

Beijing spends US\$2.3 bln in cleaning waterways

Beijing's Tongzhou district, the capital city's subcenter under construction, plans to spend 16 billion yuan (2.3 billion U.S. dollars) treating polluted waterways.

The investment will cover landscaping, pipelines, treatment of polluted creeks and wetlands, according to Tongzhou Water Authority on Friday.

About 90 percent of the funds will be raised through the public private partnership model and the rest directly comes from the government.

To address overcrowding and congestion, Beijing is building the subcenter in Tongzhou where the municipal government will move. Beijing has a population of nearly 22 million.

"The city subcenter faces big tasks in treatment of sewage, small and medium riverways," said Jin Shudong, head of the Beijing Water Authority.

Tongzhou will address the pollution of 16 rivers upstream which flow into the district and step up efforts to improve the overall water environment, he said.

This year, Tongzhou will start construction of 80 sewage treatment plants or stations and complete cleaning 53 polluted waterway stretches.

By 2020, more than 95 percent of sewage in Tongzhou will undergo treatment.

Meanwhile, Tongzhou will cover 3,466 hectares of land with grass or trees this year. In the future, the subcenter will build more than 30 parks to realize there are green belts or parks within a radius of 500 meters.

Shanghai Disney Resort rewards outstanding volunteers

Nearly 100 outstanding volunteers and their families enjoyed a day of magic at Shanghai Disneyland Friday, to celebrate community volunteerism and the upcoming China Youth Volunteer Service Day.

These volunteers, including a torchbearer of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, were selected by the Shanghai Volunteer Foundation as the first group of recipients of the Shanghai Disney Resort Outstanding Volunteer Recognition Program.

The program, founded by Shanghai Disney Resort and the Shanghai Volunteer Foundation, began on December 5 last year, International Volunteer Day.

In the program, 1,000 volunteers and their families will be recognized and invited to enjoy a day at Shanghai Disneyland to reward their contributions to society.

“It is one of Disney’s core values to promote community volunteerism wherever we operate, including here in Shanghai. Through the program, we look forward to working together with the Shanghai Volunteer Foundation to pursue our shared vision of promoting community volunteerism throughout the city,” said Philippe Gas, general manager of Shanghai Disney Resort.

The China Youth Volunteer Service Day is on March 5, the memorial day of Lei Feng, a young soldier in the 1960s, known for his lifetime of selflessly service to others.

As of early February, Shanghai Disneyland had received over 7 million visitors since it opened in June 2016.

[China’s top political advisor stresses unity with Xi’s leadership](#)

China raised the curtain on its annual political season on Friday, with top political advisor Yu Zhengsheng pledging conformity to the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee with Xi Jinping as the core.

As chairman of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) National Committee, Yu delivered a work report to more than 2,000 political advisors gathered in the heart of Beijing to discuss the political, economic and social issues facing the world’s most populous nation and second-largest economy.

Yu said that in the course of the nation’s great rejuvenation, the importance of 2016 was assured by the endorsement of Xi Jinping as the core of the CPC Central Committee.

Xi’s core status embodies the fundamental interests of the Party and the people, and will be of far-reaching significance. His political ideas should be a guidance for all, Yu told the political advisors.

During the gathering, attendees are expected to fully align their thinking with Xi’s strategic blueprint of the “four comprehensives” – comprehensively achieve a moderately prosperous society, deepen reform, advance rule of law and govern the CPC strictly, which is crucial to the drive of China becoming a well-off society by 2020.

The CPPCC is an important vehicle for multiparty cooperation and political consultation under the leadership of the CPC, and the key to socialist democracy.

Political advisors come from various walks of life and ethnic groups. They serve as a think-tank for the government, legislative and judicial organs, and put forward proposals on major political and social issues.

Their proposals can be considered a rough barometer of public opinion, signaling issues of concern on anything from industrial policy to domestic violence, and telegraph the general national agenda for the next year and beyond.

In the past year, seminars have convened to discuss a plethora of topics including new development ideas, supply-side structural reform, revitalization of the northeast region, and rural poverty relief. Agendas also included creation and management of national nature reserves, preservation of land resources and prevention of pollution, Yu said.

Yu commended the advisors for their work on the 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-2020), saying 2017 is a more important year for the plan's implementation.

The CPPCC will help the country better adapt to the "new economic normal" of steady and healthy economic development, he said.

Friday's CPPCC session was the start of the most important two weeks on China's political calendar. The National People's Congress (NPC), China's top legislature, is set to begin its annual session on Sunday.

Together dubbed the "Two Sessions," the meetings are where political and economic developments are reviewed and discussed and key policies are made. This year, attendees will also discuss the general provisions of civil law.

In his speech, Yu saw room for improvement in some aspects of CPPCC work.

"Discussion of state affairs needs to go deeper and to be more practical, work on democratic oversight needs to be further standardized, and CPPCC National Committee members need to do better in the performance of their duties," Yu noted.

The advisors' main efforts this year should be directed toward stable and healthy economic development, communication with representatives of public opinion in Taiwan, and maintaining social harmony and stability.

Yu said communication between political advisors and the youth in Taiwan should be strengthened to consolidate public support for the peaceful development of cross-strait relations.

Political advisors will continue to oversee the implementation of CPC Central Committee policies and raise practical proposals.

While praising the Standing Committee of CPPCC National Committee for

promoting unity and friendship, Yu called for work on solidarity and friendship with the people in Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan, as well as overseas Chinese.

[This business rates revaluation has exposed the fundamental flaws in this outdated system of taxation – Teresa Pearce](#)

Teresa Pearce MP, Labour's Shadow

Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, responding to the IFS analysis of the business rates revaluation on local authorities, said:

“This business rates revaluation has exposed the fundamental flaws in this outdated system of taxation. Those flaws will be further magnified once 100% business rate retention comes into effect.

“Our high streets are already struggling – and this revaluation will signal the end for many small businesses, such as independent pubs at the heart of community life.

“The current system means that councils won't see a sharp increase in their revenue – but once 100% retention kicks in, some councils may be rolling in cash whilst others are left out in the cold.

“Businesses and councils need far more support and stability than the Government is currently offering. The Government must re-evaluate the business rates system and produce something which works for communities across our regions and the businesses they rely on.”

[Quality support key for people with](#)

disabilities to fully participate in their communities – UN rights expert

3 March 2017 – Access to good and safe support is of great importance for people with disabilities, as it helps them become independent and gain human rights, a United Nations independent expert said today, urging Member States to take legal, policy and financial actions to ensure their adequate support.

“Guaranteeing their access to support is not only a human rights obligation, but also a prerequisite to ensure that no one is left behind in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda,” Catalina Devandas Aguilar, the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, said today while presenting her report to the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council.

However, she stressed, in practice, people with disabilities have limited or no access to the support they need.

“Many have been segregated and disempowered in traditional care services, explained Ms. Devandas, adding that “for them, the very notion of ‘care’ bears a heavy historical connotation associated with oppression and invalidation.”

Today, people with disabilities still risk having their decisions overridden by the “caregivers,” the human rights expert underscored.

“This must stop,” said Ms. Devandas, while emphasizing that “States must promote support services that allow for the independence, autonomy and direct participation of all and invest resources in this.”

Voicing concern that not enough is being done to make sure persons with disabilities are getting support, as well as the fact that the demand for support is rising, her report offers guidance to Member States on how to best provide human rights-based support services.

She urged government authorities to develop legislation, implement policies and allocate funds to make support services available, accessible, adequate and affordable.

“States should guarantee the full and equal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms of persons with disabilities in the provision of support,” Ms. Devandas concluded.