

CHINA

Three times around world, postal worker keeps going

From letters to parcels, mailman walks 10 hours a day, delivering happiness

By MA JINGNA in Lanzhou and YE ZIZHEN

Over the course of 12 years, Tang Heshun has walked 130,000 kilometers, the equivalent of more than three times around the equator, carrying mail and parcels on his back.

He's a postman in rural Lanzhou, in Northwest China's Gansu province. Whether it is sunny, snowy or rainy, dressed in a green working suit and carrying a green bag and a crabstick, Tang does his rounds on foot every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. It isn't uncommon to see him covered in mud on rainy days, and in sand on sunny days.

Getting up at around 6 am, it takes an hour for him to get to the post office in Lanzhou's Xigu district.

At 9 am, the post office staff start sorting mail, which they must distribute to three postal workers, including Tang, before 9:30.

His delivery area lies at an average altitude of about 2,100 meters. Vehicles can't reach most villages because of cliffs and mountains.

Born in 1966, Tang is a native of Jingou village in Lanzhou. Twelve years ago, his cousin retired as a postal worker because of a bad

ankle, and hoped Tang would take over his job.

Formerly a farmer, Tang always thought it would be good to serve the villagers, so he accepted the offer and passed the interview.

For many years, whenever he thought of giving up because of bad weather, he would think about his cousin, who is his role model.

On a chilly spring morning, Tang is dressed in a shirt and a jacket. It's easier to climb mountains in this outfit, he said.

Loaded with mail, letters, a bottle of water and some steamed buns, he begins work.

Sometimes, when he runs out of drinking water on his 10-hour days, he grabs a handful of snow and eats it, instead.

He vividly recalls the terrifying experience of falling into a 2-meter-deep hole in the mountains the first year he was working. It almost cost him his life.

He returned home later than normal and was not able to hide what had happened from his wife and daughter because of his bruises and wounds.

"My family has been trying to talk me out of this job since then," Tang said. "And I also started to think



Tang Heshun takes a break on his way to deliver mail and letters in rural Lanzhou, Gansu province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

about giving up until one day, I delivered an envelope containing an admission letter to college.

"I don't want my family to be upset, but I'll also never forget the light in the villager's eyes when I delivered his letter of acceptance."

After 12 years, Tang has become familiar with the roads and knows which is better on sunny days and which is better on snowy and rainy days.

He's worn hundreds of pairs of shoes and thousands of socks to pieces, and dealt with the challenges of poisonous snakes, bad weather and landslides. The one thing he isn't able to overcome is loneliness.

While delivering mail, Tang talks to those he meets about what's going on in the cities, and is a source of information for villagers in rural Lanzhou. "Tang is so nice and diligent, he's like a link between me and the outside world," said Wang Haozhong, a villager from Jingou.

The postman's mail bag is witness to the changes in village life.

As the number of letters has decreased, the number of packages has increased.

"The more online shopping there is, the more deliveries we have," he said.

Some of the packages contain things people buy online, others are sent by family members working faraway. They mostly contain daily items, clothing and stationery.

In 2019, Tang's dedication earned him the title of "Good Samaritan of China". Over the course of so many years, Tang can't remember how much mail he has delivered.

"Maybe there will be more advanced ways of delivering mail in the future, but I will continue in this job for as long as the villagers need me."

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For police officer, canine cops are trusty friends

By HU MEIDONG in Fuzhou and YE ZIZHEN

Name a few occupations you can think of that involve working with furry animals. Veterinarian, groomer, pet shop owner ...

He Shitao has been working with furry friends for 18 years, but in his case, his companions are police dogs, and he is a police officer. "For me, raising and training police dogs is a pleasure, rather than a burden. They are very intelligent and make trustworthy comrades-in-arms," He said.

Born in 1981 in Henan province, He dreamed about being a police officer as a child. Gaining admittance to the Criminal Investigation Police University of China in Shenyang, Liaoning province, he mastered the basic skills of training, and learned to get along with police dogs.

"Dogs are like human beings, they have different characteristics and abilities. We first need to know their strengths and weaknesses, and then set up different training plans."

The bond between humans and dogs starts with grooming, feeding and playing together. Training takes up the entire life span of a police dog, which is usually between 12 and 15 years. "We're not able to communicate through language, so observation of their behavior is critical to mutual understanding," He said. Patience and kindness are important characteristics in a dog trainer.

To train their four-legged charges to work with humans, trainers need to practice running and fighting with their dogs. Physical strength is also very important.

"When training, it's easy to get bitten accidentally. It's a process of getting to know each other," he said. "Police dogs can be trained to be security guards, to track, to

search for drugs and blood, to find explosives and maintain order."

After graduation in 2003, He began working at the Fuzhou Public Security Department in Fujian province and brought the dog he had trained at college with him.

The same year, he went on his first real-time mission with his police dog, when he and his comrade-in-arms found illegal firecrackers in Minhou county. "Depending on the mission, we will dispatch different dogs. Every police officer has at least three dogs with different skills," he said.

In 2019, He and his colleagues dispatched six dogs in search of evidence in a robbery and murder case in Fuqing, Fujian. They found a bloody jacket, glove and shirt, uncovering crucial evidence that helped close the case.

When it is 6 months old, a canine candidate is measured according to five criteria: appearance; health; courage; fetching and the desire to hold onto items acquired. If the animal qualifies, it will receive training for further three months in different disciplines. A final test is needed before it officially becomes a police dog.

Two of He's dog friends were honored by the Ministry of Public Security. He's love of dogs has grown daily over the past 18 years but he isn't able to keep a pet because he works day and night.

In recognition of his hard work and dedication, He received the National Labor Medal from the All-China Federation of Trade Unions in April, but for him, the honor also extends to his seniors and peers, who work day and night to solve cases and raise police dogs. "The experience of dog training can also be applied to team building," He said.

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Shenzhen set to mirror its economic performance with cultural refinement

By CHEN HONG
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Shenzhen, a Chinese vanguard in reform and opening-up, has pledged to use its soft power to turn itself into a model for urban civilization, culture and city image by the end of 2025.

The city, located in South China's Pearl River Delta, is an economic miracle that has soared to become the country's third-strongest city in GDP over the past four decades.

It has worked and poured funds into improving cultural infrastructure, activities, industries and public education to raise its overall performance in culture to parallel its economy.

According to Wang Qiang, director of Shenzhen's publicity department, the city will issue an official outline to achieve the goal by 2025, in which 10 projects will be addressed.

These include popularizing the thought of socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era, establishing a civilized model city, developing literature and art of the new era, reforming the cultural system, and promoting the convergence of new and traditional media.

Building a leading internet city, raising the quality and efficiency of the city's public services for culture, flourishing the cultural industry, improving the international communications performance and attracting cultural talents are also among the 10 priority projects.

By the end of 2025, the urban civilization level, public services for culture and the quality of the cultural industry will be enhanced with a group of iconic cultural facilities, Wang said.

Meanwhile, Shenzhen's image as a globalized, modern and innovative city will be enhanced and can exert a wider influence on the global community, he said.

Ten years from then, the city will have more outstanding cultural characteristics that feature openness, diversity and inclusiveness. Its fashion and innovation industries will play an increasingly important role in the world, Wang noted.

It is expected to become an urban model for China by the end of 2035,



Clockwise from top: The Pingshan Cultural Center in Shenzhen is home to a group of premium art and cultural facilities, including a gallery, library, exhibition center and theater. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY Readers immerse themselves in books at a library in Shenzhen. CHEN YAN / FOR CHINA DAILY An outdoor New Year concert is staged near Shenzhen Bay. HE ZHIXI / FOR CHINA DAILY Models on a catwalk showcase designs during the Shenzhen Fashion Week in April. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

which could mirror the country's soft power in culture and represent the country when participating in global cultural exchanges and dialogues, he added.

Jiang Nan, a middle school music teacher, said the artistic atmosphere has been stronger since she started working in the city in 2000.

She has witnessed the construction and operation of a group of new concert halls and theaters with top-notch design in the city. For example, the Shenzhen Concert Hall, which was opened in September

2007, was appraised by conductor Zubin Mehta as "the best concert hall in the Asia".

"The sound infrastructure has attracted top artists and troupes to Shenzhen," she said. "We don't have to envy audiences in Beijing or Shanghai any longer now that Shenzhen has been an important leg of the performance tours of many world-famous symphony orchestras and conductors."

Besides the gorgeous venues downtown, some suburban district governments have built their own

concert halls and theaters and staged performances to enrich the lives of locals.

Jiang was impressed by the charity program of the Shenzhen Concert Hall held every Sunday night, which provides a chance to some amateur but devoted music groups and individuals to hold public performances.

"The public performances have nurtured a big number of young music lovers and encouraged more people to step inside concert halls and appreciate fine music," she said.

According to the city government, it has planned another 10 cultural assets, including the Shenzhen Opera House, Shenzhen Conservatory of Music and Shenzhen Institute of Creative Design. These projects will add glamour to the city when they are opened in the coming years.

Liu Qiao, the office director of Shenzhen Yantian Library, said the application of new technologies in the library's operation can provide convenient services to readers.

About 650 public libraries and

nearly 300 self-service library facilities are in service around the city, according to official figures.

Benefiting from China's reform and opening-up, Shenzhen has witnessed increasing enthusiasm for the study of the Communist Party of China's history. From government agencies at various levels to schools and businesses, Shenzhen residents have initiated a variety of events to learn about the growth of the CPC.

Local authorities released a map focusing on the city's Red culture in mid-June. The map, which also has its online and mobile versions, shows routes to 33 CPC historical educational bases and more than 50 revolutionary heritage sites in Shenzhen.

Li Fengliang, president of the Institute for Cultural Industries at Shenzhen University, said the city should be bolder and more open-minded to build its own unique cultural brands and earn fame in the global community.

Besides bringing in and sponsoring more international art and music events and competitions, the local government can create more powerful cultural icons, he said.

The government has developed a couple of high-level cultural industry platforms, such as the annual China (Shenzhen) International Cultural Industries Fair, the Shenzhen Culture Assets and Equity Exchange and the China Industry Investment Fund, according to Li.

These platforms, which can cluster quality cultural products, can work as a foundation for the city to develop an external exchange for culture, he said.

He also suggested the government attract a pool of talent, including famous artists and social sciences celebrities, to settle in Shenzhen.

In September 2019, Shenzhen was selected by the State Council as a demonstration pilot zone of socialism with Chinese characteristics. One of its goals is to become a model of urban civilization.

The city has closely associated the core value of Chinese socialism with its spirit. The city government believes this will work as the motivation to fulfill its mission and lead its residents to a better life.