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Xiang Nan, managing director of a Tianjin-based investment company that has an office in Beijing

## Briefly

### BEIJING Underprivileged to get more funding

China plans to set up county-level coordination for ensuring basic living standards for people in difficulties, according to the Ministry of Civil Affairs on Tuesday. A circular issued by the State Council has called for various authorities at county level, including civil affairs, reform, finance, social security, housing and health agencies, to work together to address the needs of people living in difficulties. Such groups include those in poverty, the disabled, left-behind children, orphans and the homeless.

### HUNAN Live poultry trade halted over disease

The sale of live poultry has been suspended at several markets in Hunan over bird flu concerns. The province has reported 20 cases of human H7N9 infections, including five fatalities, since the beginning of this year, the provincial center for disease control and prevention said on Tuesday. The center expects more cases to emerge in the following months and, thus, decided to close several markets, including in Changsha and Yueyang.

### YUNNAN Rare ibis spotted in wetlands



A group of rare ibis once thought extinct in China have been spotted in the Dianchi Lake wetlands in Kunming. Ten glossy ibis were first captured by a photographer in late January. The flock has remained there for more than two weeks. The glossy ibis, a close relative of the endangered crested ibis, is under second-class State protection in China. Zoologists used to believe the birds had become extinct in China in the 20th century before a glossy ibis was found in Yunnan in 2012 and several others have been spotted in the province over the past few years.

### Forest fires cover 130 hectares

Two separate forest fires have broken out since Sunday, engulfing a combined area of 130 hectares. The provincial forest fire control department said on Tuesday that as both fires were at such a high altitude in Lanping county, they were extremely difficult to contain. So far, no residential areas are at risk. More than 800 people are trying to contain the fires.

### ZHEJIANG 4 detained over massage parlor fire

Four people from a foot massage parlor in Tiantai county were detained by police on Monday after a fire left 18 dead and 18 others injured on Sunday. The people who died in the incident have been identified, local authorities said on Tuesday. Twelve of the victims were women. Fifteen were locals, and the other three were from Henan, Sichuan and Yunnan provinces respectively.

XINHUA

## Beautiful beast



Men holding a dragon lantern walk through a field in Yuqing county, Guizhou province, on Monday to celebrate the Spring Festival holiday. The Yuqing dragon lantern was included on the provincial intangible cultural heritage list in 2007. MU MINGFEI / XINHUA

# Pangolin dinner prompts calls for species' protection

Animal listed as 'critically endangered' after population declined by up to 94%

By SU ZHOU  
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The Chinese pangolin is said to be extinct in the wild. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Conservation groups have called for governments to increase protection of the Chinese pangolin after a social media post triggered public concern over this critically endangered wild mammal.

A Sina Weibo user posted four pictures from 2015 showing a pangolin meat banquet held for a business delegation from Hong Kong in the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region. This triggered public criticism and has led to a probe.

The Chinese pangolin, one of the eight species of pangolins, has been heavily hunted and trafficked for its meat and scales, which are believed to have medicinal qualities. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species

of Wild Flora and Fauna said in 2003 the population was estimated at 50,000 to 100,000, having declined by up to 94 percent since the 1960s.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature listed the Chinese pangolin as "critically endangered" in 2014 on the basis of predicted continuing declines of up to 90 percent over the next couple of decades.

Wu Shibao, a professor at South China Normal University, has devoted himself to pangolin protection since 1995. He said the Chinese pangolin is already commercially extinct in the wild.

"There is virtually no information available on population levels of the Chinese pangolin on the Chinese mainland," he said. "The species exists, but is very rare. I talked to some hunters. Some said they haven't seen wild pangolin for three decades."

Wildlife trade monitoring network Traffic and environmental organization WildAid in September released an overview of the pangolin trade in China. The report said the "illegal trade appears to be continuing unabated".

Traffic China recommended that the Chinese government should upgrade the species from a second-class to a first-class national protected species and strengthen management of the animal.

One of the authors of the review, who wished not to be named, told China Daily that it is difficult to protect the Chinese pangolin, unlike the giant panda or snow leopard.

"The majority of rescue centers or zoos don't even know how to keep pangolins alive, not to mention encourage reproduction," she said. "One of the important ways to raise public awareness of wildlife protection is to show endangered animals in zoos. However, no zoo on the Chinese mainland has pangolins. So most people don't know this species is more endangered than the giant panda."

Wu from South China Normal University is more positive about the pangolin's future. He said the first step is to conduct a national survey of wild Chinese pangolin to provide a basis for establishing reserve areas.

"We have saved giant pandas and Tibetan antelope from the brink," he added.

## Path out of poverty found on 'green trains'

By XINHUA in Xi'an

At 6 am, Wang Yingxiang carefully boards a train, her hands full with four heavy kettles of hot water.

The steam from the spout fogs up the window of the old-fashioned "green-skinned train". She quickly gets to work. Her first task is to write information on the carriage's signboards.

The signboards advertise goods that passengers are selling. Many people sell products during their journey on the No 8361 train, which runs deep through the Qinling Mountains in Shaanxi province.

Lei Shunmin paid 1 yuan (\$0.15) to travel from Xiangshui town to Daijiaba market, about 8 kilometers away. Once he finds his seat, he carefully begins to calculate how much he can earn on the train and at the market.

"The honey sells for 200 yuan, and five brooms will make me 50 yuan," he tells himself.

300

of Dayudong village's 500-plus households still live under the poverty line.

The train only has three carriages, and it picks up passengers every 10 minutes from 12 stations in one of the most impoverished hinterlands in northwestern China. For locals, the clanking green train is their lifeline, taking them to relatives, hospitals, schools and markets.

"When I was young, we had to leave at midnight to get to the morning fair," Lei said.

China's slow, green trains, like the No 8361, have no air conditioning and are often crammed with people and huge bags bulging with goods. In the modern era of high-speed trains they are just a distant memory for many

urbanites. In rural areas, however, they are the only link locals have to the outside world, and to wealth.

The tradition of peddling produce on the trains, which was once a major source of income for many folks, is changing.

After Lei gets off the train, the green carriages chug along to a bigger market in Da'an town, which is where Zhu Jihong, 28, is headed.

Born locally, Zhu took the train to a new life 10 years ago. She never imagined it would bring her back.

She is now vice-chairwoman of an e-commerce association, which was set up last year, in Dayudong village in Da'an. The aim of the association is to help villagers out of poverty through the sale of their produce, such as mushrooms, chestnuts, bacon and free-range chickens.

E-commerce was identified by the central government as a way to reduce poverty. However, many locals are not

computer literate, so people like Zhu have been brought in to help villagers use these new tools.

"We just got an order for 1,000 chickens from Beijing," Zhu said, adding that local farmers had received more than 30,000 orders last year.

More than 300 of the 500-plus households in Dayudong still live under the poverty line, which means they survive on an annual income below 2,300 yuan per capita. E-commerce has helped at least six households get richer in less than a year and encouraged many more to explore large-scale farming.

"There was no independent industry in the village. It was only recently that farmers started to grow produce on a large scale," a local official said.

Encouraged by the accomplishments, the local government plans to eradicate poverty in the village by 2018 by helping e-commerce businesses in the region grow.

## Beijing, Tianjin plan monthly train pass

By LIANG SHUANG in Beijing and ZHANG MIN in Tianjin

350 km/h

Speed of trains on the Beijing-Tianjin Intercity Railway, the first of its kind in China

Beijing and Tianjin are planning a monthly pass for high-speed intercity trains linking the cities, as well as canceling expressway toll fees between the two cities, the mayor of Tianjin said on Monday.

The move will facilitate the integrated development of Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei province, an outline given in 2015 to improve transportation links in the area, while also moving some of Beijing's low-end industries to neighboring areas.

Wang Dongfeng, mayor of Tianjin, said the plan is to build a modern transportation system. He added that a unified smart prepaid traffic card, called Yikatong, already exists in 12 cities in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region, and the government aims to expand its use to all cities in the area by the end of this year.

In addition to universal traffic cards and expressways, the proposal of a high-speed train network in the region was approved last year, with Beijing-Binhai New Area Intercity Railway expected to be completed by 2020.

The Beijing-Tianjin Intercity Railway was the first of its kind in China. Traveling at up to 350 kilometers per hour, passengers can commute between the cities in about 40 minutes on trains that depart every 10 to 15 minutes.

Officials from Tianjin's transportation bureau said they are still deliberating the monthly pass mechanism and a timetable is not available.

Potential benefactors are eagerly awaiting the implementation of the planned policies. "We are looking forward to

having monthly train passes," said Xiang Nan, the managing director of a Tianjin-based investment company that has offices in Beijing, downtown Tianjin and Binhai New Area of Tianjin. He has rented offices near the train stations to save time on commuting.

Xiang said that he and seven of his employees spend nearly 5,000 yuan (\$730) every month on commuting. "We hope the monthly pass can help frequent passengers save money."

In 2009, a prepaid express card was issued by railway authorities for Beijing-Tianjin intercity trains, offering exclusive entrance channels at stations so frequent travelers don't have to buy tickets in advance or wait in line before boarding.

In 2012, the express card was upgraded into a debit card that also works on about 20 intercity rail transit lines nationwide.

However, in both cases, passengers still have to pay the full price for each trip — 54.5 yuan from Beijing to downtown Tianjin.

"If expressway toll fees were lifted, it would save us a lot of money," said Wang Rui, who drives between Tianjin, where she works, and Beijing, where she and her husband own a house.

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A driver checks a high-speed train before it heads from Tianjin to Beijing South Railway Station on Jan 25. YANG BAOSEN / XINHUA

## Boy born from embryo frozen 16 years ago

By XINHUA in Guangzhou

A healthy baby boy has been born from an embryo frozen 16 years ago, a hospital in South China announced on Monday.

A 46-year-old woman gave birth to her second son at the First Affiliated Hospital of Sun Yat-sen University in Guangdong province early this month. "I'm ecstatic to have another child," she said.

Her first son, already 16 years old, was from the same batch of embryos frozen in 2000. She gave birth to him through in vitro fertilization after the hospital froze her 18 other embryos.

Last year, the mother came to the hospital expressing a desire to get pregnant again, following the implementation of the second-child policy. "There were a few issues to address when she asked to thaw her embryos," said Xu Yanwen, director of the hospital's reproductive center.

"It was not easy to thaw the frozen embryos and there were also some problems with her womb," Xu said, adding that the risk of complications increases with a woman's age.



A baby that was born from an embryo frozen 16 years ago. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Both the baby and mother are said to be in stable condition and due to be discharged from hospital soon.

Xu said that more women are having their embryos thawed, and that some frozen embryos at the hospital date back as far as 1994.

As China relaxed the family planning policy, an increasing number of women of an advanced maternal age have visited the hospital expressing a desire to conceive with the help of Assisted Reproductive Technology, Xu said.

"Last year, we received about 1,000 women above the age of 40 seeking to have babies, with the average age of women thawing their embryos rising from 32.7 to 33.7," Xu added.