

China unveils top names for Mars spacecraft

China has released a short list of eight names for the country's first Mars spacecraft, which is scheduled to launch by 2020.

The eight names— "Fenghuang" (phoenix), "Tianwen" (questions for heaven), "Huoxing" (Mars), "Tenglong" (soaring dragon), "Qilin" (Kylin), "Zhuque" (rose finch), "Zhuimeng" (chasing dreams) and "Fengxiang" (flying phoenix), were the top names chosen from over 14,500 choices submitted through more than 35,900 proposals entered by people worldwide.

China plans to launch its first Mars spacecraft by 2020, which will orbit, land and explore the Red Planet.

Proposals were accepted from August last year.

The eight names were selected via a jury review and online polls.

The final choice will be announced around Space Day, April 24, according to a moon probe and space program center under the State Administration of Science, Technology and Industry for National Defence, which solicited the proposals.

China launches emergency measures over missing boat in Malaysia



File photo shows the port in Kota Kinabalu (KK). [Photo/Xinhua]

The China National Tourism Administration (CNTA) on Sunday activated emergency measures after a boat carrying mainly Chinese tourists was reported to have gone missing in Malaysia.

An emergency team led by a deputy chief of the administration has been set up to deal with the incident, according to a CNTA statement.

The administration is checking the information of the tourists, and the staff in its Singapore office are preparing to search the area where the boat went missing, the statement said.

A boat carrying 31 people, among them more than 20 tourists from China, lost contact with marine authorities after it left a port in Kota Kinabalu (KK) in the eastern Malaysian state of Sabah to Pulau Mengalum, a popular tourist island 60 km west of KK, on Saturday, the Consulate General of China in KK said Sunday.

It is not clear yet what caused the disappearance of the boat, but an official from the Chinese consulate said there was unfavorable weather condition Saturday.

[Beijing parks receive 180,000 tourists on Spring Festival](#)

Beijing's 11 municipal parks and the Museum of Chinese Garden and Landscape Architecture received a total of 180,000 tourists on Saturday, the first day

of the Lunar New Year, or Spring Festival.

During the Spring Festival public holiday, a string of events and activities, such as winter sports and flower exhibitions, are being held across Beijing's parks. Many Beijingers have said that visiting parks is on their holiday "must do" list.

Taoranting Park reported 40,000 visitors, while the Temple of Heaven Park and the Summer Palace saw 30,000 tourists each, according to the Beijing parks office.

Spring Festival is the most important festival in China.

Heavy snow disrupts traffic in NE China

Heavy snow has disrupted traffic in northeast China's Liaoning Province, local authorities said Sunday.

The snowstorm started Saturday afternoon, the first day of the Lunar New Year or Spring Festival, and continued Sunday.

As of 9 a.m., 18 expressways in the province, including the section that links neighboring Jilin Province and part of the Beijing-Harbin Expressway, are either closed or restricted, according to the provincial department of transportation.

Most highway coach stations in Liaoning are also closed as a result of the snow.

The local meteorological station forecast snow to continue in most parts of Liaoning throughout Sunday.

Foreign volunteers help make Chunyun easier



Rachel (1st L) from Britain performs the Monkey King with young volunteers during a break at the East Railway Station of Hangzhou, capital of east China's Zhejiang Province, Jan. 23, 2017. Five foreign volunteers worked at the railway station to offer help to passengers who rush home for family reunion during the Spring Festival. (Xinhua/Wang Dingchang)

This Spring Festival, a group of foreigners volunteered to give something back to China as a gesture of thanks for what China has done for them.

Yu Zhongyan, was among about 80,000 passengers that will use Wuhan railway station each day during the Spring Festival travel rush, or Chunyun, this year.

She was deeply touched when the volunteers offered to help her with her bags.

"They made our holiday special this year," said the granny with her grandson in arms.

Wuhan, the capital city of the central province of Hubei, is one of the country's busiest railway hubs. This year 28 foreign students from 15 countries, wearing yellow hats and orange vests, were on hand to help passengers.

Thursday is Bassim Mohammed Dahash Aljizani's last day in Wuhan. He earned his doctorate at Huazhong University of Science and Technology.

Together with his wife and three sons, the man had five suitcases and a buggy. Sadi Makangila Patrick from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Agil Mubariz from Azerbaijan hurried to help.

Aljizani told Xinhua that he will take the train to Guangzhou, before flying back to Baghdad. "I have been in Wuhan for four years and I really don't want to leave, but my country needs me," he said.

"It is great experience to see people off at the station," said Areen Muhammed, a student from Iraq. "The work is tiring. But when I see the smiles, I feel so happy."

"China's government provides us scholarship for our study here," said another volunteer from Sri Lanka. "China helped me, and in return, I would like to do something for the people here." [Yuan Gaoping, an official with Wuhan railway bureau, said that by working in the station, the volunteers could experience Chunyun, and experience Chinese culture and the development of its railway firsthand.

Yu Zhongyan asked Patrick to pose for a photo together, before bidding farewell to the foreign "uncle." "Thank you," said the boy, while Yu waved, "Happy New Year."