

## 《中国十三种犯罪将不再判死刑》

13 crimes removed from death penalty list

BEIJING - China's newly revised Criminal Law eliminated the death penalty for 13 economy-related crimes, as the country moved to restructure its penalty system and better protect human rights.

Fifty-five crimes are now punishable by death, according to the eighth Amendment to the Criminal Law, which was discussed and passed by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC) at a bimonthly session that closed on Friday.

The amendment marks the first time since the Criminal Law took effect in 1979 that the country has reduced the number of crimes subject to the death penalty.

"The 13 crimes that have been exempted from the death penalty are mainly economic and non-violent crimes," Lang Sheng, vice-chairman of the Legislative Affairs Commission of the NPC Standing Committee, said at a press conference following the three-day session.

Crimes that are exempt from capital punishment include tax fraud and "fraudulent activities involving financial bills". Also wiped from the list are offences involving the smuggling of cultural relics or of precious and rare animals.

Lang said the amendment aims to "temper justice with mercy".

Making the use of the death penalty more rare has come with a decrease in the number of years violent offenders can have removed from their prison terms through probation.

Altogether, the changes "embody the humaneness of the country", he said.

The amendment follows a 2007 decision in which the Supreme People's Court gave itself the responsibility of reviewing and approving all verdicts involving capital punishment. Since then, the court has overturned 10 percent of the death sentences handed down in the country.

Zhou Guangquan, a law professor at Tsinghua University and a member of the NPC Law Committee, told China Daily that the country's tradition of punishing crimes harshly can lead to an overuse of the death penalty, tarnishing China's image for foreign observers.

"But the country is unlikely to abolish the death penalty in one fell swoop, since the total number of criminal cases in China is still in an upward trend," he said.

The amendment also stipulates that the death penalty will not be imposed on people who are 75 or older at the

time of their trials, unless they are convicted of crimes involving "exceptional cruelty".

In the past, the only exemptions allowed for death sentences applied to offenders who were younger than 18 when they committed their crimes and women who were pregnant at the time of trial.

The same bimonthly session also saw the passage of a Vehicles and Vessels Taxation Law and a Law on Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection, which aims at better preserving heritages of historic, literary, artistic or scientific value.

As a result of the first measure, the owners of the 199 million vehicles registered in China will have to pay an annual tax levied according to their vehicles' engine capacities.

The law, which is aimed at encouraging the conservation of energy and the protection of the environment, will impose tax amounts ranging from 60 yuan (\$9.13) to as much as 5,400 yuan.

