

Projects to improve traffic on Yangtze



A navigation lock in operation in Xiangjiang River in Changsha, Hunan province. [Photo/Xinhua]

China will dredge sections of the Yangtze River this year to deepen it and increase the amount of freight traffic that can use the waterway, a national legislator said recently.

“Projects will be carried out on the upper, middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River,” said Tang Guanjun, deputy to the National People’s Congress and also director of the Changhang River Administration of Navigational Affairs in Hubei province.

“We aim at forming a water network connecting more places,” he said.

“The water level is of prime importance to freight transportation on the river. For every 10 centimeter rise in the water level, a 3,000 metric ton ship can carry an extra 176 tons of cargo,” he said.

“The ‘golden water gateway’ is essential to boosting the development of the Yangtze River Economic Belt. The river’s mainstream is the busiest river in the world regarding freight traffic,” Tang said.

In 2016, freight traffic on the mainstream of the Yangtze River was 2.31 billion metric tons, while railways across the country carried 3.33 billion tons. The river handled 15.2 million containers last year.

“Water transportation is much cheaper than rail and road transportation,” he said.

New projects will be carried out under strict environmental rules, Tang said.

“We will build a green navigation channel, including using environmental materials and technology to avoid water pollution, and use an ecological design to allow fish to migrate and plants to grow,” he said.

The projects will be carried out on the mainstream and its tributaries.

After the project is completed, the river will be navigable for bigger ships, allowing them to be able to load and unload cargo along the middle and upper reaches of the Yangtze River.

Bottlenecks affect freight transportation traveling to the middle and upper reaches of the river.

The increase of freight traffic along the river is an important part of the Yangtze River Economic Belt, one of China's three major national strategies.

The economic belt covers 11 provinces and cities, such as Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Anhui, Sichuan and Shanghai, with a total area of 2.05 million square kilometers. The belt also spans the country's eastern, middle and western regions, and its population and GDP account for more than 40 percent of the national totals.

Time to see the UK's strengths – steady pound since 2012

Amidst all the hyperbole over short term movements in sterling it is worthwhile looking at the longer trend. Today sterling is around the same level against the Euro as it was at the beginning of 2012. It is almost a fifth higher against the yen, and around one fifth down against the dollar. Over this time period the dollar has been strong against all major currencies, running with higher interest rates and expectations of higher rates than elsewhere in the advanced world. The yen has been particularly weak thanks to negative rates and the creation so many extra yen by the authorities.

One of the odd features of the protracted and often repetitious UK debate about Brexit is the wish of so many to look for weaknesses and problems on the UK side, and to fail to analyse the weaknesses and difficulties on the EU side in the forthcoming talks. On Tuesday I pointed out to the PM during the exchanges on her statement about the EU summit that the questions to be asked need to be asked of the 27.

I began by asking how can a group of civilised democracies that are meant to believe in decent values not reassure British citizens living on the continent legally that they can stay there after exit? I do not for one moment think the Spaniards will want to evict UK pensioners living in their own villas on the Costa Brava, for example. Nor do I see how they could do so legally. However, why is it asking too much of the EU and the Spanish government not to confirm that of course they are welcome to stay. After all, the UK government has been very clear that we would like all EU citizens

legally in the UK to stay as long as they wish, but do need similar confirmation for our citizens on the continent.

I also asked for confirmation that it is clearly in the interests of business and governments on the continent to carry on trading tariff free, with no more barriers than they currently face, once the UK has left. The UK will willingly offer continental countries tariff free access to our market as long as we have the same to theirs. The choice rests with them, as the UK would recommend tariff free but can live with WTO most favoured nation terms.

Whilst we are about it, we should ask the rest of the EU how they intend to implement their Treaty obligation to have good relations with neighbouring states and to promote trade with them. As the EU is always keen to ensure we follow the letter as well as the spirit of the Treaty I assume the same applies on this important issue.

The UK voted to take back control of our laws, our money and our borders. We are doing so based on the referendum of the UK voters, and now also on the back of a Commons vote with a majority of 372 to leave. Under the Treaty we do not owe them any money apart from our regular contributions.

[Donor shortage threatens rare-blood carriers](#)



Wang Rui



Cheng Juanping



Bao Sanming



Wang Meng



Zhao Cuihui



Liu Qianjing



Shen Zhilong



Zhu Qi



Cheng Ling

Volunteers proudly display their blood donation certificates. The China RH Union is looking for more donors to help the small number of people with rhesus negative blood in China. [Photos/China Daily]

Only a small number of people in China have rhesus negative blood, and a lack of supplies can be potentially life-threatening if they need an urgent transfusion. Zhou Wenting reports from Shanghai.

Xie Yingfeng recently quit his job to devote himself to an NGO that helps people with a rare blood type find donors who could potentially save their lives.

There are four human blood types: A, B, AB, and O. Each has a rhesus factor, either positive or negative. Generally, people with rhesus negative blood can only receive transfusions of their own type, while rhesus positive carriers can receive blood from both positive and negative donors.

Only three in every 1,000 Chinese has rhesus negative blood, so in the words of an old phrase they are "as rare as a panda", which has led to it being known as "panda blood". Moreover, many people have no idea whether their blood type is rhesus negative or positive until they need a transfusion.

The small number of people with rhesus negative blood means there is an equally small number of donors, which poses serious problems for people who require urgent transfusions, especially women who have postpartum hemorrhages.

Volunteers

Xie, 38, is the Shanghai regional head of the China RH Union, an NGO founded by volunteers in Beijing, most of whom have rhesus negative blood. Nationally the organization has about 4,000 members.

Every year, the Shanghai branch assists about 40 people who approach it in search of blood donations. For each case, Xie may receive as many as 200 phone calls from the patient's family, volunteers, friends and even strangers who have read online posts for donors.

"It's hard for me to do 9-to-5 office work because my phone is likely to ring constantly," said the former construction materials salesman, who is currently living on his savings, but is considering selling delicacies from his hometown of Urumqi, capital of the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, to earn more money.

On a typical day, he spends hours confirming patients' requests, rushing to the hospital or calling their physicians, and accompanying volunteers when they donate blood.

"The aim behind the union is that when people of the same kind are in trouble, we can stand up for each other," said Xie, who is rhesus negative himself. In the 12 years since it was founded, the union has helped more than 3,000 people nationwide.

Having spent 12 years helping other people, Xie has become less interested in material wealth, which is another reason he quit his job.

The union was founded in 2005 by Beijing resident Wang Yong, who was deeply touched by media coverage of a rhesus negative leukemia patient who had been forced to abandon medical treatment because of a shortage of suitable donors.

Although Wang has a positive blood type, he began researching the condition and discovered that millions of people across the country are carriers: "I was an IT engineer, so I set up an online platform to make it less difficult to obtain blood for this small group."

At first, the union—which has branches in 26 provinces and municipalities—received just one or two calls a week, but it now fields as many as 20 a day. The regional heads, who never turn off their cellphones in case they are called for help, collect information about patients, verify their medical information, post messages to volunteers via an online chat group and search for donors.

A precious resource

According to the union's rules, six months must elapse between each donation,

while people recovering from a cold or who have taken medicine have to wait a week after the all-clear before they are allowed to give blood. Women who are menstruating or breastfeeding are not allowed to donate. "Most of us don't visit centers to donate blood regularly. Our resource is fairly precious, so we must make every drop count," Xie said.

According to Wang, the largest amount donated by a single volunteer was 20,000 cubic centimeters, roughly five times the volume of blood in the average adult body, which required at least 50 separate donations.

"Some volunteers have stopped smoking or drinking alcohol and going to bed late to ensure they are healthy enough to make an urgent blood donation. Some slender women have even attempted to gain weight to meet the requirement that donors must weigh at least 45 kilograms," he said.

The regional heads usually look for candidates within their home province or municipality, but sometimes volunteers rush to distant locations to donate blood.

In February, the union's branch in Anhui province was looking for donors with B negative blood for a 60-something woman who was awaiting surgery. No one could be found within the immediate locality, but Kang Huiming, a primary school teacher in Lianshui county, Jiangsu province, volunteered to help. That night she asked a friend to drive her to the hospital, six hours from her home.

"It's not about showing your benevolence—it's about saving a life," Kang said.

Although the number of members has grown gradually, some quit the union after a couple of years.

"When they first join, some people feel like they are superman and can help anybody. But if their help fails to save a life, it's hard to drag them out of the low mood," Wang said.

Xie, in Shanghai, recalled an unsuccessful attempt to save the life of a 7-year-old girl with leukemia. Having received a phone call from the girl's mother, he immediately started looking for donors. Eventually, he contacted a suitable volunteer, but the man was on a business trip to Henan province in Central China. Desperate to help, the volunteer concluded his trip, flew back to Shanghai and rushed to the hospital. Unfortunately, the girl died just as he arrived.

"Many of the volunteers were sleepless that night. The volunteer who flew back even blamed himself for taking the trip," Xie said.

Others have been lured away by money. Trading in blood is illegal under Chinese law, but "black" collection and supply agencies still exist. According to Xie, 400 cc of rhesus negative blood can fetch more than 20,000 yuan (\$2,900) on the black market.

Decisions and pressure

The biggest pressure Xie faces comes when he has to decide whether to ask volunteers to donate blood to someone with a minimal chance of survival.

In May, he was approached by the father of a 2-year-old boy who had double kidney failure and was about to have a transplant. The man was hoping to obtain 3,000 cc of rhesus negative blood.

“The hospital said the transplant stood very little chance of success. To provide 3,000 cc, we would have needed eight donors, but their blood might save eight other patients who have a better chance of survival,” he said. Reluctantly, Xie declined the father’s request. He later discovered that the parents had bought blood from illegal dealers, but the boy died during surgery.

“In such cases, I shoulder overwhelming pressure from the volunteers, the patient’s family and my friends, but after all these years, I’ve become more rational. The truth is that we can’t always provide assistance in time or help people endlessly,” he said.

Wang has considered leaving the union on several occasions, but hasn’t been able to bring himself to abandon the cause.

“The simple act of disseminating a message can sometimes save the life of someone who may have no other way out,” he said.

Speech: “We need a more forceful and unified UN approach to human trafficking and modern slavery and forced labour”

I’d like to begin by thanking all four of our excellent briefers. And by paying particular tribute to our civil society briefer Ilwad Elman for bringing home to us the devastating impact of trafficking and slavery in conflict. She gave voice to the 46 million men, women and children caught up in this tragedy across the world.

I’m glad that so many Ministers are here today to hear that testimony – and I’m grateful to them and to all Council members for their statements. The fullest response from each and every member of the United Nations is needed and I look forward to hearing the views of countries from outside the Security Council shortly.

Because, as we have heard so clearly, modern slavery is a global problem; one that extends far beyond the fifteen countries sat at this table. It exists in

nearly all societies, including my own. It does not respect borders or jurisdictions. It does not recognise the dignity or worth of the human person. It just sees opportunities to exploit, lives to destroy.

If we could hear the millions who are being coerced and exploited today, their unwavering message to us would be that we have simply not done enough. That we have shut our eyes and dulled our senses to a crime we hoped had been consigned to history.

And that's why the United Kingdom called this open debate today. It's why my Prime Minister Theresa May first raised this issue at UNGA last year and plans to do so again later this year. And it's why we are taking such strong action in our own country and across the world, so that together we can eradicate it.

We know the root causes. Poverty, conflict and instability lie at the heart of so many victims' suffering. When a state's authority is eroded, when its responsibility to its people is unfulfilled, organised criminal networks thrive, partnering with armed groups and terrorists to prey on the vulnerable, to prey on those who have already suffered far too much.

We know what follows. Sexual exploitation and sexual slavery. Forced labour and child labour. Human rights in tatters. Conflict exploited, conflict sustained.

This should be a familiar tale to this Council. We heard it ourselves in north-eastern Nigeria only last week. We saw it in the hands in the air when we asked the women there whether they'd lost a child to Boko Haram. We saw it in their tears as they spoke of abducted daughters, of mass rapes, of grandchildren being born only to be enslaved.

And in response, we need a more forceful and unified UN approach to human trafficking and modern slavery and forced labour. We look forward to the Secretary-General's report in November on exactly that. And we encourage him to focus on making existing structures work effectively, including the Inter-Agency Coordination Group Against Trafficking in Persons.

We also need to combine our efforts across the mandates entrusted in us. We in this Council have a responsibility, no a duty, to maintain international peace and security, to end the instability in which modern slavery thrives. And as UN members, we have frameworks for action; the 2030 Agenda commitment to end trafficking, modern slavery and forced labour, and the General Assembly's Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

But we also need to take responsibility as individual Member States. This means doing more to disrupt and disband serious organised criminal networks engaged in people trafficking. It means all of us ratifying the 1956 Convention and the ILO Forced Labour Convention Protocol. And it means taking real steps to strengthen our own national systems to identify, investigate and prosecute those committing these abhorrent crimes.

If we take these steps, at home and here in the UN, we will have begun to

turn the page. But for us truly to consign this terrible tragedy to the history books, we will need sustained commitment that endures long after this session is over. Modern slavery must become a recurring theme for this Council, and one for other parts of the UN to return to – including at this year's UNGA – so that we can accelerate our efforts to end this abhorrent practice once and for all.

Thank you.

Press release: New grant for council homelessness services

The government is transforming the way councils fund homelessness services, giving them greater flexibility to prioritise homelessness prevention, Communities Minister Marcus Jones has confirmed.

The new 'flexible homelessness support grant' is a radical replacement of the tightly controlled funding currently given to source and manage temporary accommodation for homeless individuals and their families.

Under the existing 'temporary accommodation management fee', funding can only be used for expensive intervention when a household is already homeless, rather than on preventing this happening in the first place.

The new grant will empower councils with the freedom to support the full range of homelessness services. This could include employing a homelessness prevention or tenancy support officer to work closely with people who are at risk of losing their homes.

Communities Minister Marcus Jones said:

This government is determined to help the most vulnerable in society, which is why we're investing £550 million to 2020 to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping.

We've brought in a raft of measures over the last few months, from funding homelessness projects in 225 local authorities to changing the law by backing Bob Blackman's Homelessness Reduction Bill to support for more people at risk of losing their homes.

We're now going further and giving councils greater flexibility, so they can move away from costly intervention when a household is already homeless, to preventing this happening in the first place.

Councils across England will receive £402 million over the next 2 years. No

local authority will receive less annual funding under the grant than we estimate they would have received under the Department for Work and Pensions fee. First year allocations will also include an additional amount to authorities with high temporary accommodation commitments.

Compared to the old system, we estimate that London councils will receive around £20 million more next year and that other high pressure areas, including Leeds, Birmingham, Reading, Peterborough and Portsmouth, will also gain significant additional funding.

In recognition of the particular pressures which London councils face, we are also setting aside £25 million of the funding across the 2 years while we work with the Greater London Authority and London boroughs to look at how we might help councils collaborate in the procurement of accommodation for homeless families in London.

The new grant forms part of the wide range of measures the government is taking to prevent people from becoming homeless.

This includes:

- protecting and maintaining the funding for councils to provide homelessness prevention services at £315 million over the 4 years to 2019-20; £20 million to support innovative approaches in local areas to tackle and prevent homelessness
- a £20 million rough sleeping prevention fund to help individuals at risk or new to the streets get back on their feet
- a £10 million Social Impact Bond programme to help long-term rough sleepers
- £61 million for councils to implement the measures in the Homelessness Reduction Bill, which will change the law to provide vital support for more people at risk of losing their homes

The former Chancellor announced at Autumn Statement 2015 that the Department for Work and Pensions' temporary accommodation management fee would be replaced by a Department for Communities and Local Government grant from April 2017.

The new flexible homelessness support grant will come in from 1 April 2017. It is based on a completely new funding model so resources are directed to the areas with the greatest need and which allows councils to plan their homelessness services with certainty.

The funding allocated for the 2 years from 2017 to 2018 is £186 million and £191 million. A further £25 million has been set aside for London boroughs to

work together to provide accommodation for homeless families in the capital.

See the [allocations for the new grant](#).