

20 New Laws Benefit Daily Life in Beijing

By Li Xiao

New laws and regulations in force in the capital from September 2002 will touch upon and benefit the daily lives of many citizens. A raft of measures provides new protection across such diverse areas as hospital treatment, computer purchase, lost bicycles, bankruptcy, second children, road tolls, breakfast, house purchase, education, safety, credit ratings, electric vehicles, public borrowing and import controls.

In Hospital

Patients now have new rights. A signature of consent is required from the patient before an operation may proceed. Case history records are to be clearly written and retained on file for 15 years. The patient has the right to get a copy. There is a new mechanism for reporting poor medical treatment within 12 hours. Where treatment is not up to standard it will be reviewed and appraised by specialists in the field. These new measures further promote care for the rights and wellbeing of the individual.

Computers After-sale Service Improved

Consumers now have the right to return their new computer for free repair work during its first year. The responsibility to carry out this work rests with the vendor from whom the machine was bought. And what's more the main components are covered for two years. In addition customers can return the computer for replacement or refund if it breaks down within seven days of purchase.

Compensation for Bicycles Lost from Bicycle Parks

Bicycle parks operators are now responsible for paying compensation for bicycles lost from the parks due to their negligence.

Protection for Employees of Bankrupt Enterprises

Employees of bankrupt enterprises now enjoy enhanced protection. The new measures also address inappropriate use of bankruptcy protection legislation, infringement of the rights of creditors and so on.

Parenting a Second Child

New measures on family planning and population control are now formally in place. Their effect is that while the "one child policy" remaining unchanged, a second child may be parented subject to the conditions of the legislation.

Road Tolls to Airport Reduced

Drivers will now save five yuan (US\$0.60481) per journey on the highway to the capital's airport. All charges levied at the Tianzhu toll station have been reduced by this amount. For example the charge for a minibus going the full 18 kilometers or so is down to 10 yuan. However tolls at other exits such as Dashanzi, Beigao, Weigou, Yanglin remain unchanged.

Vouchers Help Breakfast Project

The Beijing Land Tax Bureau has introduced a cost reduction to help support the "breakfast project," which is aimed at securing better breakfasts at lower cost through new investment in eating places in the capital. The voucher books used by restaurants will now be made available at 1 yuan (US\$0.12096) per book instead of 8 yuan (US\$0.96769) as was previously the case.

Uniform Treatment for All House Buyers

Compatriots from Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan together with foreign house buyers now have more choice. There is no longer any distinction being made in their purchase of commercially produced housing in the capital. World Trade Organization (WTO) rules now apply. The new policy means that contracts will no longer differentiate between them and domestic purchasers.

Revisions in Primary and High Schools

Updated teaching materials have been introduced for the capital's 1,700,000 students attending primary and high schools. The new session has marked the introduction of sweeping changes not only in content but also with a new national curriculum spanning the boundary between primary and high school. The reforms include a revision of course categories and class hours all the way from grade one to grade nine.

No Sundry Fees for 600,000 School Students

Over 50 percent of Beijing's primary and high school student population will now benefit from not having to pay the sundry fees, which they would previously have incurred. This will benefit students from 10 counties and districts in the outer suburbs and from families in receipt of certain allowances in eight downtown areas. To be eligible, students must be registered as Beijing residents and meet the requirements for entry to their education in state run primary and high schools.

Non-residents' School Fees Reduced

Children from the "floating population" who do not have residency may now be eligible to attend their local state schools at reduced fees. Subject to the students meeting entry requirements such as being in the right age range, fees for secondary school attendance have been cut from 1000 to 500 yuan (US\$60.48070) and for primary school the reduction is from 500 to 200 yuan (US\$24.19228).

New Calisthenics for Schools

New calisthenics exercises will be carried out to radio music in all kindergartens, primary schools and high schools. The new style involves five series of actions and is undertaken to a musical rhythm set at 130 beats per minute instead of 60 beats per minute as previously.

200 Million yuan (US\$24,192,280) a Year in New National Scholarships

All new and continuing college students including postgraduate students are now eligible to apply for appraisal and selection within a new “National Scholarship” provision. China will invest 200 million yuan (US\$24,192,280) a year in financial support to 60,000 of the country's poorest students. Scholarships may be awarded at one of two levels, these being 6,000 (US\$725,768) and 4,000 yuan (US\$483,846).

School Responsibilities Relating to Accidental Injury to Students

Measures have been introduced to place responsibilities on schools to take precautions against and assume liability for accidents involving injury to students. Eleven types of injuries are specified as falling within the scope of the new responsibilities. Clarification has also been given in respect of ten other types of injuries, which are not included.

Construction Safety Enforced

Under new legislation, the City Construction Committee has fresh powers to make spot checks and impose penalties for unsafe practices in the construction industry in the capital.

Lightning Prevention Enforced

New regulations make provision for fines of up to 30,000 yuan for failure to install lightning prevention facilities. The measures apply to computer information systems, communication facilities, TV broadcasting facilities, places of open-air public entertainment and petroleum, gas and chemical industry installations.

Credit Ratings for Investors in Beijing's Silicon Valley

Enterprises interested in investing in Beijing's northwest suburb of Zhongguancun, (known locally as China's Silicon Valley) are to have a new scheme for credit rating reports. Five categories of risk are defined. The scheme will provide an improved framework of mutual confidence within which enterprises can apply for guarantees and loans, raise funds and make commercial inquiries.

Licenses for Electric Bicycles

Electrically powered bicycles are no longer permitted on the roads of the capital without a license. Beijing's Traffic Control Department will now impound vehicles not covered by the proper documentation.

Nation Raises New Funds

Public issues were set to raise fresh funds of 40 billion yuan (US\$4,838,456,049) in September 2002. A three-year term issue was put out at a nominal rate of 2.12 percent and a five-year issue at a nominal 2.36 percent. Both three and five year issues are expected to increase the national debt by 20 billion each (US\$2,419,228,024).

Stricter Import Controls on Plants and Animals

New border control and inspection measures have been introduced aimed at protecting the country from animal infections, parasitic diseases, plant diseases and other harmful organisms.

Source: <http://www.china.org.cn/> 09/25/2002