

Heritage parks to protect cultural icons

Great Wall, Grand Canal and route of Long March to be incorporated in national parks by 2023

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The development of three national parks covering the Great Wall, the Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal and the route of the Long March will enable better protection of endangered cultural relics and bring them closer to the general public, officials and experts said.

A document issued by the general offices of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council earlier this month said the country plans to complete construction of the parks by 2023 to enable protection, inheritance and exploitation of the three cultural icons' relics and resources.

The plan, a preliminary step for pushing forward the development of national culture parks across the board, also called for systematic efforts to promote research, cultural and tourism development and digital reconstruction of cultural relics.

After it was issued, a senior central government official said a key part of the plan is to scale up protection projects, especially for relics that have been damaged or are endangered.

Protective precautions will be adopted for key historic relics, and improper development and commercialization of heritage sites will be banned, the official said.

To bring the relics closer to the public, authorities will encourage the organization of themed activities during major holidays and celebrations as well as live shows in suitable areas.

The digital reconstruction of the relics will include efforts to develop official websites and digital cloud platforms showcasing the relics and cultural resources. Information about historic figures, poems, classics and documents will also be displayed.

The Great Wall and the Grand Canal have both been under severe threat from natural and human factors.

The Great Wall began as separate fortifications around the 7th century BC that were joined up during the Qin Dynasty (221-206 BC). Its best-known sections were built by the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644).

About half of the Great Wall has already vanished or is on the verge of disappearing, according to a general plan on the protection of the Great Wall issued this year. In addition to natural factors such as erosion and geological disasters, tourism development, urban construction and infrastructure development have posed threats to the Great Wall.

The Grand Canal, like the Great Wall a UNESCO world heritage site, is the longest and the oldest man-made waterway in the world. The oldest parts of the canal date back to the 5th century BC, but the various sections were first connected during the Sui Dynasty (581-618).

Huang Runqiu, vice-minister of ecology and environment, said in June that the large number of chemical and papermaking industries

along the canal had been a source of industrial waste for the canal's water bodies, with a lack of waste water treatment facilities aggravating the pollution problem.

The Long March, a military maneuver carried out by the Red Army and led by the CPC to combat the Kuomintang regime, covered over 12,500 kilometers from October 1934 to October 1936.

There will be sections of the three parks in different provincial-level areas.

The Great Wall park will cover 15

regions, including Beijing and Tianjin, the provinces of Hebei and Shanxi, and the Inner Mongolia autonomous region.

The Grand Canal park will cover eight regions, including Beijing and Tianjin and the provinces of Jiangsu and Zhejiang, while the Long March park will spread across 15 regions, including the provinces of Fujian, Jiangxi, Gansu and Qinghai.

Tang Yuyang, a professor at the Academy of Cultural Heritage at Beijing University of Civil Engineering and Architecture, said the three cul-

tural heritage sites have irreplaceable value in Chinese history.

"Spread over wide geographical areas and composed of rich cultural relics, the three parks are closely related to the natural ecology and environment and closely connected to modern urban and rural residential areas," she said.

She said planning the development of the three heritage sites would enable more coordinated protection and better sharing of their resources with the general public.

To enable the completion of the three cultural parks by the end of

2023, it would be important to come up with detailed targets, research the scope of implementation and key areas and further explore the value of cultural resources, Tang said.

Huang Jie, who researches the Grand Canal at Yangzhou University in Jiangsu province, said it is important to prevent overexploitation of cultural heritage during the development process.

"The development of tourism and ecological sectors must be conducted in an appropriate manner on the premise of not affecting the protection of the heritage sites," he said.



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

POLICY RESPONSE

Bell tolls for expressway toll booths on provincial borders

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Several ministry-level departments, including those responsible for transport, finance and education, have recently responded to issues of public concern.

Fast, nonstop electronic toll collection on track

China is on track to eliminate all expressway toll booths on provincial borders by the end of the year, with related construction work expected to be completed by Friday, the Ministry of Transport said on Thursday.

Ministry spokesman Sun Wenjian told a news conference that all of the

country's expressway entrances had been equipped with weighing systems and the weights of vehicles would be detected at expressway entrances nationwide from Monday.

He said tolls would still be collected on provincial borders, through a fast and nonstop electronic toll collection system.

China had more than 185 million electronic toll collection users as of Dec 10, he said.

Sun said the process of finding jobs for toll collectors after the elimination of toll booths was being carried out in an orderly manner and more than 9,600 people had found new positions in 25 provinces so far.

5.24 billion yuan fund for natural disaster victims

The ministries of finance and emergency management have allocated 5.24 billion yuan (\$750 million) to ensure a warm winter for people affected by natural disasters.

The Ministry of Emergency Management said the funds will be used to provide basic cost of living allow-

ances and relief for people affected by natural disasters in all regions in winter and spring.

The disaster relief fund was arranged on the basis of comprehensive investigations of affected areas and thorough assessment of local needs, it said.

On Dec 10, the ministries of emergency management, civil affairs, and finance held a video and telephone meeting at which local authorities were told to take concrete measures to ensure all people affected by natural disasters can receive the money before Spring Festival.

Student athletes, artists facing tougher scrutiny

China will implement strict regulations in this year's college enrollment of student athletes and artists, the Ministry of Education said in a notice published on Dec 11.

It said reviews of candidates' qualifications will be strengthened. Pilot colleges with high-level sports teams are required to pay extra

attention to reviewing the qualifications of athletes with their technical titles earned outside of the province of their household or school registration or through team competitions.

In sports exams, anti-doping education will be further boosted and doping tests will be increased for student athletes hoping to join high-level sports teams, it said.

The ministry also asked high-level art troupes in colleges to cancel the preferential policy of lowering academic admission requirements for "a very few examinees with outstanding performance in art troupe tests".

Local education authorities and colleges should implement the policies strictly, it said.

Feedback sought on performance guidelines

The Ministry of Culture and Tourism is considering new guidelines to regulate the country's performance industry to ensure its high-quality development, a notice soliciting



public opinions on the draft guidelines said on Dec 5.

While the flourishing performance industry has played an important role in boosting cultural consumption and enriching people's cultural life, weak links still exist in terms of the content of commercial performances, ticket sales and on-site supervision, it said.

The notice said the guidelines aim to strengthen content review and on-site supervision of live performances in small theaters, including talk shows, cross talk and avant-garde drama.

The online livestreaming of commercial performances and performances involving virtual images will be further regulated.

The public can give feedback on the draft guidelines until Sunday.

Policy digest

Regulation gives teeth to Foreign Investment Law

China approved a draft regulation on implementing the Foreign Investment Law at a State Council executive meeting presided over by Premier Li Keqiang on Thursday.

The regulation, with detailed administrative measures on protecting foreign investment, will take effect on Jan 1, along with the Foreign Investment Law.

The regulation requires that domestic and foreign enterprises be treated in an equal way in areas such as project applications, land supply, taxation and fee cuts.

Foreign businesses will also be able to participate equally in formulating and revising national, industrial and local standards in accordance with the law.

According to the regulation, governments and related departments should not prevent foreign companies from entering the government procurement market or discriminate against them.

In order to strengthen foreign investment protection, the regulation says foreign investment should not be requisitioned by the State. In special cases, where requisition is necessary for the public interest, legal procedures and provisions should be followed, and compensation should be paid based on market value.

It also prohibits forcing foreign investors and companies to transfer their technology, either through licenses, the threat of penalties or other means.

No discriminatory requirements will be allowed to be set for foreign investors in terms of licensing conditions, application materials, review procedures and time limits when the authorities review applications for market-access licenses in a range of industries and fields.

The regulation also specifies the legal responsibilities for violations resulting in unequal treatment of foreign enterprises, restrictions on foreign companies' equal participation in setting standards, failure to implement policy commitments and forced technology transfer.

Investors from Hong Kong and Macao will be able to refer to the Foreign Investment Law and the regulation when they make investments in the Chinese mainland, the regulation said.

For investment in the mainland by investors from Taiwan, the Law on the Protection of Investment by Taiwan Compatriots and its implementing regulation should be applied, and matters not covered should be addressed by reference to the Foreign Investment Law and its implementing regulation.

Lower financing costs for smaller businesses

China will take measures to further lower the financing costs for small and micro-sized businesses, the State Council decided at an executive meeting on Thursday.

Noting that small and micro-sized companies play an important role in developing the economy and creating jobs, the meeting decided to bring down overall financing costs of inclusive loans for small and micro-sized businesses by 0.5 percentage points next year, and make sure that inclusive loans continue to grow faster than overall loans, and that such loans issued by the five major State-owned commercial banks increase by no less than 20 percent.

Inclusive loans are those provided to small and micro-sized businesses at an affordable cost.

Banks will also be supported in increasing medium- and long-term loans to manufacturers, and developing credit loans and services that facilitate the rollover of outstanding loans.

By the end of October, the balance of inclusive loans to small and micro-sized businesses rose by 23.3 percent year-on-year, nearly 11 percentage points higher than overall loan growth.

Xinhua contributed to the story.

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