

# Drunk driver gets death penalty

## Chinese court's ruling may set precedent

AILEEN MCCABE

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**P**unishment for drunk driving in China now includes the death penalty.

A court in Sichuan sentenced 30-year-old Sun Weiming to death for killing four and seriously injuring one person while driving under the influence of alcohol, without a licence, and failing to stop at the scene of an accident.

It's the first time the death penalty has been handed down for a collision. Until this verdict, even drunk drivers who killed pedestrians were

usually charged with violating traffic rules and faced a maximum of seven years in jail.

Sun was charged with "endangering public safety," however, which carries the possibility of execution.

His sentence could act as a precedent in the case of another drunk driver that is expected to come to trial soon in Nanjing. Zhang Mingbao is charged with killing five people, including a pregnant woman, while driving under the influence of alcohol.

Despite the fact Chinese courts regularly dole out death sentences for non-violent economic crimes, experts were somewhat shocked the judge in Sun's case was so hard line.

Wang Zuofu, a deputy director at the Beijing Law Society, told the official China Daily: "We encourage cracking down on (drunk) driving, as it has become increasingly serious in cities, but that does not

mean we should resort to the death sentence."

The paper reported Monday that the Supreme People's Court last week summoned a panel of experts to advise it on what to do about drunk driving and that it is now considering its recommendations.

Rising alcohol consumption and increased car ownership, both attributes of an increasingly well-off society, are taking their toll in China, particularly in the urban centres where the country's economic miracle is most pronounced.

According to the Ministry of Public Service, 29,866 people died in collisions across China in the first half of this year and 130,000 were injured.

In China, drunk driving is defined as having 80 milligrams of alcohol per 100 millilitres of blood, the same as in Canada. Sun tested almost 75 per cent above the legal limit.