

2 new H7N9 cases reported in central China

Two new cases of H7N9 infection were reported from March 31 to April 6 in central China's Hunan Province, health authorities said Saturday.

Live poultry trading has been suspended in the provincial capital Changsha since March 17, which will last until the end of April.

Nationwide, 79 people died in January from the virus, according to the National Health and Family Planning Commission.

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

Disease control and prevention experts have said that the H7N9 virus is not transmitted from person to person.

Experts recommend that people avoid contact with dead and live poultry, and only buy poultry with quarantine certificates.

Govt cuts budget on overseas trips, vehicles, receptions

The central government has continued to cut its annual budget for overseas trips, vehicles and receptions this year.

Central government departments will spend a maximum of 6.15 billion yuan (891 million U.S. dollars) on the "three public consumptions" in 2017, down 31 million yuan from 2016, according to the Ministry of Finance (MOF).

Expenses on overseas visits will reach no more than 1.88 billion yuan, while 3.5 billion yuan was budgeted for the purchase and maintenance of government vehicles and 761 million yuan for official receptions.

The MOF said the 2017 budget will give a priority to funding important overseas visits, reception of foreign guests, as well as participation in international meetings.

In addition, central departments will need to replace their vehicles with greener cars in line with Beijing's policy on emission reduction, the MOF said.

China has long been bedeviled by officials using their expenses accounts to

travel in the name of official visits, use work vehicles on personal errands, and enjoy luxurious receptions and accommodation.

However, the frugality campaign launched by central authorities is driving down the expenses in a bid to build a cleaner and more transparent government.

Thunderstorms to hit central, southeast China

Thunderstorms and heavy rains are forecast to hit parts of central and southeast China in the next 24 hours, the national observatory warned Saturday.

From Saturday evening to Sunday evening, parts of Hubei, Anhui, Hunan, Jiangxi, Zhejiang and Fujian provinces will be lashed by thunderstorms, wild winds or hailstones, according to the National Meteorological Center (NMC).

The center issued a blue alert, the lowest in a four-tier warning system, for severe convective weather for the above-mentioned regions, predicting precipitation of 20 to 40 millimeters per hour, or even 50 millimeters per hour, in some areas.

The NMC cautioned that local governments should take emergency measures against thunderstorms, strong wind and potential disasters, including mountain floods and landslides.

China has a four-tier color-coded weather warning system, with red representing the most severe warning, followed by orange, yellow and blue.

Beijing to launch medical reform



A pharmacy [File photo: Chinanews.com]

Beijing is to officially launch medical reforms on Saturday, separating hospital services from drug sales.

The overall price of drugs is expected to fall as the reform requires all public medical institutions in Beijing to do away with the 15 percent markup on drug prices.

All the cost of 435 medical services can be reimbursed from the medical insurance, except those otherwise provided by the state.

The reform also requires hospitals to bring in medical affairs fees to replace registration, diagnosis and treatment fees.

The director of Beijing Municipal Commission of Health and Family Planning, Fang Laiying, outlined the new mechanism.

"The medical affairs fee is a kind of compensation for the cost of medical activities at a hospital. The medical affairs service fees vary. For example, the starting fee is 20 yuan for a community hospital, with a patient paying 1 yuan and medical insurance paying the rest. For Class III hospitals, the starting fee is 50 yuan, with a patient to pay 10 yuan and their medical insurance to pay the rest," said Fang.

Fang added that the move aims to give Class III hospitals more strength to treat difficult and complicated cases.

The reforms will be implemented among more than 3,600 hospitals.

It is part of the country's efforts to end the practice of hospitals supplementing their income through drug sales, while guaranteeing that medical personnel get recognition for the value of their skills and services.

Tibet reports first H7N9 case

A human infection of H7N9 bird flu has been reported in southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region, the local health authority said Saturday.

The patient, a 41-year-old migrant worker from neighboring Sichuan Province, was diagnosed on April 3 and is in quarantine at Tibet's Third People's Hospital in Lhasa, the regional health and family planning commission said on its website.

The man had been involved in the trade of live poultry since arriving in Lhasa in February.

His symptoms were reported to the regional disease prevention and control center on April 2, and his condition was confirmed on April 3. He is the first human infection of H7N9 bird flu in Tibet.

Following the diagnosis, live poultry trading has been suspended across the region. All those who had been in close contact with the patient are under medical observation.

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