

China, ASEAN Ink Enhanced Free Trade Pact to Fight Off Trump's Tariffs



China Commerce Minister Wang Wentao and Malaysia Investment, Trade and Industry Minister Tengku Zafrul Abdul Aziz, China Premier Li Qiang and Malaysia Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim during the 47th ASEAN Summit in Kuala Lumpur on Oct 28, 2025.

KUALA LUMPUR (Dispatches) - China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) on Tuesday formally signed an enhanced trade deal, as both sides seek to boost ties amid global uncertainties and trade tensions with the United States.

It's the second upgrade of the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area (ACFTA) that was first inked in 2002 - making it then China's

first free trade agreement and ASEAN's first with a major external partner. It then came into effect in 2010, with negotiations for the first upgrade starting in September 2014 and coming into force in 2019.

The pact, built on a first free trade deal with China in 2010, was inked on the sidelines of the 47th ASEAN Summit in the Malaysian capital of Kuala Lumpur on Tuesday as trade between Beijing and the 11-member regional

bloc continues to rise amid US President Donald Trump's much-maligned trade war.

The "3.0 version" of the deal will broaden collaboration on "infrastructure, digital and green transition, trade facilitation and people-to-people exchanges," according to China's State Council.

In his remarks to the ASEAN summit, Chinese Prime Minister Li Qiang lauded the deepening trade relationship between his country and the bloc, highlighting his expectation for "expanded and higher-quality economic cooperation" under the upgraded trade pact.

"Cooperation in various fields has yielded fruitful results, trade volume continues to grow steadily, and ASEAN governments have promoted even closer people-to-people exchanges," he said.

Li also censured Trump's tariffs, saying the move has "seriously disrupted" global trade and marked the most protectionist policy pursued by the US government since the 1930s.

"Unilateralism and protectionism have seriously disrupted the global economic and trade order. External forces are increasingly interfering in our region, and many countries have been unfairly subjected to high tariffs," Li said.

UN Warns of Climate Crisis as Most Countries Fail to Update Carbon Plans

PARIS (AFP) - A recent UN report reveals that most countries have failed to update their carbon-cutting plans as part of the Paris Agreement, and even those that have, will only reduce emissions by 10% by 2035, far short of the 1.5°C target.

While progress is being made, extreme weather events continue to worsen, highlighting the urgency of stronger action. With COP30 in Brazil approaching, only 64 countries have submitted updated plans, and major emitters like China and the U.S. are under scrutiny for their weak targets or lack of commitment.

The extra calculation incorporated elements from major polluters such as China and the European Union, which have not

submitted full official updated pledges.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said last week that slow action from nations meant it was "inevitable" that efforts to limit temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius would fail in the short term, unleashing devastating impacts during a period of overshoot as countries worked to pull temperatures back down again by the end of the century.

UN climate chief Simon Stiell said the estimated 10% emissions cut suggested that "humanity is now clearly bending the emissions curve downwards for the first time, although still not nearly fast enough."

The UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has said emissions must

fall 60% by 2035, from 2019 levels, for a good chance of limiting global warming to 1.5 C above preindustrial levels — the more ambitious goal of the Paris climate deal.

"The science is equally clear that temperatures absolutely can and must be brought back down to 1.5 C as quickly as possible after any temporary overshoot, by substantially stepping up the pace on all fronts," Stiell said in a statement.

The two-week COP30 climate negotiations in the Amazon, which start on Nov. 10, are tasked with galvanizing momentum in the face of a hostile United States, geopolitical tensions, economic concerns and fears that the most ambitious climate targets are already slipping out of reach.

Exclusive interview with Dr. Hassanali Moeini on the occasion of Passive Defense Day

On the occasion of Passive Defense Day, in an interview with Dr. Hassanali Moeini, a researcher in management and strategic issues, he emphasized that passive defense is a fundamental pillar for enhancing security, reducing vulnerabilities, and protecting national infrastructures. Dr. Moeini believes that passive defense, relying on non-military measures such as safeguarding and increasing the resilience of equipment and structures, plays a crucial role in maintaining the country's stability during crises and provides a foundation for sustainable development. According to him, developing resilient infrastructures and public education based on passive defense principles significantly mitigate risks and damages arising from natural and human threats.

Dr. Moeini stressed that the consistent implementation of passive defense policies ensures the continuity of vital national services in critical conditions, necessitating that all executive agencies incorporate such approaches into their operational plans. He added that in the development arena, passive defense not only facilitates the preservation of emergency functions but also serves as a key tool to support crisis management systems, critical industries, urban services, and even the cultural and social dimensions of national development.

Regarding the role of passive defense in the 12-day Iran-Israel war, Dr. Moeini explained that this approach reduced the damages to the country's vital infrastructures and ensured the sustained operation of service centers. Passive defense measures, such as fortifying communication systems, power grids, and essential healthcare services, played a pivotal role in maintaining defensive capabilities and service continuity for vulnerable populations. He emphasized that coordination and public training were among the critical factors contributing to the success of passive defense programs during this conflict.

In another part of the interview, Dr. Moeini highlighted the importance of the physical and technological aspects of passive defense, stating that one of its strengths in crisis scenarios lies in the integration of military studies and infrastructure engineering, which led to reduced vulnerability of vital centers and the continuity of public and government



tal services. He underscored that research indicates geographic dispersion, structural reinforcement, and parallelization of backup systems enhance the effectiveness of passive defense in warfare and facilitate more effective crisis management.

Moreover, Dr. Moeini, pointing to the future of passive defense at the national level, remarked that in light of emerging threats such as cyberattacks and the complexity of the digital realm, countries must undertake modern planning for securing information and communication infrastructures. He added that public education, leveraging new technologies, and strengthening inter-agency collaboration are essential for realizing sustainable passive defense, thereby guaranteeing social resilience and national security against future threats. In conclusion, Dr. Moeini emphasized that recent war experiences revealed that neglecting the protection of digital and physical infrastructures can have irreversible consequences, urging nations to develop comprehensive passive defense plans and harness advanced technologies to bolster national resilience and mitigate the impacts of potential attacks. He stressed the necessity to improve inter-agency coordination and expand specialized training in passive defense to achieve comprehensive preparedness against threats.

Russian Troops Will 'Destroy' Foreigners Fighting for Kyiv



Soldiers with a Ukrainian battalion fire at Russian positions with U.S.-supplied weapons in Kharkiv on July 14.

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - The Kremlin said on Tuesday that Russian troops were constantly hearing foreign languages spoken by those fighting for Ukraine on the front line, and promised that such fighters would be "destroyed".

Russia has long said that NATO military personnel have been present in Ukraine and that its eavesdropping services have picked up English and French being spoken repeatedly at the front lines.

The U.S.-led NATO military alliance says it supports Ukraine but has not deployed soldiers there. U.S. media reports, indicate that U.S. and leading European intelligence agencies have a significant presence in Ukraine.

"Our military hears foreign speech, they constantly hear foreign languages at the front," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters when asked about claims that France was preparing to deploy some soldiers to Ukraine.

"So, these foreigners are there, we are destroying them. Our military will continue to do their job."

President Volodymyr Zelensky stated that Ukraine needs European financial support to continue fighting Russia for another two or three years.

"I emphasized this again to all European leaders. I told them that we are not going to fight for decades, but you must show that for some time you will be able to provide stable financial support to Ukraine," Zelensky told journalists on Tuesday.

And that is why they have this program in mind — 2-3 years," he added, referring to a European Commission proposal to gradually unlock frozen Russian assets to fund Ukraine.

Ukraine is ready for peace negotiations but will not withdraw its soldiers from additional territory first as Moscow has demanded, he stressed.

Zelensky also urged U.S. President Donald Trump to pressure Chinese leader Xi Jinping to cut his support for Russia when the two leaders meet later this week.

"I think this may be one of Trump's strong moves, especially if, following this decisive sanctions step, China is ready to reduce imports" from Russia, Zelensky said.

In recent weeks, the EU has been considering giving Ukraine a so-called 'repairs loan' of up to €140 billion (\$163 billion), using frozen Russian assets as collateral to back the bloc-issued bonds.

The move would effectively amount to the seizure of the Russian funds, given that Ukraine would be obliged to repay the loan only once Moscow compensates it for damages inflicted during the conflict.

So far, Belgium, which hosts clearing-house Euroclear, where most of Moscow's frozen funds are being kept, has been skeptical of the loan proposal and has demanded that liability be shared among all EU members if the move is made.

On Wednesday, the Ukrainian parliament voted in favor of the country's draft budget for 2026, which has a deficit of over 58%. It projects that the Kiev government will spend 4.8 trillion hryvnia (around \$114 billion) next year, while earning just 2.8 trillion hryvnia (around \$68 billion). According to the draft, the 2.8 trillion hryvnia in tax revenue will be used to fund the military, with all other state expenditure to be covered by financial aid from foreign backers.

Sudan Army Withdraws From Darfur's El-Fasher, UN Warns of RSF Atrocities



Around 260,000 civilians, half of them children, remain in El-Fasher without aid.

PARIS (AFP) - Sudan's army chief has announced the withdrawal of his soldiers from their last stronghold in Darfur, as the United Nations issued a stark warning over reports of "atrocities" by the paramilitary group now in control of the city of el-Fasher.

The announcement by Abdel Fattah al-Burhan came late on Monday, a day after the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) seized control of the main Sudanese army base in el-Fasher and declared victory there.

The army's withdrawal from el-Fasher leaves more than a quarter-million people — half of them children — under the control of the RSF. Aid groups reported chaotic scenes there, including killings, arrests and attacks on hospitals.

In his statement, al-Burhan said that his soldiers decided to withdraw from the city entirely in the hopes of sparing the civilian population from further violence.

The army retreated because of "the systemic destruction, and the systemic killing of civilians" by the RSF, he said,

adding that the army hoped to "spare the citizens and the rest of the city from destruction".

"We are determined to avenge what happened to our people in el-Fasher," he said. "We, as the Sudanese people, will hold these criminals accountable."

The fall of el-Fasher to the RSF could herald another split of Sudan, more than a decade after South Sudan's creation. The latest war started in April 2023, when tension between the military and RSF exploded into fighting in the capital, Khartoum. The ensuing conflict has killed tens of thousands of people and displaced more than 12 million.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said that the developments represent a "terrible escalation in the conflict" and that "the level of suffering that we are witnessing in Sudan is unbearable".

The UN Human Rights Office said that RSF fighters reportedly carried out atrocities in el-Fasher, including "summary executions" of civilians trying to flee their attacks, "with indications of ethnic motivations for killings".

News in Brief

ARLINGTON, Virginia (Reuters) - Hundreds of U.S. air traffic controllers have taken temporary second jobs as they missed their first full pay check on Tuesday, putting more pressure on the strained aviation safety system, a union official said Tuesday. National Air Traffic Controllers Association President Nick Daniels told reporters at Reagan Washington National Airport that the number would rise as more controllers look for ways to pay bills. "It's quickly going to be 1,000," Daniels said, calling on the government to end the stand-off. "We want the shutdown to end today... Whatever way that it gets done, that's what the American people deserve."

CARACAS (Reuters) -- Venezuelan authorities have arrested three individuals allegedly linked to the CIA, Interior Minister Diosdado Cabello Rondon said. During the arrests, authorities reportedly seized mobile phones and CIA operational manuals, Cabello said. The minister said the suspects were involved in a suspected false-flag operation in the Caribbean Sea as the United States undertakes military exercises with Trinidad and Tobago. The plan aimed to fabricate an incident that could justify aggression against Venezuela, Cabello added. Venezuela's government has information that they intend to "attack a U.S. military ship stationed on that island and then blame Venezuela to justify an attack" on the South American country, Venezuelan Foreign Affairs Minister Ivan Gil said in a post on social media.

NAIROBI (AFP) - A light aircraft carrying foreign tourists from Hungary and Germany crashed in Kenya on Tuesday, killing the 11 people on board. The airline, Mombasa Air Safari, said the plane was carrying 10 passengers: eight Hungarians and two Germans. The captain was Kenyan. "Sadly, there are no survivors," Mombasa Air Safari said in a statement. The Civil Aviation Authority said the accident happened at Kwale, near the Indian Ocean coast, at about 0830 local time (0530 GMT).

LONDON (Reuters) - King Charles was heckled by a protester over his brother Prince Andrew's ties to the late sex offender Jeffrey Epstein while greeting royal fans during a cathedral visit in Britain. "How long have you known about Andrew and Epstein?", the man could be heard shouting as the monarch went on a walkabout outside Lichfield Cathedral in northwest England close to Birmingham. Although Andrew, 65, said this month that he would give up using his title of Duke of York after years of scrutiny over his behavior and connections to Epstein, questions about the prince - and what the royals knew of events - have intensified since. The contents of a posthumous memoir by Virginia Giuffre, who accused the prince of sexually abusing her as a teenager, have triggered renewed backlash over the issue this month.

KING Stone (AFP) - Jamaican officials urged people to get to higher ground and shelters ahead of Hurricane Melissa's expected landfall Tuesday, with the prime minister warning it could bring massive devastation. The Category 5 storm -- which could be the island's most violent on record -- is charting a painstakingly slow path through the Caribbean, and has already been blamed for three deaths in Jamaica, three in Haiti and one in the Dominican Republic. The U.S. National Hurricane Center (NHC) reported on early Tuesday that Melissa was about 115 miles (185 kilometers) from the capital Kingston, and reaching maximum wind speed of 175 miles (280 kilometers) per hour.