

THE EAST ASIA SUMMIT P.16 | THE RISE OF SHADOW BANKING P.32

BEIJING REVIEW

VOL.55 NO.48 NOVEMBER 29, 2012

北京周報 WWW.BJREVIEW.COM



AN IDEAL LIVELIHOOD

China advances in its mission to beautify the homeland

RMB6.00
USD1.70
AUD3.00
GBP1.20
CAD2.60
CHF2.60

ISSN 1000-9140



JPY188 邮发代号2-922 · 国内统一刊号: CN11-1576/G2

CHINAFRICA

中国与非洲



12 issues a year at a subscription rate of 180 RMB

SUBSCRIPTION HOTLINES
(8610) 6831 0644, 6899 6223, 6899 5808

An Africa-oriented English monthly covering China and Africa published by BEIJING REVIEW, ChinaAfrica is the only one in China featuring news, views and analysis for an African audience.

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北京周报

BEIJING REVIEW

A News Weekly Magazine
Published Since 1958

□ iPad APP

<http://www.bjreview.com>

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Published every Thursday by

BELJING REVIEW, 24 Baiwanzhuang Lu,

Beijing 100037, China.

Overseas Distributor: China International Book Trading

Corporation (Guoji Shudian), P. O. BOX 399,

Beijing 100044, China

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E-mail: fp@mail.cibtc.com.cn

Website: <http://www.cibtc.com>

General Distributor for Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan:

Peace Book Co. Ltd.

17/F1, Paramount Bldg, 12 Ka Yip St, Chai Wan, HK

Tel: 852-28046687 Fax: 852-28046409

Beijing Review (USPS 2812) is published weekly in the United States

for US\$64.00 per year by Cypress Books,

360 Swift Avenue, Suite 48, South San Francisco, CA 94080

News Postage Paid at South San Francisco, CA 94080

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Beijing Review,

Cypress Books, 360 Swift Avenue, Suite 48,

South San Francisco, CA 94080

A Beautiful Vision

With the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) having concluded on November 14, a new catchphrase of “building a beautiful China” has spread across the nation. First proclaimed in the political report by the then General Secretary of the CPC Central Committee Hu Jintao on the opening day of the Party congress, the concept has outlined a sustainable plan that China will surely adopt in the coming decade and beyond.

Since the late 1970s, when China implemented reform policies and opened up to the outside world, the country has made some remarkable progress in terms of economic growth and social development. Along with these heartening developments, however, some worrisome environmental problems have emerged. Land and waterway pollution, increased scarcity or depletion of natural resources and negative climate changes and natural calamities resulting from unsustainable practices all pose new challenges.

Under these circumstances, China urgently needs to strike a proper balance between faster development and more effective environmental protection.

Hence, the idea of “building a beautiful China” from Hu’s report. It identified ecological progress as part of the country’s overarching strategy in economic, social and cultural development. By highlighting the concept in the national development roadmap, a clear mandate was given to the ruling Party and the country’s 1.3 billion-plus population to follow the crucial task of creating sustainable development models and adopting resource-saving and environmentally friendly ways of life.

“Building a beautiful China” offers an ideal vision for the country and the Chinese people, envisioning a landscape with fresh air, clean water, clear skies and uncontaminated green land. The concept also reflects the ruling Party’s sense of responsibility to the people and its determination to improve their living environment. After all, enhancing the public welfare and collective livelihood has long been the ultimate mission of the CPC, and a prerequisite for boosting China’s prosperity as well as its national image.

All citizens are responsible for taking part in the campaign of “building a beautiful China,” be they government employees, environmental workers, corporate executives, or the general public. Individuals should join in this national effort by advocating and engaging in environmental protection and conserving all types of resources, whether it is a drop of water or a mere kwh of electricity. Meanwhile, laws and regulations related to the environment and sustainability will be carefully crafted, strictly implemented and closely followed.

The whole nation’s combined efforts will only help accelerate the process of turning a beautiful vision into a magnificent reality. ■

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北京周报 英文版 2012年 第48期 ISSN 1000-9140 广告许可证 0171号
北京市期刊登记证第733号 邮发代号2-922 国内统一刊号: CN11-1576/G2 国内零售价: 人民币6.00元

CHINA...RMB6.00 U.S.A...USD1.70 AUSTRALIA...AUD3.00 UK...GBP1.20 CANADA...CAD2.60 SWITZERLAND...CHF2.00
JAPAN...JPY188 EUROPE...EURO1.90 TURKEY...YTL5.00 HK...HKD9.30 NEPAL...RS40



“China’s development in the future needs to be supported and guided by a powerful culture. The 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China has recognized this importance, making it clear that we should share the richness of Chinese culture with the world.”

Zhang Yiwu, a professor at the Department of Chinese Language and Literature of Peking University, speaking with *Beijing Review* on November 14

“The future of our society lies in the well-being of our children. Inadequate care for youth will one day bring harm to the nation.”

Li Hongbing, deputy chief of the *People’s Daily* Shanghai bureau writing in a commentary published on November 20, following the deaths of five “left-behind” children in Bijie, southwest China’s Guizhou Province, on November 16. The children had burnt charcoal to keep warm inside a roadside dumpster and died from carbon monoxide poisoning

“Government authorities should impose strict punishments on manufacturers found to be engaging in illegal activities.”

Dong Jinshi, Executive Vice President of the International Food Packaging Association, urging authorities to investigate the use of plasticizers found in almost all brands of Chinese liquor on November 19. Plasticizers are banned in China as food additives because the chemicals can cause male fertility problems and induce early female puberty

“The first thing I do after class is rush to the bathroom, as females outnumber males by 4 to 1 in my classroom.”

Wu Caiyun, a female student at the Chinese Language and Literature Department of Shandong Normal University, on November 20. Female students from 12 universities in China demanded more women’s restrooms in universities on November 19, the World Toilet Day

Country Folk Jubilee

A band from Puer, in southwest China’s Yunnan Province, pose for a photograph alongside a singer of a French band on November 21 during the first China Puer International Country Music Festival.

The festival showcases more than 20 bands and singers from all over the world. The New Silk Road Miss World Contest will also be held among the festival’s array of scheduled events.

Other activities organized during the festival include a symposium on country music and an outdoor concert.



OUT OF THE COLD A flock of sheep are herded to a winter pasture after snowfall in Bayingolin Mongol Autonomous Prefecture, northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, on November 21

Climate Change Report

China on November 21 published a report outlining its plans to deal with global climate change.

The report, titled China's Policies and Actions for Addressing Climate Change (2012), outlines actions taken by the Chinese Government to mitigate and adapt to climate change. It also documents measures to promote the building of low-carbon communities and advance international negotiation and cooperation.

During the 2006-10 period, the aggregate energy consumption per 10,000 yuan of the GDP (\$1,605) dropped 19.1 percent from that of 2005, which is equivalent to a reduction of 1.46 billion tons of carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions. This indicates that China has accomplished its energy conservation goals listed in the 11th Five-Year Plan (2006-10), according to the report.

By 2015, the nation aims to reduce energy consumption per 10,000 yuan of the GDP by 16 percent, cut CO₂ emissions per unit of the GDP by 17 percent, and raise the proportion of non-fossil fuels in the overall primary energy mix to 11.4 percent, said the report.

In 2011, natural disasters caused by extreme weather and climate events affected 430 million people in the country and caused economic losses of 309.6 billion yuan (\$49.7 billion).

New Entry Policy

A new plan for the college entrance exam policy for migrant children in Beijing will be worked out by the end of this year, the city's education authorities said on November 16.

The Beijing Municipal Commission of Education made the announcement in response to an application filed by migrant worker volunteers in October. The volunteers asked educational departments to publish the

results of migrant children's college matriculation research and measures for balancing educational resources.

The commission said that the new plan will provide equal rights to education and entry opportunities for migrant children.

However, it did not give a clear answer on whether migrant students who take the national college entrance exam in June 2013 could stay in Beijing for the exam.

Under current policies, children of migrant workers are not free to attend senior high schools or take the national college entrance exam outside of their home provinces.

Figures provided by the commission show that about 400,000 migrant children were studying at primary and middle schools in Beijing in 2011.

Safety Facilities

China has picked up speed in constructing "international safe communities" in line with standards set by the World Health Organization (WHO), according to a leading Chinese association.

The country now has 64 such communities, according to a statement released by the China Occupational Safety and Health Association (COSHA) on November 21.

The WHO's safe community concept was formally launched at the First World Conference on Accident and Injury Prevention

New Spokeswoman



Hua Chunying was appointed the Foreign Ministry spokeswoman on November 16, becoming the ministry's fifth spokeswoman since the post was created

in 1983.

Hua, 42, is also Deputy Director of the Information Department of the ministry. She and spokesman Hong Lei will rotate their duties to address the ministry's daily news conferences on weekdays.

Hua began her diplomatic career almost 20 years ago when she joined the former Department of West European Affairs of the Foreign Ministry in 1993. She worked for the ministry in the EU, Singapore and in the Department of European Affairs before joining the Information Department this year.

Hua is expected to balance and complement Beijing's customarily masculine tone in China's complicated diplomatic environment.



GOODBYE, CHINA

Russian figure skaters perform at the closing ceremony of the Year of Russian Tourism at the Shanghai Oriental Sports Center on November 16

in Stockholm, Sweden in September 1989.

The Manifesto for Safe Communities states, "All human beings have an equal right to health and safety." Regarded as a cost-effective way of injury prevention, a safe community can be a municipality, a county, a city or a district.

A total of 1,589 communities in 22 Chinese provinces have started efforts to build safe communities, according to the COSHA, covering a gross population of 120 million.

Safe community efforts in Chinese urban and rural districts, enterprises and campuses have led to fewer accidents in terms of production, traffic, fire and social safety, said Zhang Baoming, COSHA Chairman.

Corporate-NGO Guide

A guidebook on communications between non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and corporations was published in China and posted online on November 21.

The Corporate Communications Handbook for NGOs is the first guidebook in China written to direct local NGOs on how to work with corporations.

The handbook, jointly sponsored by the China Association for NGO Cooperation and the Heinrich Boell Foundation (HBF), uses 37 examples from NGOs, corporations, private foundations and a public incubator to illustrate common communication problems and solutions. The book also discusses NGOs' social responsibilities in supervising corporations.

Michael Busgen, head of the HBF China Office, said that the guidebook, like the *Media Handbook for Grassroots NGOs* published in 2008, is part of an NGO capacity-building book series provided for free to NGO workers and those interested in the public sector in China.

Returned Students

More than 72 percent of overseas Chinese students have returned to China after finishing education abroad since the late 1970s, according to a report from a government-backed agency.

From 1978 to 2011, about 818,400 Chinese students returned home after studying abroad, said the report issued on November 18 by the Chinese Service Center for Scholarly Exchange, which is administered by the Ministry of Education.

In 2011 alone, nearly 186,200 chose to return, nearly 40 percent higher than in the previous year, said the report, adding that the center had offered services to 110,000 students.

Rail Insurance

China's State Council, or cabinet, has decided to abolish a decades-long compulsory acci-



TIGER DNA Tigers in the Siberian Tiger Park in Harbin, northeast China's Heilongjiang Province. The world's largest Siberian tiger artificial breeding base recently announced that all its 1,067 residents had received DNA tests



FUTURE AGRICULTURE Visitors learn about space horticulture at the 19th China Yangling Agricultural Hi-tech Fair in Xianyang, northwest China's Shaanxi Province, on November 20

dent insurance regulation on railway transport in a bid to better protect passengers' interests.

According to a statement posted on the Central Government's website on November 16, the regulation, which enables railway operators to invariably charge all train passengers 2 percent of their ticket prices as accident insurance, will be annulled starting January 1, 2013.

The regulation, created in 1951 and amended in 1992, placed a cap on the insurance compensation at 20,000 yuan (\$3,210) regardless of the classes of passenger seats.

The stipulation had been widely criticized as unfair and contradictory to the country's insurance law, which states that insurance contracts should be formed on a voluntary basis.

The country ended similar accident insurance for sea and air travelers in 1987 and 1989, respectively.

The statement also abrogated a provision in a railway accident emergency rescue regulation, which sets a maximum 150,000 yuan (\$24,080) of compensation on accident casualties and 2,000 yuan (\$321) on baggage losses for each passenger.

Road Safety Day

The Chinese Government has designated December 2 as the country's Road Safety Day.

According to the Ministry of Public Security, China had 238 million vehicles and 256 million drivers by the end of October, with an average annual increase of more than 16 million vehicles and 20 million drivers during the last five years.

More than 80 percent of the country's road accidents are caused by violations of traffic rules, it added.

Anti-dumping Triumph

China's leading shoemaker, Aokang Group Co. Ltd., has won a lawsuit against EU anti-dumping measures on Chinese leather shoes.

On November 18, the European Court of Justice overruled an earlier judgment by the General Court of the EU in April 2010, which dismissed Aokang's action against the EU.

The court also ordered the Council of the European Union to pay the costs incurred by Aokang Group from the lawsuits.

The EU imposed a two-year 16.5-percent anti-dumping duty on imports of Chinese leather shoes in October 2006 and later decided to extend the duty until March 31 in 2011.

Five Chinese shoe companies including Aokang lodged a lawsuit against the EU measures to the General Court of the EU after the duties were imposed.

After the Chinese companies lost the first round, Aokang decided to appeal to the European Court of Justice.

Despite the EU removing its anti-dumping duties in April 2011, Aokang continued with its lawsuit.

Experts said Aokang's legal victory could bring the company more than 5 million yuan (\$801,600) in compensation for legal costs, and importers and exporters in trade relations with Aokang will get back the anti-dumping duties levied by the EU over the past six years.

Experts also believe the victory will set a legal precedent for Chinese shoemakers when facing international trade disputes in the future.

Home Price Rise

More Chinese cities saw home prices rise in October from September despite the government's dogged efforts to curb property prices, said the National Bureau of Statistics on November 18.

In October, 35 of 70 major cities, up from 31 in September, recorded higher new home prices than a month earlier.

Home sales rose 5.6 percent year on year to 4.63 trillion yuan (\$736 billion) in the first

10 months, accelerating by 2.9 percentage points from the January-September period.

Home transactions have picked up over the past month, the traditional peak season for housing sales in the country, on the back of recent government policies to shore up growth, analysts said.

Yin Zhongli, a finance researcher with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said the government's current measures showed that it has kept its vigilance against price hikes. The central bank has stopped introducing more easing measures since the interest rate cut in August for fear of re-igniting speculation fervor in the property market, he said.

Investment Condition

Foreign direct investment (FDI) in China dropped 3.45 percent year on year in the first 10 months of 2012 to \$91.74 billion, the

Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) said on November 20.

The drop was less sharp compared to the first three quarters when FDI dropped 3.8 percent year on year to \$83.42 billion.

On the other hand, China's outbound direct investment (ODI) in non-financial sectors surged 25.8 percent year on year to \$58.17 billion during the first 10 months.

The increase was slower than the 28.9-percent expansion seen in the January-September period, as the country's economy slowed due to flagging property investment and exports, said Shen Danyang, MOFCOM spokesman, at a press conference on November 20.

Chinese mainland's investment in Hong Kong rose by a stunning 42.6 percent during the first 10 months of the year, while the member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the United States,



AUTO SEASON People check out cars at the Third Harbin Autumn Automobile Exhibition in the capital of northeast China's Heilongjiang Province on November 20. The one-week exhibition, along with the 10th Harbin Automobile Purchasing Week, will showcase over 400 new cars

Numbers

6,000

The number of micro-credit companies in China, with outstanding loans exceeding 540 billion yuan (\$85.7 billion), according to the China Microfinance Institution Association on November 17.

15.88 billion yuan

Sales for prime-time advertisements on China Central Television for 2013, the highest in 19 years, according to the TV station on November 18.



CHEN YIXIANG

AGRO EXPO

A salesman from Fuping County, northwest China's Shaanxi Province, shows fruit vinegar to attendees at the Exhibition of Agricultural and Sideline Products from Shaanxi Province held in Hong Kong on November 20

Russia and Japan also saw double-digit growth in ODI from China.

However, China's ODI in the EU fell 20.9 percent year on year to \$1.58 billion during the January-October period.

Corporate Governance

A survey on the corporate governance standards of companies listed in Hong Kong, which was released on November 20, found that current levels of corporate governance have improved significantly since 2009.

The Hong Kong Institute of Directors and the Hong Kong Baptist University jointly conducted the survey.

A total of 121 listed companies in Hong Kong are assessed based on the five principles of corporate governance—rights of shareholders, equitable treatment of shareholders, role of stakeholders, disclosure and transparency, and board responsibilities.

Six out of the top 10 firms with the best corporate governance practices are state-owned or backed with funding from China's mainland, reflecting that many large state-owned enterprises have devoted the time and resources needed to improve transparency, to clarify the power and responsibilities of the

board of directors and to enhance corporate social responsibility.

The six firms from the Chinese mainland are Bank of China, shipping giant COSCO, China Life Insurance, Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, PC maker Lenovo and marine oil producer CNOOC.

Liquor Stocks Slump

While China's high-end liquor makers are enjoying intoxicating profits, they face a frustrated stock market partly due to government vows to control official spending on banquets.

Stocks tumbled across the liquor sector listed on Shanghai and Shenzhen stock exchanges on November 19, sparing only a few. Kweichow Moutai, Wuliangye and Luzhoulaojiao saw stocks fall by 4.6, 5.8 and 6.1 percent respectively as of the end of the trading day.

The net profits of Moutai surged 106.05 percent year on year to reach 3.42 billion yuan (\$543.41 million) in the third quarter of 2012.

Wuliangye Group, a major competitor of Moutai, also recorded a net profit increase of nearly 90 percent in the third quarter, which the company attributed to price hikes and strong sales.

However, Moutai has gone through a

A Sailor Embarks

Chinese sailor **Guo Chuan** set out on November 18 from Qingdao, a coastal city in East China's Shandong Province, for a solo, non-stop sail around the globe.

Guo, 47, aims to travel 21,600 nautical miles in about 130 days, navigating in a Class 40 boat named after his hometown of Qingdao. Guo will pilot his boat across the Pacific Ocean to Cape Horn in Chile, enter the Atlantic Ocean, then go on to the Indian Ocean via the Cape of Good Hope at the southern tip of Africa before crossing the islands of Indonesia to return to Qingdao. He will eat artificial dehydrated food during the voyage, and use a desalination unit for drinking water.

Guo is the first Chinese sailor to have taken part in the Clipper Round the World (2006) and the first Chinese to complete the Volvo Ocean Race (2008-09).

Guo received a master's degree in aircraft control from Beijing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics and then worked on China's commercial satellite launch projects. He joined friends at the Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club for a day's sailing during a trip to Hong Kong in 2000, at which point he decided to become a professional sailor.



string of price drops this year that have taken its average bottle price to around 1,500 yuan (\$240.75) from about 2,300 yuan (\$369.15) at the beginning of 2012.

It is said that Moutai's inventory has topped 20,000 tons. Industry insiders believe that unconfirmed information moved some dealers to lower prices in order to destock and cash in.

\$1 billion

The annual investment that Royal Dutch Shell Plc., Europe's largest oil company, vowed to make in its upstream businesses in China, according to Peter Voser, the company's CEO, on November 20.

20 billion yuan

The value of bonds that PetroChina Co., China's biggest oil and gas producer, sold on November 21. The proceeds will be used to repay bank loans and replenish its working capital, according to a company statement.

THIS WEEK WORLD



A woman attends a pro-Palestinian demonstration in Rome on November 16 to protest against Israel's airstrikes over Gaza

ITALY



A float is on display at the 108th Santa Claus Parade in Toronto on November 18. The parade attracted more than 1 million spectators along the 5.6-km-long route in downtown Toronto

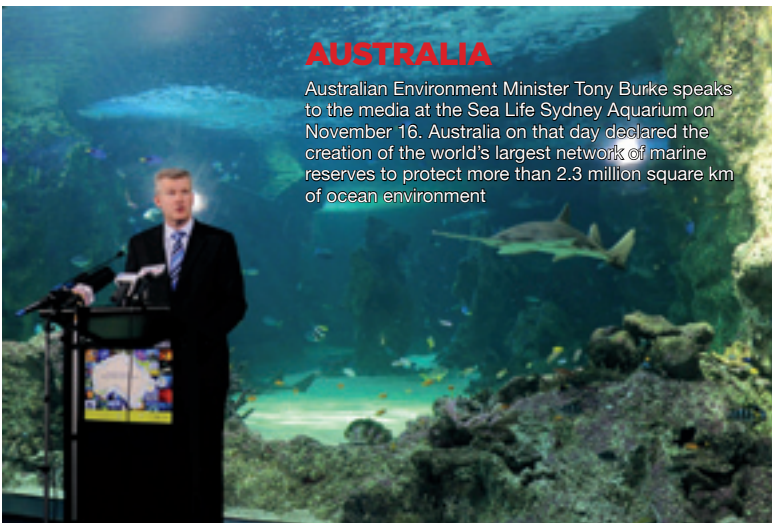
CANADA



ZHANG JIN

U.S. first lady Michelle Obama hugs Wu Lianyun, a 13-year-old girl from China's Dong ethnic group, as Wu accepts the International Spotlight Award for the 100 Dong Songs Program on November 19 at the White House in Washington, D.C. The program teaches hundreds of American youth to express themselves through traditional Dong music

THE UNITED STATES



XINHUA/AFAP

AUSTRALIA

Australian Environment Minister Tony Burke speaks to the media at the Sea Life Sydney Aquarium on November 16. Australia on that day declared the creation of the world's largest network of marine reserves to protect more than 2.3 million square km of ocean environment



XINHUA

A policeman displays a suicide bomber's jacket at a news conference in Lahore on November 16. The authorities seized large quantities of weapons and ammunition and arrested 12 suspected terrorists in a recent operation in eastern Punjab Province

PAKISTAN

SOUTH KOREA

Volunteers make 140 tons of *kimchi*, a traditional Korean dish of spicy fermented cabbage and radish, in a park in Seoul on November 15. The *kimchi* was handed out to 14,000 low-income households at the start of the winter season



XINHUA/AFAP

COVER STORY

THE FUTURE IS GREEN

As the country's development charts a new course, the environment comes into focus By Li Li



LIVABLE AGAIN: Baotou, a major steel producer in north China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, has brought its once-infamous air pollution under control after massive government investments in environmental projects over the past decade



Yu Xiaolan, a farmer from Cuijiayao Village, Youyu County in north China's Shanxi Province, and a delegate to the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC), said she was thrilled when hearing Hu Jintao, former General Secretary of the CPC Central Committee, advocating ecological progress while delivering a report at the five-yearly congress.

Yu's home county used to be a desert area plagued by sandstorms. Thanks to massive reforestation programs, its forest coverage rate has risen from 0.3 percent more than 60 years ago to the current 53 percent.

Yu, 46, who has planted trees in formerly barren mountains totaling more than 667 hectares over the past 20 years, has been awarded several times for her work. "In my hometown, green development is a concept deep in our mindset. Reforestation programs have in-

involved many people," she told Beijing-based *Economic Information Daily*.

Delivering his report, Hu said, "We must give high priority to ecological progress, work hard to build a beautiful country and achieve the lasting and sustainable development of the Chinese nation."

China has been aware of the severity of the burden of pollution and energy consumption amid its economic miracles over the past decades.

At the 17th CPC National Congress in 2007, Hu advocated ecological progress for the first time in his report. The term was also translated as "conservation culture" or "ecological civilization" in official documents.

In 2008, China elevated the State Environmental Protection Administration to a full-fledged ministry, which is tasked with "stepping up environmental improvement

and ecological protection and accelerating the building of a resource-saving and environmentally friendly society."

The country has pledged in its 12th Five-Year Plan (2011-15) to cut energy consumption per 10,000 yuan of the GDP (\$1,605) by 16 percent while slashing carbon emissions by 17 percent before 2015. That will help China meet its pledge of reducing carbon intensity by 40-45 percent by 2020 from the 2005 level. China's use of wind farms and the use of solar-powered water heaters both top the world.

In his report at the 18th CPC National Congress, Hu called for efforts to preserve more farmland, and leave to future generations a beautiful homeland with green fields, clean water and a blue sky.

Such a move of elevating environmental protection to higher strategic importance immediately attracted wide attention. While a



A REVIVED LAKE: Tourists visit a wetland park on Erhai Lake. Improved sewage management has had a dramatic effect on water quality

focus on protecting the environment is welcomed by aspiring local government officials who are ready to promote their cities and provinces as tourism and investment destinations, environmental NGOs who desire a bigger say in public affairs also applaud the unprecedented emphasis on environmental ideals.

Chen Baosheng, Vice President of the Party School of the CPC Central Committee and a delegate to this year's CPC congress, said that Hu's report shows China will pursue an energy-saving and environmentally friendly development path featuring harmony with nature and cast away the traditional path of extensive development.

Fan Hesheng, a sociologist from east China's Anhui Province, said that the emphasis on green development reflects the CPC's deepened understanding on the relationship between nature and humanity. "The Party shows sense of responsibility for future generations and the world as well," Fan said.

Yu, who plans to open a small hotel in the countryside to woo urban residents with fresh air and organic food, believes such development can bring farmers immediate benefits. "The scale of organic livestock farming will be expanded and slaughter and processing facilities will be built so that local farmers will have higher incomes," she said.

Consonant voices

Erhai Lake is the most famous tourist attraction in Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture, southwest China's Yunnan Province, with its picturesque beauty. It has long been regarded by local people as Mother Lake since fish from the lake is an important food source. However, it was severely polluted in the late 1990s when new factories sprang up. Sample tests showed water in the lake was suitable only for irrigation, not for human contact. A massive blue-green algal bloom in 2003 was a wake-up call for local government officials, who then decided to revolutionize Dali's



A FACELIFT: (above) Coke ovens smolder on a hill in Linfen City, north China's Shanxi Province on September 6, 2005. (below) Linfen enjoys a clear day on May 31, 2011, after the local government closed down more than 700 energy-intensive and highly polluting factories between 2006 and 2007

development model. The same year they launched an environmental publicity campaign to protect the lake.

Yin Jianye, Party chief of Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture, told *China Youth Daily* that over the past 10 years or so, the local government has closed down a large number of polluting factories around Erhai and spent billions of yuan improving its water quality.

Now a beautiful natural environment has become Dali's competitive edge.

Yin said the water quality in Erhai has recovered so much that it is currently suitable as drinking water and a habitat for endangered animals. The environmental recovery has also boosted local tourism. Last year, Dali received a record 15.6 million tourists. The number is expected to surpass 18 million this year.

Yin said after several ups and downs, local officials have realized that emphasizing ecological progress can expand an area's development space.

Wang Jiangping, Director of Guizhou Provincial Commission of Economy and Information Technology, was repeatedly asked during the 18th CPC National Congress whether Guizhou, a less developed landlocked province, would accept investment proposals from energy-intensive and highly polluting factories relocated from China's eastern areas.

Wang said that Guizhou used to welcome such proposals, but times have changed. According to Wang, the province has closed down many cement, metal alloys, paper and leather factories with obsolete production facilities since the beginning of this year, which incurred a total loss of 60,000 jobs and 8 billion yuan (\$1.28 billion) in its GDP.

"Although the local economy may suffer in short term, long-term sustainable development with a better industrial structure is more likely," Wang said, adding that a recycling economy is replacing a resources-based

economy in Guizhou.

When Li Jun, Party chief of Guiyang, the provincial capital, spoke at a panel discussion on Hu's report during the 18th CPC National Congress, he shared his surprise at how many times "ecological progress" appeared in the report.

"In Hu's report at the 17th CPC National Congress in 2007, 'ecological progress' only appeared twice in one paragraph while in his report at this congress the term appears 15 times in seven paragraphs."

Li believes that such emphasis is not unnecessary. He said that the Chinese public is now highly sensitive to environmental issues and many of Guiyang's local petitions are about environmental pollution.

"We are obligated to meet people's demands for a clean environment, including clean drinking water, fresh air, safe food and

beautiful surroundings,” Li said.

Promising activism

In recent years, China’s environmental NGOs have become more active as they receive more government support and funding from the corporate world.

In 2010, a consortium of 34 environmental NGOs, under the name of Green Choice Alliance, conducted research on farmland contamination by heavy metal, which drew heavy media attention. They found that several China-based contract manufacturers of major global IT brands were responsible for heavy metal contamination in their vicinities. After releasing a report, the groups asked 29 major brands, including Apple and Vodafone, to provide more information about the Chinese facilities where their products are made. Eventually, the groups succeeded in revving up pressure on companies like Apple, which initially refused to answer questions about pollution regulation across their supply chains.

China’s environmental groups have also gone beyond the country’s borders to promote global public action. At the UN Climate Change Conference in Durban, South Africa, in December 2011, Chinese NGOs jointly organized an event to promote the C+ Initiative, a climate change effort with the slogan “Beyond Government Commitment, Beyond Climate Change, Beyond China.”

Li Ruinong, a long-time observer of environmental NGOs in China, is pleased with their increased participation in broader regional and national issues.

Zhang Yadong, Director General of Green Longjiang, a youth environmental group founded in 2002, is dedicated to protecting the environment in northeast China’s Heilongjiang Province. Zhang told *China Industrial Economy News* that the organization has effectively cooperated with government agencies when organizing activities, especially environmental awareness campaigns. The government has also of-



ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVIST: Fang Minghe (right), 28, founder of Green Eyes China, an environmental NGO, witnesses the release of an injured egret into the wild after nurturing it back to health on April 19



fered Green Longjiang assistance in finding and releasing companies’ environmental records. Zhang said that this progress should be attributed to the public’s growing awareness of the work of environmental NGOs in recent years.

On June 29, the Environmental Protection Bureau of Wuxi in eastern Jiangsu Province, offered cash grants to five environmental NGOs, 5,000 yuan (\$803) each, to support their work on government-initiated projects. It was the first time a government environmental agency in the province gave financial assistance to environmental NGOs.

“The money is not much, but the act has given us great confidence,” *China Industrial Economy News* quoted an anonymous member of one NGO as saying.

Meanwhile, more companies are also pooling money to support environmental efforts outside the government.

In May 2011, Alibaba Group, China’s largest e-commerce company, announced

a plan to earmark 0.3 percent of its annual revenues to fund efforts designed to boost environmental awareness and conservation in China and around the world. Last year, the company’s revenues hit \$2.8 billion.

Since 2000, the Ford Conservation & Environmental Grants have become the best known annual environmental protection award that is independently organized by the private sector in China.

According to the award’s website, by the end of 2011, 278 environmental NGOs and individuals in China had received awards totaling 12.6 million yuan (\$2 million).

Meanwhile, many environmental NGOs are struggling for survival due to financial difficulties. According to research conducted by Professor Deng Guosheng at the School of Public Policy and Management at Tsinghua University, many NGOs misused earmarked project management fees for administrative purposes, including paying for office rent and staff salaries. Many alleg-

“As China develops rapidly, it is experiencing environmental problems in a relatively short space of time that more developed economies had centuries to tackle.”

—Zhou Shengxian, Minister of Environmental Protection



BIRDS PARADISE: Black-necked cranes rest in a nature reserve in Ninghai County, Guizhou Province, the world's largest winter habitat for black-necked cranes created jointly by the local government and NGOs



A GREEN BANK: Liu Yucai, a farmer in Youyu County, Shanxi Province, works in his forest of Scots pine. The forest of nearly 4 hectares on formerly barren land has brought him handsome financial rewards

edly cheat in their accounting records just to make ends meet.

Deng told *Beijing Review* that to make China's NGOs stronger and more influential, the government should purchase more services from grassroots NGOs in order to alleviate their financial pressure and cut back on registration requirements.

Pleasing the masses

Last year, Zhang Shiyou, a farmer in east China's Anhui Province, led a protest by local farmers demanding the closure of a chemical factory next to their village. He took photos of dead fish in a pond and crops dying in fields submerged by the factory's run-off. After the protest, with the help of local media organizations and environmental NGOs, the chemical factory and local government together pooled 200 million yuan (\$32 million) to clean up the environment and compensate farmers for relocation.

"We are satisfied with the compensation deals, but we still worry that there could be projects with environmental hazards we don't know about," Zhang told the Xinhua News Agency. "The public wants more transparency and to have a larger part in decision making."

According to a survey by the Xinhua News Agency, environmental pollution

has become one of the three major causes for protests in China together with illegal land acquisitions and labor disputes. Most protests over environmental concerns were sparked by projects being launched without approval or for failing to adequately assess their impact on local communities.

"The government will increase transparency and public involvement in decisions regarding major projects with a potential environmental impact," Minister of Environmental Protection Zhou Shengxian said at a news conference on the sideline of the 18th CPC National Congress on November 12.

"As China develops rapidly, it is experiencing environmental problems in a relatively short space of time that more developed economies had centuries to tackle," Zhou said.

In 2012 alone, three violent protests against the construction of chemical projects near residential areas broke out in Shifang in southwestern Sichuan Province and the eastern cities of Qidong in Jiangsu Province and Ningbo in Zhejiang Province. All the projects were eventually scrapped.

Zhou said that central authorities require all large projects to undergo stringent risk assessments and the Ministry of Environmental Protection will work with other government agencies to ensure the rules are followed.

Liu Zhibiao, President of the Jiangsu

Provincial Academy of Social Sciences, said that once a protest occurs over environmental concerns, the local government always immediately announces the abrogation of the project at stake. He warned that such practice could greatly compromise China's industrialization process.

Liu suggested that public representatives, NGOs, education programs, environmental monitors and legal agencies should be encouraged to participate in the decision-making process.

"Promoting ecological progress must rely on institutional building and we urgently need to perfect environmental decision-making involving public participation," said Wang Kaiyu, a sociologist from the Anhui Provincial Academy of Social Sciences.

Wang said that relationship between protests and government concessions are fundamentally attributed to the conflicts between rising public awareness and current ways that governments administrate environmental issues. He believes that governments should survey public opinion before a project is given the go-ahead and should release timely information about the current state of the environment. ■

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全国翻译专业资格(水平)考试

China Accreditation Test for Translators and Interpreters (CATTI)



China International Publishing Group is responsible for organizing, implementing and administering the test under the guidance of the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security



Tel: 010-68995947, 68328249

Web site: <http://www.catti.net.cn>

National Translation Test and Appraisal Center