

CHINA

PLANNING FOR GROWTH

Party seeks better rehab for disabled

Proposal comes amid broader efforts to boost health services, prevent diseases

By LI LEI
lilei@chinadaily.com.cn

In a proposal for China's development priorities in the next five years and beyond, the Communist Party of China Central Committee has called for better rehabilitation therapies for disabled people.

Released earlier this month following an annual Party gathering in Beijing, the proposal called for more efforts to improve rehabilitation services, public health education and the control of chronic diseases, among other initiatives.

It was part of a broader effort by the Party to advance its "Health China" strategy that was unveiled three years ago. It aims to bolster health services and prevent diseases and disabilities as China rapidly ages.

To meet the goals, Zhang Haidi, chairwoman of the China Disabled Persons' Federation, conducted research in hopes of instilling cutting-edge elements into rehabilitation treatments and products, such as wheelchairs and canes.

While addressing a conference on Monday, she called on rehabilitation professionals across the nation to step up academic research and help create China's first national lab for rehabilitation medicine.

She encouraged the attending therapists and researchers to study the idea of making medical rehabilitation an independent discipline parallel to clinical medicine to boost related research and train professionals, which are in short supply.

Last year, the Ministry of Education approved the establishment of a university focusing on rehabilitative majors in Qingdao, Shandong province. Currently, medical rehabilitation is a subdiscipline of clinical medicine.

Zhang, also chairwoman of Rehabilitation International, an international disability rights organization, asked therapists to help draft industrial standards to boost service quality and step up technical support for treatments in rural villages and other places lacking qualified therapists.

"More emphasis will be placed on rural women and children," she said.

Government-subsidized rehabilitation services — ranging from cochlea implantation surgeries to psychological consultations — have been a crucial tool to ease the finan-

cial burden facing families with disabled relatives. The services also help disabled people maintain basic functions and dignity, experts said.

In a landmark move in 2017, the State Council, China's Cabinet, released a regulation on disability prevention and rehabilitation, making such treatment a public service covered by basic health insurance.

The rules came after China set a target of 80 percent coverage of rehabilitation services, a goal due to be reached by the end of this year, to benefit the growing disabled and senior population. The China Disabled Persons' Federation said the coverage rate was 65 percent five years ago.

Official figures showed that authorities have made headway in expanding the availability of such therapies.

More than 10 million certified disabled people received such treatments in 2019. That includes 1.1 million visually-impaired people and 5.5 million people with physical disabilities, according to an annual report by the federation.

A report by the China Association of Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons said 88 percent of disabled people received the necessary treatment in 2019.

Zhang acknowledged the achievements on Monday. However, she noted that many therapists at the grassroots level lack qualifications, and the standards in the sector have yet to be ironed out, creating difficulties for regulating the market.

China had an estimated 85 million disabled people in 2010, the latest available data, according to the China Disabled Persons' Federation. Experts have projected the number to be around 100 million by the end of this year, creating huge demand for rehabilitation services.

The need is also fueled by a fast-graying demography.

China had 253 million citizens age 60 and above by the end of 2019, according to the National Bureau of Statistics. The Ministry of Civil Affairs, which oversees elder care policy, said in October that the head count will surpass 300 million in the next five years.

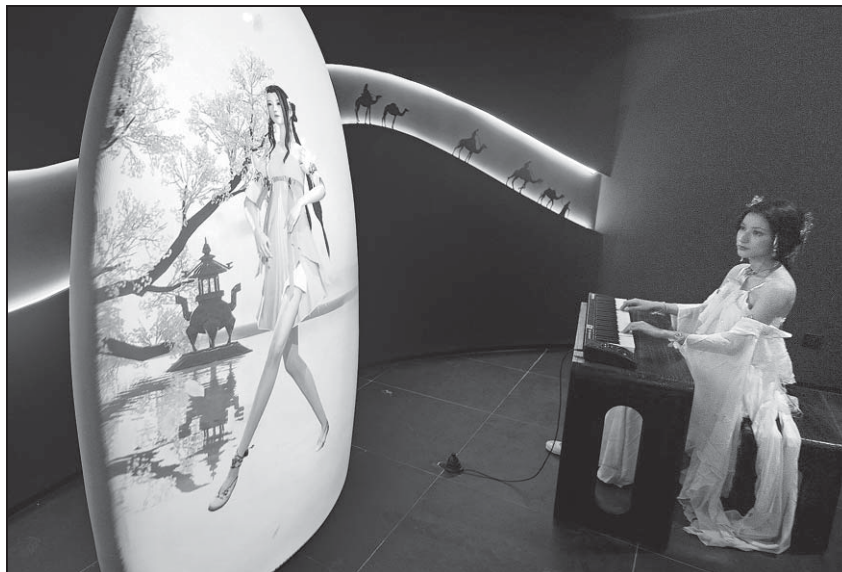
Among them, 40 million will be disabled or semi-disabled seniors who are usually not counted as part of the 85 million disabled population.



A therapist helps a disabled person recover at a rehabilitation center in Sanya, Hainan province, in September.

SHA XIAOFENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Classical creation



A woman in a classical costume on Wednesday plays an electronic organ as a figure — generated based on her appearance — dances on the screen in sync with the music she plays. The figure can perform classical, hip-hop and even anime-style dances based on the music. It is the latest experience available in Silk Town in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, and will be unveiled on Thursday. The pedestrian street introduced digital entertainment featuring artificial intelligence during its five-month upgrade and is poised to bring tourists some new experiences. PAN JIE / FOR CHINA DAILY

Railways lauded for anti-poverty role

By LUO WANGSHU
luowangshu@chinadaily.com.cn

China's railway operator — China Railway Corp — has helped lift people out of poverty, including opening new high-speed railways, operating slower train services and selling products from poverty stricken areas on bullet trains, according to China Railway Corp.

Since 2013, the company has invested 3.3 trillion yuan (\$503 billion) for railway infrastructure construction in deeply poverty stricken areas, representing about 78 percent of the company's infrastructure investment.

Also since that year, a network of 36,000 kilometers of railways connecting deeply poverty-stricken areas has been under construction, of which 20,000 km are high-speed railways. When completed, the network will reach 274 poor counties. Among them, more than 100 of those counties have been newly connected with railway services.

A high-speed railway connecting Guiyang, capital of Guizhou province, and Nanning, capital of the

Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, is one such high-speed rail service. The line, which started construction in December 2016, is expected to open at the end of 2023.

It will be the first high-speed railway with a designed speed of 350 kilometers per hour in the autonomous region. When the line opens, travel time between the capitals will be reduced to two and a half hours from the current time of more than five hours.

The line, passing mountainous areas, crosses deeply poor regions.

Zhou Junwei, director of the Guiyang-Nanning high-speed railway construction project, was struck by the inconvenience of the local transport network at the beginning of the project. When he and his colleagues conducted field research, it took them more than eight hours to walk 6 km to a construction site, which was in a mountainous area.

"For local people, it is so important to have a better transport network," he said, sharing his thoughts about poverty alleviation at a State Council news conference on Wednesday.

"When the line opens, it will attract more people and logistics to these mountainous areas. It will also help local people get out more easily. More businesses will be attracted to settle here and also create more employment opportunities, enabling local agricultural products to be sold across China," he said.

Zhou also said that the new line will attract tourists who can enjoy the beautiful scenery along the railway.

According to Zhou, the company built 165.5 km of roads to transport materials for railway construction and connect villages in the mountains. The project hired more than 7,000 local workers and has paid them more than 68 million yuan in salary.

Slower trains in poverty stricken areas have also fulfilled people's needs and given them a better life by taking students to school and farmers to market, for example.

To boost sales of agricultural products from poor areas, the company has sold those products on 1,396 bullet trains.

Relics: Items have great historical value

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The relics were transported in tailor-made cases and landed intact in Beijing on Oct 20, but the process had remained confidential until Wednesday.

"The consistent action showed our determination to solve crimes and bring back lost or stolen cultural relics from overseas," Guan said.

An expert panel was organized to examine and appraise the relics as soon as they arrived in Beijing, according to Deng Chao, director of the cultural relic repatriation office of the National Cultural Heritage Administration.

"Generally, they are very well preserved and in good shape," Deng said. "Many of them are of very great value for historical and scientific studies."

He said 13 artifacts have been labeled as national precious cultural relics of the second-highest grade, and 30 are categorized as being of the third-highest grade.

Many of the recovered relics were Song Dynasty (960-1279) porcelains from different kilns,

reflecting a booming economy at the time and showing how the production techniques used at the time had spread.

Two intact ceramic vases, dating from the late Yuan (1271-1368) and early Ming (1368-1644) dynasties, are thought to be from the same tomb. A rare stone statuette of a horse was probably tied to a local chieftain in Guizhou province during the Yuan or Ming Dynasty, based on comparisons with other archaeological discoveries.

A group of Han Dynasty (206 BC to 220 AD) figurines portraying dancers is also a key reference for the study of pottery-making technology of the time.

All the returned relics are on virtual display at ncha.gov.cn/col/col2432/index.html on the website of the National Cultural Heritage Administration.

Guan added that the repatriation also sets a good example as this year marks the 50th anniversary of the UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit

Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, commonly known as UNESCO Convention 1970. China joined the convention in 1989.

Guan said one reason the repatriation of the 68 relics was difficult back in the 1990s is the absence of a shared legal basis for the process before the UK joined the convention in 2002.

"Repatriation of lost relics not only involves complex legal issues," he said. "It is also connected with people's collective emotions and international relations. As an issue of shared difficulty for the world, the solution requires consistent efforts over generations."

But he added that international law has undergone a historic change in the past 20 years and returning lost relics to their origin is becoming a worldwide consensus.

"So this achievement jointly reached by China and the UK has global significance in providing support for similar cases," he said.

Measures: Science used to fine-tune mitigation

From page 1

He Peng, a spokesman for the Tianjin Health Commission, said at a recent news conference that a local dockworker was confirmed to have contracted the virus after a routine test of frozen pork from Germany tested positive.

"We must adhere to the principle of fending off risks carried by both products and people, especially workers coming into contact with cold-chain food," he said. "Their health is the basis for blocking contaminated food products."

On Nov 9, the State Council released a guideline requiring thorough disinfection of cold-chain imports after collecting samples for testing and urging the establishment of tracking systems.

On Monday, the Ministry of Transport published another guideline urging all companies, docks and freight terminals involved in cold-chain logistics to protect their front-line employees by enforcing safety protocols, monitoring their temperatures and conducting nucleic acid testing. It also stressed the importance of the strict and regular disinfection of transportation equipment and vehicles.

Wu, from the CDC, said, "Instead of imposing a reckless and simple ban on all imported food, China has decided to integrate management of cold-chain products into regular disease control work and mitigate risks to the lowest possible level."

He said the State Council guideline is aimed at ensuring the safety of cold-chain food and safeguarding people's health while increasing the efficiency of customs clearance and securing the stability of the industry chain.

Similar efforts aimed at striking a balance between curbing the virus and continuing the pace of economic recovery are part of adjustments to the scope and duration of long-standing epidemic control measures.

Different lockdowns

Feng, the CDC deputy director, said community lockdowns imposed nowadays are "distinctly different" from those in Wuhan early this year.

"Lockdowns are more precise now, affecting smaller areas and having less impact on society, though the goal remains the same: to reduce population-mixing," he said.

When Tianjin detected three local infections among cold-chain workers this month, the city upgraded virus risk levels from low only to medium in three areas where the confirmed patients and several asymptomatic individuals worked and lived. Mass testing covered only residents in medium-risk areas and all cold-chain workers in the city.

Zhang Diyan, a program developer in Tianjin's Xiqing district, about 100 kilometers from the affected cold-chain facilities, said the new cases did not affect his life at all.

"I'm in favor of such an accurate designation of risks," he said. "As a Tianjin resident, I see no need to expand lockdown areas."

When the Beijing government was dealing with the outbreak in June, the launch of a citywide testing campaign covering all 20 million residents of the capital was initially proposed, Wu said.

"The campaign was called off after screening 10 million because an additional 10 million tests would not detect any more cases and would pile on unnecessary costs," Wu told China Newsweek.

"Other cities should use the science-based and refined method. Large-scale tests should revolve around the origin of confirmed infections and be called off when no new cases can be found."

Zhang, from Shanghai, said during a forum last week that even though the virus continues its rampage worldwide and China has largely stamped out local transmission, there is no need to sever communication with the outside world.

"We should maintain a certain degree of international cargo and personnel exchange while properly managing risks stemming from imported cases," he said.

To reach the goal, Zhang underscored the importance of fever clinics being able to detect suspected cases and send alerts swiftly, as well as the ability of public health workers to track down close contacts.

Briefly

BEIJING Premier to attend economic roundtable

Premier Li Keqiang will attend the Fifth "1+6" Roundtable with the heads of six major international economic organizations via video in Beijing on Nov 24, Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said on Wednesday. Also slated to participate are World Bank Group President David Malpass, International Monetary Fund Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva,

World Trade Organization Deputy Director-General Alan Wolff, International Labor Organization Director-General Guy Ryder, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development Secretary-General Angel Gurría and Financial Stability Board Chairman Randal Quarles, he said. The participants are expected to exchange views on topics including the global economic situation, post-COVID-19 economic governance and China's growth during the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25), Zhao said.

China issues orange alert for blizzards

China's meteorological authority on Wednesday issued an orange alert for blizzards in northeastern areas and advised residents to avoid unnecessary outdoor activities. Snowstorms will hit parts of Heilongjiang, Jilin, Liaoning and Hebei provinces and the Inner Mongolia autonomous region from Wednesday morning to Thursday morning, according to the National Meteorological Center. Authorities should strengthen

inspection and maintenance of roads, railways and power and communications lines and should also work to ensure that public transport not be disrupted, the center said. China has a four-tier color-coded weather warning system, with red representing the most severe weather, followed by orange, yellow and blue.

HUNAN 34 hurt in explosion, fire at Miluo restaurant

Thirty-four people were injured in

an explosion and fire at a restaurant in Miluo city, Hunan province, around noon on Wednesday, according to the local government. The injured were sent to hospital for treatment, one of whom had a more severe injury. A gas tank that was cracked open was found at the scene, local police said. The local firefighting department and the police are jointly investigating the cause of the incident.

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