

# Opinions mixed on subway ban of food, drinks

By WANG QINGYUN  
wangqingyun@chinadaily.com.cn

Beijing's legislature is considering whether to allow people to eat and drink on subway trains, as members of the city's People's Congress urged on Thursday that such behavior be banned.

Eating and drinking, as well as giving out fliers, begging and performing for money should all be prohibited in subway train carriages, and violators should be fined at most 1,000 yuan (\$160), according to the Urban Construction and Environment Protection Committee under the city's People's Congress.

The committee submitted review opinions on Thursday of a draft to enhance the safety of the city's subways.

When it first came out for public review in February, the draft of Regulations on Beijing Railway Transportation Operation Safety said that eating and drinking should be prohibited on subway trains. However, the city's government deleted the stipulation when it submitted the draft to the standing committee of the city's People's Congress for review on Thursday.

"Eating and drinking doesn't have much direct relation to the safety of the subway operation," said Yang Hong, an official with the city's Legal Affairs Office, as quoted by China National Radio.

Additionally, she said, a large number of personnel would be needed to enforce the prohibition, which, if it becomes law, won't be effective if enforcement lags.

However, Guo Pujin, director of the Urban Construction and Environment Protection Committee, believes otherwise.

"Eating and drinking in the carriage of the subway may cause disputes between passengers and between pas-

sengers and the operators of the subway, as food and drink may be spilled or give out an unpleasant smell," Guo said when announcing the committee's review opinions.

Li Wenjie, an official with Beijing Subway Line 8, agreed.

Li said she has received reports of people who slipped and fell in stations and in carriages because they stepped in food or drink that had spilled on the floor.

One woman even broke a bone, she recalled.

"In the carriage, it's more often that the food and drink spill out, burning other passengers or staining their clothes, and the two sides fall into a brawl," she said. "Getting the report of such cases, our employees have guided these passengers out and handed them over to the police in the station."

If the prohibition becomes law, the employees of the subway lines will have something to fall back on when dissuading passengers from eating and drinking, she said.

However, it would take a special team of law enforcers to patrol subway carriages, because the stewards focus on driving the train and don't have time to supervise passengers' behavior, she said, adding that stewards also lack the authority to levy fines against violators.

It's also difficult to patrol the carriages in peak hours, she said.

Chen Haibo, 28, who takes the subway to work, said he would welcome the enactment of such a ban.

"I never eat on the subway," he said. "The air in the train in the morning peak hour is already very stuffy, and food gives out a smell that further deteriorates the air quality. But I don't think the ban, if legalized, will be effectively implemented, as some people believe it is their right to eat and drink in the train."



JIANG DONG / CHINA DAILY

A staff member examines the quality of seeds in a temperature-controlled storage at Yangling Leda Biology Science and Technology Co Ltd located in Yangling Agricultural Demonstration Zone, Shaanxi province, on Thursday.

## Central Asian farmers to reap benefits

**Editor's note:** During his visit to Kazakhstan in September, President Xi Jinping proposed that China and Central Asia join hands to build a Silk Road economic belt to boost cooperation. The idea has been widely echoed in Central Asian countries, becoming an encouraging blueprint for Chinese areas along the Silk Road that has linked Asia and Europe for more than 2,000 years. In the next three weeks, China Daily reporters will travel through the belt in China and in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkey. They will show the progress and expectations of the countries, businesses and peoples on the route.

By ZHONG NAN, LU HONGYAN and MALIE in Xi'an

Farm planting technologies and anti-drought grain seeds, which have long been driving parts of western China's agricultural sector, are finding new growth thanks to Central Asian countries' rising demand to improve the output of various farm products.

The opportunities come from Central Asian nations' rising investment in various agricultural sectors and rapid urban development. Countries such as Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan have all begun seeking technical solutions and human assistance from China, which is good at using limited land and resources to feed its enormous population.

Yangling Agricultural Demon-

### CHINESE MEDIA ALONG THE SILK ROAD

stration Zone, which is Shaanxi's largest international agricultural technology and production zone specializing in anti-drought grain and flower seed production and technology and is close to Xi'an, began to transfer its technology to Central Asian nations in 2006.

Wang Baoping, deputy director of the Yangling Agricultural zone, said the northern part of Shaanxi province has weather and soil conditions that are similar to certain Central Asian regions.

The zone has established a specialized research center to develop

anti-drought seeds.

Wang said farmers in Central Asia will be big beneficiaries of China's effort to build the modern Silk Road Economic Belt.

"The train of Chang'an, the first international cargo train running from Xi'an to Kazakhstan, will carry more of the zone's agricultural products to the marketplace in Central Asia, which will be our market focus over the next five years," said Wang.

The zone currently has more than 120 agriculture-related enterprises and 32 modern production bases to grow various fruits, vegetable, wheat and flowers.

Yan Xiaoqin, deputy general manager of Shaanxi Yangling Huicheng Fruit Co Ltd, said Shaanxi province has plans to cooperate with other apple production areas in the planned Silk Road Economic Belt to set up apple stores in Xinjiang and in Central Asian cities to serve as steppingstones to Russia and Europe.

Exchange activities related to apples and technology have become significant symbols of industrial cooperation between Shaanxi and Kazakhstan.

Shaanxi Yangling will send 20

employees to Kazakhstan to introduce its apple-planting technology and help capable local companies build apple-processing factories to diversify their businesses. The company also plans to build three air-conditioned warehouses for apples in Kazakhstan.

"Central Asia's ongoing urbanization is also transforming people from farmers to urban residents every year, which means their diet will change from grain to more protein-rich foods such as fruit, meat, eggs, milk and yogurt," said Yan.

Shao Ge, board chairman of Yangling Leda Biology Science and Technology Co Ltd, which produces anti-drought grain and flower seeds, said, "We have discovered the potential of expanding our business westward."

Yangling Leda has already signed a contract worth 300 million yuan with its business partner in Kyrgyzstan to expand its market share in that country.

"With fast economic growth pace, many city councils in Kyrgyzstan are keen to improve the outlook of their cities. They have seen huge demand for gaining flower planting technology and seeds from Shaanxi in recent years," said Ge.

## Protecting ancient villages

By WANG QIAN  
wangqian2@chinadaily.com.cn

Shandong province has launched a campaign to further strengthen protection of its traditional villages and towns amid the nationwide wave of rapid urbanization.

"The move is a crucial measure to protect cultural legacies because traditional villages and towns are precious sites in terms of research, and historical and cultural continuity," Xie Zhixiu, head of the province's cultural relics bureau, told China Daily.

The efforts include thorough investigation of all traditional villages and towns not already under State protection and establishment of a system that not only protects the sites, but also helps integrate tourism and improve rural settlements.

The protected list is expected to take two or three years to complete and include 10 traditional towns, 100 villages, 1,000 ancient streets and 10,000 rural buildings, said Xie.

Villages and towns to be protected include those with unique elements

that reflect the essence of Chinese traditional culture, those dominated by ancient buildings with strong local features, and those rich in intangible cultural heritage such as festivals and folk customs.

During the past decade, a large number of traditional villages disappeared into China's urban vortex, a massive transformation that has taken tens of millions of farmers to the cities.

Statistics from the National Traditional Villages Conservation Commission show that some 900,000 traditional villages have disappeared over the past decade. The 12,000 villages that applied for protection to date account for a mere 10 percent of the total.

"Traditional villages and towns are the fruit of ancestral wisdom and the root of Chinese culture. The earlier we take measures to protect them, the less we lose them," Xie said.

He added that due to the limitations on transport and interaction in ancient times, most traditional villages and rural buildings have

strong regional characteristics that can provide researchers with high-value historical information.

As one of the cradles of Chinese civilization and the birthplace of the philosopher Confucius, Shandong has many traditional villages and ancient rural buildings with high historical and cultural value.

An outstanding example is 600-year-old Zhujiayu village in the outskirts of Jinan, the province's capital.

Lying in a valley surrounded by mountains, Zhujiayu was rated as one of the 24 most famous historical and cultural villages in 2005 by the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development and the State Administration of Cultural Heritage.

With a population of 2,000 even at its peak, the isolated village is renowned for well-preserved buildings dating to the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing dynasties (1644-1911).

Because of the local geology, buildings in the old village are mostly built from stone from nearby mountains.

There are about 300 houses, temples, pavilions, bridges and courtyards from the Ming and Qing dynasties perched on the mountain-side surrounded by forests and fields blanketed with flowers.

The natural setting and traditional ambience have already brought fame to Zhujiayu, which receives more than 20,000 visitors from all over the country annually.

To further protect the village and promote cultural tourism, the local government has allocated more than 30 million yuan (\$4.8 million) to repair houses and historic sites, and build basic facilities.

"Shandong has many successful experiences in protecting traditional villages and towns. We hope the new campaign can leave more beautiful memories about the old days for our residents," Xie said.

Protection of the first batch of more than 20 villages and towns is now in place, he said.



PHOTOS BY JU CHUANJIANG / CHINA DAILY

Seaweed-thatched houses with stone walls are cool in summer and warm in winter.

## Seaweed makes not only a roof, but also deep cultural heritage

By ZHAO RUIXUE  
zhaoruixue@chinadaily.com.cn

It feels like in two seasons at one time when standing in the doorway of a seaweed-thatched house in late May. Outside is scorching while inside is cool as if spring lingers on.

"Thanks to the grass roof and the stone walls, the house is cool in summer and warm in winter," said Liu Yuqi, the house owner.

It is one of the 95,000 so-called seaweed bungalows scattered in 317 villages in Rongcheng, a coastal city in Shandong province.

Among the settlements is East Chudao Village built in the Wanli period (1573-1620) of the Ming Dynasty. Home to 650 seaweed bungalows, the village has been named one with historical and cultural significance by the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development and the State Administration of Cultural Heritage in 2007.

Liu said the shallow sea area near the villages nurtures a kind of eel

grass that is very pliable, yet tough when dried. Traces of halogen and colloid in the dried eel grass make it insect proof, and mold and fire resistant.

Ancestors of Rongcheng villagers started using eel grass as roofing material in the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368).

According to local folklore expert Yu Yingyu, the oldest seaweed house in Rongcheng has stood the test of time for more than 300 years.

Yu said it is not easy to build a seaweed house. It usually takes four people at least 10 days to complete more than 70 procedures that need around 5,000 kilograms of dried eel grass and wheat straw.

Dried eel grass is applied layer upon layer on the triangle-shaped house ridge, which can be as high as 4 meters. A layer of wheat straw is added to make the roof sturdier.

The technique of building seaweed houses is now listed as an intangible cultural heritage by the Shandong provincial government.

Yu said the seaweed house — different from modern rural architecture in style, technique and inner structure — serves as important evidence for scholars studying human settlements and lifestyles in the coastal area.

But he expressed concern about their future.

"Eel grass is no longer commonly available due to environmental degradation and there are fewer and fewer people mastering the techniques needed," Yu said.

To preserve the houses, the local government allocates funding for repair work on heritage houses.

A tourism project with local coastal features has been built around the seaweed houses. An exhibition hall in Rongcheng now shows tourists the procedures of building seaweed houses, as well as the materials and tools used.

Every year, especially in summer, tourists flock to the grass-thatched houses in their quest for cool temperatures.



A cradle of Chinese civilization and the birthplace of the philosopher Confucius, Shandong has many traditional villages and ancient rural buildings with high historical and cultural value.