

Contrite Metro diners write apology letter



Photo from Metro police's Weibo account shows four foreigners who dined on a Metro train yesterday attend an "education" meeting with police and the Metro operator. [Shanghai Daily]

Four foreigners who set up a table and dined on a Metro Line 11 train last Friday in Shanghai wrote an apology letter yesterday.

The incident sparked an online uproar, with the foreigners accused of displaying bad manners.

The Metro operator and police officers have summoned and talked to the foreigners, whose nationalities and names were not released, about their behavior and they apologized in the office of Shanghai Shentong Metro Group.

Metro police said a total of six foreigners were involved, all of them working for the same company. As two of them were on a business trip, the remaining four attended the meeting, which was held yesterday.

Eating and drinking on the Metro is not illegal but is discouraged in Shanghai. However, setting up a table in the middle of a train carriage could be dangerous as it might block movement of commuters or injure others, which could mean a 50 yuan (US\$7.25) fine, according to the Metro operator.

Police said they did not punish the foreigners because after checking surveillance footage, "the table was small, not as big as it looked in the photo (initially published on the Internet), and there were not many people in the carriage."

Whether to ban eating or drinking on the Metro has long been a controversial subject in many Chinese cities, including Shanghai and Beijing.

In Hong Kong, it is illegal. People there can be fined HK\$2,000 (US\$257) if found eating or drinking on Metro trains or platforms.

Eating and drinking are also banned on Singapore's subway. But there is no such rule in New York.

Guidelines to help fix national healthcare

China will press to strengthen medical partnerships and arrange closer ties between top-tier hospitals and grassroots medical services to provide better health management and care for urban and rural residents.

A set of measures was approved during the State Council's executive meeting on Wednesday, presided over by Premier Li Keqiang.

"The goal for the medical partnerships is to make quality medical care more accessible to the wider public, especially in less-developed areas," Li said. "We've managed to set up nationwide medical insurance coverage and increased medical competence in grassroots medical institutions. The coverage is among the highest in the world. What we mostly need now are medical professionals."

People are demanding more and better healthcare, and the allocation of medical resources is a tough balancing act.

The idea of building partnerships across medical institutions providing different levels of care would help bridge the gap of resources. According to the National Health and Family Planning Commission, by 2016 medical partnerships had been set up in 205 cities across China.

"Currently, high quality medical resources are mostly in big cities. These should further trickle down to lower tiers so that wider demand will be met," Li said. "We must encourage joint partnerships of city level hospitals and grassroots institutions, while imposing expense reimbursements."

Wednesday's meeting yielded new measures.

Administrative fragmentation between regions, fiscal expenses, insurance payouts and human resources will be resolved. More diversified forms of medical partnerships will be encouraged, with top-tier hospitals taking on leading roles. The guidelines encourage an internet-based medical information platform to help better diagnose and prescribe treatments for rural patients.

More will be done to allocate high quality medical resources to wider

regions. To do this, teams of medical professionals will be sent to less developed areas with enhanced sharing of health and medical services.

China will accelerate building a cascaded medical system and will introduce demand-oriented and contract-based family doctors. The government plans to cover all impoverished regions with such services this year while inviting private healthcare institutions to participate.

The guidelines stress better coordination systems and policies in new medical partnerships, allowing a more balanced allocation of resources across different levels of medical centers. The government will encourage diverse forms of payments and performance at grassroots levels will be included in evaluations of medical practitioners, who often can work at any organization within the partnership.

“The government needs to have well-designed, concrete guidelines to build medical consortia, taking local conditions in different regions into consideration,” Li stressed. “Local governments are encouraged to have their own ideas in exploring systematic innovation.”

Wang Chen, president of the China-Japan Friendship Hospital, said strengthening medical partnerships is the best approach available to improve the nation’s health system.

He said medical resources remain limited, fragmented and unevenly distributed. Also medical doctors’ abilities vary.

“As it’s hard and time-consuming to train quality physicians, medical partnerships is the most feasible way to systemize and optimize resources available now,” he said.

Statement by Federica Mogherini and Johannes Hahn on the latest developments in Albania

We regret the parliamentary boycott in Albania and that the opposition has not yet registered to participate in the elections. The political debate should not take place outside, but inside the parliament according to democratic practise. Citizens deserve responsible leadership.

We once again urge all political leaders to act responsibly, with respect for institutions, and pave the way for democratic elections, in line with international standards.

More specifically, the much needed justice reform in Albania has once again

come under attack. We call on all parties to complete the formation of the vetting institutions. Attacking the judicial reform rather than ensuring implementation of vetting, with close monitoring of the International Monitoring Operation, harms Albania's present and future.

We expect that Members of the Parliament will show responsibility, capacity to act within the democratic legitimate institutional framework, and that they stand by the people of Albania, who continue to demand that the vetting is launched and the judiciary eventually reformed, also as a crucial step for the country to join the European Union.

Indian Giant to Expand in Australia

One of the world's largest conglomerates has agreed to expand its operations in Australia, after a visit by the Prime Minister, The Hon. Malcolm Turnbull MP.

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) announced today it will open a new TCS Innovation Lab in Australia, after a one-on-one meeting between Prime Minister Turnbull and the CEO and Managing Director of TCS, Rajesh Gopinathan.

The Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull toured the TCS headquarters in Mumbai yesterday as part of his three day visit to India.

The new facility in Australia will operate as a collaborative space for TCS and its industry partners, employing the best Australian talent, and utilising the company's vast network of expertise in innovation.

It will complement the Turnbull Government's Innovation and Science agenda, delivering crucial investment across a range of sectors, including financial services, aviation and retail.

TCS says it will spend the next six months reviewing suitable locations for the lab.

The facility will enable Australia to benefit from the research being carried out by the company – and the technological breakthroughs being made – at a network of TCS Innovation Labs worldwide.

Currently, there are nine such labs: in the UK (Peterborough), North America (Cincinnati) and India (Pune, Hyderabad, Chennai, Mumbai, Delhi, Bangalore, and Kolkata).

The announcement reflects the Turnbull Government's commitment to invest in science, technology, engineering and mathematics in Australia.

This is an excellent outcome for Australian jobs and innovation.

CEO and Managing Director of Tata Consultancy Services, Rajesh Gopinathan said "TCS has a long history of innovation working with our clients across Australia. I am delighted to take this partnership to a new level in pursuit of Prime Minister Turnbull's Science & Innovation Agenda."

The Tata Group is India's largest conglomerate, and operates across a range of industries including automotive, steel, energy and consumer goods. Some of its brands include Jaguar, Land Rover and Tetley Tea.

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) employs 378 000 people worldwide, including 3000 in Australia. It provides IT services, consulting and business solutions. Its clients include Qantas, Westpac and AGL.

Interview with David Speers, Sky News

DAVID SPEERS:

Prime Minister thanks for talking to Sky News. Now you've said that India is evolving into an economic superpower and that its military and strategic power will come with that. What does that mean for the regional status quo? How do you think India is going to use this power?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well India is committed to the rule of law, it's the world's largest democracy, a very successful democracy. India will be a force for stability in the region. Its values are the same as ours, it believes that international affairs should be governed by international law, disputes where they arise should be settled peacefully and in accordance with –

DAVID SPEERS:

So having a third power in a region – are we talking here along the lines of the power that China and the United States have got in the region? Is that a good thing for Australia?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well the answer is yes. I believe India has, India's values are very deeply ingrained. This is a democracy and, India is an extraordinary, an extraordinary phenomenon. I mean this a nation that hadn't existed as a nation prior to 1947. It's extraordinarily diverse, there are 22 languages, at least 22 languages, 11 scripts. It hasn't had the same history of political unity, for example as China has which goes back, in China's case thousands of years. So the fact that India has been so successful as a nation, as a democracy is an extraordinary achievement in itself.

DAVID SPEERS:

Now, big part of your visit here has been to push the trade agenda. On the free trade agreement negotiations though, as you've acknowledged, the Indian bureaucracy perhaps hasn't been as enthusiastic as you would have liked. What about the Australian bureaucracy though? Do we even have a chief negotiator for the India free trade agreement at the moment?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well the negotiations are being conducted by the, you know the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade –

DAVID SPEERS:

But do they have a chief negotiator?

PRIME MINISTER:

We do and we will be bringing the negotiators back to the table. The critical point here David is that India has a long tradition of protectionism. It would be probably too strong to say it was a closed economy but it was, very big barriers to foreign investment, to foreign trade. So that was its culture. So China, although not a democracy and a communist state opened up to foreign trade and investment much earlier than India did, at least 20 years before, and so that's when I say India is evolving, it is evolving but old habits and attitudes are ingrained. And so what PM Modi and I are doing is making sure that both sides get together, put their respective claims on the table.

Now you see from our point of view, we are an open market already. We have free trade agreements, free access –

DAVID SPEERS:

Which means we probably don't have a lot to offer India? The one thing they do want is greater access to our labour market, for more Indians to be able to come and work in Australia. I understand this has been raised with you by business leaders you've been meeting here. Are you willing to offer anything on that?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well we already have a skills based temporary migration program. As you know, there are many Indians working in Australia on 457 visas or after they've studied, studied at an Australian university – they're entitled, depending on the degree to do, entitled to work for a period. So there's already a lot of Indian temporary skilled workers in Australia –

DAVID SPEERS:

So you're not willing to go beyond what we do already?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well we already provide very substantial access and our temporary migration program is geared to the demands of our economy so we are not putting artificial restraints on it and we're certainly not discriminating but having said that, if a job is able to be done by an Australian it should be done by an Australian. Now that's, that is, every nation is entitled to take that point of view and we certainly do.

DAVID SPEERS:

Now Prime Minister, during this visit you've had to keep up to date on what's been going on with some, well, increasingly concerning international developments. Can I ask you about North Korea firstly? President Donald Trump has tweeted: "North Korea is looking for trouble if China decides to help that would be great, if not we will solve the problem without them, U.S.A."

What do you take that to mean?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well I'll leave that for the American President to –

DAVID SPEERS:

But you're an ally –

PRIME MINISTER:

Expand on –

DAVID SPEERS:

Prime Minister, a strong ally. This is an issue that matters to Australia.

PRIME MINISTER:

It does and the obligation I believe is on China as North Korea's closest ally, as its neighbour, as its most significant economic partner to enforce the UN sanctions and to bring the pressure to bear on North Korea that only China can to ensure that the regime stops this dangerous and reckless conduct-

DAVID SPEERS:

It's not doing that already, China?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well it is not, clearly not doing enough. So the Chinese side would say that they have imposed some sanctions but the reality is that the regime is threatening peace and stability in the region and in the world and so the Chinese are the parties with the greatest leverage over North Korea. That's a fact. So it is vitally important I believe for China to use its influence to ensure North Korea stops this conduct.

DAVID SPEERS:

The other issue is Syria, now going back a week when this chemical weapons attack first happened you called for an independent international investigation but then a few days later when the US launched its missile strike on Syria you were convinced that Assad was responsible. What convinced you?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well basically the intelligence, and I'm not disclosing any secrets here, the Americans made it very public – it is very clear that the chemical attack was undertaken by the Assad regime.

DAVID SPEERS:

So you were shown intelligence?

PRIME MINISTER:

I'm not going to go into what I was shown.

DAVID SPEERS:

No I don't want you to, but you were shown some evidence?

PRIME MINISTER:

It is a matter of – I am not going to go into intelligence that I have been shown but it is –

DAVID SPEERS:

I'm not asking you to do that.

PRIME MINISTER:

A matter of public knowledge, David, that the United States have made it very clear that the, and it is not frankly, it is not seriously contested by anybody that this was an attack undertaken by the Assad regime and the American response was swift and it was just.

DAVID SPEERS:

Well others though are still saying there needs to be an independent investigation. Is that still your view or not?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well I'm sure there will be an investigation and there should be because obviously it's important to know who the individuals were involved, the more we can find out about it the better because individual actors need to be held to account.

DAVID SPEERS:

The point –

PRIME MINISTER:

But it was clear, it is clear the attack was conducted by the Assad regime.

DAVID SPEERS:

The point I am making though is you went from, your initial reaction, we need an investigation to then, coinciding with the missile strikes, saying it is definitely Assad, he's committed a war crime. I am not asking you to tell us what intelligence you might have seen, but there was clear cut evidence you saw?

PRIME MINISTER:

I can say that the matter, I am not going to go into intelligence that I have seen or not seen, I can say to you however, as the US has made public and has been widely acknowledged, this was an attack that was undertaken by the Assad regime and the American response was appropriate, it was just and it was swift.

DAVID SPEERS:

Now what has it achieved, that missile strike?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well it has served to send a very clear message to the Assad regime that the United States will not tolerate the Assad regime using chemical weapons against its own people, in breach of international law, in breach of its own undertakings, in fact, as you know, to dispose of its chemical weapons stockpile. Also, at a more tactical level, it has prevented that airfield being used, or the aeroplanes and the infrastructure of that airfield being used to deliver chemical weapons again. It sends a very strong message but it was very carefully calibrated. You see, the balance here is providing the strong response, the calibrated response that sends the message, prevents a repeat, but obviously then invites all parties to, as the President said, reach a resolution.

DAVID SPEERS:

The reality is Syria continues, and even from that airfield, continues to use conventional weapons to bomb its own people. Putin hasn't shifted his position on, his support for Assad either. I mean, it hasn't really changed the game in Syria much has it?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well, that is what you assert. Time will tell. This is a very complex, some would say, almost an intractable political and military conflict in Syria,

but a solution has to be found. It has defied a solution for too long, too many people have died in Syria. And it is up to the nations of the world, as the President said, civilised nations of the world to reach a resolution to ensure a resolution is reached in Syria. This has gone on for too long.

DAVID SPEERS:

And you've said this week it can't include Bashar al-Assad, the political solution. Have you given much thought to who should be in power?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well, David, the answer, let me make two points here. Bashar al-Assad's conduct, brutal conduct was one of the factors that started the conflict in the first place, right? So his continued oppression of his people, this chemical attack, surely disqualifies him from any role in a political settlement, this is both a moral statement and a practical statement. I'm echoing what has been said by the American Administration.

DAVID SPEERS:

So if not him?

PRIME MINISTER:

Having said that there are various parties, various interest groups, ethnic groups, religious groups in Syria. It's a very complex environment and clearly in any settlement everybody will need to feel that they are being represented or acknowledged in the outcome so that is why it's a very complex problem.

DAVID SPEERS:

Finally, you're heading back home to a few weeks in lead up to the budget. I know you don't want to get into too much pre-budget speculation.

PRIME MINISTER:

No I don't want to get into any actually.

DAVID SPEERS:

But, as you know –

PRIME MINISTER:

It is your melancholy duty to invite me to engage in it.

DAVID SPEERS:

Correct. In fact, there is quite a debate going on amongst your own colleagues, forget us journalists, about the idea of not raiding superannuation but diverting contributions to superannuation into some sort of account to build up a first home deposit. You had previously said

'thoroughly bad idea'. Has your position changed?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well I'm not going to, as I said earlier when I was invited to comment on this, I'm not going to get involved in pre-budget speculation. It is less than a month away and it is, all of these issues are very important. I would just make one observation on housing and again I've said it many dozens of times before – housing affordability, or the unaffordability of housing, particularly for new home buyers is a major challenge especially in our two biggest cities, Sydney and Melbourne, where there's been really strong house price inflation, growth in house prices. This has been a consequence of there being inadequate supply. This demand, we've had strong population growth, strong demand but at the same time we haven't had enough dwellings being built over a long period of time. This is not an issue that has come up over the last year. So what is happening is you are seeing more supply coming on and that is very good but there is a lot to catch up. But, believe me, I mean the Governor of the Reserve Bank, Phil Lowe said this the other day – the fundamental reason why housing prices have shot up so much in Sydney and Melbourne but less so in the rest of Australia, in fact in some markets they've actually gone the other way, has been because of this imbalance between supply and demand.

DAVID SPEERS:

And letting people use their superannuation deposits to buy a house, that might have the adverse impact some suspect?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well this is all part of the pre-budget debate and I'm watching it all but as far as what is going to be in the budget that is a matter for budget night.

DAVID SPEERS:

But on principle itself, superannuation should be locked up for retirement – do you agree with that in principle?

PRIME MINISTER:

The purpose of superannuation is to provide for retirement, that's the objective, the legislative objective of superannuation is to provide for retirement that's the whole purpose of it and that's the way the whole system is set up in the first place.

DAVID SPEERS:

Good system?

PRIME MINISTER:

I believe yes it is. Particularly since the reforms we made last year, it has become, the super system has become, its fairer, its more flexible and I

think the reforms we made last year, I know they were controversial in some quarters but they have made a very significant improvement in the availability of super, particularly for women and for people on lower incomes and people who have had disruptive periods of employment, but also, it's a very important part of ensuring Australians when they retire have the resources to have a dignified and comfortable retirement.

DAVID SPEERS:

Prime Minister, thank you for your time. Safe travels home.

PRIME MINISTER:

Thank you very much.

[ENDS]