

# China Approves New Security Law for Hong Kong



Police officers ask people to leave during a protest after China's parliament passes a national security law for Hong Kong, in Hong Kong, China June 30, 2020.

HONG KONG (Dispatches) — China on Tuesday approved a national security law that will allow authorities to crack down on subversive and secessionist activity in Hong Kong.

President Xi Jinping signed a presidential order promulgating the law after it was approved by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, the official Xinhua News Agency said. It will be added to the Basic Law, Hong Kong's constitution.

China's liaison office in Hong Kong issued a statement warning opponents of the law not to "underestimate the party center's determination to safe-

guard Hong Kong's national security" or its willingness and ability to enforce the new rules.

On Wednesday, Hong Kong's government will mark the 23rd anniversary of the territory's passing from British to Chinese control. A series of official events are scheduled and a heavy police presence is expected to deter riots of the type that rocked the city for the second half of last year.

"We hope the law will serve as a deterrent to prevent people from stirring up trouble," said Tam Yiu-Chung, Hong Kong's sole representative on the Standing Committee "Don't let

Hong Kong be used as a tool to split the country."

The legislation is aimed at curbing subversive, secessionist and terrorist activities, as well as foreign intervention in the city's affairs. It follows months of riots in Hong Kong last year that at times descended into violence.

Speaking in a video message to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam said the law would "only target an extremely small minority" of lawbreakers, would not be retroactive, and that mainland legal bodies would only have jurisdiction in "rare, specified situations."

Ahead of the law's passage, the Trump administration said Monday it will bar defense exports to Hong Kong and will soon require licenses for the sale of items that have both civilian and military uses.

"We cannot risk these items falling into the hands of the People's Liberation Army, whose primary purpose is to uphold the dictatorship of the (ruling Communist Party) by any means necessary," Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said in a statement.

"This issue is purely China's internal affairs, and no foreign country has the right to interfere," Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said.

He said China would take necessary measures to protect its national interests in response to "the wrong acts of the United States."

## EU Excludes U.S. From List of Countries Allowed to Visit



A passenger wearing a protective face mask walks at Fiumicino Airport in Rome, Italy, May 28, 2020.

BRUSSELS (AP) — The European Union announced Tuesday that it will reopen its borders to travelers from 14 countries, but most Americans have been refused entry for at least another two weeks due to soaring coronavirus infections in the U.S.

Travelers from other big countries like Russia, Brazil and India will also miss out.

As Europe's economies reel from the impact of the coronavirus, southern EU countries like Greece, Italy and Spain are desperate to entice back sun-loving visitors and breathe life into their damaged tourism industries.

More than 15 million Americans are estimated to travel to Europe

each year, while some 10 million Europeans head across the Atlantic.

Citizens from the following countries will be allowed into the EU's 27 members and four other nations in Europe's visa-free Schengen travel zone: Algeria, Australia, Canada, Georgia, Japan, Montenegro, Morocco, New Zealand, Rwanda, Serbia, South Korea, Thailand, Tunisia and Uruguay.

The EU said China is "subject to confirmation of reciprocity," meaning it must lift all restrictions on European citizens entering China before it will allow Chinese citizens back in.

Countries considered for the safe list are also expected to lift any bans they might have in place on

European travelers. The list is to be updated every 14 days, with new countries being added and some even dropping off depending on whether they are keeping the disease under control.

Still, many people both inside and outside Europe remain wary of travel in the coronavirus era, given the unpredictability of the pandemic and the possibility of second waves of infection that could affect flights and hotel bookings. Tens of thousands of travelers had a frantic, chaotic scramble in March to get home as the pandemic swept across the world and borders slammed shut.

The number of confirmed coronavirus cases in the United States has surged over the past week, and President Donald Trump also suspended the entry of all people from Europe's ID check-free travel zone in a decree in March.

European Union countries hastily slapped restrictions on who could cross their borders in February as the virus spread in Italy. Then in mid-March the Europeans limited all non-essential travel to the 27 EU member states plus Liechtenstein, Iceland, Norway and Switzerland.

Non-EU citizens who are already living in Europe are not included in the ban. The EU list does not apply to travel to Britain, which left the EU in January.

## Belgium Regrets Colonial Past, Refuses to Apologize

BRUSSELS (AP) — For the first time in Belgium's history, a reigning king expressed his regret Tuesday for the violence carried out by the former colonial power when it ruled over what is now Congo.

In a letter to the Congolese president, Felix Tshisekedi, Belgium's King Philippe stopped short of issuing a formal apology but conveyed his "deepest regrets" for the "acts of violence and cruelty" and the "suffering and humiliation" inflicted on Belgian Congo. The letter was published on the 60th anniversary of the African country's independence.

Philippe's letter was sent amid growing demands that Belgium reassess its colonial past and take responsibility for the atrocities committed by former King Leopold II. In the wake of the protests against racial inequality triggered by the May 25 death of George Floyd in the United States, several statues of Leopold, who is blamed for the deaths of millions of Africans during Belgium's colonial rule, have been vandalized. A petition has called for Belgium to remove all statues of the former king.

A bust of Leopold II was expected to be taken down from display later Tuesday in the city of Ghent following a decision from local authorities.

Belgium Prime Minister Sophie Wilmes has called for "an

in-depth" debate conducted "without taboo."

"In 2020, we must be able to look at this shared past with lucidity and discernment," she said on Tuesday. "Any work of truth and memory begins with the recognition of suffering. Acknowledging the suffering of the other."

In his letter to Tshisekedi, Philippe stressed the "common achievements" reached by Belgium and its former colony, but also the painful episodes of their unequal relationship.

"At the time of the independent State of the Congo, acts of violence and cruelty were committed that still weigh on our collective memory," Philippe wrote, referring to the period when the country was privately ruled by Leopold II from 1885 to 1908.

"The colonial period that followed also caused suffering and humiliation," Philippe acknowledged.

Leopold ruled Congo as a fiefdom, forcing many of its people into slavery to extract resources for his personal profit. His early rule, starting in 1885, was famous for its brutality, which some experts say left as many as 10 million people dead.

After his ownership of Congo ended in 1908, he handed the central African country over to the Belgian state, which continued to rule over an area 75 times its size until the African nation became independent in 1960.

## Russia Raps 'Destructive' U.S. Stance on Nuke Treaty



DF-41 intercontinental nuclear missiles roll through Tiananmen Square during a military parade in Beijing in 2019.

MOSCOW (Dispatches) — Russia's foreign ministry accused the United States on Tuesday of taking a "destructive" stance over the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and of preparing for a possible resumption of nuclear testing.

Moscow, which ratified the CTBT 20 years ago on Tuesday, said the non-proliferation and arms control regime was facing serious challenges and urged Washington to reconsider its position. It said the situation around the CTBT was "seriously deteriorating."

"Russia is calling on ... above all the United States to reconsider its position and 'give the green light' to transform this most important agreement from the point of view of global security into a fully functioning international legal instrument," the foreign ministry said in a statement.

Washington, which formally withdrew from the landmark Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty in August 2019, has signed but not ratified the CTBT, along with seven other countries.

According to SIPRI's recent yearbook for 2020, the U.S. has 5,800 nuclear warheads, Russia has 6,375, China has 320, the UK has 215 and France has 290 warheads. The UK

deploys its nuclear warheads on submarine-launched missiles, while France uses aircraft-launched cruise missiles and submarine-launched missiles. On the other hand, China has been operating a triad of land-launched, air-launched and submarine-launched missiles for decades.

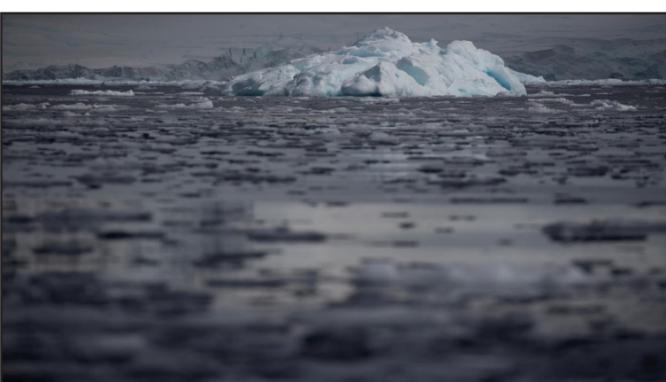
When U.S. President Donald Trump announced in 2018 that he was ending U.S. participation in a treaty that limited the range of ground-launched missiles that the U.S. and Russia could develop to less than 5,500km, China's arsenal was cited as a factor.

A senior U.S. official responsible for arms control negotiations has claimed that China is engaged in a "crash nuclear program" at its main nuclear test facility.

The Times newspaper of the UK reported on Tuesday that Marshall Billingslea, U.S. special presidential envoy for arms control, had claimed China was engaged in a "secretive and destabilizing" nuclear program. Billingslea told officials of NATO's North Atlantic Council that China was working on a range of short-range, medium-range and long-range missile systems.

Billingslea claimed China was engaged in "year-round" activity at its nuclear test facility at Lop Nur in Xinjiang province.

## Temperatures Rising Fast in Earth's Coldest Point



Small chunks of ice float on the water near Fournier Bay, Antarctica, February 3, 2020.

BUENOS AIRES (Reuters) - At the South Pole, considered the coldest point on Earth, temperatures are rising fast.

So fast, in fact, that Kyle Clem and other climate researchers began to worry and wonder whether human-driven climate change was playing a bigger role than expected in Antarctica.

Temperature data shows that the desolate region has warmed at three times the global warming rate over the last three decades up through 2018, the South Pole's hottest year on record, the researchers report in a study published Monday in Nature Climate Change. Looking at data from 20 weather stations across Antarctica, the South Pole warming rate was seven times higher than the overall average for the continent.

"The South Pole seemed to be isolated from what was going on across the rest of the world," said Clem, who has focused his research at the Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand on better understanding the Antarctic climate. "But all of the sudden, it ramps up with rapid warming, some of the strongest warming on the planet."

Clem and his colleagues wanted to explain why the icy continent began warming rapidly after a period of cool-

ing during the 1970s and '80s: was it natural variability? Or was it part of the wider trend of global warming caused by human industrial activity?

The answer, they found, was both. The South Pole warming is partly connected to naturally rising temperatures in the tropical western Pacific being propelled southward by cyclones in the icy waters of the Weddell Sea, off the Antarctic peninsula.

But that pattern, believed to be part of a multi-decade natural process, explained only some of the warming trend. The rest, the researchers said, was due to human-induced climate change.

"The end result is a massive warming," Clem said, though he acknowledged that it's difficult to determine exactly how much each factor played a part. With temperature records for the South Pole dating back only about 60 years, the region's climate is little understood.

Scientists have known that Pacific weather systems can influence the western Antarctic and the Antarctic peninsula, where rising air and water temperatures already are causing ice to melt. Researchers are closely watching the continent amid concerns that ice loss will lead to higher sea levels worldwide.

## News in Brief

PARIS (Reuters) — Air France aims to present a plan to trade unions to cut just over 6,500 jobs over the next two years, three sources familiar with the matter said on Tuesday, as the airline grapples with the coronavirus crisis. France's flagship airline, part of the Air France-KLM group, is cutting capacity and exiting loss-making domestic routes as the pandemic hits international travel. On top of the 6,500 staff cuts - roughly representing just under 15% of employees such as pilots, ground staff and flight attendants - an additional 1,000 layoffs would be made at Air France's "HOP!" airline, one of the three sources said. BFM TV and Agence France Presse earlier reported 7,500 looming job losses. Air France declined to comment on its labour plans. It is expected to hold talks with unions on Friday.

CHENNAI/NEW DELHI (Reuters) — India's prime minister on Tuesday warned citizens against flouting rules to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus, as he extended a vast social security scheme until November. Several Indian cities prepared to extend their lockdowns to combat the spread of the infection on Tuesday, with daily new cases in the country remaining close to 20,000. "Ever since (easing of restrictions) started in the country, negligence in personal and social behaviour has been increasing," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in a televised address, adding citizens were ignoring guidelines on social distancing and hand washing. Under pressure for leaving the poor to fend for themselves early in a stringent lockdown that began in March, Modi also announced the extension of a scheme providing free food grains to 800 million Indians, at a cost of around \$12 billion. The opposition Congress Party, led by Rahul Gandhi, said the measures were inadequate, calling for direct cash transfers to the poorest in the country.

LONDON (Reuters) — Prime Minister Boris Johnson said on Tuesday Britain could not continue to be "prisoners of this crisis" as he outlined plans to boost Britain's economy, devastated by the coronavirus lockdown. He said while people were rightly still nervous about further outbreaks of the virus, the government had to spell out the way ahead. "We cannot continue, simply, to be prisoners of this crisis," he said in a speech in central England. The United Kingdom's suspected COVID-19 death toll has hit 54,852, according to a Reuters tally of official data sources that underlines the country's status as one of the worst hit in the world.

MOSCOW (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin and his counterpart from Belarus on Tuesday unveiled a monument honoring the fallen Red Army soldiers who fought in one of the most bloody battles of World War II. Putin and Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko traveled to the village of Khoroshevo, just outside Rzhev, about 200 kilometers (about 125 miles) northwest of Moscow for a somber ceremony that involved goose-stepping troops laying wreaths to the towering figure of a soldier. The battle of Rzhev, in which the Red Army launched a series of offensives in 1942-1943 to dislodge the Wehrmacht from its positions close to Moscow, involved enormous Soviet losses from persistent, poorly prepared attacks against well-fortified Nazi positions. Putin said that 1.3 million Red Army soldiers were killed, wounded in combat or went missing in action during the fighting around Rzhev that raged for more than a year. The battle, which became known as "the Rzhev meat grinder," was largely neglected by Soviet propaganda and official historians because of the Red Army's huge losses and its generals' blunders.

ISLAMABAD (Reuters) — Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan told parliament on Tuesday he had no doubt that India was behind an attack on the stock exchange building in the southern city of Karachi. Four gunmen armed with grenades attacked the Pakistan Stock Exchange on Monday, killing two guards and a policeman before security forces killed the attackers. "There is no doubt that India is behind the attack," Khan said in his address to parliament - a charge that India had denied a day earlier. Khan offered no evidence for his allegation, but he said there had been intelligence reports warning of attacks in Pakistan and he had informed his cabinet about the threat. The Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), a separatist insurgent group from the southwestern province of Balochistan, claimed responsibility for the attack in a message on Twitter.

KHARTOUM (Reuters) — Tens of thousands demonstrated on Tuesday in Sudanese cities despite a coronavirus lockdown to demand greater civilian rule after the ouster of veteran strongman Omar al-Bashir last year. Waving Sudanese flags, protesters gathered in Khartoum and its twin cities Khartoum North and Omdurman after the government closed roads and bridges leading to the centre of the capital. Similar protests took place in Kassala in eastern Sudan and in the restive region of Darfur. They chanted "freedom, peace and justice", the slogan of the anti-Bashir movement. Some protesters blocked streets with burning tyres. Premier Abdalla Hamdok, a technocrat, governs the country in awkward tandem with the long dominant military that helped remove Bashir after mass protests against his 30-year autocracy. An opposition coalition agreed to joint governance with the military in a two-year transition towards free elections but key parts of the deal have not been implemented, such as appointing civilian state governors and establishing a parliament.