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Ban on ultra-thin plastic bags draws mixed reaction

DATE: 2008/05/30

BEIJING -- China is banning the use of ultra-thin plastic bags, or those thinner than 0.025 millimeters, from Sunday in a bid to reduce energy consumption and polluting emissions. However, Chinese shoppers may need a while to adjust to the new rule.

"It is a 'habit revolution,'" an official with the Ministry of Commerce, Men Xiaowei, said in an on-line interview. "It will no doubt bring some inconveniences. However, to limit the use of plastic bags is to protect our entire environment."

In addition to banning ultra-thin plastic bags, retailers will no longer provide free plastic bags. Customers are being encouraged to carry their own baskets or bags.

"The plastic waste accounted for more than 3 to 5 percent of the daily waste, most of which was plastic bags," Men said.

China's retailers, including supermarkets, department stores and grocery stores, use more than 1.6 million tons of plastic each year. About one ton of plastic can be derived from more than three tons of oil.

Although bags were said to be degradable, "only a small portion of plastic bags could be thoroughly degraded," said Li Jing, an official with the National Development and Reform Commission, China's top economic planner. "These bags are usually more expensive."

In consideration of food safety and sanitation, bags which are used to pack food, such as raw meat and noodles, are still free.

Men also said retailers were not likely to make money by selling plastic bags. "On the contrary, they worried about losing customers by charging too much for one bag."

To date, giant retailers such as Wal-Mart have not decided how much they would charge for the bags.

Source: *China Daily*

China's economy able to expand over 8% for long time

DATE: 2008/05/29

China's economy can maintain a steady growth above 8 percent for a relatively long period because of a stable society, a vast market and ample capital, said Cheng Siwei, an economist and former vice chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress.

"China's economy can stay in the fast developing track if we work hard and pay enough attention to existing problems," Cheng said at a three-day forum with the theme of "Economic globalization and the choice of Asia: transition, growth and welfare" Wednesday in Shanghai.

"Social stability is crucial to economic development while China has a market of 1.3 billion people, which creates a huge consumption power," said Cheng. "Meanwhile, China's foreign reserves have reached US\$1.68 trillion, and it has built up an ample capital pool."

China also beefed up its efforts to improve education and expand its coverage, which paved the way for sustainable economic development, he said, but added that there were problems China could not afford to ignore.

One of them was the yawning gap between the rich and the poor. The income of urban residents has tripled that of rural households while the purchasing power in cities was four times larger than that in rural areas.

China faced increasing pressure to protect the environment and in securing raw materials and resources for its economy. It also lacks a large pool of senior professionals in finance and management.

"For example, we buy a lot of the United States treasury bonds. It means appointing them (US bond managers) to manage our assets and we only gained a little bit of interest," said Cheng. "We are trying to work on such problems."

Cheng estimated China's per capita GDP can reach US\$3,000 by 2010, US\$5,000 by 2020 and US\$10,000 by 2049, given its economic expansion and a stronger yuan.

Source: Shanghai Daily

Indian Cotton Dominates April Cotton Imports

DATE: 2008/05/29

In April, China imported 263,400 tons of cotton worth 438.32 million U.S. dollars. 45.6 percent of all imports or 120,053 tons came from India -- Indian cotton continues to enjoy an excellent reputation in China. The availability of cheaper freight rates as well as cotton quality has helped Indian styles to remain competitive. The U.S. was the second largest supplier at 94,271 tons, while Uzbekistan and West Africa were the other main suppliers.

Source: globecotnews

Cotton Fabric Exports Steady in April

DATE: 2008/05/29

Despite the weak nature of the global textile market and the rising yuan, China's cotton fabric exports were strong during the month of April, increasing 8.44 percent from the previous year to 604 million meters. Cumulative September 2007 through April 2008 exports jumped 5.12 percent to 4.458 billion meters. However, cotton fabric imports did not fare as well, dropping 18.72 percent during the month to 109 million meters, while cumulative imports declined 16.11 percent to 741 million meters.

Source: *globecotnews*

Asian Polyester Prices Remain Depressed by Overcapacity

DATE: 2008/05/28

Asia's polyester production continues to experience a major erosion in profit margins. The prices of raw materials are rising. PTA, which is the largest raw material, has been rallying. PTA CIF China has risen to its highest level of the year at approximately 1,030 - 1,050 U.S. dollars per tons, while MEG prices are only marginally higher. Despite these increases, very little movement has been noted in 1.4/1.5 den staple polyester fiber, FOB Asia (Taiwan & South Korea), which is near 63.00 to 65.00 cents. These prices are actually weaker than those prevailing in April due to a sharp decline in China's domestic prices, which has pressured import demand. China's polyester fiber producers are low-cost suppliers, who are continually lowering prices in order to stimulate offtake.

Source: *globecotnews*

Design contest for stylizing simple cloth bags

DATE: 2008/05/28

In order to encourage use of eco-friendly products, Shenzhen city has organized a cloth bag making competition; the two month long contest began on May 22. The purpose behind holding this event is to involve creative people, who can make the not so popular plain cloth bag, fashionable.

The competition is part of this year's campaign marking World Environment Day, on June 5, a lecture on environmental protection is also planned on this occasion. Renowned scholars will share their knowledge and help participants make the country pollution free.

The young and fashion conscious generation of China hardly uses handbags made from cloth due to unavailability of innovative and stylish designs. However, with this contest, Publicity and Education Center of the Shenzhen Municipal Environmental Protection Bureau, is expecting some multi functional bags that will attract the attention of residents.

Experts believe that, extensive use of plastic bags is negatively affecting the environment and it needs to be banned as soon as possible. Various problems including global warming, high temperature and melting of glaciers has made environmentalist worldwide take steps like promoting eco-friendly products.

Source: *fibre2fashion*