

Waste fees on the way

► Rubbish, wastewater charges expected to spread nationwide

By Li Fangchao

The polluter pays concept is about to become a fact of daily life.

Cities and towns across the entire country are expected to start collecting fees for the treatment of wastewater and rubbish by the end of this year, a leading official said.

The breakneck pace of urbanization and sizzling economic growth of recent years have placed intense pressure on the country's environment and inspired a growing awareness of the need to preserve resources while reducing pollution.

"Education alone cannot lead to a unified awareness," Chen Deming, deputy minister of the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) was quoted by Xinhua News Agency as saying.

"We need to employ economic leverage to prod a change."

Chen added that cities across the country should begin collecting the fees by the end of this year.

Many cities already collect such fees, though their methods are all different and there have been complaints that the funds have not been used properly.

Revenue generated by the fees is to be used to construct

and operate more wastewater and rubbish processing facilities, Chen said.

Many cities have built their own plants. However, a lack of funding and incomplete pipelines have kept many of them from operating, Chen said. "A lot of wastewater treatment plants are just sitting there in the sun," he was quoted as saying.

Statistics from the NDRC showed that only about 55 percent of the wastewater in 36 large- and medium-sized cities in the country was treated.

And more than 600 cities do not have wastewater treatment plants, let alone systems for collecting treatment fees, Xinhua reported.

Local governments are allowed to decide their own standards for how the fees are

handled and should provide subsidies to help low income-earners bear the increasing cost of living, Chen said.

Ma Jun, director of the Institute of Public and Environmental Affairs, said making sure that the system for collecting the fees was transparent would inspire people to get behind the move.

Ma said some wastewater treatment plants in areas where the fees were already being collected had complained that they had not seen any of the money.

Recent research by the institute uncovered nearly 200 wastewater treatment plants sitting idle or with below-standard purifying standards, he said. "Local governments should let the public know how the money is spent," he said.



Snow capped
A woman pulls a plastic bag over her head to shield herself from a sudden snowfall yesterday in Changchun, capital of Northeast China's Jilin Province. Xia Ri

Public concerns grow as garbage piles mount

By Wang Ying

The bane of modern cities and an environmental nightmare — the garbage pile is growing, and so is public concern.

China's cities generate an average of 120 million tons of garbage annually, official figures show.

That figure is growing 8 percent annually.

While there are policies and measures in place to recycle and properly dispose of waste, a new survey has cast new light on garbage, and what people think of it.

Conducted by the China

Youth Daily, the survey of 1,800 people found that 75 percent of people feared that one day the world will be buried under garbage because of increasing garbage rates.

Roughly 23 percent of people said garbage hills can be seen everywhere in the places they are living.

The survey also found that most people would like to contribute a bit more to protect the environment.

About 90 percent of people said they would like to buy environment-friendly and recyclable products even though they are considered more expensive.

A culture of "over-packaging" has largely contributed to the surge of daily garbage output, with about one third of garbage generated from packaging material.

Among the country's 660 big and medium-sized cities, about one third are surrounded by garbage dumps, figures from the Ministry of Construction show.

Beijing has 23 garbage disposal plants, including 13 sanitary landfill sites. The city generates 11,500 tons of domestic garbage daily and roughly 96 percent of them was "disposed harmlessly", according to Beijing

Environment Protection Bureau.

However, up to 500 tons of garbage are dumped in suburban areas daily in the Chinese capital.

In other cities, the situation is worse. The countryside has become a dumping place for urban garbage.

"Farmers are the biggest victim to urban garbage, often dumped right near their homes," Wang Er, a netizen, said. "Some farmers have lived with garbage hills for years and can do nothing but tolerate it."

The country's disposal rate of urban garbage is roughly 60

percent, a big leap from the 11 percent in early 1990s.

However, only 20 percent of urban garbage was disposed harmlessly in the country through sanitary landfills, incineration and composting — a biological process in which organic waste is turned into humus like substance and returned to the soil.

By 2008, 98 percent of urban garbage in Beijing should be disposed harmlessly, according to the city's White Paper on Domestic Garbage Disposal, which was released as a guideline to reduction and reuse of urban waste and pollution-free disposal of domestic garbage.

T A L K • B A C K

Questioning the art of selling science

By Zhan Lisheng

GUANGZHOU: The appointment of **Zhang Tielin**, a popular actor and dean of the art school at the Guangzhou-based Jinan University, as an advisor to the Guangzhou Science and Technology Association has stirred much debate.

While the association has some 40 advisors, Zhang is the only one from the arts, the rest having backgrounds in science, technology and the social sciences.

Nevertheless, he has promised to use his many contacts in the world of arts to support the association and hopes to invite fellow stars to talk on scientific issues.

Defending the decision to appoint the star, **Zhong Nanshan**, the association's chairman, said it was far more than just a public relations exercise.

"We didn't appoint Zhang simply because he is a famous actor," he said.

"There is a close relationship between science and art: Art can often inspire innovation."

That said, Zhang's appointment has attracted the public's attention and aroused intense debate across the country.

"An advisor's role is similar to that of a bridge. Zhang Tielin, as a very popular TV star in the country, can play a good role as a bridge for communication between the worlds of science and technology and society."

"The fact that Zhang has agreed to become an advisor reflects his interest in science and technology."

"We can't ignore Zhang's ability to rally his young fans. It is possible that many more young people will become interested in science and technology because of his influence."

Wu Liang, a psychology lecturer with South China Normal University

"Promoting science takes money, but the government has made very little headway in this area."

"As a popular actor and celebrity, Zhang will find it much easier to raise funds for that very purpose."

Guo Yu, an account executive with Fortune China PR

"The association of science and technology is for scientists, so its advisors should be experts in a specific scientific or technological field."

"Never before have I heard of a TV star becoming an advisor to such an association and I really doubt what kind of role Zhang can play."

Wang Longsheng, a member of the Guangdong Provincial Science and Technology Association

"It is meaningless to argue whether it is proper for Zhang to become an advisor at this moment."

"What is really important is what Zhang does for the association and the promotion of popular science."

"As long as he makes a good contribution to scientific and technological development, he is the right person for the job."

Long Wogang, an official with the Guangzhou Personnel Bureau



Double happiness
Wang Hongjun, a worker at the First Auto Works, gets a kiss from his daughter as they sit in their new car. The company gave Wang the 160,000-yuan (\$20,512) automobile to thank him for inventing a system that allows for rapid repairs of defects in car bodies. Xinhua

'Relief' for workers on Shenyang metro

By Wu Yong

SHENYANG: While there might not be anything special about the construction of the city's first metro line, there certainly is about the installation of the country's (and possibly the world's) first ever toilet inside a tunnel-boring machine (TBM).

For those who man the mechanical giant that's carving the tunnels for the Shenyang metro — it's 48 meters long and stands more than 6 meters high — it's not always easy to answer the call of nature, especially when you're working 20 meters underground. So the special convenience has brought sweet relief.

The new toilet, which is making its debut in the Northeast China city in Liaoning Province, can be used for three months without the need for cleaning, as it features an environmentally friendly design that consumes very little water, Wang Jiayi, president of the Shenyang Zhengchang Environmental Protection Company, said.

But such luxuries do not come cheap. The TBM toilet costs more than 20,000 yuan (\$2,600), Xiao Hui, director of the China Railway No 9 Group Co Ltd, which is responsible for the metro project, said.

However, the handy little device will be a huge benefit

to the 3,300 people working on the project underground, and that will improve efficiency, he said.

Lin Muxi, an economist from Liaoning University, said: "The project will play a big role in easing the ever worsening urban congestion, as well as helping the economy."

After decades of seeing its applications rejected, Shenyang finally obtained approval from the State Council in 2005 to build the 182 km metro.

The first phase, which is currently underway, will cost 17 billion yuan (\$2.2 billion) and is scheduled for completion in 2012.

"A subway is one of the most important symbols of a modern city. It will help improve the city's reputation and attract investment," Chen Zhenggao, the city's party chief, said.

Shenyang is set to become the country's seventh city to boast a metro, after Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen, Nanjing, Guangzhou and Tianjin.

Zhang Min, a saleswoman who lives on the outskirts of the city said she currently spends more than an hour every day commuting to work.

"That would become 20 minutes (when the metro is completed)," she said. Zhang is also lucky to already have a flat close to the metro's Line 1, as property prices have soared 30 percent since the scheme was launched.

Spinster stereotype panned

By He Na

If the stereotype is to be believed, women doctoral students lead dull, colorless lives.

However, a recent survey by Tianjin's Nankai University is about to put that old chestnut to rest: Almost 90 percent of the 117 future PhDs polled said they were quite happy with their lives.

"The results of our survey suggest that the lives of women doctoral students are normal and healthy and even full of sunshine. People should be more respectful toward these women," said Yan Guangfen, a professor at Nankai University's Higher Education Institute.

There is a long-standing bias against woman doctoral students. In many people's minds, such women have a hard time finding jobs and husbands and are subject to high rates of divorce and suicide.

Most of the women who took part in the survey spoke out

against this biased view.

Statistics show that of the 120,000 students across the country who were working on PhDs in 2002, 30.35 percent were women. By the end of 2004, the number of doctoral students had grown to 143,500, while women expanded their share to 34.8 percent.

The women who participated in the survey said they regarded a harmonious family life and research work as the highest standards of happiness.

Be happy

When it came to what made them happy, 46.2 percent of the respondents said having a happy marriage and harmonious family were their first choices; 30.8 percent said their careers were most important; and 9.4 percent said they were looking forward to a life of luxury and ease.

The survey found that 71.8 percent of the respondents said they wanted to balance their careers and families, while 21.4 percent said family

Eat and be merry: A cartoon restaurant

By Jonathan Yeung

A new cartoon-themed restaurant wants to bring out the big kid in all of us.

The restaurant in the Guangdong city of Shunde serves up a feast for both the eyes and the stomach, with good food and plenty of guiltless cartoon viewing.

"We like to come over at the weekend to refresh ourselves," a high school student called Ah Wen said about the new eatery.

"We eat here while watching some cartoon movies... this helps us relax so that we can be better energized for next week's studying."

While watching the Japanese cartoon "Initial D" on a big screen right above him, Ah Wen said many of his classmates loved watching cartoons.

"Previously we could only watch them (cartoons) alone at home but now we can enjoy them together here, which is really much more fun."

Xiao Min, Ah Wen's classmate is also impressed with the restaurant.

"It is very cool," she said. "I have never heard of this type of restaurant before."

Located in Shunde's Daliang pedestrian street, the restaurant is the first cartoon-themed restaurant in Shunde.

Everything in the restaurant is related to cartoons, both in design and feel, even selling cartoon merchandise.

"The prices of the products vary from 20 yuan (\$2.56) to 70 yuan (\$8.97) and some cartoon models can cost a cartoon lover hundreds," a staff member said.

"Not only students but also white collars are frequent buyers here."

"Because they (white collars) have stable source of income, they generally spend more (on their favorite cartoon products)."

Cartoons are popular for both youngsters and grown-ups alike, and the industry is a huge money-spinner.

"The cartoon industry is one of the booming industries in developed countries such as the United States and Japan," Yang Sizhong, a visiting professor at Shenzhen University, said.

LOGISTICS CHINA

A MONTHLY REVIEW OF CHINA'S LOGISTICS INDUSTRY

Keeping you abreast of logistics news, policies, analyses and statistics surrounding China's aviation, railways, shipping, expressways and more.

Also available:

- ★ AutoChina
- ★ China Banking
- ★ China Insurance

For subscription information about the above reports, please visit our website or contact: Tel: 86-10-84883603 84883615
Fax: 86-10-84883345 E-mail: bizchina@chinadaily.com.cn http://www.bizchina.com.cn