

Shanghai seeks ways to promote smoking ban

Political advisers in Shanghai have proposed the city learn from other cities about publicizing the smoking ban that will take effect in five weeks.

Beginning March 1, all public indoor venues and work areas, as well as some outdoor places, such as art performance and sporting venues, open areas at maternity and infant hospitals, kindergartens and bus stops in Shanghai will become nonsmoking zones to shield nonsmokers from secondhand smoke.

But the current anti-smoking advertisements in the city are far from enough, said some local political advisers during their annual gathering last week.

"In Singapore, smoking bans with pictures, such as broken cigarette butts and children covering their mouths and noses surrounded by smoke, are very commonly seen in the streets to gain people's attention," said Wang Xinmei, a member of the Shanghai Municipal Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, Shanghai's political advisory body.

"Beijing also did a good job informing the public of its smoking ban, which became effective in June 2015. On all the flights and trains bound for Beijing there are repeat broadcasts of the smoking ban, which seems powerful, and Shanghai can learn from that," said Wang, who is also chairwoman of the Jinshan district branch of the city's political advisory body.

Gwan Tat-cheong, a Hongkonger and another political adviser in Shanghai, said Shanghai may look to Hong Kong, where smoking indoors has been prohibited since 2007. Publicity of the smoking ban is ubiquitous in public venues and on different communication channels throughout the city, and the notifications also highlight the cost that violators face.

"It always states clearly that errant smokers can be slapped with fines of HK\$1,500 (\$193)," said Gwan, who is also a senior adviser at the Bank of East Asia (China) Ltd.

Severe punishment for violators in the first few days after the regulation takes effect may also serve as a powerful deterrent, said the political advisers. Individuals caught smoking in forbidden areas will be fined from 50 to 200 yuan, and organizations that fail to stop smokers will be fined up to 30,000 yuan, according to the new regulation.

Wu Fan, director of the Shanghai Center for Disease Control, said: "Any new regulation, such as the citywide fireworks and firecrackers ban since the beginning of last year, faces challenges when it first comes into being, but it'll become easier when a consensus is formed in the whole society."

China is the world's largest consumer and producer of tobacco. World Health Organization statistics showed that there are more than 300 million smokers in the country, accounting for almost one-third of the world's total.

Outdoor workers need protection from pollution

People who must work outdoors on heavily polluted days are in dire need of labor protections, Worker's Daily reported.

Wang Hongtao, a food deliveryman in Beijing, said he receives 30 percent more orders on smoggy days, as people tend to stay home due to personal health concerns.

China's online food delivery company ele.me showed a 39 percent increase in orders on Dec. 16, when Beijing issued a red alert for air pollution, compared to Dec. 14, when the air was good.

A courier named Zhang said his salary depends on the number of packages he delivers, so he cannot afford to stop working when the weather is bad.

Sanitation workers and traffic police are also among those who continue working outdoors on polluted days, yet labor protection for such workers remains poor.

Ma Jingjing, a lawyer in Beijing, said smog can cause irreversible harm to humans, yet some laborers have a poor awareness of the health hazards. Ma said it is necessary for authorities to include professional dust masks among the standard equipment for outdoor workers.

Ma also called for a shortening of outdoor work hours when the air is polluted, or for higher pay on smoggy days.

Zhang Yimin, a political advisor in Ningbo City of Zhejiang Province, also proposed the adoption of flexible hours on polluted days.

It can be hard to directly attribute negative health impacts to smog exposure. This poses a challenge when it comes to verifying smog as a reason for occupational diseases.

Health expert Zhou Shenglai, with the Chinese Hospital Association, says diseases caused by exhaust fumes and smog should be included on the list of occupational diseases for sanitation workers and traffic officers.

Former oil chief sentenced for graft

Wang Tianpu, former general manager of oil giant China Petroleum and Chemical Corporation (Sinopec Group), was sentenced Tuesday to 15 and a half years in prison for graft.

The sentence was handed down by the Nanchang City Intermediate People's Court in east China's Jiangxi Province.

The court also imposed a fine of 3.2 million yuan (around 468,300 U.S. dollars) on Wang and ordered all his illicit gains to be confiscated.

The court found that from 2003 to 2014, Wang took advantage of his various positions to help others with business operations, project undertaking and job placement. He asked for and illegally accepted money and property worth over 33.4 million yuan and illegally possessed state-owned assets worth almost 800,000 yuan, according to the court.

The court showed leniency, taking into consideration his confession, remorse and the fact that he voluntarily turned over all his proceeds.

Disease-led poverty 'hardest nut to crack'

Addressing poverty caused by illness is the most difficult task in China's poverty alleviation campaign with about 40 percent of the country's rural poor in that situation, said a senior official on Monday.

The central government subsidy for medical aid reached 15.5 billion yuan (2.26 billion U.S. dollars) in 2016, up 10 percent year on year, to address this problem, said Liu Xitang, director of the social assistance bureau under the Ministry of Civil Affairs, at a press conference.

Financial aid allocated by provincial governments also shot up by 31 percent in 2016, Liu said.

In addition, the central government launched a poverty alleviation project through health promotion in 2016, pledging universal access to basic medical and health services by 2020.

Liu said the Ministry of Civil Affairs would improve its medical aid system to offer more help and ensure "the last line of defense" in medical security for the poor.

New 'carrier killer' delivered to fleet

The People's Liberation Army Navy on Sunday commissioned its fifth Type 052D guided missile destroyer to the North Sea Fleet.



Rear Admiral Zhang Wendan, commander of the North Sea Fleet, views the guard of honor on the CNS Xining in Qingdao, Shandong province, on Sunday. [Photo/China Daily]

The PLA Navy said in a news release on Monday that the CNS Xining, which has a hull number of 117, was delivered to a destroyer flotilla of the North Sea Fleet at a naval base in Qingdao, Shandong province.

The fleet's new commander, Rear Admiral Zhang Wendan, who was deputy chief of staff of the PLA Southern Theater Command, conferred the flag to Captain Zhou Minghui, commander of the Xining.

The news release said that the Xining has a stealth design and can act as a flagship for a strike group. It is capable of conducting anti-ship, anti-submarine and air defense operations, it said.

The Type 052D class is deemed by military experts to be the mightiest destroyer and the most capable fleet escort deployed by the PLA Navy. With a large load of anti-ship and land attack cruise missiles, it has been described by some Western observers as a "carrier killer".

According to military sources, a Type 052D destroyer has a full displacement of nearly 7,000 metric tons and a wide range of weapons, including a single-barrel 130-mm naval gun and a close-in weapon system as well as a total of 64 HHQ-9 long-range anti-aircraft missiles and YJ-18 or YJ-83 anti-ship cruise missiles. Adopting a host of cutting-edge technologies, the vessel features a low radar signature, a high information level and a state-of-the-art phased array radar.

The first Type 052D destroyer, the Kunming, joined the PLA Navy in March 2014. The second, the Changsha, started active service in August 2015. The third, the Hefei, was delivered to the Navy in December 2015 while the fourth, the Yinchuan, was commissioned in July last year. All of them belong to the South Sea Fleet. The Xining is the first such vessel to serve with the North Sea Fleet.

A Navy officer told China Daily on condition of anonymity that compared with other Chinese warships he has served with, the Type 052D class features better performance in terms of target detection, air defense, strike precision and joint operations.