

Advertisement

### Don't Run Out of Money in Retirement

If you have a \$500,000 portfolio, download the guide by *Forbes* columnist Ken Fisher. Even if you're not sure how to start rebuilding your portfolio or who to turn to for help, this must-read guide includes research and analysis you can use right now. Don't miss it! [Click Here to Download Your Guide!](#)

FISHER INVESTMENTS™

washingtonpost.com > World > Asia/Pacific

#### CORRECTION TO THIS ARTICLE

A Page One photograph with a Jan. 26 article about railroad protests in Shanghai was incorrectly credited to the reporter. The photo was taken by a protester, who provided it on the condition of anonymity.

## Shanghai's Middle Class Launches Quiet, Meticulous Revolt

By Maureen Fan  
Washington Post Foreign Service  
Saturday, January 26, 2008

SHANGHAI -- Bundled against the cold, the businessman made his way down the steps. Coming toward him in blue mittens was a middle-aged woman.

"Do you know that we're going to take a stroll this weekend?" she whispered, using the latest euphemism for the unofficial protests that have unnerved authorities in Shanghai over the past month.

He nodded.

Behind her, protest banners streamed from the windows of high-rise apartment blocks, signs of middle-class discontent over a planned extension of the city's magnetic levitation, or maglev, train through residential neighborhoods.

The couple checked to make sure no plainclothes police were nearby and discussed where security forces had been posted in recent days. "Did you take any photos?" the man asked. Yes, she said, promising to send them to him so he could post the evidence online.

In a minute, the exchange was over, but the news would soon be added to the steady flow of reports being posted on blogs and community bulletin boards,

VIDEO



### Shanghai Citizens Protest Train Extension

Thousands of Shanghai homeowners protest against a proposed extension of the high-speed magnetic levitation train on Jan. 12. The proposed extension has angered thousands of residents who fear noise, vibration, radiation and wind from the train. They are shouting "Reject the Maglev" and "Protect Our Homes." These unofficial protests, which often start as short text mobile phone messages, are the latest chapter in a quiet middle class battle against local government officials who fail to give adequate public notice for ill-conceived projects often designed to promote GDP growth at the expense of the environment. The video was taken by an anonymous protester.

» LAUNCH VIDEO PLAYER

#### TOOLBOX

Resize Print  
E-mail

#### COMMENT

19 Comments | View All »

COMMENTS ARE CLOSED

WHO'S BLOGGING powered by sphere

» Links to this article

Advertisement

### You deserve a vacation.



TOP JOBS

The Washington Post

Find Your Dream Job Now!

keywords

location

Jobs by SimplyHired

#### FEATURED ADVERTISER LINKS

Lawsuit: Cochlear Implant Recall, Mesothelioma Help, Gallbladder Removal, Gulf Oil Spill, Crohn's, DePuy hip surgery

Asbestos lung Cancer, Hydroxycut, Hip Implant Failure, Chondrolysis, Femur Fracture, Paxil birth defect

Russia Now: In-Depth Coverage of Russia News, Business, and More.

TimeSpace: Navigate articles, photos, video and commentary from around the globe.

Looking to buy a home? Visit TWP Real Estate section for the latest open houses.

Make Your Vanguard Investing More Profitable - Free Research Report Reveals Best & Worst Funds

Offer hope to people in need through the CFCNCA. Give Today.

#### Slate HIGHLIGHTS



Blue Valentine: A Captivating Portrayal of a Fragile Marriage...

as well as in housing compounds along the proposed extension -- which residents contend will bring noise pollution and possibly dangerous radiation to their neighborhoods.

The sudden "strolls" by thousands of office workers, company managers, young families and the elderly in this sleek financial hub are the latest chapter in a quiet middle-class battle against government officials. The protesters are going about their mission carefully, and many speak anonymously for fear of retribution in a country that stifles dissent.

The Communist Party has a massive security apparatus that closely monitors what it views as subversive activity. The party sometimes allows public protests if they serve its political interests, such as the ouster of corrupt officials.

Advertisement



But the protests here have been unusual. They are led by homeowners and professionals -- people who may not previously have had much to complain to the government about but whose awareness of their individual rights has grown along with their prosperity. Police, who have routinely put down rural protests by poor farmers, have found it more difficult to intimidate an affluent, educated crowd in a major city.

The demonstrations do have at least one recent precursor, and it is one Shanghai residents acknowledge using for inspiration. In the picturesque seaside city of Xiamen, thousands of middle-class residents have managed at least temporarily to halt the construction of a \$1 billion chemical factory because of environmental concerns. Demonstrators in that city, in Fujian province, relied on the Internet and cellphone text messaging to organize strolls and other opposition.

"We learned from Xiamen," said Gu Qidong, 36, a Shanghai protester and freelance sales consultant in the health-care industry. "We have no other way besides this. We once asked if we could apply for a march permit, and the police said they would never approve it."


As in Xiamen, Shanghai residents have spent countless hours researching their cause. They have posted fliers sprinkled with such phrases as "electromagnetic compatibility" and wooed residents and news media with slick PowerPoint presentations that question whether a 55-yard-wide safety buffer envisioned for each side of the rail extension would be sufficient to keep noise and vibration from reaching their apartments.

**Sponsored Links**

**Free Penny Stock Picks!**  
Our last pick exploded 3550% - Join our free newsletter today!  
[www.PennyStocksExpert.com](http://www.PennyStocksExpert.com)

**Save on Appliances**  
Save Big on our Huge Selection of Appliances. Compare Prices & Save!  
[PriceGrabber.com/Appliances](http://PriceGrabber.com/Appliances)

[Buy a link here](#)



[Weigel: Political Predictions I Got Wrong in 2...](#)  
[Hitchens Describes How To Make the Perfect Cup...](#)  
[How a Soldier in Iraq Spent His New Year's Eve...](#)

[See All of Slate »](#)

**CONTINUED** 1 2 [Next >](#)

3

Share

More ways to share this Article...

- [Reddit](#)
- [Twitter](#)
- [myspace](#)
- [del.icio.us](#)
- [NewsTrust](#)
- [Stumble It!](#)

powered by 

From Our Partners

**FP** Foreign Policy

- [Forget the Aftershocks - By Charles Kenny](#)
- [The LWOT: Terror arrests roil Europe; Obama considers indefinite detention review process - by Andrew Lebovich](#)
- [Gucci in the Land of Genghis Khan - Photos by Timothy Fadek](#)

Most Viewed World Articles

Advertisement



TODAY: iPads for \$123.74? Alert: iPads are being auctioned on QuiBids.com for 95% off... Discover more...



Berkeley: \$9 Car Insurance Your Auto Insurer hates this. Car Insurance For Only \$9! Get details...

washingtonpost.com > World > Asia/Pacific

CORRECTION TO THIS ARTICLE

A Page One photograph with a Jan. 26 article about railroad protests in Shanghai was incorrectly credited to the reporter. The photo was taken by a protester, who provided it on the condition of anonymity.

Page 2 of 2 < Back

Shanghai's Middle Class Launches Quiet, Meticulous Revolt

They say the existing maglev route, which takes passengers from an out-of-the-way suburban subway stop to one of the city's international airports in less than eight minutes, is a showy waste of money. When it opened four years ago, they note, the line operated at less than 20 percent capacity; after ticket prices were lowered, it ran at 27 percent capacity.

Armed with knowledge of the law, the Shanghai residents became angry that public officials had neither given proper notice of their plans for the extension nor held a public hearing. And so they decided they had no alternative but to "take a stroll" or "go shopping." They started small, and they were careful to say they did not oppose the government.

First, a small group of protesters met at a shopping center the morning of Jan. 6, shouting "Reject the maglev!" and "We want to protect our homes!" They left after an hour, regrouping later in a neighborhood near where the extension would be built.

A few days later, hundreds of people went to a mall that is popular with tourists and made an evening stop in another affected neighborhood. By Jan. 12, thousands of people were gathering at People's Square and on Nanjing Lu, both high-profile locations in downtown Shanghai, shouting "People's police should protect the people!" and "Save our homes!"

The growing boldness of the protesters has prompted city officials to emphasize that residents should find "normal" channels to vent their unhappiness. "We will forestall and defuse social tensions," Shanghai Mayor Han Zheng said in his annual government report Thursday, in what appeared to be a tacit nod to the protesters' concerns.

VIDEO



Shanghai Citizens Protest Train Extension

Thousands of Shanghai homeowners protest against a proposed extension of the high-speed magnetic levitation train on Jan. 12. The proposed extension has angered thousands of residents who fear noise, vibration, radiation and wind from the train. They are shouting "Reject the Maglev" and "Protect Our Homes." These unofficial protests, which often start as short text mobile phone messages, are the latest chapter in a quiet middle class battle against local government officials who fail to give adequate public notice for ill-concieved projects often designed to promote GDP growth at the expense of the environment. The video was taken by an anonymous protester.

» LAUNCH VIDEO PLAYER

TOOLBOX

AAA Resize Print E-mail

COMMENT

19 Comments | View All »

COMMENTS ARE CLOSED

WHO'S BLOGGING powered by sphere

» Links to this article

Advertisement

CHINA WATCH

CHINA DAILY 中国日报

NEW TAX POLICY WON'T HURT U.S. FIRMS



China's recent move to cancel preferential policies for Intl' companies will have little impact on foreign investments

PRESENTED BY CHINA DAILY

TOP JOBS

The Washington Post

Find Your Dream Job Now!

keywords

location

After each stroll, residents upload photos and videos to Chinese Web sites, which are often blocked by the government, and to YouTube, a site that isn't. The project has turned neighbors who did not know each other into close friends and allies who now compare notes and strategize.

Advertisement

"They can't arrest everybody," said Yao, a 58-year-old protester who asked that his full name not be used because he is a manager at a state-owned enterprise.

"We haven't done anything wrong," said Wang Guowei, 51, a manager in a Chinese-Japanese plastics venture whose family lives near the planned extension. "We always follow the Chinese constitution, we never violate the law. And in our many contacts with the police, they say we are within the law."

A victory for the protesters here does not seem as likely as the one activists achieved in Xiamen. Proud city officials hope the maglev extension will further cement Shanghai's reputation as the mainland's most advanced city when the train connects the city's two airports and the site of the 2010 World Expo.

City officials have already made some concessions. An original plan to extend the train from Shanghai to the city of Hangzhou, for example, was scrapped in May. The new extension proposal announced Dec. 29 lops almost two miles off the old plan, and one section of track would be underground. But opponents say such concessions are small.

Critics of the government plan point out that even some residents who use the train are skeptical of the usefulness of an extension.

"I'd rather see an ordinary railway connecting" Pudong international and Hongqiao airport. "It's cheap, and it's almost the same convenience," said Chen Min, 37, an airline pilot who rides the train each time he flies abroad. "Does [China](#) really need more maglev trains? Does China really need expensive things?"

Shanghai municipal officials declined requests for comment. At a news conference this week, government spokeswoman Jiao Yang said Shanghai Maglev Transportation Development Co., the Shanghai Academy of Environmental Science and the Municipal Urban Planning Administration would analyze public opinion "seriously."

Without the entire city united against the project, residents concede they are not optimistic the extension will be scrapped.

"But we must insist on our position. We require our government to respect the law, and public construction must follow a legal framework and the right procedure," said the 54-year-old businessman who asked another protester for her photos. "Our action is a way to wake up people's awareness of their civil rights."

*Researcher Zhang Jie contributed to this report.*

## FEATURED ADVERTISER LINKS

[Lawsuit: Cochlear Implant Recall](#) , [Mesothelioma Help](#), [Gallbladder Removal](#), [Gulf Oil Spill](#), [Crohn's](#), [DePuy hip surgery](#)

[Asbestos lung Cancer](#), [Hydroxycut](#), [Hip Implant Failure](#), [Chondrolysis](#), [Femur Fracture](#), [Paxil birth defect](#)

[Russia Now: In-Depth Coverage of Russia News, Business, and More.](#)

[TimeSpace: Navigate articles, photos, video and commentary from around the globe.](#)

[Looking to buy a home? Visit TWP Real Estate section for the latest open houses.](#)

[Make Your Vanguard Investing More Profitable - Free Research Report Reveals Best & Worst Funds](#)

[Offer hope to people in need through the CFCNCA. Give Today.](#)

## Slate HIGHLIGHTS



**How a Soldier in Iraq Spent His New Year's Eve**

[Hitchens Describes How To Make the Perfect Cup...](#)

[Weigel: Political Predictions I Got Wrong in 2...](#)

[Blue Valentine: A Captivating Portrayal of a F...](#)

[See All of Slate »](#)

< [Back](#) [1](#) [2](#)

3

Share

More ways to share this Article...

[Reddit](#)[Twitter](#)[myspace](#)[del.icio.us](#)[NewsTrust](#)[Stumble It!](#)

powered by evri

From Our Partners

FP Foreign Policy

- [Forget the Aftershocks - By Charles Kenny](#)
- [The LWOT: Terror arrests roil Europe; Obama considers indefinite detention review process - by](#)