

world

Hong Kong ‘abduction victim’ convicted for misleading police



Howard Lam, accompanied by Democratic Party officials, shows the wounds he said suspected mainland (Courtesy of EJ Insight)

Hong Kong, China

A Hong Kong activist was found guilty yesterday of “misleading police” after a local court decided his claims to have been abducted by mainland Chinese agents and punctured with staples were made up, local media reported.

Howard Lam, 44, a founding member of the city’s largest pro-democracy party, was sentenced to five months in jail and was freed on bail pending an appeal.

Lam claimed in August 2017 that he had been kidnapped from a busy Hong Kong street in broad daylight over his plan to send a signed photo of footballer Lionel Messi to the widow of late Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo.

He held an explosive press conference showing his legs punctured by metal staples and red marks on his stomach.

But acting chief magistrate So Wai-tak concluded Friday that Howard Lam’s story was false and there never was an abduction, local newspaper South China Morning Post reported.

“He had orchestrated the entire incident,” So said.

Police arrested Lam after local news agency FactWire acquired CCTV surveillance footage which they said showed Lam walking in the neighbourhood of Yau Ma Tei after the time of his alleged abduction from that area.

The prosecution said during the trial that not a single person had witnessed the alleged abduction, according to local broadcaster RTHK.

Despite increasing concerns over mainland interference, Hong Kong still enjoys rights and freedoms unseen on the mainland, and it is illegal for mainland agents to operate in the semi-autonomous city.

China does not ask firms to spy on others: premier

AFP | Beijing, China

China will “never” ask its firms to spy on other nations, Premier Li Keqiang said yesterday, amid US warnings that Chinese telecommunications behemoth Huawei poses security risks.

The United States has launched a global campaign to convince Western allies to shut Huawei out of next-generation 5G technology over fears the company could be used by Beijing for espionage.

A law recently enacted by Beijing that obliges Chinese companies to aid the government on national security has added to the concerns.

But Premier Li Keqiang said the government would not ask any company to spy on its behalf.

“There is none of that now, and there never will be (any of



Chinese President Xi Jinping (L) chats with Premier Li Keqiang during the closing session of the National People’s Congress in Beijing’s Great Hall of the People

it) in the future,” Li told journalists at a press briefing marking the end of China’s yearly parliamentary meeting.

“This is not in accordance with Chinese law, and is not

how China does things.”

China’s government voiced support last week for a lawsuit Huawei filed against the United States over legislation preventing American federal agencies from buying its equipment and services.

Washington this week upped the pressure on its European allies to not use the firm, threatening to cut back intelligence cooperation with Germany if it uses Huawei equipment.

Canada arrested Huawei’s chief financial officer, Meng Wanzhou, in December at the behest of the United States over charges of Iranian sanctions violations. Two Canadians, including a former diplomat, have been detained in China in apparent retaliation since then.

Her father is the company’s founder, Ren Zhengfei, a former engineer in the People’s Liberation Army.

Dutch arrest two in 2015 Paris attacks weapons link

The Hague, Netherlands

Dutch police have arrested two men in Amsterdam with suspected links to weapons used in deadly attacks in Paris in 2015 that killed 130 people, prosecutors said yesterday.

“Police arrested two men on Tuesday in Amsterdam in an investigation into the origin of weapons used by Islamic State terrorists in the attacks in Paris in 2015,” a statement said.

The two men, aged 29 and 31, “are suspected of in some way

being involved in the delivery of weapons” to carry out France’s worst terror attacks on November 13 that year.

Armed jihadists gunned down at the Bataclan concert hall and at several bars and restaurants around the French capital and

at the Stade de France stadium.

They used automatic weapons including AK-47 assault rifles and explosives in the attacks.

The Islamic State group, based in Syria and Iraq, claimed responsibility for the attacks, coordinated from Brussels.

George Michael’s artworks sold for £9.2 million

London, United Kingdom

A collection of contemporary art owned by late pop idol George Michael, including works by Damien Hirst and Tracey Emin, has been sold for £9.2 million (10.8m euros, \$12.2m), Christie’s auction house said.

Michael was a keen collector of works by the Young British Art movement and developed friendships with many of the artists, visiting their galleries and studios.

Christie’s billed the sale of more than 200 works as a



British singer George Michael (file)

“once-in-a-lifetime opportunity” for fans of the tradition-defying movement from the 1980s and 1990s.

“The Incomplete Truth”, a 2006 work by Hirst consisting of a dove preserved in formaldehyde, sold for £911,250 -- below its estimated price of

£1.0-1.5 million.

Proceeds of the auction will go towards Michael’s various philanthropic ventures, the auctioneers said.

The singer died of heart and liver problems on December 25, 2016 at the age of 53.

During his career, both with Wham! and later as a solo artist, Michael sold more than 100 million records and had a string of massive hits between 1983 and 1996.

Among his biggest hits were “Wake Me Up Before You Go-Go”, “Last Christmas” and “Faith”.

Stay close to mama!



A polar bear cub and her mother Tonja stay close to the water at their enclosure as the baby is presented to the press after leaving the breeding burrow for the first time at the Tierpark zoo in Berlin. The cub, who does not have a name yet, was born on December 1, 2018.

3 astronauts successfully reach ISS



Members of the International Space Station (ISS) expedition

Baikonur, Kazakhstan

A Russian cosmonaut and two US astronauts arrived yesterday at the International Space Station aboard a Russian Soyuz spacecraft, five months after the failed launch of a rocket carrying two of the passengers.

NASA astronaut Nick Hague and his Russian colleague Alexey Ovchinin, who both survived a dramatically aborted Soyuz launch last year, were joined on the smoothly-executed trip by NASA astronaut Christina Koch.

The rocket blasted off without incident from Russia’s Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan and docked at the ISS less than six hours later, more than 400 kilometers (249 miles) above the Earth at 01:01 GMT, a few minutes ahead of schedule.

Over 2,000 fall ill in Malaysia after toxic waste dumped

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

More than 2,000 people, including many children, have fallen ill after toxic waste was dumped in a Malaysian river and emitted hazardous fumes over a wide area, an official said yesterday.

About 200 schools and nurseries have been closed in the affected area in southern Johor state after a lorry dumped the waste last week. People who

inhaled the fumes suffered from nausea and vomiting, and a handful were left in critical condition.

The number of those needing medical treatment has been slowly rising since the crisis began and on Friday the figure stood at 2,355, including 113 still in hospital, local lawmaker Sahrudin Jamal told AFP.

No one has died.

Prime Minister Mahathir Mo-



Fire and Rescue Department’s Hazmat unit personnel take water samples

hamad visited victims in hospital on Thursday and praised the response of emergency workers. “They have done their job well even though such a case has never occurred (here),” he said, according to official news agency Bernama.

The military has been deployed along with hazardous waste experts, wearing protective suits and masks, to respond to the emergency and clean up the river near the industrial

town of Pasir Gudang.

Local media have reported the waste was a type of oil commonly used to lubricate ship’s engines which emitted methane and benzene fumes. Up to 40 tonnes of the toxic substance is believed to have been tipped into the river.

Three men have been arrested over the dumping of the waste and face up to five years in jail if convicted of breaking environmental protection laws.