

Flexible working hours on trial in Guizhou

By YANG JUN in Guiyang and LI HONGYANG in Beijing

Based on the outcome of a trial in one of its cities, Guizhou province may ask its employees to work on a more flexible timetable, according to a notice released on its website.

The idea, which was brought up and first implemented by the city of Qingzhen, offers employees two options.

Some can work consecutively for 22 days and then rest for eight days, while others follow cycles of 11 days of work and four days of rest. The total monthly working days cannot be lower than 22.

The working patterns will be adopted by civil servants within departments responsible for administrative work relating to people's daily lives, such as the bureau of civil affairs and the family planning office.

These employees account for more than 80 percent of all civil servants in Qingzhen.

The trial run started on Nov 1 and will end on May 31.

"The adjustment aims to benefit the majority of customers, who usually have to work on weekdays. Using this rotating schedule, we can improve efficiency by ensuring our office is open every day except legal holidays," said Li Zhengfei, deputy head of the organization department of Qingzhen's CPC committee.

According to Li, most of the officials in the city often sacrifice their weekends for emergency work and can't get their holidays back.

So the rotation system not only benefits customers but also guarantees that civil servants can enjoy their holidays without being disturbed.

"To see whether this reform of the timetable system will carry on successfully, we should ensure that it has a good purpose and is achieved by reasonable means," said Wang Xixin, a professor of administrative law at Peking University.

"Moreover, the adjustment must comply with existing laws."

A guideline issued by the State Council said that employees should normally work eight hours per day, 40 hours per week.

However, enterprises or authorities in some industries can adjust working hours as needed in special situations.

"Though there is still no document drafted related to this reform, three towns have put the flexible timetable into practice with encouraging results," Li said.

Zhao Yandi contributed to this story.

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Testing time



Flight attendants from airlines participate in an escape drill during a skills competition in Kunming, Yunnan province, on Tuesday. LIU RANYANG / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Expert: China, US now equals in pollution fight

NGO's China chief celebrates four decades of cooperation

By ZHENG JINRAN
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The head of the China branch of an influential environmental advocacy group has hailed 37 years of cooperation between the United States and China. From the early days in which it followed the US' example, China has grown into an equal partner, according to Zhang Jianyu, chief representative of the China office of the Environmental Defense Fund.

"The two countries, both with large populations and territories, have shared experiences in economic growth

and pollution issues, making exchanges necessary," he said, adding that he expects these mutually beneficial exchanges to deepen.

In 1980, the top environmental agencies in Beijing and Washington signed an agreement on scientific and technical cooperation. It was China's first international agreement on environmental protection. Just over a decade later, the US invited the New York-based Environmental Defense Fund to participate in China's first experiment with economic incentives for pollution control, one of the China-

US cooperative projects

The organization, which is known for its market-based approach, opened its Beijing office in 1998. Zhang said it has since helped the country adopt a variety of incentives developed and implemented in the US.

One such measure has been to follow the US example of daily fines with no upper limit, which was incorporated into China's Environmental Protection Law in 2015. Wang Canfa, a professor at the China University of Political Science and Law, said making businesses pay a

heavy price for harming the environment has become a major tool to deter polluters.

During the administration of Barack Obama, the US and China became the leading negotiators in global efforts to tackle climate change. Zhang said it is clear the two countries now share equal footing on environmental protection.

"China has taken more positive measures in addressing climate change," Zhang said. He pointed out that during the second China-US Climate-Smart Low-Carbon Cities Summit in June last year, 12 Chinese cities pledged to cap their carbon emissions earlier than the national deadline of 2030.

In the future, Zhang said the US might even learn from China, such as the wide use of smartphones for information release and collection, which has made air quality data freely available.

US leads pack for Chinese students

By ZHAO XINYING
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As the number of Chinese students heading overseas for education continues to grow, and as the choice of destinations becomes more diverse, the United States continues to be preferred, according to a report by an educational institute.

The Open Doors Report, released by the Institute of International Education in the US in November last year, showed that nearly 330,000 Chinese studied in the US during the 2015-16 academic year, accounting for one-third of the country's international students.

China has been the largest source of foreign students in the US for seven consecutive years.

Overall, according to the Ministry of Education, more than 540,000 students went overseas to study last year.

Andrew Hang Chen, CEO and chief learning officer at WholeRen Group, a US company that provides overseas study services to Chinese students, said that many Chinese parents view sending their children to study overseas as simply a purchase of international education services.

"They will choose services of the best quality if their financial situation allows, and studying in the US, among many other destinations, is such a service," he said.

"Looking at rankings of world universities, higher education institutes in the United States always account for the largest proportion of

the top 10, 20 or even 100 and 200," he said.

In Chen's eyes, the high quality of education in the US is also behind another trend: More Chinese parents are sending their children to study in the US at younger ages.

According to the US Department of Homeland Security in 2015, the number of Chinese studying at K-12 stage at schools in the US tripled to 34,578 over a five-year period.

"More parents are doing so because they are not only recognizing the teaching quality in higher education in the US but also basic education," he said.

"Many told me that they hope their children will not only gain knowledge, but more importantly the ability of thinking. This is where the

education of the US is stronger and more attractive than China, at least currently."

In contrast with the high enthusiasm among Chinese heading to study in the US, students seem to find more uncertain prospects for landing a job there after graduation. However, Chen said there's no need to be overly worried about job hunting in the US.

"Many Chinese parents and students have changed their minds about employment in the US," he said. "They have started realizing that studying in the US does not necessarily end up with landing a job there after graduation. What really matters is students grow up as talents who are needed globally and who can work globally, including coming back to work in China."

New species of orchid found on Beijing mountain

By CHENG SI
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An unusual flower found on Yudu Mountain in northwestern Beijing's Yanqing district was identified as a new species of orchid in October.

Mu Xianyun, who found the wild orchid in August, said the international plant journal *Phytotaxa* published his research on Oct 24. He named the flower *Holopogon pekinensis* — a reference to Beijing. It is the third species in its family found in China, and one of only seven globally.

Mu, an associate professor at Beijing Forestry University, found the plant by chance when he was surveying for another precious orchid on Yudu Mountain at the end of August.

"It was coincidental," Mu said. "I was surveying for *Cypripedium shanxiense*, a rare orchid I've investigated for years. When I finished the survey I found the little thing in the nearby woods."

"I thought it was a variation of a certain kind of orchid," Mu added. "But later when I examined the photos I had taken, I found I was wrong."

He said he contacted friends at the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Institute of Botany to take detailed pictures for further research.

"The orchid looks like *Holopogon ussuriensis*, a precious orchid found in Russia. So I emailed Irina Tatarenko, a Russian botanist, to get more information. After comparing its petals and labellum with other orchids, my friends and I concluded that it was a new species."

The flower of the newly found orchid is about 4 to 5 millimeters long, with a width of less than 2 millimeters.

"This orchid has no chlorophyll in its cells nor leaves on its stem, so it is incapable of photosynthesis," Mu said. "Fungi on its rhizome (subterranean stem) in soil offer nutrition, enabling growth."

Luo Yibo, a researcher at



Mu Xianyun takes photos of orchids on Yudu Mountain. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

the Institute of Botany, said: "Orchids require really specific living conditions, especially wild ones. The whole life cycle of *Holopogon pekinensis* involves a high-quality ecosystem. It lives on soil bacteria and delivers pollen with the help of insects. Water, light and soil, everything should be good."

Huang Sanxiang, deputy director of the Division of Wildlife Conservation of the Beijing Gardening and Greening Bureau, said: "*Holopogon pekinensis* is an important addition to the biodiversity of Beijing. Its existence shows that the environment of Beijing is getting better."

Yudu Mountain is a nature reserve in Yanqing, with its core area off-limits and a buffer zone limited to scientific research. Management of the reserve will be reinforced to secure a better habitat for the orchid and other precious species, he said.

"Wild orchids are of great importance for scientific research. We plan to cooperate with the Beijing Municipal Science and Technology Commission to promote the artificial reproduction of the orchids and other precious species," Huang said.

Beijing's list of rare species, including *Holopogon pekinensis*, is expected to be released at the end of the year to legitimize the protection of rare species found there, he said.



An orchid growing on Beijing's Yudu Mountain has been identified as a new species.

Say goodbye to smoking emoji on QQ app

By JIANG CHENGLONG
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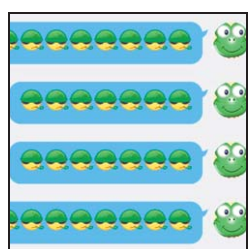
QQ, a popular social networking app heavily used by younger people, has removed a smoker emoji from its mobile version to help curtail the smoking habit in China, the world's largest tobacco consumer.

The move was made at the suggestion of the Beijing Tobacco Control Association. Meanwhile, the QQ computer

version continues to feature the emoji.

The removed image, which shows a commando with a cigarette in his mouth, is supposed to express leisure and ease. It has been now replaced with another emoji displaying a commando with a green leaf in his mouth.

QQ is an influential application created by internet giant Tencent. Another widely used social media application developed by the company, WeChat, has not changed the



The smoker emoji on the QQ computer version has been changed to a commando with a green leaf in his mouth.

smoking emoji.

Zhang Jianshu, director of the Beijing Tobacco Control Association, said letters were sent twice to Tencent, asking that the emojis showing a smoker should be withdrawn from their lists.

"It's not appropriate to define smoking as leisure and ease. And that emotion would mislead people about leisure, especially young people," he added. "They may get the idea that smoking is a symbol of fashion and handsomeness."

Tencent's financial report showed that QQ's monthly active user number reached its highest point in the second quarter of 2016 — 89.9 million. According to a research report by the company in 2014, QQ users born after 1990 accounted for 50.3 percent of the total.

Zhang said the association expressed gratitude to Tencent on Monday and hoped it would remove the same image on QQ's computer platform and WeChat soon.

On Sept 13, Sina Weibo, Chi-

na's popular social media platform, began to remove a similar emoji of a smoker on its smartphone apps and computers. That was also at the suggestion of the association.

"Controlling smoking starts in dribs and drabs," said Jiang Yuan, deputy director of the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention's Tobacco Control Office. "Removing that image was a good example of blocking improper information."

According to the CDC, the smoking rate in China in 2015 was 27.7 percent. An outline promoting Chinese health before 2030, issued by the Central Committee of the Commu-

nist Party of China and the State Council in 2016, said the proportion of smokers older than 15 years should decrease to 20 percent.

"That is a truly challenging goal," she said. But she noted that more groups in society are participating in tobacco control work, and "they can do many things that governments cannot."

"Many volunteers can help the authorities supervise on different occasions. And a number of think tanks also can release various research reports to make suggestions or even criticize the government's smoking control work," Jiang said.