

CHINA

Group wedding in Wuhan



Police officers take part in a group wedding at the Garden Expo Park in Wuhan, capital of Hubei province, on Thursday. Wuhan was the city hit hardest by the novel coronavirus in China earlier this year. The event saw the marriages of 38 couples, including four who fought against the COVID-19 epidemic together on the front line. SHI WEI / CHANGJIANG DAILY

China on pace for modernization

Nation ranked 64th out of 131 countries studied in 2017, according to 2020 report

By ZHANG ZHIHAO
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China was categorized as a mid-tier developing country in 2017 based on dozens of key indicators on modernization and development, but it has the potential to “basically achieve socialist modernization” by 2035, according to a report published on Thursday.

Among the 131 countries studied, China ranked 64th in terms of its integrated modernization level in 2017, according to the annual China Modernization Report 2020 published by the China Center for Modernization Research of the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

For metrics measuring industrialization, urbanization and governance, China ranked 48th among the examined countries. As for benchmark marks on science and technology, education, quality of life and economy, China placed 47th.

Between 2015 and 2018, among the 64 modernization indicators with sufficient data in China, the

nation had 12 indicators that were at a moderately developed stage, while 33 were at an early developed stage and 19 were underdeveloped.

Zhao Xijun, an associate researcher at the center, said these figures show that China is catching up with developed countries in terms of modernizing its society and economy, but the gap remains substantial.

To qualify as a developed country, 60 percent of the modernization indicators must reach the developed level, and the country has to rank in the top 20 in the study. “China’s modernization indicators are developed unevenly,” Zhao said.

Last month, the Communist Party of China Central Committee proposed a set of long-range objectives in a development plan for the country to basically achieve socialist modernization by 2035.

The proposals aim to modernize the many facets of society, including the economy, agricultural sector, tech industries, urban

development and China’s system and capacity for governance.

The 2020 report defines “basically achieve socialist modernization” as China’s overall modernization level ranking between 21st and 40th among the 131 countries. However, this criterion is subject to change as it was calculated based on standards in 2015.

He Chuanqi, director of the China Center for Modernization Research, said the report lists 100 key measurements to evaluate modernization, which are divided into six broad categories: economy, society, politics, culture, environment and living standards.

From 1960 to 2018, China saw an increase in 56 out of 100 indicators, such as per capita GDP, research spending, potable water and the processing rate for water and urban waste.

Meanwhile, 13 indicators including the infant mortality rate and the proportion of population experiencing absolute poverty and malnourishment saw a decrease over the same period. Lower scores among these indicators typically signal socioeconomic development. However, some areas, such as the

rising number of elderly, decreasing birthrates, growing energy consumption per capita and obesity among children, are issues that warrant more attention and research, He said.

“These indicators highlight the remarkable complexity of measuring and studying modernization on a national scale,” he said.

“China has been championing modernization as a slogan for more than six decades, but people’s understanding and definition of this topic can vary significantly.”

“By closely examining these criteria and measures, we can turn the slogan into science and science into concrete, practical actions,” he said, adding China will need more data and quantitative analysis, especially at the local level, to accurately assess the results of modernization.

By 2035, of China’s 34 administrative divisions — which includes 23 provinces, four municipalities, five autonomous regions and two special administrative regions — nine are estimated to become developed regions, he said.

Twelve regions are set to become moderately developed, and 13 will reach the early development stage.

Better forestation aids Guizhou environment

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845,900 hectares

of desert-like land were restored in Guizhou province from 2005 to 2016.

Increased forestation in Guizhou province in the past few years has reduced rocky desertification and greatly improved the environment and residents’ quality of life.

The change is due to greening efforts by locals and authorities as well as the quick development of eco-friendly industries. Thanks to those concerted efforts, the rocky land area in the province shrank by more than 25 percent from 2005 to 2016.

China’s surveillance report last year on rocky desertification — which leads to degraded land quality that has the appearance of a desert-like landscape — said the province had 2.47 million hectares of rocky land by the end of 2016. The improved land area, 845,900 hectares, is about half the size of Beijing.

Previous poor planning and extensive land use on the fragile karst environment led to the desertification.

The karst topography in Guizhou, usually characterized by barren ground, caves and a lack of surface streams and lakes, gives the province splendid landscapes but makes the local ecosystem fragile due to soil erosion that accompanies karst formations.

“Guizhou’s stony deserts are shrinking at a faster pace as the spread of desertification has been effectively contained,” said Zhang Fujie, deputy director of the Guizhou Forestry Administration.

“The improved environment was mostly attributed to the restoration of forests and grass, which contributed to 67.7 percent of the desertification reversal,” Zhang said, adding that 60 percent of the province’s area is expected to be covered by forest by the end of this year.

Guizhou is among the pilot candidates short-listed by China’s central government as demonstration samples in 2017. The ultimate aim is to improve the local environment and build a colorful park province with beautiful mountains and clear waters that are

more suitable for living.

The latest statistics from the administration showed that forest coverage in Guizhou soared dramatically from 52 percent in 2016 to just under 60 percent last year. During the same period, the province’s grassland vegetation coverage increased from 84.5 percent to 87.3 percent.

Zhang said that in addition to those greening efforts, other measures contributed to the improved environment. Planting traditional Chinese herbs and trees with higher economic values are becoming more popular. Oil-tea trees, grapefruit trees and Chinese red pepper trees are among those trendy ones.

In Libo county, where 73 percent of its land is karst formation, the local forestry authority has introduced plans to plant fruit trees and herbs to cater to different geological conditions.

The Libo forestry department said the county’s forest coverage has soared from 55.2 percent to about 72 percent.

Herbs and fruit trees can help contain and reverse rocky desertification and bring greater income to the locals. In Laba village, for example, every villager received an average annual income of 15,000 yuan (\$2,280) last year by planting grapefruit.

The county now has 4,230 residents working as forest rangers. Each of them earns an annual salary of 10,000 yuan from the local forest authority — a decent income in the nation’s comparatively less developed southwest region.

“We will intensify the work on environmental protection and make efforts on treating the rocky land, improving the infrastructure in the natural reserves and encouraging social participants to innovate more to protect the environment,” Zhang said.



Farmers harvest *cili*, or chestnut rose, at a production base in Anlong county, Guizhou province. The county introduced *cili* to fight rocky desertification. LIU CHAOFU / FOR CHINA DAILY

Academy grads to join Navy’s carrier fighter jet force

By ZHAO LEI
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The first flight students-turned-pilots for the People’s Liberation Army Navy’s aircraft carrier-based fighter jet force have gained initial operational capability, said a spokesman for the Defense Ministry.

Senior Colonel Ren Guoqiang said at a news conference on Thursday afternoon in Beijing that these young aviators, who are in their 20s, have recently carried out landing and takeoff operations on the CNS *Liaoning* and received certificates for

daytime aircraft carrier operations.

Compared with their predecessors, these pilots are the youngest to be certified, and they needed a shorter amount of time to master the sophisticated carrier-based pilot skills and obtain certificates, the spokesman said.

Previously, all naval pilots in the carrier-based fighter force were selected from experienced aviators who had already served in either the PLA Air Force or the PLA Navy. These new pilots, however, were the military’s flight academy students after graduating from high schools.

Their success means that now the Navy can train more pilots for carrier-borne fighter units within a shorter time period, and they will be able to serve longer than their predecessors in the Navy, according to Ren.

“The Navy is striving to explore suitable approaches for carrier-based pilot training, which has been a priority for the force,” the senior colonel said.

The selections of experienced aviators and high-potential students will continue to co-exist in the foreseeable future to make sure that car-

rier-based fighter pilots can be trained rapidly, he noted.

According to the Navy, a pilot must pass a series of stringent tests to obtain a carrier-based operation certificate.

The PLA Navy now operates two carriers — the CNS *Liaoning* and the CNS *Shandong*. The *Liaoning* was commissioned to the Navy in September 2012 after being refitted in China for several years from an imported Soviet-era vessel, while the *Shandong* was domestically designed and constructed and entered service in December 2019.

Villages in Tibet benefit from renovations of toilets

By PALDEN NYIMA
and DAQIONG in Lhasa

The Tibet autonomous region completed renovations of more than 220,000 toilets in the region’s rural areas by the end of October, underscoring the region’s continuing efforts to improve rural residents’ quality of life.

The region’s department of agriculture and rural affairs said more than 45 percent of the households in rural areas are using sanitary toilets now, and the renovations have contributed to improving living conditions for the people.

Answering the call of nature in shabby latrines was not a pleasant experience for Dondrup, a villager from Sergola, a farming village near the Yarlung Zangbo River in the Manri township of Nyingchi in Tibet.

Dondrup said that in the past, his fellow villagers used latrines that were apparently far from hygienic.

He said he is now very pleased that Sergola has sanitary toilets in a much cleaner, brighter environment thanks to the government-supported renovation project.

China launched the nationwide renovation initiative in 2015 to increase the number and quality of toilets around the nation’s scenic spots. Later, the initiative developed into a campaign to build more public toilets in cities, renovate existing ones and build new ones in rural areas.

The government-supported campaign supports each household with a subsidy of 2,000 yuan (\$300). With this money, Dondrup’s fellow villagers were able to afford to renovate their toilets.

“Thanks to the toilet renovation project, we had all the walls of our washroom decorated with colorful ceramic tiles last year. We also installed a water flushing closet, and now it’s much more convenient,” he said.

Dondrup said that his new toilet now has better lighting and shower equipment.

“At first, we were not really accustomed to having a toilet installed inside the house, because traditionally the toilets were built outside of the living area or in the corner of the yard. Gradually, we have found it is much more convenient and hygienic,” he explained.

“When it’s a snowy or windy day, going outdoors to use the toilet is a hard thing, especially for the elderly and the sick. And hygiene has greatly improved through the renovation

of the toilet project — now our toilets are not smelly anymore,” he added.

Nyima, a Tibetan villager in Lhasa’s Maldrogungkar county, told Xinhua News Agency that in the past, his toilet had no roof or door, and going to the toilet was not convenient at all.

“Last year, my fellow villagers said that the government would provide a 2,000-yuan subsidy if we have our toilets renovated, and I seized this opportunity,” Nyima said.

“Now, I have the toilet installed with a proper roof and a nice door, and it looks much better.”

Xinhua contributed to this story.

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Mass testing finds over 700 camel pregnancies

By AYBEK ASKHAR
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The first mass ultrasound pregnancy test on camels in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region was conducted recently on 1,700 cows at a camel culture park in Jeminay county.

The tests, jointly organized and carried out by the county government and Xinjiang Agricultural University’s College of Veterinary Medicine, started in mid-October. After more than 20 days of testing, more than 700 camels were found to be pregnant.

Ma Wanyang, a researcher at the college, said the test can detect pregnancies and stages of gestation in a timely manner, allowing pregnant cows to be grouped together for targeted feeding. It also enables prompt attempts to impregnate those yet to conceive, which not only ensures a healthy birthrate of young camels but also helps to control breeding costs.

“The camels are so large that we need to carry the portable ultrasound equipment on our backs and move the probe slowly over their abdomens to search for the placenta and detect amniotic fluid,” Ma said. “To prevent the camels from

attacking people, we designed and built a frame to hold them in place.

“In addition, the ultrasound testing allows the early detection of some diseases in the camels so that they can be treated in time.”

After the tests ended early this month, the park divided the cows into different herds based on the results.

In the past, determining whether a camel was pregnant relied solely on a herder’s experience, which often resulted in errors. Since the breeding cycle is more than 13 months, it is easy for a pregnant camel to miscarry if scientific testing methods are not used, and that can cause difficulties for future pregnancies.

“Now, we have introduced and provided the test for the local herdsmen, and many of them have been surprised by the technology, so we believe the future applications of this testing measure are very promising,” said park staff member Ma Yingjun.

The county government said it is building a camel hospital, which is expected to be completed next year.

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