

Student's tuition loan approved after father's suspected suicide

Local governments have been told to streamline college tuition loans for students from poor families, after a man was suspected to have killed himself over a document related to his son's loan application.

Yue Chengyi, a resident of Youyu county in Shanxi province, was reported to have stabbed himself to death on Aug 14 as he was trying to obtain a document from the local government that was required for a student loan application.

Yue, 50, was the breadwinner of his family – an unemployed wife, two sons and a daughter.

On Aug 7, Yue's second son was admitted to a college and needed about 5,000 yuan (\$750) for tuition for his freshman year.

Aware of the student loan policy to reduce the financial burden for impoverished families, the father approached the township government on Aug 14 hoping to obtain an official document proving that his son qualified for the loan.

Students are allowed to apply for interest-free loans from banks if they have documents showing the family's financial difficulty. The documents must carry government seals.

Yue went to the government office alone. Two hours later, he was found lying in blood in the office by himself, with several stab wounds on his belly and neck. He was sent to the hospital but was too severely injured to be saved. He died that night while being moved to a hospital in Beijing.

On Aug 17, the Youyu county government said on its Weibo account that, according to the local police, Yue, who was feeling great pressure, killed himself with a knife 15 to 20 centimeters long.

Yue Zhong, the older son, told Beijing News that he didn't know whether the knife was his father's.

"We don't know what happened in the office at that time," Yue Zhong was quoted as saying. "We don't know why my father did it."

A staff member of the township government told Beijing News that because there was no surveillance camera in the office, nobody knew exactly what happened.

The Youyu county government told China Daily on Wednesday that a task force has been formed to investigate the incident. The government helped the son get the loan.

The China National Center for Student Financial Aid issued a notice on

Tuesday urging education authorities and banks to improve working efficiency and make the application process “student-centered”, so that every student in need can get loans in a timely manner.

“Students who can offer a statement showing their families’ financial difficulty – whether it’s from their school or the village-or township-level government – are eligible for the loans,” the center said in the notice.

Most Chinese support green consumption

More than 70 percent of Chinese consumers understand the idea of sustainable consumption, according to a report released by the China Chain Store and Franchise Association.

Sustainable consumption means buying products or services that have the least pollutants and do minimum harm to the environment. Sustainable consumption provides for the basic needs of consumers while improving their lives, the report said.

The report was based on questionnaire results from 9,370 consumers in 10 Chinese cities in 2016, as well as online surveys.

More than 30 percent of those surveyed believed strongly that personal consumption has a direct impact on the environment, and more than 40 percent basically agreed, indicating that more than 70 percent of Chinese consumers were aware of the benefits of sustainable consumption, the report said.

“Safety and health” was the top reason given for purchasing sustainable, or green, products and services. Environmental friendliness and good quality were the next two most popular reasons.

According to the report, more than 70 percent of respondents were willing to pay 10 percent more for sustainable products or services over nonsustainable ones.

The report suggested using laws and regulations to boost the market for sustainable products and services – along with improved pricing, fiscal incentives and better education.

The report was produced under the guidance of the 10-Year Framework of Programs on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns, a global framework for shifting toward sustainable consumption and production in both developed and developing countries.

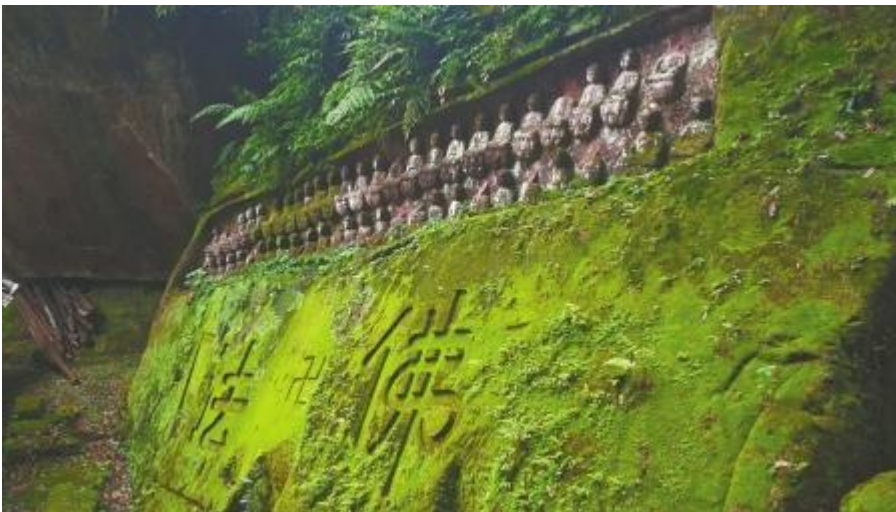
The framework was adopted by heads of state at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012.

Sustainable production and consumption is part of China’s national strategy

in its 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-20).

Ming Dynasty Buddha statues 'beheaded' in Sichuan

10 ancient Buddha statues carved into a cliffside in Jiajiang County, Sichuan Province, have been beheaded, reports the West China Daily.



10 Ming Dynasty Buddha heads in Sichuan Province were stolen between August 18th and 21st. [Photo: West China Daily]

Local police said that they believe this was a theft, rather than vandalism or act of religious intolerance.

"Preliminary clues indicate that the heads were stolen between the evening of August 18th and the dawn of August 21st," said an official from the Jiajiang Agency of Cultural Relics Preservation.

The Buddha statues were carved into the cliffsides in 1522 during the Ming Dynasty.

Local culture authorities said they will cooperate with police to bring the criminals to justice.

Officials also said they intend to marshal more local volunteers to ensure the protection of the remaining relics at the site.

Local police have begun an investigation. So far authorities have not identified any suspects.

HIV-positive students get their chance at college

Fifteen students at a school for HIV-positive students in North China have been enrolled in colleges this year and will start their new lives in September.

Two of them will enter four-year study programs at colleges that award bachelor's degrees, and the rest will go to three-year junior colleges, said Guo Xiaoping, principal of Linfen Red Ribbon School, in Linfen, Shanxi province.

Sixteen senior middle school students at the school – the only one in China that recruits students with HIV – took the college entrance exam this year, he said.

“The students are quite happy with the results, but they are also worried about their future,” Guo said.

All of the students were infected by HIV through their mothers, and most have lost one or both parents and have no source of income, he said.

The Chinese Foundation for Prevention of STDs and AIDS has agreed to provide financial assistance so the students can finish their college studies, he said.

Each will get 12,000 yuan (\$1,800) to cover tuition for two semesters annually, plus 1,500 yuan per month for living expenses, he said.

Yuan Jizheng, deputy director of the foundation's general office, said the foundation plans to donate about 1.5 million yuan to the school to help the 15 students throughout their college studies.

“The monthly living subsidies include rent, as teachers from the school told us most of the students will not choose to live in dorms provided by the colleges because of privacy concerns, and they are planning to rent a room off campus,” she said.

“Each student has received 3,000 yuan in subsidies from the local government, but most of them have given the money to their parents, if they are alive, or to support other guardians, as their families are generally very poor,” she said.

Guo believes that the students will choose not to tell others about their HIV condition while in college, but fears the secret may eventually leak out, because the students have to take medication.

“They will likely face many difficulties in their school life and afterward, as people with HIV are still discriminated against in many places, although things have become better in recent years,” Guo said.

“If you meet them, you will realize that all of them are actually optimistic and keep a positive attitude,” he said. “They will not transmit the disease to anyone. I hope society can be more understanding of them.”

All 340 wild pandas in quake area unharmed

A headcount completed two weeks after a 7.0-magnitude earthquake struck southwest China has confirmed all 340 wild giant pandas in the quake zone are unharmed.

Eleven nature reserves – of which ten are dedicated to protecting giant pandas, golden monkeys and their habitats – were affected by the earthquake which struck Jiuzhaigou County in Sichuan Province, on Aug. 8, local government officials said.

The 340 pandas account for 31 percent of the wild panda population in China, they said.

The earthquake triggered landslides in the mountainous region. Official figures show that 24 people were killed, while hundreds were injured.

Bin Junyi, deputy head of Sichuan provincial forestry bureau, said although the pandas survived the quake, their habitat sustained severe damage.

The natural recovery of the panda habitat will take a long time, he said.

Giant pandas live mainly in the mountains of Sichuan and neighboring Shaanxi and Gansu provinces. Their survival is being threatened by habitat loss and very low birthrates.