

Police probe death of 14-year-old boy in Luxian County



A dormitory building in Taifu Town Middle School [Photo/Shanghai Daily]

Police in Luxian County in southwest China's Sichuan Province are investigating the death of a 14-year-old boy and will conduct autopsy as soon as possible, said a statement by local authorities Wednesday evening following a spate of speculation that he was beaten to death by bullies.

The student surnamed Zhao was found dead outside his dormitory building in Taifu Town Middle School at 6 a.m. on April 1, local police said on that day. One day later it said preliminary investigation has ruled out homicide and the injuries he sustained suggested he fell from high places.

However, Xinhua news agency reported that a video showed the mother of the boy stormed into the funeral parlor, cut the boy's shirt off and found large area of bruises on his back. Meanwhile claims that the boy was beaten up by a gang of bullies were widely circulated online, Xinhua said.

In an interview with Xinhua, school headmaster Chen Liang and local education bureau director Zhu Daqing didn't answer if there was bully in the school, only saying the incident was being probed by police.

"All I can say is we will tighten up management," Chen was quoted by Xinhua.

Although local police said on April 3 the online allegations were not true and several people were caught fabricating rumors such as the boy was beaten up by five others and his arms and legs were broken in the assault, it failed to appease local residents.

The Xinhua report said checkpoints were set up several kilometers away from the county to stop any cars from entering. After the reporter detoured and walked into the town, large crowds of people were found standing in front of the school and hundreds of police officers wearing helmets were separating them apart.

While conducting the interview, the Xinhua reporter claimed he was constantly harassed by phone calls and the family of the student was badgered by local government officials and were afraid from telling the truth.

Easter eggventure – 9th April



The Friends of the University of Dundee Botanic Garden are holding an event in the Garden, aimed at children under the age of 10, accompanied by as many parents/grandparents as they like, on Sunday 9th April from 3pm – approximate end time 4.15pm.

There will be Easter related activities, including decorating an egg, but please bring your own hardboiled egg!

Numbers are limited for this event, so booking is essential – contact fudbg.committee@gmail.com.

Survey shows vandalism troubles shared bike users



Bicycles from OFO, one of the major companies involved in China's shared bike business, are spotted abandoned in massive numbers under a flyover in Beijing. [Photo/Weibo]

Users of urban shared-bike programs have called for regulation to address bike vandalism, and suggested that shared bike schemes should be an urban planning consideration, according to a survey by China Youth Daily.

The survey, which was published by the paper Thursday, revealed that 50.5 percent of respondents said vandalized bikes had forced them to rethink their travel plans, and 78.8 percent suggested shared bikes should be incorporated into urban planning management.

The survey was based on the answers of 2,000 respondents. The top complaint relating to shared bike programs was shared bikes crowding the sidewalks, with 63.6 percent saying it was a common sight. The other concerns related to vandalism and theft.

"It is not unusual to see shared bikes secured with private locks," Miao Yue, an undergraduate in Guangzhou, told China Youth Daily. "During rush hour, sometimes it takes 20 minutes to find a usable shared bike."

In addition, 88.6 percent voiced support for a law that would address the vandalizing of public facilities.

There are government-run shared-bike programs, but they only offer bicycles that must be returned to docking stations.

"Dockless bicycle-sharing is more efficient and convenient," Zhao Jie, a

transportation expert with the China Academy of Urban Planning & Design, was quoted as saying.

Zhao suggested that there should be a system that tracks user's conduct.

According to the survey, 78.6 percent of respondents have used shared bikes, with 0.7 percent born after 2000, 21.1 percent born in the 1990s, 54.4 percent in the 1980s, 18.1 percent in the 1970s, and 5.6 percent in the 1950s and 1960s.

Scotland and a homage to Catalonia

We learn from the voice of Alex Salmond and from briefing to papers that the SNP have altered their approach to the EU. Apparently they will now say that were Scotland to have a formal vote to leave the UK, and were voters to vote to leave, Scotland would apply to join EFTA, not the EU, in the first instance.

This new contortion of policy probably is based on the unpopularity of the EU with a significant part of the SNP's vote, those who also voted to leave the EU. It helps them get round the painful issue of having to join the Euro as a new member of the EU. It avoids too many issues about long delays in joining the EU. The EU has made clear that if a part of an existing member state becomes independent, that new state has to apply to join from outside the EU. Scotland would meet the main requirements to join as it is already part of a member state. However, it would not qualify for a share of the UK's budget rebate, nor automatically achieve opt outs from the common borders and single currency policies.

Scotland would need to establish Euro convergence, which would require a very large contraction in its substantial budget deficit. Outside the UK Scotland would start with larger deficit than the UK's, and would need to cut spending and or raise taxes to get within the Maastricht rules. These are unlikely to be palatable to SNP politicians. They do not like austerity policies, yet these would be serious Euro style austerity policies with considerable bite as the southern members of the Eurozone can testify.

At the same time Catalonia is pressing for her first official independence referendum. She would welcome one chance to be independent of Spain, and is jealous of the democratic approach of the UK in granting such an opportunity to Scotland. Catalonia is more likely to vote to be independent should a meaningful vote be held. Spain has had to accept that Catalonia, like Scotland, would be able to apply for EU membership if out of the Spanish Union, if that was their wish. Whilst the government has not ruled out use of the veto over theoretical Scottish EU membership, it seems likely now that Spain wants to avoid having to wield the veto. Indeed, Spain still prefers the idea of not allowing Catalonia an official referendum, in the hope that

this will keep her Union together.

Spain is on the undemocratic end of more than one of these issues of identity. The UK once again did the decent thing over Gibraltar, as over Scotland. It asked Gibraltarians to vote on whether Spain should share sovereignty over the territory. By an overwhelming majority Gibraltar said No. Had it gone the other way the UK would have implemented the people's wishes. Spain's pressing to have some say over Gibraltar's new relationship with the EU on UK exit is not going to change Gibraltar and the UK's approach to sovereignty and identity. Spain's argument that geographical contiguity is sufficient cause to give her sway is not borne out by her actions over Ceuta, nor by general international law. France has no right to the Channel Islands because they are closer to France than the UK. Spain holds on to Ceuta though it is on the other side of the Med.

The EU has to be careful about these tangled webs of identity. Its policy that states created out of parts of member states have to apply anew from outside makes sense. They also need to help uphold international law over borders and self determination of peoples. After all, the EU prides itself on democracy so it should proceed by referendums on these matters to reflect the wishes of the people affected.

[China pledges to improve secondary education coverage](#)

China aims to increase secondary education coverage nationwide to 90 percent or more by 2020 from 87.5 percent in 2016, the Ministry of Education announced on Thursday.

Despite a rise in the gross enrollment rate of the country's high schools, poor areas in central and western China still face a shortage of educational resources and slower development in secondary vocational education, said Lyu Yugang, senior official with the ministry, at a press conference.

There has been an imbalance between the development of high school education and secondary vocational education in affluent eastern China, added Lyu.

According to a plan released by the ministry on Thursday, China will promote secondary vocational education, and improve facilities in schools and the education funding mechanism from 2017 to 2020.

More resources will go to schools in poor and ethnic regions, and the right to education for students with disabilities as well as children of poor families and migrant workers should be ensured, Lyu said.