

Mystery around disappearance of Chinese star Fan Bingbing

By Christopher Bodeen
The Associated Press

BEIJING — *X-Men* star Fan Bingbing's Beijing management office is dark and abandoned. Her birthday passed almost unremarked in China's hyper-adrenalized social-media environment.

For one of China's best known stars and a rising Hollywood actress, Fan's vanishing is stunning, coming amid vague allegations of tax fraud and possibly other infractions that could have put her at odds with Chinese authorities.

Fan has starred in dozens of movies and TV series in China and is best known internationally for her role as Blink in 2014's *X-Men: Days of Future Past*, a cameo in the Chinese version of *Iron Man 3*, and star turns on the red carpet at Cannes as recently as May. She was booked to star with Penelope Cruz in the Hollywood film *355* and has a role in the upcoming Bruce Willis-Adrien Brody feature *Air Strike*.

Yet for nearly three months, Fan hasn't been seen or heard from in public in any verifiable way.

One of China's wealthiest entertainers, Fan pulled down tens of millions of dollars for her roles, along with handsome sums in appearance fees and product endorsements. Some of those contracts may have landed her in hot water with the authorities.

Fan's name has been mentioned in reports about a reportedly common entertainment industry practice — an actor having a public contract stating an official salary and a private contract detailing the true, much higher payday. A talk show host, Cui Yongyuan, had said in May that Fan had such an arrangement — which allegedly helps facilitate tax evasion — and revealed details that sparked a public outcry. Cui later apologized.

At Fan's management office in Beijing's Dongcheng district, the doors are locked, the lights are out, and a calendar hanging alongside posters advertising Fan's film appearances is still turned to July. A worker at an office across the hall said she couldn't remember the last time she'd seen anyone enter the company premises.

Fan turned 37 on September 16, but only



a handful of entertainment notables sent greetings online, a stark break from the past when her birthday celebrations were lavish, well-attended affairs, marked last year by a public marriage proposal from boyfriend Li Chen.

An automatic birthday greeting on her once-active account on Weibo, China's main microblogging service, was apparently deleted by persons unknown.

Shi Shusi, a columnist and commentator on Chinese popular culture, suggests Fan's high profile was her undoing, having made her a target for officials wishing to set an example for would-be tax cheats amid China's slowing economy.

"Such a famous actress and no one knows her whereabouts. And no authorities have made any clarifications. This is the real suspense," Shi said.

Fan's disappearance even brought a message of concern from Hu Xijin, editor of the *Global Times* tabloid known for its hardline pro-Communist Party nationalist opinions.

"A timely clarification and public notification of Fan Bingbing's status would also be beneficial to setting the record straight internationally," Hu wrote on his Weibo account on September 15.

Back in June, Fan's production company denied Fan had ever signed a "yinyang" contract, so named because of its dual natures. Fan, her production company, and her agent could not be reached for

more recent comment. Police rarely acknowledge such investigations are taking place until a conclusion has been reached.

Her disappearance had come as Chinese authorities seek to rein in high salaries for actors that can eat up much of the cost of a production. In June, regulators capped star pay at 40 percent of a TV show's entire production budget and 70 percent of the total paid to all the actors in a film.

Though China has become the world's second-largest film market, authorities keep tight control on local productions, exercising final say over choice of cast, director, and script. If Fan had stepped on official toes, it would be a simple task to retaliate by destroying her career, with Chinese authorities wielding broad powers to detain, interrogate, and accuse citizens out of the public eye.

Other celebrities have run afoul of

TAX TROUBLES. The management office of actor Fan Bingbing is seen in Beijing. Fan, one of China's best known stars and a rising Hollywood star, appears to have truly fallen off the map amid vague allegations of tax shenanigans and possibly other infractions that have put her at odds with China's Communist Party-appointed culture czars. (AP Photo/Mark Schiefelbein)

authorities over drug use, excessive pay, or tax issues, said Shaun Rein, managing director of China Market Research Group based in Shanghai.

"Then the government really cracks down hard and pretty much destroys their careers for several years if not forever," Rein said. Companies that bet big on A-list Chinese celebrities incur a "huge political risk," he said.

Known as a classical Chinese beauty with almond eyes and porcelain skin, Fan usually maintains a prominent presence on Weibo, where she has more than 62 million followers. Her account has been largely dormant for weeks, however, with a July 26 "like" about a posting on her charitable foundation being the last activity prior to the deletion of her birthday notice. Photos on social media also appear to show her visiting a pediatric cardiac ward at a Shanghai hospital for a charity event on July 1.

The strongest clue to Fan's status may have been a September 6 notice posted on the website of the *Securities Daily*, a newspaper published by the official *Economic Daily*. It stated that the local tax bureau had sent a notice to Fan's studio that she had been "placed under control" — a legal term for being held under investigation. The article was later deleted from the website.

Fan's disappearance has already taken
Continued on page 4

PROTECT YOUR FAMILY AND SAVE MONEY



Kelaiah Erickson
(Key-lay or Mrs. Erickson)
Funeral & Cemetery Arrangement Specialist
(971) 407-3243
Kelaiah.Erickson@DignityMemorial.com

Lincoln Memorial Park & Funeral Home
11801 S.E. Mt. Scott Blvd.
Portland, OR 97086





Tu Phan
Branch Manager, NMLS #7916

Call about
refinances & purchases
Offering
FHA/VA/Conventional Mortgages

(503) 780-6872
<tu.phan@fairwaymc.com>
<www.LoansNow.com>

12817 S.E. 93rd Ave.
Clackamas, OR 97015

Copyright ©2018 Fairway Independent Mortgage Corporation, NMLS#2289, 4750 S. Biltmore Lane, Madison, WI 53718, 1-877-699-0353. All rights reserved. Fairway is not affiliated with any government agencies. These materials are not from HUD or FHA and were not approved by HUD or a government agency. This is not an offer to enter into an agreement. Not all customers will qualify. Information, rates and programs are subject to change without notice. All products are subject to credit and property approval. Other restrictions and limitations may apply. Equal Housing Lender.

Need health insurance?

CareOregon's goMobile Team can help you sign up for Oregon Health Plan (OHP) and get doctor appointments.

SNAP assistance available at ALL locations

MULTNOMAH COUNTY

CAREOREGON

315 SW 5th Ave, Portland

Oct 3..... 9-11 a.m.
Oct 10..... 9-11 a.m.
Oct 17..... 9-11 a.m.
Oct 24..... 9-11 a.m.
Oct 31..... 9-11 a.m.

CLACKAMAS SERVICE CENTER

8800 SE 80th Ave, Portland

Oct 9..... 10-12 p.m.

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

50 SW 2nd Ave, Portland

Oct 2..... 9-11 a.m.
Oct 9..... 9-11 a.m.
Oct 16..... 9-11 a.m.
Oct 23..... 9-11 a.m.
Oct 30..... 9-11 a.m.

JOIN

1435 NE 81st Ave, Ste 100, Portland

Oct 11..... 12-2 p.m.

PORTLAND RESCUE MISSION

111 W Burnside, Portland

Oct 11..... 8-10 a.m.
Oct 25..... 8-10 a.m.

UNION GOSPEL MISSION

3 NW 3rd, Portland

Oct 23..... 2-4 p.m.

WORKSOURCE GRESHAM

19421 SE Stark St, Portland

Oct 4..... 2-4 p.m.

WASHINGTON COUNTY

BEAVERTON LIBRARY

12375 SW 5th St, Beaverton

Oct 10..... 1-3 p.m.

COMPASSION CONNECT TUALATIN

20405 SW 95th Ave, Tualatin

Oct 20..... 8 a.m.-3 p.m.


FOREST GROVE FARMERS MARKET

Main St, Forest Grove

Oct 3..... 4-8 p.m.

For information, or to host our team, call Tamara at 503-416-1479 or Caleb at 503-416-4883.

careoregon.org/gomobile

STUNNING PHOTOGRAPHY

WEDDINGS
SENIORS
BABIES
PREGNANCY
PORTRAITS
FUNERALS

LANDIS.PHOTOS@GMAIL.COM
JANLANDISPHOTOGRAPHY.COM
503•317•3759