

CHINA

Noodle nexus

Farmers air-dry sweet potato noodles at a production base in Jingxing, Hebei province, on Sunday. Winter is a busy time for local residents, with noodle-making having become a major industry that has boosted farmers' incomes.

LIANG ZIDONG / XINHUA



Benefits flowing from plan for river basin protection

Yunnan, Sichuan and Guizhou work together to tackle Chishui pollution

By **HOU LIQIANG** in Beijing and **LI YINGQING** in Kunming

A mechanism that protects river basins by compensating upstream areas for their environmental conservation efforts has promoted environmental protection and socioeconomic development, with the Chishui River in Southwest China being a prime example.

Flowing for over 400 kilometers, the Chishui runs across three provinces. Rising in Yunnan, it joins the Yangtze River, Asia's longest watercourse, in Sichuan. Most of the tributary, however, is in Guizhou.

With no dams along its length, it's the last free-flowing tributary on the upper reaches of the Yangtze. Home to more than 160 species of fish, the Chishui is key to biodiversity conservation in the entire Yangtze basin.

In 2018, the three provincial governments signed an agreement to introduce the mechanism to the Chishui and committed to contributing a total of 200 million yuan (\$31 million) a year to a fund dedicated to the river's conservation.

As the region that will gain the least economic benefit from the

“Thanks to these projects, all areas in the Chishui basin have been preliminarily covered by disposal facilities for domestic waste and sewage.”

Zhang Ning, deputy head of the ecology and environment department of Zhaotong city

joint environmental protection efforts, Yunnan will only contribute 10 percent of the fund. However, it will get 30 percent of the proceeds.

Guizhou and Sichuan, each with an alcohol industry heavily dependent on water from the river, will contribute 50 percent and 40 percent, respectively. When it comes to distribution, Guizhou will be allocated 40 percent and Sichuan 30 percent.

In Yunnan, the Chishui only runs through the city of Zhaotong. The city's ecology and environment department said Zhaotong has received 140 million yuan from the fund, which it has used to roll out 11 pollution control projects.

Zhang Ning, the department's deputy head, said nine of the projects have been completed.

In one of the projects in the town of Chishuiyuan — which means the



source of the Chishui — a sewage disposal plant with a daily capacity of 1,500 cubic meters has

been completed. A sewage pipe network extending 16.5 km has also been built.

“Thanks to these projects, all areas in the Chishui basin have been preliminarily covered by disposal facilities for domestic waste and sewage,” Zhang said, adding that the facilities have greatly improved the living environment in the city's rural areas.

The department says the quality of water flowing into Guizhou from Yunnan was kept at or above Grade II, the second-best level in the country's five-tier quality system for surface water, from 2018 to last year.

Aside from reducing economic losses caused by pollution in Zhaotong and giving downstream areas relief from environmental problems, Zhang said the improved water quality has helped boost the city's tourism industry and increase residents' incomes.

Li Yong, deputy head of Zhenxiang county, where the Chishui originates in Yunnan, also lauded the compensation mechanism.

He said governments on the Chishui's upper reaches have seen their financial stresses from promoting environmental manage-

ment in the basin ease substantially, which has motivated further pollution control efforts.

The environmental improvement has not only benefited locals but also people far afield in downstream areas.

In Guizhou, the provincial government is eyeing further expansion of the alcohol industry, which has most of its production capacity concentrated near the Chishui, as the watercourse continues to improve.

A total of 266.2 million liters of alcohol was produced in Guizhou last year, according to the provincial government.

Guizhou plans to increase production to 600 million liters by 2025, when the production value of the industry in the province is expected to reach 250 billion yuan.

Zhong Fangda, president of Guizhou-based liquor producer Xijiu, has emphasized the importance of the Chishui's environment to efforts to further develop the province's alcohol industry.

“Only when the ecosystem of the Chishui gets well protected can we have a good living environment that could guarantee a happy life for the people,” he said. “This is also a must for the high-quality development of the liquor industry.”

Yang Jun in Guizhou contributed to this story.

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Green trucks to be used for coal transportation

By **LUO WANGSHU** in Beijing and **YUAN HUI** in Hohhot

Heavy trucks running on new energy will gradually replace diesel-fueled ones in the transportation of coal for power generation in Baotou, Inner Mongolia autonomous region, to help reduce carbon emissions in the city.

On Nov 18, a technology company that operates and coordinates the city's road transportation ordered 370 new energy heavy trucks, mainly to transport coal for nine power plants in Baotou.

The new trucks will reduce costs and carbon emissions, said Liang Jun, deputy general manager of China Huaneng Group's Baotou power plant.

“Traditionally, we need 400 heavy trucks powered by diesel every day (to transport coal),” he said. “Each replacement new energy heavy truck will reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 132 metric tons a year. If we replace all the diesel trucks with new energy trucks, it will reduce carbon dioxide emissions by more than 50,000 tons every year.”

Thirty new energy vehicles will have been delivered by Tuesday, with the rest to be delivered next year.

Zhou Yawei, chief scientist at Beiben Trucks Group, the manufacturer of the new energy heavy trucks, said their adoption will lead green logistics development in the region and set a good example for the rest of the country.

The State Council, China's Cabinet, released an action plan last month aimed at seeing carbon dioxide emissions peak before 2030. The plan outlines key tasks to achieve that, with promoting green and low-carbon transportation one of the major tasks.

The plan will help promote a comprehensive transportation network, enhance multi-mode transportation, encourage more shipments by

trains and ships, and reduce energy consumption and carbon dioxide emissions during transportation. It will also promote green logistics and improve efficiency.

Low-carbon modes of transportation, such as new energy vehicles and vessels, will be encouraged, and smart transportation, railway electrification and building more hydrogen stations for new energy cars will also be promoted.

In a speech delivered via video link at the Second UN Global Sustainable Transport Conference last month, President Xi Jinping said, “More efforts are needed to foster a green and low-carbon way of transport, step up green infrastructural development, promote new energy, smart, digital and lightweight transport equipment, and encourage and advocate green travel, to make transport and travel more environmentally friendly and low-carbon.”

The promotion of low-carbon green transport was written into the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) for the transport sector released by the Ministry of Transport on Nov 18.

By 2025, the ministry will build about 100 model programs to encourage green freight delivery.

Wang Yang, vice-minister of transport, said the ministry has set a goal of greatly reducing carbon emissions while balancing development. It will boost the development of clean transport equipment and eliminate the use of high-emission vehicles, he wrote in an article.

“A majority of freight transportation in China is still via roads,” Qin Yu, an associate professor from the Business School at the National University of Singapore, said in an email explaining constraints on rail freight capacity, adding that economic forces such as net transport costs via road or rail may also play a role.

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Older job seekers run into employment hurdles

By **CHENG SI** chengsi@chinadaily.com.cn

A recent post left by a 45-year-old computer programmer on the State Council's website has stirred heated debate on the difficulties older people face in landing new jobs.

The programmer, using the name “Mary”, said they had professional qualifications in the Java programming language and big data, and were once part of a company's “tech backbone”.

However, they were turned down by several companies before even being interviewed when they tried to find a new job after spending six months at home with their son.

“Mary” is not alone. In January, a joint report by the State Council's Development Research Center, the China Development Research Center and Zhaopin, an online hiring portal, said people older than 35 may face a higher risk of long-term unemployment.

It said their advancing years, depreciation of their work skills and resulting decline in their confidence were the main reasons they had difficulties landing new jobs.

The report said that a survey conducted last year showed the number of job seekers older than 50 rose by 32.3 percent between February and September, with more men than women looking for work.

About 80 percent of those surveyed who were older than 35 said their age was the main barrier hampering them in finding new jobs. Zhaopin said the number of resumes submitted by job seekers over 35 on its platform rose by 4.3 percent year-on-year between February and September last year, while the number submitted by job seekers under 35 fell by around 11 percent.

“I felt lucky that I finally got a new job in July,” said Zhang Chen, a 36-year-old accountant in Beijing. “I didn't even think that age might become a problem for me, but I felt offended when I heard the interviewers jeering at my age and previous working experience.”

He said that becoming old is an inevitable part of life and it's extremely impolite to reject job seekers because of their age.

“Working experience and ability

matter, don't they? I'm sorry that people of my age or above face discrimination,” he said.

Liu Yan, a customer manager at a construction company in Beijing, said that recruiting people under 35 years old is an implicit standard at her company.

“I was astonished when I heard that, because I am getting close to 40 years old, too,” she said. “But I can understand why my company has such a requirement as we are a construction company that needs its employees to run around different construction sites that may be in some far away places like the Tibet autonomous region. It's really hard for people who are older or who have children to take care of.”

The report said that for job seekers above 35 years old, the main pressure is not finding a new job, but finding a “good” job. For older job seekers, adjusting their requirements, learning more digital work skills and unleashing their potential to start their own businesses were much more important than getting stuck in self doubt or self criticism.

Chu Yin, an economist, said in a video posted on Douyin that those serving in high-tech positions need to think about transferring from technician jobs to becoming product managers or working in marketing positions after 30.

“Positions requiring higher creativity will need candidates who are even getting into their 60s or 70s — even 80 years old,” he said. “But the fact is that most of the technical personnel nowadays are not fundamentally different from ordinary workers whose experience or skills are not that important, other than having a strong body and being able to stay up late.”

Shen Jianfeng, a professor at the Law School of Central University of Finance and Economics, said that workers may face career hurdles as they get older because their efficiency might be lower and they are more likely to get injured. Joint efforts are needed to eliminate discrimination against older workers, he said. Workers need to embrace lifetime learning, while companies should shoulder their social responsibilities to train their workers and help them surmount career barriers.

Livestreaming becoming a popular career choice

By **CHENG SI** chengsi@chinadaily.com.cn

The stability of the developing livestreaming sector has made it an ideal source of jobs for those born after 1995 who have a passion for novel and newly emerging industries, experts said.

A recent report by Zhaopin, an online recruitment platform, and e-commerce giant Alibaba revealed steady growth in the livestreaming sector in the third quarter of the year, with job postings up nearly 12 percent year-on-year. The increase was around 5 percentage points higher on average than for other industries.

The number of college graduates seeking livestreaming jobs surged by nearly 70 percent in the third quarter, compared with an average rise of 47 percent in other industries, the report said.

Liu Siyu, a 21-year-old student in her third year at Nanchang University in Jiangxi province, said she has high expectations for the livestreaming industry.

“It was a novelty before the novel coronavirus epidemic hit, but it has grown to be a big industry nowadays,” Liu said.

“The applications I browse every day, like Taobao and Douyin (a short-video-sharing platform), all have livestreamers selling goods.

“In my opinion, being a livestreamer is no different from being a traditional salesperson. In fact,



A businesswoman lectures trainees on livestreaming sales skills at an e-commerce training school in Wudi, Shandong province, on Nov 17. GAO SHIDONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

it's more flexible and can offer higher incomes. I may try the job after I finish my college studies. I'm young and I have time to try any kind of job.”

After booming during the COVID-19 epidemic last year as people sought more online entertainment due to home quarantines, the livestreaming industry has become known for offering good salaries.

The report said the average salary for jobs related to livestreaming was over 10,000 yuan (\$1,600) a month in the third quarter, a year-on-year increase of nearly 11 percent. Livestreaming product development positions offered the highest wages over the period —

averaging about 26,000 yuan a month.

Despite high labor costs, talent is in great demand, especially for livestreamers and livestreaming operators, the report said.

It said that those two positions made up over 70 percent of jobs available in the sector in the third quarter, and the proportion is projected to increase.

Other related jobs, such as livestreaming tutors and assessors, have also emerged, the report said.

However, problems have also come to light due to the sector's rapid expansion in the past few years.

Last year, 13-year-old vlogger Zhong Yusheng, who called himself

Zhong Meimei on the Kuaishou short-video-sharing platform, attracted over 1.5 million followers in two months by making videos of himself making fun of female teachers.

His video and livestreaming channel were later removed, sparking controversy over whether his school forced him to delete the content. Zhong said he did so after his mother told him to.

Yang Lin, a 35-year-old from Beijing who has an 8-year-old son, said that it's hard to cut off the connection between children and livestreaming or online video platforms as they have become an important teaching tool in their daily lives.

“Last year, when the epidemic was still rampant, my son received his lessons online by watching livestreams,” she said.

“It's hard to completely separate livestreaming from our lives.”

Chu Zhaohui, a senior researcher at the National Institute of Education Sciences, said in a recent interview with China Youth Daily that due to continually growing employment pressure, the growth of the livestreaming sector is important for information technology development.

He said, however, that the sector could be affected as other industries implement policy changes, so job seekers, especially college graduates, should keep this in mind and choose a more stable career.