

## OUTRAGE OVER ON-CAMERA ABDUCTION ATTEMPT IN CHINA

**BEIJING:** The choking, assault and attempted kidnapping of a Chinese woman at a Beijing hotel in full view of security cameras and multiple passers-by has sparked a social media firestorm, with more than two billion views. It is the latest in a series of flashpoint incidents in China where witnesses have stood by doing nothing, sparking debate about whether the country is turning into a society of bystanders. A woman using the screen name "Wanwan" on Tuesday posted a video of surveillance footage showing her being assaulted by a man in the hallway of a Yitel hotel, an economy chain. Her assailant choked her, pulled her hair and tried to abduct her while she shouted, "I don't know you, let go of me!" she said.

A hotel staff member who assumed that they were a couple having a fight observed them at close proximity for several minutes and asked them take their dispute elsewhere, but did not intervene, she added. After a failed attempt to flee via the lifts, she was eventually rescued by a female passerby who came to her aid, the footage showed. "The whole incident lasted five to six minutes, in a place entirely covered with surveillance cameras, yet not a single security or hotel management staff member came out to help me," Wanwan lamented.

The most popular of numerous hashtags referring to the incident had accumulated over two billion viewings by Thursday afternoon on China's Twitter-like Weibo—around 50 percent more than the number of people in the world's most populous country. It had over two million comments. "When a man hits a woman, no mat-

ter whether they know each other or not and no matter what the reason or what the circumstances, you should always mediate and pull them apart if possible," said one.

### 'Absurd'

Witnesses are often afraid to come to the aid of strangers in China, where there have been numerous high-profile attempts by injured parties to try to extort money from those who have helped them.

In one well-known 2009 case, a driver who assisted an elderly woman was ordered by a court to pay her 100,000 yuan (\$16,500), on the grounds that he would not have helped if he was not responsible for hitting her. In another oft-cited 2011 incident, a toddler named Yue Yue in Guangdong province was run over by two separate vehicles and later died after being ignored by more than a dozen passers-by.

The country only passed its first ever law against domestic violence in December, despite government statistics stating that nearly a quarter of all married Chinese women have fallen victim to it. Wanwan said she called police multiple times, only to be told the event "wasn't their business". They later opened an investigation. In a separate post, Wanwan said the hotel had offered her money to take down her post—which she refused. The day after her original post, women staged a protest outside the hotel in support, holding signs reading: "Hotels have a responsibility to protect women" and "Who will be responsible for protecting women's safety?"

Yitel's parent company Homeinns issued a

statement saying: "We deeply apologize to the person involved and the general public." The incident had revealed "insufficient security management and customer service", among other issues, it admitted. Many social media posts gave women basic self-defense tips, while others told them not to go out alone at night or dress too fashionably.

"This society! We don't talk about how to improve security or our bureaucratic governing style, or about using the law to punish violent criminals when their victims have nowhere to turn!" wrote one Weibo commentator in disgust. "Instead, we ask passers-by and girls to be more careful and not go out at night—this is absurd!" — AFP



**BEIJING:** This photo shows Liu Hongni (left), a manager of the Yitel hotel, talking to journalists during a press conference in Beijing.—AFP

## CLINTON TELLS WORKERS SHE'LL STAND UP TO CHEATING CHINA

**PHILADELPHIA:** A day after losing Wisconsin, White House hopeful Hillary Clinton unleashed a blistering critique of China while campaigning Wednesday in blue-collar Pennsylvania, warning the Asian giant must "toe the line" if she becomes president. The eastern US state, where organized labor is an influential force, hosts its presidential primaries on April 26. "China illegally dumps cheap products in our markets, steals our trade secrets, plays games with their currency, gives unfair advantages to state-owned-enterprises and discriminates against American companies," she said.

"We will throw the book at China for their illegal actions." Clinton's remarks, delivered to a state AFL-CIO union convention in Philadelphia, were among her most forceful campaign trail comments about Beijing. Her rival for the Democratic nomination, Senator Bernie Sanders, addresses the gathering yesterday. Clinton, seeking to regain her footing in the nomination race after losing six of the last seven state contests, pointed to her experience as secretary of state as a measure of her ability to influence Beijing. "I've gone toe to toe with China's top leaders on some of the toughest issues we face, from cyber attacks to human rights to climate change to trade

and more," she said.

"I know how they operate, and they know if I'm president, they're going to have to toe the line, because we're going to once and for all get fair treatment, or they're not going to get access to our markets." At one point she referred to China as "the biggest abuser of global trade." Clinton defeated Barack Obama in Pennsylvania in their 2008 primary battle, thanks to support from union Democrats, and she aims to repeat her victory in three weeks' time.

But she will need to reassure workers who have criticized her late opposition to the trans-Pacific trade deal recently signed by President Barack Obama. Sanders has steadfastly opposed the agreement from Day One.—AFP

## INDONESIA RESUMES EXECUTIONS AS IT STEPS UP 'WAR ON DRUGS'

### AUTHORITIES LAUNCH CRACKDOWN ON CHILD EXPLOITATION

**JAKARTA:** Indonesia is preparing to execute more foreigners convicted of drug offenses as it maintains a contentious policy of imposing capital punishment for drug crimes. Attorney General Muhammad Prasetyo said Thursday that his office is looking for the right time to carry out the executions. He did not specify how many convicts would face firing squads in what would be the third set of executions under President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo's administration.

"We are still concentrating on drug convicts. We want to see a deterrent effect," Prasetyo said when asked whether people convicted of other death-penalty crimes such as murder would be executed. "We are waiting for the right time" to carry out the executions, he said. Indonesia has extremely strict drug laws and more than 130 people are on death row, mostly for drug crimes. About a third of them are foreigners.

Fourteen people convicted of drug-related crimes, mostly foreigners, were executed last year amid an international outcry. Indonesia's relations with Australia were particularly strained following the execution of two of its nationals in April last year. Local media reports quoted the chief of the Jakarta prosecutor's office as saying 10 foreigners would be executed: four Nigerians, two Malaysians, two Americans, one Zimbabwean and one

Senegalese. In the past, Indonesia has avoided executions during Islam's holy month of Ramadan.

### Child exploitation

In another development, authorities in the sprawling Indonesian capital are cracking down on the exploitation of children after a raft of cases, from child labor to violence and sexual assault, was uncovered in recent weeks. Tens of thousands of children are trafficked annually in Indonesia, with the majority forced into prostitution and manual labor, the United Nations' child welfare agency UNICEF says.

The drive follows the arrests last month of several Jakarta residents who sedated infants and used them to beg for money or hired them to motorists looking to evade minimum passenger norms designed to fight the city's notorious traffic congestion. "These cases are a wake-up call for us all to improve our policing style, to make it proactive and prevent violence against children," said Jakarta police spokesman Mohammad Iqbal.

Authorities have begun designating safe houses for vulnerable children in the city, besides tightening patrols in neighborhoods where there are many children, he added. This week, the city government suspended a rule requiring each car to carry at least three passengers, saying it was encouraging child labor. The measure had been

aimed at congestion in Jakarta, where poor public transport forces commuters to spend three or four hours in their cars each day, at an annual cost to the economy of about 65 trillion rupiah, or about \$5 billion.

The practice of hiring extra passengers, or "jockeys", off the street to satisfy the three-passenger rule has long been in use in the city of 10 million people. But the discovery of some jockeys drugging babies and offering them for hire prompted authorities to suspend the rule. "Many victims are traumatized and stressed when they come to us, so we have to counsel them," said Neneng Heryani, the director of a state-run rehabilitation centre that offers academic, sport and musical activities for the children.

The centre in East Jakarta looks after about 40 children, but thousands more remain at risk of exploitation. Experts have welcomed the latest efforts to combat child abuse, but have urged the government to take a comprehensive approach in tackling the problem. "At the moment this is more like fire-fighting and reactionary," said Arist Merdeka Sirait, chief of a national panel on child protection, pointing to an urgent need for preventive measures. "People need to be educated," he said. "The whole mindset needs to be changed, to think of children not just as a source of income, but as needing protection." — Agencies