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MARXIST STUDENTS VANISH BEFORE MAY DAY

Six Marxist university students have vanished while spending May Day alongside workers, making them the latest in a series of disappearances and detentions of leftist student activists. The former president of the Peking University Marxist Society, Qiu Zhanxuan, announced on social media that he would go to a job market on the outskirts of Beijing, where thousands of migrant workers gather to find odd jobs. "If doing this kind of manual labor makes me disappear, everyone knows who did it," he wrote. Just before his posts stopped, Qiu posted pictures of six plainclothes police officers following him and the other students. Since August 2018, Marxist students around the country have been detained for supporting worker protests. This latest round of disappearances took place ahead of Xi Jinping's speech commemorating the 100th anniversary of the May 4th student protests. (CNN, May 1, 2019)

VENEZUELA USES CHINESE VEHICLES TO QUASH PROTESTS

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro has deployed eight Chinese-built VN-4 "Rhinoceros" armored personnel carriers against protesters calling for him to resign. Venezuela bought 121 VN-4 armored vehicles from China back in 2012 as part of a \$500 million deal that also included anti-tank missiles, self-propelled mortars, and self-propelled rocket launchers. China has also sold K-8 trainer aircraft, VN-16 light tanks and VN-18 infantry fighting vehicles to Venezuela – which has ranked as its biggest arms customer in Latin America since 2006. China has also sold weapons to Argentina, Bolivia and Ecuador. "China will continue supporting Maduro because he's the legally elected president," said Song Junying of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the unrest would not affect arms sales. Over the past decade, China has loaned \$50 billion to Venezuela, which has been gradually paying off its debt with oil shipments but still owes about \$20 billion to Beijing. (*South China Morning Post*, May 3, 2019)

PAKISTAN ARRESTS CHINESE CITIZENS FOR HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Pakistan's Federal Investigation Agency has arrested at least eight Chinese nationals and four Pakistanis for luring young girls into fake marriages and then forcing them into prostitution in China. In a report this Spring, Human Rights Watch raised the alarm over "bride" trafficking from Pakistan to China and identified a "disturbingly similar pattern of trafficking of 'brides' to China from at least five other Asian countries." In April, a Pakistani news channel gained entry to a matchmaking center in Lahore where poor families marry their daughters off to Chinese nationals in exchange for money and a visa. "China is cooperating with Pakistani law enforcement agencies to crack down on illegal matchmaking centers," China's embassy in Islamabad has declared. Thousands of Southeast Asian women from Myanmar and Vietnam marry Chinese men each year, plugging a gender gap caused by Beijing's one-child policy. (Agence France Presse, May 8, 2019)

CHINA'S DIGITAL SERFS RISE UP

An online protest movement has emerged targeting companies, like Alibaba, that embrace China's tech industry's notorious "996" work culture, in which employees work 9 am to 9 pm, six days per week – a practice that Alibaba founder Jack Ma has defended. The 996 backlash surfaced publicly in April, when a group of programmers launched an online protest against the practice and published a list of companies that encourage long overtime including Baidu and Tencent. (Bloomberg May 1, 2019) 996 violates China's labor laws, which mandate an average of 44 working hours per week. The official People's Daily weighed in, encouraging tech companies to promote greater work-life balance. In 2014, the state-run China Youth Daily estimated that 600,000 people per year died from overwork. (Bloomberg, May 1, 2019; Reuters, May 16, 2019)

SICHUAN TEACHERS PROTEST OVER POOR PAY

More than 200 primary and middle school teachers in Jianyang, Sichuan have protested outside the municipal petition bureau demanding pay raises. "Jianyang's 10,000 teachers have suffered unfair treatment for many years and we are outraged. We are fighting for our legal rights and we want our income to be on a par with that of public servants," their letter said. The income gap between the two groups has grown in Jianyang. A middle school teacher said the protest was triggered by the discovery that the city's public servants will receive a 39,800 yuan bonus this year, while teachers will get just 14,500 yuan. "This bonus gap is bigger and bigger. In 2015, they received a 10,500 yuan bonus and we teachers had only 7,000 yuan." The teacher, who had been teaching for 12 years, was paid just 3400 yuan a month: "Our income is at the bottom of society and we have low social status," he said.

The education bureau's response to the protest was multipronged. First, it ordered school principals to go the protest and bring teachers back to campus. Second, it ordered social media chat groups – which teachers used to organize the protest – be shut down and issued a notice that teachers were banned from distributing "unhealthy" content on social media. Third, the government pledged to investigate teachers' conditions and resolve their problems. (*South China Morning Post*, May 22, 2019)