

Newsletter from China (3/7/2005)

1. New technology to dispose of sewage, mud (SHANGHAI, Feb. 20, 2005)

Chinese scientists have developed a technology that can effectively turn sewage water and mud, two main headaches of urbanization, into organic fertilizer and high value pesticide.

The closed microorganism aerobic fermentation technology, developed by a research group headed by Professor Chen Liqiao of the Shanghai-based Huadong Normal University, has passed a technical appraisal by experts of the Shanghai Municipal Science and Technology Committee recently. Experts spoke highly of the technology, saying it can remove the odor of sewage and mud, and turn waste into resources. Experiments by the Shanghai Sewage Water Treatment Plant show that disposing of mud with the new technology can generate 150 yuan (18.13 US dollars) per ton.

Currently, China's sewage treatment plants discharge more than nine million tons of mud annually and the figure is rising by an average 10 percent year on year. Two methods are now used to deal with increasing urban sewage water and mud in China: incinerating and burying underground.

2. HK's sustainability plans to be finalized (HONG KONG, Feb. 21, 2005)

Hong Kong's Council for Sustainable Development will soon finalize its recommendations on a Sustainable Development Strategy for Hong Kong, following the completion of a six-month engagement process. The council plans to forward its recommendations on the way forward for a Sustainable Development Strategy to the government this spring. During the public engagement process, the council received nearly 2,000 responses on three pilot areas, including solid waste management, renewable energy and urban living space.

3. Waste pollution more hazardous than mine disasters. 2005.

A noted geoscientist has warned that wastes left from the mining of mineral resources can be ten times more hazardous than mine disasters.

These are largely heavy metals found in copper, aluminum and zinc mines," said Prof. Sun Chuanmin, president of the Geoscience Institute of Chengdu University of Technology in southwestern Sichuan Province. "They pollute air and water and do harms to the people's health." According to Prof. Sun, excessive intake of heavy metals can lead to cerebral vascular diseases and liver and kidney problems. He said the general public needs to pay more attention to the industrial pollution, a byproduct of the mining industry that can affect millions of people -- far more than gas blasts, cave-ins and other mine mishaps that have induced widespread concern in China. "Some experts and media organizations have started to look into the pollution, and the Chinese governments have moved to tackle the problem, too," said Prof. Sun. "But it's still a long way to go: most waste residue simply flows away with river water and poses a threat to the people's health and life safety." Sun, a deputy to the 10th National People's Congress, is currently in Beijing to attend the incoming annual session of the Chinese parliament. Two years ago, he proposed turning the industrial wastes into resources to make up for China's inadequate supply and remove their potential harms to the people at the same time. "It'll be a double-win solution," he said. "The Chinese government should offer more financial support to foster technological research in this field and promote the compulsory use of effective technologies at an earlier date."