

Internet helps promote organ donation in China

The myriad services just a swipe of the finger away in China are no longer limited to food delivery, airport check-ins, or finding a bike on the street.

The latest novelty is an after-death service: organ donation.

Once beset by misconceptions and opaque proceedings, the Internet is unleashing explosive growth of people signing up for organ donation.

Huang Jiefu, director general of the China Organ Transplantation Development Foundation, told Xinhua on the sidelines of the annual “two sessions” that the number of online applicants in two days had been equal to those registering at Red Cross offices in two years.

In December, Huang’s foundation – backed by the National Health and Family Planning Commission – launched an organ donation function on Alipay, an online payment platform with 450 million users.

Alipay users can easily register themselves as potential organ donors, because to sign up as an Alipay user, one has to submit accurate personal data. It saves the foundation efforts to collect and verify potential donors’ information.

If one regrets, even at the deathbed, he can de-list himself from the pool by a few clicks, says Hong Junling, public relations manager of the foundation.

Hong said after three months of operations, the number of registered donors on Alipay has exceeded 100,000 and keeps rising.

“With Internet, I register in just one minute,” said an eager donor who chose to remain nameless. “Life is short, but by donating my organs, I can save the lives of others and part of me will live on in them, so why not?”

In China, about 300,000 patients need organ transplants each year.

Volunteers became the lone source of transplants after organ trading was outlawed in 2011 and the use of organs from judicial systems banned in 2015.

In a public opinion poll by the foundation, 83 percent of the respondents said they would like to donate their organs after death. Among the remaining 17 percent, more than half were reluctant to register because they did not know where to apply or complained that the registration was too complicated.

Xiaolong (pseudonym) was diagnosed with progressive muscular dystrophy when he was six years old. Last year, at 14, he decided to call off his treatment.

Xiaolong said he had wanted to donate his body, but did not know where to go. He only succeeded in getting touch with a Red Cross cornea bank after

appealing on a local TV channel.

China has 731 million Internet users, more than half of the entire population. Internet is rapidly changing people's life, including the way they participate in charity.

"The wide availability and convenience of the Internet made it much easier for the Chinese to express their wish to donate organs," said Huang, a member of the 12th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), a political advisory body.

Though registered donors do not translate into actual donors because the law gives the deceased's family the final say, there will definitely be more donations in the long run, Huang said.

As political advisors, CPPCC members can put forward proposals, comments and suggestions on major political and social issues.

Huang has proposed that the health insurance covers organ transplant costs so that more low-income families can afford it.

"A £60 billion Brexit fund"?

I awoke to an odd headline yesterday in the Sunday Times. The Chancellor we were told is going to set up a £60bn Brexit fighting fund.

Fortunately the Chancellor's own words in the same newspaper said no such thing. It was a silly headline. The government is scheduled to continue borrowing a bit more each year up to 2020, beyond our likely date of exit. The additional borrowing each year is now well down on the peak rates of the previous decade, and will continue to fall this Parliament. All the time we are adding a bit to state borrowing we cannot create a fund out of tax revenues.

Nor did the Chancellor write that there can be no net increase in spending in the March budget. He acknowledged that growth has come in faster and the revenues higher than forecast in the Autumn Statement. He has pre announced more money for vocational training and hinted at more spending on social care. He of course states his wish to see continued progress this Parliament in cutting the deficit further but has not said he wishes to stop all new borrowing. He will have some options as the Treasury and OBR correct some of their forecasting mistakes from the Autumn.

The headline about a Brexit fund is doubly misleading. The sum involved just happens to be the sum the rest of the EU would like us to pay as an exit payment. That is why we must rush to explain to them there is no such fund, no such money, as well as telling them there is no liability for us to have

to pay. Nor does Brexit require a special fund. The future path of the UK economy is going to be mainly influenced by interest rates, the performance of the US and global economy, world commodity prices and their impact on inflation, and by the balance of domestic fiscal and monetary policy. In other words after Brexit as before the main determinants of our performance will have nothing to do with whether we are in or out of the EU, just as our past performance clearly got no visible benefit out of being a member of the EU internal market. Inflation is rising as many have predicted, but so far UK inflation has risen in line with US and German because it is led by world oil prices, not by the fall in sterling.

In the EU we experienced two great crashes. One was caused directly by EU policy when we fell out of the mad and dangerous Exchange Rate Mechanism and plunged into recession. The second, the Great Recession and banking crash of 2008-9 was a common crash in the USA, the Euro area and the UK brought on by similar Central Banking and commercial banking mistakes in all three zones. The EU did not cushion or ameliorate the problems, and then added their own twist of the recessionary knife with the Euro crisis that followed.

Let's hope our authorities have learned from these bitter experiences so we have a good economic performance as we leave the EU. To do so we need interest rates that allow continued expansion without damaging the pound further, as the US hikes her rates. We need some relaxation of credit for good projects, home purchase and other affordable purposes in the private sector, and we need accelerated rates on investment in infrastructure to catch up with our needs.

[UN calls for support to recovery plan as Haiti loses \\$2.7 billion in Hurricane Matthew](#)

6 March 2017 – The United Nations office dedicated to disaster risk reduction today called for urgent support to improve disaster risk management in Haiti, following a damage assessment that shows the country lost \$2.7 billion, or 32 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP), as a result of Hurricane Matthew six months ago.

Hurricane Matthew revealed disturbing truths about least developed countries which lack the capacity to respond adequately to climate change and the rising intensity and frequency of weather-related disasters, said the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction, Robert Glasser in a press release.

His call came on the eve of the 5th Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Americas, which opens in Montreal, Canada, tomorrow.

“While the government’s civil protection system prevented many deaths, it is unacceptable that over 600 people should have died in a hurricane that was so well-forecast,” he added.

The magnitude of the losses shown by a thorough government-led Post-Disaster Needs Assessment would be a devastating blow to any economy. It came on top of two years of drought affecting the food security of one million people and the 2010 earthquake which cost 120 per cent of GDP, he said.

Mr. Glasser urged strong support for the three-year recovery plan developed by the Haitian government, the UN and other partners that seeks \$2.72 billion.

He said that Haiti demonstrated how implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the global plan to reduce disaster losses, has to take into account the role that poverty plays in driving disaster risk.

In 2012, it was estimated that 58.6 per cent of the 10.7 million people live below the threshold of \$2.4 per day while 24 per cent live in extreme poverty or less than \$1.23 per day. Haiti is estimated to have lost on average 2 per cent of its GDP to weather-related disasters every year between 1975 and 2012.

[Polluted environments kill 1.7 million children each year, UN health agency reports](#)

6 March 2017 – Unhealthy environments are responsible for one-quarter of young child deaths, according to two new reports from the United Nations health agency, which reviewed the threats from pollutants such as second-hand smoke, UV radiation, unsafe water and e-waste.

According to the latest information, polluted environments take the lives of 1.7 million children under the age of five.

“A polluted environment is a deadly one – particularly for young children,” said Margaret Chan, Director-General of the UN World Health Organization (WHO). “Their developing organs and immune systems, and smaller bodies and airways, make them especially vulnerable to dirty air and water.”

In one of the two reports, *Inheriting a Sustainable World: Atlas on Children’s Health and the Environment*, WHO announced that many of the common causes of death among children aged between one month and five years of age

are preventable with safe water and clear cooking fuels. These include diarrhoea, malaria and pneumonia.

The main pollutant is in the air, resulting in 570,000 deaths each year among children under five years old. Air pollution can stunt brain development and reduce lung function and trigger asthma. In the longer-term, exposure to air pollution can increase the child's risk of contracting heart disease, a stroke or cancer.

To counter such exposure, WHO recommends reducing air pollution, improving safe water and sanitation, and protecting pregnant women and building safer environments, among other actions described in *Don't pollute my future! The impact of the environment on children's health*.

Investing in the removal of environmental risks to health, such as improving water quality or using cleaner fuels, will result in massive health benefits, said Maria Neira, WHO Director, Department of Public Health, Environmental and Social Determinants of Health.

One of the emerging environmental threats to children is electronic and electrical waste, according to the second WHO report. Appliances such as old mobile phones that are improperly recycled expose children to toxins which can lead to reduced intelligence, attention deficit, lung damage, and cancer, the UN agency reported.

At the current rate, the amount of such waste is expected to increase by 19 per cent between 2014 and 2018, up to 50 million metric tonnes.

The reports also point out harmful chemicals that work themselves through the food chain such as fluoride, lead and mercury, as well as the impact that climate change and UV rays have on children's development.

AUDIO: If you smoke, burn fossil fuels like coal or drive a vehicle, chances are, you're polluting the air and harming the health of those around you, the World Health Organization (WHO) is warning. *Credit: UN News*

[UN agency concerned new US refugee plan may 'compound the anguish' of people fleeing conflict](#)

6 March 2017 – Refugees are ordinary people forced to flee war, violence and persecution in their home countries and who remain in urgent need of life-saving assistance and protection, the United Nations refugee agency underscored today in the wake of the latest Executive Order signed by the

President of the United States on refugee resettlement.

“The imperative remains to provide protection for people fleeing deadly violence, and we are concerned that this decision, though temporary, may compound the anguish for those it affects,” UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi said in a news release, adding that his Office (UNHCR) has long been a partner for the US in finding solutions to refugee problems, “and we look forward to continuing this partnership.”

Mr. Grandi’s statement follows the signing earlier today by US President Donald Trump of an Executive order that, according to news reports, would, among other things, suspend the country’s refugee programme for 120 days. It would also bar for 90 days travel to the US by citizens of Iran, Libya, Syria, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen.

Today’s measure follows a similar Order signed by the US President on 27 January, which barred all nationals from several majority Muslim countries — Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen — from entering the US for 90 days. Under that Order, Syrian refugees were barred indefinitely.

In the wake of the new Order, the UN refugee agency reiterated its readiness to engage constructively with the US Administration to ensure all refugee programmes meet the highest standards for safety and security.

“Americans have long played a crucial role in promoting global stability while simultaneously exemplifying the highest humanitarian ideals, from support for refugee emergencies overseas, to welcoming some of the most vulnerable refugee families in the United States to rebuild their lives in safety, freedom and dignity,” said UNHCR.

“This is the gold standard in refugee protection and a powerful model for all countries,” it said, adding that at a time of record-high levels of forced human displacement, “this kind of humane leadership is needed more than ever.”