

China approves clinical trial of albumin from rice

China's food and drug authority has approved a clinical trial of human blood protein yielded from transgenic rice seeds, which could lead to large-scale production of much-needed plasma.

Human serum albumin is widely used in surgery. A Chinese research team led by Yang Daichang, an expert on China's national "Thousand Talent" program, has researched using rice seeds to produce human serum albumin for 12 years.

Wuhan Healthgen Biotechnology Corp. for Human Health, a private Chinese firm that specializes in developing and marketing innovative animal-free products for pharmaceutical use, has invested 200 million yuan (29 million U.S. dollars) to support the research.

The company, based in the Wuhan National Bio-Industrial Base in Wuhan, capital of central China's Hubei Province, is eyeing large-scale production of human serum albumin from rice.

With the drug trial approval, the albumin will be put into clinical use in August, and it can be expected to hit the market in four to five years.

There is a huge shortage of human serum albumin in China, estimated at 100 tonnes a year, and 60 percent of the country's yearly demand of 420 tonnes relies on imports.

Safety is also a concern with plasma from human donors as blood diseases such as HIV/AIDS and hepatitis still pose a threat.

Yang's team transplanted human serum albumin into rice seeds. As the seeds grow, they continue to generate the protein, which has been tested to have purity of 99.9999 percent and a productivity rate of 10 grams per kilogram of rice grain.

The Center for Drug Evaluation under China Food and Drug Administration said that rice-extracted human blood protein is "safe and effective," and its quality can be easily controlled.

CPC leadership stressed in philosophy, social sciences

The Communist Party of China (CPC) has pledged to enhance its leadership in

developing philosophy and social sciences with Chinese characteristics.

CPC organizations at various levels should put such studies on their agendas, lead and guide them, according to a guideline issued by the CPC Central Committee, which was made public Tuesday.

Noting that Marxism will remain the guiding theory in philosophy and social sciences in China, it called for more efforts in pushing for the sinicization, modernization and popularization of Marxism, and developing a Marxism that fits into the 21st century and contemporary China.

It also highlighted the study of the Party's new theories developed since the 18th CPC National Congress in 2012 and the application of them in academic research.

The academic system of philosophy and social sciences with Chinese characteristics should combine the achievements of the country's traditional culture with foreign theories and innovate in knowledge, theories and methods, said the guideline.

Reforms on fund allocation and human resources were also proposed in the document.

Senior CPC official calls for studying Xi's speeches

Senior leader of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Liu Yunshan has underscored the importance of studying speeches made by President Xi Jinping.

Liu, who is president of the Party School of the CPC Central Committee, made the comment during the opening ceremony for the second group of students at the school's 2017 spring semester Tuesday.

Chief officials and leading cadres should take the lead in studying Xi's speeches and mastering Marxist standpoints to raise political awareness and improve governing ability, Liu said.

Speeches delivered by Xi, also general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, are the latest achievements in adapting Marxism to Chinese conditions, Liu stressed, asking officials to unite closely around the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi as the core.

Liu also urged officials to reaffirm their faith, represent the interests of the people, be realistic and pragmatic and make bold innovations.

He said that the speeches contain the essence of Marxism, the wisdom rooted in traditional Chinese culture and the Party's innovation and creative

thoughts since the 18th CPC National Congress in 2012.

The Party School trains existing and potential CPC or government officials.

Taiwan's visitor arrivals drop for first time in 13 years

A total of 2.54 million visitors came to Taiwan from January to March this year, 9.99 percent lower than the same period last year, data from the island's transport bureau said Tuesday.

It is the first time in 13 years visitor arrivals have registered a drop in Taiwan.

Of the 2.54 million visitors, about 667,000 were tourists, which fell over 15 percent in the first quarter.

A total of 659,575 visitors came from the Chinese mainland, which dropped 42 percent from the same period last year. Visitors from Hong Kong and Macao fell 25 percent to 342,270 while the number of Japanese visitors also dropped slightly by 0.11 percent from January to March.

Taiwan's visitor arrivals surpassed 10 million for the first time in 2015, thanks to a continued rise in the number of Chinese mainland visitors since the island opened up to mainland travelers in 2008.

However, the number of mainland tourists has plummeted since Taiwan's leader, Tsai Ing-wen, who has refused to recognize the 1992 Consensus, took office in May last year.

In 2016, the number of Chinese mainland tourists to Taiwan slipped 14.4 percent to 3.61 million, the first drop in eight years, data from the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council showed.

China intensifies crack down on telecom, online fraud

China has been strengthening its forces for combatting telecom and Internet fraud, with 32 provincial anti-fraud centers and 206 city-level anti-fraud centers having been established, according to the Ministry of Public Security

(MPS).

Chinese police solved 83,000 cases of telecom and Internet fraud in 2016, up 49.6 percent year on year.

The ministry noted that the number of cases has dropped significantly since last September.

The increase in telecom and Internet fraud has been contained, according to the MPS. The economic losses caused by telecom and Internet fraud in 2016 decreased by 10.9 percent from 2015.

According to the ministry, Chinese police have successfully stopped 1.55 million bank transfers to fraudulent accounts with a total amount of 5 billion yuan (around 730 million U.S. dollars) since banks and police began cooperation.