

## Lanka: Anti-India rebel leader's wife approaches court to locate him 29 yrs after his arrest

**COLOMBO, JUNE 30** /-/- The wife of an anti-India rebel leader in Sri Lanka has filed a petition to trace her husband, who has not been heard of since his arrest 29 years ago. Srimathi Wijeweera, wife of former Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) leader Rohana Wijeweera, yesterday filed a habeas corpus petition before the Appeal Court here, seeking an order for the government to produce her husband before court or release him. Wijeweera, who led two bloody rebellions in the south of the country in 1971 and from 1987 to 1989, was believed to have been extrajudicially executed in 1989. He was not among the living now after 29 years of his disappearance. The then Opposition had also accused the government of "extra-judicially executing" the Russia-educated Marxist leader.

She said that her husband was arrested in 1989 but was not heard of since. Former Defence Secretary General Cyril Ranatunga, former State Minister of Defence Ranjan Wijeratne, former Minister Hamilton Wanasinghe and General Cecil Waidyaratne are among the respondents named in the petition. On November 13, 1989 Wijeweera was reported to have been shot dead, but the actual circumstances remain a subject of speculation.

Several versions of his death were circulated following the incident. The Sri Lankan Army stated that he had been shot in a confrontation between members of the JVP and the Army when he was taken by the Army under custody to help look at a JVP safe house. A rumour later circulated that he was taken to a cemetery, shot in the leg and then summarily executed by being burnt alive in the crematorium. The official line from the then Minister of State Defence Ranjan Wijeratne was that Wijeweera and a fellow JVP member, H B Herath, had been taken to the safe house to help the Army locate part of the JVP's "treasure" and while the search was in progress Herath had pulled out a gun and shot Wijeweera dead. Wijeweera's 1987-1989 rebellion was triggered by the Indo-Lanka Peace Accord of July 1987 when the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi took direct intervention steps to solve Sri Lanka's north and east Tamil issue.

Wijeweera's JVP called the Indian peace keepers who were sent to Sri Lanka the north and east as the "Indian monkey force". The JVP's terror campaign unleashed saw parliamentarians and political parties who supported the Indo-Lanka accord being shot and killed branding them traitors. It also charged that Gandhi was planning to annex Sri Lanka as one of the Indian states. Indian Peace Keepers were soon fighting the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam leading to the deaths of thousands of Javans.

## China lifts ban on import of British beef: London

**LONDON, JUNE 30** /-/- China has lifted a ban on importing British beef, which was triggered by the "mad cow disease" outbreak, the UK government said today. "China has today lifted its longstanding ban on exports of beef from the UK, in a landmark move," British producers estimated to be worth 250 million pounds (USD 329 million, 284 million euros) in the first five years alone, said a statement. The announcement comes two days after China signed a deal to lift a ban on French beef imposed more than a decade ago. Announcing an end to the British ban, the UK government said: "More than 20 years after the Chinese government first imposed a ban on British beef in the wake of the BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy) outbreak, today's milestone marks the culmination of several years of site inspections and negotiations between UK and Chinese government officials." Environment Secretary Michael Gove called it "fantastic news", allowing the country to "be a truly outward-looking Britain outside the European Union".



Visitors watch a performance at a People's Liberation Army airbase in Hong Kong, China.—REUTERS

## PLA holds high altitude drill in Tibet to test military-civilian integration

**BEIJING, JUNE 30** /-/- Chinese military stationed in Tibet has carried out a drill to test their logistics, armament support capabilities and military-civilian integration in the remote Himalayan region, official media reported here on Friday. The drill carried out by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) units on Tuesday was the first such reported exercise in Tibet since the Doklam standoff. State-run 'Global Times' which reported the drill also cited the PLA's 13-hour long exercise conducted at an elevation of 4,600 metres in August last year. Analysts hailed the Tuesday's drill, which was held in cooperation with local companies and government, as an important move toward military-civilian integration, a strategy to realise the country's goal of building a strong military in the new era, the report said.

An important component of the drill was the military-civilian integration strategy, a key component in Tibet where the Dalai Lama's legacy still lingers on. The Qinghai-Tibet Plateau has an adverse climate and complex topography. Over a long period of time, it is very difficult to provide soldiers with logistics and armament support, the report said. To solve the difficulties in personnel survival, rescue, emergency maintenance and road safety, the military has adopted a military-civilian integration strategy and constantly advanced logistics support capabilities. Zhang Wenlong, head of the command logistics support department, was quoted as saying by the state-run Xinhua News Agency. Zhang said that the drill aimed to explore a new mode of military-civilian integration in the plateau command following the reshuffle of the military system.

During the drill, a local petroleum company supplied fuel immediately when the armoured unit ran out of fuel and the city government of Lhasa delivered a steady flow of food to soldiers after a day of mock battle, the report said. "The biggest challenge of battle at the high altitude is to provide sustainable logistics and armament support. In the 1962 China-India border conflict, China failed to protect its fruits of victory due to poor logistics support. Although local Tibetan residents provided soldiers with temporary support, it was not sustainable," Song Zhongping, a military expert, told the Global Times. "The drill showed that military-civilian integration is a feasible strategy and could help form stronger combat power," he added.

## Teenager's suicide sparks soul-searching in China

**SHANGHAI, JUNE 30** /-/- The suicide of a teenager in China whose sexual harassment case was dismissed has triggered a bout of national soul-searching over her treatment and anger at onlookers who encouraged her to jump off a building. Li Yi, 19, died last week after throwing herself from the eighth floor of a department store in Qingyang, a city in northwest Gansu province, following previous suicide attempts, police reporters. A public outcry erupted after videos of the scene circulated online and reports that some bystanders had jeered her and urged the young woman to "jump quickly" while firefighters tried to save her. The police said Monday they had detained two people who had boomed, and started investigations into six others for verbally abusive online posts about Li.

"The world is getting more and more indifferent. I'm scared. Just how mentally defected are those people who boomed her to jump?" questioned one user on Twitter-like Weibo. The case has put a new spotlight on the struggle among Chinese women to get legal help in sexual abuse allegations. The teenager had been upset because prosecutors cleared a high school teacher whom she had accused of forcibly kissing her and trying to take her clothes off in September 2016. Li and her father had repeatedly sought charges against him but local prosecutors decided not to try him, declaring that his behaviour was a "slight" offence that did not constitute a crime. She appealed to a higher prosecutor, who also rejected her case. The teacher was briefly detained but kept his job. "She fought for two years. Except for her father, no one including teachers, the school, the court and the prosecutor cared about her pain. Only those firefighters kept trying to save her," a Weibo user wrote.

Sexual harassment cases have ruffled China university campuses in recent months, fuelling a #MeToo movement that has been more low-key than in other countries due to censorship by the authorities. There is no legal definition of sexual harassment in China, and national regulations on how to handle sexual assault cases in schools and workplaces. Guo Jianmei, a women's rights lawyer in Beijing, said very few sexual assault cases are prosecuted due to lack of evidence and a lack of respect for women has contributed to such cases not being taken seriously in China. "Her case is a typical pattern where her helplessness and loneliness after long-term pressure sent her toward a death path," Guo told AFP. "It happens a lot. And it is hidden harassment, which is hard to get convicted as there is no obvious violation," she added. She said, "She was actually very brave as she went to the police and talked about it. Most girls just cry in private and then become depressed. They wouldn't even dare to tell their parents." A 26-year-old Chinese graduate student drew social media praise last month after she tried to sue police for dismissing her rape report - it was believed to be the first such attempt to challenge the authorities on a sexual assault allegation.

The burden of proof is high for alleged victims, according to lawyers. In a 2017 survey of more than 5,500 Chinese students, conducted by the Guangzhou Gender and Sexuality Education Centre, 70 per cent reported having been sexually harassed and over 40 per cent said the cases took place in public areas on campus.

But only four per cent of women and even fewer men reported campus sexual abuse cases to police, according to a 2015 Sina.com survey. Li had attempted to kill herself four other times before taking her own life, police said Monday. Police said the teacher was detained for 10 days on a minor offence. The officers said they were investigating if the suicide was linked to the sexual harassment case. "The thing my daughter could not let go was the person was only lightly punished. The school didn't admit even they did wrong... They think she made too big of a deal out of a small matter," Li's father told the Beijing News. In a complaint to prosecutors, Li said the school had "deceived" her and had not punished the teacher because he was "hard to replace". The captain of the rescue team at the local fire department, Xu Jiwei, who had intervened in Li's previous suicide attempt, told reporters the young woman had begged him to let her die. Xu said in a rare emotional account that the whole firefighting squad cried after Li fell and they were "deeply sorry" for her death. (AFP)

## China appeals to S Korea to help 'protect free trade'

**BEIJING, JUNE 30** /-/- China's No. 2 leader, Xi Jinping, appealed to South Korean business leaders today to help "protect free trade" in a new effort to recruit allies in his escalating dispute with Washington. The Chinese leaders were the latest targets of a Chinese charm offensive that has been directed, with little success, at securing European support against President Donald

Trump's threats of tariff hikes in the trade and technology. Beijing is willing to "further open up" Li told them in the meeting at the Zhongnanhai compound where Chinese leaders live. The group included a deputy chairman of Samsung Electronics Co, Yoon Boo-keun, and chairmen Chey Tae-won of SK Group and Sohn Kyung-shik of CJ Corp. "China is willing to work together with Korea to protect free trade," said "We're willing to together work with Korea to protect global peace and stability." Chinese relations with Seoul have strained after Beijing destroyed retailer Lotte's business in China last year in retaliation for its sale of land to the South Korean government to install an anti-missile system.

## 18 killed, 14 injured in China coach-truck highway collision

**BEIJING, JUNE 30** /-/- The death toll in a head-on collision between a passenger coach and a truck on a highway in central China has risen to 18, with another 14 people injured, cop said today. The accident took place last evening in Hunan province south of the Beijing. Footage from the scene showed both heavily damaged vehicles along the rain-slicked highway. It appeared that one of the vehicles may have

crossed a centre divider. Speeding, dangerous passing, poorly maintained vehicles and fatigued drivers are most often the cause of serious traffic accidents. Friday's disaster appeared to be one of the worst in recent months. Despite vast improvements in safety, the World Health Organisation says about 260k Chinese die each year in traffic accidents, many of them pedestrians, bicyclists or motor riders.

## French police seize 10 Chinese-owned vineyards



**BORDEAUX (FRANCE), JUNE 30** /-/- French financial police have seized 10 vineyards in the Bordeaux area, which are owned by Chinese conglomerate Haichang over suspicions of tax fraud, a police source said today. Haichang Group, based in the northeastern Chinese port city of Dalian, is the biggest of numerous Chinese investors which have bought into one of France's most famous wine-growing regions in recent years. It owns 24 estates, including Chateau Chenu-Lafitte, but the group's purchases have been under investigation by financial prosecutors for several years. "For 10 chateaux, we discovered a certain number of tax crimes: laundering of the proceeds of tax fraud, forgery, use of forged, etc.," a police source told AFP, confirming a report by France 2 television. "In the second quarter of the year, we seized those that were acquired fraudulently," the source said. Investigators began looking into Haichang after reports in the French press that the group had been named in a report by a Chinese state auditor in 2014. China's National Audit Office (NAO) said in its annual report that Haichang had been granted public money by state authorities to buy foreign technology, but had instead purchased vineyards in France. Controlled by 56-year-old businessman Naje Qu, Haichang is a trading and shipping company which also has interests in property, tourism and agriculture. In 2013, Paris's money laundering investigators proceeded of tax fraud, raising the alarm about Chinese investments in the French wine industry and called for "increased vigilance." (AFP)

## Myanmar downgraded in US trafficking report

**YANGON, JUNE 30** /-/- Myanmar is not doing enough to tackle human trafficking, according to a US State Department report that downgraded its ranking to the worst tier. The annual Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report said Myanmar slipped backward on its trafficking person's index to Tier 3 for failing to protect Rohingya Muslims fleeing a military crackdown in Rakhine state. More than 700,000 Rohingyas fled to escape military retaliation following attacks by militants on police posts in August 2017. The United Nations and the United States have said the violence amounts to "ethnic cleansing". The vast majority of the fleeing Rohingyas settled in sprawling refugee camps in neighbouring Thailand and Bangladesh. Many were women and children who have become prey for traffickers, the report said. The Rohingyas were subjected to exploitation -- or

transported to other countries for the purpose of sex trafficking - as a result of their displacement," it said. It also said some Rohingya children were abducted in transit and sold into forced marriages in India, Indonesia and Malaysia. "The Government of Burma does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and is not making significant efforts to do so," it said, using the former name for Myanmar. Myanmar officials did not immediately reply to AFP's request for comment. Myanmar and Bangladesh later signed an agreement to repatriate the Rohingyas but many fear returning without guaranteed basic rights such as safety, freedom of movement and citizenship. The camps in southern Bangladesh were recently battered by monsoon rains, forcing thousands to shift in the face of deadly land. Yesterday the World Bank approved a USD 50 million grant for a project to improve health, education, water supply and sanitation in the camps, the first instalment in a series that could total as much as USD 490 million, it said in a statement. Rights groups have accused Myanmar's security forces of extrajudicial killings, rape and arson as part of the campaign against the stateless Rohingyas, which the military denies. The TIP report ranks 187 countries using its three-tier index. A Tier 3 ranking could lead to trade related sanctions. Myanmar joined China, Russia, Laos, South Sudan and North Korea in the lowest Tier 3 ranking in this year's report. Thailand and Pakistan were upgraded to a Tier 2 from the Tier 2 Watchlist, which refers to countries who are not doing enough to protect trafficked people, but "are making significant efforts" to do so. (AFP)

## Pak special court to resume trial in Musharraf's treason case early next month

**ISLAMABAD, JUNE 30** /-/- A three-judge special court formed by Pakistan's Supreme Court for conducting high treason trial of former military ruler and dictator Pervez Musharraf is set to resume its hearing early next month, a media report said today. Musharraf, 74, who has been residing in Dubai since March 2016 after leaving the country on medical grounds, is facing the trial for subverting the Constitution on November 3, 2007. Lahore High Court (LHC) Chief Justice Yawar Ali, who heads the special court, will stay in Islamabad/Rawalpindi from July 2 to 4 to hear the treason case. "The Express Tribune" reported. The high treason case was planned to be restarted earlier but one member of the special court was abroad, the report said, quoting sources. The special court, formed in November 2015 by the Supreme Court on request of the former Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government, had to be reconstituted as its former head and Peshawar High Court (PHC) Chief Justice Yahya Afridi recused himself from hearing the case on March 29. On April 17, Chief Justice of Pakistan Mian Saqib Nisar proposed a fresh com-

position of the three-judge special court, nominating Ali as its head. All is set to report on October 22 this year. The former PML-N led government, however, did not notify the new bench during its tenure and the caretaker government had to issue a notification after taking charge. Recently, the Supreme Court had summoned Musharraf, who has been living in UAE for two years, regarding his disqualification, but he did not show up, prompting the apex court to bar him from contesting in the July 25 general elections. Besides facing a high-profile treason case, Musharraf has been declared absconder due to his persistent failure to appear before the special trial court. The former president was indicted in March 2014 on treason charges for imposing emergency in the country which led to the confinement of a number of superior court judges in their houses and sacking of over 100 judges. A conviction for high-profile treason carries the death penalty or life imprisonment. Musharraf, who ruled Pakistan from 1999 to 2008, has sought adequate security from the government for his return from the UAE to appear before the special court. (PTI)