

‘It’s all fake’

Sr Chinese official heckled by Wuhan residents for handling crisis

AFP, Beijing

Videos showing residents at the centre of China’s coronavirus epidemic haranguing a top Chinese official have highlighted persistent anger at how authorities have handled the crisis.

The clips, which have been circulating online since Thursday, show occupants of an apartment block in the city of Wuhan yelling “it’s all fake” from windows during an official neighbourhood inspection by Vice Premier Sun Chunlan.

According to Chinese media, the complaints were an outcry against the community’s property management, who were allegedly only pretending to have volunteers deliver vegetables and meat to inhabitants of the towers in the lockdown city.

Surprisingly, China’s censors, usually quick to scrub any criticism of government officials, have allowed the homemade videos to remain on Weibo, the country’s Twitter-like social media platform.

But the central government appears to be seizing on the videos to craft a narrative that Beijing is listening to the demands of its people and that local authorities are to blame for the mistakes.

State news agency Xinhua reported late Thursday that Sun has asked for “in-depth investigations” to address problems raised by Wuhan residents, although there is no mention of the video.

The People’s Daily, the Communist Party mouthpiece, shared an edited version of one clip on Twitter, though it deleted the post on its English account while the Chinese version was still online.

With no end in sight to the quarantine, which began in the city of 11 million people on January 23, many residents are depending on online group-buying services to get food.



People walk through an ‘EM Auto Sanitizing Gate’, amid concerns over the spread of the COVID-19 novel coronavirus, outside a shopping centre in Bangkok, Thailand yesterday. Inset, students wearing protective masks attend a lecture as part of a coronavirus awareness campaign at a school in Kolkata, India. PHOTO: AFP, REUTERS



Virus emptying famed sites

Aerial images reveal normally bustling spots from Makkah to Tiananmen Square in Beijing thinned of people

AFP, Beijing

Empty public squares, a ghostly train station and deserted holy sites -- a series of striking satellite images have revealed the impact of the coronavirus epidemic on some of the world’s busiest spaces.

The aerial photographs, released by Colorado-based space technology firm Maxar, show normally bustling spots from Makkah to Beijing thinned of people.

One image shows a handful of pilgrims circling the granite Kaaba at Makkah’s Grand Mosque -- a sacred site usually thronged with worshippers from every corner of the Muslim world.

Saudi Arabian authorities have suspended the year-round “umrah” pilgrimage to Islam’s holiest place, in a bid to stop the spread of the virus which has killed more than 3,000 people worldwide.

An image above the Hazrat Masumeh Shrine in Qom shows one of Iran’s most hallowed places virtually empty as its famed golden dome shimmers in the sunlight.

Streets and courtyards around the shrine are similarly vacant.

Photos above Wuhan, China -- the epicentre of the global outbreak -- show dozens of trains parked up at the city’s deserted Dongdamen Station.

With the city under lockdown and virtually cut off from the outside world since January 23, the usually bustling station has been transformed into a make-shift depot.

Elsewhere, Tiananmen Square lives up to its name as the Gate of Heavenly Peace, with only a couple of dozen cars passing by and no pedestrians to be seen.

The UN rights chief said yesterday governments using lockdowns and quarantines to fight the deadly new coronavirus must ensure people’s rights are respected and avoid unintended consequences.

Michelle Bachelet said the response to the COVID-19 disease caused by the virus must place human dignity and rights at its centre.

Her office said lockdowns, quarantines and similar measures “should always be carried out in strict accordance with human rights standards and in a way that is necessary and proportionate”.



Police and firefighters gather at the scene of an explosion near the US embassy in the Tunisian capital Tunis yesterday. A blast that rocked Tunis was an attack that targeted the US embassy and caused injuries among policemen, police said.

PHOTO: AFP

Warren drops out of race for White House

AFP, Cambridge

Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren, once a favourite to win the Democratic presidential nomination, dropped out of the race on Thursday, setting up a two-man duel between Joe Biden and Bernie Sanders.

“I am suspending my campaign for president,” the 70-year-old progressive lawmaker announced following her disappointing performance in the Super Tuesday primaries.

“But I guarantee I will stay in the fight for the hardworking folks across the country who have gotten the short end of the stick,” Warren told reporters outside her home in Massachusetts. Warren said she was not ready to endorse either of the two remaining major candidates.

Dubai’s ruler ordered abduction of daughters

Says a damning UK family court judgment

AFP, London

Dubai’s ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum ordered the abduction of two of his daughters and subjected his former wife to a “campaign of fear and intimidation”, forcing her to flee to London with their two children, according to a British court ruling made public on Thursday.

Princess Haya Bint Al Hussein, 45, fled the United Arab Emirates last April having become “terrified” of her husband, who is also the vice-president and prime minister of the United Arab Emirates.

Soon afterwards, the 70-year-old sheikh applied for their two children -- a son aged eight and a 12-year-old daughter -- to be returned to the Gulf kingdom.

But Princess Haya, a half-sister of Jordan’s King Abdullah II, applied for the children to be made wards of court and filed a non-molestation order for herself.

She asked during a London hearing for a judge to make findings of fact about

the kidnapping and forced detention of two of the sheikh’s adult daughters from a previous marriage.

She also alleged she had faced a “campaign of fear and intimidation” since she left last year.

Sheikh Mohammed, who owns the Godolphin horse racing stable, tried to prevent two of the court rulings being made public.

But the Supreme Court rejected his application on Thursday morning, allowing them to be published.

Judge Andrew McFarlane, found Mohammed “ordered and orchestrated” the abduction of Sheikhha Shamsa from the UK city of Cambridge when she was 19 in August 2000.

She was forcibly returned to Dubai and “has been deprived of her liberty for much, if not all, of the past two decades”, he said.

He also found Shamsa’s sister, Latifa, 35, was seized and returned to Dubai twice, in 2002 and again in 2018.



Rare calm in Syria’s Idlib

Russia-Turkey ceasefire takes effect; EU countries urge warring parties to allow in more humanitarian aid

AFP, Idlib

Syria’s war-ravaged northwest woke up to relative calm yesterday, its skies free of warplanes for the first day in months, following a Russian-Turkish ceasefire deal.

The agreement raised hopes of an end to one of the bloodiest phases in the conflict but residents in Idlib were sceptical this deal would last longer than previous ones.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitoring group and AFP correspondents in Idlib province said the truce that came into force at midnight appeared to be holding.

Observatory chief Rami Abdel Rahman reported “a complete absence of regime and Russian warplanes in the Idlib airspace”.

He said an exchange of fire before dawn killed six regime fighters and nine members of the Turkistan Islamic Party, a Uighur-dominated jihadist group, but in general belligerents seemed to be observing the ceasefire.

Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan reached a deal after hours of talks

in Moscow late Thursday.

The agreement will create a security corridor along the key M4 highway in northern Syria, where Turkish and Russian forces will launch joint patrols later this month.

Putin told a joint news conference after the talks that the agreement would “serve as a good basis for ending fighting” in Idlib and for “stopping the suffering of the civilian population”.

A Russian-backed government offensive on the last rebel bastion in the country has killed hundreds of civilians since December and displaced close to a million people.

European and UN officials welcomed the Moscow deal and said they hoped to see a lasting cessation of hostilities, but residents of the conflict-torn region had low expectations.

EU countries urged warring parties to allow in more humanitarian aid.

Nearly a million civilians have fled their homes due to the Idlib fighting, dubbed by the United Nations the worst humanitarian emergency since the start of the Syrian civil war in 2011.

NEWSIN brief

Saudi Arabia relieves economy minister

AFP, Riyadh

Saudi Arabia’s King Salman has relieved the economy minister in the latest cabinet reshuffle, official media reported citing a royal decree, as the kingdom grapples with plunging oil prices. Saudi Press Agency said late Thursday that the king “relieved” Mohammed al-Tuwaijri from his position as economy minister and tasked Finance Minister Mohammed al-Jadaan with overseeing the ministry. Tuwaijri was appointed as advisor to the royal court with the rank of minister, the agency said.

US man executed for triple police murder

AFP, Washington

The US state of Alabama on Thursday executed a man found guilty of murdering of three police officers, despite a campaign to save him by activists including celebrity Kim Kardashian. Nathaniel Woods, 44, was accused of being the “mastermind” behind the 2004 deaths of police officers allegedly lured into an ambush when they tried to arrest him on drug charges. Woods did not pull the trigger but was given the same sentence as the gunman, Kerry Spencer.

Nasa names next Mars rover ‘Perseverance’

AFP, Washington

Nasa on Thursday announced the name of its next Mars rover: Perseverance. It will be the fifth exploratory vehicle on the Red Planet following in the tire tracks of the similarly augustly titled Sojourner, Spirit, Opportunity, and Curiosity. The name was announced at an event at Lake Braddock Secondary School in Virginia, to congratulate Alex Mather, the seventh grade student who picked it. “Alex’s entry captured the spirit of exploration,” said Thomas Zurbuchen of Nasa’s Science Mission Directorate.

		Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh			
College Education Development Project (CEDP)					
Satkhira Govt. College, Rajarbagan, Sadar, Satkhira					
Invitation for Tenders					
1	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Education.			
2	Agency	University Grants Commission/National University.			
3	Procuring Entity Name	Prof. S.M. Afzal Hossain, Satkhira Govt. College, Satkhira.			
4	Procuring Entity Code	N/A			
5	Procuring Entity District	Satkhira.			
6	Invitation for	Renovation and Refurbishment of 20 class rooms, 1 Library reading room, 2 Office rooms and 1 multifunctional lab.			
7	Invitation Ref No.	sgc/cedp/idg/2020-14			
8	Date	07-03-2020			
KEY INFORMATION					
9	Procurement Method	Open Tendering Method (National).			
FUNDING INFORMATION					
10	Budget and Source of Funds	Development Budget (Government & IDA Credit).			
11	Development Partners	International Development Association (IDA), World Bank.			
PARTICULAR INFORMATION					
12	Project Code	224017200			
13	Project Name	College Education Development Project (CEDP).			
14	Tender Package No.	W-1			
15	Tender Package Name	Renovation and Refurbishment of 20 class rooms, 1 Library reading room, 2 Office rooms and 1 multifunctional lab.			
16	Tender Publication Date	07-03-2020			
17	Tender Last Selling Date	23-03-2020; 5.00pm			
18	Tender Closing Date and Time	24-03-2020; 2.00pm			
19	Tender Opening Date and Time	24-03-2020; 2.30pm			
20	Name & Address of the office	Satkhira Govt. College, Rajarbagan, Sadar, Satkhira-9400.			
	Selling Tender Document				
	Receiving Tender Document				
	Opening Tender Document				
21	Place/Date/Time of Pre-Tender Meeting (Optional)	-			
INFORMATION FOR TENDERER					
22	Eligibility of Tenderer	1. The tenderer shall have a minimum number 05 years general experience in refurbishment activities (renovation/repair/extension) and physical services. 2. The tenderer shall have satisfactory completion of refurbishment activities of minimum BDT 3,500,000 (thirty-five lac) only under maximum 01 contract in the last 03 years 3. The required average annual construction turnover shall be greater than BDT 20,000,000 (two crore) only over the last 03 years. 4. The minimum amount of liquid assets i.e. working capital or credit line(s) of the tenderer shall be Tk. 40 (forty) lac. 5. Other requirements as per tender data sheet			
23	Brief Description of Goods or Works	Setting up Wall tiles, Floor tiles, Sliding Window Thai, Thai Aluminum swing door, Partition Thai (fixed), Wooden door, Window grille, Plastic emulsion paint, Melamine board false ceiling and make Conceal wiring.			
24	Brief Description of Related Services	Related service shall be in accordance with Section 4: Particular Conditions of Contract, Section 6: Bill of Quantities.			
25	Tender Document Price	BDT 1,500.00 (one thousand five hundred).			
26	Tender Name	Location	Tender security amount (Tk)	Completion time in weeks	
	Renovation and Refurbishment of 20 class rooms, 1 library reading room, 2 office rooms and 1 multifunctional lab.	Satkhira Govt. College, Rajarbagan, Sadar, Satkhira-9400.	Tk.1,25,000	08 weeks	
27	Name of Official Inviting Tender	Prof. S.M. Afzal Hossain.			
28	Designation of Official Inviting Tender	Principal			
29	Address of Official Inviting Tender	Satkhira Govt. College, Rajarbagan, Sadar, Satkhira-9400.			
30	Contact Details of Official Inviting Tender	Tel: 0471-63227	Tel: 0471-65601	Tel: 01711-380413	
31	The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject all tenders without assigning any reason whatsoever.				
Prof. S. M. Afzal Hossain Satkhira Govt. College, Satkhira					
GD-439					