

Central China province reports 20th H7N9 case in 2017

A new human H7N9 avian flu case was reported in central China's Hunan Province Sunday, the 20th in the province this year.

The 69-year-old female patient, surnamed Zou, was diagnosed in Changsha city, the provincial capital. She had contact with poultry before falling ill and is in a critical condition, according to the provincial center for disease control and prevention.

This is the second H7N9 case in Changsha. Five of the the 20 patients in Hunan died from the virus.

H7N9 is a bird flu strain first reported to have infected humans in China in March 2013. It is most likely to strike in winter and spring.

Double standards – no democracy on EU matters

Most people in the UK currently pay for and take instructions from at least three or four governments – EU, UK, County, District or Unitary Council. Many also have Parish Councils.

One of the reasons people voted to get rid of one of the layers of government is that we have too many competing layers, seeking more money and imposing more rules on us than are needed. Sometimes the competing layers seek to achieve different things or impose contradictory rules and requirements. Defra, the Agriculture Department, often lost cases in the ECJ because they found it impossible to implement EU policy in a way which did meet with the satisfaction of the European Court. They were trying to comply!

One of the odd things about UK Opposition politicians and the media that feeds off them was the complete absence of any informed opposition to the EU government whenever the Conservatives were in office. All the government had to do was to claim some law, payment or decision had come from Brussels, and the Opposition parties backed off. They either acquiesced in not even debating it, or they went through perfunctory motions of asking a few polite questions and then voted with the government or abstained so the measure could pass. Bill Cash, aided by a few good Labour MPs who did wish to probe and question, led his European Scrutiny Committee to require the important issues to be debated in the Commons chamber itself. These debates were usually peopled by a stalwart group of Eurosceptics pointing out the problems

or undesirable features to a disinterested House. Government Ministers whichever side was in office always sought to make the debates low profile and could avoid answering any difficult question, safe in the knowledge that there was always a front bench consensus so they would win easily any vote we forced . The media rarely covered them, on the grounds that government and the official opposition both supported whatever measure it was.

This lack of democracy on EU matters allowed Ministers to push through a vast library of new laws and controls, and large amounts of public spending with effectively no democratic check or balance. Whole areas of government, from fishing and farming, through the environment, to trade, energy and business received this treatment. The EU was brilliant at extending the *acquis* by increasing the occupied field -their language for the process of establishing their dominance in area after area. Once the EU had legislated on a subject, the UK Parliament then had to leave it alone or work round the EU laws and rules, never contradicting or modifying them in unapproved ways.

It will take years for successive Parliaments to review and modify where it wishes what was done in our name without our proper consent. Legislation and decisions are better for a probing and sometimes hostile opposition forcing Ministers to think things through and sell them to the public as necessary and desirable. EU laws were pushed through on a vast scale in a lazy way. It meant many people in our country had little idea just how much is now controlled by the EU, and how little room for change the UK has all the time it accepts this legal framework.

Chinese flock to cinemas during Spring Festival

Traditional Spring Festival celebrations include firecrackers, family reunions and temple fairs, but today it might be worth adding cinema to the list.

Chinese cinemas posted a record of 3.347 billion yuan (about 487 million U.S. dollars) in ticket sales during the seven-day holiday, from Jan. 27 to Feb. 2, according to industry figures.

China's box office sales also set a single-day record on Jan. 28, the first day of the Chinese Lunar New Year, at 805 million yuan.

The strong figures came after China registered weak growth in box office sales in 2016, when 45.712 billion yuan was reported, or a 3.73 percent annual growth.

HOT MARKET

As cinemas sprout up nationwide, with the number of screens exceeding 40,000, going to the movies has become a popular holiday pastime.

Full cinemas were found in big cities such as Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, but also in smaller cities across the country.

Wu Xiaoqi, 26, chose to spend half a day with her cousins in a cinema near her home in southwest China's Chongqing Municipality when the holiday was drawing to its end.

"We were hanging out and then decided to see a movie since it was a good way to kill time," said Wu, who works in Beijing.

After watching "Kung-Fu Yoga," an action starring Jackie Chan, they decided to stay at the cinema.

"We had a lot of spare time then and my cousins were interested in the story of 'Journey to the West: The Demons Strike Back,' so we stayed in the theater to watch it," Wu said.

Directed by Hark Tsui and partly scripted by Stephen Chow, the fantasy-action tells the story of a monk bringing his three disciples to the west, a story immortalized in the Chinese classic novel "Journey to the West."

Both movies were popular across the country. "Journey to the West: The Demons Strike Back" took 1.153 billion yuan over the seven days, topping the holiday box office, while "Kung-Fu Yoga," earned 870 million yuan.

Though vastly different films, they share two things in common: comedy elements and famous stars.

"The holiday is an important battleground for the Chinese film market," said Rao Shuguang, secretary-general of the China Film Association. "Due to stiff competition, films screened during this period are more likely to be blockbusters."

MORE TO IMPROVE

Led by domestic blockbusters, homemade films took the lion's share of holiday earnings.

However, despite strong ticket sales, worries over the quality of domestic productions persist.

Influential entertainment website douban.com, rated both "Kung-Fu Yoga" and "Journey to the West: The Demons Strike Back" as less than 6 out of 10.

Some observers were also worried about the lack of imagination in domestic productions, complaining that the classic "Journey to the West," had been made several times before.

Observers have said that the film market could face a setback after its short term successes, and that filmmakers should focus on making high-quality films

to guarantee the healthy market development.

Yin Hong, a professor at Tsinghua University, said filmmakers should not just be satisfied with targeting box office earnings, but that they also needed to improve the quality of their content.

He said that in order to match ticket sales with favorable reviews, domestic films should make progress in a changing society.

China scientists develop diseases and insects resistant rice

A new rice variety, developed with genome-wide breeding chip technology, will be grown in northeast China's Heilongjiang Province, China National Seed Group announced Saturday.

The new variety is expected to be the first disease and insect resistant, and high-yield rice in the country, the company said at the signing ceremony with Rongzhong Capital Investment Group in Wuhan city, central China's Hubei Province.

"The use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers have caused environmental and food safety problems," said Zhang Qifa with Chinese Academy of Sciences. "But the genome-wide chip helps develop a new variety to cope with the problem."

In May 2012, scientists from China National Seed Group, Peking University and Huazhong Agricultural University selected more than 40,000 useful gene markers in countless gene data and developed the first genome-wide breeding chip in the world.

"It helped to improve the diseases and insects resistance of the current rice variety," said Zhou Fasong, leading scientist at China National Seed Group. "We have been identifying the genes in the past five years, and recently finally developed the new breed."

The new rice variety will be cultivated in Heilongjing Province in April.

China unveils first strategic plan for

territory development



Farmers are seen busy working on farmland as the plowing and sowing season comes along, in Yongning County, northwest China's Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, Feb. 29, 2016. (Xinhua/Wang Peng) (File photo)

China has issued its first strategic plan for territory development and preservation, outlining the protection of arable land reserves and islands.

The plan, issued by the State Council Saturday, demands the retaining of 1.825 billion mu (about 121 million hectares) of arable land by 2030 and reiterates the red-line of holding 1.865 billion mu by 2020.

Urban areas must occupy no greater space than 116,700 sq km by 2030, according to the plan.

The timetable also suggested that the country create 1.2 billion mu of high-standard farmland and bring an additional 940,000 sq km of eroded soil under control.

China, the world's third largest country by size, has a landmass of 9.6 million sq km and nearly 3 million sq km of maritime area.

The plan calls for enhanced restoration of ecology on the nation's islands, serving as base points of territorial sea and the environment-friendly development of uninhabited islands.

It also said that infrastructures on islands with development plans, and remote ones, must be improved as a major task in protecting the natural resources and environment of islands.

The plan said that development of tourism projects on remote islands would be encouraged, and the ocean economy would own a greater share of the country's growth.

China will establish 10 to 20 demonstration zones during the 13th Five-Year Plan period (2016-2020) to test ocean economy policies, according to the country's top economic planner.

By 2030, the country will get closer to becoming a maritime power given its enhanced ability in oceanic development and protection, according to the plan.

The nation had more than 11,000 islands by the end of 2015, with Zhejiang, Fujian and Guangdong having the largest number, according to the State Oceanic Administration survey.

Since 2010, the nation repaired damaged islands with 3.6 billion yuan (about 525 million U.S. dollars) from the central budget, 2.6 billion yuan from the local budget and 300 million yuan from enterprises, in a total of 169 projects.

The plan also envisions better water quality in the country's rivers and lakes, so that 75 percent of water in major drainage basins is of good quality by 2030.