

Guangxi officials probed over pangolin dinner

The disciplinary authority in south China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region has launched a probe into the case of a "pangolin dinner", after a newly discovered social media post went viral online.

A controversial microblog post in 2015 about an official banquet has been dug up by netizens, sparking public outrage with regards to eating endangered animals and putting local officials in serious trouble.

Weibo user Al_cal, later identified to be the son of a clock tycoon in Hong Kong, posted on his Weibo account that he'd been hosted by local officials in Guangxi to a banquet that included a pangolin dish.



Al_cal's microblog post on the pangolin banquet has sparked public outrage with regards to eating endangered animals. [Photo: Weibo]

“Thanks to the hospitality of Director Li and Secretary Huang for inviting me to their office and cooking pangolin meat for us,” wrote Li Jiahe in July 2015, when he was on a research trip in south China with a Hong Kong delegation. “This is the first time that I had it, and I find it very delicious.”

The post also includes pictures from the alleged banquet, including the pangolin dish and a group photo of Li with several government officials. All of his posts were later deleted after wide online circulation.

In response to the extensive public attention, Guangxi Investment Promotion Agency, which was hosting the Hong Kong delegation, said that they cannot recognize any of its leaders or employees among the diners in the photo. It also claimed that there is no senior official surnamed Li or Huang when the post was published on July 15, 2015.

The current Party secretary of the agency, named Huang Wenbiao, is said to have been in Singapore at the time and was only appointed to the job on July 21.

According to a written statement issued on Feb. 8, the Hong Kong business delegation revealed that all the members were having group buffet dinner during their visit in Guangxi between July 8 and 10, and Li did not return to Hong Kong with rest of the group. “The alleged pangolin dinner was Li’s personal involvement and the delegation has nothing to do with the case.”

The investigation is still underway.

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 International Union for Conservation of Nature listed the Chinese pangolin as “critically endangered” in 2014 on the basis of predicted decline of up to 90 percent over the next couple of decades.

Late last year, Shanghai customs officials seized more than 3 tons of pangolin scales – the largest pangolin seizure in China’s history, officials said.

[China to continue cracking down on surrogacy](#)

China will continue cracking down on surrogacy, despite recent speculation that the country may loosen related policies, reports said on Wednesday.



Mao Qun'an, a spokesperson of the National Health and Family Planning Commission, speaks during a press conference Wednesday in Beijing. [Photo:China.org.cn]

"We will continue cracking down on the illegal practice of surrogacy to ensure people's safe, legal and efficient access to assisted reproductive technology," said Mao Qun'an, a spokesperson of the National Health and Family Planning Commission, during a press conference on Wednesday.

The state-run People's Daily published a story recently which quoted several experts who argued that the country should loosen its restraints on surrogacy. The story was then interpreted by some as a signal that the country would loosen its grip. But Mao responded that surrogacy is still prohibited in China, citing a law in 2001 which banned surrogacy in any form.

According to the People's Daily article, there are 90 million Chinese households which are eligible to have a second child after the country loosened its one-child policy in 2015. But 60 percent of the females are 35 years old or above, and 50 percent are more than 40 years old, making it quite difficult for them to have a second child.

Experts in that article also cited the high rate of diseases which cause lowered fertility and loss of children in a Chinese household as reasons for surrogacy to be allowed.

Confucius Museum to be opened in Shandong



An artist's impression of the newly-built Confucius Museum in Qufu, Shandong province. [Photo/Xinhua]

The Confucius Museum in Qufu, Shandong province – the birthplace of China's most famous sage – will be opened in the second half of this year, a local official said on Wednesday, describing it as the country's first comprehensive museum to focus on Confucius (551-479 BC) and his ideology.

“Work on the exhibition center, the main building of the museum complex, has been completed, while detailed work on exhibition platforms and landscaping is underway,” said Zhang Lizheng of the Qufu Culture Industry Park where the museum is located.

The museum complex, with a total investment of 700 million yuan (\$102 million), consists of an exhibition center and six subordinate halls, covering a total of 57,000 square meters.

The museum is a cultural project showcasing Confucian teachings and relics collected by generations of Confucius, as well as a place to learn about traditional culture, said Yang Jinquan, deputy head of the Qufu bureau of cultural relics.

Construction of the museum started in 2013, but was disrupted due to financial issues and discussions over how to present the essence of Confucian thoughts and teachings in the most accurate way.

Local government statistics show that by the end of last year, a total of 380 million yuan had been spent on the museum.

Yang Chaoming, head of the Confucius Research Institute in Qufu, said the museum is of great importance.

“Currently, people learn Confucian teachings mainly from textbooks and at the Confucius Temple. At the museum, visitors will be able to gain a more in-depth understanding about Confucius and his teachings via images, modern technologies and relics related to the sage,” said Yang Chaoming, who is also a member of the provincial political advisory body.

Yang Yitang, an expert on Confucian studies at the Jining bureau of cultural relics, said, “About 350,000 Confucius-related relics and archives that now rest in storerooms will be better protected and presented to the public, helping experts and tourists to learn about the sage.”

Teachings of Confucius, an educator and philosopher, deeply influenced later Chinese generations. He was the first Chinese to set up private schools and enroll students from all walks of life.

The government of Shandong is exhibiting the work of Confucius to promote traditional Chinese culture.

Guo Shuqing, governor of Shandong, said in his government work report at the ongoing sixth session of the 12th Shandong Provincial People’s Congress, the province’s top legislature, that Shandong will continue to promote the essence of traditional Chinese culture, completing construction of the Confucius Museum and opening it to the public this year.

[Taiwan urged to improve tourists' safety](#)



People take photos of the landmark Taipei 101 building in Taiwan in January. [Zhu Xiang/XINHUA]

The mainland office responsible for cross-Straits relations has urged Taiwan to improve safety across its whole tourist sector and to take measures to ensure the safety of mainland travelers.

According to local media reports, the island's transportation authority will raise the daily quota for mainlanders from 5,000 to 6,000 and allow them to stay for 30 days rather than 15.

The move comes after statistics showed a drop in the number of mainland tourists visiting over the Spring Festival holiday.

Taiwan ranked ninth on online travel agency Ctrip's annual list of the most popular destinations for outbound tourists over the holiday, down from fifth last year.

Data from Taiwan's Travel Agent Association also showed the number of mainland visitors had dropped by 20 percent during Spring Festival compared with last year.

However, on Wednesday, An Fengshan, a spokesman for the State Council Taiwan Affairs Office in Beijing, said the reason for the decline was "quite clear" and would only be reversed through improved cross-Straits relations.

"Other solutions are a move in the wrong direction and will not succeed," he said.

Zhu Songling, a professor at Beijing Union University's Institute of Taiwan Studies, said the decline in mainland tourists has affected Taiwan's tourism industry and its economy.

Relations between the mainland and Taiwan have been tense since Tsai Ing-wen took office as the island's new leader on May 20.

Tsai has failed to acknowledge the 1992 Consensus, which refers to the one-China policy, and official channels of cross-Straits communication have been suspended.

Tsai's refusal to acknowledge the 1992 Consensus "has damaged all the hard work toward peaceful relations across the Taiwan Straits", Ma Xiaoguang, another spokesman for the State Council Taiwan Affairs Office, has previously said. "Whoever started the trouble should end it."

The situation was further compounded when US President Donald Trump challenged the one-China principle by taking a congratulatory call from Tsai in December shortly after he won the presidential election.

China's Foreign Ministry has called on the new US administration to stick to the one-China principle and limit its relationship with Taiwan to a nonofficial level.

Meanwhile, on Saturday, 21 mainland tourists were injured in a bus accident in Kaohsiung, a city in southern Taiwan. The bus, carrying 25 tourists and a tour guide from the mainland, hit the edge of a tunnel after the driver took a wrong turn.

The injured were taken to hospital. Everyone, apart from the tour guide who remains in hospital, has returned to the mainland, An said, adding that mainland authorities had extended their sympathies to those injured and helped handle the accident through nongovernmental tourism organizations on the two sides of the Taiwan Straits.

He also urged Taiwan to improve safety of its tourist sector and ensure the safety of mainland travelers.

PLA 'does not want war', but is not afraid of one

The People's Liberation Army does not want a war in the South China Sea, but will not be afraid of one if it knocks on China's door, the military has said.

An editorial published on Tuesday on the PLA Daily's website said the Chinese military is not afraid of "demons" and "intimidation", adding that the PLA dares to "show its sword" and has a proven record of safeguarding national interests.

It invoked China's determination and victory in the Korean War as well as the Chinese government's warning toward the United States' escalation in the 1960s during the Vietnam War.

"In the past, the PLA produced numerous miracles in wars, despite being outnumbered by enemies or having inferior weapons compared with those of its adversaries. Today, our troops are well equipped and high-spirited ... Facing risk-takers, the PLA, which owns DF series ballistic missiles, will show them that we are ready for a war and we do not fear wars," the article said.

In another article published on the same website on Wednesday, the writer blasted "some US politicians" for believing that lasting superiority over China and the Asia-Pacific will ensure the US' "global leadership", saying that playing tricks with China in the South China Sea is unreasonable and dangerous.

The article also suggests that the US should focus on its domestic issues instead of "interfering elsewhere" if it wishes to become "great again".

The articles came after recent claims from senior US officials threatening to take hard-line measures against China over issues relating to the South China Sea.

Shao Yongling, a professor of military strategy at the PLA Rocket Force Command College, told China Daily that the remarks show the Chinese military's determination and capability of safeguarding the country's sovereignty and interests anywhere.

"They also show that we are well prepared for contingencies. I believe these remarks are more like warnings than threats. They aim at telling the US that we will not tolerate negative actions that compromise our interests," she said.

Shao added that the PLA Rocket Force will definitely be mobilized if there is a large joint operation in the South China Sea and that Chinese ballistic missiles are capable of covering all of the sea.

Li Li, a military equipment expert at PLA National Defense University, said recent moves by the US, such as sending the littoral combat ship USS Coronado to the South China Sea, indicate that the new US government will not relax its interference in the region and it does not want to see the recent improvement in relations between China and other nations in the region.

"However, no matter what measures the US plans to take, we will never abandon our sovereignty, interests and rights in the South China Sea," she said.

Yang Xiyu, a researcher of Asia-Pacific security affairs at the China Institute of International Studies in Beijing, told China Central Television that some US politicians are hoping that military pressure will intimidate China in the South China Sea, but this has repeatedly turned out to be useless.

He said that the stronger the PLA is, the less willing the US will be to

launch a war against China.