

WHO China launches smoke-free campaign targeting youth

The World Health Organization (WHO) started a “smoke-free generation” media campaign in Beijing Thursday targeting young Chinese.

China is in the grip of a national tobacco epidemic, and children are most susceptible with cigarettes portrayed as fashionable and alluring in popular culture, said Bernhard Schwartlander, WHO Representative in China at the launch event.

According to WHO, over half of Chinese adult men smoke, two thirds of whom started as young adults. By 2014, 72.9 percent Chinese students had been exposed to secondhand smoke.

“There is nothing cool about smoking, but there is something empowering about choosing to live a healthy, smoke-free life,” said Schwartlander.

Since China ratified the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in 2005, the country has made a number of tobacco control efforts, including banning tobacco advertisements, increasing tobacco taxes and putting forward regional smoking bans.

As of 2016, 18 cities, including Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen, had implemented regional smoking bans.

China has set a target to reduce the smoking rate among people aged 15 and older to 20 percent by 2030 from the current 27.7 percent, according to the “Healthy China 2030” blueprint issued by the central authorities last October.

Expertise valued in promotions



From left to right: Hou Jianguo, Li Ganjie and Wang Menghui. [Photo/China Daily]

The central government has announced the appointments of several senior officials in the past week, which experts said reflect the trend that China will have more senior officials with expertise related to their posts.

Among the newly appointed, Hou Jianguo, an academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, was appointed Party chief of the General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine, the country's top quality watchdog, on Thursday.

The 58-year-old worked at the University of Science and Technology of China in the Anhui provincial capital Hefei for 15 years and was president of the university from 2008 to 2015 before becoming vice-minister of science and technology.

He then was transferred to the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region as the regional deputy Party chief in 2016.

On Wednesday, Li Ganjie, former deputy Party chief of Hebei province, was named Party chief of the Ministry of Environmental Protection after his predecessor, Chen Jining, became Beijing's acting mayor.

Li, born in 1964, holds a master's degree in nuclear reactor engineering from Tsinghua University. He worked as an environmental protection official for about 16 years and was vice-minister of environmental protection from 2008 to October last year before he was transferred to Hebei province.

In addition, Wang Menghui, 57, was appointed Party chief of the Ministry of Housing and Urban-rural Development on Wednesday.

Wang got a doctor's degree in engineering after he studied urban planning and design in Tsinghua University from 2002 to 2007 when he held various posts in Guangdong province, including mayor of Shanwei city.

Generally speaking, Party chiefs of central government departments also serve

as the agencies' executive chiefs. But the appointment of ministers needs approval from the National People's Congress, so the announcement of Party positions sometimes come first. The next meeting of the congress's standing committee is scheduled for late this month.

Ma Qingyu, a professor at the Chinese Academy of Governance, said that the appointment of these senior officials shows the general trend of the central government to nominate more officials with expertise related to their posts.

"Personally, I feel excited to hear this news and I know many people welcome the appointments as well," he said.

The acceleration of China's modernization and the development of science and technology have resulted in a larger need for officials with special expertise in addition to governing capacity, Ma said, adding that officials with special expertise may be in a better position to make decisions that are in accord with the latest situation.

Song Shiming, a professor also with the Chinese Academy of Governance, said that both expertise in certain fields and governing capacity are needed by the best modern public administrators. The appointments of these senior officials well meet the needs of the times.

"It's a general trend to transform the public administration in China to be law-based and scientific with high efficiency," he said.

"The appointment of technocrats as high-level officials is one of the preconditions for the transformation and could help accelerate the modernization of public governance of the Chinese government."

Chinese vice premier urges efforts to end all military paid service

Chinese Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli urged efforts to terminate all paid services provided by the armed forces and the armed police on Friday.

It is a vital decision aimed at building a powerful army, said Zhang, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, in a teleconference.

Party committees, governments and troops at all levels should work together to fulfil the "major political task," adhere to the correct direction of military reform, and root out corruption in the army, Zhang said.

The vice premier asked government departments concerned to coordinate with the military and create favorable conditions to ensure the completion of the

task on time.

They were ordered to appropriately deal with various problems that may emerge, promote the reform in accordance with the law, and safeguard the security of military assets as well as the rights and interests of the public.

Fan Changlong, vice chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC), warned of the complexity of the task to end all military paid service during the conference.

Resources for terminated paid service will be used to improve the work and living standards of the troops, Fan said.

Since 1998, the armed forces and armed police have not been allowed to run businesses, but were permitted to use surplus resources to provide paid services to the public in 15 fields, as China's service industry was weak at the time, said Jiang Luming, professor at the National University of Defense Technology.

However, with the development of the market economy and imperfections in the paid service system in recent years, corruption cases in the military were exposed due to such services, Jiang added.

In February 2016, the CMC issued a circular on the termination of military paid services. All military paid services will be terminated by the end of June 2018.

[Separate exam sites for HIV students spark controversy](#)

A special school for HIV students has caused controversy by arranging for 16 of its students to take the gaokao exam in separate classrooms from non-HIV students.

The 16 students – 11 boys and five girls – will sit the gaokao, China's college entrance exam, on June 6-7 in two classroom-turned exam rooms at Linfen Red Ribbon School in northern China's Shanxi Province, the country's only school for HIV children.

The students, aged 17 to 21, are the first group of high middle school graduates from the school, previously called "A Tiny Classroom of Love," opened by Linfen Third People's Hospital for medical staff to teach four HIV children. The school was officially founded in 2011, offering both primary and middle school education.

The gaokao is of vital importance to Chinese students, with millions of candidates participating every year.

"We just made the place where they study and live as the exam site," said Guo Xiaoping, principal of the school and former president of Linfen Third People's Hospital.

He said the decision to set separate exam rooms was out of care for the children, who were infected with HIV from mother-to-child transmission.

"The school is a half-hour ride from the general exam site. It is not convenient to take them to go to another place for the exam," Guo said. "If the children take the exams with other candidates, I fear they may feel nervous and others will protest."

However, after many years working against AIDS discrimination, the school underestimated growing acceptance of people with HIV.

"Separate exam rooms objectively create a discriminatory atmosphere," Wang Linghang, a doctor with Beijing Ditan Hospital, told Beijing News.

"Obviously, there is no transmission risk when HIV students take the exams together with other candidates."

"The personal privacy of HIV people should be protected. If these children do not take the exams in separate rooms, who will know they are HIV carriers?" said Bai Hua, leader of a Beijing-based AIDS organization. "The exam rooms are distributed randomly to candidates. Other students will not know they are HIV carriers."

However, some supported the school's decision.

"Separate sites can remove the worry of others and provide free space for people with HIV infection. This is not discrimination," said a user of Weibo, a Twitter-like service. "The social reality is that many people are afraid of contacting AIDS and that cannot be changed currently."

"It is not a matter of discrimination, but the kids' safety. We could not rule out any possibility of infection, such as the virus passing through blood in wounds," said another internet user.

Xiong Bingqi, of the 21st Century Education Research Institute, said the separate exam rooms were meant to provide a good environment, and it was important that the students were given equal education rights.

"There is still a long way to go to completely eradicate discrimination against people living with AIDS/HIV," he said.

In China, about 654,000 people live with HIV/AIDS.

Shanghai official sentenced to nine years for graft

A former high-ranking Shanghai official, Dai Haibo, was sentenced to nine years in jail for accepting bribes and concealing assets in overseas accounts.

Dai is a former deputy secretary-general of the Shanghai municipal government. The investigation into him started in 2015.

According to No. 1 Intermediate People's Court, Dai accepted more than 9.9 million yuan in bribes when he worked in several posts in Shanghai from 1998 to 2015.

Dai opened bank, stock and fund accounts with Citibank Hong Kong in April 2001 without reporting his assets to superior authorities as required.

As of March 2015, the accounts were worth more than 1.58 million yuan in total, prosecutors said.

The court imposed a fine of 2 million yuan and confiscated his illegal profits. It said Dai showed remorse during the investigation.