

WORLD

Briefly

AUSTRIA
Envoys tight-lipped as arms control talks start

Nuclear weapons talks between the United States and Russia started in Vienna on Monday, with the two countries' envoys making only guarded comments shortly before they met. Little has been said officially about the arms control negotiations, but the US envoy has made clear they will be about nuclear weapons, suggesting they will include replacing the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, or New START, which expires in February. The deadlock over New START and the demise of other nuclear arms control treaties "suggest that the era of bilateral nuclear arms control agreements between Russia and the USA might be coming to an end", said Shannon Kile of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. According to the institute's latest research, Russia has 6,375 nuclear warheads, including those that are not deployed, and the US has 5,800.

REPUBLIC OF KOREA
Action threatened over scattering of leaflets

The Unification Ministry of the Republic of Korea said on Tuesday that it will sternly deal with the scattering of leaflets criticizing the Democratic People's Republic of Korea after the alleged dispersal of such leaflets across the inter-Korean border overnight. The ministry in charge of inter-Korean affairs expressed deep regret over an attempt by some civic group activists to scatter anti-DPRK leaflets and materials across the border, according to a statement. The ministry said it would sternly deal with such acts in cooperation with relevant agencies, including the police, adding that it would strongly respond to the distribution of anti-DPRK leaflets, which escalate tensions between the two neighbors, and endangers the lives and safety of people residing in the border areas. Earlier this month, the ministry filed a legal complaint against two civic groups for having sent anti-DPRK leaflets.

MEXICO
15 killed in attack on indigenous village

Assailants killed 15 inhabitants of an indigenous village in southern Mexico that has been plagued by local disputes, authorities said on Monday, in one of the most brutal attacks to shake the countryside in recent years. State prosecutors in Oaxaca said the bodies of 13 men and two women were identified as victims of the attacks over Sunday night and Monday morning in the municipality of San Mateo del Mar, east of the Pacific port of Salina Cruz. The San Mateo del Mar municipal government said in a statement that the attack was orchestrated by at least six armed people with the support of a suspected local crime boss. No arrests have yet been made. In a separate statement, Oaxaca state prosecutors said investigations are under way.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

After the eruption

A worker cleans volcanic ash off the stupas at the Borobudur Temple in Magelang Regency, Indonesia, on Monday, a day after Mount Merapi erupted in nearby Sleman district, sending a plume of ash into the sky. Merapi, one of the world's most active volcanoes, erupted twice on Sunday and sent clouds of gray ash 6,000 meters skyward. AGUNG SUPRIYANTO / AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Britain told it has only 6 weeks to work out trade deal with Japan

By JULIAN SHEA in London
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Four years to the day from the referendum where the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union, Tokyo has given London just six weeks to agree terms for a post-Brexit trade deal between the countries.

Having taken the country out of the EU at the end of January, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has repeatedly insisted there will be no extension requested to the post-Brexit transition period that lasts up until the end of the year, meaning the UK is under great pressure to come up with alternative trade agreements not only with the EU, but also other countries, over the coming months.

Hiroshi Matsuura, the Japanese government's chief negotiator, told the Financial Times that the tightness of the deadline meant both sides might have to "limit their ambitions", suggesting some of London's desired goals might be unrealistic.

"To avoid a gap in January, we must pass this in the autumn ses-

sion of the Diet," he said, referring to the Japanese parliament. "That means we must complete negotiations by the end of July. The shortage of time means that both sides will have to limit their ambitions."

Official figures show that 9,500 British companies exported goods worth \$37 billion to Japan last year.

Sticking point

The comments about ambitions needing to be limited could be bad news for British agricultural export hopes. Agriculture was always a sticking point in negotiations between the EU and Japan, and British Trade Secretary Liz Truss had hoped any new deal could produce fresh opportunities for the farming sector.

A spokesman for the British Department for International Trade said: "We will be fighting for British farmers' access to the Japanese market as part of a deal along with ambitions digital and data chapters." Matsuura has not commented on what any trade deal may contain.

Around 100 British negotiators

are involved in daily video conference calls with their counterparts from Japan. "We are doing this deal differently to the usual style. Instead of rounds of talks, we are negotiating every single day," Matsuura said.

If a deal were to be agreed, it would be the first independent one Britain had clinched in more than 40 years, and one of the fastest in history. But should Britain end up with a bad deal, it would pile even more pressure as regards negotiations with the EU and also the United States over other deals.

A much talked-about deal with the US has long been one of the mainstays of Brexit, but the prospect of British agricultural standards and the National Health Service both being potential bargaining chips has already provoked fury in the UK.

As long ago as 2016, just after Donald Trump was elected president of the United States, the man who is now the US secretary for commerce, Wilbur Ross, was quoted as calling Brexit a "God-given opportunity" to take trade from the UK.

Circular economy

Fishermen keep to the traditional ways as they fill their net in the Brahmaputra River in Gaibandha, Bangladesh. They draw in the ends of the wide net from the two boats, while beating the surface of the water to keep the fish inside and maximize their haul. ABDUL MOMIN / SOLENT NEWS

**Trump extends visa freeze for foreign workers**

With clamp lasting all year, experts warn of impact on US tech industry

By CHINA DAILY

US President Donald Trump on Monday signed an executive order to suspend the issuance of certain temporary worker visas through the end of 2020, a move that critics said would hurt the country's technology industry.

Trump's latest effort to crack down on immigration follows a measure in April to temporarily suspend immigration to the US, which he said was aimed at protecting US jobs affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

The new restrictions will prevent about 525,000 people from entering the United States between now and the end of the year, including 170,000 green-card holders who have been barred from coming to the country since April, according to a Wall Street Journal report, citing a senior administration official.

The Trump administration will grant exemptions for healthcare workers focusing on treating and researching COVID-19 as well as those working in the food supply chain, including seafood and food packaging, said the report.

Trump "is going to prioritise those workers who are offered the highest wages", as an indicator that they can add more value to the US economy, the official said.

"It will eliminate competition with Americans... in these industries at the entry level, and will do more to get the best and the brightest."

The new order extends his earlier ban through Dec 30 and expands it by imposing restrictions on a variety of work visas, including the categories H-1B, H-2B, H-4, L-1 and certain J-1 visas. Around 300,000 J-1 visa recipients enter the US every year, according to the American Immigration Council.

H-1B visas are designed for highly skilled workers, particularly in the tech industry. It is the largest visa program of those included in Monday's order.

"Immigration is essential to the success of America's innovation economy. In Silicon Valley, nearly 60 percent of STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) workers with a bachelor's degree or higher are foreign-born," said Peter Leroe-Munoz, general counsel and vice-president of tech and innovation policy at the Silicon Valley Leadership Group.

The ban impedes companies, universities and research institutions from attracting and retaining top global talent, said Leroe-Munoz, whose organization represents nearly 400 Silicon Valley firms.

The initial order was strongly opposed by those in the tech indus-

try, claiming it would harm their efforts to recruit for positions that do not have a strong applicant pool among US citizens.

In the short term, the expanded visa restrictions will make it harder for Silicon Valley companies to fill tech positions that were vacant before the coronavirus pandemic, said Leroe-Munoz. "In the long term, tech companies in the region will be faced with reduced opportunities for innovation, as smart, hardworking immigrants relocate to other countries and compete against American businesses."

The Trump administration has also increased the denial rate for H-1B visas to a record high. Denials more than tripled to 15.2 percent in 2019 from 4.3 percent in 2015.

Other types of jobs affected by Monday's order include H-4 visas given to spouses of H-1B visa holders; H-2B visas used by seasonal workers, such as in the construction and hospitality industries; L-1 visas for executives who work for large corporations; and J-1 visas for academic and cultural purposes.

Political reasons

Immigration advocates criticized Trump for targeting immigrants for domestic political reasons.

"There has been a steady effort by the Trump administration to completely shut down immigration to the United States for the past three years. It is no surprise they are using the coronavirus as a pretext to advance this agenda," said Beth Werlin, executive director of the American Immigration Council, following the initial order in April.

Google Chief Executive Officer Sundar Pichai — whose company has been a leading beneficiary of the H-1B visa system — said he was disappointed by the announcement.

"Immigration has contributed immensely to America's economic success, making it a global leader in tech," he wrote on Twitter.

Congresswoman Judy Chu, a California Democrat, said immigrants are essential to the US, particularly during a health crisis.

"Immigrants make up 28 percent of doctors and surgeons in the US and 24 percent of nurses and home aides," she said. "So it's obvious that immigrants are so vital to this nation and to our recovery."

Layoffs caused by the pandemic in the US passed 45.7 million last week, and although many jobs will come back as the country reopens, there are worries that some have been irrevocably lost by the heavy financial impact on businesses and local governments.

Lia Zhu in San Francisco, agencies and Xinhua contributed to this story.

International Education Column

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