



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

Yangtze River fishing ban reinforced

Ministry details slew of measures to redeploy fishermen to other sectors

By XU WEI
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China has ramped up efforts to enforce a fishing ban on the Yangtze River in concert with stronger steps to cushion the blow to fishermen forced to give up their boats and nets, as experts highlight the importance of across-the-board measures to restore the ecology of Asia's longest river.

In a notice released on Wednesday, the General Office of the State Council said more work must be done to enforce the Yangtze fishing ban and ensure the livelihoods of former fishermen in its river basin.

Local authorities must ensure that eligible fishermen are included in social security networks and also come up with tailored plans to help with their employment, based on their age, level of education and professional skills, the office said.

China introduced a 10-year fishing

ban on the Yangtze at the start of this year to protect its aquatic life in the face of dwindling fish stocks and declining biodiversity.

However, illegal fishing has persisted in areas where local authorities failed to faithfully carry out measures to identify fishermen, offer them aid and enforce fishing bans, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs said in another notice released on Wednesday.

Xia Dejun, a fishery administration officer in Maanshan, Anhui province, told People's Daily that a lot of illegal fishing took place late at night, which made law enforcement difficult, and officers were also challenged by a lack of staff and equipment.

Xu Pao, head of the Chinese Academy of Fishery Sciences' Freshwater Fisheries Research Center, said the fishing ban is a key measure to curb the decline of the river's ecosystem and avert a biological diversity crisis.

A study by the center suggests pop-

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ulations of four main fish species in the river have fallen by more than 90 percent since the 1980s. In recent years, less than 100,000 metric tons of fish have been caught in the river each year, down from more than 400,000 tons in 1954.

“Even worse, in the face of declining fishing resources, some fishermen have resorted to illegal fishing tools and methods, similar to ways

that drain ponds to get all the fish,” Xu said. “As a result, the fishermen were getting even poorer and fish stocks were in an increasingly dire situation. It was a vicious circle.”

He said a lack of official statistics on fishermen and boats along the river posed a major hurdle to enforcement of the ban.

“Many boats were unlicensed, and the fact that the ban involves a large area has also made data collection difficult,” Xu said. “However, for authorities, accurately and comprehensively grasping information about fishing boats and fishermen is a prerequisite for enforcement of various policies.”

The fact that most fishermen had low levels of education and few other skills made the implementation of official policies difficult, he said, citing a study that showed 65 percent of fishermen along the Yangtze only finished primary school and about 27 percent were illiterate.

The ministry's notice detailed a slew of measures to redeploy fishermen to other sectors. The government will encourage the development of

fish farming, aquatic products processing and leisure fishing to create new jobs, in addition to measures to offer them free training in other skills. Businesses will also be encouraged to recruit them.

Former fishermen who launch startups that operate for more than a year will be rewarded with a one-time subsidy, the notice said.

The authorities also rolled out plans to relocate fishermen living on islands in the river or lakes in its basin to more developed areas.

To ensure the enforcement of the fishing ban, a joint law enforcement campaign will be launched by eight central government departments and the Supreme People's Court targeting illegal fishing and the sale of illegal fishing gear.

Xu said the fishing ban is only the first step to restore the Yangtze's aquatic life and ecosystem.

“It's only an immediate method,” he said. “To attain long-term outcomes, more systemic ecological restoration measures, such as water environment treatment and shoreline repair, must move forward.”

POLICY RESPONSE

Funds allocated for teacher training and flood relief

By MO JINGXI
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A number of ministry-level departments, including those responsible for finance, national development and reform, and emergency management, have responded recently to issues of public concern.

Teacher-training program receives 2.18b yuan

The central government has allocated 2.18 billion yuan (\$311.90 million) to provide training for primary school, middle school and kindergarten teachers in central and western regions, the Ministry of Finance said in a notice released on Thursday.

The teachers will be encouraged to



receive training through various channels, including outside training, online study and visiting scholarship programs at elite schools, it said.

Areas of extreme poverty should be given priority when distributing the funds, the ministry said.

China launched a national training program for teachers at primary and middle schools and kindergartens in 2010.

In the past decade, 18 billion yuan has been allocated for the program and more than 15 million teachers and school principals have received training, the ministry said.

Guideline to boost private sector's transport role

No restrictive thresholds shall be set to prevent private companies' participation in the construction and operation of transport infrastructure, a guideline published on Wednesday said.

The guideline, aimed at encouraging the private sector to fund transport infrastructure, was jointly issued by 12 departments, including the National Development and Reform Commission.

It said barriers to market access

should be made equal to ensure fair competition. For example, private enterprises should not be restricted from bidding for projects by local rules that require them to set up subsidiaries in places where the projects take place.

Private enterprises will also be encouraged to participate in the construction of major railway projects, and the operation and development of railway passenger and freight stations, mobile internet services and express logistics, it said.

615m yuan provided for flood disaster relief

China allocated a total of 615 million yuan (\$87.82 million) to six provincial-level regions on Wednesday for disaster relief in areas hit by floods, the Ministry of Emergency Management said.

The funds, allocated by the ministries of finance and emergency management, were channeled to Chongqing, the provinces of Anhui, Jiangxi, Hubei and Guizhou, and the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region.

While 430 million yuan will be used for flood control, the remain-

ing 185 million yuan will be used to help people affected by the disasters, the Ministry of Emergency Management said.

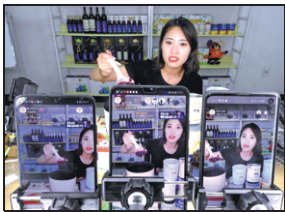
On July 7, the State Flood Control and Drought Relief Headquarters upgraded the emergency response for flood control to level three as incessant downpours continued to wreak havoc across vast stretches of the country.

Heavy rain has lashed large parts of southern China since June, with the waters of many rivers in affected regions exceeding warning levels.

Nine professions gain government recognition

China has given official recognition to nine new professions in an effort to promote employment amid COVID-19 prevention and control measures, according to a statement released on July 6 by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, the State Administration for Market Regulation and the National Bureau of Statistics.

The new professions, including blockchain technician, online marketer, online learning consultant



and community health assistant, are mostly in the public health sector, emerging industries and areas related to poverty alleviation, it said.

Five other jobs, including live-streaming salesperson and internet information auditor, have also been recognized, while three types of work related to public health services, such as epidemic prevention coordinator and sanitation worker, have been upgraded into professions, the statement said.

It is the third time China has added new professions to its occupation list since 2015, when the country unveiled the latest edition of its occupational classifications.

Xinhua contributed to the story.

Policy digest

Oversight of healthcare fund to be upgraded



The supervision and law enforcement systems for China's healthcare security fund will be basically in place by 2025 as the country moves to reform its oversight, according to a guideline released by the General Office of the State Council on Thursday.

The healthcare security fund pays for people to see the doctor and saves lives, and the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council place a high value on its safety, the guideline said.

It said the medical expenses of COVID-19 patients were covered by the fund in a timely manner, ensuring their treatment was not affected.

However, according to the guideline, reform of the healthcare security fund's supervision systems is needed because there are still a number of problems, including an unsound supervision system and the relatively low effectiveness of fund utilization.

According to the guideline, the reform will require building supervision systems with smart technologies, tip-off rewards and credit management, and improving the public supervision system.

For example, in terms of public supervision, people from all walks of life will be encouraged to supervise the healthcare security fund together with the government. In addition, representatives from the National People's Congress, the public and media, among others, will be hired as supervisors to conduct oversight of related organizations and people.

The guideline also underscored the importance of clearly defining the accountability for supervision, and improving supporting measures.

Pilot reforms ready for replication after testing

Six groups of reform measures tested in pilot free trade zones will be replicated and promoted across the country, a notice issued by the State Council on July 7 said.

They cover five areas: investment management; trade facilitation; financial openness and innovation; operational and post-operational oversight; and human resources.

To reform investment management, green channels will be set up for approval procedures for electricity projects, real estate registration will be more convenient for members of the public, and smart technologies will make small value-added tax declarations easier.

Management and supervision of imports and exports will be further upgraded across the country to facilitate trade, intellectual property will be securitized, and risk control for lease finance companies will be based on big data.

Meanwhile, measures including one-time utility operation approval for construction projects and a new business model for second-hand automobile exports will be adopted in designated pilot areas.

In addition, a few measures will be implemented in supervised bonded places and areas administered by the Chengdu Railway Bureau.

The State Council said governments at all levels and all ministries should fully implement the measures to further improve the business environment and stimulate the market to build a more open economy.

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