

DELIVERY WORKERS TO BE BETTER OFF?

City authorities to consider stronger laws to boost rights and benefits

> PAGE A3



‘FORMIDABLE’ FIRMS TO DRIVE IPOs IN HK

More than 150 in pipeline including many set to be US\$1b deals, HKEX CEO says

> PAGE B1



I.P. ECONOMY MORE THAN CHILD’S PLAY

HK could carve a niche as demand booms for toys and collectibles

> PAGE A4

EDUCATION

STUDENTS LEFT IN CONFUSION BY U.S. VISA POLICY MOVE

Some from China persist with their study plans despite Washington’s apparent interview freeze, while others consider alternative destinations

Edith Lin and Xinyi Wu

Students from Hong Kong and the mainland looking to pursue tertiary education in the US are grappling with uncertainties as Washington has reportedly halted scheduling student visa interviews, with some considering alternative destinations.

There was also confusion over whether student visa interviews could still be reserved, as some people said bookings were available yesterday in Hong Kong and on the mainland, while others could not do so.

According to a diplomatic cable on Tuesday, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio directed embassies and consulates worldwide to stop scheduling student visa interviews as the Trump administration considered more expansive social media vetting of applicants.

The latest move followed a series of actions aimed at restricting international students over claims of promoting antisemitism or threatening national security.

The Trump administration cancelled hundreds of student visas earlier this year and, on Friday, revoked Harvard’s right to enrol international students.

Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning yesterday urged the US to protect international students in the country.

“It is China’s consistent position that normal education exchange and academic cooperation should not be disrupted. The US needs to protect the lawful rights and interests of international students from all countries, including China,” she said.

While a report by state broadcaster CCTV cited unidentified staff at the US embassy in Beijing as saying visa interviews were continuing as usual, some students in Shanghai who planned to study in the United States were unable to make bookings online.

The Post has contacted the US embassy in Beijing for comment.

In Hong Kong, a US consulate spokesman said the State Department would not comment on internal communications,

while the Trump administration focused on protecting public safety by upholding the highest standards for visa processes.

The consulate said the scheduling of non-immigrant visa interview appointments was dynamic and its capacity reflected the time required to adjudicate cases in full compliance with US law.

The consulate also noted that the State Department had required visa applicants to provide social media identifiers on immigrant and non-immigrant visa application forms since 2019.

Kitty Wu, director of Hong Kong-based education consultancy Litz USA Student Service, said her company was still able to schedule visa interviews yesterday morning despite the US government order coming to light the previous night.

The US needs to protect the lawful rights and interests of international students from all countries

MAO NING, FOREIGN MINISTRY

But Wu said her consultancy had experienced difficulties last week and could not make any bookings on Tuesday before the order emerged.

“The arrangement has been fluctuating. We have spoken to the schools [in the US] and we are not too worried about it,” she said.

“For students enrolling in top-quality universities in the United States, they will look for universities of the same level ... They may not meet the application deadline of universities in other countries.”

But she said she had observed that a minority of parents who had applied on behalf of their children for US institutions for the three academic years starting in 2026 had taken recent uncertainties into consideration and thought of

applying to local top institutions, such as the University of Hong Kong, at the same time.

A Hong Kong student surnamed Cheung, who was helping her younger sister apply for a US visa, said she was unable to book an interview this week.

“My family is considering whether to send her to Britain,” Cheung said, adding her sister had already been offered a place in the UK.

Will Kwong, managing director of consultancy AAS Education in Hong Kong, said the latest US development was “unsettling” to about 10 of his clients, and he had advised them to apply to institutions in the United Kingdom and Australia also to play it safe.

“They are concerned about whether they can receive the visa and go to the US, and whether their visa will be revoked ... Though there could be new developments, I think many of them do not want to wait,” he said.

But many prospective mainland students were undeterred. James, a Zhejiang-based undergraduate is studying biomedicine and still plans to apply for PhD programmes in the US next autumn. He said the benefits of a US education, such as the provision of a stipend for PhD students, outweighed the uncertainties.

“Since I’m already in my third year and have pretty much made my choice, the cost of turning back now would be too high,” he said, adding he would apply for the US and consider other locations such as Hong Kong only if he did not make it.

Erin Zhao, a third-year undergraduate who plans to pursue a master’s in accounting in the US next autumn, also favours the country despite her parents encouraging her to apply elsewhere given the instability.

“Policy changes are a concern, but my major shouldn’t be as heavily affected as others, so I’m not too worried,” she said.

But Liu Zhao, father of a third-year middle school student, said while his son had set his eye on US universities, he was worried about unpredictability in three years. “We need to think it over carefully and maybe switch if he still wants to go to a university overseas. Or maybe we choose a new destination, such as the UK,” Liu said.

Additional reporting by Daniellyn Popov and Kathryn Giordano

POLITICS



The headquarters of the International Organisation for Mediation will be located at the site of the old Wan Chai Police Station. Photo: Eugene Lee

Wang Yi to meet John Lee before mediation body launch

Natalie Wong, Willa Wu and Sylvie Zhuang

China’s top diplomat Wang Yi will arrive in Hong Kong this afternoon and meet the chief executive ahead of a ceremony for the establishment of an intergovernmental mediation organisation in the city, the Post has learned.

A source familiar with Wang’s itinerary yesterday said Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu would greet the diplomat this afternoon and host a dinner in the evening.

Tomorrow morning, Wang is scheduled to attend the signing ceremony of the Convention on the Establishment of the International Organisation for Mediation in the Grand Hyatt hotel in Wan Chai.

In an opinion piece published in the Post today, Secretary of Justice Paul Lam Ting-kwok has stressed the new body will help Hong Kong cope with challenges that arise when “hostile external forces are attempting to de-internationalise and de-functionalise” the city.

Wang, the country’s foreign minister and a member of the Politburo, the Communist Party’s principal decision-making body, is expected to meet more officials and legal representatives follow-

ing the signing ceremony. “After the full-day event [on Friday], Wang will join a dinner hosted by the Department of Justice,” a second source said, adding the dinner would be attended by Lee, senior government officials, members of the Executive Council and representatives from the legal sector, among others.

Wang, who also serves as the deputy chair of the Central Leading Group on Hong Kong and Macau Affairs, will leave the city on Saturday, another source told the Post.

Before visiting Hong Kong, the top diplomat was spending yesterday and today in Xiamen to chair a high-level meeting with 11 Pacific Island nations – Kiribati, Niue, Tonga, Nauru, Micronesia, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea, Cook Islands, Fiji and Samoa.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Beijing announced Wang’s visit to Hong Kong last week. Representatives from nearly 60 countries, as well as around 20 global bodies, are also expected to attend the ceremony.

A forum will be held tomorrow afternoon to discuss the mediation of disputes between countries and those related to international investments. Justice secretary Lam said the scope of cases to be

handled by the new body would include disputes between countries, between a country and nationals of another country, and between private entities internationally.

He added that after the signing of the convention, state parties would discuss details of the future operation of the body, which would be an independent organisation with diplomatic privileges.

Lee had said on Tuesday that the organisation’s status would be on a par with the International Court of Justice and the Permanent Court of Arbitration of the United Nations in The Hague.

The new body’s headquarters will be located at the site of the old Wan Chai Police Station and is anticipated to open by the end of this year or early 2026.

One of [its] key challenges is likely to be establishing trust with potential users

CELINE LANGE, OF THE CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL LAW

Hong Kong ranked joint first with Singapore in the Asia-Pacific region and joint second, behind only London, as the most preferred seat of arbitration worldwide, according to the 2025 International Arbitration Survey conducted by Queen Mary University of London in April.

Terence Wong, an international commercial arbitration expert and partner at the Hong Kong-based law firm Loeb & Loeb LLP, said the establishment of the body in the city would be significant for China, as it was the “first global legal institution focusing exclusively on mediation”.

“Its mediation services offer a practical, less adversarial alternative to arbitration or litigation, which can be costly and time-consuming,” Wong said.

But Celine Lange, lead of the International Dispute Resolution Programme at the Singapore-based Centre for International Law, said the potential impact of the body on the existing international dispute resolution landscape “remained to be seen”.

“One of [its] key challenges is likely to be establishing trust with potential users, particularly in the context of mediation,” Lange said.

> IN PAUL LAM’S WORDS A11

EXCLUSIVE

Former WTO chief urges China and EU to find common ground on trade

Pascal Lamy also calls out Trump for ‘mafia-like’ approach to negotiation

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Against the backdrop of tariff negotiations between the United States and various countries, there is “common ground” where China and the European Union can work together and ensure trade remains a rules-based game, according to a former head of the World Trade Organization.

“We should do what China did to us 30 years ago,” Pascal Lamy told the Post yesterday on the sidelines of the UBS Asian Investment Conference in Hong Kong, with the message being: “Welcome to the EU, provided you produce here.”

Chinese investment in electric vehicles was the kind of investment the EU wanted, added the Frenchman, who is now coordinator of the Jacques Delors think tank network based in Paris.

The other common interest that China and the EU shared was their decarbonisation drive, because “the direction of travel” between both sides was the same and “there is a lot of cooperation capacity there”, he noted. However, he added that China was not “moving rapidly enough” by still relying heavily on coal amid its decarbonisation push.

Lamy’s comment came as the world has been grappling with uncertainties introduced by US President Donald Trump’s tariff policies since his return to the White House in January.

Trump imposed so-called reciprocal tariffs against almost all trading partners in April and threatened last week to slap 50 per cent tariffs on the EU from June 1, though he later postponed the implementation date to July 9.

The US is engaged in tariff negotiations with a number of economies. Earlier this month,

Washington reached a deal with Beijing, with both sides agreeing to pause most tariffs imposed since April 2 for 90 days.

But Lamy reckoned the likelihood of major trading partners getting the “best scenario” – meaning a proper trade deal – out of their tariff negotiations with the US would be “low”, because this

was not “the mindset” of Trump. “He’s looking for an unbalanced deal,” Lamy said. “I threaten you, and you pay to remove the threat” – this is not a balanced deal. This is mafia-like hostage-taking.”

On Friday, at a conference hosted by the Centre for China and Globalisation in Beijing, a group of ambassadors, including the EU’s, called for an overhaul of the world’s multilateralism systems to immediately address

the political and economic chaos unleashed by Trump.

“You need enough coordination to increase the efficiency of countermeasures now,” Lamy said yesterday, echoing their sentiment. “Trade works with an international division of labour. The countermeasures of China and the countermeasures of the EU – if they are to do that – are complementary.”

There could be a “united front” for making sure the World Trade Organization worked, for the moment, without the US, according to Lamy, who said he believed in globalisation.

“How can they send a signal together that would rally other countries multilaterally – we stick to the notion that trade opening is a rules-based game,” he added.

“It’s more difficult if China does it by itself,” he said, noting how doing so would be perceived by a number of countries as “anti-US” action. “If you and China do it together, then you remove the sort of reluctance that

some countries would have, and you send a signal [that is] important for the future, which in my view has value for the world economy.”

Given the size of the US economy, and its “relatively” high level of imports compared with exports, Lamy said Trump believed “he has a weapon” to wield in negotiations. But Lamy said the chances of the EU accepting an unbalanced deal in the face of Trump’s tariff threat “are very low”.

Meanwhile, Lamy said trade talks between the US and EU were independent from US-China talks, as Trump was “hitting bilateral relationships”.

“Where [the trade talks] are not independent is with the fact that, if China exports less to the US, China will export more elsewhere, and this may have a knock-on effect on the EU-US and EU-China relationships,” he said.

Amid heightened geopolitical uncertainties, Beijing has been trying to forge closer ties with

European economies. President Xi Jinping urged greater cooperation with Germany last week in his phone call with Germany’s new chancellor, Friedrich Merz. Also last week, French President Emmanuel Macron said he and Xi spoke by phone and agreed to move quickly to resolve a trade dispute over cognac tariffs.

In April, Chinese sanctions on five members of the European Parliament, and on the parliament’s subcommittee on human rights, were lifted.

Speaking on China’s overcapacity issue, which has been a long-standing concern among the European bloc, Lamy said China needed “to address the root cause of underconsumption”.

“The root cause of underconsumption is over-saving, and the root cause of over-saving is the non-existence of a proper social security system – education, pension, health,” he said. “The price that Chinese households pay for a service is too high because of not enough competition.”