

China revises law to boost Red Cross credibility

China's top legislature Friday passed a revised law to boost the transparency and credibility of the country's Red Cross societies.

The legislation was adopted after a third reading at the bimonthly session of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC), which runs Wednesday to Friday.

Red Cross societies in China are now required to give feedback to donors on the use of their donations, and staff who fail to do so could face civil and criminal charges.

"The revision primarily focuses on strengthening supervision on Red Cross societies and standardizing their activities," Guo Linmao, an official with the Legislative Affairs Commission of the NPC Standing Committee, told a press conference Friday afternoon.

A previous clause giving Red Cross societies power to "rectify" illegal activities by their subordinate societies and staff was deleted from the new draft.

After several scandals, China's Red Cross has grappled with trust issues in recent years.

Revision work for the law began in 2016.

The first reading of the draft suggested that independent third-party agencies should audit donations and that an information disclosure system should be put into place.

The societies should also establish a system for financial management, internal control, public auditing as well as supervision of funds and assets.

The second draft expanded Red Cross societies' duties in stem cell and organ donation.

The Red Cross Society of China established an organ donation administration center in 2012, becoming involved in organ donations at every stage from donor registration to organ distribution.

The third reading specified that Red Cross societies could participate in and promote blood, body and organ donations, and could carry out work related to stem cell donations.

It stated that leading supervisors at all Red Cross societies must be chosen through a democratic process.

The revision will safeguard and regulate Red Cross societies in performing

their duties and boost its credibility, according to Zhang Mingqi, a vice chairman of the Law Committee of the NPC.

The law will come into force May 8, 2017.

Green light for China's first high security bio lab

China's first high level biosafety laboratory has been accredited and will be fully operational soon, the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) said Friday.

The certificate was issued by the China National Accreditation Service for Conformity Assessment, according to the CAS.

The lab in Wuhan, capital city of central China's Hubei Province, will be used to study class four pathogens (P4) – the most virulent viruses that pose a high risk of aerosol transmission.

P4 is the highest biosafety level.

The lab in Wuhan will help China prevent and control outbreaks of infectious diseases and aid research and development of antiviral drugs and vaccines, said Zhang Yaping, vice president of the CAS.

All the air from the lab will go through two advanced filters before being discharged, while solid and liquid waste will also be properly processed, according to the CAS.

The Wuhan lab has undergone a trial operation since its construction was completed at the end of 2014. Some of the core research team have been trained in France and the United States.

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[Beijing to replace all taxis with new energy vehicles](#)

Beijing is aiming to gradually replace its petrol-powered taxis with greener new energy vehicles to help reduce air pollution starting from this year.



A new engergy car is on the road in Beijing. [File photo/ecns.cn]

The plan is contained in a discussion document on preventing and solving air

pollution problems in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei Region and neighboring provinces, which was issued on February 14, according to National Business Daily.

All petrol-and diesel-powered taxis being taken out of service would need to be replaced by electric or liquid petroleum gas (LPG) powered cars. Any vehicles that taxi companies plan to buy should be electric or other types of new energy cars.

Statistics show that Beijing currently has about 71,000 taxis in total, out of which 67,000 are conventionally powered, the National Business Daily reports.

It is estimated the market size would reach 9 billion yuan (about 1,309 million USD) if all the taxis in Beijing were replaced by electric or natural-gas-powered vehicles, according to National Business Daily.

Experts say once the plans in the discussion document implemented, it will not only contribute to the environment, but stimulate China's new-energy vehicle industry.

However, it is not easy for green powered taxis to compete with traditionally powered ones at present, due to concerns over longer time needed on charging and the limited mileage of electric vehicles, says Liu Tao from the Beijing Taxi Cum Automotive Leasing Association

Purchasing a traditionally powered vehicle would generally cost between 60,000 yuan (about 8,725 USD) to 70,000 yuan (about 10,179 USD), but an electric vehicle would cost about 140,000 yuan (about 20,359 USD), Liu said.

But if the number of new energy vehicles is increased, that cost will go down, say Li Liangjin, CEO of CAOCAO, a Chinese travel service platform.

[China to build 6M homes for shantytown-dwellers in 2017](#)



Aerial photo taken on Jan 9, 2017 shows view of Zhangqiao, one of the largest shantytowns, and surrounding estate in Hongkou district, East China's Shanghai. [Photo/Xinhua]

China will build 6 million new homes for residents of shantytowns before the end of 2017, said Chen Zhenggao, Minister of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, at a news briefing in Beijing on Feb 23.

The Chinese central government started a three-year project to rebuild urban shantytowns in 2015, aiming to construct a total of 18 million new homes in all. In 2015, construction began on 6.01 million new dwellings, and another 6.06 were started in 2016.

According to Chen, the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development (MHURD) kicked off this year's shantytown transformation work on Jan. 16. The central government has provided 224.3 billion RMB in subsidies for the work in 2017, an increase of 15 billion RMB compared with last year.

China is determined to reconstruct all of its existing shantytowns by 2020. MHURD is working with relevant departments to conduct a thorough investigation and make the planned transformation a reality.