

China to ‘Fight to the End’ Against U.S. Trade War



BEIJING (AFP) -- China vowed on Tuesday to “fight to the end” against fresh tariffs of 50 percent threatened by U.S. President Donald Trump, further aggravating a trade war that has already wiped trillions off global markets.

Trump has upended the world economy with sweeping tariffs that have raised the specter of an international recession, but has ruled out any pause in his aggressive trade policy despite a dramatic market sell-off.

Beijing -- Washington’s major economic rival but also a key trading partner -- responded by announcing its own 34 percent duties on U.S. goods to come into effect on Thursday, deepening a showdown between the world’s two largest economies.

The swift retaliation from China sparked a fresh warning from Trump

that he would impose additional levies if Beijing refused to stop pushing back against his barrage of tariffs -- a move that would drive the overall levies on Chinese goods to 104 percent.

“I have great respect for China but they cannot do this,” Trump said in the White House. “We are going to have one shot at this... I’ll tell you what, it is an honor to do it.”

China swiftly hit back, blasting what it called “blackmailing” by the U.S. and saying it would “never accept” those tariffs.

“If the U.S. insists on going its own way, China will fight it to the end,” a spokesperson for Beijing’s commerce ministry said on Tuesday.

“If the U.S. escalates its tariff measures, China will resolutely take countermeasures to safeguard its own

rights and interests,” the ministry said.

But Beijing also reiterated that it sought “dialogue” with Washington -- and its view that there were “no winners in a trade war”.

Its foreign ministry additionally warned the U.S. that “pressure, threats and blackmail are not the right way to deal with China”.

Trump’s tariffs have rocked global markets.

Hong Kong’s Hang Seng collapsed by 13.2 percent on Monday -- its worst day since the Asian financial crisis -- before paring back some of those losses in opening trade on Tuesday.

Wall Street stocks finished lower following a volatile session, with both the Dow and S&P 500 ending down.

Stocks in Thailand, Indonesia and Vietnam -- a key export hub -- also sank on opening on Tuesday.

And in financial powerhouse Singapore, Prime Minister Lawrence Wong told parliament his government was “very disappointed by the U.S. move”.

“These are not actions one does to a friend.”

Trillions of dollars have been wiped off combined stock market valuations in recent sessions.

Trump doubled down Monday, saying he was “not looking” at any pause in tariff implementation.

Drone Row Between Algeria, Sahel Nations Escalates



The Algerian air force reportedly downed a Malian Baykar Akinci drone when it crossed into Algerian airspace.

ALGIERS (Dispatches) -- Algeria closed its airspace and recalled its ambassador to Mali amid a diplomatic row over the alleged shoot-down of a drone from the neighboring country.

“Due to repeated violations of our airspace by the Malian state, the Algerian government has decided to close air navigation coming from or heading to the Malian state, starting today,” the Algerian defense ministry said.

Algiers also recalled its ambassador to Niger in a retaliatory move after the two countries -- along with Burkina Faso called

their ambassadors home over the alleged shoot-down.

The three military-run African allies jointly announced the ambassadors’ recall on Sunday. Mali had accused Algeria of downing one of its drones over its territory last week.

Northern Mali borders Algeria and is the scene of a separatist rebellion, while jihadist attacks continue to trouble the nation.

Algeria said on Monday that it regretted “having to apply reciprocity” following the move by the three countries.

As part of the measure, the new-

ly-assigned Algerian ambassador to Burkina Faso would delay taking up his duties, Algeria’s foreign ministry said in a statement.

The “false allegations”, coming particularly from Mali, “only conceal very imperfectly the search for outlets and diversions from the manifest failure of a putschist project that has locked Mali into a spiral of insecurity, instability, distress and destitution,” it added.

Algeria says it shot down the Malian drone March 31 when it crossed into its air space near the border town of Tin Zaouatine. Mali denies the drone crossed the border, and the three-country bloc — the Alliance of Sahel States or AES — called the downing an “irresponsible act” that violated international law.

Algeria denied any wrongdoing in the drone incident and accused Mali of trying to redirect blame for its internal problems.

Algeria has one of Africa’s largest militaries and has long considered itself a regional power. The military leaders of the three Sahel nations have recently distanced themselves from Algeria.

Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali have formed their own confederation, the Alliance of Sahel States (AES), set up initially as a defense pact in 2023.

UK Summit on Sudan Excluding Khartoum Draws Protest

CAIRO (AFP) -- The army-aligned government of war-devastated Sudan has protested to Britain over its planned hosting this month of a conference on the conflict, which Khartoum says it has been excluded from.

British Foreign Secretary David Lammy in February told Parliament he will host foreign ministers in London, around the second anniversary of Sudan’s war, “to foster international consensus on a path to ending the conflict.”

Sudan’s Foreign Minister Ali Youssef sent a letter to Lammy “in which he protested the organization by his country of a conference on Sudan without inviting the Sudanese government”.

Youssef denounced Britain for what he said was an attitude that put the paramilitary Rapid Sup-

port Forces (RSF) on equal footing with the Sudanese state, the Sudanese government said in a statement issued Sunday.

The war between Sudan’s army and the RSF has created what the United Nations describes as the world’s worst hunger and displacement crises.

More than 12 million people have been uprooted, tens of thousands killed, and a UN-backed assessment declared famine in parts of the country.

Germany and the European Union are co-organizing the conference with Britain on April 15, the war’s second anniversary. France’s deputy permanent representative to the United Nations Jay Dharmadhikari said last month.

The United Kingdom has sanctioned businesses linked to both

the army and the RSF in Sudan’s war.

The RSF are rooted in Darfur and control much of its territory, as well as parts Sudan’s capital.

The army reclaimed the southern Khartoum last month, and holds sway in the east and north, leaving Africa’s third-largest country essentially divided in two.

Youssef also criticized invitations to the conference for the United Arab Emirates, Chad and Kenya which he termed “stakeholders in the war”.

The International Court of Justice is on Thursday to hear arguments from Sudan and the UAE after Khartoum accused the Gulf state of complicity in genocide.

The UAE has repeatedly denied supporting Sudan’s paramilitaries in the war.

Trump to Fine Migrants \$998 a Day for Not Leaving U.S.



Protesters rally against deportations being carried out by the Trump administration, in New York City.

WASHINGTON -- The Trump administration plans to fine migrants under deportation orders up to \$998 a day if they fail to leave the United States and to seize their property if they do not pay, according to documents reviewed by Reuters.

The fines stem from a 1996 law that was enforced for the first time in 2018, during President Donald Trump’s first term in office. The Trump administration plans to apply the penalties retroactively for up to five years, which could result in fines of more than \$1 million, a senior Trump official said, requesting anonymity to discuss non-public plans.

The Trump administration is also considering seizing the property of immigrants who do not pay the fines, according to government emails reviewed by Reuters.

In response to questions from Reuters, U.S. Department of Homeland Security spokesperson Tricia McLaughlin said in a statement that immigrants in the U.S. illegally should use a mobile app formerly known as CBP One - re-branded as CBP Home under Trump - to “self deport and leave the country now.”

“If they don’t, they will face the consequences,” McLaughlin said. “This includes a fine of \$998 per day for every day that the illegal alien overstayed their final deportation order.”

DHS warned of the fines in a March 31 social media post.

Emails reviewed by Reuters show the White House has pressed U.S. Customs and Border Protection to handle the issue of penalties, property seizures for migrants who don’t pay, and the sale of their assets.

The Department of Justice’s civil asset forfeiture division could be another option for the seizures, one email said.

President Donald Trump kicked off a sweeping immigration crackdown after taking office in January, testing the bounds of U.S. law to increase arrests and deportations. The planned fines target the roughly 1.4 million migrants who have been ordered removed by an immigration judge.

Trump invoked the 1996 law during his first term to levy fines of hundreds of thousands of dollars against nine migrants seeking sanctuary in churches. The administration withdrew the penalties, but then proceeded with smaller fines of about \$60,000 per person against at least four of the migrants, according to court records.

President Joe Biden stopped issuing the fines and rescinded related policies when he took office in 2021.

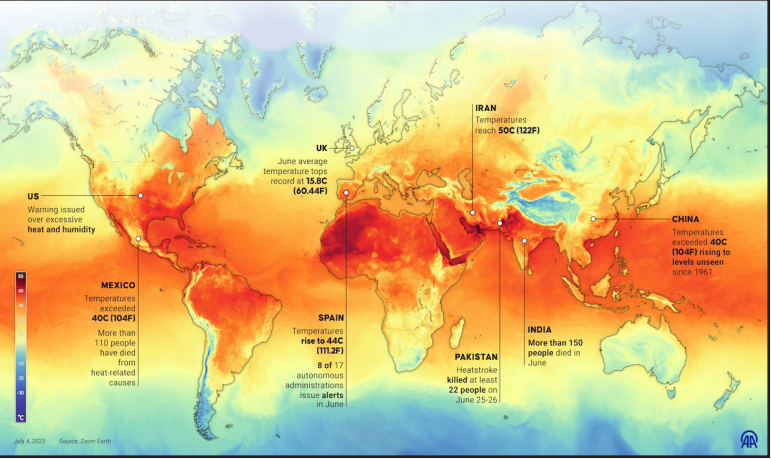
Scott Shuchart, a top ICE policy official under Biden, said migrants and their supporters could challenge the fines in court but that the threat alone could have a chilling effect.

“Their point isn’t really to enforce the law, it’s to project fear in communities,” he said.

The proposed asset seizures against the migrants who fail to comply with final deportation orders could impact U.S. citizens or permanent residents in their households.

The immigration advocacy group FWD.us estimates that some 10 million migrants with no legal status or temporary protections are living with U.S. citizens or permanent residents in what are known as “mixed status households.”

Report: Global Temperatures Hit Record Highs in March



PARIS (AFP) -- Global temperatures hovered at historic highs in March, Europe’s climate monitor said on Tuesday, prolonging an unprecedented heat streak that has pushed the bounds of scientific explanation.

In Europe, it was the hottest March ever recorded by a significant margin, said the Copernicus Climate Change Service, driving rainfall extremes across a continent warming faster than any other.

The world meanwhile saw the second-hottest March in the Copernicus dataset, sustaining a near-unbroken spell of record or near-record-breaking temperatures that has persisted since July 2023.

Since then, virtually every month has been at least 1.5 degrees Celsius hotter than it was before the industrial revolution, when humans began burning massive amounts of coal, oil and gas.

March was 1.6C above pre-industrial times, extending an anomaly so unusual that scientists are still trying to fully explain it.

“That we’re still at 1.6C above preindustrial is indeed remarkable,” said Friederike Otto of the Grantham Institute for Climate Change and the Environment at Imperial College London.

“We’re very firmly in the grip of human-caused climate change,” she told AFP.

Scientists had predicted the extreme run of global temperatures would subside after

a warming El Nino event peaked in early 2024, but they have stubbornly lingered well into 2025.

“We are still experiencing extremely high temperatures worldwide. This is an exceptional situation,” Robert Vautard, a leading scientist with the United Nations’ climate expert panel IPCC, told AFP.

Scientists warn that every fraction of a degree of global warming increases the intensity and frequency of extreme weather events such as heatwaves, heavy rainfall and droughts.

Climate change is not just about rising temperatures but the knock-on effect of all that extra heat being trapped in the atmosphere and seas by greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide and methane.

Warmer seas mean higher evaporation and greater moisture in the atmosphere, causing heavier deluges and feeding energy into storms.

This also affects global rainfall patterns.

March in Europe was 0.26C above the previous hottest record for the month set in 2014, Copernicus said.

Elsewhere in March, scientists said that climate change intensified a blistering heatwave across Central Asia and fuelled conditions for extreme rainfall which killed 16 people in Argentina.

The spectacular surge in global heat pushed 2023 and then 2024 to become the hottest years on record.

News in Brief

PANAMA CITY (Reuters) -- Pentagon chief Pete Hegseth landed in Panama late on Monday for his first official visit to the country as questions persist about President Donald Trump’s repeated vows to take back the Panama Canal. During his trip this week, Hegseth will meet Panamanian officials as well as defense leaders from other Central American nations who are attending a security conference in Panama City.

WASHINGTON (Reuters) -- U.S. Navy Vice Admiral Shoshana Chatfield, who holds a senior position in NATO, has been fired as part of what appears to be an expanding national security purge of top officials by the Trump administration, three sources told Reuters. The information was not immediately confirmed by the Pentagon. However, the sources told Reuters that allies had been notified that Chatfield had been removed from her job. Chatfield, the U.S. military representative to the NATO Military Committee, is one of only a handful of female Navy three-star officers and was the first woman to lead the Naval War College, a job she held until 2023. The firing, which was first reported by Reuters, is the latest to rock the Pentagon after Thursday’s removal of General Timothy Haugh, the head of the National Security Agency and U.S. Cyber Command. For the Navy, it follows the firing of its top officer, Admiral Lisa Franchetti, the first woman to become Chief of Naval Operations. President Donald Trump’s administration has taken a cool view of NATO, as well as European allies, since taking office in January.

MANILA (AFP) -- The Philippines took possession of the first of two corvette-class warships with “advanced weapons and radar systems” on Tuesday as it faces Beijing in the disputed South China Sea. The arrival of the 3,200-ton BRP Miguel Malvar is part of a two-ship deal with South Korea’s Hyundai Heavy Industries in 2021. Its sister ship, the BRP Diego Silang, was formally launched in Ulsan, South Korea, last month but has yet to begin the journey to the Philippines. It follows months of confrontations between Philippine and Chinese vessels in the South China Sea, which Beijing claims almost in its entirety despite an international ruling its assertion has no merit. In December, Manila said it planned to acquire the U.S. mid-range Typhoon missile system in a push to secure its maritime interests. Beijing warned such a purchase could spark a regional “arms race”. Last week, the United States said it had approved the possible sale of \$5.58 billion in F-16 fighter jets to the Philippines, though Manila said the deal was “still in the negotiation phase”.

NEW DELHI (Reuters) -- India is preparing to roll out its first school curriculum for Buddhist monasteries this month, aiming to unify education programs and foster patriotism in Himalayan religious centers near its border with China. Home to many ancient monasteries as the birthplace of Buddhism, India received an influx of Tibetans in the 1950s that led to many new institutions being set up, but now it seeks to insulate religious learning from China’s influence. The border state is claimed by China, but New Delhi rejects this. About 600 monasteries scattered across the northern states of Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and the regions of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh offer training in four types of Tibetan and Indian Buddhist traditions. In its effort to unify school programs, a court essentially banned Islamic schools in India’s most populous state in March last year, saying they violated constitutional secularism and ordering students moved to conventional schools. Last year the Asian giants began unwinding a military standoff on their disputed border since clashes in 2020 killed two dozen troops, but India aims to spend more to develop border areas amid the slow thaw in ties.

ALMATY, Kazakhstan (AFP) -- A Soyuz spacecraft carrying an American and two Russians on Tuesday launched from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan to head to the International Space Station. The MS-27 craft, which was decorated to celebrate the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II, took off at 10:47 am (0547 GMT), according to televised images shown by the Russian Roscosmos space agency. Onboard were Russian cosmonauts Sergey Ryzhikov and Alexey Zubritsky, as well as NASA astronaut Jonny Kim. Space is one of the few remaining areas of cooperation between Russia and the United States, whose relationship deteriorated significantly after Moscow sent troops into Ukraine in February 2022. As part of the slew of sanctions imposed on Russia since its invasion, Western countries ceased partnerships with Roscosmos, but the Soyuz craft remain one of the few outlets to reach the ISS.

SEOUL (AFP) -- South Korea will hold a presidential election on June 3, the country’s acting president said Tuesday, after former leader Yoon Suk Yeol was removed from office over a disastrous declaration of martial law. The country has been effectively leaderless since December, when ex-president Yoon attempted to subvert civilian rule but was quickly impeached by lawmakers and suspended from office. The country’s Constitutional Court last week upheld his impeachment, stripping him of the top job and triggering fresh elections, which must be held within 60 days. The government has set June 3 as polling day. Prime Minister Han Duck-soo said Tuesday, adding that it would be declared a temporary public holiday to facilitate voting.