

Top attractions to install unisex toilets



Pedestrians use unisex toilets in Chongqing City on April 24, 2015. [Photo: gmw.cn]

China's top-ranking tourist attractions should be equipped with unisex toilets to meet higher standards, said a top tourism official on Feb. 4.

As part of a "toilet revolution" scheme that aims to boost tourism through cleaner and better-managed public conveniences, China will build 271 unisex toilets and renovate 333 at the country's 5A scenic spots, according to Li Jinzao, head of the China National Tourism Administration.

As an alternative to gender segregated restrooms, unisex toilets are installed for people with disabilities, the elderly, the young and anyone who may require the assistance of someone of another gender.

A typical unisex restroom is equipped with a 45-centimeter toilet, a 70-centimeter safety pole, a clothes hook and an emergency call button to meet the needs of different people.

China is making steady progress to improve toilet sanitation nationwide since the "revo-loo-tion" began in 2015.

A total of 50,916 toilets have been installed or upgraded so far, 89.33 percent of the official target the government announced for the three years through to 2017, said Li.

Beijing receives over 2 bln cubic meters of water from Yangtze

As of 10 a.m. on Feb 1, the middle route of the South-to-North Water Diversion Project had supplied Beijing with over 2 billion cubic meters of water, of which nearly 70 percent are for drinking.

Water plants got 1.369 billion cubic meters, accounting for 68 percent of the total. Currently the average daily flow into Beijing hit 1.05 million, with 0.93 million supplied to water plants.

11 million people in Beijing have got access to water from the Yangtze River. In addition, 284 million cubic meters were stored in reservoirs, with the rest used for groundwater, rivers and lakes.

Beijing attracted 671 new 'cutting-edge' projects in 2016

A night view of Zhongguancun Science Park in Beijing. [Photo/China.org.cn]

A total of 671 major projects in high-tech and sophisticated industries were registered in Beijing last year, according to the annual work meeting of the city's investment promotion bureau.

In the same period, the bureau managed to attract 747 foreign-funded projects, with a combined value of US\$7.02 billion, up by more than 10 percent year on year. Newly registered enterprises paid 15.2 billion yuan (US\$2.22 billion) in total in tax last year,

"Since 2016, the investment promotion bureau has been endeavoring to remove the city's non-capital functions to make the city more livable," said Zhou Weimin, director of the Beijing Investment Promotion Bureau.

Zhou said these endeavors were the reason that the bureau put a priority over high-tech industries, high-end and high-quality service industries, and high-value cultural industries last year.

The business sector's growing willingness to invest in Beijing reflects the perfect, amicable business environment of the Chinese capital. In particular, the city's business administration, tax, finance, among other government agencies are exploring innovative, new measures that could provide good

templates for other cities to follow.

For example, among the 40 innovative, new measures in the city's service sector, there is China's first aircraft maintenance company formed by a joint-venture and China's first joint-venture tourism agency dealing with Chinese citizens' overseas trips.

While the city keeps promoting cutting-edge industries and projects, local enterprises have accelerated their pace in going overseas. Data shows that in the first three quarters of last year, foreign direct investment (FDI) totaled US\$13.75 billion, a 94-percent year-on-year increase. The FDI figure was basically on par with US\$12.62 billion, the amount of investment Beijing attracted over the same period.

Zhou Weimin said that in 2017, the investment promotion bureau will continue to serve the city's objective of developing the service-based economy, knowledge-based economy, green economy and headquarters economy, helping control the city's population, contribute to stable growth and facilitate private investment.

Beijing vows to clear out non-capital functions

Beijing Mayor Cai Qi addresses a symposium with state media on Sunday.

Beijing Mayor Cai Qi vowed to remove Beijing's non-capital functions at a symposium with state media on Sunday.

Cai said that to remove non-capital functions of Beijing is to do the supply-side structural reform, to make structural adjustments and transform the economical growth pattern, as well as to clear out outdated industries and fill in advanced industries.

The task also entails improving the quality of urban development and living environment as well as the ease of tensions between population, resources and environment, Cai added.

He said Beijing will perform better as the capital and make headway in development through the move.

Beijing will remove non-capital functions for optimization of economic and spatial structure, stepping on a new path featuring sound structure, high quality and efficiency.

For the next step, Beijing will focus on scientific and technological innovation and boost sophisticated industries.

News story: Law change demands equal treatment for disabled taxi users

Taxi drivers face a fine of up to £1,000 if they refuse to transport wheelchair users or attempt to charge them extra, in a change to the law announced today (7 February 2017) by Transport Minister Andrew Jones.

From 6 April taxi and private hire vehicle drivers will be obliged by law to:

- transport wheelchair users in their wheelchair
- provide passengers in wheelchairs with appropriate assistance
- charge wheelchair users the same as non-wheelchair users

Transport Minister Andrew Jones said:

We want to build a country that works for everyone, and part of that is ensuring disabled people have the same access to services and opportunities as anyone else – including when it comes to travel. People who use wheelchairs are often heavily reliant on taxis and private hire vehicles and this change to the law will mean fair and equal treatment for all.

The new rules will apply in England, Wales and Scotland affecting vehicles that are designated as wheelchair accessible and will apply to both taxis and private hire vehicles. All taxis in London and a significant number in most major urban centres are wheelchair accessible.

In a change to the law, drivers found to be discriminating against wheelchair users face fines of up to £1,000 as part of provisions being enacted from the Equality Act. Drivers may also face having their taxi or private hire vehicle (PHV) licence suspended or revoked by their licencing authority. Drivers unable to provide assistance for medical reasons will be able to apply to their licensing authority for an exemption from the new requirements.

Robert Meadowcroft, Chief Executive of Muscular Dystrophy UK, said:

This is a victory for all people with disabilities who experience daily struggles with accessible transport.

Being able to get from A to B is usually very easy for most people, however we know that this can be a challenge that affects a disabled person's entire life, including their ability to have a job and play an active part in society. This is a positive and very welcome step in the right direction which we hope will not affect the number of accessible taxis being made available by companies

because of the duties now being placed on to drivers.

[Muscular Dystrophy UK](#) and our Trailblazers have been campaigning on this issue for many years, and we commend the government for listening to the views of disabled people.

The new requirements, which will come into force from 6 April, complement those already in place to prevent discrimination against users of assistance dogs and underline the government's wide-ranging commitment to supporting transport networks which work for everyone. The government will be consulting on a draft 'Accessibility action plan' later this year, which will seek to address the barriers faced by disabled people in accessing all modes of public transport.