

Cambodia deports 74 Chinese fraud suspects



Chinese suspects arrive in Hunan Province from Cambodia on Thursday.
[Photo/China Daily]

Cambodia deported 74 Chinese nationals suspected of involvement in telecom fraud, and they were taken to Hunan Province on Thursday afternoon, a senior Cambodian police official said.

“The Chinese police sent a plane to pick them up after we decided to deport them,” said Major General Ouk Hai Seila, chief of the investigation and procedure department at the General Department of Immigration, in an interview with Xinhua.

The deportees, including 21 women, were arrested on Saturday by Cambodian authorities in simultaneous raids on 12 locations in the capital, Phnom Penh, and Kandal and Kampot provinces, he said, adding that they would face legal action in China.

The 74 were suspected of using internet phones from Cambodia to extort money from victims in China, he said, adding that a number of phones and laptops were seized.

Seila said the raids came at the request of the Chinese embassy.

Scammers often use overseas internet servers to make scam calls to their victims, claiming to be court or police officials. They typically tell their targets that their bank accounts have been breached, so they need to transfer

the money to a separate safe account, which is provided to the victim.

[The Government must address the chaos engulfing Universal Credit – Abrahams](#)

Debbie

Abrahams MP, Shadow Work and Pensions Secretary, commenting on the Citizen's Advice Bureau report on Universal Credit said:

"The Government must address the chaos engulfing Universal Credit. It must pause the programme to tackle the serious design flaws in UC at the same time as addressing its chaotic mismanagement."

"The Government's cuts to Universal Credit means that on top of the design and delivery issues, it fails to make work pay, compounding people's ability to make ends meet. In spite of this Government's warm words about making Britain fairer, their tax and spending choices have done the opposite."

"Labour will invest to reform Universal Credit, under our plans to create a social security system that, like the NHS, is there for us all in our time of need."

["There is no cherry-picking on Brexit"](#)

Michel Barnier debates Brexit negotiations with European Economic and Social Committee

"*Brexit means uncertainty*", said **Michel Barnier** at the outset of the debate with EESC members on 6 July, "*uncertainty for citizens, businesses and jobs*". He stressed his task was to negotiate on the basis of what the United Kingdom put on the table, which included no free movement for EU citizens, full autonomy of laws, no role for the European Court of Justice and the autonomy to sign free trade agreements. The latter involves leaving the customs union and the single market.

But there was also one certainty, he said, namely that the UK would become a third country, and this would entail three main consequences:

1. The basic freedoms – free movement of people, goods and capital – are indivisible;
2. There is no option for a sector by sector participation in the Single Market; and
3. The EU will keep its own independence in setting economic and social rules and standards that all 3rd parties must respect.

The United Kingdom and the EU need to be aware that Brexit has a cost and it is the task of the negotiating team to keep this cost as low as possible. *“From the EU’s side, there will be neither aggressiveness nor arrogance, said Mr Barnier, “but we need to be ready for any situation, even a no deal situation, although this would be the worst-case scenario.”*

Members of the European Economic and Social Committee voiced their concerns on many aspects, including consumer rights, social rights or the trade policy. Irish and Northern Irish members raised the issue of the Good Friday Agreement, which was mainly achieved with the help of the EU.

Luca Jahier, President of the EESC’s Various Interests Group stated that *“A bad deal is better than no deal, we need to achieve a deal at any cost, because nobody voted to become poorer, nor for the end of the Irish peace process.”* Mr. Jahier proposed that *“half of the frontier negotiations should take place at the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and that a cultural route of peace be established between the Irish border and Nicosia in Cyprus, where another wall still exists in Europe.”*

Business investments are high on both sides of the Channel. Brexit could jeopardise business relations; particularly as uncertainty is a disruptive factor for businesses. **Jacek Krawczyk**, President of the Employers Group stressed that *“The main expectation for employers is that companies have certainty on the withdrawal agreement and clarity about the future relationship. These negotiations create challenges for both sides, but the EU is no ‘restaurant à la carte’. Here we fully support the Commission: there are no low hanging fruits to grab. Transparency and integrity – this is what we appreciate.”*

Gaby Bischoff, President of the Workers Group referred to the fact that 4 million workers are affected by Brexit, that is to say the equivalent of the population of two Member States – Estonia and Latvia – taken together. She stressed that *“we cannot accept that people could be used as bargaining chips. “Workers’ rights– protecting jobs, working and living conditions – must be high on the agenda. We cannot let EU workers’ rights be undermined by low pay, low regulation or tax havens.”*

Mr Barnier stressed that the EU too wanted a fair and balanced deal, and that failure to reach a deal would be the worst option, as it would mean reverting to a distant past, including trading relations with the UK regulated by WTO rules, making products more expensive.

EESC members agreed with Mr Barnier that although Brexit is important and a good deal is in the interest of both the 27 and the UK, the most important thing is the future of Europe. *“We have to make people aware about the*

countless advantages of EU membership. Brexit has shown very clearly that many people are not aware of the fact that these advantages come from being a member of the European Union. In the UK for many people the awakening has already begun. Now it's for the European stakeholders to make the EU27 stronger and more cohesive. The EESC is ready to be a main partner in this process", concluded EESC President **Georges Dassis**.

Central Mediterranean Route: Remarks by Commissioner Avramopoulos following the informal JHA Council in Tallinn

Dear all,

I would like to take this opportunity to warmly thank the Estonian Presidency, and my friend Andres Anvelt, for their excellent work in organising this first informal Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting here in Tallinn.

It is clear that we have a lot of homework ahead of us in the coming six months, and I am glad that we share the same priorities when it comes to migration, borders and security.

We have made considerable progress as a Union in managing the migration crisis. In the Eastern Mediterranean, arrivals have decreased with 97 percent.

In contrast, numbers are rising on the Central Mediterranean route. But in the last six months, we have improved our cooperation with Libya.

We have increased our support to the Libyan coast guard to help them better patrol their sea borders and conduct search and rescue operations.

We are supporting voluntary returns from Libya to countries of origin in cooperation with IOM. More migrants have already returned in the first half of 2017 than in the whole of 2016.

In the Sahel region, we are supporting countries like Niger to better manage their borders.

Relocations from Italy have increased from 2,000 to 8,000 since the beginning of the year.

Taking into account the urgency of the situation, we need to further step up our work. That is why, on Tuesday, the Commission adopted an Action Plan setting out a series of immediate actions to support Italy, to stem the flow

and show solidarity. These actions should be taken by all EU Member States, including Italy itself, the Commission and EU Agencies.

This Action Plan implements the fundamental principles of our migration policy: Showing solidarity with those fleeing war and persecution whilst at the same time stepping up our work to return those who are not and have no right to stay in Europe.

We all now need to intensify and accelerate our efforts to turn the commitments made by EU leaders recently into reality.

We had an open and frank discussion today on everyone's responsibilities, and I am glad to see that Ministers are committed to swiftly start this work, notably:

- to contribute much more substantially to the EU-Africa Trust Fund;
- to accelerate relocations for all those eligible;
- to better coordinate the maritime operations to save lives at sea and fight smugglers and also to jointly step up engagements with Tunisia, Egypt, Algeria as well as Libya to improve search and rescue operations,
- and to improve returns internally and externally: First, we agreed to mobilise our own internal capabilities, alongside those of the European Border and Coast Guard, to support the return of irregular migrants from Italy. Secondly, we committed to step-up negotiations on readmission agreements with main countries of origin and using all leverages at our disposal including our visa policy.

The situation in Italy is yet another stark reminder of the need to pursue our work on a genuine and fair reform of Dublin and our entire asylum system. We need a crisis resistant system. Our Maltese friends have done important preparatory work. Discussions now have to advance.

Now turning to the discussions we have had today on security. Recent incidents have demonstrated the importance of linking existing and future EU information systems for security and border management. Information must be available when it is needed and where it's needed in real time.

This is why I welcome the importance that the Estonian Presidency will give to improve information exchange at EU level over the next six months.

Last week, we proposed to strengthen our EU Agency in charge of our information systems, eu-LISA, which is based here in Tallinn. With this proposal, eu-LISA will become a digital centre of excellence, and the nerve centre of our actions to achieve the interoperability of our information systems.

I know they will make good progress on this legislative file. We want to make sure that eu-LISA can deliver the technical solutions to make interoperability a reality by 2020.

I also welcome the commitment of the Member States to finalise the

negotiations on EURODAC, the Schengen Information System and ETIAS by the end of the year.

All our work on information systems is key to strengthening our external borders.

I look forward to continue working closely together with Andres and the Estonian Presidency to move forward on all these issues in the next 6 months.

Thank you.

Rural funding: Keep it simple, but make it better

Europe's rural regions vary within and between Member States. It is important to be aware of these differences and to ensure that rural programmes and measures take into account the differences at EU and Member State level. In its own-initiative opinion *From Cork 2.0 declaration to concrete action*, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) calls for more targeted funding, based on the priorities of Member States, regions and citizens' initiatives, to help rural areas develop.

Only rural proofing which is mandatory will ensure effective policies

Rural development is a horizontal issue and it is not sufficient for it to be mainly shouldered by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) only. Rural development practically affects all policy areas. The EESC therefore calls for a more cohesive policy as well as to increase the shares of the other ESI funds – in particular of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF) – allocated to rural development. These are necessary steps in order to reduce existing disparities and territorial imbalances.

The EESC believes that rural proofing (a tool for identifying the impact of policy decisions on rural areas) must be mandatory. *“Rural proofing which results only in reports and findings is meaningless; it must deliver a true and accurate basis for people who are taking the rural policy decisions including the distribution of funding”*, said **Brendan Burns**, President of the EESC NAT section.

In its opinion, the EESC emphasises that **simplification** at all levels – EU, national, regional – is a matter of urgency. *“If the EU doesn't ease the regulatory burden, fewer and fewer farmers will be willing to safeguard and promote its unique landscape and this will be much more costly than targeted subsidies. The victims will be European citizens in both the cities and rural areas,”* stressed rapporteur **Sofia Björnsson**.

The EESC backs the Cork 2.0 Declaration as it offers strong support for a rural policy at EU level.

Boosting innovation and digitisation helps to create jobs in rural districts

Sustainable agriculture and rural development need innovative solutions. There is high potential for climate-smart solutions and a more circular and bio-based economy. Generating solar, wind, hydro and bio-energy would not only help the climate, but would also be a sustainable income source for people in rural areas. *“Implementing innovations and applying new technologies, however, often require extensive investment and high risk. To ease that risk either public funding could be used or a group of farmers could invest together”*, said Ms Björnsson, who believes that innovation strategies and funding need to be based on identified needs. In the EESC’s view, the European Innovation Partnerships (e.g. the EIP-Agri) can be useful because of their bottom-up approach.

If young people are to remain in rural areas and businesses and entrepreneurs to thrive, quality broadband coverage is essential, both for safety and quality of life. *“Broadband is a must for businesses and entrepreneurs, and modern farming is more and more dependent on a well-functioning internet”*, said Ms Björnsson. Where market forces are not enough, EU funding should be used in order to help broadband reach remote communities.

Farmland and forests make up 85% of the EU’s land area and provide Europeans with food, animal feed, energy and fibre as well as with public assets such as rich flora and fauna. This diverse landscape can also help generate economic activities other than agriculture, particularly in the tourism and recreation industry.

Agriculture is also the main driver in the transition to sustainable food systems. Promoting local consumption not only benefits local economies and agricultural production, but shortens the supply chain and thus helps our environment.

Last, but not least, rural areas are key players in implementing the international commitments under the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris climate agreement (COP 21).