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Twitter deletes over 10,000 accounts that sought to discourage U.S. voting



Inside C2

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Fearing ‘angry mob’, lawyer of freed Christian woman leaves Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (Reuters) - The Pakistani lawyer who helped a Christian woman overturn her death sentence for blasphemy said on Saturday he had left the country in fear of his life after her acquittal earlier this week sparked street protests by Islamists. Leaders of the ultra-Islamist Tehreek-e-Labaik (TLP) group blocked main roads in Pakistan’s biggest cities for three days, calling for the murder of the Supreme Court judges who acquitted Asia Bibi on Wednesday — urging their cooks and servants to kill them. Saiful Mulook had kept a low profile during the years he represented Bibi, a mother-of-five who has been on death row since 2010, due to the highly sensitive nature of the case. Two politicians who had tried to help her have been assassinated. Mulook told Reuters in a WhatsApp message he had gone abroad “just to save (my) life from angry mob” and because of fears for the safety of his family. “I consulted and everybody is of this opinion (that I should leave),” he said, adding that he would return to the country to continue his work on the case if he was given protection by security forces. The TLP called off the protests late on Friday after striking a deal with the government that

would see authorities seek to put Bibi on an ‘exit control list’ barring her from leaving the country. Bibi’s whereabouts are unknown, but Islamists have warned the authorities against taking her out of the country. “There will be a war if they send Asia out of country,” TLP leader Khadim Hussain Rizvi said after the deal was reached. Earlier in the week one of Rizvi’s deputies called for Pakistan’s Chief Justice Saqib Nisar and two other judges who ruled in the case to be murdered. “Whoever, who has got any access to them, kill them before the evening,” TLP co-founder Muhammad Afzal Qadri told supporters. Protests for second day after Christian acquitted of blasphemy in Pakistan The TLP was founded out of a movement supporting a bodyguard who assassinated Punjab provincial governor Salman Taseer after he spoke in Bibi’s defence in 2011. Federal minister for minorities Shahbaz Bhatti was also killed after calling for her release.



FILE PHOTO: Saiful Mulook (L) the lawyer of Christian woman sentenced to death for blasphemy against Islam, leaves after the Court overturned the conviction, in Islamabad

GM wants Trump administration to back national electric vehicle program

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - General Motors Co said on Friday it wants the Trump administration to back a nationwide program to boost sales of zero emission vehicles like electric cars, even as the government has proposed ending California’s ability to require more clean vehicles. GM says a nationwide program modeled on California’s effort could result in 7 million electric vehicles, or EVs, on U.S. roads by 2030. The largest U.S. automaker said the requirements would not apply if “battery cost or infrastructure targets are not practicable within the time frame.” GM product chief Mark Reuss told reporters that governments and industries in Asia and Europe “are working together to enact policies now to hasten the shift to an all-electric future. It’s very simple: America has the opportunity to lead in the technologies of the future.”

A national mandate also would create jobs and reduce fuel consumption, CO2 emissions and “make EVs more affordable,” Reuss added. GM also wants the program to offer incentives for electric autonomous and ride-sharing vehicles. GM has said it plans to offer 20 EVs globally by 2023. The Trump administration in August proposed reversing Obama administration fuel rules and freezing standards at 2020 model year levels through 2026. The administration has proposed barring California from setting its own emissions requirements or requiring more zero emission vehicles. The administration is also considering eliminating all emissions compliance credits that automakers receive for building EVs. Other automakers, including Tesla Inc, did not comment on GM’s proposal. The Trump administration and California officials did not immediately comment but

one environmental group called the GM proposal “a distraction.” Luke Tonachel, director of clean vehicles and fuels at the Natural Resources Defense Council, said automakers should focus on maintaining the Obama era rules that call for hiking fuel efficiency requirements at about 5 percent annually through 2026. Automakers and others have until Friday to file comments on the administration’s proposed emissions revisions. Major automakers say they do not support freezing requirements.

China, U.S., signal trade war detente California wants 15.4 percent of vehicle sales by 2025 to be EVs or other zero emission vehicles. Nine other states, including Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey and New York, have adopted those requirements. In January, California Governor Jerry Brown set a target of 5 million zero-emission vehicles in California by 2030. A nationwide ZEV plan would give automakers more flexibility to meet a single nationwide target, rather than specific state sales requirements, GM said. California Air Resources Board

chief Mary Nichols said last month the state will “continue to insist on cars that produce fewer emissions, including millions more zero-emission vehicles.” The Trump administration criticizes California’s ZEV mandate, saying it requires automakers to spend tens of billions of dollars developing vehicles that most consumers do not want, only to sell them at a loss.



FILE PHOTO: The steering wheel of a Chevrolet Corvette is pictured before the start of the 11th rally Hamburg-Berlin Classic in Bremen

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Twitter deletes over 10,000 accounts that sought to discourage U.S. voting

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Twitter Inc (TWTR.N) deleted more than 10,000 automated accounts posting messages that discouraged people from voting in Tuesday's U.S. election and wrongly appeared to be from Democrats, after the party flagged the misleading tweets to the social media company.

A voting official hands back an early voter his ID in Valdosta, Georgia, U.S., October 24, 2018. REUTERS/Lawrence Bryant
“We took action on relevant accounts and activity on Twitter,” a Twitter spokesman said in an email. The removals took place in late September and early October.

Twitter removed more than 10,000 accounts, according to three sources familiar with the Democrats' effort. The number is modest, considering that Twitter has previously deleted millions of accounts it determined were responsible for spreading misinformation in the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

Yet the removals represent an early win for a fledgling effort by the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, or DCCC, a party group that supports Democrats running for the U.S. House of Representatives.

The DCCC launched the effort this year in response to the party's inability to respond to millions of accounts on Twitter and other social media platforms that spread negative and false information about Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton and other party candidates in 2016, three people familiar with the operation told Reuters.

While the prevalence of misinformation campaigns have so far been modest in the run-up to the Congressional elections on Nov. 6, Democrats are hoping the flagging operation will help them react quickly if there is a flurry of such messages in the coming days.

The Tweets included ones that discouraged Democratic men from voting, saying that would drown out the voice of women, according to two of the sources familiar with the flagging operation.

The DCCC developed its own system for identifying and reporting malicious automated accounts on social media, according to the three party sources.

The system was built in part from publicly available tools known as “Hoaxley” and “Botometer” developed by University of Indiana computer researchers. They allow a user to identify automated accounts, also



A voting official hands back an early voter his ID in Valdosta, Georgia

known as bots, and analyze how they spread information on specific topics.

“We made Hoaxley and Botometer free for anyone to use because people deserve to know what's a bot and what's not,” said Filippo Menczer, professor of informatics and computer science at the University of Indiana.

The Democratic National Committee works with a group of contractors and partners to rapidly identify misinformation campaigns.

They include RoBhat Labs, a firm whose website says it has developed technology capable of detecting bots and identifying political-bias in messages.

The collaboration with RoBhat has already led to the discovery of malicious accounts and posts, which were referred to social media companies and other campaign officials, DNC Chief Technology Officer Raffi Krikorian said in email.



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Editor’s Choice



A man prepares to launch a pumpkin using a giant slingshot in Ottawa



Supporters listen as U.S. President Donald Trump speaks during a campaign rally at the Bozeman Yellowstone International Airport in Belgrade



(L-R) Silver medalist Stanislava Konstantinova, gold medalist Alina Zagitova, both of Russia and bronze medalist Kaori Sakamoto of Japan pose during the victory ceremony for the ladies' competition at the figure skating ISU Helsinki Grand Prix in Helsinki, Finland November 3, 2018. Lehtikuva/ Martti Kainulainen via REUTERS ATTENTION EDITORS - THIS IMAGE WAS PROVIDED



Soccer players of the Bulls soccer team attend the opening ceremony of the Champions LiGay, a gay soccer tournament in Sao Paulo



Soccer players of the Futeboys soccer team attend the opening ceremony of the Champions LiGay, a gay soccer tournament in Sao Paulo



A member of the Futeboys soccer team poses for a photo during the Champions LiGay, a gay soccer tournament in Sao Paulo



Milton, a migrant man, part of a caravan of thousands traveling from Central America en route to the United States, lays injured on the floor after falling from a truck whilst hitchhiking along the highway to Isla from Sayula de Aleman



FILE PHOTO: Humanitarian aid is prepared to be delivered to Syria, in the town of Ramtha

The reception at the Henn na Hotel east of Tokyo is eerily quiet until customers approach the robot dinosaurs manning the front desk. Their sensors detect the motion and they bellow “Welcome.” might be about the weirdest check-in experience possible, but that’s exactly the point at the Henn na (whose name means ‘weird’) chain, which bills itself as offering the world’s first hotels staffed by robots.

The front desk staff are a pair of giant dinosaurs that look like cast members of the Jurassic Park movies, except for the tiny bellboy hats perched on their heads. The robo-dinos process check-ins through a tablet system that also allows customers to choose which language—Japanese, English, Chinese or Korean—they want to use to communicate with the multilingual robots.

The effect is bizarre, with the large dinosaurs gesticulating with their long arms and issuing tinny set phrases. Yukio Nagai, manager at the Henn na Hotel Maihama Tokyo Bay, admits some customers find it slightly unnerving.

“We haven’t quite figured out when exactly the guests want to be served by people, and when it’s okay to be served by robots,” he told AFP.

But for other guests the novelty is the charm: each room is staffed with mini-robots that look a bit like spherical Star Wars droid BB-8, and help guests with everything from changing channels to playing music.



Even the fish are robotic with electric lights on their battery-powered bodies.

Even the fish swimming in the lobby run on batteries, with electric lights in their articulated bodies flickering on and off as they work their way around

Robotel: Japan Hotel Staffed By Robot Dinosaurs – Really!

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor



Dinosaur robots wait to check in customers at the Henn na hotel

giant tanks.

“The dinosaurs looked intriguing, and I thought my son would love it,” said Chigusa Hosoi, who was at the hotel with her three-year-old.

“My son is really happy. There’s an egg-shaped robot inside the room. He was playing with it a lot.”

The first Henn na Hotel opened in Nagasaki in 2015, and was certified the following year by Guinness World Records as the world’s first hotel with robots on its staff.

The travel agency group that operates the chain now runs eight hotels across the country, all with robots on the staff, some of them dinosaurs, but others tak-

ing a more humanoid shape.



The Henn na Hotel in Nagasaki was certified by Guinness World Records as the world’s first hotel with robots on staff. Some humans are also on call to intervene in case of glitches, which customer reviews online suggest are a not infrequent problem at check-in.

But Nagai said relying on robots for everything from front desk duty to cleaning had proved an efficient choice in a country with a shrinking labour market. “It’s becoming difficult to secure enough labour at hotels. To solve that problem, we have robots serving guests.” (Courtesy <https://phys.org/news>)

In Pictures: Japan’s First Robot-Operated Hotel



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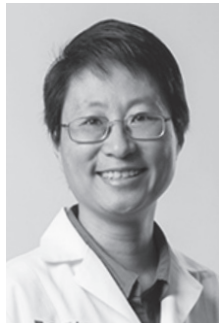


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Meet Dr. Beth Yip



Beth Yip, M.D., F.A.A.P.
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“I consider it a privilege to be allowed to help take care of patients and their families and make a difference in the life of a child. I view myself as a partner with the parents and patient and derive great satisfaction through our interactions. I love working with kids, a simple smile or hug will brighten my day.”

~Beth Yip, M.D., co-managing physician, Pearland Clinic

Dr. Yip is a board-certified pediatrician who completed her medical degree, internship and residency at Baylor College of Medicine. She is a fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics and member of the American Medical Association, Texas Medical Association, Harris County Medical Society and Texas Pediatric Society.

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First mentioned by Chinese President Xi Jinping during a state visit to Kazakhstan five years ago, the Belt and Road Initiative (or BRI) celebrates its birthday this week. Backers of the biggest infrastructure build-out the world has ever witnessed have worked hard at promoting it, although some of their efforts have missed the mark, including a children’s song that was mocked in the Western media this summer. “Everybody let’s make friends,” the kids beg. “Take my hand, and let’s dance all night.” The problem for policymakers is that plenty of people need more convincing to about the Belt and Road, amid criticism that the plan is poorly conceived. Critics of the policy have asked why it needs such a hard sell if it is really such a boon, while others describe it as a ‘debt trap’ designed to deceive its participants. Cancellation of one of the biggest projects in Malaysia last month proved awkward for the anniversary too. But back in China the mood was more bullish, as Xi defended his signature policy at a gathering of African leaders this week, before doubling down on his promises to partner with nations via BRI investments.

Has the BRI been a success?
Unfortunately there’s no straightforward way for tracking how it is progressing. Chinese officials talk mostly about topline investment in the plan and debtor countries don’t disclose their loans in any detail. Chinese lenders, including the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank, have showcased some of the key financings but there’s no authoritative breakdown of how all the capital has been allocated or how the projects are performing.



African delegates walk by a screen panel showing a footage of Chinese President Xi Jinping with Ethiopia’s Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed ahead of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in Beijing, Monday, Sept. 3, 2018. African leaders will likely press their Chinese hosts at a conference this week to help narrow their trade deficits with Beijing by shifting more manufacturing to their continent, the chief executive of the biggest African bank said. (AP Photo/Andy



China celebrated the fifth anniversary of the Belt and Road Initiative this week.

Wong) THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
Unsurprisingly, the propaganda push from media like China Global Television Network, the international incarnation of state broadcaster CCTV, is that things are going even better than expected. “The Belt and Road Initiative is like welcome rain after a long drought,” it ventured last week, before switching metaphors to describe how friends of the programme have been getting a “free ride on the Chinese fast-train”. Railways are a feature in the anniversary coverage, which has tried to talk about some of the outcomes of the initiative, including the 10,000th journey involving freight trains between China and Europe. Other newspapers also talked about the savings in travel time on Belt and Road journeys, courtesy of freshly dug tunnels through the mountains of Uzbekistan, or newly laid track along the Kenyan coast. In loftier prose, the Chinese media has championed BRI as an opportunity for all, with benefits that more than transcend the train timetables. “The BRI focuses on promoting the connectivity of the land, sea, air and the internet,” China’s state television channel enthused in the kind of celebration that makes critics of Belt and Road cringe. “It

Other countries have been celebrating too?
Repayment questions first came to the fore in Sri Lanka, when the Sirisena government reneged on commitments run up by its predecessor. After protracted negotiations, the Chinese swapped some of their loans for equity in the Hambantota port zone. The status of more than \$60 billion in spending on transport and energy projects in Pakistan also looks a little precarious (the so-called China Pakistan Economic Corridor, or CPEC). The central bank there has reserves of less than \$10 billion, or enough for about two months of imports, which raises questions as to how Islamabad is going to meet its financial commitments after borrowing another \$5 billion from the Chinese in the latest fiscal year alone. On similar lines, Myanmar’s finance minister told the press in July that plans for another new port on the Bay of Bengal would be “slimmed down” because his country’s obligations to the Chinese already amounted to about 40% of its external debt (“not recommendable”, the minister suggested). (Courtesy <https://www.weekinchina.com>)

Related

is curing the ills of neo-liberal globalisation, channelling money into the real economy, eliminating the causes of the global financial crisis, and making globalisation work for the broader community.”



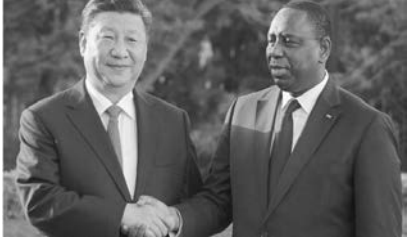
China’s Xi Pledges \$60 Billion in Financing for Africa

Chinese President Xi Jinping has pledged \$60 billion in loans, grants and investment for projects in Africa

BELJING (AP) — Chinese president Xi Jinping on Monday pledged \$60 billion in financing for projects in Africa in the form

of assistance, investment and loans, as China furthers efforts to link the continent’s economic prospects to its own. Speaking to a gathering of African leaders in Beijing, Xi said the figure includes \$15 billion in grants, interest-free loans and concessional loans, \$20 billion in credit lines, \$10 billion for “development financing” and \$5 billion to buy imports from Africa. In addition, he said China will encourage companies to invest at least \$10 billion in Africa over the next three years. China’s outreach to Africa aims to build trade, investment and political ties with a continent often seen as overlooked by the U.S. and other Western nations. That has provided lucrative opportunities for Chinese businesses, while African nations are often happy to accept China’s offers that come without demands for safeguards against corruption, waste and environmental damage. No details were given on specific projects, although Xi said China was planning initiatives in eight areas, including providing \$147 million in emergency food aid, sending 500 agricultural experts to Africa, and providing scholarships, vocational training and trade promotion opportunities. The pledge comes on top of a 2015 promise to provide African countries with \$60 billion in funding that Xi said had either been

delivered or arranged. Also Monday, Xi promoted Beijing’s initiative to build ports and other infrastructure as a tool for “common prosperity” in a world facing challenges from trade protectionism.



Addressing businesspeople prior to the formal opening of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, Xi said the “Belt and Road” initiative will expand markets. He tried to mollify concern that Beijing wants to build strategic influence, promising Chinese investment comes with “no political strings attached.” “Unilateralism and protectionism are on the rise. Economic growth lacks robust drive,” Xi said in a speech. “China-Africa cooperation under the BRI is a way to common prosperity that brings benefits to both our peoples.” African and other Asian leaders have welcomed “Belt and Road” but some projects have prompted complaints about debt and other problems. The initiative involves hundreds of projects, most of them built by Chinese contractors and financed by loans from Chinese state-owned banks, across an arc of 65 countries from the South Pacific through Asia to Africa and the Middle East. In a major blow to China’s ambitions, Malaysia recently canceled Chinese-financed projects worth more than \$20 billion, saying they were unnecessary and would create an unsustainable debt burden. Deeply indebted Pakistan is also reportedly reconsidering some projects in the multi-billion dollar China-Pakistan Economic Corridor that is a key link in the BRI. The Beijing forum brings together leaders from China and more than 50 African countries. Dozens of African leaders met with Xi ahead of the conference. Xi made no mention of the political and debt concerns that overshadow some BRI projects. But Chinese officials previously have rejected accusations that projects leave host countries too deeply indebted to Chinese lenders. “China’s investment in Africa comes with no political strings attached,” Xi said. “China does not interfere in Africa’s internal affairs and does not impose its own will on Africa.” (Courtesy <https://www.usnews.com>)

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