

15 students in Shaanxi hit by food poisoning

A suspected food poisoning case has affected 15 primary school students in northwest China's Shaanxi Province, authorities said Friday.

The incident occurred at noon Thursday, when students in Zhashui County showed symptoms of food poisoning, according to the Children's Hospital in Xi'an, capital of Shaanxi, where the students are being treated.

Xu Haoxiang, one of the students, said that he ate the steamed noodles provided by the school before feeling sick. Xu and other students later started developing symptoms such as fever, diarrhea and vomiting.

According to Xu, the potatoes and bean sprouts in the steamed noodles tasted odd.

Of the students, 6 have been discharged, while two remain under observation, said Su Yufei, a doctor at the hospital.

The exact cause of the children's symptoms is still unknown.

Authorities with the provincial center for disease control and prevention have begun an investigation.

Food delivery firms in China face white pollution charge



Three leading Chinese takeaway food delivery companies – Ele.com, waimai.baidu.com and meituan.com – have been accused of producing excessive white pollution across the country. [Xinhua]

The rise of the food delivery service has aroused deep concern among conservationists over the excessive use of throwaway packages, which some experts have estimated increases by a volume equal to the 6.4-square-kilometer West Lake in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, every 15 days.

Recently, the Green Volunteer League in Chongqing sued three popular food delivery companies – Ele.com, waimai.baidu.com and meituan.com – for their lavish use of indissoluble plastics as food containers.

The hearing of the lawsuit has been underway in Beijing No.4 Intermediate Court since September 1.

The case, first of its kind in China, involves an accusation that the three companies have failed to diversify the choices of food containers away from plastic packaging for their customers.

The plastic boxes they use in handling a combined total of 200 million orders on average each day, could cover 420,000 square meters, an area equivalent to 59 football fields.

According to the League, the prevalent use of disposable snack boxes and plastic bags by the three companies violates “the plastic limitation” order ratified on June 1st, 2008.

This prohibited use of plastic bags thinner than 0.025 millimeters and imposed charges when they used to pack customer orders at supermarkets, wholesale markets and shopping malls.

According to the prosecutor, the lawsuit seeks to constrain the rampant consumption of plastic products, for which, the three food delivery suppliers are reluctant to impose a charge.

The League has demanded a public apology from the three companies and asked them to accept accountability and cover the costs of damage they have caused to the environment.

The conservationists believe the major cause of land pollution is due to the snack boxes made from the component known as polypropylene (PP), which needs more than 30 years to decompose after being dumped in burial pits. Meantime, not enough attention is being paid to using boxes made from eco-friendly corn starch, which is easy to degrade.

Therefore, the league calls for joint efforts by the three companies, customers and authorities to put an end to the sweeping expansion of white pollution.

The three food delivery companies have yet to comment on the issue.

Hospital held negligent over pregnant woman's suicide

Official investigators in northwest China's Shaanxi Province on Thursday evening said a hospital had been negligent in a case that led to the suicide of a pregnant woman.

The investigation panel, composed of officials with the health and public security departments in Yulin city in Shaanxi, decided the case was a suicide and not a homicide, as angry members of the public had accused the woman's family and hospital of being murderers. The investigation ruled that Yulin No.1 Hospital had been negligent in its care of the inpatient.

The official case description said the woman went to the hospital on Aug. 30 when she was very close to labor. The hospital had suggested she have a caesarean because a "large foetal head circumference meant vaginal delivery would be risky."

However, the woman's family insisted on a vaginal delivery and signed papers accordingly.

From 5:50 p.m. on Aug. 31, the woman walked out of the delivery ward twice to tell her family that her pain were unbearable, but she was escorted back to the ward both times..

At 8 p.m., nurses found that the woman had jumped out of the window of the

operation room, and they called for emergency rescue. She was announced dead of severe brain injury, multiple fractures and hemorrhagic shock at 9:25 p.m. The child she was carrying was also dead.

Investigators said that the hospital's medical procedures were immaculate, but staff failed to give due care and were not prepared for an emergency.

The investigation on the direct cause of the woman's suicide is ongoing.

Authorities have vowed to deal with the case according to law.

Many people on social media questioned why the woman was not allowed to make her own decision on how to give birth.

Shanghai has a new way to pick judges

Shanghai will begin selecting new judges from the ranks of its judge assistants—a position created five years ago as part of the city's wide-ranging judicial reform.



Newly appointed judge assistants take their oath as they assume their posts in Shanghai. [Photo/China Daily]

Up to 160 judge assistants, who serve in the city's district and intermediate courts, will be promoted and assume new roles by the end of the year, the Shanghai High People's Court announced.

Nearly 300 candidates took written tests on Sept 2 and will go through simulated court hearings and qualification tests in mid-September.

"We believe the size of the talent pool is big enough, and that the people are ready in terms of professional capability and maturity," said Wei Jianping, a senior official at the high court.

The average work experience of the candidates is 6.6 years.

The role of judge assistant was created by the Supreme People's Court in 2012 as part of its effort to streamline personnel, increase efficiency and reduce the workload of judges.

Unlike court clerks, who mainly handle administrative tasks such as filing and taking notes, judge assistants preview case files, coordinate mediation hearings and handle the exchange of evidence, which were all previously a judge's responsibility.

"When court assistants shoulder the time-consuming tasks, such as pretrial mediation, judges can be more focused on hearing cases," said Zhang Xiaoli, director of the general political department of the court.

When the reform was rolled out, judges had to reapply for their jobs, with only the best qualified chosen. Others were reassigned as judge assistants, many of whom are law graduates and experienced court clerks.

Shanghai currently has 1,939 judge assistants assigned to help 1,108 judges.

The first round of promotions marks an important step, said Ye Qing, director of the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences's Law Institute.

"Chinese courts are moving forward in deepening personnel management reforms and building a more elite team of judges to respond to people's high expectations of fairness and justice," he said.

Candidates with spouses who are lawyers or serve the court in other capacities can only become judges if their spouses leave their positions, a measure designed to protect the courts' impartiality, Zhang said.

Guo Weiqing, vice-president of the high court, said that from now on all the judges in the district courts will be selected from the pool of judge assistants, and those for the city's intermediate courts and high court will be selected from the pool of judges from district courts.

The selection of judges from the judge assistant pool will be carried out once a year, he said.

China revises regulations on religious affairs

The State Council, China's cabinet, released revised regulations on religious affairs on Thursday.

The revisions protect freedom of religious belief, stipulating provision of public services for religious groups, schools and venues.

Religious communities can hold charity events in accordance with the law, while religious workers are entitled to social security rights, according to the revisions.

The new regulations highlight religious and social harmony, asking for mutual respect between believers and nonbelievers, as well as between believers of different religions.

Neither organizations nor individuals may incite conflict between different religions, within a religion or between believers and nonbelievers, the regulations read.

The revisions include management of religious affairs, covering supervision of religious property and online religious information services.

New problems have emerged in religious affairs due to changing situations at home and abroad, requiring the 2005 regulations to be revised, according to a statement issued by the State Council in September, 2016.

The revised regulations were passed by the State Council on June 14 and take effect on Feb. 1, 2018. Enditem