

France china electric vehicle market

French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire, left and Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng shake hands after a joint press conference at the end of the 9th China-France High Level Economic and Financial Dialogue held at the Diaoyutai State Guest House in Beijing, Saturday, July 29, 2023. (AP Photo/Ng Han Guan)

Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng, speaks during a joint press conference with French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire, at the end of the 9th China-France High Level Economic and Financial Dialogue held at the Diaoyutai State Guest House in Beijing, Saturday, July 29, 2023. (AP Photo/Ng Han Guan)

French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire, speaks during a joint press conference with Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng, at the end of the 9th China-France High Level Economic and Financial Dialogue held at the Diaoyutai State Guest House in Beijing, Saturday, July 29, 2023. (AP Photo/Ng Han Guan)

French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire, left and Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng, right arrive for a joint press conference after the 9th China-France High Level Economic and Financial Dialogue held at the Diaoyutai State Guest House in Beijing, Saturday, July 29, 2023. (AP Photo/Ng Han Guan)

French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire, center left and Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng, center right attend a joint press conference after the 9th China-France High Level Economic and Financial Dialogue held at the Diaoyutai State Guest House in Beijing, Saturday, July 29, 2023. (AP Photo/Ng Han Guan)

BEIJING (AP) -- The French finance minister said Sunday he pressed Chinese leaders to open their markets wider to foreign companies and lobbied for investment in France's electric car industry, as the European Union's second-largest economy followed Washington in reviving post-COVID economic talks amid tension over Beijing's surging trade surpluses.

Bruno Le Maire also defended Paris's controls on foreign access to technology after authorities said two Chinese citizens are under investigation for what news reports say is possible smuggling of French-made processor chips with military uses to China and Russia.

Chinese officials gave Le Maire and Yellen a warm welcome as part of efforts to reverse an economic slump by reviving foreign investor interest. But Beijing has given no indication of possible changes in technology and other policies that its trading partners say violate Chinese market-opening commitments.

Officials of the 27-nation European Union are trying to narrow a trade deficit with China that swelled to 396 billion euros (\$432 billion) last year. Le Maire cited cosmetics, aerospace and agriculture as possible areas for more French exports.

"There is a need to improve access to the Chinese market. I think that it was at the core of our discussions," Le Maire said in an interview at the French Embassy. "We want to have a stronger economic relationship between Europe and China, between France and China, which means to get access for all European goods."

Chinese leader Xi Jinping's government has looked to Europe as an alternative market and source of technology since Washington tightened controls on access to U.S. processor chips and other high-tech goods and hiked tariffs on imports from China in a feud over its industry development ambitions.

Le Maire and Chinese officials pledged to cooperate on climate change, financing for developing countries and nuclear power. They announced plans to set up a group to settle a dispute over access to China's market for cosmetics, a major French export.

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