

'Hong Kong independence' leads nowhere

The notion of "Hong Kong independence" will lead nowhere, a government work report to be delivered by Chinese Premier Li Keqiang on Sunday said.

The report, available just before the opening of the annual session of China's top legislature, the National People's Congress (NPC), also pledged to fully implement the "one country, two systems" principle in the special administrative region.

It said the central government will continue to implement, both to the letter and in spirit, the principle of "one country, two systems," under which the people of Hong Kong govern Hong Kong, the people of Macao govern Macao, and both regions enjoy a high degree of autonomy.

"We will continue to act in strict compliance with China's Constitution and the basic laws of the Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions, and we will ensure that the principle of 'one country, two systems' is steadfastly applied in Hong Kong and Macao without being bent or distorted," the report said.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of Hong Kong's return to China.

The report pledged full support for chief executives and governments of the two regions in exercising law-based governance, growing their economies, improving people's well-being, advancing democracy, and promoting social harmony.

It added that efforts will be made to push forward cooperation between the mainland and Hong Kong and Macao.

In particular, the report said the central government will draw up a plan for the development of a city cluster in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, give full play to the distinctive strengths of Hong Kong and Macao, and elevate their positions and roles in China's economic development and opening up.

"We have always had full confidence about ensuring lasting prosperity and stability in Hong Kong and Macao," it said.

Endangered bird-trafficking ring busted in C China

Police in central China's Hunan Province have busted a ring involved in

hunting, killing and trafficking endangered birds, the provincial forestry public security department announced on Saturday.

Ten people from the ring have been caught, and the other six remain at large, forestry police in Xiangyin county in Yueyang city said.

At the end of last year, local police discovered some people had been hunting, killing and selling endangered wild birds, especially cygnets, in the county's Hengling Lake area, a natural wetland at the south end of Dongting Lake.

An investigation showed that the ring has hunted red-crowned cranes, cygnets, and wild ducks, police said.

According to Wu Xiaogang with the provincial forestry public security department, the ring hunted more than 10 cygnets and sold them for 500 yuan (72.5 U.S. dollars) to 600 yuan each, or 1,000 yuan to 1,200 yuan for live ones.

Police are tracking down the six suspects at large, and the case is under investigation.

Robot offers legal assistance in central China

An artificial intelligence robot made its debut in central China's Hubei Province Saturday, capable of providing legal assistance.

The robot, FaGouGou, is backed with 30 million cases and massive legal knowledge data, covering the criminal, labor, marriage and traffic fields, said Liu Qian, a co-developer.

It provides consulting service for lawyers as well as customer data mining service. A new version will be developed specifically to offer legal service to the public, according to the developers.

The robot is excellent in AI storage, computing power and judicial assistance, said Xiong Minghui, professor at Sun Yat-sen University in Guangdong Province.

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Remains show N. China humans didn't originate in Africa



The 3D images of the restoration of the two Xuchang Man skulls [Photo: Xinhua]

Latest evidence suggests prehistoric hominids in northern China might have been hybrids of the indigenous population and Europeans, challenging the popular view of humankind's African origin.

According to a report published in "Science" magazine on Thursday, human cranial fossil remains dating back to 105,000 – 125,000 years ago found in Xuchang, central China's Henan Province bear characteristics of Chinese hominids, early modern humans and the Neanderthals of Europe who thrived between 30,000 and 130,000 years ago.

The two skulls of Xuchang Man were discovered in 2007 and 2014 respectively by an archaeological team led by Li Zhanyang, first author of the report and a researcher with Henan provincial institute of cultural heritage and archaeology.

Li said the skulls show a similar occipital bone and inner ear labyrinth structure to Neanderthals, and share features of Peking Man (living in Beijing about 200,000 and 700,000 years ago) in a low neurocranial vault, flat neurocranium and short mastoid with inward slopes.

The Xuchang humans lived between Peking Man and early modern humans in north China (about 40,000 years ago), which Li said proves the continuity of human evolution in north China.

Li said Xuchang Man was very likely a direct ancestor of modern northern Chinese, which challenges the hypothesis that northern Chinese were originated from Africans. Geologically Xuchang is located in north China.

In anthropogeny, the study of human origins, African origin is the current general consensus, yet a competing "multiregional view" is also held by many scientists.

It is the first time fossils bearing characteristics of the Neanderthals have

been found in East Asia. And it will influence research on the origin of modern humans, said Erik Trinkaus, co-author of the report and a professor with Washington University in St. Louis.

After using CT scanning and 3D technology to make comparisons with other human fossils found in other parts of the world, Li said Xuchang Man is a new species. However, a DNA analysis has yet to be carried out.

Li presumes that the Chinese hominids migrated to warmer European regions during an ice age and crossbred with the local Neanderthals. During the last interglacial stage (74,000 to 128,000 years ago) when the climate got warmer, the ancestors of Xuchang Man came back to north China. The migration might have happened several times due to climate change.