bangladesh's economic reforms and enhance climate resilience.

Additionally, USD 641 million will fund railway line upgrades, improving infrastructure connectivity crucial to Bangladesh's economic growth. Japan will also provide USD 4.2 million in educational grants for Bangladesh's students, fostering long-term people-to-people ties. The announcement came following a meeting between Japan's Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba and Nobel laureate Yunus, who assumed leadership in August 2024 after Sheikh Hasina fled amid student-led unrest. (Ruma Paul and Lincoln Feast, "Japan to give \$1.06 billion to Bangladesh in budget support, Dhaka says," *Reuters*, 30 May 2025)

Japan seeks concessions on US tariffs in the upcoming talks, says Japan's Economy Ministry

On 31 May, *Japan Today* reported that Japan and the United States have agreed to hold another round of trade talks ahead of the upcoming G7 summit in June, with both sides acknowledging the need for concessions. Japan's Economy Minister Ryosei Akazawa met with US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick in Washington for the fourth round of negotiations. While the US described the talks as "frank and constructive," no breakthrough was reached. Japan continues to oppose looming US tariffs, including a 24 per cent general tariff rate and 25 per cent on automobiles and parts, which threaten Japan's auto industry. Akazawa reiterated Japan's position that the tariffs are unacceptable and urged their removal as a condition for any agreement. He emphasized that Japan would not accept a rushed deal that failed to protect its key industries, and he is "strongly urging" the US to immediately reconsider and drop all the tariffs, including those levied on automobiles, auto parts, aluminum, and steel. Discussions also covered trade expansion, non-tariff barriers, and economic security, including semiconductor supply chains and rare earth materials. Despite the urgency, Japanese officials warned a quick deal was unlikely without substantial US concessions. (Makiko Yamazaki and Nathan Layne, "Japan says there is no easy concession on U.S. tariffs, seeks more talks in June," *Japan Today*, 30 May 2025)

Japan's Coast Guard rescues injured crew members from a Chinese vessel

On 30 May, Japan's Coast Guard (JCG) officials announced a humanitarian rescue mission for an injured Chinese crew member aboard the survey ship *Ke Xue* operating in disputed waters near Miyako Island. The request came from the Chinese vessel on Wednesday after one crew

member sustained a hand injury during operations. A Japanese patrol vessel retrieved the injured man and transported him to Naha, Okinawa, for medical treatment. While the rescue underscores cooperation in humanitarian emergencies, it comes amid rising maritime tensions in the East China Sea. The Ke Xue is one of several Chinese vessels conducting regular operations in the region, where China has ramped up its presence by deploying survey ships, coast guard vessels, and military assets, often entering areas Japan considers its exclusive economic zone (EEZ). On 26 May, another Chinese survey ship reportedly lowered equipment into waters near Okinotorishima, deep within Japan's EEZ, without prior consent. Japan's Coast Guard patrol aircraft issued a warning, and Tokyo lodged an official protest with Beijing. ("Japan Coast Guard rescues injured crew from Chinese ship near contested waters," *Japan Today*, 31 May 2025)

Japan's Prime Minister vows to expand the Asia-Pacific trade group

On 29 May, Japan's Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba reaffirmed his commitment to defending a rule-based, free, and multilateral trade system amid growing global economic tensions, particularly over US tariffs and ongoing trade disputes. Ishiba stated at a global forum in Tokyo that "high tariffs will not bring economic prosperity," and emphasized that lasting economic strength cannot be built on the sacrifices of other countries. Ishiba expressed Japan's willingness to work with the United States on investment, job creation, and high-quality manufacturing to support both US and global prosperity. His remarks coincided with the fourth round of tariff negotiations in Washington, led by Japan's chief negotiator Ryosei Akazawa. Despite past setbacks, Japan is now reportedly considering increased purchases of US farm goods and defense equipment to encourage tariff relief from the US. Akazawa stated that defense equipment purchases, while not subject to international bargaining, may help address the US trade imbalance. He stressed that Japan's security policy remains sovereign and cannot be reduced to a transactional agreement. Ishiba also urged other Asian countries to champion the value of free and fair economic practices by supporting frameworks like the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). He reiterated Japan's commitment to upgrading and expanding the 12-nation pact. Despite bolstering ties with Southeast Asia and Europe, Ishiba confirmed

that Japan continues to regard its alliance with the US as the cornerstone of its security policy. (Ayaka McGill and Mari Yamaguchi, "Ishiba warns against tension over tariffs and vows to expand Asia-Pacific trade group," *Japan Today*, 30 May 2025)

Cambodia detains 30 Japanese nationals in a fraud case

On 29 May, Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi published a statement stating that Cambodian authorities detained several Japanese nationals as part of a coordinated crackdown on fraud centers operating in the country. According to the United Nations, the move is part of a broader regional effort to disrupt organized criminal networks that have trafficked hundreds of thousands of people across Southeast Asia to work in scam operations generating billions in illicit profits annually. Hayashi stated that Japan's government is actively verifying the number, identities, and conditions of the detained individuals. Stressing Japan's intention to work closely with Cambodian authorities to address the situation appropriately, he said: "We are in the process of confirming details such as exactly how many people were detained, and where and how they were detained." According to a Kyodo News report citing Cambodian government sources, on 27 May, approximately 30 Japanese individuals suspected of participating in scam activities were transported to Phnom Penh from the northwestern border city of Poipet. ("Japan says nationals detained in Cambodia in joint battle on fraud," *Japan Today*, 30 May 2025)

Japan promises a cheap stockpile of rice for rural areas

On 28 May, Japan's government pledges to ensure a more stable and affordable rice supply in rural areas by prioritizing smaller retailers in its latest reserve rice release plan. After receiving over 200,000 tons worth of orders from about 70 major retailers, two-thirds of the 300,000-ton stock set for sale. Japan's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries halts large-scale orders at night to reserve 100,000 tons for small supermarkets and local rice shops. The government will begin accepting requests from these smaller businesses and will cover transportation costs to enhance accessibility. Japan's Farm Minister Shinjiro Koizumi, affirmed that the ministry would impose purchase limits on big retailers to ensure equitable distribution. Previously, only retailers handling over 10,000 tons of rice annually were eligible buyers. Major chains like

Aeon, Ito-Yokado, and Rakuten had secured large orders, favoring newer rice from 2022, leaving 2021 rice priced around 1,800 yen per 5 kg, nearly half the current retail rate, for smaller shops. The move follows unsuccessful attempts to control prices through auctions earlier this year, prompting the shift to direct sales. Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi emphasized the government's commitment to delivering stable, lower-cost rice under Koizumi's leadership amid soaring prices and mounting public pressure. ("Japan gov't promises lower-priced stockpiled rice supply for rural areas," *Japan Today*, 29 May 2025)

Japan's Supreme Court upholds ban on dual citizenship

On 29 May, *Japan Today* reported that Japan's Supreme Court has upheld the country's longstanding ban on dual citizenship, rejecting an appeal from a Japanese-born US citizen who challenged the policy's constitutionality. The First Petty Bench ruled that Article 11 of the Nationality Law, which mandates the loss of Japanese citizenship upon voluntarily acquiring another nationality, does not violate the right to self-determination. The appellant, a woman who obtained US citizenship in 2004, attempted to renew her Japanese passport in 2017. Her application was denied in 2018 because she had automatically lost her Japanese nationality under the law. She filed suit, arguing the provision was unconstitutional. However, the Fukuoka District Court ruled in 2023 that the law was a legitimate exercise of state discretion and did not violate individual rights. The Fukuoka High Court upheld that decision later the same year, emphasizing the legal and administrative reasoning for restricting dual nationality. With the Supreme Court's latest rejection of the appeal, the lower court rulings are now final, reinforcing Japan's strict single-citizenship policy. The ruling aligns with the government's view that dual citizenship could create conflicting national loyalties, even as critics argue that such policies fail to reflect the narratives of an increasingly globalized society. ("Top court rejects claim dual nationality ban is unconstitutional," *Japan Today*, 29 May 2025)

Japan accuses China of unauthorized scientific research near the Okinotori atoll

On 27 May, Japan accused China of conducting unauthorized maritime scientific research within its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) near Okinotori atoll in the Philippine Sea, intensifying a longstanding maritime dispute. Japan's coastguard observed a China's survey vessel deploying a wire 270 km east of Okinotori on 26

May, prompting Tokyo to demand the activity cease and lodge a formal protest. The vessel left the area later that evening. The core dispute revolves around Okinotori's legal status. Japan considers it an island, entitling it to a 200-nautical mile EEZ under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which grants exclusive rights over resources and scientific activities. However, China argues that Okinotori is a mere rock, citing UNCLOS Article 121(3), which denies EEZ rights to features incapable of sustaining human life or economic activity. Beijing insists its actions fall under the freedom of the high seas, with support from Taiwan and South Korea, who also question Japan's EEZ claim. Strategically located between Taiwan and Guam, Okinotori lies along key maritime routes with potential resource wealth. The incident reflects rising Indo-Pacific tensions, where legal ambiguities are exploited in grey-zone tactics, turning scientific research into a tool of geopolitical assertion and contestation. ("Japan says China conducted research near Pacific atoll", *The Hindu*, 28 May 2025)

Two US Marines arrested in Okinawa

On 27 May, *Japan Today* reported that two US Marines in Okinawa have been arrested in separate incidents. Lance Corporal Ivan Garciamartinez, 20, from Camp Hansen, was held for a hit-and-run on 25 May in Naha. He allegedly fled after injuring four family members, including two children. His blood alcohol level was twice the legal limit. Corporal Adrian Sanchez, 23, from Camp Schwab, was arrested Monday for suspected drunk driving but claimed he believed the alcohol had worn off. Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi called the incidents "regrettable" and stated that they are worried about the locals. He urged the US military to prevent such cases and improve discipline. Okinawa hosts most US bases in Japan, where public frustration over crimes, noise, and pollution by US forces is already high. ("2 U.S. Marines arrested in Okinawa for alleged hit-and-run, DUI," *Japan Today*, 27 May 2025)

Japan's Prime Minister affirms support to revive the US shipbuilding sector

On 25 May, Japan's Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba vowed to support the US in reviving its shipbuilding industry through bilateral negotiations. Ishiba was at the port city of Maizuru, along the Sea of Japan coast, in the Kyoto Prefecture, to inspect the Maritime Self-Defense Force helicopter carrier Hyuga. He said: "The government wants to cooperate in the

shipbuilding sector," indicating that Japan is seeking full removal of tariffs. He also said: "Japan has a substantial advantage in terms of building icebreakers. Icebreakers are one key point of cooperation," Additionally, he added, while also noting that the US is keen on where its military ships can be repaired overseas. Japan is exploring cooperation in the shipbuilding industry as a bargaining chip in the tariff talks. Japan urged the US to withdraw the high tariffs on cars, key car parts, and steel and aluminum, as well as reciprocal tariffs, part of which have been paused through early July. "We will hold further discussions while keeping an eye on the Group of Seven summit in June," notes Ishiba. (Ishiba says Japan will support the U.S. in shipbuilding, *Japan Today*, 26 May 2025)

Japan's tourism increased by 28.5 per cent in April, reports Japan Today

On 22 May, *Japan Today* reported that the number of foreign visitors to Japan soared 28.5 per cent in April year-on-year to a record 3.91 million. This surpassed the previous record of 3.78 million in January 2025, making it the highest monthly total on record. The Japan National Tourism Organisation said: "Spring cherry blossom season boosted demand for visits to Japan in many markets, as in the previous month, and overseas travel demand increased in some Asian countries, in Europe, the US and Australia to coincide with the Easter holidays." The professor emeritus at Kansai University, Katsuhiko Miyamoto, estimated the economic impact of Japan's cherry blossom season at 1.1 trillion yen (USD 7.3 billion) this year, up from 616 billion yen in 2023. (Natsuko Fukue, "Number of tourists to Japan soars 28.5% in April to record 3.9 mil," *Japan Daily*, 22 May 2025)

Japan conducts DSEI exhibition on weapons and arms, reports Japan Today

On 22 May, *Japan Today* reported that Japan hosted the DSEI Japan exhibition, one of its largest-ever arms shows. The exhibition showcased Japanese missiles, warships, and research into lasers and electromagnetic railguns. Japan's Defence Minister Gen Nakatani said: "I sincerely hope that this exhibition will provide a new opportunity for cooperation and exchange between national delegations and companies, help sustain defence industry development, drive innovation and promote peace and stability." The event organiser, Clarion Defence & Security, commented that the event, which is double the size of the 2023 show, drew 471 firms from 33 countries, including 169 from Japan, twice as many as two years ago. As the US

Ambassador to Japan, George Glass, opened the DSEI US pavilion, he commented that "Strength comes from expanding and elevating the alliance's capabilities and capacity, which means leveraging our respective skills and our specialities in co-development, co-production, and co-sustainment." (Tim Kelly, "Japan flexes defense ambitions at arms show," *Japan Daily*, 22 May 2025)

Japan's Prime Minister vows to reduce rice price

On 22 May, *Japan Today* reported that Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba vowed to bring rice prices down to below 4,000 yen per 5 kilograms on Wednesday. He pledged to take necessary steps to lower rice prices that have doubled over the past year. The grains are in short supply due to poor harvest, while inbound tourism has increased its demand. During a one-on-one parliamentary debate with the opposition leader, he staked his job on achieving the target. In order to help struggling households, the main opposition party sought to scrap the consumption tax on food items for one year, using unused government funds to cover the shortfall. This demand surged amid food inflation and U.S tariffs clouding the economic outlook. The Japan Finance Minister Katsunobu Kato stated that the country is not facing currently facing difficulty raising funds through debt issuance, but it must strive to maintain market trust in its finances. (Leika Kihara, "Japan's Ishiba rules out tax cuts funded by debt issuance," *Reuters*, 19 May 2025; "Ishiba pledges rice price rollback but rules out tax cut," *Japan Today*, 22 May 2025)

Japan-US agree to market-driven currency rates

On 21 May, during the second meeting between Japan's Finance Minister Katsunobu Kato and US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessen, they agreed that the market should determine exchange rates. They continued to avoid discussing a specific target for the yen-dollar rate. According to a statement from the US Treasury Department, during the meeting of the Group of Seven finance ministers and central bank governors on Wednesday, they reaffirmed their shared belief. They agreed that the current dollar-yen rate reflects economic fundamentals. Leif Eskesen, managing director and chief economist at CLSA, stated, "At least when it came to the U.S.-China negotiations in Geneva, there was nothing explicit on the exchange rate." The Bank of Japan maintained its policy rate at 0.5% following its first rate hike in 17 years last year. As the chief negotiator prepares for further

tariff talks in Washington, no policy shifts in currency are expected in the near term. (Francis Tang, "Japan and U.S. reaffirm commitment to letting markets set currency rates," *The Japan Times*, 22 May 2025)

Taku Eto resigns as Agriculture Minister over his rice remarks

On 21 May, Japan's Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Minister, Taku Eto, resigned after making inappropriate comments about soaring rice prices. Taku Eto said it was a crucial time to deal with the issue and admitted he was not the right person for the job. The former Environment Minister, Shinjiro Koizumi, is considered a strong candidate to succeed him. Taku Eto submitted his notice of resignation to Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba, explaining that it would not be suitable to continue in the office. (The Yomiuri Shimbun, "Agriculture Minister Taku Eto Submits Resignation over His Remarks on Rice; Shinjiro Koizumi to be Successor" *The Japan News*, 21 May 2025)

Japan to open Fast Lanes for South Korean visitors in June

On 21 May, Japan's government announced that it will introduce special fast lanes for South Korean visitors at Haneda and Fukuoka airports in June to mark 60 years of diplomatic ties. South Korea will offer similar lanes for Japanese travelers at Gimpo and Gimhae airports. Japan's Immigration Services Agency stated that it is the first time such nationality-specific lanes will be used. Travellers who visited the other country in the past year and completed pre-boarding procedures can use the lanes between 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. In 2024, over 8 million South Koreans visited Japan, making them the top group of foreign tourists. ("Japan to give South Koreans fast-track entry in June to mark ties anniv.," *Kyodo News*, 21 May 2025)

Japan may settle for lower US tariffs to secure trade deal

On 21 May, *Japan Today* reported that Japan is considering accepting reduced US tariffs instead of demanding complete removal, as President Donald Trump remains firm on his trade stance. Japan's Chief Negotiator Ryosei Akazawa will visit the US for a third round of talks on 23 May and possibly meeting Trade Representative Jamieson Greer. The US has refused to drop 25 percent tariffs on cars, steel, and aluminum. Japan hopes for a deal like Britain's, which secured partial relief on auto exports. Japan currently exports 1.36 million vehicles to the US. Talks continue ahead of the July deadline, though removing the 10 percent baseline tariff

appears difficult. ("Japan mulls backing off from demand for U.S. to scrap tariffs: sources," *Japan Today*, 21 May 2025)

Support for Ishiba's cabinet declines to 24.7 per cent

On 18 May, *Japan Today* reported that support for Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba's cabinet has fallen to a record low of 27.4 per cent, down from 32.6 per cent in April. This decline is largely attributed to public dissatisfaction with the government's handling of rising rice prices in Japan. A Kyodo News poll indicates that 87.1 per cent of respondents find the government's measures insufficient in addressing the issue. Following the dissatisfactions, retail rice prices have approximately doubled compared to the previous year, driven by extreme heat damaging crops and increased demand from a tourism boom. Despite the government releasing stockpiled rice into the market starting in March, the public feels these measures are insufficient to curb the price surge. This implies that the plummeting approval ratings pose significant challenges for Ishiba's ruling Liberal Democratic Party and its coalition partner Komeito, especially with the upcoming upper house elections scheduled for July. The sharp decline in support reflects growing public frustration over economic issues and the government's perceived inability to manage them. This sentiment could influence voter behaviour in the forthcoming elections. ("Ishiba cabinet support rate hits record low at 27.4%: poll," *Japan Today*, 18 May, 2025)

Japan pledges Artemis despite US budget cuts

On 16 May, Japan's Aerospace Exploration Agency President Hiroshi Yamakawa stated that Japan is committed to US-led missions to the moon under the Artemis program despite US drastic cuts in budget. He confirmed Japan's commitment after President Donald Trump released a 2026 budget plan cutting NASA's budget by USD 6 billion, almost half of its space science budget, and diverting focus to Mars. Japan, European Space Agency (ESA), and Canada-participating the Artemis program will send astronauts back to the moon for the first time since 1972. Japan will have cooperation despite uncertainties, providing such capabilities as HTV-X cargo resupply vehicle, a Toyota-built rover, and details on a future moon mission with India. The budget asked for would cancel the Gateway lunar station in the fourth Artemis mission, though NASA would recycle components. ESA Director Josef Aschbacher and

Yamakawa put emphasis on continuing dialogue, and analysts like Kota Umeda stated that the US will not sacrifice useful global coalitions in an era of increased space rivalry with China. (Kantaro Komiya, "Japan remains committed to moon missions as Trump cuts NASA budget," *Japan Today*, 17 May, 2025)

Japan to enlarge specified skilled worker visa to meet labor shortage

On 17 May, *Japan Today* reported that Japan is set to extend the coverage of its Specified Skilled Worker (SSW) visa program to meet an increasing labor shortage, a draft distributed to the ruling Liberal Democratic Party committee. The suggestion is to include three additional sectors: warehouse management, waste disposal, and linen supply to the existing 16 industries, making it 19. The SSW visa enables foreign workers to enter sectors that suffer from manpower shortages, such as construction, nursing care, and agriculture. The SSW No. 1 visa provides for five years of stay, while SSW No. 2 offers the option to renew without limit, eligibility for permanent residency, as well as reunification with family members. There were more than 280,000 holders of the Specified Skilled Worker visa as of the end of 2024, according to the Immigration Services Agency. The government asserts that broadening the scope of the visa is needed because of a severe domestic labor shortage. ("Japan considers expanding industries eligible for foreign skilled workers," *Japan Today*, 17 May 2025)

Japan Fair Trade Commission limits Google and Apple's app store software services

On 15 May, the Japan Fair Trade Commission (JFTC) released draft guidelines that would ban tech giants like Google LLC and Apple Inc. from "monopolising and restricting software applications that they see as competition." The move is intended to promote fair competition by allowing smaller firms greater access to smartphone platforms. According to the commission, the aim is to benefit consumers by helping "reduce prices and improve access to convenient apps." The law is expected to go into full effect by December 2025. Importantly, the guidelines still permit Google and Apple to conduct app reviews and block content "if they do so from the perspective of ensuring cybersecurity or preventing content that promotes violence or is otherwise harmful." ("Japan moves to ban Google, Apple from blocking app store competitors," *Japan Today*, May 16 2025)

Japan approves the Pension Reform Bill, which was sent to parliament

On May 16, the Government of Japan submitted a pension reform legislation to parliament for deliberation. If passed, the "kosei nenkin" will release pressure for part-time workers at small companies and "allow more elderly people to receive their full pension benefits while working." In addition, the new law also plans to raise the cap on how much "high-income earners" have to pay into the "kosei nenkin" pension system, which covers company employees. It also aims to fix the unfair difference between men and women in the "survivor's pension" program, making it more equal. Due to fear of facing opposition from the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, the proposal for using public and reserve funds for the pension scheme was avoided. ("Japan Govt OKs Public Pension Reform Legislation," *The Japan News*, 16 May 2025)

Third round of tariff negotiations between Japan and the United States, reports Japan Times

On May 15, the *Japan Times* reported that Japan and the US are planning a third round of high-level talks about tariffs. Japan's lead negotiator, Ryosei Akazawa, might visit Washington as soon as next Thursday for these talks. However, some Japanese government officials said they haven't confirmed these plans yet. Before Akazawa's possible visit, there will be working-level meetings in Washington. So far, Akazawa's two previous visits to Washington have not led to any major agreements. ("Third round of U.S.-Japan tariff talks may be held next week: report," *The Japan Times*, 15 May 2025)

Search ongoing for missing crew of ASDF jet crash in Japan's Lake Iruka

On 14 May, a Japan Air Self-Defense Force (ASDF) T-4 training jet that crashed into Lake Iruka, a large artificial reservoir in central Japan. The aircraft, which was 36 years old and based at Nyutabaru Air Base in Miyazaki Prefecture, disappeared from radar just two minutes after taking off from Komaki Air Base in Aichi Prefecture. The two missing crew members have been identified as Capt Takuji Ioka (31) and 1st Lt Shota Amitani (29), though it is unclear who was flying, as both seats have controls. Debris and helmets believed to belong to the crew have been recovered, but the aircraft lacked a flight recorder, complicating investigations. Search efforts continue with help from ASDF members, police, rescue workers,

divers, and helicopters. The Chief of Staff of the ASDF, Gen Hiroaki Uchikura, announced the suspension of all T-4 flights for now. The T-4 jets, domestically made and used for training and aerobatics by the Blue Impulse team, number 197 in the fleet. This incident adds to a recent series of SDF aircraft accidents, including the fatal crashes of a UH-60JA helicopter in April 2023 and two SH-60K patrol helicopters during a submarine drill. ("Search continues for 2 missing crew of crashed ASDF training jet," *Japan Today*, 15 May 2025)

Japan plans to make childbirth free by April 2026, reports Japan Today

On 15 May, *Japan Today* reports that Japan is planning to eliminate out-of-pocket expenses for normal childbirth under its public health insurance system as early as April 2026. This aims to tackle the country's declining birthrate. The policy, approved on 14 May by a panel of experts under the Health, Labor and Welfare Ministry, would fully cover regular delivery costs which are currently excluded from insurance since they are not classified as medical conditions, unlike cesarean sections. Epidurals, however, will remain outside insurance coverage. Spokespersons from the ministry noted that while the government currently provides a lump-sum payment of 500,000 yen per childbirth, actual delivery costs often exceed this, averaging about 518,000 yen nationwide in the first half of fiscal 2024. This change would standardize childbirth fees nationwide, but obstetricians are concerned it could cause financial strain for medical institutions due to reduced revenue. ("Japan set to fully cover childbirth costs possibly from April 2026," *Japan Today*, 15 May 2025)

US-Japan tariff negotiation likely to resume next week, reports The Japan Times

On 15 May, *The Japan Times* reported Japan-US will hold the third round of high-level tariff negotiation as early as next week. Japan's chief negotiator Ryosei Akazawa is expected to visit Washington by 22 May, according to a report by TV Asahi. Although this visit has not been officially confirmed. Cabinet Office and Cabinet Secretariat officials told *The Japan Times* they were unaware of any finalized arrangements. Akazawa's previous two visits yielded no concrete outcomes, and after the last round of talks earlier this month, both sides agreed to resume negotiations intensively after mid-May while continuing lower-level discussions. The talks remain stalled, with key issues which include the 25 percent tariffs on Japanese cars and the 24 percent reciprocal tariffs (currently

paused for 90 days), still unresolved. Akazawa and Japan's Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba have emphasized that a comprehensive agreement is only possible if all tariffs are addressed.

Meanwhile, other countries are progressing in trade discussions: the UK recently secured a deal on car tariffs with the US, and China agreed to a 90-day rollback of mutual tariffs during talks in Switzerland. (Francis Tang, "Third round of U.S.-Japan tariff talks may be held next week: report," *The Japan Times*, 15 May 2025)

Japanese trade ministers to skip APEC meeting amid geopolitical tensions

On 14 May, *The Japan Times* reported that Japan's Trade Minister Yoji Muto and Chief Trade Negotiator Ryosei Akazawa would not attend the APEC trade ministers' meeting in South Korea. Their absence may weaken Japan's chances of holding meaningful bilateral talks with the U.S. Instead, State Minister for Trade Masaki Ogushi and State Minister for Foreign Affairs Takuma Miyaji will represent Japan during the two-day meeting, set to begin on May 15. While it is not uncommon for trade ministers to skip such gatherings, Japan's no-show comes at a sensitive time, as tensions rise over global trade and U.S. protectionist measures. ("Japan's key officials to skip APEC meet attended by U.S. trade representative," *The Japan Times*, 14 May 2025)

Nissan Motor Co. plans to lay off 20,000 jobs globally, reports Japan Times

On 13 May, *Japan Today* reported that Nissan Motor Co. plans to cut around 20,000 jobs globally, approximately 15 per cent of its total workforce, as part of a major restructuring effort. The company is also considering the closure of one of its domestic factories to optimize production capacity in response to plummeting global sales. The move comes as the automaker faces a record annual net loss of 700 billion to 750 billion yen for fiscal year 2024, largely due to restructuring charges and weak performance in key markets like the US and China. The *BBC* noted that "closing domestic plants is expected to draw strong opposition," highlighting the political and social sensitivity of such a move within Japan. Nissan stated, "Facing a severe situation, Nissan is taking urgent measures to turnaround its performance and create a leaner, more resilient business." ("Struggling Nissan plans to slash 20,000 jobs globally," *Japan Today*, 13 May 2025)

Value of rice in Japan falls, informs the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and

Fisheries

On 13 May, *Japan Today* stated that according to the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, the cost of rice sold at Japanese supermarkets fell from 19 yen per 5 kg over the week through 4 May. The supply has suffered due to the rising temperatures of the previous summer's harvest and the increase in tourism. To ensure smooth market distribution, the government will release 312,000 tons of stockpiled rice. ("Japan rice prices fall for 1st time in 18 weeks," *Japan Today*, 13 May 2025)

Japan's universal healthcare system politicized, says an editorial in the Japan Times

On 12 May, an editorial in the *Japan Times* titled "Japan's gold standard health insurance system at politicization risk," by Peter Masheter, looked at Japan's lauded universal healthcare system and the strains on it. The system is praised for affordable healthcare and supporting the longest living population. The author notes that this system is facing strain due to an aging society and a shrinking workforce. The system, where most residents pay 30 percent of medical costs with capped out-of-pocket expenses, is now caught in political debates ahead of key elections. Japan's Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba's administration aims to secure 3.6 trillion yen for child-rearing policies, with about 1 trillion yen expected from healthcare savings. Japan's Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare proposed that they raise the monthly out-of-pocket expense cap for individuals earning between 3.7 and 7.7 million yen annually by approximately 59,000 yen. This will establish the new maximum at around 139,000 yen. This saw public backlash, especially from cancer patients, which led to the plan being frozen. The opposition and even some LDP members criticized the rushed reforms. Analysts warn that using healthcare as a political tool could damage public trust. Experts suggest long-term reforms and better cost control instead of increasing burdens on patients, especially as elderly voters dominate election dynamics. (Peter Masheter, "Japan's gold standard health insurance system at politicization risk," *Japan Today*, 12 May 2025).

China-Japan tensions escalate near the Senkaku Islands, reports the Japan Times

On 12 May, the *Japan Times* reported on escalating tensions between Japan and China following an incident where a China Coast Guard helicopter violated Japanese airspace near the Senkaku Islands. This marked the first such breach by a

helicopter and the fourth overall by Chinese aircraft. In retaliation, a flight of a Japanese civilian plane faced China's deployment of government ships to the contested waters for 175 consecutive days. Additionally, a Chinese research vessel was spotted conducting unauthorized activity within Japan's exclusive economic zone. Japanese lawmakers voiced alarm, warning that Beijing might be attempting further fait accompli to bolster its territorial claims, possibly by landing drones or helicopters on the islets. Despite Japan's scramble of fighter jets, critics argued the response was delayed. Japan's Defense Minister, Gen Nakatani, reaffirmed Japan's control over the islands, denying any territorial dispute, while highlighting China's persistent attempts to alter the status quo by force. The Japanese government also cautioned against further civilian flights near the Senkakus to prevent unforeseen incidents amid the growing regional tension. (Jesse Johnson, "Escalation fears rise in Japan following Chinese moves near Senkakus," *Japan Times*, 12 May 2025)

Japan-US agree to ramp up tariff talks

On 01 May, Japan's top trade negotiator, Ryosei Akazawa, and US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent agreed to intensify ministerial-level discussions from mid-May. Akazawa announced the two sides had made "some progress" on nontariff barriers, economic-security cooperation, and expanding bilateral trade. They aimed for a mutually beneficial agreement as early as June, potentially timed with a G7 leader's meeting. He stressed that nothing is fixed and that Japan will not compromise its national interests. ("Japan, U.S. agree to step up tariff talks with June deal in mind," *Japan Today*, 02 May 2025)

Israel's Ambassador condemns the compulsory tourist declaration of war crimes committed

On 01 May, *Japan Times* reported that an Israeli tourist was asked to sign a declaration stating he had committed no war crimes when checking into the Wind Villa guesthouse in Kyoto. This prompted Israeli Ambassador Gilad Cohen to lodge a formal protest with Governor Takatoshi Nishiwaki. Cohen said: "This discriminatory act, based solely on nationality, caused the guest significant emotional distress." The guesthouse later explained it requires such pledges from nationals of countries whose citizens "may have been involved in war crimes," citing the need to protect staff and other guests. Kyoto city deemed the practice "inappropriate" and warned against singling out Israeli and Russian

visitors. (Karin Kaneko, "Israel protests after Kyoto inn seeks war crime declaration from tourist," *Japan Times*, 01 May 2025)

Japan is a crucial partner for ASEAN amid US-China tariff tensions, says Prime Minister

On 30 April, Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba visited Vietnam and the Philippines from 28 April to 01 May 2025, to portray Japan as a steadfast partner. Ishiba pledged to expand security cooperation, establish vice-ministerial foreign and defense dialogues with Hanoi, explore an information-sharing pact with Manila, and supply non-offensive assets such as patrol boats and radars. He underscored the shared values of democracy and the rule of law. *Japan Today* reported that, unlike the United States' uneven engagement, Japan's long-standing "official security assistance" program and consistent economic ties position Tokyo as a dependable intermediary, bolstering a free and open Indo-Pacific and regional stability. (Keita Nakamura, "Japan's role for ASEAN increasingly crucial amid U.S. tariff standoff," *Japan Today*, 01 May 2025)

Bank of Japan holds short-term policy rate at 0.5 per cent

On 01 May, the Bank of Japan maintained its short-term policy rate at 0.5 per cent, pausing further tightening amid heightened global uncertainty from US tariffs. Governor Kazuo Ueda noted that while inflation, driven by soaring food prices, has exceeded 3.5 per cent, slowing the pace of rate hikes allows the central bank to assess the tariffs' full impact on growth and prices. The bank also revised down its consumer-price forecasts, to 2.2 per cent for fiscal 2025, 1.7 per cent for 2026, and 1.9 per cent for 2027, reflecting a more cautious outlook in the face of external trade pressures. (Kazuaki Nagata, "Bank of Japan holds rates as Trump tariffs unsettle markets and economies," *Japan Times*, 01 May 2025)

AUSTRALIA & THE PACIFIC READER

PNG faces a persistent issue of money laundering, reports RNZ

On 31 May, RNZ reported that Papua New Guinea (PNG) is under urgent pressure to strengthen its anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing (AML/CTF) systems. The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) has given PNG until October 2025 to fix critical deficiencies or face being placed on its "grey list," a status indicating increased monitoring. Such a designation could severely impact PNG's economy, trade, and international reputation. Prime Minister James Marape has appointed

Treasury Minister Ian Ling-Stuckey to lead a national taskforce to address the lapses. Marape stressed the urgency of the matter, saying that agency heads have been directed to work relentlessly to avoid greylisting. Although PNG was previously greylisted in 2014, it was removed in 2016 after regulatory improvements. However, a recent review by the Asia Pacific Group on Money Laundering (APG) shows that while laws exist, enforcement remains weak. The key challenge lies in the implementation of laws. Prosecutions and convictions for financial crimes remain rare, and critical enforcement agencies face shortages of staff, training, and coordination. Deputy Opposition Leader James Nomane warned that greylisting could undermine investor confidence, raise the cost of imports, and delay major projects like Papua LNG and Wafi-Golpu. The looming FATF deadline gives PNG a narrow window to demonstrate real and sustained progress. Without meaningful enforcement, technical compliance alone will not suffice. The outcome of this push will likely define PNG's economic direction and international financial credibility for years to come. In Parliament, Marape, acknowledging the urgency, said: "I summoned all agency heads to a critical meeting... They must work day and night to avert greylisting." (Scott Waide, "PNG faces deadline for fixing issues with money laundering and terrorist financing," *RNZ*, 31 May 2025)

One China policy upheld at the Pacific Island countries ministerial meeting

On 29 May, *ABC* reported that at a high-profile meeting in Xiamen, Pacific nations expressed support for China's One-China policy, recognizing Taiwan as part of China's territory, but stopped short of endorsing Beijing's reunification agenda. The joint statement highlighted "understanding and support" for China's national reunification efforts, reflecting a softer diplomatic stance. Analysts note that while China seeks stronger international backing on Taiwan, Pacific nations remain cautious, especially as countries like Palau, Tuvalu, and the Marshall Islands, which support Taiwan, did not attend. China used the forum to position itself as a key regional partner, pledging climate aid, infrastructure development, and support for disaster management. Foreign Minister Wang Yi also criticized the Trump administration for abandoning the Paris Agreement, contrasting China's ongoing commitment to climate leadership. Although Beijing promoted increased policing cooperation, the joint

statement did not endorse it directly. Experts suggest China is exploiting gaps left by US disengagement, but regional trust remains mixed. Pacific nations, facing economic vulnerabilities and mounting debt to China, are balancing economic needs with geopolitical caution. (Stephen Dziedzic, "Pacific Island nations support China's Taiwan claims at high-profile foreign ministers' meeting," *ABC*, 29 May 2025)

Commander of US Indo-Pacific visits Malaysia

On 29 May, *US Indo-Pacific Command* reported that the Commander of US Indo-Pacific Command, Admiral Samuel J. Paparo, visited Malaysia from 28 May to 29 May, reinforcing the strategic importance of US-Malaysia relations and Washington's broader commitment to the Indo-Pacific. His visit included high-level meetings with Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim and Defence Minister Mohamed Khaled Nordin, where they reaffirmed robust defense cooperation through joint exercises, expert exchanges, and shared efforts in maritime domain awareness. The visit highlighted ongoing military engagements, such as the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Exhibition 2025, where over 400 US personnel showcased support for Malaysia's defense modernization. Paparo also took part in ceremonial events at the Ministry of Defence and honored fallen soldiers at the Tugu Negara National Monument. The US-Malaysia partnership, now spanning 68 years, continues to prioritize regional prosperity, stability, and security. *USINDOPACOM* emphasized its enduring mission to deter aggression and ensure peace in the Indo-Pacific through multilateral cooperation and military readiness. (U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, "U.S. Indo-Pacific Commander Travels to Malaysia," *USINDOPACOM*, 29 May 2025)

UK Consul-General visits Northern Mariana

On 29 May, *RNZ* reported that UK Consul-General Paul Rennie recently visited the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) and Guam, marking the first official trip by a UK diplomat of his rank to the region. Rennie described the three-day visit as "overdue" yet vital, emphasizing the UK's interest in strengthening ties with Pacific Island communities. During his stay in the CNMI, Rennie met with key local leaders, including Lieutenant Governor David Apatang, Senate President Dennis Mendiola, and Saipan Mayor Ramon Camacho. Rennie said: "This was the first visit in history by a serving British Consul-General. While we've had British

military visiting the islands before - such as [the ship] HMS Queen Elizabeth in 2021 - it was important for me to show that we value this relationship across a wider spectrum of areas." Drawing parallels with Scotland's remote islands, he suggested collaborative opportunities in green energy, small business growth, aquaculture, and logistics innovations like drone deliveries. In particular, he noted the potential use of unmanned aerial drones, currently tested in Scotland, for transporting mail and medical supplies to remote CNMI communities such as Rota and the Northern Islands. Rennie stressed that the visit was not merely symbolic but aimed at exploring tangible partnerships. His office plans to further UK engagement in areas like renewable energy, broadband infrastructure, and entrepreneurial development in the US Pacific territories. (Mark Robango, "UK Consul-General visits Northern Marianas, highlights shared island priorities and future partnerships," *RNZ*, 29 May 2025)

China is sparking a growing debt crisis in the Pacific, reports the Lowy Institute

On 28 May, Australia's Lowy Institute reveals that China has become the largest creditor to developing nations, with at least USD 54 billion in repayments due in 2025 alone. While loans under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) supported infrastructure projects across Africa, Asia, and Latin America, they have now created severe debt burdens for many low-income countries. The expiration of grace periods and delayed repayments during the COVID-19 pandemic have triggered a financial crunch. Countries like Tonga, which owes China nearly 25% of its GDP, face compounded challenges due to natural disasters and fiscal strain. China's reluctance to forgive debt, despite offering deadline extensions, has placed it in a diplomatic bind, risking relationships or jeopardizing its own financial institutions. Comparisons are being drawn to the 1980s Latin America's debt crisis, warning of a potential "Lost Decade" for today's borrowers if restructuring is not pursued. Australia has offered aid, including USD 85 million to Tonga, while calls grow for China to adopt more transparent and sustainable lending practices. China defends its policies, blaming Western institutions for misrepresenting facts. The report underscores China's shift from investor to debt collector, with significant implications for global development, diplomacy, and financial stability in the developing world. (Stephen Dziedzic, "Lowy report finds Pacific nations 'grappling with a tidal wave of debt

repayments' to China", *ABC News*, 28 May 2025)

Call for UN action against illegal logging in Papua New Guinea

On 27 May, *RNZ*, the UN Committee received appeals from watchdog groups ACT NOW and Jubilee Australia on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination to address human rights abuses concerning illegal logging in Papua New Guinea (PNG). ACT NOW campaign manager Eddie Tanago stated customary landowners are suffering "pervasive, ongoing and irreparable harm" as their forests are stolen through fraudulent logging schemes like Special Agriculture and Business Leases (SABLs) and Forest Clearing Authorities (FCAs). Despite a Commission of Inquiry over a decade ago, PNG's government has failed to cancel illegal SABLs or stop expanding FCAs. Logging companies have earned hundreds of millions, possibly billions, but landowners remain unaware of leases, boundaries, or profits due to a lack of transparency. Tanago also stated that foreign companies have gained profit through imports to countries that accept illegal timber. He has urged them to stop importing timber from SABL and FCA areas and to demand permit audits, stressing that this is systematic exploitation, not poor law enforcement. ("Plea for UN intervention over illegal PNG logging," *RNZ*, 27 May 2025)

China to host China-Pacific Island Countries Foreign Ministers Meeting

On 26 May, *RNZ* reports that foreign ministers from Pacific Islands will be gathering in Fujian province of China, for the third China-Pacific Island Countries Foreign Ministers' Meeting. China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi will chair the meeting in Xiamen scheduled for 28-29 May, which the China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs noted "it will be the first of its kind to be held offline in China." At the daily news briefing, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning stated to reporters on 21 May that foreign ministers or representatives from 11 island countries that have diplomatic relations with China, and the Pacific Islands Forum deputy secretary general Esala Nayasi, would also attend the meeting. Mao stated that the participants would participate in in-depth exchanges of views on all-round cooperation between China and Pacific Island countries, as well as on international and regional issues of mutual interest. She also noted that the objective of the meeting was to jointly build an even closer China-Pacific Island countries community with a shared future. (China to host Pacific foreign ministers for first

in-person summit in Xiamen, *RNZ*, 26 May 2025)

China's Ambassador to Australia criticizes the return of Darwin Port to Australia

On 26 May, *Reuters* reported that China's Ambassador to Australia criticised the Australian government's intention to return Darwin Port to local ownership, stating the Chinese company running the strategically located northern port should not be punished. Australia's Prime Minister, Anthony Albanese, stated in April during the election campaign that his government was working on a plan to force the sale of Darwin Port from its Chinese owner on national interest grounds. Australia sold the commercial port on a 99-year lease to the Chinese company Landbridge in 2015, a move that was criticised by the US president at the time, Barack Obama. China's Ambassador to Australia, Xiao Qian, stated that the Landbridge Group had invested in the port and contributed to the local economy, according to a statement on Sunday by the Chinese embassy. Qian said: "Such an enterprise and project deserves encouragement, not punishment. It is ethically questionable to lease the port when it was unprofitable and then seek to reclaim it once it becomes profitable." Albanese stated in an Australian Broadcasting Corporation radio interview in April that his government wants the port to "be in Australian hands," and would directly intervene and buy the port if it were unable to find a private buyer. (Chinese ambassador criticises plan to return Darwin Port to Australian ownership, *Reuters*, 26 May 2025)

Bougainville's electoral commission kickstarts voter registration

On 26 May, the Office of the Bougainville Electoral Commissioner (OBEC) began the formal process of voter registration and enrolment in the North Bougainville region, which is set to be conducted on 02 September 2025. OBEC announced except for the Atolls and Nissan constituencies, for which voter enrolment dates have not yet been confirmed, other parts of the North Bougainville region are currently in the process of updating their electoral rolls within the constituencies. The Electoral Commissioner Desmond Tsianai said: "So far, we are currently conducting the voter enrolment exercise in Haku, Halia, Hagogohe, Tsitalato, Peit, Tonsu, Selau, Suir, Toanita Teop, Toanita Tinputz, Mahari, Teua and Kerieka Constituencies in the North Bougainville region." He also noted that it is also important that every eligible voter must make sure that

their details are accurately written and that they must request an update if needed. Voter enrolment activities will end on 07 July, which is the date set for the issue of the writ for the 2025 Bougainville General Elections. (Bougainvilleans urged to register to vote as voter enrolment kicks off, *RNZ*, 25 May 2025)

Fiji struggles to retain its teachers, reports RNZ

On 26 May, RNZ reported on Fiji's Finance Minister stating that they cannot compete with Australia and New Zealand to retain their teachers. The Fijian education system is facing major challenges as the coalition government struggles to address a teacher shortage. While the education sector receives a significant chunk of the budget (approximately NZD 587 million), it has not been sufficient, as global demand for skilled teachers is prompting qualified Fijian educators towards better prospects and brighter futures. Fiji's Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Biman Prasad expressed to the *Pacific Waves* on the sidelines of the University of the South Pacific Council meeting in Auckland last week, "The government has put in measures, we are training enough teachers, but we are also losing teachers to Australia and New Zealand," Meanwhile, the Fijian government is currently undertaking a review of the Education Act 1966. Education Minister Aseri Radrodoro announced in parliament last month that a draft bill is expected to be submitted to the Cabinet in July. (Lydia Lewis, Fiji can't compete with Australia and NZ on teacher salaries - Deputy PM, *RNZ*, 26 May 2025)

Papua New Guinea government to remove GST on 13 essential items

On 22 May, Papua New Guinea Prime Minister James Marape said his government will remove the Goods and Services Tax (GST) on 13 essential household items. This commitment made in last year's budget will take effect from 01 June 2025. Marape stated that these tax reforms are a part of relief measures to support struggling families. He further noted that, "These include removing project fees from schools, paying tuition fees for elementary to secondary education, supporting higher education through the Higher Education Loan Programme (HELP), and offering scholarships for high-performing students to study overseas. We've also provided tax relief by raising the income threshold for non-taxable earnings to K20,000." From next year onwards, the government will remove 10 per cent GST from first-time home buyers. ("PNG government on

track to remove GST on 13 essential items" *RNZ*, 22 May 2025)

New Zealand's Deputy Prime Minister warns against the Pacific becoming a military zone On 21 May, New Zealand's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Winston Peters stated that the Pacific must not become a "military zone" in an interview. He shared his concerns amid China's growing influence in the region. He stated that, "But the reality is, as the geostrategic shape of the world changes, we do not want the Pacific to become the grounds for competition." Despite having a strong relationship with China, Peters said New Zealand was concerned about recent developments, including a secretive China-Cook Islands deal and unexpected Chinese military drills in the Tasman Sea. These actions have alarmed both New Zealand and Australia. Peters noted this is the most uncertain time globally in 80 years and emphasised the need for face-to-face diplomacy with Pacific nations. Defence and security in the Pacific will be a top priority when Winston Peters and Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong meet in Adelaide this Friday. Peters stressed that open dialogue with China is key, saying, "If you can't talk frankly to them, it's not a great relationship." (Eva Corlett, "Pacific must not become a 'military zone' amid rise of China, New Zealand's deputy PM warns," *The Guardian*, 21 May 2025)

Papua New Guinea landowner groups shut down Oil Palm Mill

On 19 May, *RNZ* reported that the Landowner groups in East New Britain, Papua New Guinea, had shut down the Liguria Oil Palm Mill on 12 May after East New Britain Palm Oil Ltd failed to address eight government recommendations. The closure followed allegations by oil palm farmers of exploitation and price-fixing. The National Government's recommendations include repayment of approximately USD 9 million owed to landowners and growers and the establishment of a fair market price formula. Pomio Oil Palm Growers Association demands a favorable response before reopening. Trade Minister Richard Maru warned of legal action against the company if non-compliant. The Narragit Oil Palm Mill may also face temporary closure. ("PNG landowner groups shut down Oil Palm Mill in East New Britain," *RNZ*, 19 May 2025)

Australian prisoner Matthew Radalj's ordeal in Beijing's brutal detention system

On 18 May, *BBC* reported that Australian Matthew Radalj was arrested in Beijing on

January 2, 2020, after a dispute with shopkeepers and was wrongly convicted of robbery, receiving a four-year sentence. He endured brutal treatment, beatings, starvation, and bullying to force a false confession. He was detained in harsh conditions with no showers, dirty toilets, constant lighting, and overcrowding, he was first held in a tough “transition period” before moving to regular prison. Mandarin-speaking Taiwanese inmates convinced guards to give them control of extra food, sparking a large brawl. Radalj was caught in the middle and, after hitting another prisoner, was sent to solitary confinement for 194 days in a tiny 1.2 by 1.8-meter cell with minimal light, no reading materials, and halved food rations. Prisoners, mostly drug convicts from Africa, Pakistan, and the US, faced psychological abuse through the prison’s “good behaviour points system,” which allowed earning up to 100 points monthly by tasks like studying Communist Party texts or factory work, with 4,200 points theoretically reducing sentences. However, Radalj and others say points were frequently revoked near targets for trivial reasons, causing many to give up and face other punishments, such as reduced family calls. Radalj secretly documented these abuses and, after release, returned to Australia to advocate for prisoners still enduring harsh conditions. (Stephen McDonnell, “You start to go crazy: The Australian who survived five years in a Chinese prison,” *BBC*, 18 May 2025)

Fiji’s Deputy Prime Minister Biman Prasad denies collusion with University of the South Pacific Vice-Chancellor

On 21 May, *RNZ* reported that Fiji’s Deputy Prime Minister Biman Prasad dismissed claims of collusion with University of the South Pacific (USP) Vice-Chancellor Professor Pal Ahluwalia as “nonsense.” Prasad, attending the 99th USP Council meeting in Auckland, stated “meeting friends at the university was normal.” Allegations arose from reports of private meetings at Ahluwalia’s residence. Prasad denied any leadership crisis at USP, stating challenges are common and the Council is professional. Fiji’s government has restored funding and academic freedom to USP. Prasad stressed the university’s importance to regional unity and development, noting that a search for a new vice-chancellor will begin soon as Ahluwalia’s term ends in August 2026. (Lydia Lewis, “Fijian Deputy PM rejects University of the South Pacific collusion claims, says ‘no leadership crisis,’” *RNZ*, 21 May 2025)

Pacific Territories raise voice at UN

Decolonisation meet

On 21 May, *RNZ* reported that New Caledonia and French Polynesia are sending strong delegations to the UN Pacific seminar on decolonization, held in Dili, Timor Leste, from 21 May to 23 May 2025. New Caledonia, on the UN decolonization list since 1986, is facing political unrest and deadlocked talks with France. Its government President Alcide Ponga and the Kanak Senate will present both pro- and anti-independence views. French Polynesia, re-listed in 2013, is represented by both pro-independence Tavini Huiraatira and pro-autonomy leaders like Moerani Frébault and Tepuaraurii Teriitahi. Tavini recently drafted a proposed “Constitution of a Federated Republic of Ma’ohi Nui”. France President Moetai Brotherson seeks a peaceful evolution in ties with France, though not immediate independence. France, however, maintains that French Polynesia does not belong on the UN decolonisation list. The seminar precedes formal Fourth Committee sessions in New York. (Patrick Decloitre, “New Caledonia, French Polynesia at UN decolonisation seminar in Dili,” *RNZ*, 21 May 2025)

Papua New Guinea’s rainforests are under threat from illegal logging

On 21 May, *RNZ* reported that Papua New Guinea’s rainforests are being rapidly cleared through abuse of the Forest Clearing Authority (FCA) scheme. They were meant for small-scale agriculture. Advocacy group ACT NOW and Jubilee Australia stated in their report *The FCA Logging Scandal* that large-scale illegal logging is disguised as agricultural activity. On 09 August 2022, Prime Minister James Marape, in his inaugural address to the national parliament, stated that “we are committed to stopping all round log exports by 2025”. But not much action had been taken. ACT NOW campaign manager Eddie Tanago blames the PNG Forest Authority for failing to enforce regulations and calls for an immediate suspension of FCA-based logging. The group also asked for clear investigation, public audit reports, and stronger monitoring by banks, foreign buyers, and organizations like Interpol. China, which buys 90 percent of Papua New Guinea’s timber, has also asked to make sure the wood is sourced legally. The communities will face land loss, environmental harm, and human rights violations without strong regulation and traceability. (Don Wiseman, “Report highlights widespread abuse of logging permits in Papua New Guinea,” *RNZ*, 21 May 2025)

US officials express frustration as retired

Australian M1A1 tanks make their way to Ukraine

On 19 May, *ABC* reported that American officials expressed frustration over Australia's decision to donate retired M1A1 Abrams tanks to Ukraine, as the vehicles are finally bound for the battleground. After confirming the fleet of second-hand M1A1 vehicles was on the way, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy thanked Prime Minister Anthony Albanese in an overnight meeting in Rome. The ABC has confirmed that loading the first of the 49 vehicles onto a cargo ship began recently, but details remain hazy due to "security reasons". Australia had to wait for Washington's approval to export the US-made tanks to a third country, which was granted despite some frustration. (Andrew Greene, US officials question use of Australia's retired tanks as vehicles go to Ukraine, *ABC News*, 19 May 2025)

West Papuan indigenous groups protest Indonesia's Food Estate Project

On 16 May, *RNZ* reported the ongoing land disputes in Merauke, West Papua, wherein Indigenous groups alleged that the Indonesian government is grabbing their ancestral lands to build a national "food barn" under the Food Estate Project. Wensi Fatubun, from Merauke in Indonesian-occupied Papua, said: "[The] Indonesian government took the land for the [food] security project, it was not consulted or consented by Indigenous Papuan." About 90 per cent of the areas targeted were forest, and that was a source of livelihood for most of the locals. The plan, like past governments, aims to convert 3 million hectares of land into rice (2 million) and sugarcane (1 million) to reduce food imports by 2028. Wensi Fatubun, Rosa Moiwend, and Human Rights Watch's Andreas Harsono highlight the absence of consent, rising militarisation, and fear among Papuans. The project is in the memory of the failed 2010 Merauke Integrated Food and Energy Estate for 1.3 million hectares, mostly forest, which raised environmental and legal issues. Indonesia's embassy insists all its land sales are respectful of tribal culture. Catherine Delahunty of West Papua Action Aotearoa denounces Australia and New Zealand for closing their eyes to what she considers racially driven exploitation and ecological devastation within a territory she calls the "lungs of the Pacific." (Caleb Fotheringham, "Indigenous West Papuans claim Indonesian government is 'land grabbing'," *RNZ*, 16 May 2025)

Polio outbreak plagues Papua New Guinea, reports WHO

On 16 May, *RNZ* reported on a World Health Organisation informing of a fresh outbreak of polio cases in Papua New Guinea. This is the second outbreak since 2018, which was eradicated the same year. PNG health officials are focused on vaccinating people, especially children under the age of five, who are more susceptible to acquiring it. The transmission of the disease was first noted in the city of Lae, in stool samples from two healthy children. WHO representative in PNG, Dr Sevil Huseynova, said: "In communities with low polio immunisation rates, the virus quickly spreads from one person to another." In some rare cases, the virus can invade the nervous system, leaving one in 200 people with irreversible paralysis. ("Polio outbreak confirmed in Papua New Guinea, World Health Organisation says," *RNZ*, 16 May 2025)

Australia's employment increases in April by 89,000

On 15 May, *ABC News* reported the strong rise in Australia's employment in April and its effect on unemployment and monetary policy. The employment increased by 89,000, much higher than the forecasted 22,500, with female employment rising by 65,000 (mainly full-time) and male employment by 24,000. Despite this growth, the unemployment rate stayed steady at 4.1 percent, the same as March, and the participation rate rose to 67.1 percent. Over the year, employment grew by 390,000 (2.7 percent), outpacing the 2.1 percent population growth for those aged 15 and above. The employment-to-population ratio inched up to 64.4 percent, near its January record. While headline inflation dropped from 4.1 percent to 2.4 percent, the Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) still plans to cut interest rates, though possibly less aggressively, due to the strong job figures. Callam Pickering, economist at Indeed, said the robust jobs growth shows the labor market remains healthy, supported by ongoing strong labor demand. Tony Sycamore from IG noted the market now expects a slightly lower chance of a rate cut next week, and ANZ economists Aaron Luk and Adelaide Timbrell highlighted that the surge might be "more noise than signal," pointing out flat hours worked despite rising employment, but they still expect a 0.25 percent rate cut soon. (Gareth Hutchens, "Employment surges by 89,000 in April and unemployment rate holds steady at 4.1pc," *ABC News*, 15 May 2025)

Missing ballot papers found at the Australian Electoral Commission worker's home

On 14 May, *ABC* reported an investigation that

was launched into the 1,866 missing ballot papers found at the home of a temporary Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) worker. While this did not affect the outcome of the polls, it remains unclear how the ballots went missing. Further investigation is ongoing. The ballots were found in a secure container that had been shipped on 03 May but failed to reach the commission's central counting centre. According to an AEC spokesperson: "Ballot papers were securely packaged in the presence of scrutineers, with an authorised transport officer collecting two ballot paper transport containers for delivery to a central counting centre to await further processing," (AEC investigates after missing ballot papers found at election worker's home," *ABC*, 14 May 2025)

China is accused of pressuring the Solomon Islands minister to resign from IPAC

On 13 May, *RNZ* reported that China's Embassy in Solomon Islands was accused of pressuring newly appointed Rural Development Minister, Daniel Waneoroa, to resign from the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China (IPAC). The IPAC condemned the alleged pressure as "bullying behaviour", viewing it as a direct challenge to the Solomon Islands' sovereignty. When asked, Mr Waneoroa stated that he made the decision "in the interest of fostering stability and aligning with a collective national vision." Transparency Solomon Islands criticized China's actions, stating, "The People's Republic of China must understand: Solomon Islands is not a satellite state like Hong Kong," and demanded an end to political interference. Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Solomon Islands denied these allegations, terming them "baseless." (Stephen Dziedzic, Chrisnrita Aumanu-Leong, "China accused of foreign interference in Solomon Islands after minister quits international group," *RNZ*, 13 May 2025)

Sussan Ley becomes the first woman to lead Australia's Liberal Party

On 13 May, as reported by the *BBC*, Susan Ley was elected as the first woman to lead Australia's Liberal Party, following Peter Dutton's electoral defeat for the party. The Liberal-National coalition suffered one of its worst defeats, securing only 42 seats, down from 58. In contrast, the Labor Party, led by Anthony Albanese, won at least 93 seats, increasing their majority by 16. Ley promised to rebuild the party's relationship with Australians, particularly women and young people, aiming to modernize the party's image and policies. In a statement made by her, "We

have to have a Liberal Party that respects modern Australia, that reflects modern Australia, and that represents modern Australia." Ley also said that all nuclear and net-zero emission policies, as well as the party's losses, would be subject to review, advocating for multilateral decision-making. ("Liberal Party names first female leader after historic Australia election loss," *BBC*, 13 May 2025)

A ban on public demonstrations in New Caledonia for the 2024 riots anniversary

On 12 May, *RNZ* reports, New Caledonia has implemented strict security measures following unsuccessful political talks and ahead of the first anniversary of the deadly riots of May 2024. The riots resulted in 14 deaths and EUR 2.2 billion in damages. From 12-15 May 2025, public demonstrations and marches will be banned in the Greater Nouméa area, with restrictions on firearm sales, ammunition, and takeaway alcohol. The move follows violent clashes in Nouméa's suburbs, including the setting up of roadblocks and arson incidents. In response, French authorities have deployed 2,600 officers, including special SWAT units and riot-armored vehicles, aiming for a "zero tolerance" policy against urban violence, especially in pro-independence strongholds like Saint-Louis. Meanwhile, a New Zealand war memorial was set alight, prompting police investigations. Australia and New Zealand have issued heightened travel advisories due to the risk of civil unrest. The political talks aimed at resolving New Caledonia's future also ended without agreement, with pro-independence and pro-France parties unable to compromise on sovereignty and electoral issues. (Patrick Decloitre, "New Caledonia tightens security following aborted political talks ahead of riots' first anniversary," *RNZ*, 12 May 2025).

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