

Ex-captive panda may be pregnant



Giant panda Caocao. [Screenshot: CNTV]

Monitoring data show that Cao Cao, a 16-year-old giant panda raised in captivity, has mated with a male in the wild—a rare occurrence for the endangered species—according to a panda research center in Sichuan province.

Cao Cao was released in the Liziping Nature Reserve in early February in time for mating season from March to May.

In March, researchers reported seeing several males fight for the right to mate with her and began checking data sent by the GPS tag on her neck—which is fitted with a recording device—every five days.

“When we checked the recording on March 27, we heard her making noises similar to those made by females while mating,” said Zhang Hemin, head of the China Conservation and Research Center for the Giant Panda, where Cao Cao was raised. “It lasted one minute and 30 seconds.”

If the panda is pregnant, she will give birth in July or August, “at which point we will bring her and her cub back to the center”, Zhang said.

Cao Cao arrived at the center when she was 2 years old, after being found in poor health inside the Wolong National Nature Reserve. She has already mothered two cubs: male Tao Tao and female Zhang Xiang. Both are 2 years old and have been released into the wild in the Liziping reserve.

The research center, which was set up in the Wolong reserve in 1983, has released seven captive pandas since 2006 in an effort to boost the wild giant panda population.

There are 471 captive pandas worldwide, 234 of which are from the Wolong center—enough to prevent extinction, experts say.

In the early 1990s, the government banned the capture of wild pandas to mate

with captive ones. Captive pandas have mated with few of their captive peers, which hurts biodiversity, researchers say.

The center formulated the plan last year to have captive pandas mate with wild ones. Cao Cao is the first to be chosen.

“She has a close bond with humans, and researchers have helped feed her since she was released,” Zhang said.

Cao Cao is the equivalent of 48 years old in human terms, and she has only one or two years left before she is too old to participate in a breeding program.

“If she fails to get pregnant this year, she will have one last opportunity to mate with a wild panda next spring,” Zhang said.

More captive pandas will be selected to mate wild ones, he said.

[Submersible Jiaolong tested ahead of S. China Sea dive](#)



Jiaolong submersible goes through a dive simulation in Sanya, Hainan Province, on April 22. [Photo/Xinhua]

Jiaolong, China's manned submersible, went through a dive simulation in Sanya, Hainan Province on Saturday to prepare for a deep descent in the South

China Sea.

The submersible stayed underwater for 18 minutes in Saturday's drill before returning to Xiangyanghong 09, the mother ship, completing tasks including underwater training for its crew.

Zhang Weijia, who participated, said she was very excited entering the submersible for the first time to learn about its facilities, practical operation and emergency escape.

Jiaolong's South China Sea dive is part of the second stage of China's 38th ocean scientific expedition. The expedition will last for about four months.

The drill was necessary for testing equipment and personnel, said Wu Changbin, general commander of the second stage of the expedition. Currently the Jiaolong's "technological status" is stable and the cooperation among various departments is smooth, Wu said.

Jiaolong completed a deep-sea operation in the northwestern Indian Ocean earlier this year in the mission's first stage. It will also conduct surveys in the Yap Trench and the Mariana Trench in the third stage.

Named after a mythical dragon, Jiaolong reached its deepest depth of 7,062 meters in the Mariana Trench in June 2012.

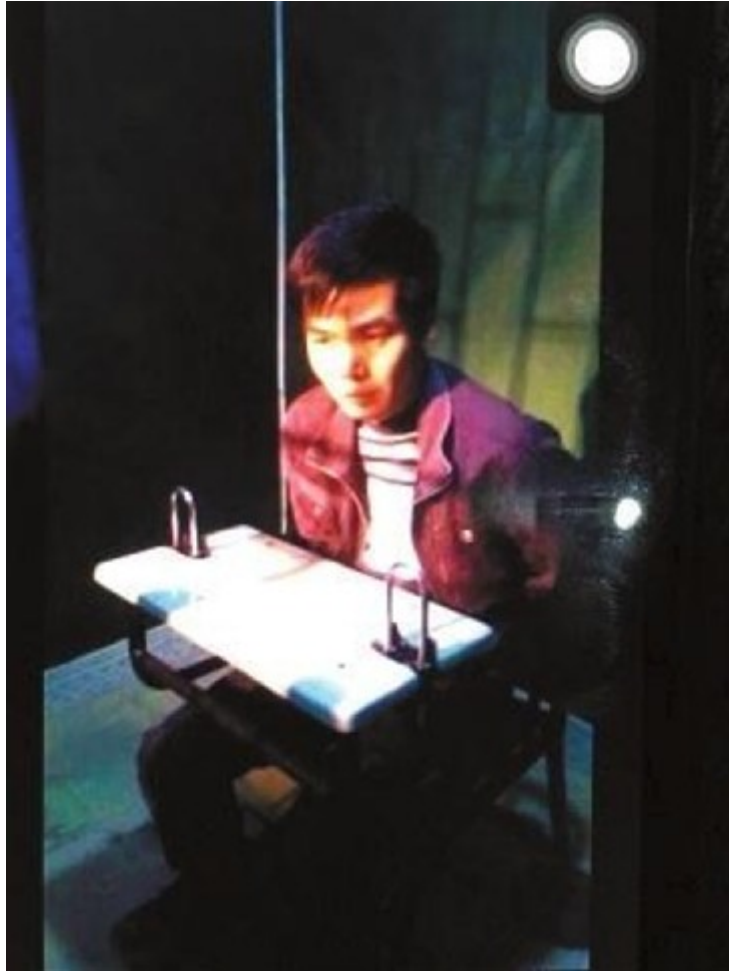
Three dead in east China landslide

Three people were killed after a landslide hit a village Saturday night in east China's Fujian Province, local authorities said Sunday.

At round 9 p.m., the government of Yongding District, Longyan City, received a report of three villagers trapped by a landslide. Nearly seven hours later, rescuers recovered the bodies of the victims.

The cause of the accident is being investigated. Local authorities are handling the aftermath.

Man executed for killing two young women, raping corpse



Chen Quansong [Shanghai Daily]

China's Supreme People's Court (SPC) announced on Saturday that a criminal convicted intentional homicide had been executed after the SPC approved the death sentence.

According to a SPC statement, Chen Quansong killed two young women surnamed Wang and Xian on January 3, 2014 in Shiqian County, southwest China's Guizhou Province after a disagreement. Chen then raped Wang's corpse and covered the two bodies with tree branches.

In the review of the death sentence handed down to Chen by the local court, the SPC formed a collegial panel to review files, interrogate Chen, meet Chen's lawyers and verify evidence, including DNA test results.

The SPC held that the death penalty was given on the basis of clear facts and solid evidence. Chen committed intentional homicide with serious consequence and vile social effect.

To punish serious crimes according to law and safeguard social justice and fairness, the SPC approved the death sentence, according to the SPC statement.

The Intermediate People's Court of Tongren City in Guizhou Province executed Chen on Saturday.

[Air pollution inspectors find problems in 2,808 companies](#)

China's environmental authority found 2,808 companies in violation of standards during the first round of air pollution inspection.

Inspection teams in 28 cities in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region and nearby areas found 2,808 of 4,077 companies breaking the rules, the Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP) said in a statement.

Problems included unlicensed production, inefficient dust prevention and lack of or malfunction of pollution treatment facilities, the statement said.

Inspectors also found that some enterprises which had been closed for violations illegally resumed production and some reported fake monitoring data.

Some companies refused the inspection or prevented inspectors from carrying out their duties, said the statement.

The statement said the first round of inspection ended as of April 20 and the second round had already started. There will be a total of 25 rounds this year.

The share of days with good air quality in Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei rose by 14.6 percentage points from a year earlier to 66.3 percent in March, even though the share declined in the first quarter, MEP data showed.