

CHINA

Sex abuse of minors gets attention

Recent cases have led SPP to train focus on prosecuting suspects in such crimes

By CAO YIN

caoyin@chinadaily.com.cn

Chinese prosecutors have taken more than 4,100 people to court for alleged sexual abuse of juveniles in the past three months in an intensified effort to protect minors, China's top procuratorate said.

From January to March, prosecutors across the country charged a total of 4,151 people with crimes related to the sexual assault of minors, up 2.2 percent year-on-year, according to a report released by the Supreme People's Procuratorate on Wednesday.

torate on Wednesday.

The sexual abuse of children has received more attention from the SPP, a result of public outrage triggered by several such cases over the past few years, and has become a top priority for prosecutors nationwide to crack down on.

On Monday, for example, the SPP and the Ministry of Public Security dispatched a joint team to Shandong province to supervise the investigation of a high-profile case in which a former company executive is suspected of sexually assaulting his "adopted" daughter.

The case aroused public anger last week after Chinese media reported a man surnamed Bao allegedly sexually abused his "adopted" teenage daughter when she was 14 years old.

In addition, cases involving harm to juveniles, including trafficking and molestation, have been on the rise in recent years because of loopholes in school management and lax parental supervision, the SPP said, adding crimes committed by minors, such as robbery, theft and intentional injury, have also happened frequently.

According to the SPP's report, more than 12,000 people have been charged with crimes involving minors from January to March, of

whom some 6,200 were juvenile suspects.

The SPP said it has conducted a great deal of social research into such offenses and has provided lectures to children to enhance their self-protection awareness.

To better protect the rights of young victims and perpetrators, the SPP called for educational institutes to prevent children from being abused and harmed in schools and urged authorities to focus more on crimes committed by youngsters.

Last year, the SPP set up a special prosecutorial department to tackle cases involving minors.

"Considering the frequency of cases in which children were assaulted or trafficked, we've

worked with schools to jointly prevent and punish crimes against minors by establishing a database of sex offenders and a relevant inquiry and restriction mechanism for candidates seeking jobs related to minors," Shi Weizhong, head of the new department, said in December.

With the construction of a mandatory reporting system of such crimes and an online platform for handling affairs regarding such offenses, "we've also demanded all prosecutors increase legal education on campuses to boost children's self-protection capabilities and jointly intensify inspections in entertainment places and cyberspace," he added.

Crisis: Virus 'exploits the cracks between us'

From page 1

The health crisis has also hampered the US economy. Trump has been pushing to reopen US businesses and end social distancing orders.

During the lockdown, millions of people in the US have lost their jobs and thousands of businesses have been forced to close their doors.

On Monday, Trump threatened to invoke his "total" power to force state governors to follow his directives on reopening. On Tuesday, he backpedaled, saying he was not going to put "any pressure" on governors to reopen.

At Wednesday's briefing, he said again that some states will reopen sooner, even before the May 1 deadline.

After his move to stop funding the World Health Organization in the midst of the pandemic, Trump attacked the UN body again on Wednesday as losing trust and credibility in handling the crisis.

In response, the WHO said on Wednesday it regrets the US decision to halt funding to the organization and it was assessing the possible impact.

"We regret the decision of the president of the United States to order a halt in funding to the WHO," WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said at a virtual news conference from Geneva.

Tedros said that the WHO is reviewing the impact on its work of any withdrawal of US funding and will work with its partners to fill any financial gaps it faces to ensure its work continues uninterrupted.

The US is the largest fund contributor to the WHO, providing about \$400 million a year, but some of its payments are in arrears.

The WHO director-general emphasized that his organization is not only fighting COVID-19, but also working to address a wide range of diseases and conditions such as polio, measles, malaria, Ebola, HIV, tuberculosis, malnutrition, cancer, diabetes and mental health. He said that the WHO also works with countries to strengthen health systems and improve access to lifesaving health services.

"Our commitment to public health, science and to serving all the people of the world without fear or favor remains absolute," Tedros said, adding that the WHO's mission and mandate are to work with all nations equally, without regard to the size of their populations or economies.

He reiterated that COVID-19 does not distinguish among rich nations and poor nations or large nations and small nations, nor does it distinguish among nationalities, ethnicities or ideologies. "When we are divided, the coronavirus exploits the cracks between us," Tedros said.

Meanwhile, a US-China symposium on COVID-19 — Texas-Shanghai Experience — was held on Tuesday by Fudan University, Harris County Public Health and the Houston Public Health Authority, in which health experts from two sides shared experiences on containing the virus.

Wu Fan, leader of the Shanghai COVID-19 Task Force and vice-dean of Fudan Medical School, said Shanghai's success in stopping the further spread of the virus came from detecting cases at the early stage, providing free and widely available tests, and conducting contact-tracing of infected people.

Zhang Wenhong, another leader of the Shanghai COVID-19 Task Force and head of infectious diseases at Huashan Hospital, said: "We do everything we can for each patient. Tracing every cross contact is very important."

Umair Shah, executive director of Harris County Public Health, said he was impressed by Shanghai's ability to detect infections early and conducting effective contact-tracing.

Edward Septimus, a professor at Harvard Medical School, said he was impressed by contact-tracing in China.

"If we have a second wave, we don't have the diagnostic tests to test people, including a potential antibody test. We don't have the ability to do contact-tracing to identify individuals to quarantine and isolate. I think that's the US challenge right now," Septimus said.

Pan Mengqi in Beijing and agencies contributed to this story.

Public feedback sought on list of edible animals

By LI LEI

lilei@chinadaily.com.cn

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs is seeking public opinion on a revised list of edible animal species in the latest effort to distinguish between livestock and wildlife.

The move came after the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress decided in February to crack down on the illegal consumption of wildlife.

In a circular posted on its website recently, the ministry said it had drafted a new version of the National Catalog of Livestock and Poultry Genetic Resources in light of the NPC Standing Committee's decision.

It is welcoming public feedback on the draft, including proposed changes, until May 8.

The draft catalog lists 18 traditional livestock and poultry species (including pigs, cattle, chickens and ducks) and 13 special species, whose breeding and consumption would be subject to anti-epidemic and other rules prescribed in the country's Livestock Law.

One special species on the existing list, rabbits, has been moved to the traditional species list in the draft catalog.

Most of the animals labeled as "special species" in the new list — including ostriches, silver foxes and minks — were not included in the previous version of the catalog, even though they have been domesticated and bred for decades and are central to extensive industry chains.

In a policy interpretation, the ministry said the revision is an important step in carrying out the NPC Standing Committee's resolution, which aims to ban the consumption of nearly all wild animals falling outside the list, including the wild relatives of cataloged species.

China used to allow consumption of non-cataloged wildlife as long as the animals were raised in farms

with government approval.

Gan Yuanchun, a lawyer and an adviser to the Hunan Cuisine Industry Promotion Committee, said the new rules were very strict because they did not exempt some domesticated species.

"In practice, it's really hard for watchdogs to discern wild species and their domesticated relatives," he said.

In another policy interpretation, the ministry said dogs were not added to the new list as they are essential human companions, and it is a common global practice and a sign of civilization not to treat dogs as livestock.

However, an unnamed ministry official told ThePaper.com, an online news outlet, this does not mean the consumption of dog meat will be banned.

That's because the ministry says there are two types of animals not included on the list: wild animals and their relatives in captivity, which are governed by wildlife protection laws and the NPC's ban on wildlife consumption; and pets, which are neither wildlife nor livestock — with extra laws needed to determine their edibility.

Though widely consumed in border regions in Northeast China and the south, dogs have never been included in the catalog due to management difficulties and sensitivities related to dog meat consumption.

Neither the draft catalog nor the existing one includes bamboo rats, one species suspected of being an intermediary host for the novel coronavirus.

Some local authorities have promoted the breeding of the rodent for consumption in the mountainous regions in South China to boost farmer's incomes.

Gan said that, given the economic importance of bamboo rats, there was still hope for minor modifications to the draft that could save them from being banned for good.

Routes getting busier



Passengers get off a regular-speed train in Tongzi county, Guizhou province, on Thursday. Villagers in the mountainous areas in Chongqing and Guizhou province depend on such trains to visit relatives and go to markets and schools, with the cheapest ticket being only 2 yuan (\$0.30). The railway routes in the region have become busier as the coronavirus situation improves.

QU HONGLUN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Health: Envoy impressed by measures

From page 1

Wuhan also set up 16 temporary hospitals with 14,000 beds in a very short time, and designated hospitals in the city had more than 20,000 beds. But in many Western countries, patients could not be admitted to hospitals in time due to limited medical resources, leading to a higher death rate, she said.

"We've attached great importance to treating severely and critically ill patients, and we mobilized the country's best medical resources in intensive care to Hubei and Wuhan," she said, adding that the treatment was free.

To control the spread of the virus, the central government also put Wuhan, a city with a population of more than 10 million, in

lockdown and strictly controlled travel in and out of Hubei.

After the lockdown, the whole country has provided necessary materials to Hubei to meet local people's demand, and that's how the country could control the pandemic in a relatively short time, Jiao said.

"Instead of questioning the accuracy of China's information, maybe they should look at China's experience in controlling the outbreak and make the utmost efforts to ensure all patients receive timely treatment," she said.

Kang Seung-seok, the consul-general of the Republic of Korea in Wuhan, said that data released by governments all across the world should be trusted, including in China.

He said what has impressed him most is that the Chinese government

has taken quick and tough prevention and control measures and the government and the people are cooperating closely.

Kang, who assumed his post on Feb 20, said people in Wuhan are very mindful of their personal hygiene and they have strictly followed government guidelines.

Currently, more than 100 people from the ROK live in Wuhan, and the consulate has been offering them medical supplies and other materials, he said.

"As the ROK and China have quickly controlled the outbreak, which has been well recognized by the international community, the two countries should resume economic and trade cooperation as soon as possible," he said, adding that the medical sector could be a key field for future cooperation.

Vision: Xi's actions 'led way for intl cooperation against outbreak'

From page 1

China has brought the domestic outbreak under control through massive, nationwide efforts and enormous sacrifices, but it still faces risks from imported cases of infections.

Since the onset of the outbreak, Xi has engaged in intensive discussions with more than 30 world leaders through meetings, telephone conversations and correspondence to promote international cooperation on combating the virus, as he stressed on various occasions that the virus can only be defeated when the international community fights in unity.

"Through these interactions, Xi demonstrated China's firm and sincere commitment to solidarity with the whole world, boosted global confidence, and led the way for international cooperation against the outbreak," State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi said in an article also published in the Qiushi Journal on Thursday.

China upholds the vision of building a community with a shared future for humanity, Xi's article said, noting that the Chinese government has acted in an open, transparent and responsible manner.

China released information on the epidemic to the World Health Organization and relevant countries and regions soon after the novel coronavirus broke out in Wuhan, Hubei province, in January. It speedily identified the genome sequence of the virus and shared it, and it provided timely updates on the outbreak to the organization and relevant countries and regions.

While working closely with the WHO, it contributed \$20 million to the United Nations body to help it coordinate efforts in the fight against the pandemic.

Wang said that enhancing international cooperation in fighting COVID-19 is a telling testament to China's role as a responsible major country and its commitment to building a community with a shared future for mankind.

At the most difficult moment in its COVID-19 fight, China received assistance and help from a lot of members of the international community, and now China has also been supporting the global COVID-19 fight to the best of its ability.

China has sent 14 medical expert teams to 12 countries — including Iran, Iraq, Italy, Serbia, Cambodia,

Pakistan, Venezuela and Russia — and Chinese medical experts had over 80 video conferences with their counterparts from 153 countries on how to effectively tackle and defeat the virus.

Although fighting the virus remains a formidable task, China has provided medical supplies to over 140 countries and international organizations and also facilitated countries' purchases of urgently needed anti-epidemic materials from China.

Efem N. Ubi, a senior research fellow and head of the division of International Economic Relations at the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs in Lagos, said that for China, giving aid is an obligation and synonymous with its culture and development, in line with its principles of a harmonious world society and Xi's vision of building a community with a shared future for mankind.

"Irrespective of how the virus came into being, there is no time on this earth that we need more concerted efforts and cooperation than this particular moment," the Nigerian researcher said in an article published on the website of the China Global Television Network.

At the Extraordinary G20 Leaders' Summit on COVID-19 on March 26, Xi called for an all-out global war against the outbreak, forging a collective response of control and treatment, supporting international organizations in playing active roles and strengthening macroeconomic policy coordination.

Xi's initiatives

Xi also highlighted many areas of practical cooperation, such as vaccine and therapeutics development, opening up access to an online COVID-19 knowledge center, promoting comprehensive, systematic and effective control and treatment protocols, launching a G20 COVID-19 assistance initiative, jointly ensuring the stability of global industrial and supply chains, and convening a high-level meeting on global public health security.

"These initiatives showed the direction for international efforts to tackle the outbreak. They have been highly commended by the international community," Wang said.

Former vice-foreign minister He Yafei, who is now a senior

researcher at Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies at Renmin University of China, said it is important that major countries coordinate their efforts in epidemic control while assistance to less developed countries needs to be intensified.

In the fight against the pandemic, the WHO must be supported to let it play a bigger role in coordinating the emergency response, He said.

Finance officials from the G20 countries agreed on Wednesday at a videoconference to suspend debt service payments by the world's poorest countries starting from May through the end of the year.

International Monetary Fund Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said at a news conference on the same day that more than 100 countries have asked the multilateral lender for emergency financing amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The reality is that anyone's fight against the virus is everyone's fight. More than ever, we need global solidarity, a common resolve, and coordinated international efforts," Georgieva said.