

## Police put pressure on scammers

The Tianjin Public Security Bureau announced early results on Tuesday in what is expected to be a 20-day campaign against pyramid schemes in the city.

It said police have identified 85 suspects involved in pyramid schemes and broken up 420 dens of the illegal business operation, after two deaths were reported recently.

Around 3,000 police officers have been assigned since Sunday to ferret out the organizations, it added.

About 100 suspects have been arrested in connection with 86 scams since the beginning of this year, according to figures from the bureau.

Pyramid schemes usually involve an organization that compels individuals who wish to join to make a payment, and the organization promises its new members a share of the money taken from every additional member they recruit.

In practice, unwitting victims are often lured to a place they believe they will meet legitimate job recruiters. They are asked, often under duress, to hand over hundreds of yuan to become a member.

The leaders of such organizations always profit from the recruiting of new members.

Zhang Chao, 25, was found dead on a road in Xiqing district of the city on the morning of July 14, four days after he inadvertently joined a pyramid scheme organization, the police said in a statement.

Police detained two people connected to the organization on Monday who admitted abandoning Zhang after finding that he was seriously ill, the police said. Autopsy results will be available in a month.

The body of 21-year-old university graduate Li Wenxing was found on July 14 in a pond in Tianjin's Jinghai district. An autopsy showed that he drowned, but the circumstances that led to his death are still under investigation.

Five people were detained in Li's case, and all confessed to luring him into a pyramid scheme, the police said.

According to media reports, pyramid schemes are rampant in Jinghai district. Local police detained more than 400 suspects in 2015 and 2016. They carried out seven operations targeting one such organization, called Die Beilei, which they say caused the death of Li.

In September 2007, the Tianjin government set up a joint working group to fight against the schemes. The authorities carried out seven operations targeting the illegal activity.

The two deaths made headlines in Chinese media because both of them were

lured into pyramid schemes in Tianjin through job-seeking websites, raising questions about the legitimacy of online recruitment websites and whether the sites should be responsible for vetting advertisers.

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## Ozone issue surfaces as PM 2.5 falls

The smog-filled Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region has seen improvement in combating particulate pollution, such as PM2.5, since 2013, but faces worsening ground-level ozone pollution during the summers, a challenge many developed countries share, a new report from Peking University said.

The 13 cities in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region last year saw the annual average concentration of ground-level ozone increase by 13.1 percent, compared with the level in 2013, the report said.

The report was conducted by the Center for Statistical Science and the Guanghua School of Management, both based at Peking University, using data released from the 73 State-controlled air quality monitoring stations and 25 meteorological stations in the region between March 2013 and May 2015.

“The analysis has clearly showed the sharp decline of the major airborne pollutants since 2013, especially of particulate matter, because a package of strong control measure initiated in past years works,” Chen Songxi, director of the statistics center and survey leader, said on Tuesday.

The annual average concentration of PM2.5 decreased last year by 27 percent since 2013, and PM10 fell by 31 percent last year, compared with the 2013 level, according the report, released on Saturday.

PM2.5 and PM10 refer to fine particulate matter, with diameters measured in microns, and are regularly monitored.

“The region is likely to reach the target of reducing the concentration by 25 percent by the end of 2017 from the level in 2013,” the report said.

The annual levels of sulfur dioxide and carbon monoxide dropped dramatically in the past four years, and nitrogen dioxide concentration dipped.

But among other major pollutants, ground-level ozone concentration has increased in the 13 cities between 2013 and 2016, the report said.

“In summers, this invisible oxygen pollution worsened, and governments should set reduction targets to control it, like they did in combating PM2.5,” said Chen.

High ozone concentration at ground level could lead to breathing problems, lung diseases and asthma, the World Health Organization has said.

Since May 1, Beijing has had 53 days with excessive ground-level ozone concentration, increasing 7 percent above the annual average in the same period of the past five years, said Dong Xin, an engineer at the Beijing Environmental Monitoring Center.

“But it doesn’t mean the controls are not working, because the increased ozone has a close relation with the strong sunshine,” she said.

Many developed countries have faced the problem in summers, as well.

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## [China predicted to become 1st cash-free society](#)

China is marking its third “Cashless Day” on Tuesday, August 8, 2017. With the country predicted to become the world’s first cash-free society in a decade, new calls are being made to create legislation to make online payments safer, reports the Legal Daily.

“Cashless Day” was proposed in 2015 by Tencent, which runs a payment service through its WeChat application. In attempting to promote “cashless day,” Tencent argues a life free from physical currency is smarter, lower-carbon and more convenient.

The use of physical cash as a form of payment is dwindling in China. A recent report from the China Internet Network Information Center shows just over half – 50.3% – of all payments made at brick-and-mortar shops were mobile payments as of December, 2016.

However, the growing trend toward online payments has also aroused security concerns, including potential privacy invasions, identity theft risk and payment platform loopholes.

Experts quoted by the Legal Daily suggest the Chinese government is obliged to build a safe payment environment through legislation.

“Legislative studies related to a cashless society are going to be a major subject in the years to come,” said Zhu Wei, deputy director of the Research Center on Communication Laws at the China University of Political Science and Law.

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## 9 killed in 7.0-magnitude quake in SW China

Death toll from the 7.0-magnitude earthquake which struck a remote area in southwest China's Sichuan Province Tuesday night has risen to nine, the information office of the provincial government said on Wednesday.

Photo taken on Aug. 8, 2017 shows a view in a hotel after earthquake in Jiuzhaigou County of southwest China's Sichuan Province. [Photo/Xinhua]

As of 5 a.m., the quake has left nine people killed, 164 others injured.

At least five of the dead were visitors to the popular tourist destination of Jiuzhaigou in the epicenter of Zhangzha town, Jiuzhaigou County.

The earthquake jolted Jiuzhaigou County at 9:19 p.m. Tuesday (Beijing Time), and the epicenter was monitored at 33.2 degrees north latitude and 103.82 degrees east longitude. The quake struck at a depth of 20 km, according to the China Earthquake Networks Center (CENC).

Jiuzhaigou, or Jiuzhai Valley, is a national park known for spectacular waterfalls and karst formations. More than 34,000 people visited the tourist attraction on Tuesday.

So far, 31,500 tourists have been relocated to safe places.

The local government has organized tourist coaches and private-owned vehicles to rush to the affected areas to help transport the stranded tourists.

Power, communication and water supply in the county seat have basically recovered.

So far, Jiuzhaigou County has dispatched more than 90 emergency vehicles and 1,200 personnel to participate in the rescue work.

The county also sent consultants to hotels, rural inns and streets to offer possible counseling service for tourists.

The quake was felt in the provincial capital Chengdu about 300 km south of the epicenter, and other regions in the neighboring provinces of Gansu and Shaanxi.

Sichuan is a quake-prone region. In May 2008, an 8.0-magnitude earthquake struck Wenchuan and killed more than 80,000 people. In 2013, a 7.0-magnitude quake hit Lushan, killing 196.

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