

CHINA

Official touts endeavors to relocate poor

9.6 million people moved to areas with better environments, job opportunities

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A total of 9.6 million Chinese people were relocated to better homes under the Chinese government's poverty-reduction campaign during the 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-20) period, a senior official said on Thursday.

During that time, more than 600 billion yuan (\$91.4 billion) was invested and 2.66 million houses or apartments built, with the average living area for each household reaching 80.6 square meters, Zhao Chenxin, secretary-general of the National Development and Reform Commission, said a news conference in Beijing on Thursday.

The project was carried out jointly by the National Development and Reform Commission, the State Council Leading Group Office of Poverty Alleviation and Development, and the finance, civil affairs, natural resources and human resources and social security ministries, with the purpose of relocating people out of places where the environment is too harsh for them to live.

Beneficiaries have been relocated to 22 provinces and regions, mostly in central and western China, including Guizhou and Shaanxi provinces and the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, Zhao said.

"People who used to live in shabby adobe houses, thatched cottages and dilapidated shelters are now living in new, bright, safe, solid houses," he said.

To make the grand relocation work more sustainable, 6,100 schools and kindergartens, 12,000 hospitals and clinics, 3,400 senior care centers and

40,000 spaces for cultural events and activities were also built or renovated, Zhao said.

The relocation has not only improved people's lives, but also has brought them more local job opportunities and higher incomes.

For people who faced difficulties landing jobs after relocation, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security joined hands with other government departments to create jobs for them, said Zhang Ying, director of the ministry's employment promotion department.

Measures have been introduced to hire newcomers for jobs in public sectors in the new communities — allocating more spaces in the communities for people to start their own businesses — and to encourage labor-intensive enterprises to build factories near the new communities.

"These measures combined have helped 3.85 million relocated people land jobs, making sure that each family has at least one person employed," she said.

Statistics showed that the average annual income of relocated residents has more than doubled from 4,221 yuan in 2016 to 9,313 yuan last year.

Zhao said that by the end of last year, 9.2 million relocated people have escaped poverty.

"The conditions of the remaining 400,000 are being assessed, and we are confident that they can shake off poverty," he said.

"By moving impoverished people out of their previous harsh living environment, the government can stop poverty from being passed down to future generations," he added.



Wang Fangzhou (left) talks to his assistant at his workshop in Danzhai county, Guizhou province. Wang's shop hired 13 villagers from local resettlement areas. TANG SHUJUN / XINHUA

Tea tasting



A visitor tries Wufeng green tea, a local specialty from Wufeng, Hubei province, at the 29th China Food Expo and China (Wuhan) International Food Fair at the Wuhan International Expo Center on Thursday. More than 14,000 products, including farm produce, aquatic products, wine, beverages and food machinery are being exhibited at the event. ZHAN SONG / CHANGJIANG DAILY

Pandemic caused few problems with China's HIV/AIDS services

By WANG XIAODONG
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Healthcare services for people living with HIV/AIDS have remained mostly uninterrupted throughout the effective containment of COVID-19 in China, an official from the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, or UNAIDS, said on Thursday.

The ravaging global COVID-19 pandemic, which has already caused nearly 1.5 million deaths, has hindered global HIV/AIDS control and prevention work and may result in an additional 293,000 people getting infected with HIV between 2020 and 2022, according to a report released earlier by UNAIDS.

However, the situation in China is different due to the nation's successful control of COVID-19, said Zhou Kai, acting director of the UNAIDS China Office.

Some Chinese AIDS patients' treatments were apparently affected during the height of the nation's COVID-19 epidemic in February and March, but the situation quickly improved with the containment of the virus, she said.

The UNAIDS China Office conducted a survey earlier that covered more than 1,000 NGOs that provide services for people with HIV/AIDS in China, including those conducting virus tests and consultations. It found that many of the NGOs could not proceed with their normal services for a time due to COVID-19, Zhou said.

But things have returned to normal since March, and now more than 95 percent of these NGOs said they have resumed normal services, she said.

In a sharp contrast, many parts of the world are plagued by stalled or delayed healthcare for people with HIV/AIDS due to COVID-19, especially in some African

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Xu Duo, an HIV/AIDS control and prevention campaigner in Pu'er, Yunnan province

nations, Zhou said.

A large number of medical equipment and workers, meant for coping with HIV/AIDS, have been diverted to fight COVID-19 in many countries. Meanwhile, COVID-19 prevention and control measures such as lockdowns in cities with COVID-19 outbreaks have worsened AIDS patients' accessibility to drugs, according to UNAIDS.

Wang Kerong, a head nurse at Bei-

jing Ditan Hospital — a major infectious disease hospital in Beijing that receives COVID-19 patients — said despite resources mobilized to treat COVID-19 patients in the hospital, it has kept its doors open to patients with AIDS and people with HIV for services such as drug prescriptions and checkups.

The hospital has also helped more than 10,000 patients living outside Beijing with HIV to get drugs delivered since the beginning of the epidemic.

Xu Duo, an HIV/AIDS control and prevention campaigner in Pu'er, Yunnan province, said HIV/AIDS prevention and control efforts in China have remained uninterrupted since March.

"Due to strict control and prevention measures adopted all over China, many people living with HIV also cultivated a higher awareness of HIV/AIDS prevention and control, which may eventually result in reduced transmission of HIV," she said.



Participants at a goodwill event organized by UNAIDS share views on HIV/AIDS prevention and control at Beijing Ditan Hospital on Thursday. PROVIDED BY UNAIDS

HK tycoon Lai seen as flight risk, denied bail

By GANG WEN in Hong Kong
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Hong Kong media tycoon Jimmy Lai Chee-ying was denied bail on Thursday after being charged with fraud, as a local magistrate believed he posed a flight risk and could re-offend.

Lai was remanded into custody and is expected to stay behind bars until the case is heard again on April 16.

The founder of local media company Next Digital was arrested along with two senior executives of the company — Chow Tatkuen and Wong Wai-keung — on Wednesday. Facing a joint count of fraud, the three were also arrested on suspicion of violating the National Security Law.

The prosecution said the police were investigating the alleged national security offenses, and there is still a chance they could be charged later.

Chief Magistrate of the West Kowloon Magistrates' Courts Victor So Wai-tak, one of the city's six magistrates designated to handle national security cases, rejected Lai's bail application, citing Lai flight risk concerns and the risk of repeating the offense.

Warning about Lai's risk of absconding, the prosecution noted that Lai has few local ties but maintains close connections with other countries and has businesses in Taiwan, which hasn't signed an agreement on mutual legal assistance with the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

The prosecution cited travel records showing that since July 2017, Lai has left the city 87 times and spent about one-third of his time in the past two-and-a-half years away from Hong Kong.

Chow and Wong were granted bail at HK\$100,000 (\$12,900) and HK\$200,000, respectively. They were ordered not to leave the city and to report to police regularly before the next hearing.

The three were among 10 arrested in August on suspicion of colluding with foreign or external forces to endanger national security, as well as conspiracy to commit fraud and sedition. The three had been granted bail and were apprehended again on Wednesday when they reported to the police.

According to Hong Kong laws, fraud can lead to 14 years in jail, and national security offenses carry a maximum sentence of life imprisonment.

Lai is also involved in four other cases for his role in unlawful rallies during last year's social unrest. He was accused of participating in and organizing unauthorized assemblies and inciting others to take part in such activities. These charges carry penalties of up to five years in prison.



Role: Education on law in past years bears fruit

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At the central conference, Xi stressed that in order to promote the modernization of China's governance system and capacity along the path of the rule of law, it is necessary to require every entity, including government agencies, Party organs, social organizations and enterprises, to shoulder the responsibility of maintaining the dignity of the Constitution and ensuring its implementation.

Previously, Chinese judges were overly cautious about verifying justifiable defense, especially when self-defense caused injuries or even death, Zhao said, even though the Criminal Law allows exemptions from criminal liability.

"But as the Constitution, which stresses respect for and protection of human rights, was promoted in recent years, judicial authorities are more prepared to identify justifiable self-defense in an increasing number of cases," he said.

On Dec 26, 2018, a man surnamed

Li broke into the apartment of a woman in Fuzhou, Fujian province, and assaulted her. After hearing a call for help, Zhao Yu, who lived upstairs, went down to stop the attack.

When Zhao Yu tried to help the woman, he was punched by Li and then fought back, pushing Li down and kicking him in the stomach. The kick injured Li, so Zhao was detained for allegedly causing injury.

But the Supreme People's Procuratorate later announced that Zhao would not be held criminally liable because his actions could be defined as justifiable self-defense.

Zhao Li, the lawyer, said the case reassured those trying to offer help to others because, as the Constitution requires, their legitimate rights will be guaranteed.

He also welcomed the guideline clarifying the parameters of justifiable self-defense, which was jointly issued by the top procuratorate, the Supreme People's Court and the Ministry of Public Security in September, saying it represented major

progress in putting the spirit of the Constitution into legal practice.

Since 2012, when the central leadership highlighted the status and significance of the Constitution, more people have realized that the basic rights and principles in specific laws can be found in the fundamental law, and that the Constitution's spirit is also key in making laws and driving the legal process.

After the Constitution was amended in 2018, its study and enforcement have been stepped up and promoted in every walk of life, including the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, which is China's top legislature, and the courts.

Review of documents

For instance, the NPC Standing Committee has intensified its supervision of all normative documents — such as administrative regulations, rules and judicial interpretations — issued by government agencies, courts and local legislatures to

ensure they do not conflict with the Constitution and national laws.

According to a report by the top legislature, about 2,000 normative documents were submitted to it for review last year, with 506 requiring correction after being found to be inconsistent with the Constitution and national laws.

Qin Qianhong, a professor specializing in the Constitution at Wuhan University in Hubei province, welcomed the top legislature's reviews, saying that many government agencies are now paying close attention to strictly abiding by the Constitution and implementing its spirit when handling administrative matters and drafting regulations.

He added that some government departments have invited legal consultants or experts to guide their drafting of regulations to prevent inconsistency with the Constitution from the start.

In May, the top legislature adopted the National Security Law for Hong Kong to uphold the authority of the

Constitution and the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

In June, a number of legislators proposed adding a new crime to the Criminal Law to better reflect constitutional provisions related to education after two people in Shandong province were found to have stolen others' identities and test scores to enter universities.

Xu Xianming, a member of the NPC Standing Committee, said at the time that stealing someone's identity to get into a college goes against the Constitution, "as receiving education is a basic right granted by the fundamental law."

In the latest version of the draft amendment, unveiled in October, those involved in identity theft should face criminal punishment.

Qin Shuo, a judge from Beijing Haidian District People's Court, has strongly supported constitutional protection of children's right to education, saying that her court has been taking measures to help children who dropped out of school because their parents were irresponsible.

"In some divorce cases, a few adults fighting for custody of children pro-

hibited the other party from meeting the kids. Some children were hidden, while some were even taken away from the capital," she said. "It's contrary to the Constitution and seriously harmed their right to receive an education."

Enhanced awareness

Qin said she was glad to see that more people, including youngsters, realize the importance of safeguarding that right, as well as having enhanced awareness about solving other disputes in court, "which is inseparable from our increasingly strengthened legal education, especially that on the Constitution, in the past few years."

On Constitution Day each year — Dec 4 — the court opens its door to students in the district, she said, helping them understand what judges do and learn more about the legal system.

To increase public interest in the Constitution and make it easier for people to gain related knowledge, Qin Qianhong, the professor from Wuhan, suggested tailoring books about it for those of different ages or in different industries to give them appropriate channels to learn more about the fundamental law.