

Beijing spends US\$2.3 bln in cleaning waterways

Beijing's Tongzhou district, the capital city's subcenter under construction, plans to spend 16 billion yuan (2.3 billion U.S. dollars) treating polluted waterways.

The investment will cover landscaping, pipelines, treatment of polluted creeks and wetlands, according to Tongzhou Water Authority on Friday.

About 90 percent of the funds will be raised through the public private partnership model and the rest directly comes from the government.

To address overcrowding and congestion, Beijing is building the subcenter in Tongzhou where the municipal government will move. Beijing has a population of nearly 22 million.

"The city subcenter faces big tasks in treatment of sewage, small and medium riverways," said Jin Shudong, head of the Beijing Water Authority.

Tongzhou will address the pollution of 16 rivers upstream which flow into the district and step up efforts to improve the overall water environment, he said.

This year, Tongzhou will start construction of 80 sewage treatment plants or stations and complete cleaning 53 polluted waterway stretches.

By 2020, more than 95 percent of sewage in Tongzhou will undergo treatment.

Meanwhile, Tongzhou will cover 3,466 hectares of land with grass or trees this year. In the future, the subcenter will build more than 30 parks to realize there are green belts or parks within a radius of 500 meters.

Shanghai Disney Resort rewards outstanding volunteers

Nearly 100 outstanding volunteers and their families enjoyed a day of magic at Shanghai Disneyland Friday, to celebrate community volunteerism and the upcoming China Youth Volunteer Service Day.

These volunteers, including a torchbearer of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, were selected by the Shanghai Volunteer Foundation as the first group of recipients of the Shanghai Disney Resort Outstanding Volunteer Recognition Program.

The program, founded by Shanghai Disney Resort and the Shanghai Volunteer Foundation, began on December 5 last year, International Volunteer Day.

In the program, 1,000 volunteers and their families will be recognized and invited to enjoy a day at Shanghai Disneyland to reward their contributions to society.

"It is one of Disney's core values to promote community volunteerism wherever we operate, including here in Shanghai. Through the program, we look forward to working together with the Shanghai Volunteer Foundation to pursue our shared vision of promoting community volunteerism throughout the city," said Philippe Gas, general manager of Shanghai Disney Resort.

The China Youth Volunteer Service Day is on March 5, the memorial day of Lei Feng, a young soldier in the 1960s, known for his lifetime of selflessly service to others.

As of early February, Shanghai Disneyland had received over 7 million visitors since it opened in June 2016.

China's top political advisor stresses unity with Xi's leadership

China raised the curtain on its annual political season on Friday, with top political advisor Yu Zhengsheng pledging conformity to the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee with Xi Jinping as the core.

As chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) National Committee, Yu delivered a work report to more than 2,000 political advisors gathered in the heart of Beijing to discuss the political, economic and social issues facing the world's most populous nation and second-largest economy.

Yu said that in the course of the nation's great rejuvenation, the importance of 2016 was assured by the endorsement of Xi Jinping as the core of the CPC Central Committee.

Xi's core status embodies the fundamental interests of the Party and the people, and will be of far-reaching significance. His political ideas should be a guidance for all, Yu told the political advisors.

During the gathering, attendees are expected to fully align their thinking with Xi's strategic blueprint of the "four comprehensives" – comprehensively achieve a moderately prosperous society, deepen reform, advance rule of law and govern the CPC strictly, which is crucial to the drive of China becoming a well-off society by 2020.

The CPPCC is an important vehicle for multiparty cooperation and political consultation under the leadership of the CPC, and the key to socialist democracy.

Political advisors come from various walks of life and ethnic groups. They serve as a think-tank for the government, legislative and judicial organs, and put forward proposals on major political and social issues.

Their proposals can be considered a rough barometer of public opinion, signaling issues of concern on anything from industrial policy to domestic violence, and telegraph the general national agenda for the next year and beyond.

In the past year, seminars have convened to discuss a plethora of topics including new development ideas, supply-side structural reform, revitalization of the northeast region, and rural poverty relief. Agendas also included creation and management of national nature reserves, preservation of land resources and prevention of pollution, Yu said.

Yu commended the advisors for their work on the 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-2020), saying 2017 is a more important year for the plan's implementation.

The CPPCC will help the country better adapt to the "new economic normal" of steady and healthy economic development, he said.

Friday's CPPCC session was the start of the most important two weeks on China's political calendar. The National People's Congress (NPC), China's top legislature, is set to begin its annual session on Sunday.

Together dubbed the "Two Sessions," the meetings are where political and economic developments are reviewed and discussed and key policies are made. This year, attendees will also discuss the general provisions of civil law.

In his speech, Yu saw room for improvement in some aspects of CPPCC work.

"Discussion of state affairs needs to go deeper and to be more practical, work on democratic oversight needs to be further standardized, and CPPCC National Committee members need to do better in the performance of their duties," Yu noted.

The advisors' main efforts this year should be directed toward stable and healthy economic development, communication with representatives of public opinion in Taiwan, and maintaining social harmony and stability.

Yu said communication between political advisors and the youth in Taiwan should be strengthened to consolidate public support for the peaceful development of cross-strait relations.

Political advisors will continue to oversee the implementation of CPC Central Committee policies and raise practical proposals.

While praising the Standing Committee of CPPCC National Committee for

promoting unity and friendship, Yu called for work on solidarity and friendship with the people in Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan, as well as overseas Chinese.

[Website launched to commemorate late Premier Zhou Enlai](#)

A website was launched on Friday to commemorate late Premier Zhou Enlai, born in 1898, in the lead-up to the 120th anniversary of his birth.

The website, zhouenlai.people.cn, featured a 366-day countdown to the anniversary, an introduction to his life, and poems, calligraphy and paintings that pay tribute to Zhou, as well as Zhou's family letters and links to memorial halls dedicated to him in China and abroad.

Visitors can offer virtual "flowers" and pay homage to Zhou online as well as post messages to the website. Endi

[Procuratorates see fewer petitions in 2016](#)

The number of petitions and complaints to procuratorial agencies across China in the first 10 months last year has dropped by 9.8 percent from the same period of the previous year.

Gong Ming, a senior prosecutor with the Supreme People's Procuratorate (SPP), said on Friday that numbers of extreme cases, repeated petitions and petitions that involve mass participation have also decreased, while the involvement of lawyers in petitions is increasing.

Gong said this shows that more members of the public are willing to resort to the law rather than extralegal means in solving their grievances.

Procuratorial authorities at the provincial level have established systems to integrate petitions into judicial proceedings, rectify wrongful decisions and provide judicial assistance in such cases.

Prosecutors have also accepted over 10,000 petition cases via online video in 2016, which could help people make their voices heard, according to Gong.