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Fostering of world-class firms stressed

Xi: Improve modern corporate system with distinctive Chinese characteristics

By MO JINGXI  
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President Xi Jinping emphasized on Tuesday the importance of leveraging the country's strength of socialism with Chinese characteristics to improve the modern corporate system and foster more world-class enterprises.

Xi made the remark when presiding over the fifth meeting of the central commission for deepening overall reform of the 20th Communist Party of China Central Committee. He is head of the commission.

The modern corporate system with distinctive Chinese characteristics features clearly defined ownership and responsibilities of companies, the separation of government functions from enterprise management, and scientific management.

Xi, who is also general secretary of the CPC Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, said efforts should also be made to strengthen the Party's leadership and improve corporate governance.

To improve the modern corporate system with distinctive Chinese features, it was agreed at the meeting that it is essential to respect the principal role of enterprises in their operations, adhere to a problem-oriented approach, and implement tailored policies based on factors such as the size, development stage and ownership of the enterprises.

Capable private enterprises should be encouraged to establish a modern corporate system, improve their corporate governance structure, and enhance risk prevention mechanisms, among others, the meeting said.

Xi also urged efforts to foster a

globally competitive open environment for scientific and technological innovation, saying that it is important to insist on promoting innovation through opening-up.

He required work to be done to improve the systems and mechanisms for international scientific and technological cooperation, focus on opening-up in key areas and at crucial links, and overcome institutional weaknesses in opening-up and innovation.

It was stressed at the meeting that equal emphasis should be given to the strategies of "going global" and "bringing in", and international exchanges and cooperation in the scientific and technological fields should be expanded, for the country to get deeply involved in global sci-tech governance.

The meeting also noted the importance of cultivating an internationalized environment for research.

To this end, efforts should be made to address the practical concerns of and solve problems for researchers, to ensure that talented individuals are introduced, are willing to stay and are properly utilized so that they can continuously contribute their wisdom, it said.

The meeting also emphasized the need to build a strong line of defense to protect scientific and technological security in an open environment by improving related systems and risk prevention mechanisms.

The meeting deliberated and approved guidelines on optimizing the modern corporate system with Chinese characteristics, safeguarding grain-growing farmers' incomes and improving compensation mechanisms in major grain-producing areas, and building a globally competitive open environment for scientific and technological innovation.

Joyful break



Young people participate in a running event at the Happy Valley amusement park in Wuhan, Hubei province, on Tuesday. The runners included nearly 1,000 students who had just finished their college entrance examinations, as well as university graduates. The test-takers are becoming major consumers in a range of sectors and are driving a new wave of economic growth this summer. ZHANG CHANG / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

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Nation's new astronauts include one each from Hong Kong, Macao

By ZHAO LEI in Beijing and LI BINGCUN and WU KUNLING in Hong Kong

China has selected 10 new astronauts, including two from the country's Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions, according to the China Manned Space Agency.

The agency said in a news release on Tuesday that the newly selected astronauts — eight spacecraft pilots and two science payload specialists — are the fourth group of members at the Astronaut Center of China, located in a northwestern suburb of Beijing.

Both of the science payload specialists were chosen from applicants from Hong Kong and Macao, it noted.

Next, the new astronauts are scheduled to start systematic and comprehensive training at the center.

Along with the advances in international cooperation in China's manned space programs, foreign nationals will also be selected to be trained as astronauts and take part in missions to China's Tiangong space station, according to the agency.

Huang Weifen, chief trainer of Chinese astronauts, said that the final-list applicants from Hong Kong and Macao have passed several rounds of selection procedures, ranging from physical and psychological examinations to spaceflight-related skill tests.

The astronauts will be tasked with serving inside the Tiangong

space station as well as fulfilling the nation's manned missions to the moon, she added.

Noting that the spacecraft pilots in the fourth group of astronauts have been chosen from aviators serving in the Chinese armed forces, Huang said this is the first time that pilots from the Ground Force and Navy of the People's Liberation Army have been given an opportunity to become astronauts. Previously, only aviators from the PLA Air Force had such a chance.

China started selecting the country's fourth generation of astronauts in October 2022.

It is the first time that people from Hong Kong and Macao have had the opportunity to join the country's astronaut group.

Hong Kong media reported earlier that the selected applicant from the city is Lai Ka-ying, a female chief inspector of the Hong Kong Police Force. The information has yet to be confirmed by the China Manned Space Agency, which usually does not disclose the names of new astronauts.

Hong Kong Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu said on Tuesday that the inclusion of a Hong Kong specialist in the fourth-generation astronaut group is an "extremely inspiring and uplifting development". He called it a glorious milestone in the history of the SAR and its residents.

He thanked the central government for including Hong Kong candidates in the selection, which he said is a show of support for the

SAR's scientific and technological development.

Lee said it highlights the city's unique status under the "one country, two systems" principle, reflects the nation's strong support and encouragement for Hong Kong's science sector, and acknowledges the research capabilities of scientists in the SAR.

The city will provide unwavering support to its scientists to make greater contributions to national science projects, he added.

The Macao SAR government said on Tuesday that the central government's move sends a powerful message of encouragement to young people in the city.

It added that Macao is committed to actively promoting the city's aerospace technology and its integration with other sectors, in order to facilitate the SAR's high-quality economic development.

Generally speaking, an astronaut will be cleared for his or her first spaceflight after about two-and-a-half years of training, but that is subject to mission plans and developments, according to space officials.

Before the fourth group, China had 39 astronauts from three generations. Among them, 22 have taken part in 13 flight missions, including the latest, Shenzhou XVIII. Several in the first generation who had not taken part in any spaceflights during their service have already retired.

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Apple's AR goggles seen as a booster to innovation

By MASI  
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China's augmented reality industry is expected to usher in a new stage of growth, as Apple Inc announced on Monday that preorders for its Vision Pro AR goggles will begin on the Chinese mainland on Friday.

The move came as Apple attaches greater importance to China, which is not just a major market but also a vital link in its supply chains and a great source of innovation for the United States-based technological company, experts said.

But as Apple brings ChatGPT to iPhones in an artificial intelligence overhaul, it will see rising competition from Chinese rivals that are also doubling down on AI applications, they added.

Apple CEO Tim Cook said that the Chinese mainland will be among the first group of countries and regions outside the US where consumers can buy Vision Pro locally, with it becoming available on June 28. Cook made the remarks on Monday as he opened Apple's Worldwide Developers Conference at its headquarters in Cupertino, California.

Cook said that the device can enable users to work and collaborate with an infinite virtual canvas for apps, relive treasured memories in a three-dimensional format and watch TV shows and movies in a one-of-a-kind personal cinema.

This month, Chinese internet companies including Alibaba, Tencent, ByteDance, China Mobile and Sina are launching new apps for Vision Pro, such as Douyin VR Live, Taobao and Tencent Video, Apple said.

Pan Helin, a member of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology's Expert Committee for Information and Communication Economy, said, "As the world's largest market and manufacturing base for consumer electronics, China is of long-term, strategic importance to Apple."

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MOUNTAIN COUNTY CHANGES ITS SPOTS TO ENSURE LEOPARDS THRIVE

Project to reinstate natural habitat on farmland is aiding survival of vulnerable native species

By HOU LIQIANG and ZHU XINGXIN  
in Heshun, Shanxi



Located at the end of a road in the Taihang Mountains, Leyi village has only 42 households with 70 residents, whose average age is 65. The densely vegetated mountains that surround the sparsely populated rural community, which has three residential areas, add to its sense of isolation from the outside world.

Recently, however, the village in Heshun county, Shanxi province, had an unusual horticultural activity. Over 10 villagers, most with gray hair, did something they had never done before when they

planted flowering shrubs on ridges among farm plots.

The villagers are a key part of the Baoxiangtian project, which aims to restore natural habitats for vulnerable North China leopards. According to the project's initiator, the Chinese Felid Conservation Alliance, a nonprofit organization specializing in the protection of wildcats in China, "bao" stands for the leopard, "xiang" for villagers, and "tian" for farmland.

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Cultural show

Residents watch a Tibetan opera performance at a park in Lhasa, capital of the Xizang autonomous region, on Tuesday. Starting on Sunday, the city is holding a five-day show of the traditional opera, drawing large audiences including local residents and tourists. Tibetan opera was added to the UNESCO list of the intangible cultural heritage of humanity in 2009.

TENZIN NYIDA / XINHUA





PAGE TWO

Leopards:  
Humans help  
survival quest



**Top:** Huang Qiaowen, executive director of the Chinese Felid Conservation Alliance, stands in front of a mural of a North China leopard in Heshun county, Shanxi province. **Middle:** Huang checks an infrared camera, which captures the action of the leopards in Heshun. **Above:** Villagers plant trees on farm plots in the area of the Baoxiangtian project. PHOTOS BY ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY



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The alliance, which has protected the North China leopard in Heshun for a decade, envisions a revitalized Leyi where both people and leopards thrive. The project aims to establish comprehensive biodiversity through eco-friendly and sustainable agricultural practices, said Huang Qiaowen, executive director of the alliance.

The program is an example of the multi-stakeholder governance model used for North China leopard conservation in Heshun, which involves not only the government but also social organizations, research institutions, and local communities.

A leopard subspecies native to China, North China leopards are under top national-level protection in China and were included on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List of Threatened Species in 2012.

From May 2015 to June 2020, a total of 89 adult North China leopards were identified in Heshun, local authorities said.

The county's North China leopards stand out as the "sole visibly healthy and continuously expanding" population of the species in China, the Ministry of Ecology and Environment said in a media release early last year.

It is a "unique population source" for the continuation of the endangered animal, and Heshun plays a crucial role as a key channel for the animal's dispersal, the release stated.

Habitat integrity

The alliance's monitoring, aided by infrared cameras, revealed the presence of six North China leopards within a 20-kilometer radius of Baoxiangtian, Huang said. On Feb 9, the eve of this year's Spring Festival, the area was graced by a female leopard and three cubs, she added.

This density of the animals is notably high for the species, considering that the territory of a male North China leopard may extend beyond 100 square km, though that of a female is usually much smaller.

Visitors standing in the Baoxiangtian project area may see no obvious signs indicating the presence of the carnivorous animal, which are known to avoid the presence of humans. But, they might chance upon traces of the shy creature if they venture into the mountains.

In a small hollow enveloped by trees, located less than half a km from Baoxiangtian, the scattered bones of a wild boar lay on the ground. Some parts are slightly weathered and blackened. These remnants were left by a North China leopard after it had fed on its prey.

The wide and deep valley where Baoxiangtian is nestled between two lush hills, should ideally be a favored roaming ground for wild animals. However, farming has disrupted the living environment of these creatures, contributing to the fragmentation of the North China leopard's habitat.

To address the problem, the alliance leased 5.6 hectares of farmland in the valley last year. The alliance aspires to restore the valley to a thriving habitat for wild animals by diversifying the crops and vegetation without using any chemicals.

The Baoxiangtian operation also

generates a steady income for local villagers. The alliance has established a cooperative named after Baoxiangtian and employs 11 villagers to assist with its operations, Huang said.

Last year, the alliance distributed harvests from Baoxiangtian, including corn, to the alliance's funding donors. "The produce was highly praised," she said with a gentle smile on her tanned face, a result of working in Baoxiangtian for a long time.

This year, the alliance plans to launch a farmland "adoption" program to connect Baoxiangtian with people from afar who share a deep concern for the North China leopard. Donors can adopt a plot of farmland as small as 1 square meter for an annual fee of 59 yuan (\$8.30) to support the cooperative's operations, she explained.

Those adopting more than 5 sq m will receive an annual allocation of 3 to 5 kilograms of produce from Baoxiangtian, she added.

Concerted efforts

Prior to the Baoxiangtian initiative, the alliance worked with local communities and authorities for a decade to explore solutions to enhance the protection of the endangered animal.

In April 2015, for example, with support from the government of Mafang township, which Leyi belongs to, the alliance funded the establishment of a patrol team named after *laobaozi*, the name for the North China leopard in the area.

The team, which has grown from five members to 20, is not only tasked with collecting data from the 400 infrared cameras the alliance has installed, but also conducts patrols to prevent poaching.

Qi Qiantang from Leyi is one of the team's first members. He retired from the team last year at age 75. In a TV cabinet in his home, there is a photo of him with an image of a North China leopard. The picture sits beside a family photo.

"We cleared the traps people set to catch wild animals, and few traps have been detected in recent years, as people have an increasing awareness about protection (of wildlife)," he said.

Team members collect data from the infrared cameras every two months, and for their work they can receive up to 6,000 yuan per year.

Qi is still engaged in alliance activities, and was one of those who planted the shrubs. He also helps the alliance maintain a vegetable garden, which earns him a daily income of at least 150 yuan.

Without such programs run by the alliance, the villagers would hardly have any income, he said.

Aside from farming, many villagers in the area also raise cattle for a living. However, it has been difficult for them to earn a decent income in recent years following sharp decreases in beef prices.

"The operations of the alliance bring us good income, and that also protects the animals," Qi noted.

He said the alliance has also issued megaphones to residents with recording and flashing light functions to help them frighten away wild boars that sometimes ravage crops. This way, the villagers don't need to resort to means that may hurt or even kill the animal, which is a common prey of the North China leopard.

Patrol teams

A team of over 100 members conducts patrols to add in the

conservation of the North China leopard, said Li Ruiping, director of the Tiejiao Mountain Provincial Nature Reserve. The group comprises Laobaozi team members, rangers from the reserve, and rangers hired by the local government.

Covering about 35,352 hectares, the reserve was officially established in 2010 with its priority being protection of the North China leopard. Leyi village is located within the reserve.

Recognizing the North China leopard's preference for habitats with abundant cover, the reserve has prioritized afforestation efforts, Li said. Over the past three years, approximately 66.7 hectares of trees have been planted to help restore the leopard's natural habitat.

Ten small ponds were dug along natural watercourses to improve access to water for the leopard's prey species.

Plans are also underway this year to enhance North China leopard monitoring using more advanced means, Li said.

Tracking collars will be used, and rangers will collect fecal samples for genetic analysis to assess reproductive connectivity between different North China leopard communities, he said.

The Tiejiao reserve, together with 11 reserves and forest administrations in Shanxi, will also conduct joint monitoring starting this year to learn about the species' level of reproductive exchanges, he said.

Huang said the alliance is in close communication with local authorities on the issue of North China leopard conservation.

"We meet with county heads at least three to four times a year," she said, adding they have more frequent interaction with lower-level officials.

Local authorities also turn to them sometimes for information about North China leopard conservation. This happened last year when the local government was applying for an interest-free loan from the World Bank to support the construction of ecological corridors in the reserve.

In a draft plan, Northeast Forestry University proposed building five such corridors. After considering the alliance's suggestion to build 11, the local government increased the number of corridors to eight, she said.

In 2022, the county government also accepted the alliance's advice to designate 782 sq km of land as core areas for North China leopard conservation where development is banned, Huang said.

Standing amid the Baoxiangtian project, Huang said she was optimistic the project would succeed on multiple levels.

The flowering shrubs attract insects that are natural predators of crop-eating pests, aiding insect control on the farmland, she explained. In addition, crops such as sesame will be grown to provide food sources for birds.

She said the alliance anticipates the ridges will be transformed into habitats suitable for lizards, snakes and small birds that may draw predatory raptors.

"This is a cafeteria for all forms of life," Huang said.

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An aerial view of the habitat for North China leopards in Heshun county, Shanxi province. XIAO SHIBAI / FOR CHINA DAILY AND ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY

Orthopedist  
digs deep into  
his pocket for  
conservation  
work, rescues

By HOU LIQIANG and ZHU XINGXIN in Heshun, Shanxi

If it were not for his father's interference, Yang Xiaodong would have pursued a major related to animals when he entered university in 1992.

However, he ended up majoring in medical science and became an orthopedist at the People's Hospital in Shanxi province's Heshun, his home county, after graduating.

Nevertheless, the 56-year-old's enthusiasm for animals has remained unwavering. Over the past two decades, he has dedicated a significant amount

of his free time and personal funds to wildlife conservation.

He is both deputy head of the hospital and chairman of the Heshun Ecological Conservation Society, founded in 2018.

Yang's interest in animals began in his childhood. As the youngest of five siblings and the only male, he received plenty of affection and his family was remarkably tolerant of him keeping an array of pets.

When he visited Beijing for a study tour in the late 1990s, he heard about the Friends of Nature, an environmental NGO established in 1993, and one of the first organizations of its kind in China.

He soon visited the NGO and applied to become a member.

Upon returning to Heshun, he literally spread the word about wildlife conservation with the help of a motorbike provided by the organization. As the NGO expanded into other sectors, including environmental protection and climate change, Yang grew distant from it. "I only like wildlife conservation," he said.

In 1999, he founded a wildlife protection organization in the county, which nine years later evolved into the Heshun Ecological Conservation Society. The society devoted most of its energy and resources toward rescuing injured wild animals. Since its establishment, it has rescued more than 500 wild animals.

The rescue work has cost Yang a lot of time and money. "I couldn't figure out how much money I have spent," he said.

In 2022 Jinzhong city, where Heshun is located, allocated the society 100,000 yuan (\$13,790) to support its wildlife conservation efforts and then 50,000 yuan the next year. It was one of the few opportunities for the association to receive financial support.

"The money was not enough to make ends meet for the society (during the two years)," Yang said.

He also received 80,000 yuan from the Society of Entrepreneurs and Ecology, a Beijing-based NGO, to build a base for wildlife rescue in 2018. However, he ended up having to contribute 5,000 yuan from his own funds to complete the project.

Seven years ago, he managed to heal an injured great bustard after more than 10 days of treatment and care. After hearing from conservationist friends that a flock of the migratory birds was resting in Datong, a city about 450 kilometers away from Heshun in northern Shanxi, he drove to the location to release the big bird.

In 2018, he took a black stork with a broken wing into his care. In just six months, he spent over 6,000 yuan on food for the stork. He eventually persuaded a zoo in Taiyuan, Shanxi, to take in the bird, after finding it was too expensive to keep.

Yang is determined to continue his wildlife conservation work, despite it being costly. He said he leads a simple lifestyle and has modest requirements when it comes to clothing and food.

"Many people have criticized me for spending excessively on wildlife conservation. However, I believe that my quality of life has not been compromised as a result," he said.