

Spain's PM meets Xi, pushes 'fair trade order' on China trip

AFP – Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez called Monday for a “fair trade order” during a visit to China where he met leader Xi Jinping and aimed to boost ties despite a tariff standoff between Beijing and the European Union.

State news agency Xinhua said Sanchez met Xi on Monday, without sharing details.

Earlier, he met local counterpart Premier Li Qiang at Beijing's ornate Great Hall of the People, telling him Spain “wishes to continue strengthening its relations with China”.

“We want to build bridges to defend together a fair trade order,” he said in a post on X.

This, he said, “allows our economies to grow and benefits our industries and citizens”.

Sanchez's trip will also take him to Shanghai on Tuesday and Wednesday, where he will meet local officials and businesses as well as inaugurate a new Cervantes Institute cultural centre.

Speaking at a forum in Beijing on Monday, Sanchez hailed “strong ties” between China and Spain.

“Even on those issues where our positions do not fully coincide, we maintain a constructive willingness to engage in dialogue and cooperation,” he said in a video of his remarks shared on his social media.

“We are committed to developing a positive agenda and seeking consensual solutions that benefit all parties,” he added.

Sanchez also met Monday with the Spain-China Business Advisory Council, part of efforts to “deepen trade and investment relations” between the two countries.

“Our objective is clear: to foster a balanced relationship, based on respect and reciprocity that benefits both nations,” Sanchez said on X.

The Spanish premier also met with Xi during his last visit to China in March 2023, and took part in the Boao Forum for Asia – similar to the World Economic Forum held in Davos – in China’s Hainan province.

– Trade tensions –

The premier’s arrival in Beijing came shortly after Venezuelan opposition figure Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia – who insists he, not strongman Nicolas Maduro, is the country’s legitimate president-elect – fled for exile in Spain.

Speaking at a socialist party meeting on Saturday, Sanchez described Gonzalez Urrutia as “a hero who Spain will not abandon”.

Beijing enjoys close ties with Maduro’s government.

Sanchez’s visit also comes against the backdrop of mounting trade tensions between the European Union and China.

The European Commission, which oversees the bloc’s trade policy, announced last month that it planned to impose five-year import duties of up to 36 percent on electric vehicles imported from China.

Also last month, Beijing launched a probe into EU subsidies for some dairy products imported into China.

In June Beijing launched an anti-dumping investigation into pork imports from the bloc in response to an application submitted by a local trade grouping on behalf of domestic

producers.

The Iberian nation is the EU's largest exporter of pork products to China, selling over 560,000 tonnes to the world's second-largest economy last year at a total value of 1.2 billion euros (\$1.3 billion), according to industry body Interporc.