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2 executed over tainted milk scandal

Xinhua, November 24, 2009

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Two people were executed in China Tuesday for their involvement in the country's contaminated milk scandal, in which at least six infants died and more than 300,000 became ill.

Zhang Yujun was executed for the crime of endangering public safety by dangerous means, and Geng Jinping was put to death after being convicted of producing and selling toxic food, the Shijiazhuang Municipal Intermediate People's Court said in a statement.

Zhang was found guilty of producing more than 770 tonnes and selling more than 600 tonnes of melamine-laced protein powder from July 2007 to August 2008.

Geng was convicted of selling more than 900 tonnes of milk tainted with 434 kg of protein powder to the now-defunct Sanlu Group, which was at the heart of the scandal, from October 2007 to August 2008.

The two lodged appeals after the Shijiazhuang Municipal Intermediate People's Court sentenced them to death on Jan. 21, and the Hebei Provincial Higher People's Court upheld the convictions on March 26.

The death sentences and the executions were approved by the Supreme People's Court, the Shijiazhuang court statement said.

Sanlu Group, which was based in Shijiazhuang, capital of northern Hebei Province, had been China's leading seller of milk powder for 15 years until the melamine scandal broke in September last year.

The company's tainted baby milk powder was found to have caused the deaths of at least six children and sickened more than 300,000 others.

The industrial chemical melamine had been added to milk to make it appear higher in protein content. It can cause kidney stones and kidney failure.

Altogether 21 people were tried and sentenced in January for their roles in the scandal at different courts in Shijiazhuang.

Among them, two were sentenced to death, one received a suspended death sentence, three were jailed for life, and the other 15 imprisoned for terms ranging from two to 15 years.

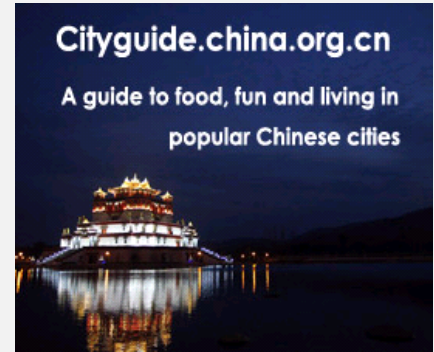
Tian Wenhua, former board chairwoman of the Sanlu Group, was convicted of manufacturing and selling fake or substandard products and sentenced to life in prison, according to the sentence handed down in January at the Shijiazhuang Municipal Intermediate People's Court.

She lodged an appeal, but it was rejected by the Hebei Provincial Higher People's Court on March 26.

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