

CHINA

Beijing steps up vaccine production

Beijing has gone all out to boost the production of COVID-19 vaccines, with the combined annual capacity of Sinopharm and Sinovac in the Chinese capital expected to reach up to 3 billion doses within the year.

"We are accelerating the construction of new vaccine production lines and aiming to achieve an annual capacity of 2 billion doses in the first half of this year," said Liu Peicheng, director of brand and public relations at Sinovac Life Sciences.

Sinovac rolled out its first COVID-19 vaccine production line in August, with an annual capacity of 500 million doses. Its second production line began operation in February, pushing the company's annual capacity to over 1 billion doses of vaccine.

No abnormalities related to the vaccine have been detected, Liu said, adding that the incidence of adverse reactions to vaccines among the elderly was similar to that in younger adults, with both relatively low.

Sinopharm bioscience subsidiary China National Biotec Group has vowed to attain an annual capacity of 1 billion doses within the year, and up to 3 billion in the near future.

China National Biotec Group said it has actively participated in international cooperation on vaccines and is striving to provide safe, effective, accessible and affordable vaccines for all countries through the COVAX vaccine-sharing initiative.

Sinopharm vaccines have been rolled out in more than 40 countries and regions, and have been recognized by the international community for their safety, effectiveness, population universality, accessibility and convenience in storage and transportation.

Daily production has increased from 1.5 million doses on Feb 1 to about 5 million, with a total of more than 100 million doses supplied across the country, Industry and Information Technology Minister Xiao Yaqing said.

He said the quality and safety of COVID-19 vaccines should always come first and be placed at the forefront of production and supply.

China has approved four vaccines against COVID-19 for conditional marketing and another vaccine for emergency use.

Beijing had inoculated 8.7 million people by Wednesday, with 5.28 million completing the two-shot regimen, taking the number of doses of domestically developed COVID-19 vaccines administered in the capital to 13.9 million.

According to officials, the city is capable of administering 300,000 doses a day.

XINHUA



Left: A medical worker inoculates an elderly resident in Mangshi, capital of the Dehong Dai and Jingpo autonomous prefecture in Yunnan province, on Thursday. Mass vaccinations have begun in the border prefecture following the emergence of a cluster of COVID-19 cases. YIN XINGSHUAI / FOR CHINA DAILY **Right:** People line up to get vaccinations in the prefecture's Yingjiang county. HU YONG / FOR CHINA DAILY



Govt builds immunity barrier

Border prefecture in Yunnan rolls out large-scale inoculation campaign

By **LI YINGQING** in Kunming and **ZHAO RUIXUE**

Large-scale vaccinations for COVID-19 were initiated on Thursday in five counties and cities in Yunnan's Dehong Dai and Jingpo autonomous prefecture, which borders Myanmar, in a bid to build an immunity barrier, the local disease control and prevention center said.

Ruili, a city in the prefecture, recorded six new COVID-19 cases and 23 asymptomatic carriers on Wednesday, data from the center showed on Thursday. It recorded six confirmed cases and three asymptomatic ones on Tuesday.

As of Thursday morning, 1,320 people who had been in close contact with infected people had been quarantined for observation.

"Pressure to control imported cases keeps increasing. To get vac-

inated is the most scientific, economical and effective way to control and prevent the epidemic," a notice released by the center said.

At a meeting in Ruili on Wednesday on dealing with the epidemic, Ruan Chengfa, Party chief of Yunnan province, urged the rolling out of vaccinations to build an immunity barrier as soon as possible.

Sixty-five stations have been set up for the vaccination work and enough COVID-19 vaccines are in place, according to the center.

Residents in four counties, including Mangshi, the prefecture's capital, will be vaccinated first, and then residents in Ruili, who will get jabs after their home quarantine finishes, the prefecture government said.

"Only by getting vaccinated, can one get better protection," renowned respiratory scientist Zhong Nanshan said in a recent video interview.

Although the number of Chinese who have been vaccinated ranks second in the world, the percentage is low given the huge size of the population, Zhong said.

Mass vaccination shall be conducted as early as possible in border areas and places with high risks, Shao Yiming, chief expert at the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, said in an interview with China Central Television on Wednesday night.

Li Yue, 25, a teacher who lives in Ruili, is staying at home for quarantine after all schools in its urban areas suspended classes on Wednesday. Students will continue their studies via online platforms.

"I will go to get a vaccine after the quarantine to get protection," Li said. "After all, we live in the border area, which features a high risk of being infected."

Ruili resident Yang Ensheng, 29, received his first dose of vaccine on Dec 29. A worker at Wanting Port, he said "half of my colleagues have

received jabs and we have taken comprehensive measures to prevent risks."

To contain the new wave of COVID-19 cases, Ruili has launched measures since Tuesday, including citywide nucleic acid testing, a one-week home quarantine, and traffic curbs.

It completed the collection of samples for nucleic acid testing across the city on Thursday.

A total of 309,448 samples had been collected in the 24 hours to 8 am Thursday, with results announced for over 100,000, a news conference on Thursday was told.

Following the shutting down of schools in Ruili, a team of 20 was assembled to offer psychological counseling to teachers, students and parents. Campuses are being disinfected and sterilized, said Chen Jun, head of Ruili's education and sport bureau.

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Expats in Tianjin offered novel coronavirus jabs

By **YANG CHENG** in Tianjin and **CHEN MEILING**

Tianjin began providing novel coronavirus vaccines on Thursday for foreigners aged 18 and above in the city.

They can make appointments through their employers or designated institutions, local authorities said.

The appointments for voluntary vaccination are open to foreigners who work, study or live in Tianjin. Inactivated vaccines will be used, and two doses are required within two to four weeks. The vaccine may

vary according to market supply, the authorities said.

Those who have joined China's social medical insurance can get the vaccination free of charge by presenting an insurance document at the vaccination site. Those who have not should pay by themselves.

After making an appointment, foreigners should receive their vaccinations at the arranged time and site after presenting their passports or other identity documents, and their valid stay or residence permits. Vaccination sites have been set up in all districts of Tianjin.

Foreigners should report their

health condition, history of allergies, illnesses and abnormal reactions to any vaccine, so that doctors can decide whether they should be given the shot. A personal responsibility statement for all risks associated with vaccination and a form verifying informed consent need to be signed before vaccination.

Those who get a shot will be asked to stay at the vaccination site for 30 minutes for observation and told to avoid contacting any known and common allergens for a week. It is suggested they seek medical treatment and report to vaccination sites if they have any abnormal

reaction, such as fever.

Wearing masks, keeping social distance, washing hands frequently and other measures continue to be required after receiving the vaccine.

Gu Qing, director of Tianjin's Municipal Center for Disease Control and Prevention, said Tianjin plans to finish vaccinating its 6.1 million people aged 18 to 59 — about 40 percent of its population — by the end of this month. He added that the supply of vaccines in Tianjin is sufficient.

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Expanding orchards lift incomes in Guizhou mountain village

By **YANG JUN** in Guiyang and **HOU LIQIANG**

Over two decades ago, the residents of Chaxiang village in the mountains of Guizhou's Longli county depended on logging for a living.

The industry caused serious damage to the local environment and wasn't that lucrative, with the villagers' average annual net income no more than 400 yuan.

Today, with no more trees cut and more planted, the village has seen the per capita net income of its roughly 700 residents soar to about 13,000 yuan (\$1,980), making it a potent example of "lucid waters and lush mountains" being "invaluable assets".

It also mirrors the country's efforts to build a moderately prosperous society in all respects, including a livable environment.

The change came thanks to a return-farmland-to-forestry campaign promoted by the provincial government, with local authorities helping the formerly impoverished village develop a fruit industry based on *cili*, a common local plant

also known as the chestnut rose.

When experts from an agricultural institute in Guizhou's capital, Guiyang, visited the village to select seeds of the wild fruit tree for commercial planting in 1995, most villagers were skeptical that its sour fruit could find a market.

When the provincial authorities decided to offer free seedlings in a pilot program, only Gu Qinglin chose to accept.

"Instead of being trapped in poverty, I wanted to try my luck," the 69-year-old said.

Villagers were impressed when, two years later, his family became the first one in the village to have savings of more than 10,000 yuan.

"I remembered the plot behind my house was only 2,000 square meters. I made 36,000 yuan from it," he said. "Retailers from Guiyang came directly to the orchard to purchase. The price was 6 yuan a kilogram. They scrambled to buy."

Three households soon followed in Gu's footsteps and invested in *cili* planting. Others, however, didn't have the money required to embark on the same path, even though they were eager to do so.



Workers sort *cili*, also known as the chestnut rose, on a conveyor belt at a processing factory in Longli county, Guizhou province. LONG YI / FOR CHINA DAILY

A preferential policy implemented by the provincial government soon changed that.

As parts of Guizhou's efforts to return farmland to forest, for eight consecutive years, farmers were offered annual subsidies of about 2.3 metric tons of grain and 300 yuan for each hectare of farmland they turned into a fruit orchard.

Lan Jiang, head of the village

committee, said the area planted with *cili* in Chaxiang has now topped 1,400 hectares. The annual output value of the business stands at 50 million yuan.

The village now also boasts over 13 hectares of *cili* nurseries that can provide 6 million seedlings a year and bring in gross income of 6 million yuan, he said.

The increasingly livable environ-

ment due to the expansion of *cili* planting has also attracted tourists, bringing the villagers extra economic benefits. Some villagers have started rural resorts to cater to tourists, the committee said. All the villagers have now moved into villas and most families have bought cars.

With Chaxiang as a demonstration base, the *cili* business has been expanding to many other areas in Longli. *Cili* is now grown on more than 16,000 hectares of land, with an annual output value of 400 million yuan, and the county government said the industry helped lift 3,100 people out of poverty.

The development of Chaxiang has laid a good foundation for ongoing efforts to realize rural vitalization, said Luo Tianxiang, the head of Longli's forestry bureau.

"We will ramp up investment to further develop the industry," he said, adding that intensified efforts will be made to encourage universities and research institutes to engage in research and development of *cili* products.

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Tree co-ops help Shanxi villagers earn more

By **SUN RUISENG** in Taiyuan and **HOU LIQIANG**

Shanxi farmer Jia Yinming depended on a small plot of land to earn money for decades and remained mired in poverty.

Living in a tatty adobe house in Huili village, Lanxian county, he became a "leftover man" who no woman wanted to marry.

The 70-year-old eventually found happiness, however, thanks to a campaign in the province to combine poverty relief with afforestation in areas with fragile ecosystems.

"Life has been much better. I have moved into a new house," he said, adding that he had bought some home appliances he had never used before, including an induction cooker, a refrigerator and a washing machine. Moreover, he got married at age 66.

Jia's life began to change in 2016, when he joined the Lindecai poverty-relief cooperative — its name means "forest brings fortune". It is one of almost 3,400 cooperatives that have been established in Shanxi as part of the province's endeavors to promote both poverty alleviation and ecosystem conservation.

Offered contracts for afforestation services by the government, the cooperatives need to ensure 60 percent of members are from poor families and that 45 percent of the afforestation funds they receive are paid as wages to members, according to Shanxi provincial authorities.

Involved in weed control and planting, Jia can earn over 2,000 yuan (\$307) a month from Lindecai.

"Though it's sometimes a little bit tiring, I am happy with the work," he said, adding that he is too old to be a migrant worker.

Ma Lanzhu, the head of Lindecai, said the cooperative had members from 48 households when it was established in 2016.

"All but three of the households were impoverished," he said. "At the time, the average age of all members stood at 60."

Lindecai was the first co-op covered by Shanxi's program to pilot government purchasing of afforestation services from village organizations, Ma, 72, said. Its members have been planting sea buckthorn introduced from the Inner Mongolia autonomous region.

"Once the plants mature, the cooperative can sell its fruit, making the tree a stable, long-term source of income for all members," he said.

According to Shanxi provincial authorities, as of early this year, afforestation cooperatives across the province had planted 547,200 hectares of trees. The ecosystem conservation efforts have helped increase the average annual incomes of over 700,000 formerly impoverished people to 16,000 yuan.

Measures have also been rolled out to help consolidate poverty alleviation achievements. As of last year, there were 42,000 forest rangers in the 58 counties that had shaken off poverty, and almost 32,000 of them were once impoverished. On average, these rangers can now make as much as 7,300 yuan a year.

In Dongkouzi village, also in Lanxian county, members of the Senshengcai cooperative have taken measures to tap the potential of the almost 370 hectares of sea buckthorn they have planted to forge ahead toward prosperity.

"All parts of sea buckthorn trees are valuable. It's the only plant in which its roots, stem, leaves, flowers and fruit can all work as herbs," said Zheng Xiao'er, head of Senshengcai.

About 7.5 metric tons of fruits can now be harvested from every hectare of trees, and he expects the yield could reach 15 tons in two years, which would mean the co-op could earn at least 8,000 yuan a hectare.

The co-op has built a 200-square-meter refrigerated warehouse that can hold 300 tons of fruit. It has also attracted investment to build six production lines to make different varieties of juice, tea, oil and sugar-free gum.

Their annual output value could reach 150 million yuan, Zheng said.

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