

Beijing reports one H7N9 case

Beijing on Saturday reported a human H7N9 avian flu case, the first human infection in the capital city in 2017, authorities said.

The patient, surnamed Zhang, is a 68-year-old man from Langfang City of neighboring Hebei Province. He is in a critical condition and is receiving treatment.

Zhang developed syndromes on Jan. 29 and received treatment in a local hospital in Langfang. He was transferred to Beijing on Feb. 6 as his condition deteriorated. Zhang was confirmed to have been infected by the H7N9 strain of avian flu on Saturday. He is suspected to have had contact with live poultry.

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

Migrants' ID card renewal now easier

Domestic migrants who have lost or need to renew their identification cards can now apply for a replacement in localities other than where their "hukou" (household registration) is registered.

The Ministry of Public Security on Saturday said public security departments nationwide have issued nearly five million new identification cards under this new rule.

The reform has made the process much more convenient, according to the ministry.

With rapid economic and social development, China's rural migrant worker population continues to grow. Official statistics released last April put the number at more than 277 million in 2015, up 1.3 percent from the previous year.

The 15th meeting of the Central Leading Group for Deepening Overall Reform in August 2015 adopted a document that committed the country to cutting red tape, which included the ID card renewal measure.

Chinese soldier returns home after 54 years in India

At around 6 p.m. Saturday, Wang Qi set his feet on his homeland again in Xi'an, capital of northwest China's Shaanxi Province, after spending 54 years in a life drift in India.

"I'm finally home!" a sobbing Wang hugged his tearful brothers and sisters at Xi'an Xianyang International Airport.

Wang, a Chinese soldier, got lost in a forest on the China-India border in 1963. He was rescued by India's Red Cross Society and later handed over to Indian military. The military sentenced him in jail for seven years after regarding him as an "espionage."

Wang settled and married in a rural area in India after serving his sentence, but he always wanted to go home. During the past years, Wang sent many letters to his family members in Xuezhainan Village in Shaanxi's Qianxian County, expressing his homesickness and the desire to go back.

To help Wang return home, the Chinese embassy in India made every effort to get him an exit permit. In 2013, he received a Chinese passport and financial support from the government, which made it possible for him to return.

In Wang's home village, groups of people lined outside the house of Wang's younger brother Wang Shun on Saturday, which happens to be China's Lantern Festival, a day that traditionally represents reunion.

"After all these years, he is finally coming back," Wang Shun said as he prepared a quilt for Wang Qi. "We bought the furniture in this room many years ago."

"He has not changed much, I can still recognize him," said local villager Wang Ming. "All of us in the village have been waiting for his return, and we are just happy that he made it."

Copycat terracotta warriors spur discussions

Copycat terracotta warriors in east China have fueled hot discussions after pictures of the army replica recently surfaced on the Internet.

The replica, located in a theme park in Taihu County, Anhui Province, boasts

up to 1,000 warriors. Pictures on the park's official website show the warriors standing in line, and on one side of the army stands a statue of China's first emperor Qinshihuang, waving his hand.

According to the website, the park was completed in 2008, and the warriors have been open to visitors ever since.

The original terracotta warriors are located in Xi'an City, capital of northwest China's Shaanxi Province. The relics were first discovered by farmers underneath a pomegranate orchard in Xi'an in 1974.

The images of the copycat army fueled a heated discussion on the Internet, with many questioning whether the display of the Anhui warriors is an act of infringement.

Authorities with the Emperor Qinshihuang's Mausoleum Site Museum, which manages the Xi'an terracotta warriors, apparently caught wind of the replica and have issued a statement on its website.

The museum said that any act of using the museum's name and its registered trademarks without authorization is an act of infringement.

"The museum did not permit or give authorization to the displaying of the copycat terracotta warriors in Taihu County of Anhui Province," said the statement. "We reserve the right to take legal action against any violators in accordance with law."

"The replicated warriors pose unfair competition," said Yan Yuxin, a lawyer for the museum. "We have sent a lawyer's letter to them."

Yang Ming, a law professor with Peking University, said that the key is to find out whether the Anhui organizers have advertised their replica as the genuine one. "If they did promote it as a replica, then it is a debatable issue."

On the Anhui park's official website, an introduction to the warriors said that "the replica of the terracotta warriors is intended to let the public feel the culture of the Qin Dynasty."

Liu Simin, deputy head of the tourism branch of China Society for Futures Studies, said that such copycat behavior is not worth promoting.

"Making such replicas is disrespectful to the original ones," Liu said. "Related departments should come up with ways to handle infringing behavior, which are still rampant in China."

The hopes, concerns around Lantern Festival

Are you curious about the Chinese Lantern Festival? Do you have a vague idea and would like to know more? Archeologists and craftsmen could help shine some light on this yearly event.

A 1,400-year-old fragment of silk, about the size of a piece of A4 paper, depicts lanterns hanging on trees. Surrounding the trees are rams and chickens.

This scene is all about the Lantern Festival, confirmed Adliabulizi, a research fellow with Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region Museum.

“Chicken and rams are homophones for the Chinese characters for auspiciousness,” he said. “This shows that people were celebrating Lantern Festival back then.”

The fabric was found in the Astana Ancient Tombs in Turpan, Xinjiang, in the 1970s. The tombs are 2km north of the ruins of an ancient city called Gaochang, which was active from the 1st Century B.C. to the 13th Century A.D. The tombs were the final resting place of officials and ordinary people of different ethnic groups in Gaochang.

Traditionally, Chinese make lanterns and rice balls, which represent reunion, on Lantern Festival, the first full moon of a new lunar year, which falls on Feb.11 this year.

Cao Zhenrong, 73, has been making festive lanterns since he was four. This year is the Year of the Rooster, and Cao has made almost 2,000 chicken-shaped lanterns.

It used to take three days to complete all of the 30 plus steps needed to finish just one lantern, as split bamboo and paper were the usual materials. Today wire is used.

“Not many of the younger generation are interested in lantern making,” said Cao. “There were more than 200 lantern workshops in Nanjing in the 1960s. Only 20 remain today.”

Cao is hoping to innovate the craft so that it does not die out.

“I cannot just make lotus lanterns all the time, so I have experimented with silk and electricity,” he said.

Lantern Festival marks the end of the Spring Festival celebrations. Duan Xujian insists on staying at home until Lantern Festival even though his company reopened on Feb. 3.

“This is how the Spring Festival holiday should end,” said Duan, 28, from

Nanyu Village, Qinyuan County in north China's Shanxi Province.

He was one of 400 villagers who featured in a group photograph, taken Saturday morning. It was the first time the village has ever come together to have their photograph taken, according to 69-year-old villager Liu Guangming.

Aside from lion dances, rural folk performances, and lantern shows, villagers in Nanyu have prepared a zigzag pathway with wood sticks. All the villagers have to navigate it, in the hope that the road ahead is smooth in the new year.

Duan will return to work after this weekend. But for Chu Fengshan, the textile company that he works for in Jiangsu in east China is still struggling to fill its vacancies.

"We had 100 employment opportunities that we advertised at three separate job fairs in Henan province, but only recruited five people," said Chu.

More and more rural residents are looking for jobs closer to home, said Liu Peifeng, section chief in charge of rural workers at Henan provincial bureau of human resources and social security.

More than 28.7 million rural workers in Henan were employed within the province in 2016, more than the number of outbound migrant workers for six consecutive years, according to the bureau.

In east China's Fujian Province where the weather is much warmer, people are preparing to plough the fields. In Julin Village, Changting County, young men parade the fields holding a statue of the Guan bodhisattva on their shoulders to pray for a harvest.

On the other side of the Taiwan Strait, "Tong Liang Huo Long," a dragon dance under a shower of melted iron, debuted in Taiwan.

Named a national intangible heritage originating from Chongqing, nearly 10,000 people went to watch the performance staged in Nantou County, according to Lin Ming-chen, the county head.

"We were all thrilled by the fantastic performance," said Lin. "It was a delightful cross-Strait exchange. We look forward to more like it!"