

# US, China cool trade tensions after phone call



In this file photo taken on Dec 05, 2018, a Chinese and US national flags hang on a fence at an international school in Beijing, China. Source: AFP

THE US and China on Sunday “made new progress” on the issues of trade balance and intellectual property following a phone call involving officials from both countries, China’s commerce ministry said.

Washington and Beijing have been engaged in a bitter trade war but relations but temperatures have cooled since Chinese President Xi Jinping and US President Donald Trump agreed to a 90-day truce.

“On December 21, China and the US conducted a phone conversation at a vice-ministerial level, exchanging views on issues such as trade balance and strengthening intellectual property protection, and made new progress,” the Ministry of Commerce said in a brief statement, as quoted by the *AFP*.

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On Wednesday, the two sides discussed “economic and trade issues” which makes Sunday’s phone call the second such engagement in a week.

A lack of fair access for foreign companies in China, as well as rampant theft of intellectual property, have long been a bone of contention for US and European officials with Beijing.

The calls came amid Chinese legislators’ move to consider new laws governing foreign investment in hopes of streamlining existing rules and to prevent the forced transfer of technology.



A Chinese official adjusts a Chinese flag before the start of a meeting between Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Indian Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj in New Delhi, India, Dec 21, 2018. Source: AFP

According to the official *Xinhua* news agency, the new “unified law” will replace three existing laws on Chinese and foreign equity joint ventures, non-equity joint ventures and wholly foreign-owned enterprises.

The Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress (NPC) meeting which began Sunday was presented with a draft of the proposed legislation.

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If legislated, the new law would bar local governments from restricting market access for foreign firms and from forcing them to transfer technology.

The law will ensure foreign investors would enjoy the same privileges as Chinese companies in most sectors except those excluded on a “negative list”, according to the *AFP*.

“In order to further expand opening up, actively promote foreign investment, protect the legitimate rights and interests of foreign investment, and promote the formation of a new pattern of comprehensive opening, the State Council has proposed a bill,” the Standing Committee said in a statement about the meeting posted on the NPC website.

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