

Beijing to stamp out toxic school racetracks

Beijing will issue new standards on the quality of synthetic racetracks in primary and high schools in 2017 after children reportedly fell sick from exposure to toxic running tracks last year.

Construction of new synthetic running tracks will be suspended until the enforcement of the new standards, which have been given priority by the Beijing Municipal Education Commission this year.

Makeshift racetracks, such as water permeable brick or concrete ones, will be adopted with the new standards.

Zhang Yongkai from the commission said the new standards would require extensive tests on chemical substances, and that the entire construction process, including raw material purchase and processing, would be under strict inspection.

Last year, pupils in a primary school in downtown Beijing reported nosebleeds, dizzy spells and coughs after alleged exposure to the newly renovated tracks. Tests on the tracks in mid-June, nine months after they were put into use, showed excessive amounts of benzene substances and formaldehyde.

Similar cases were also reported in other provincial regions, such as Jiangsu and Guangdong.

Media reports said some of the racetracks were made of industrial waste, such as scrap tires and cables, and were built with substandard glue.

Foreigner's fingerprints to be collected upon entry in China

Foreign nationals' fingerprints will be collected by China's border authorities when entering China, according to a statement on the website of China's Ministry of Public Security on Thursday.

The country's border authority will gather the fingerprints of incoming foreigners aged 14 to 70. Foreign nationals holding diplomatic passports or enjoying mutual exemption of this kind will not have to, according to the statement. The regulation will begin trials in Shenzhen airport on Feb. 10 and will be expanded to other airports and ports this year.

The ministry said the practice, which is commonplace in many other countries, is to enhance exit/entry administration, and border authorities will take measures to make customs clearance more efficient.

Police arrest over 30 drug suspects in SW China

Police in southwest China's Guizhou Province have seized a large amount of equipment and 900 kilograms of raw materials for drug production and arrested more than 30 suspects, police said Thursday.

In July 2015, police in Guizhou's provincial capital Guiyang began to investigate the activities of a drug gang headed by a suspect surnamed Li. The gang operated a drug lab in a remote village in north China's Hebei Province.

In October 2016, police raided the lab and arrested Li and five other suspects. They also confiscated over 900 kilograms of raw materials and equipment. A major member of the gang, surnamed Zhang, however, evaded capture and fled the scene.

On Feb. 1 this year, the police were tipped off that Zhang had resurfaced in Guiyang and was in the process of setting up another lab. Zhang had also secured sales with drug dealers in Malaysia.

Zhang and 30 other suspects were arrested in Guiyang on Feb. 7.

Guangxi officials probed over pangolin dinner

The disciplinary authority in south China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region has launched a probe into the case of a "pangolin dinner", after a newly discovered social media post went viral online.

A controversial microblog post in 2015 about an official banquet has been dug up by netizens, sparking public outrage with regards to eating endangered animals and putting local officials in serious trouble.

Weibo user Al_cal, later identified to be the son of a clock tycoon in Hong Kong, posted on his Weibo account that he'd been hosted by local officials in

Guangxi to a banquet that included a pangolin dish.



Al_cal's microblog post on the pangolin banquet has sparked public outrage with regards to eating endangered animals. [Photo: Weibo]

"Thanks to the hospitality of Director Li and Secretary Huang for inviting me to their office and cooking pangolin meat for us," wrote Li Jiahe in July 2015, when he was on a research trip in south China with a Hong Kong delegation. "This is the first time that I had it, and I find it very delicious."

The post also includes pictures from the alleged banquet, including the pangolin dish and a group photo of Li with several government officials. All of his posts were later deleted after wide online circulation.

In response to the extensive public attention, Guangxi Investment Promotion Agency, which was hosting the Hong Kong delegation, said that they cannot recognize any of its leaders or employees among the diners in the photo. It also claimed that there is no senior official surnamed Li or Huang when the post was published on July 15, 2015.

The current Party secretary of the agency, named Huang Wenbiao, is said to have been in Singapore at the time and was only appointed to the job on July 21.

According to a written statement issued on Feb. 8, the Hong Kong business delegation revealed that all the members were having group buffet dinner during their visit in Guangxi between July 8 and 10, and Li did not return to Hong Kong with rest of the group. "The alleged pangolin dinner was Li's personal involvement and the delegation has nothing to do with the case."

The investigation is still underway.

The Chinese pangolin, one of the eight species of pangolins, has been heavily hunted and trafficked for its meat and scales, which are believed to have medicinal qualities.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature listed the Chinese pangolin as "critically endangered" in 2014 on the basis of predicted decline of up to 90 percent over the next couple of decades.

Late last year, Shanghai customs officials seized more than 3 tons of pangolin scales – the largest pangolin seizure in China's history, officials said.

[China to continue cracking down on surrogacy](#)

China will continue cracking down on surrogacy, despite recent speculation that the country may loosen related policies, reports said on Wednesday.



Mao Qun'an, a spokesperson of the National Health and Family Planning Commission, speaks during a press conference Wednesday in Beijing. [Photo:China.org.cn]

"We will continue cracking down on the illegal practice of surrogacy to ensure people's safe, legal and efficient access to assisted reproductive technology," said Mao Qun'an, a spokesperson of the National Health and Family Planning Commission, during a press conference on Wednesday.

The state-run People's Daily published a story recently which quoted several experts who argued that the country should loosen its restraints on surrogacy. The story was then interpreted by some as a signal that the country would loosen its grip. But Mao responded that surrogacy is still prohibited in China, citing a law in 2001 which banned surrogacy in any form.

According to the People's Daily article, there are 90 million Chinese households which are eligible to have a second child after the country loosened its one-child policy in 2015. But 60 percent of the females are 35 years old or above, and 50 percent are more than 40 years old, making it quite difficult for them to have a second child.

Experts in that article also cited the high rate of diseases which cause lowered fertility and loss of children in a Chinese household as reasons for surrogacy to be allowed.