

Schooling unlocks great potential in Tibet

Progress in education opening up opportunities for youths to attend university and build impressive careers, **Yuan Shenggao** reports.

For many young Tibetans, education is the key to turn around their lives.

Tsering Sanmdrup, born in the rural area of Lhasa, capital of the Tibet autonomous region, said his childhood memories have never escaped him.

"Besides routine farm work, my mum occasionally made handicrafts to increase the family's revenue. Dad, as a driver, was often hired to drive on business trips to earn a living," he recalled.

Tsering Sanmdrup said he never worried about whether he could go to school, as his tuition spanning from primary school to high school was exempt from fees.

In 2012, he was admitted to Tibet University, where he was voted chairman of the school's student union.

Due to his outstanding performance in school work and leadership, he earned himself a brilliant business career outside Tibet. While the outside world is alluring, Tsering Sanmdrup said what he cherishes more is his home plateau where he was raised. But his parents' health is his biggest concern, he added.

As a result, taking what he had learned from outside Tibet, Tsering Sanmdrup returned to Lhasa and got a good job. He invited his parent to live with him in the urban area of Lhasa.

"I live a happy life as my family enjoys my company. We spend time together chatting, cooking and celebrating traditional festivals," he said. "My family gives me a motivation to work harder."

Rigzin Kazhoi, a startup business owner, has never forgotten the hardship of his childhood at a village in Nagchu, Tibet.

"In the past, my family and I lived in a mud hut with shabby home furniture and daily items," he recalled. "After strong winds, the house was always covered with dust."

His parents had been toiling away on a piece of land, aided by four cows, to support the entire family and afford him and his elder sister higher education, Rigzin Kazhoi said.

"My childhood dream was to leave the village and see what the outside world would look like," he said.

Such dark memories started to brighten when the family moved to a new house in 2017. Their neighborhood benefited from a housing program initiated by the local government.

In addition to improved living conditions, Rigzin Kazhoi said his family has since found a way to increase their income, making a foray into tourism-related services.

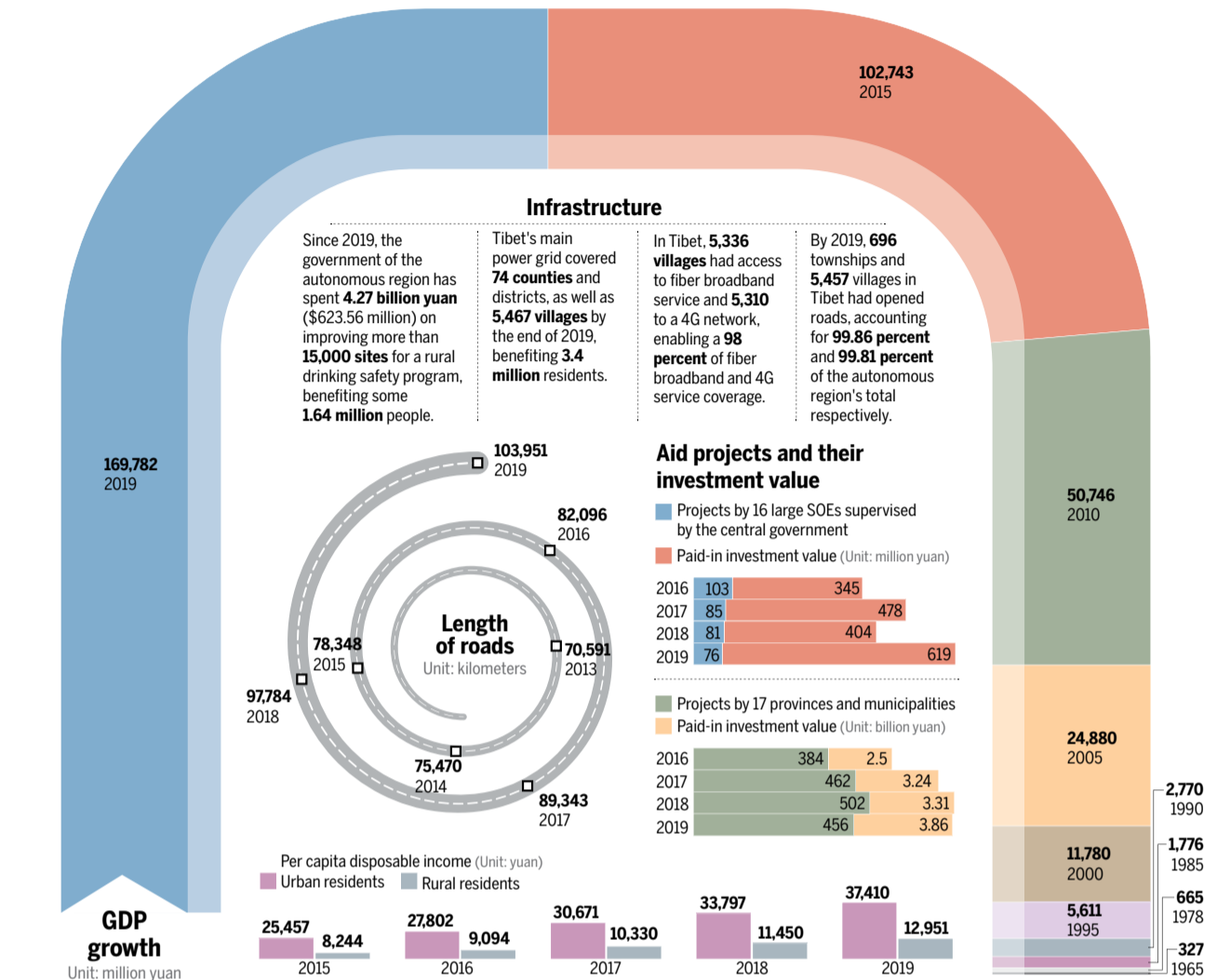
He earned more than 40,000 yuan (4,940 euros) selling barbecued food and Tibetan tea to visitors attracted to Nagchu Horse Racing Festival, a major traditional summer event in northern Tibet. "That was the first fortune I had made. It was used to pay schooling fees for me and my younger brother," he said.

After his graduation from college in June 2018, local incentive policies to encourage startup businesses prompted Rigzin Kazhoi to found his own company. It launched a series of beauty products, including shampoo, hand cream and facial masks, generating 5 million yuan in annual business revenue, according to Rigzin Kazhoi.

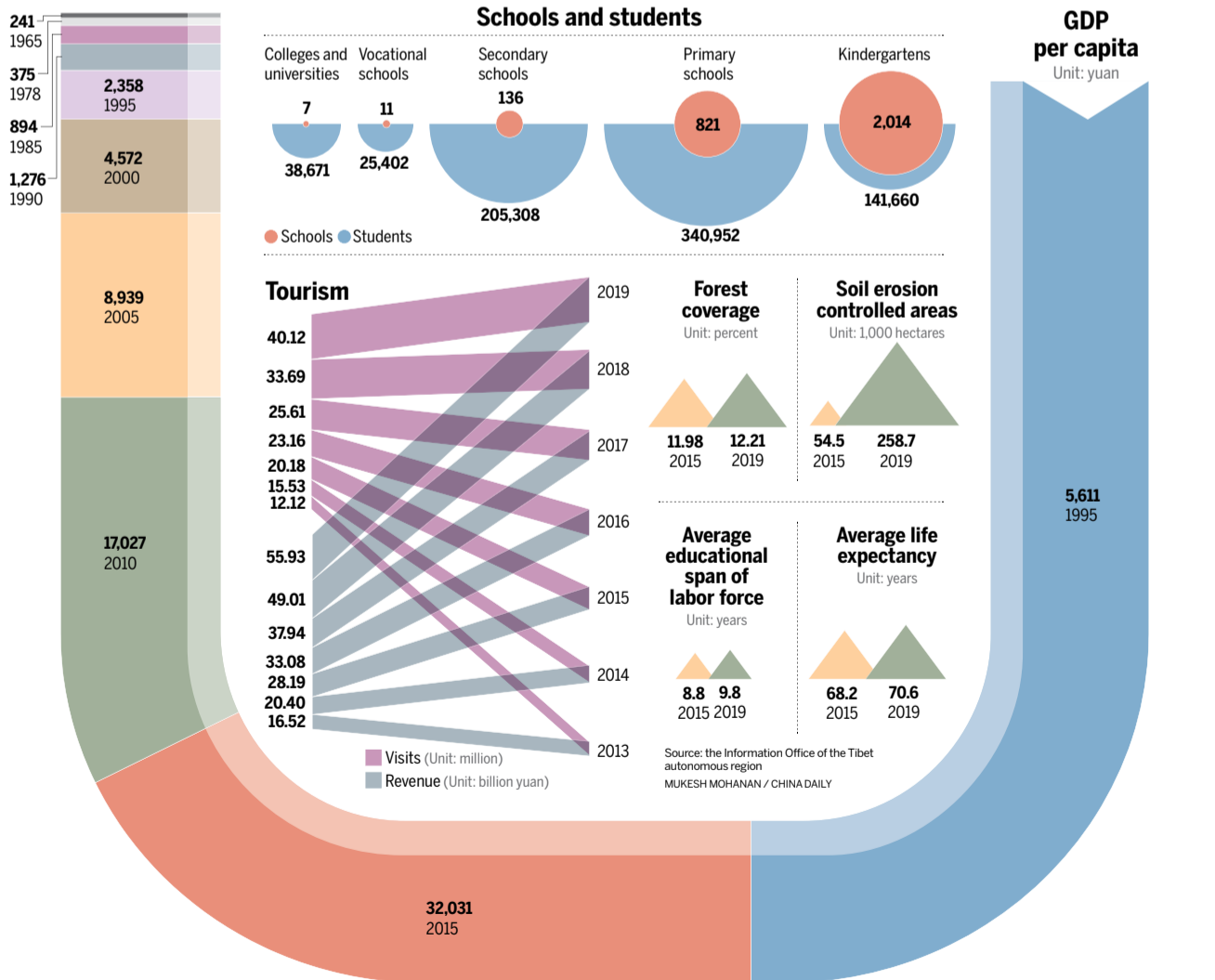
"No matter how exhausted I was after work, when I returned home and had a cup of butter tea made by my mother, all the stress and strain of the job and life vanished," he said.

Rigzin Kazhoi said he is grateful for the supportive policies and encouraging environment that have helped him live a different life from his parents.

Official data show Tibet is home to nearly 3,000 schools, ranging from preschool to higher education, vocational to special education. Their combined enrollment of some 841,500 students includes 88,530 from outside the autonomous region.



DRAMATIC CHANGES



Kelsang Kekyi is deputy head of a primary school in Metog county. As a delegate to the 2020 National People's Congress in May, he told media that with the progress in Tibet's education, a growing number of students have left mountainous regions and won opportunities to change their lives.

The veteran educator was a college graduate who decided to return to his hometown and work as a teacher, helping more local children realize their dreams. "Nowadays, a growing number of local residents have come to realize the significance of education," he said.

Source: the Information Office of the Tibet autonomous region
MUKESH MOHANAN / CHINA DAILY