

Bogu Kailai stands trial for intentional homicide

By XINHUA in Hefei

The intentional homicide trial of Bogu Kailai, wife of Bo Xilai, former Party chief of Chongqing, and Zhang Xiaojun began on Thursday in the Hefei City Intermediate People's Court in Anhui province.

The People's Procuratorate of Hefei, capital of Anhui, filed the charges against the two in the court on July 26.

Bogu Kailai and her son had conflicts with Neil Heywood, a British citizen, over economic interests. Concerned that Neil Heywood could be a threat to her son's personal security, Bogu decided to murder Heywood.

She asked Zhang Xiaojun, the other defendant and then an employee of the general office of the Chongqing Municipal Committee of the Communist Party of China, to invite Heywood to Chongqing in Southwest China and accompany him from Beijing. Heywood stayed in Room No 1605 of the 16th building of a vacation resort, the Lucky Holiday Hotel, in Chongqing.

On Nov 13, Bogu Kailai met Heywood in his hotel room for a drink. After Heywood became drunk, he vomited and asked for water. Bogu Kailai put the poison she had prepared, and which Zhang had brought to the hotel room, into Heywood's mouth, which led to his death.

The prosecuting body said the facts of the two defendants poisoning the victim are clear and the evidence is substantial.

Their behavior has violated Article 232 of the Criminal Law of the People's Republic of China. Therefore, the two defendants should be held criminally responsible for intentional homicide, according to the prosecuting body.

The case is a joint offense with Bogu Kailai as the principal and Zhang Xiaojun as the accessory, the prosecuting body said.

The Hefei City Intermediate People's Court accepted the case according to the decision designating jurisdiction made by the Supreme People's Court, and delivered a copy of the indictment in a timely way to the two defendants Bogu and

Zhang, and also informed the two defendants and the close relatives of the victim of their litigation rights and obligations.

The court notified the lawyer to meet the defendants and gave the lawyer access to the entire case file, fully ensuring the litigation rights of Bogu, Zhang and the close relatives of the victim.

The Hefei City Intermediate People's Court began the public trial on Thursday, after following the legal procedure of issuing a notice before the trial and making a public announcement.

During the trial, procuratorial authorities presented relevant evidence, witnesses appeared in court to testify and defense counsel entrusted by Bogu and Zhang to represent them pleaded on their behalf.

An attorney representing Heywood's close relatives was present during the trial and made comments.

More than 140 people attended the trial. They included relatives and friends of Bogu, Zhang and Heywood, diplomats from the British embassy and consul-

ates in China, representatives from the media, deputies to China's legislature, members of China's political advisory body and people from all walks of life.

After Thursday's session, the court announced an adjournment, and the judgment will be announced on a day yet to be decided.

According to the court, four police officers suspected of covering up Bogu's illegal conduct during the investigation into Heywood's death were also charged by the People's Procuratorate of Hefei City with bending the law to achieve personal benefit.

The officers are Guo Weiguo, former deputy chief of Chongqing's Public Security Bureau, Li Yang, former chief of the bureau's criminal section, Wang Pengfei, former chief of the bureau's technical detection team and also former chief of the public security sub-bureau of Chongqing's Yubei district, and Wang Zhi, former executive deputy chief of the public security sub-bureau of Chongqing's Shapingba district.

The court will hold an open trial for the officers on Friday.



RESTAURANT BLAZE

PHOTO BY ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY

Spectators gather at the scene of a fire that broke out in a restaurant in Beijing's Chaoyang district on Thursday. No one was killed or injured in the blaze, which started in the chimney, rescuers said.

Boosting arts education in rural schools

By HE DAN
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Mud was the only material that Qiu Hui, a pupil from a poor village in East China's Fujian province, could sculpt with before he received a "love package" from a charity in Beijing.

"I love the pieces of modeling clay in the parcel I received. They smell good and have beautiful colors. In the past, I had to dig mud from farmland, and everything I kneaded with mud looked drab," said Qiu, a sixth-grade student from Changting, an impoverished county in the mountainous area of western Fujian.

More than 90 percent of the pupils in poor rural areas said they love classes in music, arts and physical education, according to the latest survey conducted by the China Foundation for Poverty Alleviation. It polled more than 2,000 pupils and 47 principals from rural primary schools in nine provinces.

However, the survey revealed that primary schools in poverty-hit rural areas made little investment in providing quality arts education for their students.

Some 88 percent of schools polled invested less than 500 yuan (\$78.50) in buying or renewing arts supplies and about 56 percent of the surveyed schools spent less than

500 yuan purchasing instruments for music classes every semester.

It also found that only two in every 10 students had musical instruments and 13 percent had drawing books.

"Our greatest concern is that rural students are falling behind their urban counterparts in aesthetic sentiment and creativity. The effect is invisible but profound and lasting," Chen Hongtao, deputy executive director of the foundation, said in an interview with China Daily.

Weak arts education at the elementary level is commonplace in vast rural regions and will worsen the inequality between rural and urban areas, said Chen.

Arts, music and physical education have been marginalized in rural schools as a result of the exam-oriented educational system. Schools put limited resources into main subjects, said Xiong Bingqi, an education commentator and deputy director of the 21st Century Education Research Institute.

To change the situation, the foundation launched the "love package" project in 2009. Each donation of 100 yuan can buy a schoolbag filled with more than 100 arts supplies, including drawing books, colored pencils and a kettle. The foundation can afford to mail either



TAN KAIXING / FOR CHINA DAILY

Students from Guangxi University of Science and Technology play with pupils in Tantou township, Liuzhou city, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, in July. English, dancing, painting and calligraphy classes were held for the pupils during summer vacation.

a music bag or a sports bag to an eligible school once a donor gives 1,000 yuan. Those bags are full of sports equipment or musical instruments.

"Books, pens and kettles are so common in most people's eyes, but they are luxurious and fancy for my students in this poor village," said Wang Yanfang, a teacher from Guxianping Primary School, a beneficiary school in Badong county, Hubei province.

The survey also found that almost 85 percent of the polled schools did not have professionals to teach music, arts or physical education. Mathematics or Chinese teachers teach these classes, and more than half of them have never received any specialized training.

"So the arts classes in rural areas are usually simplified to worrisome levels, the physical education class is all about calling students to line up and run, and the music teachers simply teach their students to sing pop songs," said Chen.

The foundation is considering selecting hundreds of teachers from rural primary schools to receive training in Beijing to design games and group activities.

By the end of 2011, the foundation had raised more than 230 million yuan for the project and had sent parcels to more

than 6,200 primary schools, benefiting more than 2 million pupils in rural areas, according to statistics on the foundation's website.

Chen said there is a long way to go to benefit all poor rural students.

He said there are 592 national-level poverty-stricken counties in China while the project has only covered about a third of all primary schools in 300 counties.

"The project's coverage for students and schools that cannot afford arts supplies is still small, and more is needed when new students start schooling every year," he said.

Education commentator Xiong urged government to take the lead in improving the teaching conditions in rural schools, adding that civil organizations can only play a supplementary role.

Poverty: Campaign to target key regions

FROM PAGE 2

122

million people
Population living in poverty
in rural regions

"There are 505 counties in these regions", and income levels are well below average.

The 11 regions, together with parts of Sichuan, Yunnan, Gansu and Qinghai provinces, and the southern Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, will be the major focus for poverty alleviation efforts in the next decade, he said.

About 12.7 percent of the rural population, or 122 million people, remain mired in poverty, he said.

This contrasts with earlier reports that claimed there were 128 million rural people living in poverty, earning less than 2,300 yuan annually, the new poverty threshold.

"The number contracted because the annual income of farmers rose in 2011, based on the latest National Bureau of Statistics figures.

"That's why 122 million, or 12.7 percent, instead of 13.4 percent of the registered rural population, are classified poor," he said.

There has long been speculation that the poverty threshold was far below international standards.

Fan said that, to the best of his knowledge, there are 88 developing countries that have set their own national poverty thresholds and 35 of these have readjusted it over the past two decades.

Only a few of them have defined their poverty threshold in line with the "international standard", he added.

"A World Bank economist

told me that, based on the Purchasing Power Parity level in 2005, China's new poverty threshold of 2,300 yuan a year equals \$1.80 a day," Fan said. "That is slightly higher than the World Bank standard of \$1.25 set in 2008."

Getting above the threshold can be difficult but staying above it can be hard.

Roughly two-thirds of rural residents fall back into poverty the same year they managed to rise above the national poverty line, he said.

In addition, the country has to deal with the yawning wealth gap between urban and rural areas. The average per capita income of China's urbanites was 3.23 times that of rural dwellers in 2010, he said.

China wants to achieve the goal of providing adequate food and clothing for all its citizens as well as ensuring access to compulsory education, basic medical services and housing by 2020.

That goal is expressed with numbers that are easily understood: "two worries-free" (from food and clothing) and "three guarantees" (education, Medicare and housing).

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Project helps villagers fight painful bone disease

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As the official in charge of poverty reduction in China, Fan Xiaojian has made a habit of marking the places he has visited on a map hanging on his office wall.

Aba Tibetan and Qiang autonomous prefecture, in the mountainous northwest of Sichuan province, is marked with thick lines.

Fan, director of the State Council's Poverty Alleviation Leading Group Office, has visited the area five times since 2007 to investigate an endemic disease that has affected thousands of rural residents and dragged

them into poverty.

The hardships of villagers who suffered from Kashin-Beck Disease, a painful bone condition, weighed heavily on his mind when he met some of them in 2007, he said.

"Officials called dozens of villagers who suffered from KBD to an open-air ground for a meeting that day," he recalled. "I saw people with stiff, deformed joints and even burn scars. They were too poor to buy painkillers so they used lighted cigarettes to burn themselves as a way of distraction."

Fan said it is a vicious circle: Without money to buy medicine, patients' health deteriorates. They lose the ability to

work in their 30s, and poverty and disease pass to the next generation.

In China, the occurrence of the disease is limited to about 100 counties in Heilongjiang, Yunnan and Sichuan provinces and the Tibet autonomous region, he said.

According to the office in charge of KBD control in Aba, there were more than 41,000 people in the prefecture's 379 villages who had the disease in 2007. At that time, more than 147,000 people lived in the disease-affected areas, accounting for about 22 percent of the prefecture's rural population.

Things started to change in

2008 when the central government launched a five-year pilot project focusing on KBD control and poverty reduction in the prefecture.

"The comprehensive measures include helping people to move out from uninhabitable areas to somewhere with clean water, and providing grain to villagers and medicine for patients in the affected areas for free," Fan said. "People who suffer from this disease can also receive living subsidies and educational subsidies for their children."

"For those patients in a severe situation, local governments arrange for them to live in nursing homes," he said.

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