

International

Canada takes garbage back from Philippines, ending long dispute

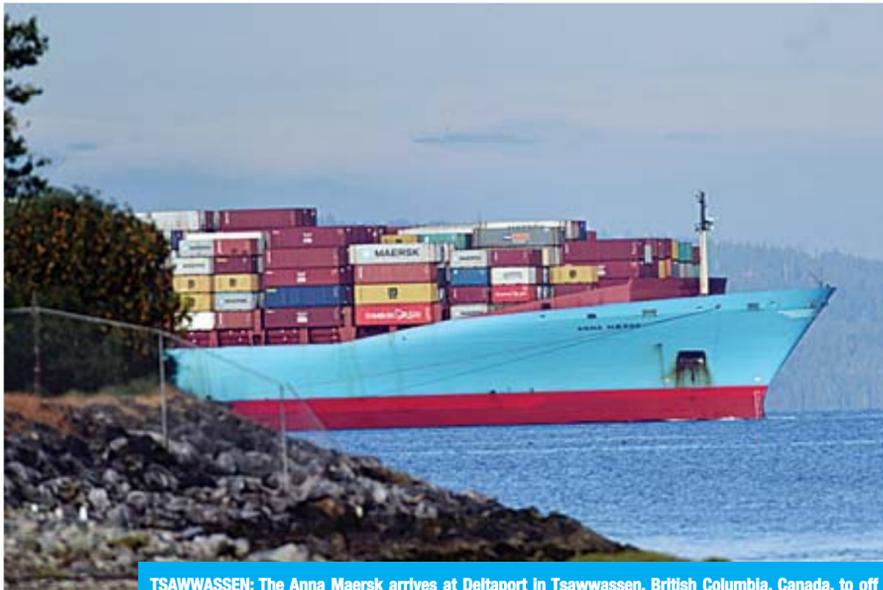
Asian nations 'tired of being the world's trash dump'

VANCOUVER: Tonnes of Canadian garbage left in the Philippines for years arrived back home Saturday, putting an end to a festering diplomatic row that highlighted how Asian nations have grown tired of being the world's trash dump. A cargo vessel loaded with about 69 containers of rubbish docked in a port on the outskirts of Vancouver, according to an AFP reporter at the scene. The trash will be incinerated at a waste-to-energy facility, local officials said. The conflict dates back to 2013 and 2014, when a Canadian company shipped containers mislabeled as recyclable plastics to the Philippines.

The shipment actually contained a mixture of paper, plastics, electronics, and household waste, including kitchen trash and diapers, even though Philippine law prohibits imports of mixed plastics and household trash. Some of the waste was disposed of in the Philippines, but much of it stewed in local ports for years. The issue polluted bilateral relations for years, but tensions came to a head in April when Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte threatened to "declare war" against Canada unless it reclaimed the garbage.

Canada missed a May 15 deadline to repatriate the rubbish, but then made arrangements soon thereafter to move it back to Canadian soil. Canada's Environment Minister Catherine McKenna told reporters on Thursday: "We committed with the Philippines and we're working closely with them." Global concern over plastic pollution has been spurred by shocking images of waste-clogged rivers in Southeast Asia and accounts of dead sea creatures found with kilos of refuse in their stomachs.

For years, China had received the bulk of scrap plastic from around the world, but closed its doors to foreign refuse last year in an effort to clean up its environment. Huge quantities of waste plastic have since been redirected to Southeast Asia, including Malaysia, Indonesia and - to a lesser degree - the Philippines. In November 2016, Canada amended its regulations on waste disposal to prevent incidents like the one with the Philippines.



TSAWWASSEN: The Anna Maersk arrives at Deltaport in Tsawwassen, British Columbia, Canada, to offload 69 containers of garbage that were returned from the Philippines. —AFP

Canadian exporters now need a permit to export hazardous waste and can only obtain it if the other country consents to the import, Jenn Gearey, a spokeswoman for the Canadian environment ministry, said via email. Even so, challenges remain. In May, Malaysian officials criticized Canada after a shipping container filled with contaminated plastic bags from major Canadian grocery chains was shipped to Kuala Lumpur by a private company.

Canada produces more waste per capita than other

countries with comparable levels of economic development, ranging from the United States to Japan, according to a study by the Conference Board of Canada. The majority of it ends up in landfills. Environmental advocates argue that developed countries should stop exporting their trash and figure out how to handle it domestically. "The way forward is to drastically reduce the amount of waste we generate, especially plastic waste," said Vito Buonsante, plastics program manager at Environmental Defense in Toronto. —AFP

Fighting rages across Afghanistan as peace talks continue

KABUL: Taliban suicide bombers killed at least 19 people in an attack on a government office on Saturday night, officials said, in the latest episode of violence in Afghanistan as peace talks continue to end the war. Election workers were registering voters ahead of presidential elections in September at an office in the Maroof district of the southern Kandahar province when fighters of the hardline Islamist group launched an attack using four Humvee vehicles, officials said.

Eight election workers were killed, they said. Eleven Afghan security force members were also killed alongside the four suicide bombers, said Tadeen Khan, the police chief of Kandahar. The Taliban, which rejects the election process,

claimed responsibility for the attack. Taliban spokesman Qari Yousuf Ahmadi said the group's fighters also killed 57 members of the Afghan security forces in the attack and captured 11 others, but Afghan officials disputed the account.

The interior ministry in a statement said 25 Taliban insurgents were killed in the clash. The Taliban, which controls or contests half the country, more than at any time since being overthrown by the US invasion in 2001, has rejected calls for a ceasefire. Fighting between the Taliban and Afghan forces has intensified even as leaders of the Taliban and US officials hold peace talks in Qatar to end 18 years of war in Afghanistan.

In a separate attack, Taliban fighters killed eight Afghan soldiers and injured eight others at a military checkpoint in Balabulak district in the western province of Farah, a local official said. Mahmood Naemi, the deputy chief of the Farah council, said the clashes ended after Afghan forces launched air strikes. "Many Taliban fighters were killed in the air strike," said Naemi. In the northern province of Takhar, over 600 villagers fled as Taliban fighters seized large areas



DOVER: Members of the US Army move the flag-draped transfer case holding the remains of Army Sgt James G Johnston during a dignified transfer at Dover Air Force Base. Johnston died of wounds from small arms fire while engaged in combat operations in Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan. —AFP

of the province during heavy fighting in recent days, government officials said.

The pace of talks between the United States and Taliban in Doha has sped up as Afghanistan heads for presidential elections on September 28. Qatar's government, which is mediating the peace

process between the United States and the Taliban, on Sunday said the two sides discussed the withdrawal of foreign troops, preventing militants from using Afghanistan to harm the United States or other countries and a comprehensive ceasefire. —Reuters

Address by Aiken Tuniyazi at the Human Rights Council

I am Aiken Tuniyazi, an ethnic Uyghur, and now a member of the Standing Committee of CPC Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Regional Committee and vice governor of Xinjiang. Since ancient times, Xinjiang has been an inseparable part of China and a multi-ethnic region where various religions coexist. On its more than 1.66 million square kilometers of land lives a population of 25 million.

The Xinjiang people of all ethnic groups share weal and woe, and achievements of reform and development featuring equality, solidarity, harmony and mutual assistance. They are united as closely as the seeds of a pomegranate. This year marks the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China.

Over the past seven decades, the successive central governments of China have always put the Xinjiang people of all ethnic groups high in their minds, and pooled support nationwide for Xinjiang's development, hence Xinjiang's socio-economic and human rights undertakings have gained remarkable achievements.

Especially since the 18th National Congress of the CPC, under the strong leadership of CPC Central Committee with President Xi Jinping at its core, Xinjiang has witnessed sustained and steady high-quality economic development, with its GDP for 2018 exceeding 1.2 trillion RMB yuan (nearly US\$200 billion). People's living standard has greatly improved, with urban and rural residents' per capita disposable income reaching respectively nearly 33,000 yuan and 12,000 yuan.

Public-interest projects regarding employment, education, medical services and social security have been moved forward. From 2014 to 2018, a total of 2.3 million people in Xinjiang were lifted out of poverty, with the poverty headcount ratio dropping from 19.4 percent to 6.1 percent. From 2019 to 2020, 817,100

people will shake off poverty.

By 2020, all rural residents living below the current poverty line will be lifted out of poverty, absolute poverty will be eradicated as Xinjiang keeps pace with the rest of China in finishing building a moderately prosperous society in all respects. Freedom of religious belief is protected by law in Xinjiang, where there are 24,800 mosques, churches, Buddhist temples, Taoist temples and other religious venues, 29,300 clerical staff, and 10 religious schools such as the Xinjiang Islamic Institute.

Fine traditional cultures of ethnic minorities are protected and developed. The Uyghur Muqam art and Kirgiz epic Manas have been listed as Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. Ethnic minority languages are widely used in judiciary, administration, education, press and publication, radio and television, the internet and social public affairs. The rights of women, children, the aged and people with disabilities are fully respected and protected by law.

Mr President, despite the progress Xinjiang has made in various undertakings, we are also confronted with severe challenges, as we suffered enormously from ethnic separatism, violent terrorism and religious extremism. From the 1990s to 2016, domestic and overseas separatist, terrorist and extremist forces plotted, organized and conducted thousands of violent terrorist attacks, causing the deaths of a large number of innocent people and immeasurable property damage.

The horrific crimes not only severely undermined the stable and peaceful order and the atmosphere of solidarity and progress in Xinjiang, but also trampled upon the basic human rights of people of all ethnic groups in the region, such as their rights to life, health and development. At that time, religious extremists disseminated sinister preachings like "jihadists for martyrdom who kill pagans can go directly to heaven" and incited religious believers to resist government management, and deny and reject all secular culture.

They preached that religious believers should not watch TV, listen to the radio, nor read newspapers. They forced people not to cry at funerals or laugh at weddings, and even forbade them to sing and dance. Those who did not follow the extreme practices were deemed as "pagans", and "jihad" was instigated against them.

Poisoned by extremist thoughts, some people act-

ed like drug addicts who did things that normal people could not understand. Aierkin Tursun from Kashgar, for example, forced his daughter Bahargul to marry a religious extremist more than 40 years her senior when she was only 15, and said that only by so doing could she go to heaven.

And Tutam Kader from Kuqa County, Aksu Prefecture, believed that the scientific and cultural knowledge taught in public schools did not conform with religious doctrines and forced his children to drop out. Ablimit Abdurehman from Turpan city attempted to go abroad to join IS after watching video clips preaching terrorism and extremism. Mamut Wubuli from Kashgar considered young people going to entertainment places as an evil act and plotted to attack them with his homemade bombs.

Terrorism and extremism are the common enemy of human society and a target that the international community has worked together to combat. The Chinese government opposes all forms of terrorism and extremism. Xinjiang has placed fundamental interests of the people of all ethnic groups first, cracked down on violent terrorist crimes, and emphasized taking preventive counter-terrorism measures and addressing the root causes of extremism.

By setting up vocational education and training centers in accordance with the law, we aim to educate and save those who were influenced by religious extremism and committed minor legal offences. Since many of the trainees influenced by religious extremism are relatively under-educated and less capable of accepting modern knowledge, and generally lack the awareness of the rule of law and skills for employment, the centers provide courses on the country's common language, legal knowledge and vocational skills and integrate deradicalization throughout the entire education and training process.

This will prevent them from becoming victims of terrorism and extremism and to protect the basic human rights of the citizens from infringement. The centers provide free education. They employ teachers, legal workers and senior vocational technicians with solid professional knowledge, as well as fulltime doctors for medical services. The dormitories are fully equipped with radio, TV, telephone, air conditioning, bathroom and shower. Sports ground and library have been built.

Various extra-curricular activities, such as contests on ethnic dancing, singing and sports, are organized to

help the trainees regain aspiration for a better life. The trainees' personal dignity and freedom are fully protected. The centers implement boarding management, under which the trainees can go home on a regular basis and ask for leave whenever needed. The trainees' right to use their own spoken and written language in daily life is fully ensured. The customs and habits of trainees of different ethnic backgrounds are also given full respect and protection.

After more than two years of practice, vocational education and training in Xinjiang has scored remarkable achievements. The trainees have gradually broken away from the spiritual control of terrorism and extremism and got to know what is legal and what is not. They have gained access to modern knowledge and information, learned basic practical skills and enhanced their employability. Now, many trainees have graduated from the centers, got stable jobs, and lived a happy life with better quality.

Mr President, preventive counter-terrorism and deradicalization are a global challenge. While drawing upon counter-terrorism and deradicalization experience and practices of the international community, Xinjiang has taken its local conditions into consideration and carried out vocational education and training. It is an effective measure and a useful tryout that aims to eradicate terrorism and extremism from the root and to protect the basic human rights of the vast majority of the people.

Meanwhile, we have drawn on common practices of the international community and applied modern scientific products and big data technology to effectively prevent and combat crimes. These measures are not directed against any specific region, ethnic group or religion. In the past three years, not a single case of violent terrorist attack occurred in Xinjiang.

The infiltration and spreading of extremism has been effectively contained, and the number of criminal cases and public security cases dropped significantly. Public security has notably improved. People have a stronger sense of happiness, fulfillment, and particularly, security. In 2018, the number of tourists to Xinjiang exceeded 150 million, up by more than 40 percent, and from January to May this year the figure rose by nearly 53 percent year on year. The people of all ethnic groups are enjoying the dividend of social stability.

We take seriously the attention of the international community. We have invited a number of delegations of foreign diplomats, officials, international

organizations, religious groups and the media to make field visits to Xinjiang. Not long ago, Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General of UN Counter-Terrorism Office and more than 20 representatives to Geneva from different countries also visited Xinjiang. Many people of insight said that the counter-terrorism and counter-extremism measures taken by Xinjiang are successful.

For some time, certain countries, NGOs and media outlets ignore Xinjiang's social stability and human rights progress, and maliciously criticize, smear and slander the counter-terrorism and deradicalization measures that Xinjiang has taken in accordance with the law. Some of them even invent stories and fabricate fake news.

When Xinjiang suffered from rampant violent terrorism and extremism, they were indifferent; yet when Xinjiang people begin to live a harmonious and peaceful life, they put on a hypocritical face and jump out to make wanton remarks and inflammatory statements. We hope they can look back at their past mistakes. The world today is not peaceful, terrorism and extremism are still lurking to wreak havoc.

Terrorist attacks that took place in Sri Lanka and other countries speak volumes about the fact that rigorous prevention measures are necessary and consistent with the purposes and principles of the UN in terms of combating terrorism and safeguarding basic human rights. Countering terrorism and extremism is an on-going process of exploration and practice.

We are ready to communicate and discuss with all parties on the basis of equality and mutual respect. "You do not know whether the shoes fit until you put them on." The best-qualified to speak on Xinjiang are the Xinjiang people of all ethnic groups. Unity and stability are blessings, while separation and turmoil are disasters. To protect our citizens' basic human rights and ensure Xinjiang's social stability and long-term security is the bounden duty of our Party and government.

We will make consistent efforts to promote sustained development of Xinjiang's human rights undertakings and create an even brighter future for people of all ethnic groups in our region. In conclusion, I sincerely invite you Mr. President, Madam High Commissioner as well as representatives of the HRC members and observers to make field visits to Xinjiang, and see for yourselves a beautiful, true and hospitable Xinjiang. Thank you!

Facebook's page of Australian missing in North Korea mysteriously reappears

SYDNEY: The Facebook page of an Australian man missing in North Korea reappeared then disappeared again on Saturday before Prime Minister Scott Morrison said Australia is still trying to find out what has happened to him. Alek Sigley, one of only a handful of Western students in the secretive country, has been missing for several days. His family had taken down his social media accounts to prevent unnecessary speculation online.



Alek Sigley

Sigley's Facebook page reappeared overnight, but it is not known who reinstated it, or why. It had disappeared again on Saturday by 2 pm Sydney time and remained down on Sunday morning. Sigley's Twitter account has remained online and members of the public have posted messages of support there. The missing man's last posts on his Twitter and Facebook profiles are from Monday, June 24, and his family has not heard from him since Tuesday.

Speaking from the G20 Summit in Osaka, Japan, Prime Minister Morrison said he had spoken to Sigley's family and said Australia was still trying to find out what happened to him. "I will just be measured in what I say because that is all about using the best opportunities we have right now, to inform ourselves about where Alek is and what his safety is and where he is being held, in what conditions," he told reporters on Saturday evening. Morrison said numerous world leaders had offered help to find Sigley and bring him home. When asked if US President Donald Trump's visit to the Korean demilitarized zone (DMZ) presented an opportunity for the Americans to make representations, Mr Morrison said he would not allow the issue to be taken up with other agendas.

"We're going to work with everybody to secure Alek's safety and the best way we can do that is doing it quietly, effectively, working with our partners," he said. "This is, not allowing this to be taken up into other agendas, it's not about that, it's simply for me, about Alek's safety. Sorry." The 29-year-old Australian moved to North Korea to study for a master's degree in Korean literature at Kim Il-sung University in Pyongyang, and also ran a small tour company specialising in educational trips to North Korea.

Sigley has been an unusually active social media user for someone living in North Korea, updating his social media accounts with photos and blog posts about benign subjects such as food and fashion. The treatment of foreign citizens by the secretive North has long been a contentious issue. American student Otto Warmbier died in 2017 after being detained in North Korea for stealing a propaganda poster from his hotel room. —Reuters