

WHITE PAPER

\$500b to boost high-speed rail plan

Goals include 'rejuvenating' western China and country's economy, transportation official says

By SU ZHOU and LUO WANGSHU

In the next five years, China will invest 3.5 trillion yuan (\$503 billion) to accelerate railway construction, including expansion of the country's high-speed rail network to 30,000 kilometers, a senior official said on Thursday.

"By 2020, more than 80 percent of China's major cities will be connected by high-speed railways," said Yang Yudong, vice-minister of transportation.

124,000 kilometers

The nation's total railway length by the end of this year

China released a white paper titled "Development of China's Transport" on Thursday, which Hu Kaihong, director of the State Council Information Office's Press Bureau, said is the first white paper to review the sector's tremendous changes in recent decades and to set goals for its future.

In the past few years, China's railway network, especially high-speed rail, has undergone dramatic change. From 2011 to 2015, China invested 3.58 trillion yuan to build 30,000 km of railway. By the end of this year, the nation's total railway length will reach 124,000 km, including 20,000 km of high-speed railway, accounting for 65 percent of the world's total high-speed rail.

In July, the National Develop-

ment and Reform Commission issued an updated national railway development plan envisioning a 175,000-km rail network by the end of 2025, with 38,000 km of high-speed rail.

However, the high-speed railway network still faces challenges, especially in the less-developed western part of China. Yang, the vice-minister of transportation, said he is confident that lines in western China will eventually become profitable.

"Plus, building high-speed railway in less-developed regions is not only about recouping investment. It is part of the big project of rejuvenating the whole region and the country's economy," said Yang.

The high-speed rail linking Beijing and Shanghai showed a profit last year. Xinhua News Agency reported in July, quoting Tianjin Railway Construction Co, a shareholder of Beijing-Shanghai High-Speed Railway Co.

Yang Hao, a professor of rail transportation at Beijing Jiaotong University, said the economic returns of a high-speed railway network shouldn't be judged solely on whether lines are profitable, since these railways can leverage the development of such industries as tourism, logistics and real estate.

According to China Railway Corp, construction began on Thursday on a high-speed rail line linking Guiyang, Guizhou province — a transportation hub connecting members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations — and Nan-



The world's highest bridge, at 565 meters, opened on Thursday at the border of Southwest China's Guizhou and Yunnan provinces. By the end of last year, China's highways totaled 4.58 million km. HE JUNYI / FOR CHINA DAILY

ning, the capital of the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region.

The 482-km line will connect the Shanghai-Kunming railway and the Chengdu-Guiyang railway to the north and will also link to southern coastal areas including Hainan province and Guangdong province.

The new railway will accelerate communication between China and ASEAN countries and play an important role in the Belt and Road Initiative.

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fact box

Development of China's transportation network



• **Railway**
By the end of 2015, China's railway network totaled 121,000 km, ranking second in the world. It has the world's longest high-speed railway network, totaling 19,000

km. By 2020, China will expand its high-speed railway network to 30,000 km, connecting more than 80 percent of its big cities.



• **Highways**
By the end of last year, China's highways totaled 4.58 million km, and the country

ranked No 1 in the world in expressway construction.



• **Civil aviation**
China had 210 civil airports by 2015, among which 26 handle more than 10 million passengers annually, and 51 handle over 10,000 metric tons of cargo

and mail each year.



• **Ports**
At the end of last year, China's ports had more than 31,000 quay berths for production use, and the number of berths for 10,000 tons or above reached 2,221.

-XINHUA

WILDLIFE

Report on Zimbabwe elephants 'nonsense'

By MO JINGXI mojingxi@chinadaily.com.cn

China rebutted a recent report that Zimbabwe had sent wild animals, including 35 elephant calves, to China to pay for a military debt, saying it is "sheer nonsense with an ulterior motive".

The Times newspaper in London reported on Monday that Grace Mugabe, wife of Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe, had sent safari animals to a Chinese wildlife park to pay for military uniforms for the Democratic Republic of Congo.

"I want to emphasize that this is a normal commercial activity, which is in line with relevant international conventions and laws in both countries," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told a daily news conference on Thursday.

Hua said that wildlife parks in Shanghai, Beijing and Hangzhou recently imported a total of 35 African elephants from Zimbabwe. Payments have been received by Zimbabwean authorities, and the money will be used for the African country's wildlife protection, Hua said.

"It is an international practice for zoos to import foreign safari animals. The technical conditions of Chinese animal parks have met international demands and the parks can take care of the African elephants," she added.

An anonymous Chinese staff member directly involved in the transaction told China Radio International that "all the payments have been brought into the accounts of the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority and national parks".

He also said Zimbabwe's environmental protection minister inspected the wildlife parks in Shanghai and Hangzhou in January and assessed the conditions of elephants that had been imported earlier to Guangzhou.

Li Wentao, an expert on African studies at the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations, said the report unfairly speculated about normal China-Zimbabwe trade ties when Zimbabwe is suffering economic difficulties.

"The two countries are good partners with close cooperation, and China has been providing economic assistance to the African country. However, this is no reason to make such speculation," he said.

He Wenping, a researcher at the Institute of West-Asian and African Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said the misleading report shows the Western media's longtime prejudice against China-Africa cooperation.

"Anyone with common sense will know such a report is ridiculous. Every country could have ups and downs, and China and African countries have a consensus on overcoming difficulties together," she said.

SPACE

Teens' mini-satellite now sending signals

By ZHAO LEI zhaolei@chinadaily.com.cn

Students at Beijing's Bayi School, President Xi Jinping's alma mater, have a new reason to boast: They worked with space scientists to develop and launch Chinese teenagers' first satellite, which is now orbiting hundreds of kilometers above Earth.

The 2.4-kg mini-satellite, Bayi Youngsters' Expedition, was launched atop a Long March 2D carrier rocket on Wednesday morning from the Taiyuan Satellite Launch Center in Shanxi province. The major task of the launch was to lift two commercial Earth-observation satellites that are much larger and heavier.

The mini-spacecraft has a designed life span of 180 days in a sun-synchronous orbit and then will be controlled to fly back into the atmosphere to burn out so it won't become space debris, said Zhou Xiubin, a senior researcher at the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corp who oversees the project.

He said the satellite has equipment to take pictures of the ground and to conduct radio communication and audio transmission experiments.

The spacecraft and instruments were designed and assembled by about 40 Bayi students instructed by more than 20 experts at the China Center for Aerospace Science and Technology International Communications, where Zhou is a deputy director, as well as the China Academy of Space Technology and Nanjing University of Science and Technology.

"Students who were at a ground tracking and control station in Kashgar (in the

Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region) received signals sent from the satellite as soon as it started to orbit Earth yesterday," he said on Thursday. "It is working well. Now we can call the project a success."

Zhu Kai, vice-dean of Bayi School, said his students plan to use the spacecraft to observe Earth and to transmit Chinese songs back to Earth. He said the school will take advantage of the satellite to popularize space knowledge.

Bayi School has built a ground tracking and control station on its campus and is training its students to use the facility, according to Zhu.

Before Wednesday's launch, President Xi sent a letter to students at Bayi School who are taking part in the project, saying he was pleased with their passion and bravery in the exploration of science and technology.

Xi also said he hopes the students will remain interested in exploring new things.

Yang Shangwen, a satellite designer who mentored students in the satellite's development, said that the United States, Russia and Israel are among other countries that have launched satellites designed by teenagers. He said the Chinese students were selected from applicants according to their academic performance in science and innovation.

Xu Yifei, a Bayi student and member of the development team, said she helped design the satellite's power system. She also has applied to take part in the tracking work because "I have been charmed by the beauty of space exploration and want very much to continue to be part of the satellite's operations".

COOPERATION

Loans to aid three Pakistan road projects

By ZHANG ZHIHAO zhangzhihao@chinadaily.com.cn

China will provide about \$1 billion in soft loans for three new road projects along the western route of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, connecting the "shortest route from Gwadar to China", a senior Pakistani official said.

Syed Murad Ali Shah, chief minister of Pakistan's southeastern Sindh province, said China will invest in new roads and factories to help smaller

Pakistani provinces integrate into the project.

The eastern and western routes of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor "should operate like two legs of a body", said Shah. However, more investment and opportunities have gone into the eastern route, where most of the country's industrial and financial sectors are located,



Syed Murad Ali Shah, chief minister of Pakistan's Sindh province

he said. "The economically smaller provinces feel deprived and left out of the project," he said. "CPEC is a national project, after all, and should improve the economy throughout the country."

Shah was in Beijing for the sixth China-Pakistan Joint Cooperation Committee meeting on Thursday in Beijing.

It was the first time that the chief ministers from all of Pakistan's provinces were invited to discuss industrial cooperation, he said.

Tang Mengsheng, director of the Pakistan Studies Center of Peking University, also said China and Pakistan both need a top-level government body to run the CPEC and "facilitate interconnectivity in policy, infrastructure, trade, currency and people".

Sun Shihai, director of the Chinese Association for South Asian Studies, said that developing the western route not only will help local economies flourish, but also will ensure a robust and convenient trade network as the bedrock of CPEC's success.

Officials: Top discipline watchdog to meet

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for taking bribes of about 20 million yuan.

From 2002 to 2014, Xu abused his official positions to grant favors to enterprises and individuals in business operations and job promo-

tions, the verdict said.

The announcements about the three cases came ahead of next week's plenary session of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, China's top discipline watchdog.

Members of the commission will meet in Beijing

from Jan 6 to 8 to report on their work in 2016 and discuss tasks for the coming year.

Yang Weidong, a law professor at the Chinese Academy of Governance, said: "The news on the three cases on Thursday shows

that pressure against graft has not been weakened and will remain high next year."

Xinhua contributed to this story. Contact the writer at zhangzhihao@chinadaily.com.cn

Open: Foreign investment vital

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of intellectual property rights for investors is also covered.

The government will work to make it easier for foreign investors and experts to live and work in China. Foreign investment in the "encouraged categories" in central and western areas will receive financing, land and taxation incentives.

Li has reiterated the importance of foreign investment this year. When addressing the UN General Assembly in New York in September, he vowed that China will carry out a new

round of opening-up.

Foreign investment is vital for China's economic transformation and structural adjustment, said Chen Fengying, a researcher in global economy at the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations.

"Multinational companies are facing competition from Chinese rival enterprises and rising costs of labor, but the market potential of Chinese consumers and China's advantage in educated talent still attract overseas investors," Chen said.

China, which now is encour-

aging foreign investments to move into high-end, low carbon and sustainable industries, can improve the business environment and lower market access barriers by introducing negative lists and granting multinational companies national treatment, which may maintain its attractiveness, Chen added. Negative lists include only those activities that are off-limits in a sector, and all other activities are considered open.

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On the move

Chongqing Health Center for Women and Children staff members transfer newborns from the center's old campus to a new one on Wednesday. The 22 infants were moved from the intensive care unit with the help of 24 doctors and 60 assistants using five cars. RAN WEN / FOR CHINA DAILY