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# CHINA INSIDER

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UNDER STRAIN?

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Customers line up to have their temperatures taken before entering a bank in Nantong, Jiangsu Province, China, on Feb. 25, 2020.

# Chinese Regime Forces Chinese Banks, Their Investors to Sacrifice \$212 Billion

FAN YU

News Analysis

China wants its banking industry to share the pain and help to boost a slumping economy—to the tune of 1.5 trillion yuan (\$212 billion).

To combat the worst economic downturn in 40 years as the country attempts to rebound from the CCP virus crisis, the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) State Council has asked its banks to forgo up to 1.5 trillion yuan in profits.

It's an unprecedented and shocking demand and serves as a sobering reminder that China, under the CCP, is still fundamentally a socialist, command economy.

There's a lot to unpack on multiple fronts. First, Beijing is reaching beyond its traditional monetary policy toolkit to boost the economy. Second, banks will suffer financially as the central government is squeezing its profits during a period in which profits may already be slim to none, given the expected number of loan defaults.

Third and most importantly, this sends a terrible message to shareholders—many of whom are foreign investors. Shareholders have few rights in the operations of the companies they believe they own, and these for-profit companies can, without notice, become nonprofit organizations in the service of the CCP. This probably isn't what the shareholders signed up for when they bought their bank stocks.

### Bank Margins Squeezed

The State Council, or China's cabinet, announced the push in

mid-June. While the form it will take varies, banks are expected to lower their lending rates, cut fees and service charges, defer repayments on existing loans, and provide more unsecured loans to small businesses. Unsecured loans are loans provided without liens on a company's assets, which provide a level of guarantee should the borrower default.

Economically, the announcement is akin to a policy stimulus, albeit Beijing isn't sacrificing its state budget. It's passing the cost to the country's financial institutions and, ultimately, their defenseless investors.

At a very high level, a bank's business model is to make money on interest spreads. It attempts to lend or invest at a higher interest rate than the interest it has to pay depositors or creditors. Forcing banks to lend at lower rates squeezes revenues without a corresponding decrease in the cost of funding.

And Chinese banks were already facing unprecedented stress even before the mandate to sacrifice profits.

Many borrowers are facing solvency issues, and the level of nonperforming loans (NPL) is set to increase. S&P Global expected the officially reported NPL ratio for Chinese banks to be around 2.2 percent in 2020, up slightly from 1.74 percent in 2019. Unofficially, S&P estimates that the industry's nonperforming assets will increase to 7.25 percent in 2020, up 2 percent from last year.

UBS estimates that in a case where China's economic growth is at 4.8 percent annually until 2021, China's banking sector could see a 39 percent decrease in profits, ac-

cording to a Bloomberg report.

### Disregard for Shareholders

Chinese bank shares have declined in Hong Kong and mainland Chinese exchanges since June 16, when the measures were proposed.

A Beijing mandate forcing banks to sacrifice profits—essentially coercing the banks' owners to take losses at the behest of the CCP—is a violation of corporate governance protocols. It serves as another reminder to foreign investors that Chinese companies are unfit as investments.

The U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission (USCC) issued a report on May 27 warning U.S. regulators that Chinese banks pose a systemic threat that is increasingly worrisome, as an increasing number of U.S. savers, pensioners, and retirement accounts own Chinese stocks, including in Chinese financial institutions.

"They remain beholden to and supported by the state," the report says. "The Communist Party-state retains the ability to intervene decisively in the banking system to achieve desired outcomes."

Chinese companies—including many of its banks—are part of MSCI and FTSE Russell's emerging markets and global markets indices. Chinese domestic onshore bonds also make up a portion of the widely followed Bloomberg Barclays Global Aggregate Index. And many popular investment funds in the United States are mandated to follow the indices by buying securities issued by Chinese companies.

In just a few weeks, the USCC report has proven alarmingly prescient.

OPINION

# China's Conflict With India Born of Crisis in Beijing

DIANA ZHANG

The bloodletting on the India-China border caught the world by surprise, but if one looks eastward to what is happening in Beijing, the events may make sense.

India and China share a long and undefined border. However, each side has a controlled area. In the past 58 years since the 1962 Indo-China War, the two countries have learned to keep the peace while dealing with the grey areas.

I have heard stories from friends who were in the Chinese army. Both sides at the border know how to play a game asserting their competing territorial claims. Neither army carries guns when patrolling near the border. One side can build a temporary tent in the disputed area or even in the other side's controlled area, and the other side can take the tent down. Both sides have lived in peace with this game.

Last week, when an Indian patrol went to tear down a tent China had erected, they were attacked by CCP soldiers wielding clubs studded with nails. Twenty Indian soldiers were killed.

This was a planned and deliberate attack. To kill anyone of a neighboring country is a major diplomatic and military issue. Without the direction of the top leaders of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), it would never have happened.

This border conflict has a few benefits for the CCP: It diverts attention away from the Chinese regime's internal crises; it tests the military, to see whether it follows the top CCP leader; and it shows India that the country will get into trouble if it doesn't follow China in its fight with the United States.

In the CCP's history, each time it has faced a severe crisis, it has looked to an outside target and deliberately created a fight. Since the CCP can not afford a real war, it picks a target with which it can control the scale of the fight. India is a good fit.

At the peak of the border conflict, on June 17, the AIIB (Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, led by China) approved a \$750 million loan to India for its response to COVID-19. The loan sent a signal that the CCP wants to keep the scale of conflict under control.

The CCP has been very unhappy



Water is released from the Three Gorges Dam on the Yangtze river, in Yichang, central China's Hubei Province on July 24, 2012.

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that India did not take China's side during the U.S.-China trade war. India declined to join the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership led by China. Punishing and attracting India with money is a typical CCP tactic.

The result might be the opposite of what the CCP wants. India is officially trying to turn down the heat, but the Indian people have begun boycotting products made in China. The border incident will definitely push India to draw closer to the United States.

This conflict has distracted the media; it has been the top news everywhere. Few media outlets are paying attention to how serious is the spread of the CCP virus in Beijing.

Different provinces are sending doctors to Beijing. Travel between Beijing and other cities is blocked. CCP officials are having meetings with hospital staff, mainly to make sure they don't tell the outside world about the real situation with the virus. More than 10 people have been punished as rumormongers.

Nonetheless, some CCP officials have revealed, anonymously, that Beijing today is like Wuhan in January and February. During much of that time, the city in central China was locked down, with hospitals overflowing.

The CCP's approach in Beijing is a repeat of how it handled Wuhan. As officials work hard to control the situation in Beijing, it's not clear where the top seven CCP leaders are. If they

stay in Beijing, their lives are threatened by the virus. If they leave Beijing, their power will be threatened.

Recently, news has spread in Beijing that military hospitals have been full of virus patients. In fact, the military infection numbers have been top secret. A small-scale war can help counter any doubts about the military's current strength.

Protesters in Hong Kong carry signs saying "Heaven is killing the CCP." It is no joke. Seemingly every week, we hear news of events that threaten the very existence of the CCP.

This week, rains have been causing flooding in many areas, especially in Sichuan Province. Land, sand, and water are piling up behind the controversial Three Gorges Dam.

Some experts are calling it a bomb, one more powerful than an atomic bomb. The dam sits in the western edge of densely populated central China. If it collapses under mounting water pressure, it will inundate an area that produces over 50 percent of China's GDP, and where hundreds of millions of people live.

Diana Zhang, Ph.D., is a staff writer with 20 years' experience in the study of China. Based in the United States, she uses a pen name to protect her family members in China.

Views expressed in this article are the opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Epoch Times.



An Indian army convoy drives toward Leh, on a highway bordering China, in Gagangir, India, on June 19, 2020.





Pro-democracy protesters hold up their mobile phones as they sing during a rally in Hong Kong on June 12, 2020.

DISINFORMATION

# Beijing Ramps Up Twitter Campaigns to Shift Global Opinion

CATHY HE

Beijing is ramping up its influence campaigns on Western social media platforms as part of an ongoing endeavor to promote pro-Chinese Communist Party (CCP) views on a global scale. While Russian disinformation efforts on Facebook and Twitter have drawn the lion's share of media attention since their bid to influence the 2016 U.S. elections, analysts say that the Chinese regime has since that time been playing catch-up, expanding and developing influence operations on these platforms—which are banned inside China. The Chinese regime's initiatives went into turbocharge at the onset of the pandemic, with an aggressive global disinformation and propaganda campaign to deflect blame over its mishandling of the outbreak and amplify narratives praising its response efforts. Recently, it has exploited the nationwide unrest following the police custody death of George Floyd to undermine the credibility of the United States and democratic governance. Earlier this month, Twitter announced that it had taken down more than 170,000 accounts linked to the Chinese regime that pushed its narratives surrounding the pandemic, the Hong Kong protests, and other topics. The company said it has identified and removed 23,750 core accounts, and around 150,000 “amplifier” accounts that were designed to boost the core network by retweeting and liking their posts. The removal builds upon the company's action in August 2019 when it scrubbed hundreds of Beijing-linked accounts that sought to undermine the pro-democracy protest movement in Hong Kong. Facebook and YouTube took similar action. Despite Chinese campaigns lacking the sophistication of Rus-

sian operations, analysts believe the gap will close as a result of the regime's persistent and aggressive actions in this space. Andrew Selepak, social media professor at the University of Florida, said that while Beijing may have more accounts peddling pro-CCP narratives, it isn't as effective as the Russians at generating impact from individual accounts. “But that's something that's going to change pretty quickly,” he told The Epoch Times. **Operations** Researchers at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI), in their analysis of the core Twitter accounts targeted in the recent takedown, found that most had underdeveloped personas—78.5 percent had no followers at all. The accounts sent out 348,608 tweets between January 2018 and April 2020. Most were in Chinese, with the campaign primarily targeted at Hong Kong residents and the Chinese-speaking diaspora, researchers said. Amal Sinha, an independent data analyst who reviewed the dataset, thinks the operation was likely run out of a human troll factory in China—rather than by bots—due to the accounts' tweeting behavior: they were tweeting during work hours at Beijing time, there were significant variations in time between tweets, and almost all were exclusively tweeted from a desktop computer. Beijing is likely using human operatives, Sinha said, because bots tend to be easier for software to catch. The Chinese regime employs an extensive network of internet trolls to censor online discussion, praise CCP policies, and demonize viewpoints critical of the regime. They have been dubbed the “50-cent army” because they are reportedly paid 50 cents by Chinese authorities for each online post made. ASPI also found that the Twitter operation used aged accounts—potentially purchased from the influence-for-hire marketplace,

hacked or stolen—to try to gain traction in larger networks. ProPublica, a New York-based nonprofit media, in March similarly found a network of 10,000 inauthentic Twitter accounts spreading Chinese propaganda and disinformation that contained hijacked accounts, which may have been obtained by hacking or purchasing. The media outlet found that the accounts were linked to OneSight (Beijing) Technology, a Beijing-based internet marketing company with connections to the Chinese regime. The company's CEO previously worked at the Beijing city foreign propaganda department. **By analyzing its [TikTok's] treasure trove of data, China can gain all kinds of insights and leverage it to manipulate Americans.** Mark Grabowski, associate professor specializing in cyberlaw, Adelphi University In 2019, ProPublica obtained a copy of a contract won by OneSight to boost the Twitter following of state-owned news agency China News Service. The outlet is run under the United Front Work Department, a Party organ dedicated to running Beijing's influence operations inside and outside of China. **Narratives** Tech analyses of the recently shuttered Twitter accounts showed that until early February, they focused on criticizing protesters in Hong Kong; demonizing Chinese billionaire fugitive Guo Wengui, who is based in New York City and an outspoken critic of the CCP; and promoting the idea that Taiwan is part of China. But as the outbreak in China worsened in late January, the narrative shifted. Accounts started cheerleading Beijing's response to

the outbreak, criticizing U.S. containment efforts, and countering claims that Taiwan's response was superior to China's, according to an analysis by the Stanford Internet Observatory published in June. The accounts also retweeted posts from Chinese state media and officials about the pandemic. Chinese diplomats have in recent months taken to Twitter to aggressively promote the regime as an exemplar in global efforts to contain the disease, and push unfounded claims that the virus didn't originate from China. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian notoriously suggested in March that the virus was brought into Wuhan by the U.S. Army. In late May, Twitter added a fact check label to his tweet, which links to a series of Western media sources about the origin of the virus. Meanwhile, Chinese state-run outlets also took to social media, promoting the hashtags “Trumpandemic” and “TrumpVirus” on its posts. In early May, separate from the company's own investigation, the U.S. State Department discovered a vast Chinese-linked campaign on Twitter aimed to spread narratives favorable to the regime amid the pandemic. The department's Global Engagement Center (GEC) found that Chinese diplomats' Twitter accounts saw a surge in new followers around March. Many of these followers were newly-made accounts, suggesting they belonged to an artificial network designed to amplify narratives from Chinese officials, GEC head Lea Gabrielle said at the time. The campaign has recently evolved to exploit the race-related unrest across the United States, ASPI found. Posts on Twitter and Facebook used the killing of Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer and U.S. authorities' response to protests to promote anti-U.S., anti-democracy, anti-protest, and pro-Hong Kong police messages, it said. One account, for instance,

tweeted an image of Lady Liberty leaning on Floyd's neck, and compared U.S. authorities' handling of the protests with Beijing's suppression of the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong, accusing the United States of hypocrisy. ASPI said the Chinese regime's persistent online experimentation will allow it to “recalibrate efforts to influence audiences on Western platforms with growing precision.” The Epoch Times reached out to Twitter and Facebook for comment about their efforts to counter Chinese disinformation but didn't receive an immediate response. **Bigger Threat** Mark Grabowski, associate professor specializing in cyberlaw and digital ethics at Adelphi University, describes the regime's disinformation campaign as a “far more menacing threat” than Russia's. He pointed to the hugely popular video app TikTok, which is owned by the Beijing-based company ByteDance. The app, which had 37.2 million users in the United States in 2019, has seen a surge in popularity during the pandemic. “By analyzing its treasure trove of data, China can gain all kinds of insights and leverage it to manipulate Americans,” Grabowski said. “With so many Americans practically living online now, especially during the lockdown, China understands American society very well and they know what buttons to push,” he added. Grabowski also said the regime could also exploit the anti-government sentiment held by many American academics, journalists, and lawmakers to propel anti-U.S. narratives. For instance, they could find an influential user with a blue checkmark who tweets that the coronavirus should be called the “Trumpvirus,” and amplify their views. “They provide the appearance of credibility and China simply provides the retweets and makes that narrative go viral,” he said.

FLOODS

# China's Largest Dam Draws Scrutiny for Structural Flaws as Flooding Ravages Country

EVA FU

China's controversial Three Gorges Dam, the largest hydropower project in the world, has drawn scrutiny for its structural flaws and environmental damage ever since its construction was first proposed in the 1950s. As torrential rainstorms are currently sweeping through half of China, a hydrology expert warns that the dam could collapse under the added pressure, endangering the lives of millions who reside nearby. Widespread flooding has affected at least 11.2 million people in 26 Chinese provinces and municipalities across central and southern China since heavy rainfall began wreaking havoc in early June. More than 9,300 houses have tumbled and 171,000 others have sustained damage. The financial damage has surpassed 24.1 billion yuan (\$3.4 billion), according to local authorities. The record rainfall is forecasted to continue for another 10 days. In Guizhou, a mountainous province in China's southwest, the stormwater at one point rose to 16 feet higher than acceptable thresholds. The flooding in Yanhe County caused water to cascade over a bridge and wash away houses underneath. “It's a hotspot in water,” Mr. Liu, a resident of Qijiang County, in the southwestern city of Chongqing, said in an interview. The flooding, he said, is “sounding a warning to the rest of China.” If the nearby Three Gorges Dam cannot withstand the water right now, the lower reaches of the Yangtze River, one of the country's most fertile and populous regions, would be in serious trouble, he predicted. **'Pressed From Both Ends'** Built with the stated objective of taming the flood-prone Yangtze River and generating clean energy, the massive 180 billion yuan (\$25.4 billion) project has been plagued

The Three Gorges is pressed from both ends.

Wang Weilu, a Chinese hydrologist

Netizens recently circulated a video accusing authorities of secretly discharging the dam water without giving advance notice, worsening their plight.

by corruption and environmental costs. Authorities' forced relocation of over 1 million residents further fueled public anger. “Whether the Three Gorges can play a role in preventing flooding in the current situation, or if the Chinese government has deceived the Chinese public from the beginning—this has been made pretty clear for people throughout the years,” Wang Weilu, a Chinese hydrologist who is currently residing in Germany, told The Epoch Times. The Yangtze River runs through 11 Chinese provinces and regions in central and western China, including Tibet, Sichuan, Chongqing, Hubei, and Shanghai. Many regions have a water level below that in the dam's reservoir, placing them “directly under the water currents” during times of flooding, Wang said. Authorities have for years hushed voices critical of the dam. Reached by The Epoch Times on June 23 about the Three Gorges, Fan Xiao, a senior engineer in the state-owned Sichuan Bureau of Geological Exploration and Exploitation of Mineral Resources, said his superiors had instructed him earlier in the day “not to take any foreign media interviews.” Fan did, however, write extensively about issues surrounding the Three Gorges Dam. One article in 2004, for example, explored the issue of reservoir-induced earthquakes and landslides. Another, in 2016, questioned the dam's “net capacity” in flood mitigation, after accounting for the cost of destroying local habitats. There's also a fundamental conflict between people in the upper reaches and the lower reaches, Wang said. When there's heavy rain, the former wants the water discharged, while the latter cannot deal with the additional flooding. “The Three Gorges is pressed from both ends,” he said. Currently, the reservoir has kept a water level lower than normal to ensure the dam's safety. **Systemic Issues** A glance at Chinese media reports

over the years conveys a diminishing sense of confidence in the dam. In 2003, an article headline from state media Xinhua said the dam could withstand a once-in-a-10,000-year flood; the wording was changed to 1,000 years in 2007, then 100 years in 2008; and in 2010, a TV anchor at state broadcaster CCTV cited the Changjiang Water Resources Commission, which has direct oversight over the Yangtze River Basin, saying that people “cannot place all their hopes on the Three Gorges Dam.” The structural integrity of the dam itself triggered widespread debate last year after a satellite image of the dam purportedly showed a curvature, raising fears that it may break. While the operating company of the Three Gorges dam has dismissed the concerns by pointing to potential inaccuracies with Google satellite images, it later admitted in a social media post that the dam had moved by up to 1.05 inches. The company said it was within acceptable margins. Authorities said they are discharging floodwater at around 980 water reservoirs along the Yangtze River, while they have hesitated to release the water inside the Three Gorges Dam, despite the level reaching a two-meter excess (6.6 feet)—citing concerns about sudden flooding. But netizens recently circulated a video accusing authorities of secretly discharging the dam water without giving advance notice, worsening their plight. Wang is urging people living near the dam to prepare emergency kits to protect themselves. “The Chinese Communist Party will never take responsibility for it ... Every death is just a number” to the regime, he said. Mr. Chen, a resident of Sichuan Province, worries that something more catastrophic could befall China in the future under the regime's mismanagement. “The government made this [dam] a show project,” he told The Epoch Times' sister media NTD. “After the disastrous consequences, commoners always foot the bill.”



The water released from the Three Gorges Dam, a gigantic hydropower project in the Yangtze River, in Yichang, Hubei Province, on July 24, 2012.





A Chinese health worker carries out a test on a journalist covering events around the National People's Congress in Beijing on May 28, 2020.

OPINION

# 5 Questions About Origins of Latest Virus Outbreak in Beijing

YUAN BIN

After more than 50 days of no new reported cases, Beijing has announced new confirmed diagnoses of CCP virus (commonly known as the novel coronavirus) infection. On June 11, the first local case was reported by the Beijing city government. To date, there have been more than 200 cases confirmed by authorities. Scanning numerous information sources, five questions come to mind about the issue.

### 1. Did the Virus Come From Imported Salmon?

After the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) virus again hit Beijing, salmon became the authorities' first suspect. Following the report of the new case on June 11, authorities removed all salmon products from the market overnight and began a major food safety inspection drive. On June 12, Beijing's municipal Party secretary, Cai Qi, and mayor, Chen Jining, held an emergency meeting on the outbreak; they claimed that the CCP virus was found in imported seafood, and the virus strain was different from the domestic strain. Imports of seafood, beef, and lamb were halted immediately. Salmon became the obvious scapegoat. According to a report by state-owned Global Times on June 13, the CCP virus was detected on a cutting board used by a seller of imported salmon at the Xinfadi food market. The seller's salmon was from the Fengtai district's Jingshen seafood market, according to Zhang Yuxi, head of the Xinfadi market. As a result, salmon naturally became the biggest "suspect" and "culprit." However, several Chinese virologists told Caixin.com that there's no scientific evidence to support the claim that salmon can be infected with the novel coronavirus and spread the virus. The possibility of transmitting the virus through food contamination is also very slim. More importantly, the nine work-

ers directly related to the Jingshen seafood market booths that cut imported salmon, the 186 people working at seafood sections of the market, and 283 on-site samples collected from the market all tested negative.

**2. Did Virus Come From the West?**

Wu Zunyou, the newly appointed chief epidemiologist of the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, said lab test results showed that the virus strain was closer to the strain from Europe. However, it could possibly come from Europe or the Americas, he said.

"There have been no new cases in Beijing for more than 50 days. This time, it must be imported," Guan Yi, director of the State Key Laboratory for Emerging Infectious Diseases, University of Hong Kong, told China Newsweek.

"The possibility of spreading through the temperature-controlled supply chain is the greatest. Many slaughterhouses in Europe and the United States have had the COVID-19 outbreak. If it is spread through the temperature-controlled supply chain, it is nothing new," Guan added.

"We ignored the prevention and testing of imported seafood and meat," a CCP official claimed on a Chinese social media platform. "Since the outbreak, we have strictly controlled inbound flights and travelers to strictly prevent imported cases, and have adopted extremely strict isolation and prevention measures for inbound people. However, there's still a shortcoming. We have not tested imported seafood, meat, and fruits.

"This provides the virus an opportunity to sneak in through salmon."

The CCP's troll army soon began picking fights online, by blaming Europe and the United States as the source of the Beijing virus outbreak.

However, if the virus really spread to China through imported goods such as seafood, meat, and other foods, why didn't that happen to other countries which import from the same regions?

The global salmon farming industry produces roughly 2.2 mil-

lion tons per year. The most important markets are Europe (about 1 million tons) and the United States (about 400,000 tons). China imports less than 100,000 tons a year, and its annual consumption is less than 5 percent of global output.

So why is it that only salmon imported into China was found to contain the CCP virus? Does the virus have a preference for China?

**3. Did Virus Come From Hubei?**

After Zhang Yuelin, general manager of the Xinfadi market, was dismissed, a worker at the market disclosed on social media that Zhang and the leadership were falsely positive about "incentivizing the procurement of produce from Hubei to save Hubei" and "neglecting the supervision of temperature-controlled transportation and staff."

Hubei Province was a hotspot for China's epidemic. Wuhan, the city where the virus first emerged, is the capital of Hubei.

Since the Xinfadi market has been actively buying goods from Hubei, is it possible that some virus-infected products from Hubei have brought the virus into Beijing? Or might the driver who went to Hubei to transport the goods, or the freezer in the truck, have been infected with the virus, and then brought it into Beijing?

I believe this is likely.

**4. Did Delegates to Two Sessions Transmit Virus?**

The Two Sessions refers to the regime's annual political meetings, where the rubber-stamp legislature and its advisory body enact policies and agendas. Normally held in March, the 2020 meeting was delayed until May 21 due to the CCP virus pandemic.

Some Chinese netizens speculated that the outbreak in Beijing was caused by delegates from other provinces who may have brought the virus to Beijing while attending the Two Sessions. Cases were already discovered before the end of the Two Sessions.

To save face for Chinese leader Xi Jinping (since he's the one who insisted on holding the Two Sessions), the outbreak was concealed for more than 10 days. Fearing that Beijing might become a second

Wuhan, the regime was forced to disclose the outbreak.

When did this wave of the Beijing outbreak begin?

In an exclusive interview with state broadcaster CCTV News on the evening of June 15, CDC's Wu Zunyou said that while it's still not certain, "From the cases found so far, based on the time the case was found and transmitted, the earliest should be around the end of May."

If so, according to the incubation period of the virus of at least two weeks, it is very possible that this burst of infections would have appeared before the Two Sessions concluded at the end of May.

Since the epidemic began, Chinese official experts have conceded that there are a large number of asymptomatic infected people in China.

"The virus stays in the body for more than three weeks, and it is possible to transmit the virus," one expert said.

Thus, even rigorous nucleic acid testing might not fully detect all cases. Of course, the experts would not trace the outbreak back to the delegates. It would be considered a challenge to the Party's political stability.

**5. Why Attention on Salmon Cutting Board Sample?**

On June 13, during a press briefing about the Beijing outbreak, officials stated that on June 12, a total of 5,424 swab samples were collected from seafood, meat, and the external environment of farmer's wholesale markets and supermarkets in Beijing. Forty environmental samples from the Xinfadi market tested positive.

What is puzzling is that, among the 40 positive samples collected from the environment, why was the salmon cutting board sample the only one that was released? Could there be any unspeakable secrets hidden in the 39 other samples?

Or, was publicizing the cutting board sample intended to mislead the public into thinking the source of the outbreak was from outside China?

*Views expressed in this article are the opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Epoch Times.*

ORGAN HARVESTING

# Austria, Belgium Stand Up to Beijing's Forced Organ Harvesting Practices

EVA FU

Beijing's grisly practice of live organ harvesting has again come into the spotlight in June as two European countries joined a chorus of opposition against the illicit trade.

For decades, the regime has faced mounting allegations that it is killing prisoners of conscience en masse to sell their organs on the transplant market.

"We are deeply concerned about this, it is simply unbearable," Gudrun Kugler, a member of Austria's parliament, said on June 23, after the parliament's human rights committee unanimously passed her resolution to combat trafficking of organs and humans.

"Time and again reports of illegal trafficking of human organs have surfaced in the People's Republic of China that contradict all human rights and ethical standards," said a statement from Kugler's office.

Ethnic and religious minorities, including Uyghur Muslims, Falun Gong practitioners, and Christians are among the groups particularly affected by such abuses, she added.

The resolution asks for the Austrian government to protect organ trafficking victims by cooperating with international bodies, such as the World Health Assembly, the Vienna-based United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the Council of Europe, and to provide support for this cause whenever possible.

The Austrian parliament made the decision in response to a petition by Austrian citizens last October, which stated: "We Austrians do not want organs from China for which innocent people have been killed," according to the statement.

In June 2019, an independent London-based people's tribunal, after a yearlong investigation considering testimony from more than 50 wit-



Falun Gong practitioners hold up yellow banners in a parade in Hong Kong on Dec. 9, 2018.

Time and again reports of illegal trafficking of human organs have surfaced in the People's Republic of China that contradict all human rights and ethical standards.

Gudrun Kugler, a member of Austria's parliament

nesses, found clear evidence that forced organ harvesting has taken place in China for years and "on a significant scale."

"The conclusion shows that very many people have died indescribably hideous deaths for no reason, [and] that more may suffer in similar ways," Sir Geoffrey Nice QC, chairman of the tribunal who previously led the prosecution of former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic for war crimes, said in delivering the judgment.

The tribunal's final judgment released in March said there was "no evidence" such transplant abuse has stopped, calling it "greatest possible breach of a person's human rights."

On June 12, Belgium also adopted a resolution condemning the continuing practice of forced organ harvesting in China. In a bill passed in April 2019, the country officially banned its citizens from traveling abroad for organ transplants. Violators could face up to 20 years imprisonment with a 1.2 million euro (\$1.35 million) fine.

Falun Dafa Information Center welcomed the gesture from the Austrian parliament, saying that the resolution

has come at "an important moment" in light of China's recent power grab by imposing a national security law for Hong Kong. The new law includes the establishment of a Beijing security agency in the city.

In a June 25 press release in German, the center expressed concerns for the Falun Gong practitioners in Hong Kong, who "may soon fall victim to systematic organ theft."

The disturbing issue has been an ongoing international concern since 2006, when whistleblowers first brought the issue to light.

Last August, the 168-member U.S. Republican National Committee unanimously passed a resolution denouncing the "vile practice." In May, a response to the "organ genocide" was one of 12 recommendations that a Washington watchdog group, the Committee on the Present Danger: China (CPDC), presented to President Donald Trump and the U.S. Congress.

The United States, Canada, The Czech Republic, and Italy are among a growing list of countries that have initiated or adopted measures to curb organ transplant abuses in recent years.



Falun Gong practitioners march from the U.S. Capitol to the Washington Monument commemorating the 20th anniversary of the persecution of Falun Gong in China, in Washington on July 18, 2019.





# Bring Home the Magic of Shen Yun!

