

“ It is the only site that provides evidence of the first forms of life on Earth. If it disappears, there will be nowhere to turn to for such scientific research.”

Zhu Maoyan, researcher at the Chinese Academy of Sciences

Towing caution to the wind



A contestant from the United States sits on a moving motorcycle while towing an octopus-shaped kite at an international kite masters' competition in Xi'an, Shaanxi province, on Wednesday. The event, held at the Daming Palace National Heritage Park, attracted more than 30 kite masters from 16 countries and regions. ZHAI XIAOXUE / FOR CHINA DAILY

Dig for rebel emperor's sunken treasure suspended as flood season approaches

By HUANG ZHILING
in Pengshan, Sichuan
huangzhiling@
chinadaily.com.cn

An archaeological dig for an ancient king's sunken treasure in Sichuan province batted its hatches on Wednesday, as the annual flood season approaches.

More than 30,000 relics have been recovered so far.

Archaeologists have unearthed gold, silver, bronze and ironware dating back about 400 years since draining a section of the Minjiang River running through Meishan's Pengshan district in early January.

"More than 1,000 items are directly related to the Daxi Kingdom founded by Zhang Xianzhong after the collapse of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) and offer evidence the river was where Zhang's fleet of about 1,000 vessels was attacked and destroyed in 1646," said Gao Dalun, president of the Sichuan Provincial Cultural Relics and Archaeology Research Institute.

Leading historians have called the discoveries the most important related to the Ming era since the excavation of the Dingling Mausoleum, the burial site of Emperor Wan Li



Left: Jewels retrieved from the sunken fleet of Zhang Xianzhong, a revolt leader in late Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). Right: A silver ingot found in the Jiangkou section of the Minjiang River. HUANG ZHILING / CHINA DAILY

(1563-1620) and his two empresses, in Beijing in 1958.

Sources from the institute said work will likely restart next year thanks to funding from the National Administration of Cultural Heritage. The amount was not disclosed.

Zhang, a native of the area that now forms Shaanxi province, led a farmers' revolt and captured Chengdu, the Sichuan capital, declaring himself emperor of Daxi in 1644.

Chronicles show Zhang was forced to flee the city two years later and was eventually defeated and killed by troops from the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) after he and his men were ambushed in a section of the Minjiang River known as Jiangkou by Yang Zhan, a Ming general, who torched the rebels' boats.

relics from the Jiangkou section.

The move prompted archaeologists to start the first underwater archaeological dig in Sichuan. Temporary dams were built in Jiangkou, and water was drained before Gao's institute started the dig in January.

"After 98 days of digging in an area of more than 20,000 square meters, we have found gold plates that Zhang gave to his concubines, gold coins he used as rewards and silver ingots with the name of his kingdom and year of their manufacture," Gao said.

"We also found gold rings, earrings and hairpins, iron knives, swords, spears, arrowheads, porcelain plates and bowls, bronze locks, keys, sliding weights from a steelyard and thimbles."

According to Zhou Chunshui, an expert in the protection of underwater cultural heritage from the National Administration of Cultural Heritage, the jewelry found in Jiangkou came from common people.

Chronicles in Sichuan suggest that Zhang was cruel, looting wealth from both governments and common people.

70 people

were detained by police in October for trading relics from the Minjiang River's Jiangkou section, valued at more than 300 million yuan.

Since the 1950s, bulk silver, gold and coins have been found in Jiangkou from time to time. The Meishan police said in October that after more than a year of investigation, they had detained 10 gangs illegally digging for relics and nine illegal trading networks involving 70 people who traded more than 300 million yuan (\$44 million) worth of

Report: Mining jeopardizes fossil studies

By YANG JUN in Guiyang and
LUO WANGSHU in Beijing

Mining activities have been halted at three sites in Guizhou province to preserve ancient animal fossils, a county government said.

Local mining has jeopardized the fossils of ancient animals and harmed scientific research, according to a report published recently by Science and Technology Daily.

Experts from the Guizhou Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources arrived in Weng'an county for a field survey on Tuesday, with the aim of creating a preservation plan.

"More preservation sites will be established based on the survey. The human eye cannot detect paleontology fossils. It requires experts with high-tech equipment to find and preserve such fossils," said Zhao Su'e, a spokeswoman for the county government.

Zhao said it is still unknown when the plan will be issued, because it is based on the progress of the survey.

In 1998, scientists found a large number of fossils of ancient creatures in Weng'an phosphorus ore sites dating back 610 million years that can help provide scientific

evidence in the study of ancient life on Earth.

"It is the only site that provides evidence of the first forms of life on Earth. If it disappears, there will be nowhere to turn to for such scientific research," Zhu Maoyan, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Nanjing Institute of Geology and Palaeontology, told Science and Technology Daily.

Weng'an has rich phosphorus ore resources. In recent years, locals started open-pit mining on a large scale, with many ores being shipped out of the county.

According to the report, the

phosphorus ore industry generates 60 percent of the county's revenue. The problem is that mining sites are located in mountains that often contain ancient fossils.

"Several ore pits from which we previously obtained high-quality fossil samples have collapsed naturally. As those areas are now buried, we cannot observe the layers of fossils and cannot obtain samples for scientific research," Yin Zongjun, from the Nanjing institute, was quoted as saying.

Contact the writers at
luowangshu@
chinadaily.com.cn

High-speed rail to adjust ticket prices

Increases aim to defray costs, ease peak loads in China's railway network

By CHINA DAILY

Ticket prices for some bullet trains traveling in China's southeastern coastal area will be adjusted from April 21, according to China Railway Corp.

The move will affect trains running at 200 to 250 kilometers per hour between Shanghai and Shenzhen, Guangdong province, two major economic hubs along the eastern coast, the State-owned railway operator said.

The 1,623-km Shanghai-Shenzhen link consists of three sections — Shanghai to Hangzhou; Hangzhou to Ningbo; and Ningbo to Shenzhen.

After the adjustment, some prices will increase, while others will be lowered, depending on the route and train a passenger takes, China Railway said.

Prices will go up by more than 50 percent for most first-class seats on bullet trains traveling on the 1,309-km section from Ningbo to Shenzhen, while prices for second-class seats on the route will climb by 16 to 20

50 percent

Price hikes for most first-class seats on bullet trains traveling from Ningbo to Shenzhen

percent. The prices for second-class seats from Shanghai to Hangzhou and from Hangzhou to Ningbo will rise by more than 10 percent.

For example, a second-class ticket between Shenzhen and Chaoshan now costs just under 90 yuan (\$13). After the adjustment, tickets for this route will sell for 107, 102, 85 or 73 yuan, depending on the schedule.

Industry observers said the changes are aimed at using price adjustments to compensate the high construction and operational costs of China's vast high-speed railway network and to help mitigate rail transport peaks, as some price-sensitive passengers are expected to avoid some trains at peak periods

because they will have the highest increase.

Last year, 818,000 journeys a day were made on the Shanghai-Shenzhen railway. On a typical day, there were 622 bullet trains operating at more than 80 percent occupancy on the route.

Despite the high-speed railway's popularity, many routes are still generating deficits, experts said, adding that this is because of the large infrastructure investment, high operational and maintenance costs, and the old regulations governing prices.

Currently, ticket prices for high-speed trains in the southeast coastal area follow the government regulation adopted in 1997, according to a railway industry source.

Sun Zhang, a professor at Tongji University's Institute of Rail Transit in Shanghai, told China Business Network that it is feasible for the southeast coastal region to test the price changes because the region is more economically developed, while high-income travelers and businesspeople from the region usually make fast and comfortable service their priority, and are less sensitive to price changes.

Smokers punished for public puffing

By WANG HONGYI
in Shanghai
wanghongyi@
chinadaily.com.cn

More than 100 people in Shanghai have been punished for violating the new smoking ban, which took effect on March 1.

In the first month since the implementation of the regulation, law enforcement departments visited more than 30,000 public venues, with 277 venues and 115 people punished for violating the rule, and fines totaling 605,800 yuan (\$88,000) handed out, according to the Shanghai Health Promotion Commission.

In March, law enforcement departments at the city and district level worked together to carry out large-scale inspections, especially in commercial areas, office buildings and crowded public places. Venues and individuals failing to adhere to the



The role of joint work between society and government should be fully recognized."

Zhang Meixing, deputy director of Shanghai Health Promotion Commission

new regulation were punished, the commission said.

In addition, law enforcement departments carried out inspections based on the characteristics of various venues. For example, star-rated hotels, entertainment venues, libraries, cinemas, arts venues, community cultural venues and other public cultural venues were inspected during their peak times.

The commission said it was organizing intensified law enforcement activities during the second week of April.

"We will continue to strengthen the joint work with different departments, and also study the challenges facing law enforcement. The role of joint work between society and government should be fully recognized," said Zhang Meixing, deputy director of the commission.

In 2010, the city started to limit smoking in some indoor venues to designated areas, including in restaurants, entertainment venues, railway stations and airports. The new regulation prohibiting smoking at all indoor public venues and work areas in Shanghai, which took effect last month, is a step toward strengthening efforts to control smoking. It extended the smoking ban to artistic performance and sports venues, open areas at maternity and infant hospitals, and bus stops.

Under the regulation, individuals caught smoking in prohibited areas will be fined from 50 to 200 yuan and organizations that violate the regulation or fail to stop smoking will be fined 2,000 to 30,000 yuan.

"The new regulation is much tougher than before. There are many places now where people are not allowed to smoke. For a smoker, it might be seen as inconvenient, but the measure will gradually be accepted," said Lao Xuchen, a Shanghai resident.

He Qi contributed to this story.



People smoke outside an exhibition hall in Shanghai on March 1, when the city's smoking ban took effect. GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY

Briefly

BEIJING Ex-spokesman named assistant minister

Former Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang has been promoted to the position of assistant foreign minister, according to the ministry's website. Qin, 51,

graduated from the Beijing-based University of International Relations. He worked as the ministry's spokesman from 2005 to 2010 and from 2011 to 2014.



Qin was head of the ministry's Protocol Department before the promotion. The website shows he still holds the position.

Infectious diseases kill 1,589 in March

A total of 1,589 people died

as a result of infectious diseases on the Chinese mainland in March, according to official data. According to the National Health and Family Planning Commission, there were 544,132 cases of infectious diseases reported on the mainland last month.

HEILONGJIANG Former legislator gets 14 years for graft

A former senior legislator from Heilongjiang province was sentenced on Thursday to 14 years in prison for accepting bribes. Gai Ruyin, former deputy head of the Standing Committee of



Heilongjiang Provincial People's Congress, abused his various positions to help others secure projects, business opportunities and promotions between 2003

and 2015, according to the Tianjin First Intermediate People's Court. In return, he accepted money and property amounting to more than 23 million yuan (\$3.34 million), the court said. Gai pleaded guilty in court.