

Pregnant looking Amur Leopard confirmed as fat male



The pregnant looking rare Amur leopard in northeast China's Heilongjiang Province [Photo/Chinanews.com]

Excitement over sightings of what was thought to be a pregnant rare Amur leopard has been dashed after it was revealed the animal was a male that had eaten too much.

The overweight leopard was spotted in a Siberian tiger national nature reserve in northeast China's Heilongjiang Province, according to experts from the Longjiang Forest Industry, quoted by Chinanews.com on Saturday.

Rangers in the reserve filmed the leopard, with a big belly which almost touched the ground, and conjectured whether it was pregnant.

But closer inspection of the video by experts at the wildlife research institute in Heilongjiang province revealed the patterns on the back of the leopard appeared similar to those of a male found in September, 2014 in the same area.

The researchers confirmed the leopards were one and the same, and the male leopard's "pregnant" appearance was simply down to eating too much.

"It's not hard to believe," said Zhou Shaochun, associate researcher at the wildlife research institute in Heilongjiang province. "In the winter of 2016, there were 2.6 roe deer and 3.2 wild boars in every kilometer, which means food was densely distributed. So, leopards eating too much is not hard to understand."

The abundance of wildlife in the national nature reserve in Heilongjiang province has brought joy and hope to staff members. In 2016, Siberian tigers were spotted on five occasions and wild Amur leopards 17 times by cameras. It later turned out that there were four individual Amur leopards and 6

individual Siberian tigers.

Fu Jingfeng, director of the Suiyang Forest Industry Bureau, said that the healthy condition of tigers and leopards are the result of concerted efforts by the whole of society. He said a reduction in tree cutting in the forest had encouraged the breeding of roe deer and wild boars, which provided stable living conditions for leopards which are at the top of the food chain.

The Amur leopard is listed as Critically Endangered on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List. Data published by the World Wildlife Fund indicates that there are roughly 70 adult Amur leopards in the wild today.

Business rates

The media have been running two popular causes in recent days. The campaigners want the government to spend more on social care. Campaigners also want no business rate rises in places where property prices have risen. This highlights the perpetual tension. How do you raise enough money for good purposes without overtaxing the people and businesses which generate so much of the national income?

Taxing work and enterprise is never a popular idea, nor helpful to promoting growth. It is a necessary evil as the country wants to have decent public services. The skill is how do you raise enough from those who earn the money without doing too much damage to enterprise?

The decision to tax business property is commonplace around the world. The political difficulty in the UK comes from the need for periodic revaluations of properties. In the areas where these have risen a lot businesses face large increases in rates bills. In the areas where values have gone down other businesses benefit but are not so vocal about the changes.

Is this a good system for taxing business? If you did not raise business rates, how would you replace the revenue?

I favour setting income and profits tax rates that people and business will pay and can pay, to avoid too much damage to incentives and to keep business and enterprise at home. I have no problem with the principle of business rates but would be interested in comments on the current levels.

5.7-km bridge to connect artificial islet



The rendering of the multi-functional bridge [Photo: CCTV]

Construction started Saturday on a multi-functional bridge that will connect China's southernmost province of Hainan to a nearby man-made islet.

The bridge will be 27.5 meters wide and 5,666 meters long, spanning over sea north of the provincial capital Haikou to link to the Ruyi Islet, a tourism project still under construction, according to the 2nd Engineering Company of the China Railway 18th Bureau Group, a major contractor of the bridge.

The bridge will have six main functions: road, a tramway, and being a corridor for water, electricity, natural gas and optical fiber.

The sea under the bridge has an average depth of 10 to 15 meters, and the construction could be challenged by strong wind, thick fog and tides, according to the company.

He Changsong, project manager at the company, said the bridge was designed to resist super typhoons and earthquakes of more than magnitude 8.

The sail-shaped bridge is scheduled to be completed in the first half of 2019.

China starts developing 256-slice CT scanner

China on Saturday launched a program to develop its own 256-slice Computerized Tomography (CT) scanner to gain a footing in the manufacturing of advanced medical imaging equipment.

The program is led by MinFound Medical Systems Co. Ltd (MinFound), based in Zhejiang Province, and joined by nine other entities including research institutes and hospitals. The program also receives a funding support of 50 million yuan (7.35 million U.S. dollars) from the state.

MinFound's CEO Jiang Haochuan said the latest scanner, compared with its older generation products, is faster and smarter, produces better images, and emits less radiation.

With a single rotation of its gantry, the device can produce clear images of any human organ, he said. It can, for example, help cardiologists make better diagnosis with high quality images of the heart and its arteries.

China's current 256-slice CT scanners are all pricy imports. Industry insiders say once the home-made equivalent hits the market, it will become more available to patients in need and cut their medical bills.

Tsinghua University rejects foreign student admission criticism

Tsinghua University has denied suggestions the university's new system of admission for international applicants has made it easier for foreign students to get a chance to study in the university, reports People's Daily.

A heated debate was triggered after media reported that an updated procedure had been adopted for the university's international student recruitment.

According to the new rules regarding undergraduate programs, applicants will be admitted by Tsinghua University if he or she passes two hurdles: the 'Online Application' and a 'Comprehensive Evaluation', which includes an 'Application Review' and 'Interview'.

Outstanding applicants recognized by Tsinghua University may have the interview waived and get an offer directly.

One of the main differences from the previous year's rules is that applicants

don't have to take academic tests.

Some critics say this has made it much easier for foreigners to get into Tsinghua University, especially those who are originally Chinese.

In response, the university has said the new rules do not lower standards for international applicants.

Applicants are required to provide a National/Regional Graduation Examination/Matriculation Examination Certificate.

If applicants don't have that certificate, they have to provide the GPA and/or the academic ranking certification from their high school.

Applicants should also have passed HSK Level 5 or above, scoring over 60 points in each subject.

For those applicants who have only reached HSK Level 4, they will have to attain Level 5 or above in each subject, scoring over 60 points within the first academic year at Tsinghua University. Students who do not achieve this will have to leave the university.

For those who have given up their original Chinese citizenship and have become foreign citizens, the applicant should have lived overseas for at least 2 years out four, before April 30th in the year they are admitted by Tsinghua University.

In addition, Tsinghua University stresses that it will offer admission to around 3,300 undergraduates from the Chinese mainland this year. The number of international undergraduates will be almost the same as in previous years. The number of domestic students won't be affected by international student recruitment.

Around 39 majors in 19 schools at Tsinghua University are open to international applicants at the undergraduate level.

Currently, around 286 international undergraduates are studying at the university.