

City acts after ministry requires tougher measures

Langfang city in Hebei province will redouble its efforts to control air pollution by the end of October, as required by the Ministry of Environmental Protection, local authorities said on Thursday.

The ministry announced last week that it would be supervising the city's efforts going forward. "We will take stricter measures to shut down or oversee polluting companies that have been identified by the ministry," said Li Chunyuan, deputy head of the Langfang Environmental Protection Bureau.

The ministry said in a notice on its website on Friday that it will oversee Langfang's work on air pollution control because the city, which has been haunted by environmental issues in recent years, still has many prominent problems to deal with.

"Some local government officials of Langfang don't realize the seriousness of the environmental issues and are slow to implement related plans, leading to continuous illegal pollution-discharging activities by clusters of companies," the notice said.

According to the notice, two counties in Langfang, including Wenan and Dacheng, are facing serious pollution caused by a number of companies making plywood and thermal insulation materials, and processing plastics and nonferrous metals, all of which are polluting.

According to Langfang Daily, 2,290 companies in 20 clusters were identified by the ministry.

Most of the companies emit volatile organic waste without proper processing, it said. They have poor environmental protection facilities, directly discharge waste or disperse it in the open air.

According to Li, all of the companies processing nonferrous metals in Dacheng county have been closed permanently, while some others were temporarily shut down pending improvements.

This is the first time the ministry has stepped in directly to oversee a city's work on preventing air pollution since earlier last month when it began intensified environmental scrutiny in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region, chinanews.com reported.

Beyond Langfang, the ministry also found clusters of polluting companies – the major environmental issue for the region – in Binzhou and Jining, Shandong province; Cangzhou and Hengshui, Hebei province; Yangquan and Changzhi, Shanxi province; and Zhengzhou, Henan province.

All will be urged by inspection teams designated by the ministry to deal with pollution in a more timely manner.

China gets tough with personal information leaking

China courts have issued a harsh judicial ruling, stipulating those who illegally obtain or sell 500 or more pieces of personal information could face a sentence of up to seven years.

The judicial interpretation, the first of its kind jointly released by the Supreme People's Court (SPC) and the Supreme People's Procuratorate (SPP), came amid increasing public outcry against rampant online and telecom fraud in China.

It clearly defines personal information, a concept of which is controversial in practice, said Yan Maokun, research director at the SPC.

Judges will be able to give an accurate and consistent ruling based on the interpretation, Yan added.

Under China's Criminal Law, those convicted of selling or providing personal information could face a maximum sentence of three years if "the circumstances are serious," while if "the circumstances are especially serious," violators could face up to seven years in prison.

The judicial ruling defines which situations considered "serious" or "especially serious" according to the types and amounts of leaked personal information, as well as the impact caused such encroachment.

Situations considered "especially serious" include illegally obtaining, selling or providing 500 or more items of data about a person's location, communication content, credit or property information; 5,000 or more items of communication record, accommodation, health or transaction information; or 50,000 or more items of personal information other than the aforementioned types.

Should violators make more than 50,000 yuan (\$7,239) from these activities or their crimes lead to victim's death, serious injury, mental disorder or kidnapping, their offenses will be considered "especially serious."

The amount of leaked information in cases considered "especially serious" is ten times that in "serious" cases.

"Such specific penalty standards for personal information infringement assists law enforcement and will act as a powerful weapon to fight information leaking," said Ren Xianjie, from the legal policy research department of the SPP.

Investigation found that employees of the banking, e-commerce, education,

express delivery and telecom industries are the most likely to leak customers' personal information, said Xu Jianzhuo from the Ministry of Public Security (MPS).

Police arrested 4,261 suspects in 1,886 cases related to infringement of personal information in 2016, and 391 of them were employees leaking customers information, according to MPS data.

The new rule has stipulated that employees who illegally sell or provide half of the aforementioned amounts of data about customers personal information could face the same penalties as individuals.

"The interpretation lowered the penalty threshold for employees, which provided legal basis for us to fight information leaking," said Xu.

Leaking personal information has become a public nuisance in China. Last year, a telecom fraud case involving leaked personal information aroused shock and anger among the public.

Xu Yuyu, a recent high school graduate in east China's Shandong Province, died of cardiac arrest in August 2016 after losing 9,900 yuan earmarked for her university fees to telecom fraudsters.

The Internet Society of China estimated junk messages, leaked personal information and fraud led to losses of about 91.5 billion yuan in 2016.

[Top graft authority exposes official corruption](#)

The top disciplinary arm of the Communist Party of China (CPC) named and shamed 88 officials in 71 corruption cases that directly undermined public interests Thursday.

The CPC Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) said the cases involved extortion of state subsidies, embezzlement of poverty relief funds, misappropriation of compensation for land requisitions, abuses of power and receipt of kickbacks.

Those named on the list were mainly low-level bureaucrats. A total of 3,333 officials in 2,412 cases have been exposed since the CCDI established the monthly reporting system to disclose such violations in July 2015.

Investigation found that extortion of state subsidies for agriculture was the most common misdemeanor, followed by misappropriation of compensation for land requisitions and embezzlement of allowances for house renovation,

according to the CCDI.

[Wells help control plateau parasite in SW China](#)

Authorities in southwest China's Sichuan Province have dug 554 deep wells in the past five years in areas subject to a fatal parasitic disease, providing clean drinking water to 57,000 residents, according to local land and resources department.

The wells are at least 30 meters deep, which can avoid spreading of echinococcosis, a type of tapeworm infection, which mainly affects herding areas in Sichuan, Gansu, Inner Mongolia, Ningxia, Qinghai, Tibet and Xinjiang.

Humans can be infected with the disease through contact with infected animals and contaminated food, water and sand.

Shiqu County in the Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Garze, Sichuan, is among the hardest-hit regions. Last year, 150 wells, costing nearly 43 million yuan (6.2 million U.S. dollars) from the provincial government, were finished in the county.

In 2012, about 50 million Chinese people were under threat from the disease. The government aims to have the disease under control by 2020.

[Han Zheng elected Shanghai CPC chief](#)

Han Zheng was elected secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Shanghai Municipal Committee on Friday.

Han, who has been Party chief of Shanghai since 2012, was elected to the post at the first plenary session of the 11th CPC Shanghai Municipal Committee.

Han, born in 1954, is currently a member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee. He served as Shanghai mayor between 2003 and 2012.

At the session, Ying Yong, currently Shanghai mayor, and Yin Hong, were elected deputy secretaries of the CPC Shanghai Municipal Committee.