

## [Search underway for vessel missing off northern Taiwan](#)

Search is underway for a missing cargo ship in the sea off northern Taiwan, the island's maritime and port bureau said Sunday.

The cargo vessel, named "Hsin Fa Erh", set sail for Mazu Harbor in east China's Fujian Province from Taipei Harbor on Friday afternoon, but encountered strong wind, rough waves and engine breakdown.

The vessel had planned to sail back to the port. No contact was reported after 8:34 p.m. Friday.

The vessel was about 14 nautical miles away from the Taipei Harbor and 11 nautical miles from the Taoyuan Zhuwei Fishing Harbor at the time of the last contact.

In addition to the captain, there were four Taiwanese crew members and one Indonesian worker on the vessel. The wind and waves are so strong that only large vessels and helicopters can be used to search for the missing vessel.

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## [Lost hikers guided through remote area](#)

An additional 14 rescue workers have been sent to help extract three hikers who were stranded in a remote part of Sichuan province's Wolong Nature Reserve after they were found by an earlier rescue team of 16, according to a report on Sunday in Western China Metropolis Daily.

At least 30 people, including police officers, medical workers and residents, had been involved in the search.

Wolong police received a call from the hikers on a satellite phone at about 3 pm on Thursday. The caller said he and his two companions – a man and a woman – were unable to continue.

They had entered a zone that is ordinarily off-limits to the public on Sept 30 and planned to walk through the mountains. However, they got altitude sickness and lost their way.

The satellite phone helped rescuers pinpoint the hikers' location.

It took six hours for the first rescue team to find the hikers, who were holed up in a cowshed in Paziqiao – a virgin forest area southwest of the reserve where altitudes soar up to 4,000 meters.

The two men were checked, and one was found to be overweight and suffering symptoms related to altitude. The woman had severe altitude sickness and was too weak to walk, police said.

“Pan, one of the male hikers, is overweight and got sick at the high altitude,” said Wang Yong, director of the Wolong police station, who led the rescue team.” His sickness will only worsen if we lead them home using the route we had originally planned.”

Instead, he said, the team and the hikers will descend rapidly through Yinchangou to the southeast. The altitude is lower, so oxygen is more abundant, but the terrain is more perilous, he said.

Police said the hikers may have illegally entered the reserve, as they did not get approval from local authorities to hike in the off-limits zone. The reserve covers 700,000 hectares, but only about 200,000 hectares are open to the public without special permission.

Because of the difficult terrain and the health condition of the hikers, police said it was hard to estimate the time needed to bring them out.

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## **Birds and bees: A wetlands victory**

Lu Gang recalls his first sighting of a colorful bee-eating bird eight years ago as his train pulled into Haikou station in tropical Hainan province.



A pair of chestnut-throated bee-eaters perch on a branch near Jinsha Bay, Hainan province. Lu Gang / For China Daily

When he got off the train and went to look for the bird, he found dozens of them nesting in a sandbank near the station, mostly the chestnut-throated variety but also a few bluethroats.

As a birder and a conservationist, Lu is fascinated by bee-eaters. Every year since 2010, from March to July, hundreds of bird-watchers from across China come to see them.

"The bee-eater is an indicator of how well we have protected our wetlands and environment," said Lu, who has worked to protect the forest and local species for a decade.

According to the Hainan Birdwatching Association, Jinsha Bay in Haikou, an important breeding ground for bee-eaters, faces many threats. Encroaching urban development, sand mining and pollution from farming have done untold damage to the birds' habitat.

A recent real estate development worries Lu and other bird-lovers, with nearby ponds and marshes set to be drained.

"I have studied waterfowl for 10 years, and I find the number of winter migrants in Hainan to be declining, even though the island is covered in thick forest and is home to a few of birds endemic to the country," Lu said. He attributes the decline largely to real estate development and quarrying.

Conservationists, environmental volunteers and birders are well aware of the threats and frequently make statements to the media or report problems to the government. But the development continues.

"We won't just stand by and watch these birds perish. It is the government's decision whether to call a halt to the destruction or to allow it," said Cheng Cheng, director of the bird-watching association.

Such reports are taken seriously by the Haikou city government. In 2016, it investigated the shrinking habitat of the bee-eaters and put an end to illegal quarrying.

An eight-year plan to restore wetlands was issued in June. A wetland nature reserve, seven parks and 45 wetland communities will be set up under the plan. Jinsha Bay is on the list.

In China, conservation has galvanized the government and people. A greener environment is a new goal, and the government has emphasized the need to preserve biodiversity.

Lu said the government has made great efforts in conservation and would benefit by drawing on the experience of people and organizations with expertise in specific areas, such as bee-eater protection.

While the wetlands plan is being reviewed by the public, the Paradise

Foundation, a conservation group, is sponsoring 18 individuals and organizations to privately protect areas using their own capital and wealth of experience, as well as new technologies.

Lu was one of those chosen, and he immediately recommended that the local government establish a protected area in Jinsha Bay.

“If both development and habitat protection are handled properly, the bee-eaters will flourish. Real estate surrounded by a vibrant environment will be worth much more,” Lu said.

Haikou is keen to work with the foundation to put the wetlands plan into practice, protecting and restoring its 29,000 hectares of wetland, said Zhang Qi, Party chief of Haikou.

The Paradise Foundation helped found the country’s first land trust reserve, a home for giant pandas in Old Creek Nature Reserve in Sichuan province.

By purchasing a variety of leases, the foundation and the government have put 110 square kilometers under protected status. The reserve not only protects the environment and various species, but includes sustainable farming.

Lu is confident that more wetland communities can be founded in Haikou, and wants to include as many as possible in the plan.

“The government is on our side, setting aside land for protection and promoting this model across the province,” he said.

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## [CPC punishes 1.343M grassroots officials in 5 years](#)

The Communist Party of China’s (CPC) top disciplinary watchdog said Sunday around 1.343 million grassroots-level Party officials around the country had been punished between the time of the 18th CPC National Congress in 2012 and the end of June this year.

These officials served at the town- or township-level or lower, including 648,000 village officials, according to a statement by the CPC Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI).

The CCDI said this demonstrates the Party has extended its strict governance to grassroots-level organizations.

As of this August, the CCDI had dealt with 270 problems in 21 county-level administrative regions, carrying out several rounds of supervision on poverty-alleviation work.

The CCDI has made public 33 typical cases of corruption in poverty relief work.

The CCDI said it had conducted inspection and supervision of 155,000 Party organizations in the past five years, transferring 65,000 pieces of evidence about problems involving officials for further investigation.

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## Professor detained for assaulting street worker

A male college professor who assaulted a female street cleaner in his community was detained and fined by the police on Saturday in Xi'an, Shaanxi province.

Xi'an police released a statement on Sina Weibo saying the professor, surnamed Ge, would be detained for 10 days and face a fine of 500 yuan (\$75) for beating up the worker, surnamed Liu. The worker sustained minor injuries, the statement said.

The violence drew people's attention after a Weibo user, Chapai017, posted photos on Wednesday showing Liu with blood on her face and crying.

The accompanying post said the street worker was confronted by Ge and another woman because of a garbage truck that was blocking the driveway. It said Ge was observed assaulting Liu after she scrambled to her feet from a pile of rubbish, as if she had just been knocked down. The other woman shouted, "Do you know how much I earn and how much you earn?" and "You are wasting my time," the post said.

Residents, who had begun to gather because of the noise, stopped the fight and called the police as Ge and the woman tried to leave, the post said.

The Weibo user, who claimed to have gone to the police station to make a statement, added that Ge was a newly employed professor at Shaanxi University of Science and Technology and had just completed his studies in the United States and Japan. The post said the shouting woman worked in the university's personnel division, but this was later contradicted by the university, which said she was one of Ge's relatives.

In a statement released on Wednesday, the university said Ge had been suspended and a work team had been appointed to assist the police with their investigation. The university said it would handle the case "seriously" and in line with the investigation results.

A Weibo post by the university on Thursday confirmed that the woman was not a member of the school's faculty. It also said Ge had realized the severity of

his actions, that he had apologized to the street worker and her family in person and would pay her medical costs.

Ge's attack on the worker caused an uproar online. Chapai017's post alone received some 107,000 reposts and 55,000 comments.

One Weibo user commented that "one's moral standing, as well as academic performance, should factor in the assessment of a college professor".

Another wrote that the assailant should be brought to justice. "I myself come from a family at the grassroots level and I hope my family will be respected by society. And so do other families of the same background," the comment said.

However, a Weibo user named Pili\_Zhang called for calm, saying criticism should not be directed at the university or its faculty:

"It was wrong for Ge to beat the cleaner, but let's leave the case to the law and the police, and stop the verbal attacks on the university and its faculty."