

Trump raises tariffs on Chinese goods

Beijing says it ‘deeply regrets’ the U.S. decision and promises to take countermeasures

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN
WASHINGTON
The trade war between the U.S. and China took a turn for the worse on Friday as the Trump administration increased tariffs on \$200 billion worth of Chinese goods. Tariffs on 5,700 categories of goods increased from 10% to 25% at 12.01 am on Friday.

The tariffs went into effect just hours before U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and Chinese Vice-Premier Liu He held a second day of talks in Washington on Friday. The session ended after about 90 minutes.

“They were constructive discussions,” Mr. Mnuchin told reporters as he left Mr. Lighthizer’s offices near mid-day. Mr. Mnuchin said the negotiations were done for the day.

Mr. Liu, the lead Chinese negotiator, told reporters at his hotel in Washington that the talks had gone “fairly well”.

Things have moved quickly over the past few days with tariffs kicking in days after Mr. Trump said they would, and five days after the administration notified the new rates in the Federal Register. This, despite Mr. Trump saying on Thursday that Chinese President Xi Jinping had sent him a “very beautiful letter” offering to “work together” and “get something done”.

The tariff rate on machinery and technology imports from China, whose value is about \$50 billion, was already hiked to 25% last year in tit-for-tat tariff rounds between the two countries.

Trade war escalates

U.S. President Donald Trump escalated his trade war with China, hiking tariffs to 25% from 10% on \$200 billion worth of goods. The latest increase extends 25% duties to a total of \$250 billion of Chinese imports

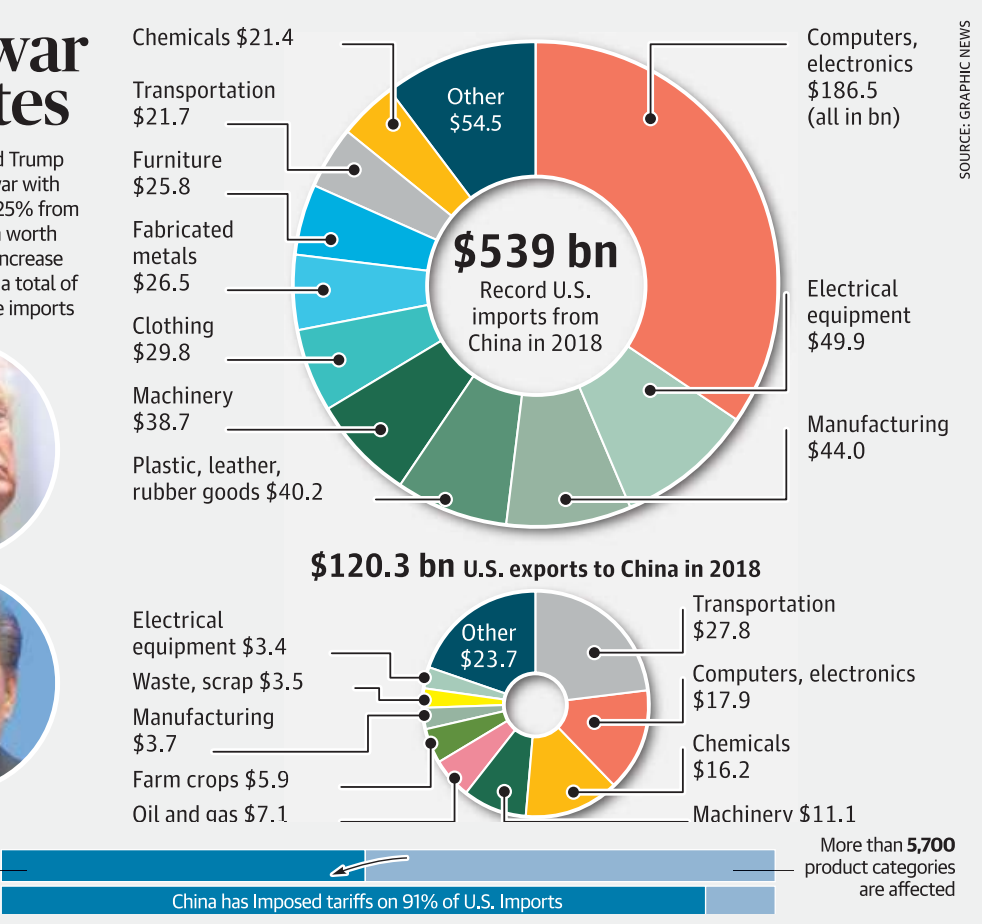


DONALD TRUMP



XI JINPING

U.S. has imposed tariffs on 47% of Chinese Imports



Friday’s tariffs for the \$200 worth of Chinese imports, “as part of the U.S.’s continuing response to China’s theft of American intellectual property and forced transfer of American technology,” was set to kick in January 1 as per a September 2018 announcement from the USTR, but it was held in abeyance as negotiations continued.

In the past, Mr. Trump had threatened to increase tariffs on the remainder of Chinese imports as well, a

threat he reiterated on Friday. The U.S. imported \$558 billion of goods from China as per the USTR, with \$250 billion attracting 25% tariffs as of Friday.

New round

“The process has begun to place additional tariffs at 25% on the remaining \$325 billion,” Mr. Trump wrote on Twitter.

Last week, U.S. officials familiar with the discussions had said China had backtracked on commitments,

prompting Mr. Trump’s decision to impose the new round of tariffs.

China has said, via a Ministry of Commerce statement, that it “deeply regretted” the latest tariff development and has said it will take countermeasures.

American agriculture has felt much of the heat of the tit-for-tat trade war with China. Mr. Trump sought to assuage concerns on Friday. With an election looming in 2020, the President cannot afford to alienate farmers –

most of the top 10 agricultural States were won by Mr. Trump in 2016. “Your all time favourite President got tired of waiting for China to help out and start buying from our FARMERS, the greatest anywhere in the World!” he wrote on Twitter. Tariff increases will also mean U.S. firms paying more for Chinese inputs and those costs will be, at least in part, passed on to American consumers.

(With inputs from Reuters)

South Africa’s ANC headed for victory, but support dips

REUTERS
PRETORIA

The African National Congress was headed for victory in South Africa’s election on Friday, although the party was on course for its worst performance since it took power 25 years ago.

The ANC held a commanding lead with 94% of the voting districts counted, according to the electoral commission’s website. It

had secured 57.7% of the vote, with the main Opposition Democratic Alliance on 20.6% and the leftist Economic Freedom Fighters on 10.5%.

ANC officials acknowledged the decline, but said the results were still strong enough.

“People have shown they are willing to forgive the ANC,” said Ronald Lamola, an official.

Sri Lanka orders mosques to clamp down on extremists

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
COLOMBO

The Sri Lankan government on Friday ordered mosques to clamp down on extremists and to submit copies of sermons in new fallout from the Easter suicide bombings that left 258 dead.

The Ministry of Muslim Religious and Cultural Affairs said mosques must not be used for radicalising con-

gregations. “In view of the prevailing situation in the country, the Ministry directs all trustees of mosques not to engage in or permit any gathering to promote or propagate hatred or extremism in any form,” the Ministry said.

It said all mosques must submit copies of sermons given within their premises.

Sri Lankan radicals who

had pledged allegiance to the Islamic State have been blamed for the April 21 bombings.

Since the attacks, the government has carried out raids across the country and killed several suspected radicals. At least 56 suspects are in custody, while authorities have expelled 200 foreign clerics who had overstayed their visas.

Chelsea Manning freed from jail in contempt case

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

Former military intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning was freed from a U.S. jail on Thursday after two months in custody – but faces a possible return to the lockup as soon as next week, a support group said.

Ms. Manning was jailed in early March for refusing to testify in a grand jury investigation targeting the anti-secrecy group WikiLeaks.

A judge in March ruled Ms. Manning in contempt of court and ordered her held not as punishment but to force her testimony in the secret case, a spokesman for the U.S. attorney in the Alexandria, Virginia federal court said at the time.

The support group, the Sparrow Project, said in Thursday’s statement that Ms. Manning was released following the expiry of the



Chelsea Manning

grand jury’s term. “Unfortunately, even prior to her release, Chelsea was served with another subpoena. This means she is expected to appear before a different grand jury, on Thursday, May 16,” Sparrow Project quoted Ms. Manning’s legal team as saying.

“It is therefore conceivable that she will once again be held in contempt of court,” and returned to jail, the legal team said. “Chelsea will continue to refuse to answer questions.”

Kim orders stronger strike power; U.S. still open to talks

Nobody’s happy about North Korea’s missile tests: Trump

REUTERS
SEOUL

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un has ordered the military to boost its strike capability as he directed another missile firing, state media said on Friday, as tensions grew over tests that appeared to show development of a new advanced missile system.

Mr. Kim’s call for a “full combat posture” follows the U.S. seizure of a large North Korean cargo ship accused of illicit coal shipments.

The increased tensions come amid a gridlock in dialogue after the second summit between Mr. Kim and U.S. President Donald Trump collapsed over U.S. demands for Pyongyang’s nuclear disarmament and



A missile tested by North Korea on Thursday. •AP

Mr. Kim’s demands for relief from sanctions.

“(Kim) stressed the need to further increase the capability of the defence units in the forefront area and on the western front to carry out combat tasks and keep full combat posture to cope with any emergency,” KCNA news agency reported. He noted “genuine peace and security of the country are guaranteed only by the strong phys-

ical force capable of defending its sovereignty,” it said, adding he “set forth important tasks for further increasing the strike ability.”

Both Mr. Trump and South Korean President Moon Jae-in said that Thursday’s missile tests were not helpful but suggested they would not scupper dialogue.

“I know they want to negotiate, they’re talking about negotiating. But I don’t think they’re ready to negotiate,” Mr. Trump said. “Nobody’s happy about it [the missile tests] but we’re taking a good look and we’ll see.”

Mr. Moon said the tests were likely a reaction to the failed summit with Mr. Trump, but he thought North Korea remained hopeful of continuing talks.

INTERVIEW | MARIYA AHMED DIDI

‘Regional infrastructure needed to combat terror’

Maldives Defence Minister says radicalisation a concern

MEERA SRINIVASAN
COLOMBO

The April 21 serial bombings in Sri Lanka not only shook the island, but also sparked considerable fear in South Asia, especially in neighbouring Maldives that is home to nearly 4,00,000 Muslims. Almost immediately after the Sri Lanka attacks, the island nation heightened security measures and began strengthening its response mechanisms to tackle a possible terror threat. Amid reports of dozens of Maldivians joining militant Islamist organisations abroad, the country is also taking steps to address radicalisation, which is a concern for the Maldivian government, says Defence Minister Mariya Ahmed Didi in an email interview.



There is a greater need for regional cooperation

As a close neighbour, how does the Maldives view the terror attack in Sri Lanka? You had tweeted about its impact on the region...

■ The terror attacks in Sri Lanka on Easter Sunday, carried out in multiple locations, are of extreme concern to the Maldives, and the entire region. The magnitude of the attacks, the level of coordination and the tactics chosen by the terrorists are alarming and indicate new levels of brutality to which terrorists may resort.

As a country predominantly dependent on tourism, we do not take these attacks within our neighbourhood lightly, and we are acting on these concerns with the urgent establishment of national-level, multi-agency security structures and measures.

Following the blasts, the Maldives appears to be gearing up for a possible security contingency. The National Defence Force and the police have been holding special emergency response exercises. Is the Maldives sensing a potential terror threat?

■ There is no specific or imminent terrorist threat detected. However, in today’s world, we can never really

entirely rule out the possibility of one. Therefore, in the interest of vigilance, the Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF) and the Maldives Police Service have been holding joint, special emergency response exercises, testing various scenarios.

Similarly, other security organisations such as the Aviation Security Command, the Maldives Customs Service, and the Maldives Immigration have also heightened their security levels.

According to reports in the Maldivian media, over 60 Maldivian men, along with their wives and children, have travelled out of the country to join foreign wars, mostly in Syria. As per official records, how many Maldivians are believed to have joined Jihadist groups abroad?

■ It is difficult to give an official figure. It is an offence punishable by several years of imprisonment to engage in a foreign war. Therefore, those who have travelled to join foreign wars have travelled under the guise of travelling to friendly countries.

The National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC) gets its numbers from relatives and others who come forward and report that someone they know have travelled abroad to join foreign wars. The NCTC puts the current figure at 69, excluding women and children.

Does your government view radicalisation as a cause of concern? If yes, how are you responding to it?

■ Radicalisation of any sort,

including religious radicalisation, is a concern for the Maldivian government. Religious radicalisation is addressed under the Religious Unity Act. Terrorism and violent extremism are addressed under the Anti-Terrorism Act. Two senior-level committees, the Counter Terrorism Steering Committee and the Counter Radicalisation Committee, ensure a whole-of-government and a whole-of-society approach to address this issue. This approach involves capacity building at the organisational level and conducting community empowerment programmes for vulnerable communities and other important social sectors such as the education sector, and the NGOs.

The government is currently working on designing and implementing a rehabilitation programme for radicalised individuals. At the operational level, the armed forces and the security agencies have been making efforts to enhance readiness and further build their operational capabilities to deal with the threat.

What, in your view, could be an effective regional response to such a threat?

■ With violent extremism, and the consequent manifestation of terrorism, plaguing our region, there is a greater need for regional cooperation. This threat has a spill-over effect, given the entangled and symbolic nature of the threat with other menaces, such as illicit trafficking, gun-running, and other criminal activities by non-state actors.

Therefore, the demand for regional collaboration is even more pressing. At the helm of such collaboration should be intelligence and information sharing, joint response capacity building, and, defence and security assistance and support. In light of the stark reality, we must constitute robust mechanisms and regional infrastructure with haste to counter the primary threat of terrorism.

IN BRIEF



China indicts ex-Interpol chief on bribery charges

BEIJING

Chinese prosecutors indicted former Interpol president Meng Hongwei on Friday on charges of accepting bribes. A statement said Mr. Meng accepted cash and property “in return for performing favours for others.” AP

Pakistan turns to science, infuriates clerics

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
ISLAMABAD

Imran Khan’s government has drawn the ire of conservative clerics with calls for a science-based lunar calendar to calculate the start of the holy fasting month of Ramzan in Pakistan, which faces an annual controversy over the date.

A cleric-led “moonsighting committee” announces when the fasting should begin, but for decades it has faced disputes over the accuracy of its decision.

“Every year on the occasion of Ramzan, Id and Muharram a controversy starts regarding moonsighting,” Science and Technology Minister Fawad Chaudhry explained in a video he tweeted on May 5, in which he recounted watching the committee use “old technology” – telescopes – to make their calculations.

“When modern means are available..., the question is why we should not use this latest technology?” he argued.

His Ministry will form a committee of scientists, meteorologists and Pakistan’s space agency to calculate the correct dates for the next five years with “100 percent accuracy”. However, the Prime Minister’s Cabinet can reject the calendar. In another tweet, he warned that decisions on how the country should be run “cannot be left to the maulana (clerics)”.

Mufti Muneeb-ur-Rehman, head of the moonsighting committee, warned that Mr. Chaudhry should stay in

his lane. “I have appealed to Prime Minister Imran Khan that only the concerned Minister should talk about religious matters,” he said in a press conference in Karachi. “Every Minister who does not know the sensitivity of the religion, does not understand it, they should not get the free licence to comment on religious matters.”

He pointed out that the committee already has members from the space agency, and also works with the Meteorological Department.