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## Amnesty International Releases Report on Death Penalty in China

In April, Amnesty released a report on the death penalty in China entitled ‘China’s Deadly Secrets’. In spite of the nearly absolute secrecy over the Chinese death penalty system, Amnesty estimates that in 2016 China carried out more executions than all other countries combined. The Report also objects to the unverifiable claims by the Chinese government that the country has been ‘killing fewer, killing cautiously’ (*shaosha shensha*). To *The Guardian*, Amnesty International East Asia Director Nicholas Bequelin explained that without concrete statistics there is no way to verify such claims, and demanded China to ‘stop being a rogue state in the international community with respect to the death penalty and finally allow the Chinese people to have a proper, informed debate about capital punishment in the country.’ Commenting on the Report for *The New York Times*, Professor Susan Trevaskes, an expert on the death penalty in China, claimed that the number of people executed annually is probably in the ‘low thousands’ and that the Chinese government has significantly reduced the use of capital punishment since the mid-2000s. According to the Report, a partial dataset of cases shows that farmers and the unemployed constitute the majority of people given death sentences. *EN*

(Sources: Amnesty International Global Report; Amnesty International China Report; The Guardian; Quartz; The New York Times)

## Beijing Offers Rewards for Reporting Spies

On 10 April, the Beijing State Security Bureau released a set of Measures on Rewards for Citizens Reporting Leads on Espionage Conduct. These regulations promise informants who report on spies rewards ranging between ten thousand and five hundred thousand yuan, depending on the relevance and usefulness of the information provided. The new regulations have been accompanied by the online publication of a cartoon in which a young boy donning the red scarf of a Communist Young Pioneer reports a bearded foreigner wearing a bandit’s mask. This is not the first sign of an increasing concern with matters of national security among the Chinese leadership. Back in 2013, President Xi Jinping established a new, secretive National Security Commission of the Communist Party of China in an apparently successful attempt to consolidate the political leadership of all the components of a fragmented security apparatus. In November 2014, the Chinese government passed a Counter-espionage Law, followed a few months later by a National Security Law. In November 2015, Jilin province was the first to introduce a hotline for residents to report possible spies. Since the passing of the National Security Law, the Chinese government has declared 15 April ‘National Security Education Day’, i.e. a day for raising public awareness of national security issues. In 2016, the day was marked by the appearance of a sixteen-panel cartoon poster entitled ‘Dangerous Love’ on the public bulletin boards of local governments. This comic told the story of an attractive young Chinese civil servant who meets a redheaded foreign man posing as a visiting scholar and starts a relationship with him, only to find out later that he is a spy. That these concerns remain paramount to the Chinese leadership was also highlighted by the unusually brief round of discussions that preceded the adoption of the new National Intelligence Law—which regulates the activities of state security bodies—on 27 June. *IF*

(Sources: China Law Translate 1; China Law Translate 2; Reuters; The New York Times 1; The New York Times 2; The Paper)

## Salaries of Executives in State-Owned Enterprises Linked to Party-Building Effort

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On 17 April, Premier Li Keqiang told a meeting of top state-owned enterprise (SOE) executives at the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission in Beijing that the government was reconsidering a 2015 policy capping their pay, and promised more competitive rates tied to performance. According to a Xinhua report, executives' pay and other rewards or punishments will be linked to how well individuals carry out 'Party building' work. This is part of the government's attempt to reform SOE management in order to restructure, modernise, and internationalise the state sector. The latest news is seen as an effort to re-establish the role of the Party in China's state industry, and retain loyal and talented managers. Since 2013, President Xi Jinping has been pushing for China's state sector—whose worth is estimated at twenty trillion American dollars—to embrace structural reforms while reining in state sector managers' pay. This year, China is about to restart state-enterprise reform, and ten large state-owned enterprises are set to sell stakes in their units. However, the pace of the reform has been slow, and concern over unrest by laid-off state workers has similarly stalled reforms of state-owned steel and coal enterprises (see **Kevin Lin's chapter** in the *Made in China Yearbook 2016*). *KL*

(Sources: **Bloomberg; Reuters; South China Morning Post; Xinhua News**)

## National Bureau of Statistics Releases Annual Report on Migrant Workers

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At the end of April, China's National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) released its latest annual report on Chinese migrant workers. According to NBS, in 2016 there were 281,710,000 migrants in China—1.5 percent more than the previous year. Chinese workers appear to be increasingly reluctant to migrate far away from their hometowns. In 2016, 112,370,000 workers migrated within the boundaries of their town (*xiangzhen*) of permanent residence—3.4 percent more than the previous year—compared to 169,340,000 who moved away, an increase of barely 0.3 percent. Significantly, 88.2 percent of the new migrant workers did not leave their towns of permanent residence. Inter-provincial migration is also dropping: 76,660,000 workers migrated to another province in 2016, one percent less than the previous year. These trends are influenced both by the rapid development of the inner provinces, and the policies of the Chinese authorities that encourage migrants to start businesses in their hometowns. Other significant trends include: a) an increase in the percentage of female migrants, who constituted 35.5 percent of the total migrant workforce in 2016; b) the progressive aging of migrant workers, with the average age in 2016 being thirty-nine, 0.4 years older than the previous year; and c) an improvement in the educational level, with the percentage of migrant workers holding a high school diploma—seventeen percent—growing by 1.2 percent. Data related to the protection of labour rights are mixed. In 2016, migrants worked an average of 24.9 days a month and 8.5 hours a day, with 64.4 percent working more than eight hours a day, a decrease of 0.4 percent compared to the previous year. The contractualisation rate was 35.1 percent—1.1 percent less than the previous year. 2,369,000 migrant workers were owed back wages—a drop of 14.1 percent compared to 2015. In general, salaries were still on the rise. In 2016, migrant workers received an average of 3,275 yuan—or 203 yuan more than the previous year—a growth rate of 6.6 percent. However, the growth rate for wages slowed by 0.6 percent. *IF*

(Sources: **Caixin; National Bureau of Statistics; Sixth Tone**)

## Fan Yusu Highlights Plight of Domestic Workers

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In late April, Fan Yusu, a forty-four-year-old female migrant worker from Hubei province, was propelled to literary stardom when her essay entitled ‘I am Fan Yusu’ went viral. Fan’s essay recounts a life marked by patriarchy, domestic abuse, and raising children singlehandedly. She details her feelings of isolation, and the challenges she faced living as a domestic migrant worker in Beijing. Fan also reflects on her experiences of exploitation at the hands of employers, and the unequal treatment she has faced as a migrant due to government policies, stressing the need for solidarity between marginalised and exploited people in contemporary China. In the wake of her success, Fan has been offered book deals and media appearances, but has shunned the spotlight, reportedly leaving Beijing and going into hiding until the unwanted attention has subsided. *NL*

(Sources: **China Digital Times**; **Los Angeles Review of Books**; **Sixth Tone**; **The Paper**)

## Liu Xiaobo Released on Medical Parole with Late-stage Cancer

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At the end of June, Nobel Peace Prize laureate Liu Xiaobo—who has been serving an eleven-year jail sentence since 2009 for ‘inciting state subversion’—was released on medical parole to receive treatment for late-stage cancer. Liu was diagnosed on 23 May, and is now being treated in Liaoning province, despite the requests of his family for him to be treated outside China. Liu’s wife Liu Xia—an artist who has been under house arrest since 2010—has said that the cancer is inoperable and untreatable. Liu has been jailed a number of times since the early 1990s for various activities related to human rights and democracy. He was given his current prison sentence due to his involvement in the writing of Charter 08, a document calling for fundamental changes to the governance of China. *NL*

(Sources: **BBC**; **Reuters**; **South China Morning Post**; **The Guardian**; **The New York Times**)

## Updates on Arrests of Lawyers and Activists

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At the end of April, the ordeal of Li Heping, a prominent lawyer who was caught up in the ‘709 crackdown’ against the *weiquan* community that took place in July 2015, came to an end. After being detained for almost two years, Li, who is well known to the international community for his overt rights activism, was convicted of ‘subversion of state power’. In a secret trial, a court in Tianjin sentenced him to three years in prison with a four-year reprieve, meaning that he was to be released but could still be arrested again at any time. The court ruled that since 2008, Li Heping repeatedly used the Internet and foreign media interviews to discredit and attack China’s state power and the legal system. The court also accused Li of accepting foreign funding and employing paid defendants. For many others the ordeal continues. The whereabouts of another lawyer, Wang Quanzhang, remain unknown. Alarming news has also emerged about *weiquan* lawyer Jiang Tianyong, who disappeared in November 2016 in connection with the Xie Yang’s case (see the brief in *Made in China* 1/2017): reports allege that he was tortured in detention. On 26 May, the Chinese authorities formally announced that Lee Ming-cheh, the human rights advocate from Taiwan who had disappeared on arrival to Macau airport in March, was under arrest on a charge of ‘subverting state power’. Finally, on 23 June former migrant worker and blogger Lu Yuyu, who was detained in Yunnan province in June 2016 along with his partner Li Tingyu for his work of meticulously recording details of public protests online (see the brief in *Made in China* 2/2016), stood trial for ‘picking quarrels and provoking troubles’. He faces three to five years in jail. Li Tingyu was tried in April and later released without a verdict. *EN*

(Sources: **BBC**; **Hong Kong Free Press**; **The Guardian**; **The New York Times**; **The Wall Street Journal**; **Weibo**)

## Labour Activists Detained While Investigating Ivanka Trump's Manufacturer

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In late May, Hua Haifeng, Su Heng, and Li Zhao—three labour activists working for the New York-based advocacy group China Labor Watch (CLW)—were detained by the police in Ganzhou, Jiangxi province, while investigating labour conditions at factories making designer shoes for global brands. In particular, they were inspecting a supplier of Ivanka Trump's fashion brand. Earlier in May, CLW had issued an interim report that alleged forced overtime and a monthly salary of two thousand and five hundred yuan in this factory. The three investigators have been charged on suspicion of illegal eavesdropping, and given limited access to lawyers. According to Li Qiang, the organisation's Executive Director, CLW has been conducting investigations in China for seventeen years, but this is the first time that its investigators have been detained. Ivanka Trump's brand has sought to distance itself from its Chinese supplier. On 5 June, Alicia Edwards, a spokeswoman for the US State Department, declared that the American government is concerned by the arrests, and added that the investigations carried out by Chinese labour activists help American companies to understand conditions in their supply chains in order to hold manufacturers accountable. In response, on 6 June Hua Chunying, spokeswoman for the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said that the activists were being investigated on suspicion of using illegal 'professional surveillance equipment.' She added that the case was being dealt with according to the law and that no foreign country had the authority to interfere in China's judicial process. Relatives of the activists have reported being harassed by the public security. On 27 June, the three investigators were released on bail pending trial. *KL*

(Sources: **Associated Press; BBC; Bloomberg; The New York Times; The Paper**)

## Undocumented Chinese Workers Protest in Saipan

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On 22 March, a Chinese construction worker died from a fall at the Imperial Pacific Casino construction site in the American Pacific island of Saipan. Soon after, Federal Bureau of Investigation agents raided the construction site and discovered hundreds of undocumented Chinese construction workers employed by a company named Suzhou Gold Mantis Construction and Decoration. They had been brought to Saipan illegally under a tourist visa programme, after being enticed by the false promises of the labour contractors. In April, United States prosecutors filed criminal charges against individuals connected to the Chinese labour contractors for illegally employing these workers, and the construction projects soon stalled. Investigators also discovered substandard working and living conditions. Out of job since early April, the undocumented workers fought for unpaid wages, staging public protests in front of the casino. On 16 May, over ninety unpaid workers received their salaries and placement fees, and flew back to China. On 1 June, another group of thirty-five Chinese workers staged a protest at the construction site to demand unpaid wages and reimbursement for medical fees for workplace injuries. Again on 22 June, forty-three unpaid workers protested at the same place against unpaid wages. After rejecting an offer of five thousand dollars each from the company, the protesting workers insisted that unless all workers are paid the full wages owed to them, they will not return to China. At the time of publishing, the issue remains unresolved. *KL*

(Sources: **Saipan Tribune 1; Saipan Tribune 2; Saipan Tribune 3; The New York Times; The Paper**)