

Rural boy commits suicide due to father's blame

A new tomb without a tombstone chills the festive air of a family in Yanxi Village, Zhenxiong Town, Yunnan Province. The family lost a son to suicide on the Eve of Spring Festival, which fell on Jan. 27 this year.



Xiao Bao's father collects his son's effects. [Photo:China Youth Daily]

The boy was named Xiao Bao (pseudonym), a [left-behind child](#) growing up with his paternal grandparents in the village while his parents worked odd jobs in Kunming, the capital of Yunnan Province.

In his last words, Bao claimed, "I was still young and I didn't want to die, but I can't handle the complaints. Dad, you must be happy when I die. It is you rather than anyone else to be blamed for my death."

In a dilapidated house, Bao's grandmother couldn't help shedding tears when talking about the tragedy of her eldest grandson, who was raised up by her and her husband since he was one year old.

Despite his rare opportunities to be reunited with his parents, Bao never ignored his responsibilities at the family farm.

His grandparents never imagined that their eldest grandson would have swallowed pesticide to end his life.

The two recalled that after dinner on that particular day, Bao shut himself

alone in his room, where the ceiling is spotted with cobwebs. Later in the night, his grandma heard him vomiting. When she opened the door she was shocked by a strong smell of pesticides – the boy had drunk down half a bottle of dichlorvos.

The grandparents, who tried to send the agonized boy to hospital, were only informed by the doctor through a phone call that it was too late.

Some villagers later recalled that they had spotted Bao buying pesticides and even two chicken legs.

The IFS offers more gloom

The IFS tells us in their latest forecasts that we can look forward to more years of tax rises and spending cuts. They expect the UK economy to slow this year, and slow again next year. They are out of touch with the mood to banish austerity and go for growth.

They are more pessimistic about the Eurozone than about the UK. They have lowered their 2017 growth forecast to 1.5% for the Euro area, whilst proposing 1.6% for the UK. They run one scenario which looks at what weak European banks and Brexit could do to their forecast – an unusual pairing with no explanation of why they are lumped together or the relative contributions to their extra gloom on this basis.

They do confess that there are “increasing chances that the forecasts may be too pessimistic”. They accept that the UK consumer carried on spending post the referendum when most forecasters said they would not. They admit that business investment rose a little faster after the vote, instead of falling off the cliff as in many forecasts. They agree that trade which had performed disappointingly last year might add a bit to our economy in 2017.

They confess that “real levels of day to day public service spending have actually fallen very little overall in the last three years”. If they checked the Red Book figures they would see the cash growth in overall public spending actually rose faster than inflation over that time period. They now think removing the deficit should be the priority, which leads them to conclude political parties have to offer some combination of higher taxes and lower spending.

Politically it is much more attractive to square the circle with more growth. More growth brings in more tax revenue without tax rate rises. It cuts the costs of benefits as people move from no pay to low pay, and from low pay to better pay. The issue before us should be what more can we do to promote growth.

I do not accept that growth will be as low as they say in 2017 or 2018. That

still makes me keen to find more measures which can promote more growth. A tax rate cutting budget could help, especially if we cut those tax rates that are damaging the revenue collected. Spending enough on social care and health is a cross party priority, and we have to accept these services will continue to need more cash in the future. Investing more when long term interest rates are still so low should make sense, though the state needs to show commonsense over projects chosen and where possible harness the private sector to ensure a proper profit test on the project.

Haiti: Peacekeeping chief points to changes in mandate of UN mission

10 February 2017 – While the security situation in Haiti is not perfect, solid progress has been made over the past few years, the head of United Nations peacekeeping operations has said, stressing that the Organization is considering a change in the mandate of the UN Stabilization Mission in the island nation, known as MINUSTAH.

Wrapping up a week-long visit during which he attended the swearing in of the new Haitian President, Jovenel Moïse, and carried out an out an evaluation of Mission, Hervé Ladsous, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, told reporters yesterday in Port-au-Prince: “The military component of MINUSTAH is likely to disappear in the relatively near future. We are looking at the modalities.”

At the heart of the Mission’s work is ensuring stability, he continued, noting that the recent elections had gone off with few incidents, thanks to MINUSTAH and particularly the Haitian National Police, and the Provision Electoral Council. “I think this is something to be noted,” he said.

He recalled that in October 2016, when the UN Security Council renewed MINUSTAH’s mandate, it had expressed its wish to examine the mandate of the Mission in mid-April. The Secretary-General is to make recommendations to the Security Council on 15 March.

“I think that when we look at the situation in this country compared to what it was a few years ago, we have made a lot of progress,” Ladsous said. “Security is not perfect, but I think it is much better.”

Mr. Ladsous went on to note that the regular strength of the Haitian National Police is set to reach 15,000 and that efforts will continue to strengthen the capacities of this police.

Somalia: UN Security Council urges sustained momentum towards democratic governance

10 February 2017 – Welcoming political and security progress in Somalia since 2012, including the recently concluded elections in the country, the United Nations Security Council today highlighted the need to maintain the momentum towards democratic governance in the African nation.

In a Presidential Statement adopted today, the 15-member Council also hailed the increased representation of women in the Upper House and the House of the People and underscored the important contribution of women to Somalia's peacebuilding and State-building processes.

The UN body responsible for matters concerning international peace and security also congratulated President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed 'Farmajo' and paid tribute to former President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud for his service and commended the swift and gracious transfer of power in Somalia.

The new President, known as 'Farmajo,' was declared the winner on Wednesday after two rounds of voting by the Somali Parliament in the capital, Mogadishu. The runner-up, incumbent President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, chose to withdraw from a third and final round.

It also underscored the importance of timely and transparent appointment of ministers and the cabinet, in consultation with the Somali Parliament, and called on the Parliament and all federal and provincial leaders to cooperate fully with the Federal Government in driving forward reform and addressing immediate priorities without delay.

The Security Council further emphasized the need to accelerate agreement between the federal and regional authorities on a federal security sector architecture as well as the importance of good faith cooperation between the authorities to speed up the country's peacebuilding and State-building process.

It also called on the international community and Somalia's partners to step up their support to efforts to build and strengthen the country's national institutions, governance structures and socio-economic infrastructure.

The Council further urged the Federal Government to promote a comprehensive reconciliation process that brings about local, regional, and national cohesion and integration in a climate of respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and to establish an effective federal political system.

Also in the statement, the Council recognized that the coming months would be an important

period for Somalia, and said that it would follow progress closely, and reaffirmed its support for peace, stability and development in Somalia.

In Turkey, UN chief Guterres spotlights collective responsibility for refugee protection

10 February 2017 – Underscoring the enormity of the plight of refugees, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres today appealed for effective burden-sharing in supporting those who have been forced to flee their homes, as well as to those providing them refuge.

“This is a moment to launch an appeal when we see so many borders being closed and when we see so many escaping their responsibilities [...] for effective burden-sharing and to make sure that the integrity of the international refugee protection regime is maintained,” Mr. Guterres said at a press encounter in Istanbul alongside Binali Yildirim, the Turkish Prime Minister.

“One area is [supporting] the countries of first asylum, support to the host communities, support to projects that can help [...] both refugee populations and the host communities,” he explained.

“The second area of burden-sharing is the resettlement of refugees [...] because the protection of refugees is not only the responsibility of neighbouring States of a crisis; it is a collective responsibility of the international community,” added Mr. Guterres.

The UN chief, on his first official visit to the region, also thanked the Turkish Government and people for their large humanitarian support to Syrian people as well as to those from other parts of the world.

In particular, he expressed his appreciation for the role of Turkey in convening and orienting the Astana conference on Syria and that it would lead to the Geneva talks in which the political solution dimension will be at the centre of the discussions.

“The role that Turkey has played has been, in our opinion, extremely positive and we are very grateful and very appreciative for that fact,” he said.

Mr. Guterres also thanked Turkey for its role in convening of the Astana

Conference and said: "It is now very important to have in Geneva discussions that go to the substance of the issues and allow for a political solution to start [being] built."

Recalling the country's contributions to the international multilateral system, he noted that Turkey is one of the guarantor powers in the UN-supported Conference for Cyprus for the unity of Cyprus, and expressed hope that the efforts of the two communities that go on meeting at the highest level and the efforts of the guarantor powers will allow for a breakthrough in the near future.

"A breakthrough able to fully respect the concerns of the Turkish Cypriot community about its security but, at the same time, compatible with the concerns of the Greek Cypriot community," added the Secretary-General, pledging the support of the UN to the two communities and the guarantor powers to support the search for a solution that is acceptable for all.

The UN chief also noted the importance of political solutions in which people feel "duly represented at the political level" for successfully fighting terrorism.

Secretary-General Guterres also said there is no "plan B" but for the two-state solution for the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and underscored: "It is absolutely essential to avoid unilateral actions that undermine the possibility of that two-state solution."

He also noted that his discussions in Istanbul included the situation in Iraq, Libya and Afghanistan as well as the importance of rule of law and protection of human rights.