

## CHINA

# Better living conditions secure borders

Increased infrastructure in rural Tibet brings benefits to people, nation

By CUI JIA  
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The population is growing in the border areas of the Tibet autonomous region, with improved living conditions and road network being a contributing factor, resulting in a safer and more stable border and safeguarding national security, according to a National People's Congress deputy.

Tashi Gyaltan, an NPC deputy of the Tibet autonomous region and head of Doyul Lhoba ethnic township in Lhunze county, said infrastructure in all 28 villages in the county near the border between China and India has been modernized, benefiting more than 6,000 people.

"Those villages are now connected by roads in good condition. Furthermore, the road network in the border area is expected to be further improved in the future," said Tashi Gyaltan, a member of the Lhoba ethnic group.

Improved transport infrastructure in recent years has paved the way for development, and new roads have allowed people to get to townships and villages in border areas more conveniently throughout the year.

"In the past, Yulmed township, surrounded by mountains, would be cut off by heavy snow in the winter for months. After the completion of a road by the end of 2020, the problem has been solved. What's more, an airport in Lhunze is now operational, which will surely boost the development of the county," Tashi Gyaltan said.

All three villages of Doyul Lhoba ethnic township have running tap water and electricity, and infrastructure such as roads and the internet. People's living standards have been significantly improved in all aspects, he said.

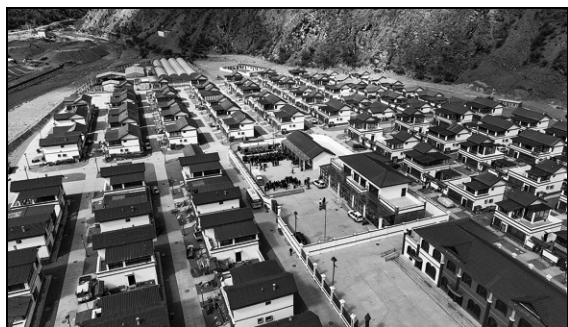
The improved living conditions have attracted more people to live in villages and settlements in border areas, and having a steady increase in population there is key to stability, Tashi Gyaltan said.

"Meanwhile, the villagers all understand the importance of safeguarding national security and their roles in keeping the border areas stable. I am often touched by their words and actions on border protection when I visit them," he said. "The changes in Lhunze county have also taken place in other border areas in Tibet."

To better make border areas stable and for them to thrive, the region introduced preferential policies in 2022 to help people settle, while setting up 48 settlements, according to the region's government work report published in January.

The population in border areas has seen an increase of 10.5 percent in the past five years, and the mileage of roads in such areas in 2022 was about 3.7 times what it was in 2018, according to the report.

By stepping up efforts in infrastructure construction in border areas and developing suitable industries in those areas this year, the growth in economic development and people's income is expected to exceed the regional average, it added.



A relocation settlement in Doyul Lhoba ethnic township in Lhunze county, Tibet autonomous region, last month.

JIGME DORJE / XINHUA

## Mask mandate dropped for school campuses

By ZOU SHUO  
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Students and teachers are no longer required to wear masks on campuses, according to the latest COVID-19 epidemic control plan for schools and universities.

Issued by the Ministry of Education, the National Health Commission and the National Administration of Disease Prevention and Control on Monday, the plan said students and teachers can choose to wear masks based on their health conditions.

Medical workers, canteen staff, dormitory superintendents, deliverymen, security personnel and janitors still need to wear surgical masks. If an outbreak occurs at universities, teachers, students and workers should resume wearing masks, the plan said.

If a COVID-19 case is discovered at a school, students in the same class, their teachers and staff members who have had close contact should wear masks for five days and monitor their health, according to the plan.

No mass nucleic acid testing should be carried out at universities, yet they can conduct antigen tests or nucleic acid tests on staff members such as medical workers and canteen staff, the plan said.

Universities are also encouraged to establish health centers, and equip themselves with enough medical workers and resources to look after mild patients.

The plan asks schools and universities to store COVID-19 epidemic control materials and guide students and teachers to maintain good sanitary habits.

An Yuhang, a doctoral student at Beijing Jiaotong University, said many students at the school do not wear masks anymore, yet some still wear them to protect against flu.

"It really seems that we have won the victory against the epidemic, and COVID is behind us. Everything has returned to normal," he said.

Wang Yuntao, a senior undergraduate student at Tsinghua University, said he felt relieved and happy to see the rigorous epidemic control measures gone.

Students at the university also stopped wearing masks as the new semester began, and there are no nucleic acid testing centers or dividers at school canteen tables, he said.

There are more activities such as shows and sports events at the school and students no longer need to report to teachers to leave and enter the campuses, Wang said.

## Two-step learning



Students who study preschool education attend dance practice at a vocational center in Julu county, Hebei province, on Tuesday. Local authorities have continued to increase funds and optimize vocational education to help students find better jobs. MOU YU / XINHUA

### PATH TO MODERNIZATION | SHANDONG

## Marine economy key for Weihai growth

By ZHAO RUIXUE in Jinan  
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Weihai, a coastal city at the easternmost end of Shandong province facing South Korea and Japan, will continue to chart its path to modernization through developing the modern marine economy, including expanding maritime trade channels, the city's mayor said.

"Although Weihai is located at the end of the land transportation, as long as we give full play to the logistics channels that combine land transportation and the maritime lines, Weihai can be a transportation hub in Northeast Asia," said Kong Fanping, a deputy to the National People's Congress and mayor of Weihai.

An agreement signed between Weihai and Incheon in South Korea for rapid cargo delivery came into effect on Feb 24.

With the agreement, cargo-loaded trucks will reach Incheon Airport directly after arriving at Incheon Port from Weihai without undergoing a separate clearance process and the cargo won't need to



Kong Fanping

Airport and Incheon Port will speed up the international logistics routes that connect Japan and South Korea in the east and Europe in the west, said Kong.

"It will attract more international trade runners to use this golden maritime trade channel," said Kong. While expanding maritime logistics channels, Weihai has been putting great efforts into developing marine economies.

Stretching along 968 kilometers of coastline, Weihai boasts rich marine resources.

The gross output from the marine economy of Weihai registered an annual increase of 8.5 percent during the past five years. The marine economy contributes 36.6 percent to the city's gross domestic product.

be moved to local trucks, which can significantly drive down costs and time required for delivery.

This direct route connecting Weihai Airport, Weihai Port and Incheon

The city has built 16 national-level marine ranch demonstration zones, with a total area of 90,000 hectares, making the city a "marine granary".

In the marine equipment sector, high-end roll-on-roll-off passenger ships and heavy-lift vessels produced in Weihai share 70 percent and 80 percent of China's total market respectively, according to the city government.

Coastal scenery has made the city a popular tourist attraction. Last summer, the city welcomed over 17.7 million visitors, which generated total revenue of 21.7 billion yuan (\$3.16 billion), surpassing the same period of 2019 before the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The ocean is the biggest advantage for Weihai, and Weihai people have very special feelings for the ocean, so we value the quality of the city's marine economic development," said Kong.

She suggested the central government support Weihai to take the lead in blue carbon market trading, which is a new sector of the marine economy.

## New Party secretaries announced

By ZHU LIXIN in Hefei  
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The Communist Party of China Central Committee announced a decision to appoint new Party secretaries for Hunan, Anhui and Hainan provinces on Tuesday.

Zhang Qingwei will no longer concurrently serve as secretary, standing committee member and member of the CPC Hunan Provincial Committee.

Shen Xiaoming has been appointed member, standing committee member and secretary of the CPC Hunan Provincial Committee, and will no longer serve as secretary, standing committee member and member of the CPC Hainan Provincial Committee, according to the decision.

Zhang, born in November 1961 and from Laoting, Hebei province, was previously elected vice-chairman of the 14th National People's Congress Standing Committee during this year's two sessions.

He began his career in August 1982 and joined the CPC in December 1992. He graduated from Northwestern Polytechnical University where he completed a graduate program in aircraft design.

Shen, born in May 1963, is from Shaoxing, Zhejiang province. He joined the CPC in August 1984 and began his career in July 1987. He has bachelor's and master's degrees in pediatrics from Wenzhou Medical College and a PhD degree from the then Shanghai No 2 Medical University.

Han Jun has been appointed member, standing committee member and secretary of the CPC Anhui Provincial Committee, and Zheng Shanjie will no longer hold these posts, the decision said.

His predecessor Zheng was appointed head of the National Development and Reform Commission at the two sessions.

Han, born in December 1963, is from Gaoqing, Shandong province. He graduated from the then Northwest Agricultural University, which is now Northwest A&F University, and has worked with the central agricultural authorities for decades.

Before he started working in Jilin province in 2020, he was vice-minister of agriculture and rural affairs and had participated in Sino-US economic and trade consultations.

Feng Fei, former governor of the Hainan provincial government, will remain in the province as Party secretary.

He was born in December 1962 and is from Duchang, Jiangxi province. He joined the CPC in July 1985 and started his career in November 1991.

## Experts call for more HPV vaccinations

By WANG XIAOYU  
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Health experts called for strengthening vaccination for human papillomavirus among teenage girls and ramping up production of HPV vaccines as China joined the global initiative to accelerate the elimination of cervical cancer.

Almost all cervical cancer cases are linked to infection with human papillomavirus, which itself is a preventable and curable disease. The World Health Organization pledged in November 2020 to speed up the elimination of cervical cancer through expanding vaccination, testing and treatment, and China released an action plan in January echoing the WHO's commitment.

Zhao Fanghui, a professor at the National Cancer Center and Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences' Cancer Hospital, said that China registered about 109,000 new cervical cancer cases and 59,000 related deaths in 2020, and each number accounted for about one-fifth of the world's total.

"If cervical cancer cannot be eliminated in China, the world's progress will be affected, so our efforts are being watched globally," she said during a seminar held by Peking University this month.

Zhao said a study led by her team showed that many medical resources were spent treating advanced cervical cancer in the past, while there was plenty of room for improvement in promoting vaccination and early screening.

The key, she said, is to shift from a treatment-centered approach to a prevention-centered one, and invest more in early prevention, especially introducing vaccines for young girls.

HPV vaccines work best when delivered at around 9 to 15 years old. Globally, over 126 countries have added HPV vaccination to their national immunizations.

Although China has not begun offering free HPV vaccination on a national level, Zhao said that a pilot program rolled out in March 2021 in 15 cities has so far yielded positive outcomes and won applause from the public.

"More cities and provinces, such as Guangdong, Fujian and Hainan, have begun providing free HPV vaccination," she said. "The experiences of pilot regions should be distributed widely to help expand the campaign."

This month, Jiangxi province announced that it will start offering free vaccines for all eligible girls under 14, making it the fifth provincial-level region across China to implement the initiative.

Zhao said that local governments usually confront challenges in securing vaccine supplies and funds.

"Our suggestion is that when vaccine supplies and funds are insufficient, they can choose to vaccinate a smaller age range first, such as vaccinating only 14-year-olds," she said. "This can also reduce cases and expenditures dedicated to treatment in the future."

On Jan 21, the National Health

Commission, along with nine other government departments, released an action plan that lays out key measures aimed at speeding up the elimination of cervical cancer from this year to 2030.

The document encouraged more developed regions to trial HPV vaccination. For less developed areas, it requested exploring various funding channels to support HPV vaccination.

It has also required expediting review and approval of domestic HPV vaccines.

Chai Yan, director of consulting firm IQVIA Biotech, said that free vaccination campaigns and market approval of domestic HPV vaccines in recent years have pushed domestic vaccination rates higher.

He said that the two domestic manufacturers of HPV vaccines should be capable of meeting demands if they operate at full capacity. It is also expected that more domestic vaccines will be available after 2025, further boosting their availability.

During this year's two sessions that concluded on Monday, Hu Xiaoping, a national legislator and an oncology expert from Jiangxi Maternal and Child Health Hospital, said during an interview with ThePaper.cn that she suggested promptly beefing up production of HPV vaccines.

She also proposed exploring innovative vaccination methods, such as deploying mobile vaccination vehicles and involving schools and communities in offering vaccines, as part of efforts to increase coverage.