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Chen Housheng, deputy to the Sichuan Provincial People's Congress

Briefly

HUBEI

Police raid gambling house

Police have busted a gambling house disguised as a poker club that catered to well-educated gamblers and detained 21 members of the gang. The gambling den made 300 million yuan (\$45.5 million) in the first half of last year alone, the provincial Public Security Bureau said on Sunday.

XINJIANG

Colleges to enroll more students

More than 300 higher-learning institutes will increase enrollment of students from the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region. At an education conference on Saturday, representatives from 323 higher-learning institutes signed an agreement to increase annual enrollment of Xinjiang students to 10,000 between this year and 2020, up from 6,800 last year.

SHANDONG

Pipeline begins water transfers

The eastern line of the South-North Water Diversion Project began to pipe water from Jiangsu province to Shandong province on Friday, according to the project office's website. Water transfers are expected to alleviate a water shortage in 13 cities and 58 counties.

XINHUA — CHINA DAILY

ANTI-POLLUTION

Smog-free meat on the way

City in Sichuan says special equipment to help keep air clean during festival run-up

By **HUANG ZHILING**
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The environmental watchdog in Dazhou, Sichuan province, will provide more than 100 machines and equipment to allow residents to smoke meat in an enclosed environment without polluting the air.

The bid is aimed at reducing smog, since the practice of smoking meat contributes to pollution in Sichuan's easternmost city, according to Wang Huaiyan, chief of the city's environmental protection bureau.

Residents will be able to share the equipment, which will prevent smoke from escaping. Officials did not say whether use of the equipment will be free.

It is a tradition for people in Sichuan to eat smoked meat during Spring Festival, which runs from February 8 to 22 this year.

Each year, Fu Xiuqin, a 75-year-old resident of Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan, struggles to find sawdust and cypress twigs so she can smoke meat in the run-up to the holiday period.

Smoked meat has been part of the festival since she was a



People smoke sausages in the open air in Dazhou, Sichuan province, on Dec 27. ZHANG JI / FOR CHINA DAILY

child. But it is difficult to find the sawdust and twigs, as well as a place to smoke meat, in the city of more than 10 million people.

In Dazhou, however, it is quite easy to find sawdust and cypress twigs on the city's Fenghuang Mountain.

“Almost 99 percent of local families would smoke meat before the Spring Festival. People who smoke meat can be found from the foot to the top of Fenghuang Mountain,” said Yu Canghai, a Dazhou city official.

During the run-up to the festival, the air in Dazhou is more polluted than usual. The local government has blamed

the smoking of bacon as the major cause of smog since early last year.

Netizens have dismissed the claim, noting that bacon smoking was carried out several hundred years before smog appeared. Others have accused the government of shifting the blame for its failure to deal with air pollution.

Chen Housheng, a deputy to the Sichuan Provincial People's Congress, said: “There are many causes for smog in Sichuan. Meat smoking is one of the contributors to smog but not the leading one.”

Researchers from the Bayu NGO Development Center, an

environmental protection group in Chongqing, spent a week in January last year visiting homes and farm produce markets in six districts where people smoked meat.

With instruments that measure PM2.5 — airborne particulate matter with a diameter of less than 2.5 microns that can penetrate the lungs and harm health — the researchers found that smoking bacon produced little or no PM2.5.

Additionally, they found that an individual site where meat was smoked did not affect air quality 50 meters away.

CELEBRITIES

Track gold medalist Liu finds new love

By **SUN XIAOCHEN**
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Retired hurdler Liu Xiang and his athlete girlfriend Wu Sha

Despite having retired from the track, China's Olympic champion hurdler Liu Xiang is still courting the spotlight, announcing a new romance on Saturday, just six months after his divorce.

Liu, the gold medalist in men's 110-meter hurdles at the 2004 Athens Olympics, posted a picture of two hands tied together by a red cord — which in Chinese culture implies that two people are in love — on his micro blog on Saturday and referred in the post to Wu Sha, a retired female pole vaulter, who is believed to be his new flame.

Wu, the women's pole vault champion of the 2013 National Games, forwarded the same post on her micro blog two hours later to confirm the romance with one of China's famous sports figures.

The 30-year-old Wu now works as an official at the local sports administrative center in her native Anhui province after retiring in 2013.

Liu, 32, retired in April because of a heel injury that had sidelined him from the Olympic finals twice, in Beijing in 2008 and London in 2012. He announced in June his divorce from actress Ge Tian following a nine-month marriage.

As a relatively low-profile

presence in Chinese athletics circles, Wu quickly became one of the most-searched names on the Chinese Internet over the weekend. The number of followers on her micro blog rose from 30,000 on Saturday to nearly 90,000 on Sunday.

Neither Liu nor Wu had made any further comment about their relationship by Sunday night.

Although Liu's short marriage to Ge stirred controversy online over what some saw as his imprudent attitude toward the relationship, the public showed more support this time around.

“Best wishes to you. I hope you two can build a family as soon as possible and have a baby and live a happy life,” former Winter Olympics champion skater Yang Yang commented on Liu's post.

“I believe a girl like Wu, who used to be an athlete as well, can understand him better. I am two thumbs-up to support their relationship,” Liu's former coach Sun Haiping was quoted as saying on Sunday by 163.com.

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