

UNEP: China's desert greening inspires world

China's success in reforesting a major desert, which was once the source of frequent sandstorms in north China, has provided ideas for other countries battling desertification, a senior UN official said.

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) executive director Erik Solheim said Sunday the main inspiration was that instead of looking at desertification as a problem, it should be viewed as an opportunity for economic development and for jobs.

He was referring to Kubuqi Desert, the seventh largest desert in China that lies in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. Over the past three decades, a quarter of the desert has been reforested.

A UNEP policy report says the core of the success at Kubuqi is its sustainable business model, and the establishment of a system that incorporates policy instruments, investment from the private sector and active participation of locals.

"We need the government to have visions, to regulate the market, but we need the private sector to bring innovative ideas and create jobs," said Solheim in an interview with Xinhua during his three-day visit to the desert from Saturday to Monday.

He said he was impressed by the large number of jobs created in new energy and eco-tourism as well as processes introduced by the private sector.

"We can use drones to spread seeds," Solheim said. "For countries in Africa and Central Asia, they can learn from Kubuqi and use that to create their own models."

UNEP on Saturday signed a cooperation memorandum with a foundation under Elion Resources Group, the company active in Kubuqi greening, to share information and boost innovation in fighting desertification.

Solheim said UNEP is also working with China to set up an International Coalition for Green Development on the Belt and Road to promote renewable energy, encourage greener infrastructure, industries and tourism.

The UNEP chief will again visit Kubuqi this September to attend a meeting of United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, which is expected to draw a roadmap to end desert expansion by 2030.

"I'll come again, ...and tell the world about the Kubuqi model," Solheim said.

Former Taiwan Leader stresses importance of 1992 Consensus

Taiwan's former leader Ma Ying-jeou on Monday said the 1992 Consensus was the common political foundation for cross-Strait ties.

Ma, at a cross-Strait economic forum in Taipei, said cross-Strait ties achieved tremendous progress since the consensus was reached.

Together, the Chinese mainland and Taiwan signed the cross-Strait Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA), which had saved Taiwan tariffs of up to 4.3 billion U.S. dollars and was very helpful in lifting Taiwan's economy, Ma said, adding that a lag in subsequent agreements had distanced Taiwan from huge business opportunities on the mainland.

The number of mainland tourists has fallen sharply in the last year as the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) has refused to recognize the 1992 Consensus, Ma said, with many travel agencies closed, hotels put up for sale and stationary tour buses.

If the DPP administration does not address the situation immediately, the consequences will be hard to predict, he warned.

Being in the media and being powerful are not the same thing

Some people write in to this site complaining that I am not on the national media enough. Some seem to think publishing things here is some kind of secret society, a way of me keeping things hushed up instead of putting them out there on the BBC. This is a silly way of looking at it. When I publish here anyone can read it. If I said something unpleasant or wrong it would soon be taken up by the better known media. Many in the media read this site without going on to quote it. It nonetheless gives them useful background. Some do quote it or use it.

It is a mistake to confuse being in the media a lot and being powerful. It is true powerful people with important roles will be in the media a lot. Any Prime Minister will be news, because the office confers great power which they will exercise. Lots of people who run departments, quangos and big companies are never in the media though their decisions affect many. It is also true people with important offices who in practice exercise little or no power will also be in the media. The media rarely probes why someone in office writes, speaks or acts as they do, though many people in such roles

are but actors and actresses reading out other people's lines. The media rarely probes this situation. There are then many people who get into the media a lot because they say controversial or difficult things, though they may have absolutely no influence over government and events at all.

It is popular with the media to report splits and disagreements within parties. They will both condemn a party for being split, and at other times complain it is brain dead if it does not have enough arguments about the best way forward. The media both says it wants more open debate, and tries to make that impossible by declaring anyone of us who holds a different view from our leadership to be disloyal. There are times when the media does more than report splits. They often seek to create them. It will invite two people from the same party who are not in disagreement to create a disagreement in a studio to illustrate some thesis they have of what is going on.

There are of course factions and splits within major parties and sometimes these matter and should be reported. Again there needs to be some assessment of numbers and influence. Today Anna Soubry is a much quoted and much interviewed MP, because the media expect her to be critical of the PM and of the Brexit policy of the government. She may be good box office, but it is difficult to believe she is influential given the difference between her views and those of most of the party.

I do not usually complain about the media. Some of it is just a freak show, seeking the extreme, the bizarre and the unimportant for greater drama. If I manage to stay off that it is probably good news. Over the last week I have produced at their request articles for the FT, Guardian and Sun. I have also been on several radio and tv shows. Some of these try to make it as difficult as possible for their guests to put forward an informed and sensible case. There seems to be a hatred of new arguments and facts at the BBC, and a wish to endlessly repeat the old, stale and often simply wrong.

[Police punish Beijing students for bullying](#)



Five students have been put in administrative detention and fined, after a video of them bullying a schoolmate went viral on the Internet. [File photo/jlonline.com]

Five students have been put in administrative detention and fined, after a video of them bullying a schoolmate went viral on the Internet.

In the video, the victim was standing in a toilet, while the bullies forced him to touch excrement. School uniforms worn by the students indicated that the incident happened in a school in Beijing's Yanqing District.

Police with the Yanqing District Branch of Beijing Municipal Public Security Bureau said Monday that the video was taken on Thursday. The seven students involved in the case also extorted more than 100 yuan (15 U.S. dollars) from the victim and physically abused him.

Of the seven bullies, two were exempted from punishment because they are under the age of 14, although their guardians were told to be stricter with them, police said.

Education authorities in Yanqing District placed two of the students under surveillance, while gave demerits on the records of four. Another bully was given a warning. The parents of the seven students were summoned for talks.

There have been frequent media reports on bullying in China's schools recent years.

In December 2016, a Beijing mother's article describing her 10-year-old son's treatment at school, went viral. After having a toilet waste-paper basket thrown on his head and being mocked by other classmates, the fourth-grade boy

was diagnosed with an acute stress disorder, a mental illness characterized by severe anxiety.

In April 2016, another video went viral showing a schoolgirl being slapped more than 30 times by a group of older girls. Police detained a number of the perpetrators.

[Torrential rain affects over 3.5 million people in China](#)



Rescuers transfer affected people in Xiangxi Township in Lanxi City, east China's Zhejiang Province, June 26, 2017. [Photo/Xinhua]

Continuous torrential rain since Thursday in parts of Anhui, Hunan, Zhejiang and Guizhou provinces affected at least 3.5 million people.

In eastern and southern Hunan, the rainstorms brought over 150 mm of rainfall in some areas in just one day, destroying more than 2,100 houses and forcing the evacuation of 163,000 people. Nearly 120 hectares of crops were damaged.

Heavy rain is forecast to continue in Hunan in the next five days.

In Guizhou, rain caused nine fatalities and left four missing. More than 57,000 people were evacuated, 12,000 houses were destroyed and 560 hectares of crops were damaged. The disaster also caused 1.3 billion yuan (about 190 million U.S. dollars) in direct economic losses.

The local civil affairs department is sending relief goods to affected areas.

In Anhui, heavy rain brought at least one fatality. More than 700 houses were destroyed and 25.8 hectares of crops were damaged.

In Zhejiang, the downpour forced the evacuation of about 150,000 people, caused direct economic losses estimated at one billion yuan. Over 40 reservoirs overflowed.