

Immoral entertainment in crosshairs

Recent celebrity misconduct has led authorities to take action

By CHEN NAN
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Through a complex combination of exquisite choreography, music videos, and photos — which usually feature them made-up and clad in trendy outfits — celebrities have won the hearts of numerous fans, especially teenagers and young adults.

But behind the glamour, the lucrative entertainment industry has recently stirred controversy with a series of scandals.

Earlier this year, Chinese actress Zheng Shuang came under fire when her ex-husband accused her of abandoning him and their two children, who were born to surrogates in the United States.

Last month, the 30-year-old was fined 299 million yuan (\$46.3 million) for tax evasion. This led the Chinese National Radio and Television Administration to announce that all programs she had participated in, including the TV series *A Chinese Ghost Story*, would be taken off the air. In addition, radio and television broadcasting organizations are banned from featuring Zheng in any of their programs.

Other scandals, including rape accusations against Chinese-Canadian star Kris Wu and Chinese actor Zhang Zhehan's visit to Japan's Yasukuni Shrine, which honors 14 Class-A convicted war criminals among 2.5 million Japanese war dead from World War II and has long been regarded as a symbol of the past Japanese militarism, also sparked public outrage.

In light of these incidents, the Chinese regulator has been implementing new regulations to curb irregularities in the entertainment sector, with the goal of creating a more wholesome industry.

According to Zhu Kening, president of the China Association of Performing Arts, a new list of moral guidelines issued by the association in February outlines how to deal with individuals involved in scandals and other misconduct.

"The professional quality of entertainers in the industry should be improved. It's important to regulate their professional behavior and strengthen the self-discipline among entertainers so that they have a positive impact on society and promote the healthy development of the performance industry," said Zhu, adding that an ethics committee has been established to monitor and punish scandalous performers.

On Sept 2, the radio and television administration released an eight-point plan to strengthen the management of entertainment programs and related personnel. The plan called for boycotting celebrities who commit illegal or immoral acts, ending sky-high payments for commercial activities and barring irrational idol worship.

The same day, the CAPA urged artists and their agencies to shoulder their social responsibilities. It also encouraged agencies to improve professional ethics.

Further, according to a notice issued by the Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China



Central Committee on Sept 2, the recent moves against the emerging chaos in China's entertainment industry are meant to create a healthy environment for the growth of both the industry and society.

"Some unprincipled idols have set a bad example for teenagers through illegal acts and misconduct, poisoning the social environment," it noted.

Moreover, entertainment platforms have also been asked to keep a close watch on the content they share, and businesses in the industry have been encouraged to take greater social responsibility, rather than just focusing on profits.

On Aug 30, the Ministry of Culture

and Tourism issued a notice on strengthening the education, management and morality of writers and artists. It pointed out that cases of celebrity misconduct, such as tax evasion and excessively high payments in the film industry, have violated laws and disturbed the industry's order.

"Artists involved in scandals will be banned from all public platforms and will not be allowed to perform publicly," the notice said.

Performers have shown support for the measures.

"The art scene is undergoing a morality crisis, which is not only harmful for the industry, but also hurts audiences. Celebrities have a moral responsibility to be good role

models for society," said Xin Baiqing, a veteran actor with the National Theater of China. "We actors have achieved fame thanks to the roles we've played. We should always focus on our art, which is the most important part of our career."

Pipa player Zhao Cong, who is also president of the China National Traditional Orchestra, said: "Music, like many art forms, can have a great impact on people. As musicians, we should be aware of our responsibilities — not only creating high-quality work but also guiding audiences to enjoy great art. We deliver our ideas through music, which should connect with people in a positive way rather than misguiding audiences,

especially the young."

Conductor Li Xincao, president of the China National Symphony Orchestra, agreed.

"The job of being a professional artist in different fields like music, dance and theater, is highly respected because it takes years of training, practice and passion. There are many artists I know who deserve to be called real artists, who are totally different from those who may achieve fame overnight. The rapid development of the country's entertainment industry and the popularity of social media platforms are a double-edged sword. We need a clean and positive environment to create and enjoy art."

Policy Digest

Campaign targeting antiquity theft

A yearlong nationwide campaign by Chinese police has detained thousands suspected of stealing or trafficking cultural relics, according to the Ministry of Public Security.

During the campaign to curb the theft and sale of ancient items which began on Aug 31 last year, police departments across the country have solved 2,200 cases, apprehending more than 4,500 suspects and breaking up over 450 criminal gangs.

About 58,000 antiquities were retrieved during the campaign, the ministry said.

At a meeting on Aug 31, Vice-Minister of Public Security Du Hangwei called for improving cooperative and long-term efforts by public security agencies and cultural relics departments to crack down on antiquities crimes.

Thanks to the campaign, the number of cases last year was the lowest since 2013.

In recent years, the ministry has also bolstered cooperation with the National Cultural Heritage Administration to boost security in museums nationwide.

As antiquity theft remains rampant, the decision has been taken to extend the campaign by a year, a ministry official said.

Confidence in autumn harvest despite disasters

Despite severe disasters triggered by extreme weather in parts of the country this year, China is confident that there will be a bumper harvest of grain this autumn.

Wei Baigang, a spokesman at the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, said on Sep 1 that the impact of recent disasters on China's agriculture sector has been "generally less severe than in previous years".

More than 4.8 million hectares of crops have been hit by disasters since June, approximately 2.63 million hectares less than last year, and the lowest figure for the three-month period in the last five years.

Disasters only affected production in parts of the country, and their impact was temporary, Wei added, saying that areas that were hit hard accounted for a fraction of those dedicated to autumn grain production.

Henan province, a major agricultural region, suffered heavy flooding this summer.

The province reported that about 730,000 hectares of autumn grain had been affected, accounting for less than 1 percent of the national cultivated grain area.

Of the country's 13 major grain-producing regions, many have experienced robust momentum in autumn grain production, said Wei, noting that Northeast China is likely to increase its output of corn and rice.

As the harvest nears, authorities have made preparations for disaster prevention, bolstering confidence that the harvest will be abundant, Wei added.

Cities to stop massive demolition of buildings

As cities in China pursue the renovation of older and informal districts, large-scale demolition of buildings will be avoided, the country's urban-planning authorities said on Aug 31.

In recent years, many local governments have introduced urban renewal policies in line with the central government's agenda.

However, some of these plans have involved the mass demolition of old towns and districts or the cutting down of old trees on a large scale, running counter to the original policy.

Huang Yan, Vice-Minister of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, told a news conference that the country will avoid the widespread razing of existing buildings unless those buildings are illegal or dangerous, while historical buildings should be preserved.

All localities should carefully plan urban-renewal programs, taking into account the particularities of their situation and avoiding hidden debts, Huang said.

ZHANG YUNBI

Government looks to tame fan club phenomenon

By CHEN NAN

Reality shows about cultivating celebrities have been one of the most popular types of programs in the country during the past five years.

However, they have also stirred controversy and caused chaos, as was highlighted in a notice released by the Chinese National Radio and Television Administration on Sept 2. The notice aims to regulate entertainment programs, celebrities and celebrity agencies.

Performers who have broken laws or ethics should be banned, reality shows aimed at developing idols should be canceled and the tendency to promote shallow and vulgar culture should be curbed, according to the notice.

It particularly notes issues surrounding *fan quan*, or fan clubs, a South Korean concept that has ena-

bled pop stars and their supporters to bring K-pop to a broader audience.

Fans gather in groups to meet and share information about their idols, and also spend considerable amounts of money to support them, buying them expensive gifts or paying to vote to increase their popularity. The fans' activities have played a key role in driving the entertainment industry, but have also triggered controversy.

Online reality shows — such as *"Idol Producer"*, produced by streaming service iQiyi, and the *"Chuang"* series from Tencent Video — have become popular in recent years among young people closely connected with *fan quan*. These shows gather young contestants to compete, and winners get the opportunity to launch their career in a girl or boy group.

In May, a video showing a group of

people opening bottles of milk, pouring the contents into buckets and dumping the buckets into a drainage ditch went viral.

The fans only wanted the bottle caps, which had a QR code printed on the inside. Each code represented a vote. By scanning the code, fans were able to vote for contestants on *"Youth With You"*, one of the country's most-viewed reality shows, which is also produced by iQiyi. The show's main sponsor is the company that produces the milk.

The wasting of so much milk sparked an outcry, and the behavior led authorities to take action.

On May 10, the Beijing Municipal Radio and Television Bureau issued a notification aimed at strengthening the regulation and supervision of online reality shows.

"Reality shows are prohibited from getting votes through inappro-

priate means, like raising money and group funding," the notification stated.

The Cyberspace Administration of China, the country's top internet watchdog, also responded by pledging to make greater effort to guide young people following celebrities by further regulating online platforms. On May 8, it launched the "Clear and Bright" campaign, aiming at controlling online misconduct, such as irrational behavior by fan groups.

Even before the milk-dumping incident, there were reports of fans following their idols day and night, invading their privacy and causing problems for others.

Some obsessive fans reportedly stole their parents' credit cards to buy products endorsed by their idols, or raised money to pay for votes. Others supported their idols by insulting their celebrity rivals, using vulgar

language and making false claims, triggering online arguments and disturbing social order.

In addition, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism issued a document on Sept 2 requiring livestreaming platforms and agencies to enhance management of their programs to prevent performers from asking fans to pay gratuities, releasing false information to drive consumption or from playing up topics for publicity.

"Fans are emotionally connected to their idols and build virtual relationships. With the rapid development of social media platforms, fans and their idols are closer than ever before," said Yin Yi, a teacher at the School of Arts and Communication of Beijing Normal University, whose research centers on subjects such as pop culture and fan culture.

"Proper guidance is necessary for young people, especially teenagers. An idol's self-discipline and strong work ethics are important parts of that guidance."