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TWO SESSIONS

China pledges vigorous poverty relief this year

BY LI LEI

China pledged to pull another 10 million people out of dire poverty this year and promised to adopt targeted measures against corruption and misconduct in the poverty relief sector.

The 2018 goal of 10 million people includes 2.8 million who are to be relocated from inhospitable areas, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang said when delivering the Government Work Report at the annual legislative session on March 5

Poverty alleviation efforts will be carried out by developing local industries, education and healthcare, the premier said.

In the most recent five-year period, China's impoverished population — which stood at more than 98 million at the end of 2012 — was cut by two-thirds, the best performance in the country's history of poverty reduction.

The country has set a goal to complete the building of a "moderately prosperous society" in all respects by 2020, which requires the eradication of extreme poverty.

The current poverty line in China is net annual income of 2,300 yuan ($362) in real terms in 2010.

Li said China will do more to support poor areas, and the national budget's newly enlarged pool of poverty reduction funds and related investments will be weighted toward those areas.

China will tailor anti-poverty measures to individuals and households to ensure that those most vulnerable to poverty, including the elderly, people with disabilities and people with serious diseases, receive the assistance they need, he said.

Relief policies will remain unchanged for those already lifted out of dire circumstances.

Those who have fallen into poverty more recently, and those who slip back into poverty, will receive prompt support, the premier added.

Li also promised targeted measures against corruption and misconduct in poverty alleviation.

Lei Ming, director of the Institute on Poverty Research at Peking University, said the shift of the relief effort's focus toward areas and people affected by extreme poverty shows that the campaign has entered the "the final sprint phase".

"The task is getting increasingly arduous as it approaches the finishing line. Most of the remaining 30 million poor are either living in inhospitable areas or belong to the most vulnerable groups, including the old and the disabled, a situation that entails relocation or government covering their basic living costs," Lei said.

Lei hailed the severe punishments aimed at corruption and praised a system design that stems misconduct in the sector, but he also noted that care should be used to avoid dampening poverty relief officials' enthusiasm.

"Corruption does exist in the sector, but most officials are hardworking and have self-discipline, otherwise the achievements wouldn't have be en made," he said. **(China Daily)**

China's annual "Two Sessions" — CPPCC, NPC — opened on March 3 and 5 respectively in Beijing, attracting attentions from rest of the world. Today, as the world's second largest economy, China's global influence increases. Decisions made during the "Two Sessions" not only influence the country itself, but also have impact on the world. **(Xinhua)**

VOICE

"Beautiful" represents direction of sustainable development

"China is winning the battle to safeguard its clear skies. The world's second largest economy is taking powerful measures to facilitate the control of polluting emissions. It is gradually abandoning the old model of growth at the expense of environment, and has created a more sustainable model of economic development." Recently, Bloomberg quoted a research report saying that the average PM2.5 concentration in Beijing, Tianjin and 26 other cities decreased by 34.3 percent year-on-year in the fourth quarter of 2017. Bloomberg made positive comments on a series of Chinese policies aimed at speeding up the creation of a more environmentally conscious civilization.

Many international experts and scholars say that China is pushing the creation of a more environmentally conscious civilization to a new height. China's green development path is getting broader and is having a positive impact on global sustainable development.

"As the world's second largest economy, China is protecting and restoring clear waters and green mountains. It is continuously accelerating the construction of an ecological civilization, releasing a positive signal of transformative development concepts and achieving green development," said Professor François of Amsterdam Business School. "The Chinese government's efforts are unprecedented. I believe the dividend of green development in China will continue to be paid out in the future."

"'Beautiful' represents the direction of sustainable development. It coincides with the concept of "harmony" advocated in Chinese philosophy since ancient times. The major actions to promote ecological protection and restore clear waters and green mountains are bringing Chinese people onto the path of man and nature living in harmony," said Albert Rodriguez, a Mexican columnist and expert on Chinese issues. He noted that China used the word 'beautiful' when describing the goal of building itself into a great modern Socialist country. The word 'beautiful' reflects China's pursuit of a higher goal than rapid economic development. The ecological concept of sacrificing the speed of development for a cleaner environment shows the wisdom and courage of Chinese leaders and will surely benefit the general public.

The director of the National Parks Management Office at the Thai Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation said accelerating the construction of an ecological civilization shows the Chinese government's emphasis on people's health and overall quality of life. The concepts and experiences is a successful example for Thailand and other developing countries.

(Adapted from a report from *People's Daily*)

NEWS IN BRIEF

First Confucius Institute Forum held

BY LIU CHUNTAO

The First Confucius Institute Forum in Bangladesh, organized around the theme "Reflection on Language", was held recently in Dhaka. Experts and scholars from Dhaka University, North South University, other Bangladeshi universities and the media attended.

Zhou Mingdong, Chinese dean of the Confucius Institute at Dhaka University, said that the forum will be held on a regular basis by the China-Bangladesh Research Centre for academic studies and exchanges. It will create more opportunities for academic exchanges between the two countries and stimulate enthusiasm for scientific research and innovation.

There are currently two Confucius Institutes and one Confucius Classroom in Bangladesh. Among them, the two institutes were established by Yunnan University. In September 2017, Yunnan University and Dhaka University jointly established the China-Bangladesh Research Centre at the Confucius Institute. **(Xinhua)**

Kunming's first intelligent tourist toilets debut

BY ZHU HAI

The Kunming Expo Garden put a 5A intelligent bathroom management system into use late February. This represents the city's first intelligent tourist toilet deployment. The toilets are also the first of their kind to show occupancy status in the province.

The intelligent tourist toilets include regular toilets and a unisex toilet and cover an area of 445 square meters. The public toilets are managed through the Internet, IoT sensors, wireless communications, intelligent security technology and other advanced technologies. Electronic displays on the outer wall show the locations of male, female and unisex toilet, their occupancy status, as well as the total visits, and real-time weather and air quality. In addition, the toilets also provide emergency call service. The user can press a call bell for one minute, and a staff member will come to provide assistance.

CULTURE

1,350-year-old tradition still alive

The "costume competition festival", is held in Zhiju Village, Yongren county of Chuxiong Yi autonomous prefecture in Yunnan province each year on the 15th day of the first lunar month. This year, the festval falls on March 3.

During the festival, the local young people attended a local mass-dating event, following a tradition that dates back about 1,350 years. The festival is not only an occasion to celebrate, but also a chance for single people to meet each other.

Photo by Chen Fei

TOURISM

Mobile App launched to better serve tourists

BY WANG SHIXUE

Yunnan Province has officially rolled out a travel application called "Tour in Yunnan on the Phone" or "E-Travel in Yunnan". The App was released March 2, in an effort to provide tourists with an easy, fast and unified information service.

Creation of the App was overseen by the Yunnan government and features tourist-oriented services.

"Tour in Yunnan on the Phone" is a mobile-based App that serves as a one-stop shop where tourists can access updated, reliable and practical information and services.

Powered by Tencent—a leading provider of Internet services in China—the mobile application leverages artificial intelligence and the widespread use of mobile telecommunications to make it a secure, objective and user-friendly App.

"The application is designed to allow tourists to enjoy easy and free travel, with government supervision everywhere," said Jia Jiaya, a prominent scientist at Tencent. Jia added China currently has 724 million internet users and more than 500 million of them conduct their daily payments using smart phones.

The updated Yunnan tourism information App can also be directly accessed by mini-programs on WeChat, a facebook-like social media platform popular across China.

VISA

Yunnan adopts ten-year visa policy for foreign professionals

On March 1, the Yunnan Provincial Administration of Foreign Experts Affairs(YPAFEA) issued its first foreign talent visa (R visa) to Metha Wanapat, a Thai zoologist. Starting from this month, southwest China's Yunnan will issue ten-year R visas for skilled foreign workers. This means Yunnan has eased visa applications for foreign professionals.

Metha Wanapat is a renowned zoologist in both Asia and Australia. Of the process, he said, "Acquiring Yunnan's first R visa, with the validity of ten years and multiple entries, is very exciting for me. The new system is very convenient, and I believe it will attract more people to work in Yunnan."

The issuance of R visas is targeted at international high-level talents to fill urgently needed positions that will aid national economic and social development. Applicants who qualify as high-end talents include scientists, leading figures in technology-intensive sectors, international entrepreneurs and skilled workers. People falling under these categories can apply for the visas.

The visa is valid for up to ten years with multiple entries—180-day stays for a single entry—according to Yunnan Provincial Administration of Foreign Experts Affairs. Spouses and minor children of the applicants will be given the same visa.

For applicants who meet the proper standards, the provincial foreigner employment management department will issue an online confirmation letter to the invitation organization within five working days. Then they will exchange confirmation letters for high level international talents, as well as other information, with the Chinese embassy, consulate or other overseas agency authorized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the applicant's country of origin. **(More information, please visit http://english.yunnan.cn/html/2018/latestnews_0226/13600.html)**

On March 1, Yunnan issues its first foreign talent visa(R visa) to Thai zoologist Metha Wanapat(Left). **Photo provided by YPAFEA**

ECO

Yunnan's 2017 air quality ranks first in China

Good air quality has helped Yunnan attract a large number of tourists. The photo taken recently in east Yunnan's Luoping County shows that tourists are taking photos in a "sea" of the blooming rapeseed flowers. **(Xinhua)**

BY HU XIAORONG

At the recently-held 2018 Yunnan Provincial Environmental Protection Meeting, 98.2 percent of the days were of excellent air quality in the province last year. This ranked first in China National and provincial monitoring systems on at major rivers recorded excellent water quality rates of 82.6 percent, while major outbound and cross-border rivers registered water quality compliance rates of 100 percent. The Inter-Provincial Ranking of Green Development Index showed that Yunnan's ecological protection index ranks second in China.

This year, Yunnan will focus on three special programmes designed to safeguard its clear waters and green mountains. The province will do a good job of environmental protection and ensure that the quality of its environment stays at the forefront of the country.

CONNECTIVITY

"Chengdu-Europe Plus" ASEAN int'l railway passage in trial run

BY LI LIKE

A train carrying eight 40-foot containers of electronics departed February 26 from Dong Anh Station in Vietnam. It entered China via the Pingxiang Railway Port in Guangxi the same day, marking a trial run success for the international railway passage connecting Vietnam with Chengdu.

The train was loaded with electronic good produced by LG Electronics in Vietnam. It arrived in Chengdu after about 55 hours, and was then placed on the Chengdu-Europe Express Line to Lodz, Poland.

In recent years, the Chengdu International Railway Port has been vigorously implementing its "Chengdu-Europe Plus" strategy. The port has built an express container transport network connecting Shanghai, Shenzhen, Wuhan, Kunming, Guangzhou, Tianjin and other coastal and frontier cities Chengdu acts as the hub. The sources of goods have expanded to the Yangtze River Delta, the Pearl River Delta and the Bohai Economic Rim. Some goods come from Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, Macao and ASEAN member states. To date, a multimodal transport collection and distribution system connecting the Silk Road Economic Belt, the 21st-century Maritime Silk Road and the middle and lower reaches of Yangtze River has come into being. **(Xinhua)**