

FROM THE GRASSROOTS

Railway staff get travel rush advice

By ZHOU WENTING
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Psychological counseling has for the first time become part of some railway officials' preparation for the upcoming travel rush for Spring Festival, or Chinese Lunar New Year.

Nearly 500 officials at the China Railway Chengdu Group attended a lecture by a team of psychological counselors on January 24. The lecture focused mainly on emotion and stress management and communication skills.

The Chengdu rail group is responsible for rail transportation affairs in Sichuan and Guizhou provinces and Chongqing. The officials are on the front line during the 40-day travel rush, which began on Thursday. Spring Festival begins on Feb 16.

They will direct work at the stations and on trains to ensure the travelers' safety and the security of goods during the travel rush, said Yang Ze, deputy director of the Chengdu Group's public security department.

Most of the officials have nearly 10 years' experience with the annual travel rush, but the pressure on them is rising as China raises the standards for anti-terrorism efforts and travelers' expectations with railway service grow, Yang said.

"Emergencies may be more frequent when many travelers take trains home at the same time, looking forward to family reunions after working the whole year," said Yang, adding that travelers who haven't bought tickets or miss their train are common during the travel rush.

"The lecture is a novel attempt to help staff members adjust their mood under pressure and to care for employees' physical and mental health," he said.

An estimated 2.98 billion

trips are expected during this year's travel rush.

Lin Zi, leader of the team of psychological counselors, said during the lecture that employees who deal directly with the public should maintain a positive facial expression, which usually elicits a positive response.

"The key to solving disputes is to always manage your emotions. Every single expression must be prudent and avoid upgrading any conflict," said Lin, vice-chairwoman of the Shanghai Psychological Counseling Association and founder of a psychological consultancy.

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"This is particularly important during the travel rush, as travelers are eager to get home and prone to emotional fluctuations — even fights are possible — due to unexpected weather conditions or crowding and traffic," she said.

Ways to calm angry travelers while receiving their complaints include repeating the key points they make, leaning toward them and looking into their eyes to make them feel respected, she added.

Lin also reminded rail officials that little improvements in the surroundings, including colors and pleasant smells, may ease their work during the travel rush.

"Sometimes even a little piece of wastepaper can set off conflicts between travelers, safety incidents and even crimes," she said. "The cleaner the trains and stations are, the more pleasant they are in the eyes of travelers, the calmer the travelers become."



Temple hall reopens

A crowd receives a blessing from a Buddhist monk at Da Xiong Bao Dian (Great Majesty Hall) of Yufo Temple (Jade Buddha Temple) in Shanghai on Saturday. The hall, which was moved just over 30 meters to the north and raised by about 1 meter, reopened to the public on Saturday.

ZHANG HENGWEI / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

China rejects US nuke policy review

Report calls Beijing 'major challenge', proposes buildup of smaller warheads

By HOU LIQIANG in Beijing and ZHAO HUANXIN in Washington

China firmly opposes a United States report that portrays Beijing as a potential nuclear adversary and calls on Washington to honor its commitments to reduce its own nuclear arsenal, a Ministry of National Defense spokesman said on Sunday.

The report, titled the Nuclear Posture Review, was published by the US Defense Department on Friday. It cites China as "a major challenge to US interests in Asia".

The US strategy for China is designed to "prevent Beijing from mistakenly concluding that it could secure an advantage through the limited use of its theater nuclear capabilities or that any use of nuclear weapons, however limited, is acceptable", according to the document.

The report speculates on China's intention of development and plays up the threat of China's nuclear strength, said Ren Guoqiang, National Defense Ministry spokesman.

Ren reaffirmed China's policy of "no first use of nuclear weapons at any time under any circumstances".

"Under no circumstances will China use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states or nuclear-weapon-free zones," he said.

Ren said that China has always exercised the utmost restraint in the development of nuclear weapons and limited its nuclear capabilities to the minimum required for national security.

As the country that possesses the world's largest nuclear weapons arsenal, the US should conform to the irreversible world trend of peace and development rather than run in the



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Inside

Editorial > p8

opposite direction, Ren said.

"We hope the US will discard its Cold War mentality, shoulder its own special and primary responsibility in nuclear disarmament, correct-

ly understand China's strategic intention and take a fair view on China's national defense and military development," he said.

The US report reaffirms commitments to nonproliferation treaties, but it emphasizes the need to enhance capabilities to match Russia, showing support for US nuclear modernization projects.

It calls for a "lower-yield" option with less powerful warheads for ballistic and cruise missiles launched from submarines.

Fan Jishe, a senior researcher of US studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said the report is one of the recent signs that Washington is shifting its policy from cooperating with major world powers to competing with them.

The development of low-yield nuclear weapons may change the unwritten rule on the use of nuclear weapons as a last resort and suggests that the US may turn to nuclear weapons in conventional con-

flicts, which signals a retrogression regression and could result in disastrous consequences, he said.

Gregory Kulachi, a senior nuclear analyst with the Union of Concerned Scientists, a nonprofit science advocacy organization at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, said the Trump administration's Nuclear Posture Review repeats one of the most pervasive misconceptions about the current state of the US nuclear arsenal: that it does not compare well with the nuclear arsenals of Russia and China.

"After a half-century of continuous incremental 'modernization', China's nuclear arsenal is smaller than the US nuclear arsenal was in 1950," Kulachi said in a Twitter post. "But the gap between China and the United States is too wide to argue the United States is lagging behind in any meaningful way."

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Old stamping ground



Stamp collectors wait at a post office counter to get new postage stamps designed for the Year of the Dog in Paris, France, on Saturday. La Poste, the French postal service, issued two sets of zodiac stamps in honor of the new lunar year. CHEN YICHEN / XINHUA

Air Force mourns plane crash victims

By CHINA DAILY

The People's Liberation Army Air Force officers and soldiers who were killed in a military plane crash in Guizhou province last week were honored as revolutionary martyrs, the Air Force said on Sunday.

The military plane crashed during a training session on the afternoon of Jan 29. There were no survivors, the Air Force said in a news release, without disclosing the number of fatalities or details of the mission.

The Air Force's Southern Theater honored the victims as revolutionary martyrs on Friday for their contributions to building a stronger, modern Air Force, the release said.

Those officers and soldiers successfully had carried out several major missions in the past, including military exercises and combat readiness training, it said. "They devoted their best years to their Air Force careers," it said.

The release was issued after a memorial service in Guizhou on Sunday. The service was attended by the families and commanding officers of those killed, as well as Air Force soldiers and local officials, it said.

"The death of the officers and soldiers is a great loss for the Air Force," the release said, adding that it will continue to conduct tough, strict training that resembles actual combat in order to continuously increase its ability to win battles.

Gangs: 'Umbrella', members sentenced in November

From page 1

In November, all 27 members of a gang headed by Zhu Qunyang in Xi'an, capital of Shaanxi province, were sentenced to jail terms up to life for organized crimes such as kidnapping, robbery and blackmail.

A police investigation shows that the gang has been active since 2004, when members started to set up illegal gambling facilities. Under the protection of Liu Wuzhou, former deputy Party chief of Xi'an's Zhouzhi county, county police turned a blind eye to the gang's criminal activities, the court verdict said. Liu had been sentenced to 10 1/2 years for taking bribes in 2015.

'Village tyrants'

Weng Ming, a researcher at the Rural Development Institute of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said county and township officials are the ideal "umbrella" operatives in the eyes of gang members because they have real power at the local level.

What's more shocking is

that Zhu, head of the gang, even became the deputy director of the villagers' committee of Tuanbiao village in 2011. On top of the title of gang leader, he also became a "village tyrant" that no villager dares to say no to.

Slapping a villager in the face in front of a news crew, openly bribing villagers to vote for them in village elections and threatening with knives those who don't obey their orders are just some of the acts from "village tyrants" according to media reports in recent years.

Liang Genlin, a Peking University law professor, said such corruption and crimes occurring at people's doorsteps would directly affect the public's sense of happiness and security.

Gangs and organized crimes at the grassroots level can make people hold gauges against local governments, which will affect social stability, Liang said, adding that he believed gang crimes in rural areas will be a major target in the latest campaign.

Police across the country have put up public notices ask-

ing people to come forward with leads in gang activities, such as exposing corrupt village chiefs and people who use their family connections to control village affairs, such as rigging elections.

On Wednesday, Shen De-yong, vice-president of the Supreme People's Court, said at a conference that courts nationwide should attach greater attention to cases involving gangs that threaten political security and political power at the grassroots level, dominate certain markets and trade, run gambling, prostitution and drug business as well as take part in transnational crimes.

The rule of law

Shen also urged courts to handle such cases strictly in accordance with the law and fully protect the rights of the defendants.

China has been launching campaigns targeting gang and organized crimes since 2000, but it has never been emphasized so much that evidence and procedural justice should be strictly followed in the cam-

aign, experts said.

Judicial authorities should check the facts, evidence, procedures and laws applied while handling such cases, said the document jointly released by the CPC Central Committee and the State Council. It clearly bans forced confessions and requires each case to be handled on the basis of irrefutable evidence.

The rule of law is the key and an important guarantee of a successful campaign, said Wang Jinxi, a professor at the law school of China University of Political Science and Law.

"Past experiences have shown that the weak implementation of procedural laws and less attention to lawyers' opinions have caused some wrongful cases," he said. "So the fight against gang-related crimes must be carried out within the framework of laws. Targeting crimes and protecting human rights are of equal importance."

Wang Minyuan, a criminal procedural law professor with the Zhejiang Universi-

ty, said the emphasis on procedures in the latest campaign is "progress" and lays a solid foundation for its final success.

Change of the name

Wang Jinxi also said the change of the name of the campaign means a lot. Instead of using the conventional expression of "fighting gangs and organized crimes", the latest campaign is to "sweep out" such crimes.

"Instead of fighting the crimes themselves, the campaign will tackle the source of the problem. It sends out a signal not only to target crimes, but also to improve comprehensive social governance," he said.

Liang Genlin said the prevalence of gang crimes has deep social reasons and to punish gangsters is like to cure the symptom not the disease. "If political governance at the grassroots is effective, there would be no room for such crimes," he said, adding that the fundamental way out is to improve comprehensive governance and erase the environment that fosters such crimes.

Plan: Penalties for polluters sped quality improvements

From page 1

strict measures to control air pollution, including efforts to reduce coal consumption, shut down polluting plants and encourage vehicles with clean

fuels as well as adding tougher punishments on polluters.

In 2017, China exposed and punished over 230,000 pollution cases nationwide, with punishment including heavy fines of 11.6 billion yuan

(\$1.84 billion), increasing by 265 percent from the level in 2014, data from the ministry showed.

The mix of strict controls led to dramatic improvements in air quality. For example, the

capital saw PM2.5 levels fall by 34.8 percent from the 2013 level and blue skies have persisted since October.

But China still faces severe environmental pollution, that requires lasting attention, the

minister said, adding there are good opportunities to make improvements considering the technologies becoming available and the capacity to restore and protect the environment.