

Central China province reports new H7N9 case

Central China's Hunan Province has reported another human H7N9 avian flu case, bringing the total number of infections in the province to 19 this year, including five fatalities.

The male patient, 37, was diagnosed in Changsha City, the province's capital. He had contact with poultry before falling ill and is in a critical condition, according to the Health and Family Planning Commission of Hunan province.

The public are advised to avoid direct contact with poultry and wear masks when symptoms such as headache, fever, coughing and chest congestion appear.

H7N9 is a bird flu strain first reported to have infected humans in China in March 2013. It is most likely to strike in winter and spring.

The Malta declaration on migrants

There are two main problems with the EU's decisions on migrants at Malta.

The first is the EU has effectively shifted the responsibility to stem the rapid flow of migrants across the Mediterranean to the Government of National Accord in Libya. This government is struggling to exert its control over Libya, which remains a deeply divided country with a rival government in Tobruk and areas of the country under tribal and rebel control. No doubt it will welcome the money promised to strengthen its coastguard and for related purposes, but can it spend it nationally to achieve the EU's aims? Will it be tempted to spend it for other purposes related to its own difficult position?

The second is the request for a policy to return people who have already arrived in the EU following illegal migration. How are they going to do this? Why do they bring people in to the EU in the first place if they want to take them back to countries like Libya? Will it be legal to require people to leave? What will they do if they refuse?

It is difficult to believe this statement will work to stop the flow. It is also difficult to see how it squares with the EU vision of itself as a home to welcome migrants as outlined by Mrs Merkel last year. How does this differ from Mr Trump's wish cut numbers crossing the Mexican frontier?

People returning to work may battle post-holiday blues

Yang Guang, a 31-year-old game developer, took his bride to the Maldives and Hong Kong for a monthlong honeymoon four years ago. When he returned, Yang hardly remembered how to build his 3D characters.

"I was thrilled at first. Almost a month doing no job at all," Yang recalled. "But going back to work from that, I found myself completely lost. It took me a month to pull myself together."

Experts in modern society have developed a term for what Yang went through — "post-holiday syndrome". It describes the little blues and, in some cases, depressions one tends to feel after spending a period of time away from work. Some get anxious, some find it hard to concentrate, others just cannot fall asleep.

People all over the world seem to have problems dealing with such downs. They start to search for articles like "how to cope with post-holiday syndrome" after major holidays like Christmas, New Year, and in China, the Spring Festival.

Zuo Lin, a Beijing-based psychotherapist specializing in treating depression with group therapy, said there is no easy cure.

"For some, the cause can be simple. For others, it might have a more profound root," Zuo said, adding that the Spring Festival may remind people of past trauma and sometimes make it worse. In her 40s, Zuo was forced by her parents-in-law to give birth to a second baby.

"But I don't want it. I have my plans for my work. It might not qualify as a career, but I still treasure it," Zuo said. She had to talk to her professional peers to get these negative feelings off her chest.

Yuan Shengchen, 25, was bored sitting at his desk on Friday, the first business day after the weeklong Spring Festival, during which he drove around Beijing's suburbs.

Working for a State-owned publishing house headquartered in the capital, Yuan's job is fairly detail-oriented and attention-consuming—he has to remember all 88 editors' individual requirements and convey them precisely to four printing houses, and make sure the latter turn over the work on time.

Yuan said a vacation, even a short one, can greatly blur his memory.

"I never have any 'mornings' on vacation. My days always start after noon," Yuan said. Yet on a workday, like this Friday, he had to get out of bed

before 6 am. His office is in Chaoyangmen, close to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, while he lives in Shangdi, the very northern part of the city.

Yuan basically did nothing that day, as his contacts at the printing houses were still on vacation. He was lingering in the office, sat for a while, then stood up for a quick walk.

“The first day is always slow. I’m counting down to five o’clock.”

Baby names with Chinese characteristics



Names reflect a nation’s changing cultural trend. [Shanghai Daily]

New-born babies bring joy, of course, but also troubles with how to name them. Names matter, Chinese agree, and that is why parents go to great lengths to devise auspicious and fitting names for their children.

“It is better to teach your children a craft, than to give them a thousand pieces of gold; it is better to give them a good name than to teach them a craft,” said an advertisement for 99qumingzi.com, a popular website providing naming services for new parents.

Decades ago, Chinese parents cared less about names.

"Probably because their parents did not go to school, some used numeral or 'dog' as given names," says Hu Weining, head of household registration in the Honggutan New District of Nanchang, capital of eastern China's Jiangxi Province. Her team, part of the city police, deals with registration documents for new babies, and she has worked there for 20 years.

She says that in the last two decades better-educated parents have started to care about names and even pay for names for their children.

According to Chinese custom, names that have been used by elder people in the family cannot be used for babies. Young parent do not like their children to share their names with others.

"Uniqueness is the new standard. Many people use complex Chinese characters to differentiate from others," Hu says.

Trying to avoid repeating someone else's name is a difficult task. Since January 1, 2016, China relaxed its one-child policy to allow all married couples to have two children.

Last year, millions of babies were born, and how to name them became a sweet headache.

"It can't be tacky, or strange. It should sound nice, but first and foremost it must be different from others," says Wang Chunhua, a 30-year-old mother who gave birth to a boy in November last year. Her older daughter is seven.

Wang spent weeks going through Chinese dictionaries, looking for a proper and nice enough name for her son. She consulted with her husband and her relatives, and asked them to vote. Finally, she said: "Let's name him Yuxuan (having an imposing appearance), nice meaning, and not common around me."

As it turns out, according to a December report by Qimingtong, a naming service company, in cooperation with Tsinghua University, Yuxuan is a common name. It ranked fourth as the most common names for boys in 2015, according to the report based on the data of 5.4 million babies born that year.

New trend

"Names reflect a nation's changing cultural trend," Hu says.

Thirty years ago, babies were given names like Wei (greatness), Aiguo (patriotism) or Xiuli (gently beautiful), now Chenxi (sun rays) and Haoran (righteousness) are more popular.

In 2015, 4,034 new babies were born in Honggutan, where Hu works. From January to November 2016, there were 4,695 newborns, up 16.38 percent year on year.

Some police districts in China have developed computer systems for registrants to search whether a name has been used and by how many people.

Hu's department does not offer such services, but she gives her advice.

"I have repeatedly told parents not to use extremely uncommon characters. Such names are unscannable in banking or social security systems," she says.

Zhang Ruxin, who led the report on names, says people used to have only one Chinese character as a given name, but two-character names were now preferred, mainly to avoid duplicates.

According to the report, 299,025 people, about the population of Iceland, are called Zhang (surname) Wei (given name), the most-used name. The second-ranking Wang Wei is shared by 290,619 people.

Younger parents are more influenced by pop culture, including romance novels and popular TV series. Zixuan, a name which probably has roots in heroines and heroes of TV series, is remarkably overused. It comes in different Chinese characters.

"My boy Zixuan was admitted to the hospital, and there happened to be four Zixuans in the same ward," a mother said.

In Tibet Autonomous Region, repetition of names is also being shunned. Doje Drolma, a college student from Tibet, said several of her friends had longer names, like Tenzingendenlesh.

In Tibet, babies are often named by high monks, living-Buddhas or the elderly in their families.

Good business

With the second-child boom, business has been good for naming services companies. Duan Lingang, 58, a self-professed name expert based in Jiangxi, founded his business five years ago.

"Back then, there were no orders for months," he says.

Duan improved his proficiency after learning from a master in "I Ching," or "Book of Changes," in Beijing. He charges 600 yuan (US\$92) for a name, and writes up to 24 options for parents to select from.

"My reputation spreads through word of mouth. Now I get two to three orders every week," he says.

Duan calculates the baby's five elements – metal, wood, water, fire and earth – from the date and time of birth, before giving names accordingly.

"A baby's name can make up for the element he or she lacks from birth, bringing good fortune," he says.

Names matter so much that Chinese parents are not settled with buying only Chinese names; they are also buying English names.

Beau Rose Jessup, from Britain, established the website Specialname.cn to

give new Chinese babies English names. The website claims it has given names to 295,379 babies.

"The English name you give your children will change their future," the website proclaims.

Classic library restored to its former glory



Restoration of the former Shanghai Library in Yangpu District has been completed. [Shanghai Daily]

Restoration of the former Shanghai Library in Yangpu District has been completed.

Officials said yesterday that expansion work would continue to realize the original vision of its architect Dong Dayou (1899-1973).

The exterior of the 80-year-old library on Heishan Road was damaged by decades of weathering and has now been cleaned and repainted.

The yellow glazed tiles on the roof were restored in Yixing in neighboring Jiangsu Province where they were originally manufactured, an official with the district culture bureau said.

Experts have also renovated the iron gate at the library's main hall, known as "the peacock gate" due to its elegant patterns.

The paintings on the ceiling of the 156-square-meter hall have also been restored, helped by finding details of the works in a hidden cabinet in the library.

The paintings on many 1-square-meter panels have traditional Chinese double happiness and lucky symbols as well as intricate corner designs, said Ma Lili, the lead restorer.

A further expansion work will extend the 3,900-square-meter library to 15,000 square meters, following the original design charts created by Dong, who studied at the University of Minnesota and Cornell University. Dong was also renowned for his works on an earlier Shanghai city hall in 1931 and many Spanish-style houses on Wukang Road.

Upon its completion, the restored and expanded building in the Jiangwan area will serve as the Yangpu District Library with about 650,000 book and seating for 650 people.

"If the expansion goes smoothly, the new library will open to public by the end of the year," an official with the culture bureau told Shanghai Daily yesterday.

It will serve the 1.24 million residents of the district and include an exhibition hall on the history of the library.

The library was built by the then Kuomintang government in 1930s as part of the "Greater Shanghai Plan" to bring the city government and major facilities to the area. It was expected to form part of a new city center along with government buildings, a museum, a stadium, a hospital and TV and radio stations.

The Jiangwan Stadium is still in use today.

However, construction on the library was suspended in 1935 with the start of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression. Although only partially built, it still opened, before closing a year later.

In its heyday, the library had more than 20,000 books, including 1,300 foreign titles. Most were lost during the war.

After the war, the library was used to detain Japanese prisoners of war. It was then converted into a military headquarters by the Kuomintang government in 1946. Traffic police were later based in the building.

It also served as the school library and dormitory of Tongji Middle School until 2000. Then it lay empty until renovation work started three years ago.