



**Exposed database shows depth of surveillance state**

BEIJING (AP) — A Chinese database found online was not just a collection of old personal details. It was a compilation of real-time data on more than 2.5 million people in western China, updated constantly with GPS coordinates of their precise whereabouts. Alongside their names, birthdates, and places of employment, there were notes on the places they had most recently visited. The discovery by a Dutch cybersecurity researcher who revealed it on Twitter has given a rare glimpse into China’s extensive surveillance of Xinjiang, a remote region home to an ethnic minority population that is largely Muslim. The database appears to have been recording people’s movements tracked by facial recognition technology, logging more than 6.7 million coordinates in a span of 24 hours.

**Indonesian forest fires highlight president’s campaign gaffe**

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — Indonesia’s disaster agency says deliberately set fires are burning through peatland forests in the province of Riau, just two days after President Joko Widodo incorrectly claimed there’d been no fires for several years. The disaster agency said 843 hectares (3.25 square miles) of land burned in Riau since the beginning of the year and that firefighting teams are currently battling blazes in several locations. Widodo has had to correct claims made in a recent presidential election debate. Local media reported he now says the amount of land affected has fallen dramatically since disastrous fires in 2015 when 2.6 million hectares (10,000 square miles) burned, polluting Indonesia and neighboring countries with a health-damaging haze. Ministry of Environment data shows more than 510,000 hectares (1,969 square miles) of land burned last year.

**Spacecraft touches down on asteroid to get samples**

TOKYO (AP) — A Japanese spacecraft recently touched down on a distant asteroid on a mission to collect material that could provide clues to the origin of the solar system and life on Earth. Workers at the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency control center applauded as a signal sent from space indicated the Hayabusa2 spacecraft had touched down. During a touchdown, Hayabusa2 is programmed to extend a pipe and shoot a pinball-like object into the asteroid to blow up material from beneath the surface. If that succeeds, the craft would then collect samples to eventually be sent back to Earth. Three such touchdowns are planned. Japanese education minister Masahiko Shibayama said the space agency had concluded from its data after the first touchdown that the steps to collect samples were performed successfully. JAXA, as the Japanese space agency is known, has likened the touchdown attempts to trying to land on a baseball mound from the spacecraft’s operating location of 12 miles above the asteroid. The asteroid, named Ryugu after an undersea palace in a Japanese folktale, is about 3,000 feet in diameter and 170 million miles from Earth.

**India suspends key bus service to Pakistani part of Kashmir**

MUZAFFARABAD, Pakistan (AP) — India has halted a key bus service with the Pakistani-controlled part of Kashmir, cutting the only land route linking the divided Himalayan region, Pakistani and Indian officials said. According to a Pakistani official, Shahid Mehmood, Indian authorities suspended the bus service without explanation. The development came amid escalated tensions between Pakistan and India in the wake of a deadly suicide bombing in Kashmir against Indian paramilitary troops. At least 40 Indian soldiers were killed in the attack, which New Delhi blamed on Islamabad. Pakistan condemned the attack but cautioned India against linking it to the bombing without an investigation. The bus service between Muzaffarabad, the capital of Pakistan’s part of Kashmir, and Srinagar, the capital of Indian-controlled Kashmir, was suspended so suddenly that travellers only learned about it when they went to the terminal. Private cars, motorcycles, and other forms of transportation have long been banned. The bus line, launched in 2005, served to reunite families on separate sides of the heavily militarized Line of Control. Angered over the suspension of bus service, dozens of people rallied in Muzaffarabad. Since independence from Britain in 1947, Pakistan and India — both nuclear-armed nations — have fought two of their three wars over Kashmir, which is divided between the two but claimed by each in its entirety.

**China using facial recognition to ID scalpers at hospitals**

BEIJING (AP) — Chinese hospitals are using facial recognition to identify people who sell doctors’ appointments at an illegal markup, the latest application of an emerging technology that is being used in places to tighten Communist Party control over the country’s 1.4 billion people. More than 30 hospitals in Beijing have installed the technology and have already identified more than 2,100 individuals who appear regularly to make appointments, then turn around and sell them to others for a profit, state media said. Chinese public hospitals require patients to line up for appointments on the day they wish to see a doctor, creating a lucrative secondary market for scalpers to sell them better numbers and save on waiting time. China’s markets are rife with counterfeit goods and fraud, and China has been aggressively applying facial recognition technology in everything from distribution of toilet paper by public lavatories to identifying jaywalkers — virtually in real time. It’s among the technologies President Xi Jinping’s government is deploying — also including the processing of big data, buying habits, and genetic sequencing — to increase the party’s store of personal information about individual citizens. Such data is being fed into a system of “social credit” that rewards or penalizes individuals based on their behavior.



**PUPIL PROTECTION.** Students line up for an eyesight test at a primary school in Donglin Township of Huzhou City, Zhejiang province, China, in this September 4, 2018 file photo. An eastern Chinese province plans to ban teachers from assigning homework to be completed on cellphone apps as part of efforts to preserve the eyesight of students. (Xu Yu/Xinhua via AP)

**For the sake of pupils’ pupils, China to ban homework on apps**

BEIJING (AP) — An eastern Chinese province plans to ban teachers from assigning homework to be completed on cellphone apps as part of efforts to preserve the eyesight of students.

Zhejiang province issued a draft regulation in February and is seeking public comment. It is one of several provinces considering such measures.

Along with barring app-based homework assignments, the Zhejiang regulation would limit the use of electronic devices to 30 percent of total teaching time and encourage the issuing of paper homework to be completed by hand.

Soaring rates of nearsightedness are blamed partly on screen usage. While China’s overall rate of myopia is 31 percent, among high school students it stands at 77 percent and among college students 80 percent.

The regulation aims to pull that back to 70 percent among senior high school students, with rates among primary school students targeted at 38 percent and junior high school students at 60 percent.

The regulation would bar primary and middle-school students from bringing electronic devices into classrooms without

permission, restrict amounts of homework assigned, and increase the time for breaks, sports, and extra-curricular activities.

It says no written homework at all should be assigned to 1st and 2nd graders.

Already, national education authorities have issued a proposal to prevent teachers from using the popular WeChat or QQ messaging apps for assigning homework and banned them from asking parents to mark their children’s work. The education ministry also called for only paper homework assignments for primary and middle-school students “in principle.”

Still, mobile devices are unlikely to be abandoned entirely as a means of supplementing classwork. Language apps, especially those for learning English pronunciation, are extremely popular with students, many of whom are more likely to own smartphones than home computers.

Limiting screen time is of particular concern in Asia, where rates of myopia tend to be higher than in Europe and North America. With a level of myopia estimated at 80 percent, the Southeast Asian city state of Singapore is believed to have the highest percentage of nearsighted people.

**Philippines says 136 people have died in measles outbreak**

MANILA, The Philippines (AP) — The Philippine health secretary said 136 people, mostly children, have died of measles and 8,400 others have fallen ill in an outbreak blamed partly on vaccination fears.

A massive immunization drive that started in hard-hit Manila and four provincial regions may contain the outbreak by April, health secretary Francisco Duque III said. President

Rodrigo Duterte warned in a television message of fatal complications and urged children to be immunized.

“No ifs, no buts, no conditions, you just have to bring your children and trust that the vaccines ... will save your children,” Duque said by telephone. “That’s the absolute answer to this outbreak.”

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Bangladesh Taka	83.4
Cambodian Riel	4021.1
China Renminbi	6.7048
Fijian Dollar	2.1
Hong Kong Dollar	7.8483
Indian Rupee	70.898
Indonesian Rupiah	14100
Iranian Rial	42025
Japanese Yen	111.89
Laos New Kip	8581.3
Malaysian Ringgit	4.072
Nepal Rupee	114.11
Pakistani Rupee	138.4
Papua N.G. Kina	3.3745
Philippine Peso	51.867
Russian Ruble	65.888
Saudi Riyal	3.75
Singapore Dollar	1.3548
South Korean Won	1126.2
Sri Lankan Rupee	179.75
Taiwan Dollar	30.83
Thai Baht	31.8
Vietnam Dong	23263