

## Man detained for disorderly conduct on flight

Airport police in Central China's Changsha detained a man for disorderly conduct on a flight Tuesday night.

The man, surnamed Zhang, reportedly lost control of his temper on flight 3U8952, exclaiming "there's someone trying to hijack the airplane".

The airplane, operated by Sichuan Airlines, was heading for the southwestern city of Chongqing from Xiamen, Fujian province via Changsha, Hunan province, according to a post published by the account of Hunan police on the social media platform Sina Weibo.

The man was later subdued by the flight crew and other passengers. After the flight landed at 21:16 at the Huanghua Airport in Changsha, the airport police detained Zhang.

Zhang reportedly has had mental problems due to relationship and work issues. Zhang has been taken to the hospital for a checkup.

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## Don't neglect public interest, courts told

Chinese courts have been ordered to increase their efforts to handle public-interest lawsuits brought by prosecuting authorities, after a successful pilot program was rolled out nationwide.

The two-year pilot program, which started in July 2015 after approval by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, the top legislature, gave prosecutors the power to sue poorly performing government departments and business agencies. The idea was to improve compliance with the law by administrators and factories.

"In the test period, more civil and administrative cases were brought by prosecuting authorities, which has contributed a lot to pushing government departments to do their jobs and effectively protect the public interest," Jiang Bixin, vice-president of the Supreme People's Court, said on Tuesday.

The latest data show that Chinese courts filed 831 public-interest lawsuits brought by prosecutors between July 2015 and September this year, with 455 of those concluded.

Now, the program has been extended across the country after it was written into the Chinese Administrative Procedure Law and Civil Procedure Law in June.

The move encourages prosecutors to play a stronger oversight role to ensure that local authorities and companies fully carry out their duties in environmental protection, food and drug safety, preservation of State assets and the transfer of land rights.

It also “raised the bar for judges on handling such lawsuits”, Jiang said, adding that there are lessons to be learned from measures taken by some of the courts in the pilot.

To improve the quality of public interest case hearings, some provinces, such as Guizhou and Shandong, set up tribunals to study and hear disputes. They also crafted guidelines to clarify the steps required in the process.

Zhang Dechang, a judge from the Guizhou High People’s Court, said that in addition to tribunals, environmental experts are invited to help investigate and evaluate losses caused by polluters.

“What we want with our judgments is to urge government departments or business agencies to implement laws in a timely manner and uphold justice. The experts’ efforts can save time in acquiring environmental knowledge and so speed up our hearings,” he said.

Applauding the achievements of the pilot program, Jiang, the SPC vice-president, ordered Chinese courts to lay down precise procedures for making cases brought by prosecutors more transparent and making the public interest a priority.

“An online platform, such as WeChat, is also necessary to increase communications between courts,” he said. “We need to learn from each other as we handle these new types of lawsuits.”

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## [Malaysia-born panda cub flies back to China](#)

Nuan Nuan, the first Malaysian-born female giant panda cub, took a flight on Tuesday at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport to head back to southwest China’s Sichuan Province, wrapping up her more than two years’ stay in a foreign country.

Born on Aug. 18, 2015 to two loaned Chinese pandas, Nuan Nuan, meaning warmth, forged a close bond with the Malaysian people and the keepers, according to Mat Naim, director of the Giant Panda Conservation Center of the

national zoo.

Mat Naim said he felt both sad and happy for Nuan Nuan, which he had been taking care of for quite some time. "Nuan Nuan is a very good cub for us. She didn't show any problems in the last two years."

Another zoo keeper accompanied Mat Naim on the flight from Malaysia to China where he will stay for several more days to monitor the panda's status.

The A330-200 freighter, which also carries some bamboo food for the giant panda, will take about four hours and 20 minutes to land in Chengdu. During the flight, Nuan Nuan will stay in a special crate, for which it has undergone some training sessions.

Ahmad Luqman, CEO of MasKargo, the airline carrying out the transportation, said they had made sure that conditions and temperatures in the cargo were comfortable for the giant panda.

Nuan Nuan's parents, Xing Xing and Liang Liang, will continue their stay in Malaysia.

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## [Waste permits put a cap on polluting companies](#)

Companies and public institutions will soon need to apply for a new government-issued permit before they can discharge pollutant waste, with restrictions placed on how much they can emit.

The move, announced as part of a pilot plan approved by the Ministry of Environmental Protection last week, is seen as a vital step in efforts to control pollution and improve air, water and soil quality.

According to the plan, which runs to 2020, the permits will be mandatory for industrial enterprises, as well as some public institutions, which are financed by the State, have no revenue, and cover sectors such as education, science, culture, health and the media.

Enterprises that apply but fail to qualify for a permit will still be monitored by local environmental protection authorities to prevent pollution, the ministry said.

China has witnessed rapid economic development over the past three decades. Yet it has come at a price, as industrial activity has degraded air, water and soil quality nationwide. In key areas, such as the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei cluster, smog has become a major headache for residents and local authorities.

The new permit – which sets a ceiling on how much waste an enterprise can discharge into the atmosphere or waterways over a certain period – is part of wider efforts by the central government to build a strict, integrated system that controls pollution nationwide.

“These permits must be issued to all potential polluters, that’s the first step,” said Song Guojun, director of the Environmental Policy and Planning Institute at Renmin University of China. “Without this permission, enterprises cannot accurately report their emissions, as the previous requirements were ambiguous.”

China first introduced pollutant discharge permits in the late 1980s, but they were not compulsory. According to the ministry’s data, only about 240,000 enterprises in 20 provincial areas ever received these original permits.

A ministry guideline on introducing the new unified system was released in January. The document covered the processes for application, examination, approval and management, and said companies will be required to disclose the volume and location of all discharges as well as the types of pollutants released.

The information should be presented in a way that is easy for the public to understand, the document added.

This came after the State Council, China’s cabinet, released a plan in November last year to establish a national platform in 2017 to manage information related to these permits. By 2020, pollutant discharges in fixed locations must match the exact amount stipulated on the company’s permit, while the data platform must effectively make enterprises and public institutions fulfill their responsibilities in pollution control, according to the plan.

Authorities have not specified the potential punishments for rule-breakers, although high-profile environmental inspections in recent years have resulted in companies being temporarily or permanently closed down for excessive discharges or lax waste management.

Shanghai, one of the pilot areas for the new system, issued its first permits in May to companies involved in the power and papermaking industries. Each was given a clear limit on how much waste they can release during the rest of the 13th Five-Year Plan period, which ends in 2020.

Shi Min, the general manager of Waigaoqiao No 3 Power Plant, said being one of the first to receive the permit was an honor, but it also brought pressure. “Along with the permit we were given a 60-page appendix that lists the types of pollutants and overall amount that can be discharged by our plant each year,” he said.

Song at Renmin University said introducing the new system will fundamentally change the discharge standards and help improve the environment.

“The permit is the foundation for environmental law enforcement, but also

evidence of enterprises' compliance with laws and regulations," he said. "It shows our environmental management is moving forward in a more professional way.

"In the past, we faced a dilemma: The air quality was below standard even though pollution discharges were in line with the standard. Now, if air quality is below standard, the regulations on pollution discharges are revised to raise the standard."

Song said a more integrated national system will also eliminate contradictions caused by parallel regulations, while data collected for the permit will help in updating discharge standards, which in turn will improve the environment, such as air quality.

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## [Xiongan New Area ecology a priority](#)

The Ministry of Environmental Protection and the Hebei provincial government signed a cooperation agreement on Monday, as China's top environmental watchdog vowed to support environmental protection work in Hebei's Xiongan New Area.

"The ministry has made the area's ecological environment rehabilitation and protection a priority," said Li Ganjie, minister of environmental protection, during a signing ceremony for the agreement in Shijiazhuang.

Li said the ministry has set up a special working group to push forward environmental protection in Xiongan, and assessment of the area's current situation has been completed.

The ministry has also drawn ecological "red lines" – limits that cannot be crossed – to protect and restore the area's environment.

Under the agreement, the ministry will join hands with Hebei to reduce pollution in the Xiongan area's freshwater Baiyangdian Lake, to establish a monitoring and supervision system and to promote the development of green industries.

In April, the central government announced plans for the new area, which will help the coordinated development of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region. About 100 kilometers southwest of Beijing, the new area includes Baoding's Xiongxian, Rongcheng and Anxin counties.

According to the plan for the area, development should always put the environment first and follow green strategies.

When plans for the area were unveiled, one goal was to create a "naturally scenic city with blue skies, fresh air and clean water".

Baiyangdian Lake, a major wetland that covers 366 square kilometers is believed to be the key to improving the area's overall environment.

At the same time, Baoding is one of 10 cities with the worst air quality in the country. Also, the city's ecology has been damaged by years of pollution from fish farming and industrial discharges.

On Nov 8, an inspection team from the Hebei Environmental Protection Bureau disclosed that there are piles of waste along the banks of the lake's feeder rivers, and that the rivers are filled with sediment and lined with illegal sewage discharge outlets, which pollute the lake.

Wang Dongfeng, Party chief of Hebei, said the province will adhere to green development and strive to solve such problems with the help of the ministry.