

Chinese provincial legislator under investigation

Wei Minzhou, a senior legislator in northwest China's Shaanxi Province, is being investigated for severe disciplinary violations, the Communist Party of China Central Commission for Discipline Inspection said Monday.

Wei has been vice head of the Shaanxi Provincial People's Congress Standing Committee since January 2017.

Protecting youth from online suicide game

Chinese police have extended surveillance of social media, after the recent spread of the "Blue Whale" suicide game targeting the country's youth.

Drawing a blue whale on a piece of paper, or carving it onto your body, and watching horror movies are just part of the game, which began in Russia. It demands players complete 50 tasks in 50 days, with the last task to commit suicide.

"If I carve a blue whale on my arm, will it leave a scar? Can I still become a police officer with that scar?" a primary school student in Wenzhou, east China's Zhejiang Province, asked his mother.

He told her his classmates were talking about a game called Blue Whale, which "sounded cool."

The alarmed mother contacted police. Their investigations into the game found a group on instant messaging service Tencent QQ inviting people to take part.

"Those who would like to join in the game must get up 4:20 a.m. tomorrow. I will send you a horror movie and you must watch it alone, or face the consequences," wrote the group's founder Xiao Yang (pseudonym).

Xiao, who called himself vice president of Blue Whale's China bureau, listed 50 tasks, including "cut your arm along the vein with a razor," "stab your hand with a needle repeatedly," "go to the roof and sit on the edge dangling your legs," "don't talk to anyone all day" and "accept the date of your death."

In Ningbo, also Zhejiang Province, 12-year-old Han Jing (pseudonym) founded a similar group last Saturday, and uploaded three photos of her self-harming.

When asked why, she replied: "I am not good at school, and don't have friends. I feel frustrated."

Chen Long from Zhejiang police's cyber security team told Xinhua that the spread of the game has been unprecedented, "in some ways like a cult." There are currently no legal means for direct conviction and punishment of game organizers and players, he said.

Police shut down Xiao's QQ group, and made him sign a declaration that he would not reopen it.

Han Jing and her parents have been receiving psychological counseling.

Zhang Zhihua from China Communications University, said prior to the spread of the game, at risk youth could meet others via the Internet and encourage or assist each other to commit suicide.

"But the game adds a level of sensory experience. Players gain attention by posting evidence of self-harming. In a sense, Blue Whale is like a step-by-step suicide guide for teenagers," said Zhang.

"Teenagers need psychological support, especially when faced with the pressures of study, society and family obligations. Otherwise, they can feel life is overwhelming and meaningless," he said.

The Beijing office of the Cyberspace Administration of China has confirmed that while Blue Whale is spread online, it is effectively an offline game.

Zhu Wei from China University of Political Science and Law has attended the office's briefing on the game as a legal consultant.

"I don't think it is a game. It is organized like a cult. It gives adolescents an excuse to do extreme things and show off," he said.

Zhu said measures have been taken on to stop its spread. Police are monitoring any mention of the game of live-streaming sites and message boards. Once messages or discussions concerning the game are detected they are immediately removed.

"Websites have been very cooperative as it concerns the lives and mental health of Chinese youth," he said.

In Hangzhou, capital of Zhejiang, the education authority has issued a notice to all primary and middle schools asking them to inform parents about the game.

If schools find their students are taking part they must report this to local police. They should also open a hotline to provide psychological counseling for both students and parents, the authority said.

Zhu said that authorities should be aware of what games and activities are popular among teenagers as the Internet allows these things to spread rapidly. "Measures must be taken as soon as harmful messages appear," he

said.

[China launches investigation into online porn, fake news organizations](#)

Four teams of inspectors are undertaking a month-long investigation into online pornography and fake news organizations across 11 Chinese provincial-level regions.

The investigation, which will finish May 26, aims to clean up “harmful” information online, targeting live-streaming, cloud service providers, mobile apps and websites circulating pornographic content, the National Office Against Pornographic and Illegal Publications said Monday.

Inspectors are also tasked with looking into news blackmailing, fake news, journalists and media organizations, said the statement.

Jointly launched by China’s various anti-pornography, publicity and Internet-related authorities, the investigation is being carried out in areas including Beijing and Shanghai municipalities, as well as provinces of Guizhou, Jiangxi and Shaanxi.

[China announces birth of 1st panda twins this year](#)

A panda in southwest China has given birth to the first set of captive-bred twins this year.

Sichuan Province’s Chengdu panda research base announced Monday that the male twins were born on April 24. They have passed the critical first month of life and are very healthy.

The cubs weighed about 110 grams at birth and have grown up to 852 grams and 844 grams respectively in their first month, according to the base.

Staff bottle fed the cubs with stored milk from other female pandas for the first nine days until the mother panda, ZhiZhi, could breastfeed them.

Pandas are an endangered species due to their extremely low fertility rates in the wild. In captivity, they often give birth to twins and sometimes even

triplets.

There are fewer than 2,000 pandas in the wild, mostly in Sichuan. More than 400 currently live in captivity.

Vaccine for HPV wins approval

Pharmaceutical company Merck recently won approval from the China Food and Drug Administration to sell its human papillomavirus vaccine, Gardasil, to help women fight cervical cancer.

Developed by the US-based company in 2006, the vaccine has proved effective in protecting against the virus, better known as HPV, the chief cause of cervical cancer. The virus is found in almost all cervical cancer cases.

Gardasil is the first HPV vaccine in the world and the second to be licensed for use in China.

In July, Cervarix, an HPV vaccine developed by pharmaceutical GlaxoSmithKline, received approval to be sold on the Chinese mainland after almost 10 years of seeking approval.

Gardasil is expected to be commercially available on the mainland in three to six months, which means women will no longer have to seek vaccinations outside of the mainland, such as Hong Kong.

After breast cancer, cervical cancer is the second-most common cancer in women ages 15 to 44 in China. Statistics from the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention show China reports more than 130,000 cervical cancer cases a year, accounting for 28 percent of global total.

The HPV vaccine, as the first anti-cancer vaccine in the world, has proved effective in preventing cervical cancer and is seen as a breakthrough in the fight against cancer.

Gardasil offers protection against nine strains of HPV, including the two main cancer-causing varieties: type 16 and type 18. Cervarix offers protection only against types 16 and 18, which account for about 70 percent of all cervical cancer cases.

Today, such vaccines are used in about 120 countries and regions, including the United States, Australia and most European countries.

As HPV is sexually transmitted, the World Health Organization recommends routine vaccination of girls age 9 to 13 because they are not as likely to have begun sexual activity.

Qiao Youlin, a professor of epidemiology at the Chinese Academy of Medical

Sciences' Cancer Hospital in Beijing, said the main target group of Cervarix is females age 9 to 26, although it is theoretically effective for women of all ages.

Clinical trials discovered the vaccine is effective for women as old as 45, he said.

According to the Securities Times newspaper, Zhifei Biological Products Co in Chongqing will promote, supply and sell the vaccine in China for the next three years.

As the exclusive distributor of the vaccine, the company plans to purchase 1.14 billion yuan (\$166 million) worth of Gardasil vaccines in the first year, 1.48 billion yuan in the second year and 1.85 billion yuan in the third year, the newspaper said.