

RARE EARTH RUMBLE P.38

TEST OF MERITOCRACY P.44

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GAME ON

Sports take center stage in London and at home

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Working Both Ways

The 2012 London Olympic Games have gotten much attention from Chinese citizens. Not only do they constantly keep themselves well informed of the intense rivalries at the games, they also take great delight in talking about how dominantly the winners have outperformed others in various events. As China bagged the highest number of gold medals in Beijing four years ago, the London Olympics have renewed their joys and expectations for the Chinese people to reign supreme at the top of the medal standings, as well as display good sportsmanship and unflinching will in competition at the world's biggest gathering of athletes.

One of the main reasons for this fervent enthusiasm about China's performance in the Olympics stems from their belief that winning in international sporting events brings glory and prestige to their motherland. To a large extent, the development of sports represents an important aspect of a nation's overall health and well-being. China used to be ridiculed as the "sick man of East Asia" through the first half of the last century, when it was plunged into internal chaos, widespread poverty and foreign aggression. Even during the first three decades of New China, its sports development remained by and large oblivious to the outside world, as the country had to give priority to fixing its poor and weak economic base. With the reform and opening up adopted from the late 1970s, China has made phenomenal progress in economic, social and cultural development, and also has become a new and formidable force in the world of sports.

The fast rise in Chinese athletics has been largely attributed to the country's national sports system, under which the government appropriates all necessary resources to select and cultivate talented athletes from childhood to adulthood, and provides logistics and facilities for all hopefuls, be they aspiring Olympians or local sports heroes. Over the past 30 years or so, this mechanism has proven very effective and fruitful in helping Chinese athletes excel in an increasing number of sports events over a relatively short period of time.

While the country has gained more and more world championship titles, many Chinese citizens have voiced their opinions that priority should also be given to boosting public sports and fitness activities, given some statistics and surveys indicating the general health conditions of a growing number of Chinese citizens are deteriorating markedly in recent years. They suggest that more preferential policies and special schemes should be drawn up toward this end, and more funding allocated to build up more sports facilities for public use, from fitness equipment to sports fields and indoor gyms. After all, the primary function of playing sports is to maintain human fitness, and making citizens physically strong and healthy is no less important than earning medals in the global sports arena. ■

WRITE TO US

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Please provide your name and address along with your submissions. Submissions may be edited.

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Naval Newcomer

Chinese Navy frigate *Yantai* opens to local people and press during its stop at Varna Port, Bulgaria's seaside city, near the Black Sea on August 7.

The arrival of *Yantai* at Varna on August 5 marks the Chinese Navy's first visit to Bulgaria since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the People's Republic of China and Bulgaria in 1949. Prior to the visit, *Yantai* accomplished a mission with the Chinese Navy's 11th escort fleet through the international waters of the Gulf of Aden.

<http://www.bjreview.com>

“We brought in a new generation of players to balance the more experienced ones. Today we went out fast and hard to ensure a win. Introducing new players each game helped us stay on top.”

Liu Guoliang, the head coach of the Chinese men's table tennis team, commenting on the gold medal winners' outstanding achievements in the London Olympic Games on August 8

“China's first aircraft carrier will be commissioned by the end of the year and is very likely to be named after one of China's provinces.”

Li Jie, a senior researcher of the Chinese Navy Military Academy, revealing when China's first aircraft carrier will be on service in an interview published on the *People's Daily* website on August 8

“The new road is an achievement of the close relationship between Cambodia and China. It will help promote tourism in the Preah Vihear Temple and increase the flow of goods in rural areas.”

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen, speaking at an inauguration ceremony on August 8 in Kampong Thom, Cambodia, for a 128-km China-funded national road

“The channel will promote a healthy lifestyle and behavior among the Chinese public, who have a growing need to stay healthy and fit. The program has to be impartial and scientifically correct.”

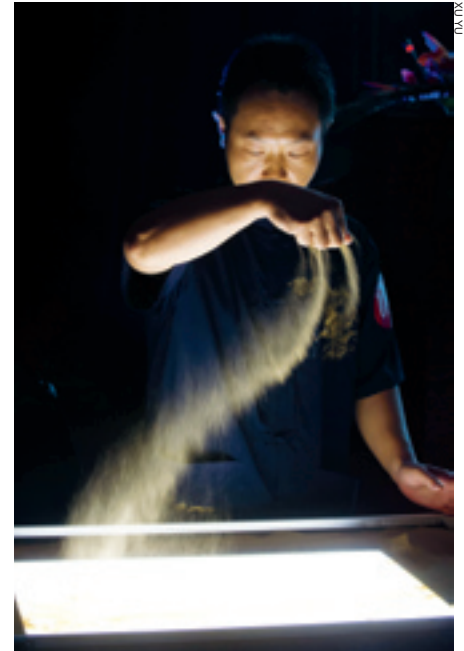
China's Health Minister Chen Zhu, explaining the purpose for the launch of China Health Television in Beijing on August 6, which has already reached more than 200 million people in 70 cities on the mainland



NK/BA

STRUGGLE FORWARD Pedestrians brave a rainstorm from Typhoon *Haikui*, which hit Shanghai on August 8. *Haikui*, which landed in the Chinese mainland on August 8, brought heavy downpours to east China and had killed three people as of August 9

SAND ART An artist performs sand painting during a contest held in Zhoushan, east China's Zhejiang Province, on August 3



DA/RY

Migrant Population

The total number of migrants in China reached 230 million last year, or 17 percent of the country's total population, according to a report issued on August 6 by the National Population and Family Planning Commission.

With an average age of 28, 80 percent of migrants are from rural areas and nearly 45 percent of them were born after 1980, the annual report said.

The average monthly pay for those at or below the age of 35 was just 2,513 yuan (\$395) in 2011. The figure represented a 29.4-percent increase from that of 2009, but was not nearly enough to cover their housing and health care in

light of the increasing cost of living.

For migrants with a bachelor's degree or higher, the average monthly pay amounted to 4,608 yuan (\$725).

Generally, only 51.3 percent of migrants hold fixed-term contracts, the report said, adding that they work an average of 54.6 hours per week, far above the 40-hour legal limit.

Nature Reserves Alliance

Four major nature reserves covering 550,000 square km in west China jointly announced on August 7 an alliance to protect the environment of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau.

The four reserves are Chiangtang Nature

Flying Man Injured

China's track and field star **Liu Xiang** again saw his gold-medal hopes dashed prematurely when he crashed into the first barrier in the opening heat of the 110-meter hurdles at the London Olympic Games on August 7.

Liu received a rousing ovation from the crowd of 80,000 as he hopped down the track to symbolically cross the finish line, kissing the last hurdle.

It was the second time Liu failed in the first round of Olympic Games. Four years ago, he was forced to withdraw due to a tendon injury at the 2008 Beijing Games.

Liu was diagnosed with an achilles tendon fracture this time and will undergo surgery in Britain.

Liu, 29, is one of the world's best athletes in 110-meter hurdles. He started training for track and field in 1990, and went on to win gold in the 110-meter hurdles with a 12.91-second finish at the 2004 Athens Olympics, tying the 11-year record of Britain's Colin Jackson. Liu's historic victory in Athens made him the first Asian man to win gold in track and field, a popular sport around the world.

Though China took 51 gold medals to top the tally in Beijing, it lags behind the rest of the world on the track and therefore regards Liu as a national treasure. In 2006, Liu set a new 110-meter hurdles world record in a time of 12.88 seconds in Lausanne, breaking the record that had stood for 13 years.



production of pharmaceutical excipients following a scandal involving contaminated medicine capsules.

According to a new regulation on the management of pharmaceutical excipients, or pharmacologically inactive substances used to carry the active ingredients of medication, the State Food and Drug Administration (SFDA) and its branches will raise standards for excipients when approving new medicines. The regulation will take effect on February 1, 2013.

Excipients that are new on the market or contain greater safety risks should be registered and approved, and their producers will have to obtain production licenses from authorities, the document says. Other excipients and their producers will be monitored.

The SFDA will set up a national database to monitor the production and application of all pharmaceutical excipients, as well as a credit reporting system for producers, said Zhang Wei, head of the Registration Division under the SFDA.

The regulation says pharmacy firms should be held responsible for quality control problems resulting from the use of illegal and substandard excipients. The firms should also supervise the quality of excipients and regulate their suppliers, the regulation says.

A China Central Television report delivered in April said that several companies had manufactured drug capsules with industrial gelatin, which contains excessive levels of chromium and is illegal to use for making drug capsules.

The industrial gelatin was made from leather scraps, according to the report.

Mining Safety

China will start a nationwide campaign to improve safety of mines, the Work Safety Committee of the State Council, China's cabinet announced on August 3.

The three-year campaign is aimed at consolidating the sector, regulating mining activities and shutting down illegal or danger-



NEW ROUND TALK Chen Yunlin (left), President of the Chinese mainland-based Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits, and Chiang Pin-kung, Chairman of the Taiwan-based Straits Exchange Foundation, hold the eighth top-level talks between the two organizations since 2008 in Taipei on August 9

ous mines.

Although the number of mining-related accidents and deaths has dropped in recent years, the sheer number of mines will make improving their safety a challenging task, the committee said.

Ninety-five percent of China's 100,000 metal and non-metal mines are smaller mines that are prone to accidents, the committee said.

Subsidies for Students

Chinese students at various levels received more than 98.6 billion yuan (\$15.51 billion) in subsidies in 2011, up 16 percent year on year, according to the Ministry of Education.

The government contributed 70 percent of the subsidies, while the rest was contrib-

uted by a student loan program, income from school-affiliated sectors and donations, said a statement issued by the ministry on August 8.

The subsidies were used to guarantee equal access to education for all citizens, especially those of disadvantaged economic status.

Nearly half of the subsidies went to students in higher education institutions, with about 14 percent paid in the form of government-subsidized student loans.

Under a government-subsidized student loan scheme, the government pays the interest on bank loans taken out by college students and students pay off the balance in installments after graduation.

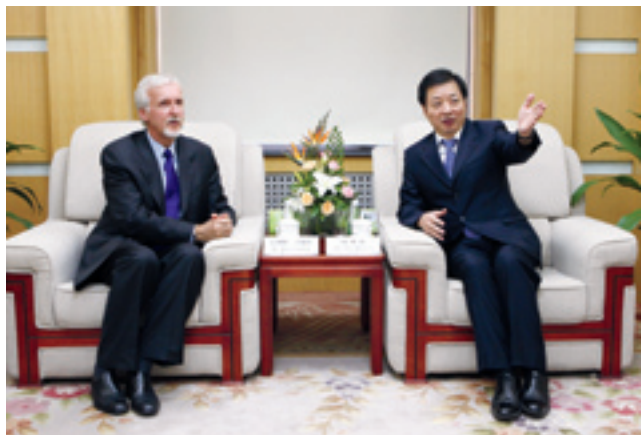
In 2011, 2.4 million college students received 13.6 billion yuan (\$2.14 billion) of loans under the scheme, up 2.3 billion yuan (\$362 million) from the previous year, according to the statement.

Marrow Donors

Potential donors enlisted in the China Marrow Donor Program (CMDP) has totaled 1.492 million, making the marrow bank the world's fourth largest in terms of donors.

The CMDP has facilitated about 3,000 hemopoietic stem cells donations for patients at home and abroad and it has uploaded the information of 50,000 donors to the World Marrow Donor Association, said Zhao Baige, Executive Vice President of the Red Cross Society of China (RCSC) said August 2.

The CMDP was established in 1992 by the RCSC.



NEW DIRECTION Hollywood director James Cameron (left) meets with President Zhou Mingwei of the China International Publishing Group (CIPG) in Beijing on August 8, discussing cooperation between Cameron-Pace Group and CIPG



GORGEOUS VIEW A tourist poses by Namtso, a plateau lake, in Tibet Autonomous Region on August 7. Namtso, meaning “heavenly lake” in Tibetan, has become one of the preferences for a growing number of tourists to Tibet

Anti-dumping Review

China on August 8 started to reexamine anti-dumping measures it imposed on chloroprene rubber imported from a Japanese supplier, said the Ministry of Commerce.

The move came after the ministry received complaints that Japan Electric Chemical Co. increased dumping activities and flouted the country’s anti-dumping measures.

Chinese chloroprene rubber producers filed an application for a reexamination of anti-dumping measures against the Japanese company’s products.

In May 2005 the ministry imposed anti-dumping duties ranging from 2 percent to 151 percent on imported chloroprene rubber from Japan, the United States and the EU with a term of five years.

In 2011, the ministry extended the anti-

dumping duties for another five years.

Chloroprene rubber, commonly known as Neoprene, is mostly used in manufacturing electrical cables and other types of cables, as well as waterproof products.

CPI Slowdown

The consumer price index (CPI), a key gauge of inflation, increased 1.8 percent year on year in July, the slowest pace since February 2010, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said on August 9.

The rate was 0.4 percentage points lower than in June.

The easing inflation is explained as a result of the base effect. The CPI growth rate hit a 37-month high of 6.5 percent in July last year.

Food prices, which account for nearly one third of the weighing in the calculation of the CPI,

edged up 2.4 percent in July from a year ago, down from an increase of 3.8 percent in June.

Food prices were mainly driven by an 8-percent hike of vegetable prices, as rain and flooding affected vegetable production in many places in a traditionally peak season of supply.

Stabilizing Pork Price

The government will purchase frozen pork to stabilize the market, as high hog production has led to falling prices, the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) said on August 7.

Due to a slow season and continued over-production, pork prices have shown signs of sliding and will likely remain low for a period ahead, said the NDRC.

The NDRC advised farmers to weed out low-yield reproductive pigs and optimize the

Numbers

20,000

China has allocated more than 20,000 hectares of land to support the construction of low-income housing this year, said Hu Cunzhi, Vice Minister of Land and Resources on August 7.

40,000

China’s first carbon capture and storage demonstration project in Erjinhoro Banner, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, sealed off more than 40,000 tons of carbon dioxide in the past 15 months, according to China Shenhua Coal to Liquid and Chemical Co. Ltd.

production structure to reduce losses.

Pork prices have generally shown a declining trend this year. In April, the hog-to-corn price ratio, a major indicator of the sector's profitability, fell under 6 to 1, the break-even point for farmers.

To avoid drastic price fluctuations, the government then initiated a round of frozen pork purchases. Price drops narrowed in May and reversed to moderate gains in June and July.

Pork prices are an important component in food prices, which have a one-third weighing in the calculation of the CPI.

Online Business Boom

An increasing number of Chinese enterprises have taken to the Internet to do business in light of the current economic downturn, according to data from the country's Internet regulator.

China had 8.73 million registered domain names at the end of June, and 3.98 million were registered using ".cn" domain names, up 460,000 from the end of 2011, marking the fastest biannual growth since 2008, the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) said on August 6.

The ".cn" suffix is a so-called Top Level Domain for China, like ".com" or ".net," and individuals and companies seeking to create a Web address are required to be approved by CNNIC.

Of those newly added ".cn" websites, about 71 percent were domestic companies, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

"This shows that a number of SMEs are beginning to promote their own brands and services through the Internet," CNNIC said in a statement.

China has the world's largest number of Internet users, with an online population of 538 million by the end of June, including 210 million online shoppers.

China's e-commerce transactions totaled 5.88 trillion yuan (\$933 billion) last year, up 29.2

percent year on year, according to the Ministry of Commerce. Over 40 percent of Chinese SMEs have used e-commerce to maintain rapid growth, as a worsening external environment, rising labor costs and tightened credit have created difficulties for SMEs.

Effective Boost

The government's measures encouraging private funds to enter more sectors have worked and helped stabilize investment growth this year, according to the NDRC's investment department.

The measures encouraging private capital to enter fields such as oil and gas exploration and education have been playing an active role since the beginning of this year, according to the department. Private investment in the oil and gas exploration, education and health sectors surged 89.2 percent, 40.2 percent and 43.1 percent, respectively, in the first half of this year.

The small quantity of private funds in those sectors also helped yield rapid growth, since such fields used to be dominated by state-owned capital.

Earlier in June, the NDRC and the Ministry of Finance issued a joint statement vowing to treat government funds and private capital equally in order to create a better business environment for private entrepreneurs.

Avant-garde Director

Rhinoceros in Love, the masterpiece of China's prestigious drama director **Meng Jinghui**, were staged on August 7-12 at the Poly Theater in Beijing, marking a run that will include the play's commemorative thousandth performance.

Since its debut in 1999, five versions of the tragic romance have been performed in front of 368,000 people in 36 cities worldwide.

Rhinoceros in Love shows the love story of a rhino feeder, Ma Lu, and his pretty neighbor Ming Ming. The rhinoceros' poor vision serves as a metaphor in the story, symbolizing those who are deeply in love and yet blinded by the sadness of unrequited love.

Meng, 48, is one of the most influential drama directors in Asia. Meng's most influential plays include *Comrade Ah Q*, *Waiting for Godot*, *Accidental Death of An Anarchist*, *Rhinoceros in Love* and *The Balcony*.



ZHANG GUOJUN

SPORTSWEAR CAPITAL A visitor looks at uniforms designed for Olympic athletes in Quanzhou in southeast China's Fujian Province on August 8. Quanzhou has become well-known in China as a major hub of private enterprises in industries like shoes and sportswear

72.66%

The iPad's market share in China's tablet PC sector climbed to over 72.66 percent in the second quarter of 2012, according to a report of market researcher Analysys International.

700,000

Dongfeng Honda Automobile Co. Ltd. announced that 700,000 of its CR-Vs had been sold, the most out of any other medium- or high-end sports utility vehicle model in the country.

THIS WEEK WORLD



HONDURAS

A policeman inspects weapons seized in Trujillo, Colon Department, on August 3. Honduran security forces conducted a weapons search operation in Colon in an attempt to stop clashes between palm farmers and landowners



NASA's *Curiosity* mission managers, flight controllers, scientists and administrators speak at a press conference in Pasadena, California, on August 5, after the Mars rover successfully landed on the red planet. The craft sent back its first signals as it entered Mars' atmosphere in the final moments of a dramatic touchdown

THE UNITED STATES





A resident pushes an improvised inflatable boat carrying his dog through floodwaters as they head for a safer area in suburban Manila on August 7, after torrential rains drenched most of the capital

THE PHILIPPINES



JAMAICA

Dancers perform at the National Stadium in Kingston on August 6 in a celebration of the 50th anniversary of Jamaica's independence



Fran Calvo (left) and Monica Fraile exchange rings in a wedding ceremony held inside an aquarium in Benalmadena, south Spain, on August 6

SPAIN



A Buddha statue is displayed at a museum in Kabul on August 5. Hundreds of archaeological treasures looted from Afghanistan were returned after being recovered with the help of the British Museum

AFGHANISTAN



COVER STORY

RISING STARS

Chinese swimmers take center stage in London By Tang Yuankai

On the first day of the London 2012 Olympic Games, the fabulous performances of two young Chinese swimmers—Sun Yang and Ye Shiwen—stunned a worldwide audience. But before the two stars could enjoy their victory, Western media sources went on the attack with doping accusations. Though the suspicions were later proved to be groundless, their biased criticism irked many Chinese fans.

On July 28, the 21-year-old Sun won the men's 400-meter freestyle at 3:40.14, setting a new Olympic record and becoming the first male Chinese swimmer to claim Olympic

gold. And Ye, 16, broke the women's 400-meter medley world record at 4:28.43.

Poolside prejudice

It is no longer a surprise when Chinese athletes win Olympic medals. But in the swimming pools, where European and American athletes have long dominated, elite Chinese swimmers are still a rare sight.

At the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona, Chinese swimmers emerged triumphantly to win four gold medals and five silver medals. But in the 10 years following that success, they suffered a sharp decline, taking only one gold medal in the Atlanta, Athens and Beijing

Olympics respectively, and zero in Sydney.

Hence the world's astonishment when Sun and Ye swept away two gold medals on the first day of competition in London.

The dominant performance put on by Chinese swimmers that day was certainly unexpected, said a BBC host during the live broadcast.

While record-breaking Olympic performances are often subject to suspicion, the breathtaking speed of Sun and Ye attracted an unusual number of groundless attacks.

Before Sun, Chinese male swimmers' best result was one silver medal won by Zhang Lin in the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. Sun's



BREATHKING PERFORMANCE:
Ye Shiwen competes in the women's 200-meter individual medley heat at the London Olympic Games on July 30

gold medal was a shocking breakthrough.

Ye's performance was equally outstanding. Her result in the women's 400-meter medley beat the world record by nearly one second. In the last 50 meters of her freestyle race, Ye's time was just 28.93 seconds, 0.17 seconds faster than American gold medal winner Ryan Lochte in the men's 400-meter medley—an extremely rare feat in swimming competitions.

"My achievements come from hard training. I have never taken drugs to enhance my performance," said Ye.

Her assertion has been confirmed by the report of the World Anti-Doping Agency,

which showed Ye passed the drug test after the competition. All results complied with the standards, and no evidence of performance-enhancing drugs was found.

Ye was clean and she "deserves recognition for her talent," said Lord Colin Moynihan, Chairman of the British Olympic Association.

Since the athletes arrived in London, they have received doping tests from various organizations, including the International Olympic Committee, International Sports Federations and the British anti-doping organizations. The tests included blood and urine samples. The swimmers were given particularly close

attention. All Chinese athletes went through all the tests and proved to be clean, said Jiang Zhixue, the anti-doping chief of China's General Administration of Sport (GAS).

"In recent years, the Chinese Swimming Association has made great efforts to combat doping. Under any circumstances, once any athlete is found to be using performance-enhancing drugs, he or she will be severely punished. It is unfair for anyone to improve their performance by doping," said Jiang.

Despite some people's doping suspicions, there were also a large number of international audiences supporting Ye. An opinion poll by Australia's *Brisbane Times* showed that of the 5,000 people who voted, 56 percent held it was unfair to question Ye's performance.

Many swimming athletes from other countries also came to the defense of their young Chinese counterpart.

People shouldn't groundlessly accuse an athlete of doping after their achievements just because they are from a different country, said Ian Thorpe, a famous Australian swimmer.

Thorpe first won the World Championship in men's 400-meter freestyle at the early age of 15. His success showed how young swimmers can accomplish incredible feats against more experienced competitors.

Ye won a second gold medal in the women's 200-meter medley and broke the event's Olympic record.

Altogether, the Chinese swimming team won 10 medals, including five gold, two silver and three bronze.

Secret to success

In fact, the Chinese swimmers' excellent performance is no accident. Their strengths had been demonstrated long ago.

For instance, Jiao Liuyang, who won the gold medal in the women's 200-meter butterfly in London, was the silver medal winner in Beijing Olympic Games in 2008. Two years ago, then 14-year-old Ye defeated the world record holder, famous American swimmer Allison Schmitt, in the women's 200-meter and 400-meter medleys, becoming the world's second best in the women's 200-meter medley in 2010.

Ye is considered to be a born swimmer. Her big hands and size-10.5 feet give her big advantage in the water. This is a key edge in swimming—for instance, top American ►►

swimmer Michael Phelps wears a size 14.

“Ye’s gift in swimming is beyond any doubt. Her leg strength is superior, as is her speed, endurance and coordination. She can perform all four swimming styles at a high level,” said Ye’s coach Xu Guoyi.

However, what Xu appreciates most is not Ye’s outstanding gift but her diligence. She trains hard year-round. Immediately after the World Swimming Championship ended in Shanghai in July of 2011, Xu led Ye into preparation for the London Olympic Games. Within one year’s time, they have been to a high altitude training camp twice.

“She trained at a high altitude twice a day, and each day, she swam at least 8,000 meters. Very few can bear such a heavy workload, but she made it through the training,” said Xu.

The hard training has proven fruitful. “Ye’s performance in London has greatly improved since last year,” said Xu.

“Scientific training is the key to my success,” said Ye.

In the daily training of Chinese athletes, a research team evaluates their training load and body conditions, so that they can plan the best training schedule while ensuring the athletes’ health.

In the past few years, China has also learned from the accomplishments of Australia and the United States, providing another element to the success of Chinese swimmers.

Nationwide support

Ever since Sun and Ye dazzled the world audience at the London Olympic Games, the popularity of their alma mater, Chen Jinglun Sport School in Hangzhou of Zhejiang Province, has soared.

Parents in Hangzhou are now eager to send their children to the school, reputedly a cradle of world champion swimmers.

“The success of Sun inspired more parents to send their children to pursue swimming. Now that we have a larger pool of children to choose from, and are more likely to find even more gifted swimmers,” said coach Chen Yunpeng.

Only a chosen few can enter the school. Every year, coaches in the school tour nearly 200 kindergartens in the city in search of promising swimmers. First, 800 children are picked to receive concentrated training. After the training, the school keeps about 150 of these children.

Currently, about 350 children aged 6-13 receive training in the school every day. The school is geared to developing sports pro-

grams, allowing children to train in their spare time, in the evenings when school is in session and during the daytime over holidays.

In the school, a 6-year-old typically swims 5,000 to 6,000 meters per day. “Heavy aerobic exercises are pivotal to improving swimmers’ ability,” said Bai Ziyue, the school’s Vice President.

In addition to large amount of aerobic exercises, the school also emphasizes technique. Sun is known for his exceptional breathing technique. While most swimmers inhale when stroking water with their arms, Sun inhales when his hands are out of water,” said coach Chen. Chen believed this advanced technique made Sun stand out above the crowd.

The school, founded in 1956, is designated by the GAS as a training base for

prospective high-caliber athletes. So far, it has produced many national and world champions in multiple sports.

The school is at the grassroots level of China’s Nationwide Sport System (NSS) of competitive sports.

“Specifically, the NSS requires the government to be responsible for the athletes’ training. In the system, amateur sports schools, provincial teams, and national teams form a complete training chain, which ensures an abundant supply of back-up sports talents,” said Wei Jizhong, President of the International Volleyball Federation. Wei once served as secretary general of the Chinese Olympic Committee for 12 years.

Talented students trained at Chen Jinglun Sport School will be selected into provincial





TALENT POOL:
Children receive
swimming
instruction at
Chen Jinglun
Sport School
in Hangzhou
City, Zhejiang
Province

sports teams to compete in national sporting games. Outstanding athletes will be selected into the national sports team.

The rise of the Chinese swimming team should also be credited to a project code-named 119.

Of the Olympic Games, the three big sports—swimming, track and field, aquatics—altogether produce 119 gold medals. However, these three are the short board of China. Thus came the need for the 119 Project, which aims to enhance the Chinese athletes' performance in these fields.

In the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, the Chinese swimming team went home with no gold medals at all. Following this disappointment, the project was silently launched.

An interesting coincidence is that “119” happens to be the fire emergency phone number in China. About this, Wei Di, then Director of the Administration Center of Aquatic Sports under GAS, pointed out the code 119 refers to a “warning.”

However, GAS never disclosed the 119 Project to the public until breakthroughs were made at the Athens 2004 Olympic Games.

In Athens, China got the first gold medal in aquatics; Liu Xiang became the first

Chinese to win the title of men's 110-meter hurdles; China jumped to the second place in the gold medal standings for the first time; and China won gold medals in an all-time high of 13 sports.

Wei said that under the 119 Project, since 2001, China's investment in aquatic sports has greatly increased. The investment hit 20 million yuan (\$3.14 million), nearly doubling the previous level.

The government spent 3 million yuan (\$470,000) on equipment purchases and 1 million yuan (\$157,000) on overseas visits and competitions.

“These big investments were unprecedented,” said Wei.

The project also attached great importance to intensive training. In 2001, China's Swimming Administration Center re-established a permanent national team. “Only in this way can the country's investment in swimming be specifically concentrated on the swimming team, and can the advantage of China's nationwide sport system be given a full play,” said Li Hua, Director of the center.

Under the NSS, the government also focuses its investment on new sports and sports without mass participation. The success of

this strategy is reflected in China's gold medal counting in trampoline during the Beijing and London Olympic Games. Trampoline became an Olympic event in 2000, before which the sport had not been introduced in China. GAS selected athletes from similar sports and trained them in trampoline. Later, trampoline training centers were established. Within a decade, Olympic champions in trampoline such as He Wenna were crowned.

The NSS has proven successful in building a strong force in competitive sports, as shown by the Beijing Olympic Games, said Huang Yaling, a professor at Beijing Sport University.

While the NSS has effectively helped produce great athletes, Olympic gold medals and a sense of pride for the Chinese people, the public also begins to question whether a nation's success in sports should be measured solely by the achievement of a small number of sports elites, while leaving out the participation of the general public.

Huang said that to develop people-oriented mass sports, the current system must be reformed. ■

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Zhou Lulu wins a gold medal in the women's +75-kg class in weightlifting competition at the London Olympics on August 5

LIU DAWEI



Yi Siling beams while holding up a gold medal atop the podium. She took the first gold of the London Olympics in the women's 10-meter air rifle on July 28

LIU DAWEI



Xu Lijia wins Olympic gold in the women's Laser Radial class of sailing after a four-way shoot-out in the final race on August 6

GOING UP



Lei Sheng cries out in celebration of his victory in the men's individual foil final of the London Olympics on July 31

ZHANG XI



Jiao Liuyang sets a new Olympic record of 2:4.06 on her way to winning gold in the women's 200-meter butterfly on August 1

FEI MAOCHUA

COVER STORY

SNAPSHOT OF CHINESE CHAMPIONS

Chinese athletes put on explosive performances to grab gold medals as the London Olympics kicked off on July 27. Among the highlights, they broke records in several categories among 36 Olympic sports. These pictures show some of the most brilliant moments from China's Olympic medalists.



Chen Ding wins gold in the men's 20-km walk and sets a new Olympic record of one hour 18 minutes 46 seconds on August 4. He became China's first race walker to win an Olympic medal

GUO YONG



Lin Dan turns the tables after losing the first game in a final of badminton men's singles and goes on to win his second Olympic gold on August 3

FEI ZHENGLIAN



LIN CHAO

COVER STORY

CASUAL SPORTS

Sports catch on with the masses By Yin Pumin

As Chinese athletes strive for medals and glory at the London 2012 Olympic Games, their less-gifted countrymen back home are aiming to meet their personal fitness goals by participating in sports.

In June, the first Shanghai Citizens Sports Meeting (CSM), an event intended to help the city's populace get fit, was launched by the Shanghai Municipal Government and will continue until November. The initiative, to be held every four years to correspond with the summer Olympics, will host more than 2,000 games in 50 different sports this year.

It marks the first time a local government has implemented fitness programs in

a city-wide sports gala since China unveiled its Outline of Nationwide Physical Fitness Program (NPPF) in 1995 in a bid to promote healthier exercise habits among the people.

"We hope to educate people about the benefits of doing sports; encourage them to join us and gradually make sports a main part of people's lifestyles through CSM," said Li Yuyi, Director of the Shanghai Administration of Sports.

"There is no conflict between mass sports and competitive sports. Instead, they are complementary," Li said. "The outstanding performances of Chinese athletes at the Olympic Games will attract more people, especially children, to fill arenas, and the

prospering of mass sports will help enrich the talent reserves of competitive sports."

The Fourth National Fitness Day fell on August 8 this year. Thousands of people in Beijing marked the day by performing the ninth edition of the country's broadcast calisthenics. Meanwhile, a basketball tournament for citizens in the capital was launched by the General Administration of Sport (GAS) and Beijing Municipal Government.

Across the country, local governments organized a variety of sporting activities, such as five-on-five football matches, marathons, bicycle races and folk sports events to celebrate the special day.

The First National Fitness Day was held on August 8, 2009, to mark the anniversary of the opening of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games.

A nationwide campaign

Six decades have passed since the founding of the People's Republic in 1949. Within this short time span, China has made great progress in both promoting national fitness and training talented athletes.

China topped the gold medal tally with 51 four years ago at the Beijing Olympic Games, affirming that it has been on the right track to becoming a sports powerhouse.

However, racking up medals is no longer China's sole focus, as it moves to promote the health and fitness among the wider population.

"Most importantly, the Beijing Olympic Games have also played a major role in luring more people into the country's mass sports program," said Liu Peng, Director of the GAS.

"After the Beijing Olympic Games, more Chinese started to exercise voluntarily as governments and sports authorities paid more attention to mass sports, creating an atmosphere for the progress of sport," said Sheng Zhiguo, Director of the Mass Sport Department of the GAS.

According to Sheng, a third of the country's population now participates in sports regularly, up from 28.2 percent three years ago. The overall fitness of Chinese people appears to be improving.

Moreover, more than 1.1 million sports venues have been built around the country, along with more than 250,000 gyms set up in communities, public parks, squares, roadsides and other convenient locations. The number of social sports instructors is approaching 800,000.

This year, the GAS will further earmark 300 million yuan (\$47.62 million) from the sale of sports lotteries to build more sports facilities for the general public, according to Liu.

The government has stipulated that 60 percent of the proceeds from the sports lotteries must go to the NPPF.

The lottery, established in 1994, is important for raising funds for sporting and recreation events and for maintaining sports facilities. Thirty percent of the lottery's revenues are used for public projects including sports meetings and mass sports programs, according to the GAS.

With the flourishing of nationwide fitness activities, people's attitudes have also undergone great changes. In many large and medium-sized cities, spending money in the pursuit of good health has become trendy. Some of the newly emerging sports, including horseracing, yoga, pole dancing, women's boxing, kendo, taekwondo and golf are particularly popular among youth.

The Chinese Government has worked hard to promote the country's mass sports activities and its people's fitness.

Aiming to improve the health and physical condition of the general population, the NPPF encouraged everyone to engage in at least one sporting activity every day, learn at least two ways of keeping fit and have a health check every year.

The program ended in 2010, by which time a sports and fitness service system had been set up for the general public. More than 850,000 gymnasiums and stadiums had been

built across China, most of which were open to and widely used by the general public.

In order to further improve people's access to sports facilities, the State Council rolled out the National Fitness Regulations in 2009, aiming to get more of China's 1.3 billion people involved in sports.

The regulations emphasized the rights of students to practice sports. It, among other things, has been mandated that schools must ensure one hour each day for students to play sports and set aside at least one "Sports Day" per academic year.

As the previous NPPF expired in 2010, a set of new guidelines for sporting activities known as the National Fitness Program 2011-15 were released in early 2011.

According to the new plan, 32 percent of the population should be getting at least 30 minutes of exercise at least three times a week by 2015. The target is 3.8 percent higher than the number of people who reported exercising in 2007.

In order to provide more opportunities for people to exercise, the number of gymnasiums and stadiums nationwide is set to rise to



A SPORTING LIFE: People perform Tai Chi, a traditional Chinese martial art, in Haikou, south China's Hainan Province, on April 24

1.2 million by 2015.

The government also plans to increase stadium space from today's 1.03 square meters per person to 1.5 square meters in the next five years. "The plan and the goals are based on the current situation and research," Sheng said.

The targets in the five-year program include a call for 50 percent of cities and

counties to set up physical training centers and 50 percent of communities to have convenient and functional sports facilities. The document also urges the promotion of competitive sports, including track and field, swimming, and tennis. In addition, the number of professional physical trainers working in communities should reach 1 million.

In order to ensure the program to be implemented effectively, governments at all levels must include their planned investment in the promotion of fitness programs in their budgets, said Sheng.

"We'll conduct a nationwide survey to examine the implementation of the new policy," Sheng said. "To ensure the accuracy of the result, the Central Government will send out staff to do the survey at the local level, instead of collecting data from local sports bureaus."

A featured exercise

On August 9, 2010, Beijing restored the long-suspended broadcast calisthenics and encouraged employees of all companies, public institutions and schools to do the exercises

during work breaks.

Since then, the local radio station has broadcast the exercise music every day at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m., repeated twice, and lasting about eight minutes. The effort is believed to improve health, especially for those who sit in an office throughout the day.

Surveys have found that the physical condi- ►►

GETTING INVOLVED: Beijing residents kick shuttlecock in Chaoyang Park on August 8, 2010, the Second National Fitness Day



tions of many employees are distressing, with a significant number of young people having high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes and so on. In addition, many office workers suffer from lumbar strain, cervical spondylosis and short-sightedness.

People between the ages of 25 and 65 get the least physical exercise due to the pressures of work upon one's personal lifestyle, according to Jiao Shufang, an expert with Beijing Municipal Center of Disease Control and Prevention.

Broadcast calisthenics refers to a set of simple exercises specially designed for the general public to perform along with recorded commands set to a tempo and broadcast by radio or loudspeaker.

The first edition of broadcast calisthenics was introduced in 1951, when millions of people across the country did exercises to the rhythm of music from China National Radio. Since then, every five to 10 years, the national exercises are switched up according to social development and people's physical conditions. In 1981, the sixth edition of broadcast calisthenics was launched, the seventh in 1990 and the eighth in 1997.

In an attempt to further improve citizens' health, China released its ninth edition of broadcast calisthenics on August 8, 2011, to promote national fitness as the past eight programs did.

"The new calisthenics, which took researchers one year to devise and modify, are

some of the most economical, practical and scientific ways to exercise the body," said Feng Jianzhong, Vice Director of the GAS.

Zhang Ping, deputy leader of the group that designed the new regimen, said the calisthenics take about four minutes to complete and will help participants cope with the pressures associated with modern life. They will also help to prevent obesity and high cholesterol, which are becoming common among Chinese students and adults.

Youth concerns

Despite China's success at the Beijing Olympic Games and its young people's rising enthusiasm for sports, a troubling reality cannot be ignored: Chinese people, especially its younger generations, have relatively poor physical fitness compared to that of people in developed countries.

A survey of college students in more than 10 cities earlier this year by the Chinese Health Education Center found that more than 50 percent of respondents do not exercise enough.

Researchers discovered roughly 23 percent were lighter than the ideal weight recommended as healthy by the Ministry of Education and sports administration, while 13 percent were overweight.

A separate study released last year by the Ministry of Education also showed only 21 percent of primary and junior middle schools

enforce the minimum exercise time of at least one hour per day. About 56 percent of primary schools and 76 percent of junior middle schools do not arrange enough physical education classes, the report said.

According to the Chinese Association for Student Nutrition and Health Promotion, China had 12 million overweight children in 2011, accounting for about 7 percent of the global total.

In Beijing alone, the number of overweight primary and middle school students hit 20.7 percent in 2011, according to the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Health.

"It's obvious that the physical fitness of students has worsened in recent decades," said Wang Heping, a teacher at the Beijing-based University of International Business and Economics. "The biggest drops are in endurance and strength, while flexibility is also very bad."

Yang Yang, the retired speed skater who won China's first Winter Olympics gold medal, suggested holding school officials accountable for the amount of exercise children receive at primary and middle school.

To ensure youngsters get at least an hour of sport each day, principals and education departments should be punished if schools do not meet the requirement, she said. ■



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