

# Decades of progress highlighted

Since the 1950s, life in Tibet has come on in leaps and bounds. **Yuan Shenggao** reports

Seventy years of development has made Tibet a place where people can enjoy economic prosperity, social stability, good ecology, ethnic unity and religious freedom, according to a top official of the autonomous region in the southwest of China.

Wu Yingjie, Party secretary of Tibet, made the remarks during a news conference arranged by the State Council Information Office in Beijing on Sept. 12.

Also speaking at the conference was Qizhala, chairman of the Tibet autonomous region.

They outlined the achievements that Tibet has made in the 70 years since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 and answered journalists' questions.

According to Wu, the autonomous region's gross domestic product jumped to 147.76 billion yuan (\$20.76 billion) in 2018 from 129 million yuan in 1949.

Qizhala noted that Tibet has maintained double-digit growth for 26 consecutive years. The autonomous region has been among the fastest-growing regions in the country since 2012.

Wu also cited other figures to show the autonomous region's rapid and healthy development.

He said the region's grain output increased from 182,900 metric tons in 1959 to 1.05 million tons last year.

The Party chief said tourism is now one of the pillar industries in Tibet. In 2018, tourist visits to attractions in the region reached 33.69 million. Local



Since the Qinghai-Tibet Railway became operational in July 2006, the Tibet autonomous region has a total railway length of more than 1,100 kilometers. ZHANG JING / FOR CHINA DAILY

tourism revenue reached 49.01 billion yuan. During the first eight months of this year, the number of visits was 33.15 million and tourism revenue was 50.5 billion yuan, increasing 19.6 percent and 25.4 percent from the same period of 2018.

Qizhala noted that Tibet has also made breakthroughs in developing a comprehensive industrial system.

"Starting from scratch, Tibet has formed a modern industrial system that covers tourism, clean energy, manufacturing,

high tech and modern services," the chairman said.

Qizhala noted that Tibet's industries have unique features relating to a plateau region.

For instance, he said, Tibet has fostered a plateau biology industry centering on the deep processing of local produce such as highland barley and yak products, as well as the production of traditional Tibetan medicines.

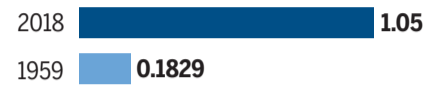
The chairman noted that Tibet's industries are also going green as the

## Great progress in Tibet in 70 years

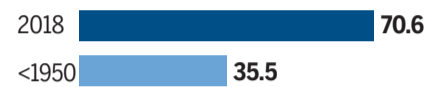
Gross domestic product  
Unit: billion yuan



Grain output  
Unit: million metric tons



Average life span of residents



Source: the Tibet autonomous region government

autonomous region applies an eco-friendly industrial strategy.

He said the region highlights environmentally friendly industries such as cultural tourism, green building materials and alternative energies including hydraulic power, geothermal power and solar energy.

Party secretary Wu said the sustained economic growth has resulted in a substantial improvement of people's living standards and social welfare.

In 2018, the Party chief said, the

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disposable incomes of urban and rural residents were 33,797 yuan and 11,450 yuan respectively.

He said breakthroughs have been made in poverty reduction. More than 70 percent of impoverished counties have risen above their poverty status.

Wu noted that there are still 19 counties in the poverty category because of their harsh natural conditions, such as high altitude and fragile ecology.

But the Party secretary said he is confident that the 19 counties can shake off the status by the end of this year.

"With efforts in targeted poverty reduction, we are sure that we will enter a xiaokang — or moderately well-off — society in 2020, as well as the rest of the country," Wu said.

The Party secretary said the residents in Tibet enjoy freedom of religion and their legal religious activities are protected by the law.



A bumper harvest looks set at a highland barley farm in Chonggyai county, Tibet. The autonomous region's grain output reached 1.05 million metric tons in 2018, compared with 182,900 tons in 1952. SONG WEIXING / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Unparalleled change experienced within space of a generation

By **YUAN SHENGGAO**

In the seven decades since the founding of the People's Republic of China, the Tibet autonomous region has created history that previous millennia cannot match.

There have been many significant events since 1949, including the peaceful liberation, democratic reform, foundation of the autonomous region, reform and opening-up.

Tibetan residents, freed from serfdom seven decades ago and later becoming masters of their own fate, are beneficiaries of and witnesses to the great changes taking place in the plateau region that has been dubbed "the roof of the world."

Kelzang Drolkar, from Lhasa, is one of the witnesses. The 56-year-old woman is the Party secretary of a community in the Nachen subdistrict of Lhasa. She has also been a delegate to the National People's Congress for three consecutive sessions.

"My post as an NPC delegate gives me a deeper understanding of the central authorities' strong support to Tibet," said Kelzang Drolkar.

She added that her parents used to be serfs in the past. "They never expected they could decide their own affairs 70 years ago. But now they have a family member as a decision-maker of the nation," she said.

"Only those who experienced the cold winter would cherish the warmth of the sun," Kelzang Drolkar added.

The peaceful liberation of and democratic reform in Tibet have fundamentally changed the lives of the previous serfs. They used to account for more than 95 percent of the population in Tibet.



Left: Residents in Lhasa read *Family Album*, a book recording the great changes in Tibet in the past seven decades. LOBSANG / FOR CHINA DAILY



Right: From kindergartens to senior middle schools, students in Tibet now enjoy 15-year free education. WANG JING / CHINA DAILY

The freedom they enjoy has also helped them release their creative powers.

Lhagpa Phantog is an owner of a factory producing Tibetan incense. She used to be a tour guide because of her fluency in Tibetan, Chinese and English.

She said her mother was given the chance to study in schools in Xianyang, Shaanxi province. Lhagpa Phantog also studied in a university.

Her educational background gives her a better understanding of the latest trends in industries.

She introduced an environmentally friendly concept in the production of incense and grew her profits. The sales revenue of her business was 4.5 million yuan (\$631,615) last year.

Tibet now has a complete modern education system that covers preschool, basic, vocational and higher-learning educational programs, as well as education

for people with disabilities.

To ensure all people can access education, Tibet launched a 15-year free and compulsory education policy for students from kindergartens to senior middle schools.

By the end of 2018, the average schooling period of Tibet's residents was 9.55 years, according to local statistics.

Nyima Tashi is a professor and head of the modern educational technologies center at Tibet University. He led the center to make a number of breakthroughs in Tibetan-language-based computer software and systems.

Their achievements include a Tibetan-language coding system and a neuro-network-based Tibetan-Madarin translation system.

Lian Xiangmin, an official and researcher at China Tibetology Research Center based in Beijing, said the greatest change

in Tibet over the past 70 years is in people's lives.

"The freedom and equality resulted from the region's liberation enable people to be masters of their own destiny, releasing their originality and creativity to the utmost," Lian said.

"That's why Tibet has created many miraculous achievements while having explored a successful path for its socioeconomic growth," the researcher added.

The sustained socioeconomic growth in Tibet has led to substantial improvements in quality of life.

At the end of 2018, Sonam Deyki became the 5-millionth air passenger in Tibet. It was a milestone in the autonomous region's civil aviation industry.

Tibet has five airports with 92 air routes linking domestic and overseas destinations.

It has developed a comprehensive transport system of highways, railways and airports.

The total length of highways reached 60,000 miles by the end of 2018.

After the completion of the Qinghai-Tibet Railway in 2006, the Lhasa-Shigatse line was opened in 2014. The Lhasa-Nyingchi Railway is now in the rail-paving stage.

Tibet has a modern manufacturing industry system including energy, light industry, food processing, ethnic handicraft making and production of traditional Tibetan medicines.

Tourism has grown into one of the local economic pillars, helping more than 100,000 rural residents increase their income.

The steady and fast economic growth makes sure that more people can benefit from ever-improving social welfare.

To date, more than 3.7 million residents are covered by various social security programs, according to local statistics.

In addition to the quality of life, the quality of growth is also emphasized by the region's government and the local people.

The autonomous region is making efforts to protect its environment and ensure sustainable socioeconomic development.

Paljor is the boss of a tree nursery in Lhokha city. During the past decade, millions of saplings from his nursery have been delivered to various regions in Tibet, contributing to greening the world's highest plateau.

The business also brings hundreds of thousands of yuan in revenue to his family annually.