

TOP NEWS

China, Ireland pledge to deepen ties

Li urges nations to align development strategies, tap cooperation potential

By ZHAO JIA
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Premier Li Qiang said on Tuesday that China stands ready to work with Ireland to advance high-quality pragmatic cooperation, consolidate political mutual trust, accommodate each other's major interests and core concerns, and elevate bilateral relations to a new level.

He made the remarks when meeting in Beijing with Micheal Martin, Taoiseach, or prime minister, of Ireland, who is currently on a five-day official visit to China.

Noting the strong economic complementarity between the two countries, Li said that China and Ireland should strengthen the alignment of their development strategies and further tap cooperation potential in various sectors.

He said that China is willing to expand cooperation with Ireland in services trade, including aircraft leasing, insurance and healthcare, deepen collaboration in green energy, the digital economy and artificial intelligence, further facilitate personnel exchanges, and strengthen cultural and people-to-people exchanges to continuously consolidate the public foundation for bilateral relations.

At a time when the international

economic and trade order is facing severe challenges, Li also emphasized the importance of strengthening multilateral communication and coordination with Ireland, upholding multilateralism and free trade, and guiding the international order toward a more just and reasonable direction.

As Ireland is set to assume the rotating presidency of the European Union in the second half of this year, Li expressed the hope that Ireland would play an active role in promoting China-EU cooperation.

Martin said that Ireland is willing to strengthen exchanges with China at all levels, and it welcomes more Chinese enterprises to invest in the country. Ireland highly values China's key role in international affairs and opposes unilateralism and protectionism, he said, adding that his country stands ready to play a constructive role in promoting dialogue and cooperation between the EU and China.

On Tuesday, Zhao Leji, chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, China's top legislature, also met with Martin. The Irish Taoiseach held meetings with representatives of several companies on the same day.

It is clear that there are "significant investment opportunities between Ireland and China", which can contribute to Ireland's economic growth, Martin wrote in a social media post.



Premier Li Qiang hosts a welcoming ceremony on Tuesday for Micheal Martin, Taoiseach, or prime minister, of Ireland, at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. WANG ZHUANGFEI / CHINA DAILY

Experts said that China-Ireland relations have maintained a steady trajectory with a solid foundation, and that the Irish delegation's visit to China carries strategic significance, both in consolidating existing cooperation and in opening up new areas of engagement.

Jian Junbo, director of the Center for China-Europe Relations at Fudan University, said that unlike China's overall trade relationship with the EU, in which China generally runs a surplus, trade between China and

Ireland shows a certain degree of deficit on the Chinese side.

"Strengthening China-Ireland economic and trade exchanges and expanding the scale of bilateral trade would not only help deepen cooperation between the two economies, but could, to some extent, also contribute to optimizing the overall trade structure between China and the EU," Jian added.

Cui Hongjian, director of the European studies department at Beijing Foreign Studies University, said the visit also reflects the growing need among some EU member states to strengthen cooperation and communication with China.

As a responsible major country, China offers an approach different from certain major powers in international affairs, he said, adding that strengthening dialogue and engagement with China is, therefore, conducive to safeguarding strategic security and contributing to greater stability in the international system.

One year on, life is beautiful in quake-hit Xizang

By PALDEN NYIMA in Shigatse, Xizang, and DAQIONG in Lhasa

The temperatures may be plummeting to around -16 C at the foot of snowcapped mountains, but warmth is filling the rebuilt homes of people who survived last year's powerful earthquake in Shigatse, Xizang autonomous region.

Inside reinforced concrete houses in the city's Dingri county, steam rises from pots simmering on stoves as families gather for meals and some quality time. The harsh winter is no longer as daunting for them as it once was.

On Jan 7, 2025, a magnitude 6.8 earthquake rocked Dingri and its neighboring counties, killing 126 people and destroying tens of thousands of homes. One year on, survivors are rebuilding their lives, supported by large-scale government reconstruction.

Reconstruction work has covered seven counties, 47 towns and 486 villages. More than 22,000 houses have been rebuilt, spanning an area of about 3.1 million square meters, while more than 10,500 homes have been repaired and reinforced.

Phurbu Dorje, vice-mayor of Shigatse, said that reconstruction work, which started in early March, has been completed. "Residents moved into their new homes the same year they were affected by the disaster," he added.

As many of the 1,032 reconstruction sites are located in remote areas inaccessible to heavy machinery and at altitudes ranging from 4,000 to 5,300 meters, construction teams braved extreme cold, oxygen deprivation and complex geological conditions to finish their tasks.

Despite persistent rain and snow, more than 61,000 workers, supported by 2,600 construction managers and 134 enterprises, completed the housing projects in just eight months, Phurbu Dorje said.

For residents like Tashi Dondrub, the change has been life-altering. On the day of the earthquake, he was working away from home as a repairman. "I was terrified, and worried about my family," he recalled.

Cracks appeared on the walls of his adobe house after the quake. The clay structure was eventually replaced with a 70-square-meter house made of reinforced concrete. "Our old house wasn't warm or bright. The new one feels sturdy. We don't worry as much about earthquakes as before," he said.

During reconstruction, Tashi Dondrub also found work at the project sites, earning about 10,000 yuan (\$1,432) in less than a month. His family moved into their new home in August.

Rebuilding efforts have addressed more than just housing needs. In Sangkar, junior middle school student Nyima said the new infrastructure has transformed her daily life.

"We now have paved roads, bank services and sports grounds," she said, referring to a newly built soccer pitch and a basketball court that have become popular hangouts for children. "It's much more comfortable to study in the new house. It's brighter and warmer," she added.

The recovery has also helped restore confidence in the local economy, including tourism.

Last year, Dingri, which is located at the foot of Qomolangma, also known as Mount Everest, received 940,000 tourist visits, up 3 percent year-on-year. The tourists generated 440 million yuan in revenue, a 5.5 percent increase from 2024, according to official data.

As the Shigatse Losar New Year Festival begins in two weeks, residents are busy tidying up the marketplace for the celebration of the Tibetan New Year in Shigatse. Norbu, a resident of Dingri's Gurong village, said he is eager to celebrate the new year in his new house.

"I have stocked up on mutton, cheese and butter for the celebrations, and I plan to do some more shopping over the next few days," he said. "In the coming year, I hope everyone will be wealthier and happier, and will live in harmony."

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Magical place



People visit the Hukou Waterfall on the Yellow River on Tuesday in Jixian county, North China's Shanxi province. As temperatures continue to drop, the waterfall freezes and forms a stunning scenery along with rainbows, earning it the sobriquet "ice waterfall jade pot". LYU GUIMING / FOR CHINA DAILY

Ban: Tightening rare earth export to Japan being mulled

From page 1

The country prohibits the export of all dual-use items to Japanese military users, for Japan's military use, and for any other end-users and end-use purposes that help enhance Japan's military capabilities, according to the announcement.

Stringent export controls and licensing requirements for dual-use items represent an established international norm.

The United States' Export Control Reform Act and the European Union's Dual-Use Regulation, for instance, mandate that the export of sensitive technologies or materials, including those with potential military applications, must be subject to proper licensing and authorization procedures.

China is also considering tightening export permit reviews for certain rare earth-related items to Japan, due to Takaichi's recent erroneous remarks on Taiwan and her continued refusal to retract them, a source familiar with the matter told China Daily on Tuesday.

On April 4 last year, the Ministry of Commerce, along with the General Administration of Customs, issued an announcement on export control measures for seven categories of medium and heavy rare earth-related items — samarium, gadolinium, terbium, dysprosium, lutetium, scandium and yttrium.

According to Tokyo-headquartered Nomura Research Institute, heavy rare earths such as dysprosium and terbium, used for electric

vehicle motors in Japan, are almost 100 percent sourced from China. Any restrictions on those supplies would pose significant challenges to the Japanese economy.

The institute estimates that if China's restrictions on rare earth exports to Japan were to last for three months, it would result in losses of about 660 billion yen (\$4.2 billion), reducing nominal and real GDP by 0.11 percent annually. If the restrictions continued for a year, losses could reach about 2.6 trillion yen, leading to a 0.43 percent decline in both nominal and real GDP as noted by the institute.

Beijing has sent Tokyo a clear message that it cannot expect to continue benefiting from China's vast market and resources while challenging China's core interests, said Chen Wenling, former chief economist at the China Center for International Economic Exchanges.

"The one-China principle and noninterference in China's internal affairs form an unbreachable prerequisite for China-Japan cooperation," Chen said.

Tetsuro Homma, executive vice-president of Panasonic, said that China is not only a consumer market or a manufacturing powerhouse, but also an innovation and engineering hub.

"For Japanese companies, strengthening collaboration with Chinese supply chain partners is crucial. It enables us to deliver quality products to global consumers at more competitive prices," Homma said.

ROK leader's Shanghai visit honors past

By ZHOU JIN in Beijing,
ZHOU WENTING in Shanghai
and YANG HAN in Hong Kong

Republic of Korea President Lee Jae-myung arrived on Tuesday afternoon in Shanghai for the second leg of his first China visit since taking office last year.

By including a commemorative event at a historical site in Shanghai on his itinerary, Lee's visit highlights Seoul's commitment to a pragmatic foreign policy based on regional stability and acknowledges the historical friendship between the two countries, experts said.

Premier Li Qiang and top legislator Zhao Leji held separate meetings with Lee on Tuesday in Beijing before he headed to Shanghai.

During his two-day stay in the metropolis, Lee is scheduled to attend a venture and startup summit to interact with young entrepreneurs in fields such as content, healthcare, infrastructure and energy. He will also visit the site in Shanghai's Huangpu district of the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea, which was established during Japan's colonial rule, and attend a commemorative

event there. From 1910 to 1945, the Korean Peninsula was under Japan's colonization.

When President Xi Jinping met with Lee on Monday, both leaders mentioned the shared history of the two neighbors fighting side by side against Japanese aggression. Lee also expressed gratitude for China's efforts to preserve the site.

According to Lakhvinder Singh, director of peace and security studies at the Asia Institute, a think tank in the ROK, Lee's visit to China underscores Seoul's commitment to a pragmatic, interest-based foreign policy anchored in regional stability.

Li Ning, an assistant research fellow at the Center for Northeast Asian Studies of the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies, said that Shanghai has long honored the historical friendship between the two countries. Shanghai has also become one of the most popular destinations for ROK nationals traveling to China for tourism, study or business, thanks to its modern infrastructure, well-established expatriate community and inclusive environment.

Since China began offering visa-free travel to ROK citizens in 2024, the number of visitors has surged, and Shanghai has become one of the top destinations. The Yangtze River

Delta, which includes the provinces of Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Anhui, as well as Shanghai, accounts for about 40 percent of the ROK's trade with China. Shanghai alone contributes around 10 percent, and around 3,000 enterprises from the ROK are based in the city, according to local statistics.

As two influential Asian metropolises, Shanghai and Seoul share similarities in urban development, green transition and aging populations, offering broad opportunities for mutual learning and cooperation, the research fellow said.

Shanghai should serve as a bridgehead for China-ROK cooperation in science and technology, as well as in digital creative industries, Li Ning said, adding that the two sides are also expected to strengthen institutional mechanisms to expand people-to-people exchanges and deepen youth and educational cooperation.

Baek Seo-hui, 26, a graduate student from the ROK at Fudan University's School of International Relations and Public Affairs, said: "I have been studying and living in Shanghai for eight years. What I most look forward to in the future is being able to stay in China."

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UN meeting: Role of dialogue emphasized

From page 1

The US should "immediately cease and desist from all explicit and implicit threats or uses of force against Venezuela", he said.

Sachs said, "Peace, and the survival of humanity, depends on whether the United Nations Charter remains a living instrument of international law, or is allowed to wither into irrelevance."

At the meeting, Russia's UN ambassador, Vassily Nebenzia, also called for the immediate release of Maduro and his wife.

The Russian envoy called the US military action in Venezuela a "crime cynically perpetrated" and a harbinger of a return to an era of "lawlessness", stressing that any conflicts must be resolved through dialogue as enshrined in the UN Charter.

Backers of the US military operation in Venezuela, including Argentina, framed the action as a law-enforcement, anti-narcoterrorism step and argued it could open a path to restoring democracy.

Representatives of many countries pushed back by arguing that democracy cannot be delivered through force and coercion, and that any political outcome must be decided by Venezuelans

through peaceful and lawful means.

Leonor Zalabata Torres, Colombia's UN envoy, said that "democracy cannot be promoted or defended through violence or coercion", and Venezuela deserves peace and democracy, prosperity and dignity, with a government whose legitimacy is defined by no one but the Venezuelan people and their institutions.

Mexico's UN envoy, Hector Vasconcelos, warned that "regime change by external actors and the application of extraterritorial measures" is contrary to international law and that, historically, all such actions have done is to exacerbate conflicts and weaken the social and political fabric of nations.

Paula Narvaez Ojeda, Chile's UN representative, noted that foreign interference caused extreme damage to her nation, and she stressed that democracy is best recovered through "the strength of organized citizens and through our institutions".

France's representative said that when a permanent member of the Security Council violates the UN Charter, it "chips away at the very foundation of the international order".

South Africa warned that "no nation can claim to be legally or morally superior" to another.

Pakistan said that unilateral military action "contravenes these sacrosanct principles", while the A3 group, consisting of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia and Liberia, said full respect for states' sovereignty and territorial integrity under the UN Charter is an essential foundation for international cooperation and peaceful coexistence.

Spain's representative to the UN, Hector Gomez Hernandez, said that democracy "cannot be imposed by force" and "force never brings more democracy".

Brazil's UN ambassador, Sergio Franca Danese, said that international norms are "mandatory and universal" and do not allow for

exceptions based on ideological, geopolitical or economic interests, such as the "exploitation of natural or economic resources".

The envoy dismissed the notion that "the end justifies the means", saying that such reasoning lacks legitimacy and grants the strongest the right to define what is just or unjust while imposing decisions on the weakest.

Representatives from other countries also emphasized that the US military intervention constituted a fundamental breach of the UN Charter and the principles of sovereign equality.

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