

Hong Kong

'Respect media tycoon's rights'

Hong Kong 'residents' defend the free press

HONG KONG, Aug 11, (AP) - Last year, hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets of Hong Kong to demand full democracy, many egged on by a tabloid newspaper critical of China's ruling Communist Party.

On Tuesday, they lined up at newsstands across the city to buy that same paper, handing over 10 Hong Kong dollars (\$1.25) a copy in a bid to help the Apple Daily - and press freedom - survive.

The public show of support came a day after police rounded up 10 people, including the paper's founder, and raided its headquarters. The move reinforced fears that a new national security law would be used to suppress dissent in Hong Kong after months of anti-government protests shook the city's leadership and the central government in Beijing last year.

Police have expanded their use of the law since it took effect six weeks ago, first arresting protesters with slogans deemed to be in violation and then activists over online posts. Media tycoon Jimmy Lai, the Apple Daily founder, and his Next Digital media group were the largest targets to date.



Lai

That people protested by buying a newspaper rather than by taking to the streets shows how much the climate has changed since the stormy protests last year. People also bought Next Digital stock to show support, driving its price up more than 300% on Tuesday.

The Apple Daily, known for its celebrity coverage as well as its condemnation of China's authoritarian rule, remained defiant, printing 350,000 copies - five times its usual print run - after police investigators left Next Digital and told employees they could go back to work.

Lines formed at newsstands Tuesday in a public show of support, and Apple Daily said it would print an additional 200,000 copies. "Apple Daily will fight on," the newspaper said on its front page.

"I do not like the way Apple Daily reports news but I think it symbolizes press freedom in Hong Kong," Tiffany Chan said after buying a copy at a convenience store. "I cannot just sit and watch the government destroy press freedom. This is the least I can do."

Operator

One newsstand operator said he had sold 200 of his allotment of about 300 papers by late morning. On a typical day, he sells about 100 copies, he said.

Hong Kong, and to a lesser degree Taiwan, have become battlegrounds for the competing world views of China and the United States. The U.S. imposed sanctions on 11 Hong Kong and Chinese officials last week, including city leader Carrie Lam, over the security law. China responded Monday by sanctioning 11 Americans, including six members of Congress.

The Trump administration, which is feuding with China on multiple fronts, sent Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar to Taiwan this week for the highest-level visit by a U.S. official since the United States broke off diplomatic relations to recognize Beijing as the government of China in 1979.

Taiwan Foreign Minister Joseph Wu, meeting Azar on Tuesday, said the self-governing island is fortunate to have U.S. support at a time when "our life has become increasingly difficult as China continues to pressure Taiwan into accepting its political conditions, conditions that will turn Taiwan into the next Hong Kong."

The fate of Hong Kong's 7.5 million residents ultimately lies in the hands of the Communist Party leadership in Beijing.

Worry

"You can't really worry about it, it is what it is," said Anna Yuen, a retiree who said her family could leave if the situation really deteriorates. "But I can't bear to leave Hong Kong. I think Hong Kong people are really admirable, especially the youth."

The fear in Hong Kong, which has its own laws and courts and greater freedoms than mainland China, is that the Communist Party wants to mold the territory over time into a city similar to those on the mainland.

Press freedom is just one characteristic that separates Hong Kong from the rest of China.

"If they crack down on Apple Daily today, they will go down the list of media that do not support the Communist Party or the Hong Kong government, and what will be left is just news that sings the praises of the Communist Party," Chan said.

Meanwhile, France on Monday called for the rights of media tycoon Jimmy Lai to be respected and for freedom of expression to be protected in Hong Kong.

In a statement, the Foreign Ministry said it had been informed of the arrest of Lai, who owns Hong Kong media Apple Daily, and of the search of the newspaper's premises.

Lai's office was searched by hundreds of police and many documents were seized on the basis of China's new National Security Law, which is controversial and has been widely criticized.

"France reaffirms its attachment to respect for freedom of the press and of opinion everywhere in the world (and) calls for Jimmy Lai's rights to be respected," the statement said.

"As the European Union has recalled, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is a central element of the Fundamental Law and of the "one country, two systems" principle," in Hong Kong, which reverted to China's control from Britain in 1997.

Furthermore, long lines of people bought up copies of the Apple Daily paper at Hong Kong newsstands Tuesday to support a free press in the semi-autonomous Chinese territory.

The public support came one day after police arrested the publisher of the pro-democracy paper and raided its premises in the most significant enforcement yet of Hong Kong's new national security law.

"The government is suppressing freedom of the press," said Michael Hung, who bought two copies for 10 Hong Kong dollars (\$1.25) apiece.

At least 200 police descended on the headquarters of Next Digital, which publishes the Apple Daily, and carted away boxes of what they said was evidence a few hours later.

Earlier, owner Jimmy Lai, his two sons and others from the company were detained under the national security law. An aide to Lai said they were suspected of collusion with a foreign power, which the law criminalizes. Police did not release details.

The arrests, along with that of democracy activist Agnes Chow on Monday night, have stoked fears that authorities are using the new law to suppress dissent and free speech.



Protesters denounce the arrest of Hong Kong media tycoon Jimmy Lai during a rally against the National Security Law imposed in Hong Kong near the Chinese Embassy in Seoul, South Korea, Tuesday, Aug. 11, 2020. Hong Kong police arrested Lai and raided the publisher's headquarters Monday in the highest-profile use yet of the new national security law Beijing imposed on the city after protests last year. (AP)

Britain

Migrants crossing in small boats

UK flies air force plane over Channel

LONDON, Aug 11, (AP) - A Royal Air Force surveillance plane flew over the English Channel on Monday as the British government sought to stop a growing number of people making the hazardous crossing from France in small boats.

Britain's Conservative government has talked tough amid a surge in the number of migrants crossing the Channel during recent warm summer weather. More than 650 have arrived so far in August - including 235 in a single day last week - with pregnant women, babies and unaccompanied children among them.

An inflatable dinghy carrying about 20 people was met by a U.K. Border Force boat on Monday and escorted to the port of Dover.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said trying to make the voyage was "a very bad and stupid and dangerous and criminal thing to do."

"Be in no doubt what's going on is the activity of cruel and criminal gangs who are risking the lives of these people taking them across the Channel, a pretty dangerous stretch of water in potentially unseaworthy vessels," Johnson said during a visit to a school near London.

U.K. Home Secretary Priti Patel appointed a former Royal Marine commando, Dan O'Mahoney, as "clandestine Channel threat commander" to try and make unauthorized sea crossings "unviable."

Patel has also said the Royal Navy could be called in to prevent boats reaching U.K. waters, though other senior officials and politicians say that would be impractical and potentially dangerous because small boats could capsize if they are forced back to the French shore.

The Ministry of Defense said it was considering how the military could best help. It said the RAF Atlas aircraft was deployed on Monday "to support Border Force operations in the Channel."

Migrants have long used northern France as a launching point to get to Britain, either in trucks through the Channel tunnel or on ferries. Before the coronavirus pandemic, the U.K.'s strong economy and need for

farm and restaurant labor drew migrants from around the world who could speak some English.

Some have turned to small boats organized by people smugglers because coronavirus lockdowns have reduced opportunities to stow away on ferries and trucks. Fine summer weather is also prompting more people to make the risky journey across one of the world's busiest shipping lanes - about 20 miles (32 kilometers) at its narrowest point - in vessels as small as dinghies and kayaks.

The British and French immigration ministers were due to hold talks in Paris on Tuesday about the Channel crossings, as some British politicians accused France of not doing enough to stop boats leaving shore.

The migrants, and the smugglers who profit off them, have long dogged French politicians, who have failed to find an effective way to deter them.

Routinely

French authorities routinely pick up migrants trying to illegally cross the Channel, most recently on Sunday, when rescuers retrieved 17 migrants from a rubber dinghy in distress off Calais.

Over the past week, French rescuers have picked up 125 migrants from kayaks, rubber boats or other small vessels trying to cross the Channel, according to near-daily statements from the regional maritime authority.

Last month Britain and France agreed to set up a joint intelligence unit to allow for better exchanges of information about people-smuggling networks.

The lawmaker for Calais accused the U.K. government of political grandstanding with talk of sending in the Royal Navy.

"This is a political measure to show some kind of resource to fight against smugglers and illegal crossings in the Channel, but technically speaking that won't change anything," Pierre-Henri Dumont told the BBC.

Human rights groups also criticized the British government's harsh rhetoric and

said asylum-seekers should be given safe routes to reach the U.K.

Lisa Doyle, director of advocacy at Britain's Refugee Council, accused the prime minister of using "inaccurate and inflammatory language."

"Seeking asylum is not a crime, and it is legitimate that people have to cross borders to do so," she said.

Meanwhile, a pair of eyeglasses that are believed to have once belonged to Mohandas Gandhi are being auctioned, decades after the independence leader gave them as an impromptu gift.

The gold-plated, circular-rimmed spectacles are going under the hammer at East Bristol Auctions later this month. Gandhi was known for giving away "his old or unwanted pairs to those in need or those who had helped him," the auctioneers said.

The seller's uncle was working for British Petroleum in South Africa and met Gandhi when the independence leader and champion of non-violent resistance was taking a tour.

Auctioneers compared the custom-shaped nose bridge of the glasses to others known to have belonged to Gandhi in determining their authenticity. The prescription also coincided to that which Gandhi would have worn at the time of the visit.

"It can be presumed that these were gifted by way of thanks from Gandhi for some good deed," the auctioneers said.

It's fair to say that the owner didn't quite realize their value: He put them in the auction house's mail slot where they dangled for a weekend, said auctioneer Andy Stowe.

When Stowe explained to the seller - a man in his 80s - that he would place a guide price of 15,000 pounds (\$19,600) on the item, he could sense the shock.

"The line went very quiet for a moment," Stowe said. "I think he thought I was joking."

The sale date is Aug. 21, but pre-sale bids stand at 50,000 pounds. The auction house has received interest from all over the world, particularly India.



Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson takes part in archery during a visit to the Premier Education Summer Camp at Sacred Heart of Mary Girl's School, Upminster, England, Aug. 10, to see the steps they are taking to be COVID secure ahead of children returning in September. (AP)



Lavrov



Maas

Europe

German FM visits Moscow:

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas is due to visit Moscow on Tuesday for talks with Russian officials on a host of international issues, topped by the Libyan conflict, the foreign ministry said.

A ministry statement, cited by German news agency, added Maas would hold talks with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on the Libyan crisis, Iran, Syrian conflict and Ukraine.

The visit of Maas takes place amidst the conflict in Libya, seven months after the Berlin conference on the crisis in the North African nation as international efforts were underway to cease hostilities and create suitable atmosphere for political negotiations. (KUNA)

Man severs another's hand:

A 22-year-old is under investigation after chopping off another man's hand with a machete at an outdoor recreation area in western Germany, prosecutors said Monday.

Prosecutors in Koblenz said the suspect told authorities he had been chopping firewood in a forested area west of the city on Saturday night when he witnessed a car crash.

According to the suspect, he ran to the car still carrying the machete to see if the driver needed help and that the driver pulled out a gun from the glove box and started firing at him, prosecutors said.

In reaction, he swung the machete at the driver, severing the 21-year-old's left hand. Minutes later, a large vehicle drove up from a nearby grilling area, and two men jumped out and punched the suspect multiple times in the face, prosecutors said the 22-year-old recounted.

The suspect was treated in a hospital for injuries to the face and released after being interrogated, prosecutors said. The investigation is still underway, but prosecutors said they were considering whether he acted out of self-defense.

The man whose hand was severed was treated in a hospital and reported to be in stable condition. (AP)

Missing man's body found:

The body of a man missing after a storm sparked flash floods on

the Greek island of Evia over the weekend was recovered Monday near the Greek mainland, Greece's coast guard said, bringing the death toll from the storm to eight.

Rescue crews had been searching for the 72-year-old since Sunday, after he was reported missing following flooding that swept away cars and sent residents of some villages scrambling to their roofs to await rescue.

The coast guard said the man's body was recovered from the sea off the coast of mainland Greece opposite Evia just after midday Monday.

The dead from the storm and flash floods include an elderly couple found in their flooded home Sunday morning, and an 8-month-old baby found in a

flooded ground-floor apartment.

Parts of Evia saw rainfall that reached 80% of the annual rainfall for the area in the space of a few hours overnight Saturday to Sunday, Greece's meteorological service has said.

A river burst through its banks and flooded part of the village of Politika, forcing many residents to climb to the rooftops of their homes. Another river in the village of Bourtsi also burst its banks.

Authorities estimated that 3,000 residences had been partially or totally damaged by floodwaters and police said many local roads were made impassable. Power and water were also knocked out in some areas.

The flood swept away cars and storage containers, tossing them

into streets and against the walls of buildings. On Monday local authorities, emergency crews and residents cleared debris and piles of mud from streets, homes and stores.

Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis surveyed the affected region by helicopter Monday afternoon, met with local residents and pledged speedy assistance for households and businesses. (AP)

Woman kills self, twin kids:

A German woman appears to have killed her four-year-old twin girls near the Swiss village of Utikon and then committed suicide, Zurich authorities said Monday.

Police said a passer-by found all three in a car in a wooded area near the village, about 10 kilometers (6 miles) west of Zurich at 7:30 a.m.

Rescue crews rushed to the scene but found the 30-year-old and the two girls dead on arrival. Further details were not released and the investigation was ongoing.

Utikon municipality leader Christ Linder told the local Blick newspaper that so far there are no indications the woman had any link to the town. (AP)

Guard conviction dropped:

All appeals against the conviction of a 93-year-old Nazi concentration camp guard have been dropped, a Hamburg court said Monday, making the decision legally binding and easing the way for possible future prosecutions.

Bruno Dey was convicted last month of 5,232 counts of accessory to murder in Hamburg

state court - equal to the number of people believed to have been killed at Stutthof during his service there in 1944 and 1945.

Because he was 17 and 18 at the time of his alleged crimes, Dey's case was heard in juvenile court and he was given a two-year suspended sentence.

Dey was convicted under new legal reasoning that even though there was no evidence linking him to a specific crime, as a camp guard he was guilty of accessory to murders committed while he was there.

The reasoning had been successfully used in the past to convict death camp guards, and the precedent set in 2015 when a federal court upheld the 2015 conviction of former Auschwitz guard Oskar Groening.

Dey's case extended the argument to apply to a guard at a concentration camp - camps where people were killed by the tens of thousands, but that did not exist for the sole purpose of extermination like the Nazi death camps.

His conviction is now considered legally binding, after his attorney and three people who had joined the trial as co-plaintiffs decided to retract their appeals, the Hamburg state court said.

That eases the way for more possible prosecutions of concentration camp guards even though it's 75 years since the end of World War II.

Last month, another former Stutthof guard, aged 95, was charged and the special prosecutors' office that investigates Nazi-era crimes has more than a dozen ongoing investigations. (AP)



People wearing face masks to protect against the spread of the new coronavirus walk in a park in Yokohama near Tokyo, Aug. 10. (AP)