



China insight

SPECIAL ISSUE FOR "STORIES OF CPC" THEMATIC BRIEFING ON XINJIANG



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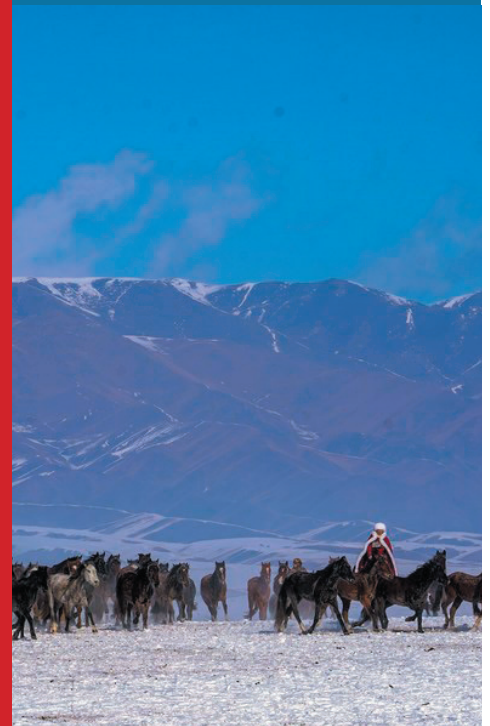
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Xi Stresses Building Xinjiang Featuring Socialism With Chinese Characteristics in New Era



Chinese President Xi Jinping talks with local people while visiting a villager's home in Tokkuzak Township, Shufu County, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, on April 28, 2014

President Xi Jinping has called for efforts to build Xinjiang featuring socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era.

Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, made the remarks at the third central symposium on work related to Xinjiang, which was held in Beijing on September 25 and 26, 2020.

Xi underlined the need to fully and faithfully implement the CPC's policies on governing Xinjiang for the new era.

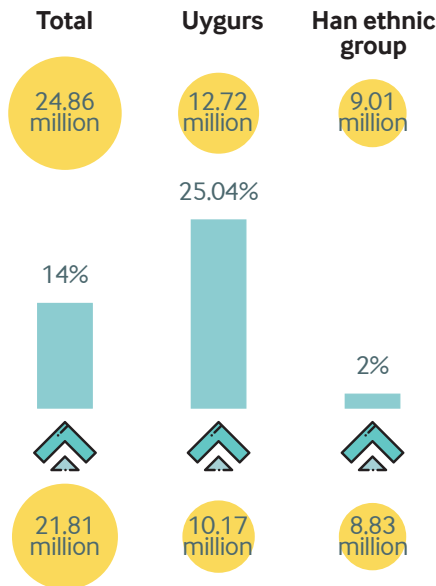
Xi demanded law-based governance and long-term efforts to develop Xinjiang into a region that is united, harmonious, prosperous, and culturally advanced, with healthy ecosystems and people living and working in contentment.

Thanks to strenuous efforts from all sides since the second symposium in 2014,

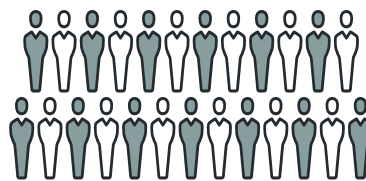
major progress has been achieved in the work related to Xinjiang. Xi said, citing a series of markedly improving key indicators from 2014 to 2019, such as a sound economic momentum with an average annual GDP growth rate of 7.2 percent, people's living standards being significantly improved with an average annual 9.1 percent growth in residential per capita disposable income, and more than 2.92 million out of 3.09 million people being lifted out of poverty.

Xinjiang Population

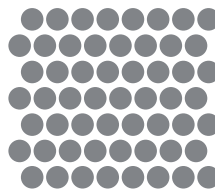
From 2010 to 2018



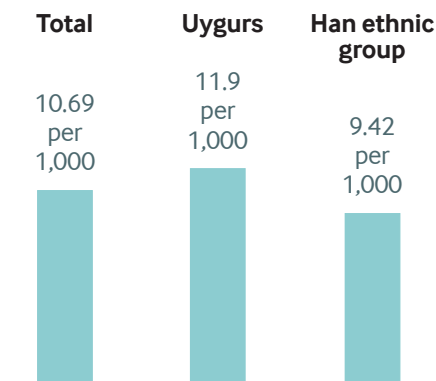
Xinjiang has a population of **25 million**



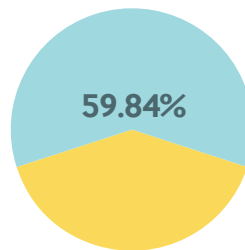
and is home to all **56** ethnic groups in China including Uyghur, Han, Kazak, Hui, Kirgiz, Mongolian and Tajik



Birth rate



Ethnic minorities accounts for



of Xinjiang's total population

(Compiled by Beijing Review)

Such a sound situation where people live and work in contentment has laid a solid foundation for long-term peace and stability in Xinjiang, Xi said.

"Facts have fully proved that China's work on ethnic affairs has been successful," he said, noting the achievements are the result of the strong leadership of the CPC Central Committee, along with the concerted efforts of the whole Party and all the Chinese people including more than 25

million people from different ethnic groups in Xinjiang.

Facts prove that the Party's policies on Xinjiang in the new era, which were developed by the CPC Central Committee since the 18th CPC National Congress, are perfectly right and must be adhered to on a long-term basis, Xi stressed.

He demanded the entire Party make implementing the Party's Xinjiang policies in the new era a political task, always maintain-

ing the correct political orientation of the work related to Xinjiang.

Xi noted that the banner of socialist rule of law must be held high to maintain lasting social stability in Xinjiang, ensuring that the requirement for fully advancing China's law-based governance covers all areas of the work related to Xinjiang.

Xi stressed efforts to focus on heightening a sense of identity of the Chinese nation to constantly strengthen ethnic unity.

The education on the sense of Chinese identity should be incorporated into the education of officials and the younger generation in Xinjiang as well as its social education, helping the officials and the general public of all ethnic groups develop an accurate understanding of the country, history, ethnicity, culture and religion, to let the sense of Chinese identity take root in people, he said.

Noting that development is an important foundation for lasting peace and stability in Xinjiang, Xi stressed leveraging the region's geographical advantages to develop Xinjiang as a core area of the Silk Road Economic Belt and a hub of opening-up in the inland and border areas.

Xi urged efforts to consolidate the foundation and increase the efficiency of the industrial sector in Xinjiang, advance industrial transformation and upgrading, and boost urbanization in an all-round way while protecting the environment.

Stressing the need to coordinate epidemic containment with economic and social development, Xi called for ensuring stability on six fronts—employment, the financial sector, foreign trade, foreign investment, domestic investment, and expectations—while maintaining security in six areas: job security, basic living needs, operations of market entities, food and energy, stable industrial and supply chains, and the normal functioning of primary-level governments.

He also called for unremitting efforts to eradicate poverty and promote employment in Xinjiang.

Xi pointed out that the original aspiration and mission of the Party is to seek happiness for the Chinese people, including people of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang, and the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, including various ethnic groups in Xinjiang.

He urged continuous efforts to foster a contingent of high-caliber officials from ethnic-minority groups in Xinjiang who are loyal to the Party and have both integrity and



Chinese President Xi Jinping poses for a group photo with pupils and teachers of the central primary school in Tokkuzak Township, Shufu County, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, on April 28, 2014



Chinese President Xi Jinping shakes hands with deputies to the 12th National People's Congress (NPC) from Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region when joining a panel discussion with them at the annual session of the NPC in Beijing on March 10, 2017



Chinese President Xi Jinping receives a traditional Uyghur hat, a gift symbolizing the highest respect and best wishes from people of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang, when joining a panel discussion with deputies to the 12th National People's Congress (NPC) from Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region at the annual session of the NPC in Beijing on March 10, 2017

ability, saying that the officials in Xinjiang are trustworthy and capable.

Underscoring the great significance of Xinjiang-related work to the whole Party and the entire country, Xi asked for improvement in working mechanism in which the CPC

Central Committee exerts the unified leadership, the central departments offer guidance and support, other provincial-level regions render support and cooperation, and Xinjiang plays its principal role.

Other senior Chinese leaders also

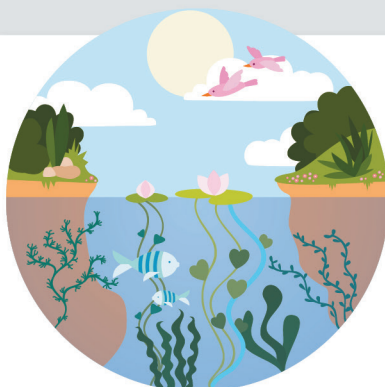
attended the symposium, which was presided over by Li Keqiang. Li Zhanshu, Wang Huning, Zhao Leji and Han Zheng were in attendance, while Wang Yang spoke to sum up the event. **C**

(Xinhua News Agency)

Highlights of Xi's Speech at the Third Central Symposium on Work Related to Xinjiang



Law-based governance



Healthy ecosystems



A sense of identity of the Chinese nation



A core area of the Silk Road Economic Belt



A hub of opening-up in the inland and border areas



Coordinating epidemic containment with economic and social development



Trustworthy and capable high-caliber officials



The central departments offering guidance and support, other provincial-level regions rendering support and cooperation, and Xinjiang playing its principal role

Key Terms of Xi's Speech at the Third Central Symposium on Work Related to Xinjiang

A strong sense of community for the Chinese nation

The report delivered at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China on October 18, 2017 said, "We will fully implement the Party's policies concerning ethnic groups, heighten public awareness of ethnic unity and progress, and create a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation. We will encourage more exchanges and interactions among different ethnic groups, helping them remain closely united like the seeds of a pomegranate that stick together, and work jointly for common prosperity and development."

People living and working in Contentment

Continuous efforts have been made to ensure stability on six fronts—employment, the financial sector, foreign trade, foreign investment, domestic investment, and expectations—while maintaining security in six areas: job security, basic living needs, operations of market entities, food and energy, stable industrial and supply chains, and the normal functioning of primary-level governments.

Law-based Governance

The banner of socialist rule of law must be held high to maintain lasting social stability in Xinjiang, ensuring that the requirement for fully advancing China's law-based governance covers all areas of the work related to Xinjiang.

Pairing Assistance

China started to carry out the pairing assistance program in Xinjiang in 1997 when it sent government officials from developed regions to work and hold tenures there. Pairing assistance, a national strategy in China to channel financial and personnel support to less developed regions, has significantly boosted progress and social stability in Xinjiang, and will continue to help the region achieve prosperity.

Sustained financial and personnel support has significantly contributed to economic development, poverty reduction, ethnic solidarity, and social progress in the autonomous region. The program has created jobs, built homes, roads and other infrastructure, and provided locals with better access to education and medical services.

Xi's Remarks on Ethnic Affairs

Xinjiang is an important security barrier in northwest China which holds a special strategic position and faces special issues. Governing the region well is of great significance.

At a panel discussion with national lawmakers from Xinjiang at the annual session of the National People's Congress (NPC) on March 10, 2017

Targeted measures should be taken to help people lift themselves out of poverty and poverty alleviation work should be done in a timely and down-to-earth manner.

Efforts should be made on advancing the rule of law to create a fair and orderly legal environment for the economy and development, and the legitimate rights of people in the areas with concentrations of ethnic minorities should be protected in the framework of the rule of law.

At a panel discussion with deputies to the 12th NPC from south China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region during the annual session of the 12th NPC on March 8, 2015

We will build a wall of bronze and iron for ethnic unity, social stability and national unity.

The tradition of all ethnic groups in the country breathing the same air and sharing the same fate should be handed down from generation to generation.

Everything possible will be done to accelerate the social and economic development of China's minority ethnic groups and the ethnic areas and to bring concrete benefits to people there.

During a meeting with members of the 12th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference from ethnic minority groups on March 4, 2014

More efforts are needed to build the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps into a stabilizer of the country's border areas, a melting pot that integrates various ethnic groups as well as a model region that showcases advanced productivity and culture.

During an inspection tour in Xinjiang from April 27 to 30, 2014

The unification of the 56 ethnic groups into one nation is an invaluable treasure bestowed by our ancestors, and one of the country's great strengths.

The correct and Chinese way to solve ethnic issues must follow these principles:

- upholding the leadership of the CPC;
- persevering in the socialist path with Chinese characteristics;
- safeguarding the unity of the country;
- adhering to the principle of equality among all ethnic groups;
- maintaining and improving the regional ethnic autonomy system;
- insisting that all ethnic groups work together and achieve common prosperity;
- consolidating the ideal that the Chinese nation is a community formed by all ethnic groups;
- practicing the rule of law;
- enhancing communication and exchanges;
- promoting harmonious and peaceful coexistence;
- consolidating and developing socialist ethnic relations featuring equality, unity, mutual assistance, and harmony; and
- achieving the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation together.

From the speech at the Central Conference on Ethnic Affairs on September 28, 2014

Embracing Change

Development erases poverty and insecurity in Xinjiang desert village

By Li Fangfang



Horses run at a horse field in Zhaosu County, Ili Kazak Autonomous Prefecture, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, on December 31, 2020

When Chen Cheng, a government official in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region in northwest China, was appointed head of a village deep in the Taklimakan Desert, he had to take extra precautions for safety.

Baxlaqbinam, a struggling village in Pishan County in south Xinjiang, had seen some of its residents become radicalized. When Chen arrived there in the first half of 2017, during his visits to the villagers at their homes, he would go in a group with other officials as there had been cases where officials had been treated with hostility.

In 2017, there were 255 households in Baxlaqbinam. As one villager said, "Many of my neighbors didn't have a decent house or electricity." Many villagers had only temporary jobs, which fetched them a meager daily income only as long as the work lasted.

Pishan was like the proverbial person in distress caught between a rock and a hard place. Bound by the desert on one side and the Karakoram Mountain Range on the other, it struggled to feed its population of 300,000 as its arable land accounts for only about 0.1 percent of the entire area. Severe desertification made it impossible for the vil-

lagers to live off the land.

Since 2014, experienced officials began to be sent to the cluster of 169 villages in the county to improve their economic situation since poverty was a major factor spawning terrorism. Chen found poverty blocked access to education and made villagers vulnerable to the influence of radicalism.

More than 95 percent of the villagers are Uyghurs, the largest ethnic group in Xinjiang. They knew little about what was happening outside their village.

One feasible solution was to provide education for the children and teach them Mandarin, the standard language of China, to help them communicate with people from other parts of the country and be informed.

Another solution was to create jobs by developing industries. In recent years, with Chen's efforts, two factories have come to the village. One of them makes sofas.

The owner of the sofa factory, Xiong Tingqiang, came from Beijing. Earlier, he was growing dates in Pishan, and then he found that the traditional lifestyle promised a business opportunity. The villagers mostly sat on the floor or on their adobe bed, and Xiong realized sofas would have a good

market if they were made locally and were affordable.

He started the business with Chen's help. The factory provides jobs for 30 people and its sofas are sold in nearby towns.

Bumaryam Pazil is one of the factory hands. The 43-year-old makes slipcovers for the sofas, earning 1,500 yuan (\$225) a month. Besides the income, the factory is some 200 meters away from home, which she finds most convenient.

"My husband has his job and I have mine. Everything is going pretty well now," she said.

However, things were far from well four years ago, when she got married. Her husband Kudrat Ismayil used to sell timber. Though once well off, he ran into heavy debts when his first wife had breast cancer and his son from that marriage was diagnosed with leukemia.

Kudrat said he was always wary when he ventured out, worrying that he would run into his debtors. "I had no money to pay them back," he told *Beijing Review*.

When Chen came to know of Kudrat's plight, he helped him find doctors. The villagers' committee also helped Kudrat and later Bumaryam to find seasonal work in other

villages during the cotton-picking season and gradually, they were able to pay off their debts.

Now the villagers no longer need to worry about medical expenses, since a large proportion can be reimbursed under health insurance plans.

Kudrat has restarted his timber business. He also works as a ranger in the village wetland, which is being developed into a scenic spot as well as a nature reserve.

With the improvements, the village established a museum in 2018 to document the change in people's lives. "The difficult life shown in the museum is a thing of the past," Chen said when the museum was inaugurated. "The villagers are moving forward with hope for the future and lessons from the past." Also, he no longer needs to move in a group. "Stability has brought a sense of personal security," he said.

Women, family, future

Bumaryam started to wear make-up after she began working in the factory. "Women in the village never used mirrors before," Chen said.

Nurgul, in charge of the women's federation in Pishan, talked about the changes in women's life after they started earning money.

"When we visited their houses and talked to them, most women were shy and didn't look at us in the eyes when talking," Nurgul said. "But as they now go out of their home to work and interact with more people, they are becoming more outgoing. At their workplaces they adopt new lifestyles from their colleagues who come from other places."

Previously, when a married woman wanted to buy clothes, she had to ask her husband to buy them for her. Now she earns her own money and can buy them herself, Nurgul said.

Also, the tradition that the women would be the last to eat is also being discarded by young people, she added.

Nurgul was born in north Xinjiang, which has more oases and the lifestyle there is more modernized. She shares tips on health and how to tackle cultural differences with the village women, who seek advice from her when encountering a problem.

"Women are gaining respect at their workplaces and they are also learning from peers like Nurgul, who have received better education and are well informed," Wang Jiangping, chief reporter of China Women News in Xinjiang, said.

"We encourage the men to share the housework and the male members in the villagers' committee are willing to lead this new trend," Chen said. "If they can't take good care of their families, how can they serve other people well?"

The change is discernible in other counties as well. In the past, the women mostly



Workers make down-filled coats at a factory in Jiashi County, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region



A live-streamer dances during an online event to promote local farm products in Luopu, a county in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, on September 26, 2020

stayed at home, looking after their families. People's incomes were erratic and they were prone to poverty as the men had no work in winter, when farming came to a halt. But the new industrialized economy is helping them live a stable life full of hope.

More choices

For many families in south Xinjiang, farming is not the only way to make a living. Besides growing cash crops such as nuts and dates, locals work in factories and raise livestock as well. Their incomes have improved substantially thanks to the companies which start businesses there.

Tursunhan Tursunniyaz is a farmer in Luopu County, 200 km away from Pishan and at the center of Hotan Prefecture. She has recently become a full-time employee at the branch factory of dairy company Xiyuchun after a three-month internship. Her monthly salary has doubled to 2,500 yuan (\$375).

"My husband had a donkey cart when I married him 15 years ago," Tursunhan said. The couple grew corn and wheat, which brought them an annual income of around 10,000 yuan (\$1,477). Though it was nearly double of what many other villagers earned, it was still a hard life for a family of four.

Liu Xiaojun, the manager of the factory, saw the market potential in Luopu, where half of Hotan's population live. "There was no large breeding farm in Hotan," Liu said. "Therefore, it was a big opportunity for us."

The factory owns 1,100 cows which produce 11 tons of milk every day. Its dairy products are mainly sold in south Xinjiang.

"We have established a complete industrial chain and plan to sell dairy products such as yogurt and milk drinks," Liu said.

The company provides 40 jobs, mostly feeding and milking the cows. In addition, it offers advanced breeding technology to villagers who raise cows. The county government invested 75 million yuan (\$11 million) to buy cows for 3,766 households that were under the national poverty line.

Tursunhan has two cows. She plans to buy a car after selling her cows and has a driving license in anticipation.

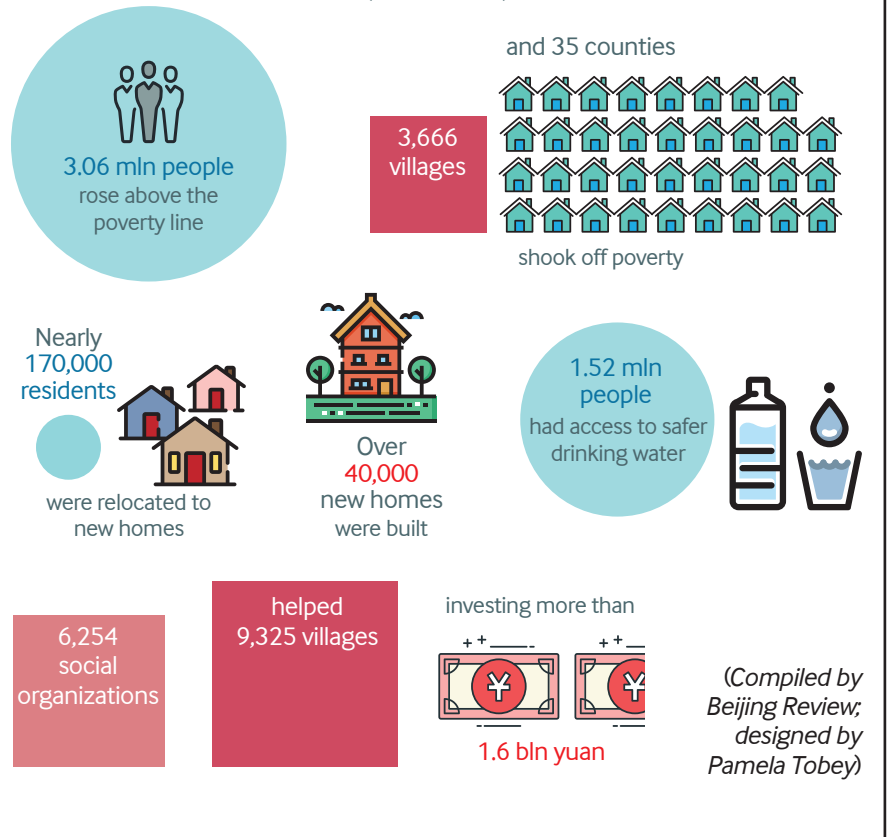
"I have more money to spend now. I can buy clothes in the city [100 km away] and eat hotpot there," the 34-year-old said. "I am going to continue working in the factory."

Besides making extra money, she has changed her way of thinking. Unlike her mother's generation, the mother of two said she is happy with two children, and wants to offer a higher standard of living for her family and invest more in her son and daughter's education and health.

"I wish for my kids to go to college," Tursunhan said. **C**

(Beijing Review)

Poverty Alleviation in Xinjiang (2015-20)



Aerial photo taken on June 10, 2020 shows a view of Taxkorgan Tajik Autonomous County, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region

Woman Leads Fellow Xinjiang Villagers Out of Poverty

By Cheng Si

Shaking off the poverty that has beset her family is not the only goal for Pashagul Kerim.

Over the past five years, she has also offered assistance to her impoverished peers to get them out of their poor financial situations.

Raised in a low-income family in Wujia County in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, northwest China, Pashagul lived a very hard life after her father passed away when she was a child. She and her two brothers were supported by their mother with a rather meager income.

She was too young to help her mother, but she was also distressed by their hardships. She got the opportunity that might change her life in June 2006 when the county released a campaign to organize labor forces to work in Dongguan, Guangdong Province, south China.

She signed up without hesitation and won a job in a factory producing electronic components.

The work was not that easy for her in the beginning. She was afraid of showing weakness and making mistakes. But she knew that if she kept working with such cowardice, she wouldn't improve, let alone master more techniques or make more money. So she decided to make friends with her colleagues and ask for their advice during her leisure time.

Her skills soon improved, and her monthly salary rose to 2,700 yuan (\$410) from 2,000 yuan (\$303) in just half a year. Now she is a senior worker at the factory, earning over 4,500 yuan (\$697) per month.

But she didn't stop there. She knows that more people like her in poor areas struggle with a lack of knowledge or jobs.

She then called her cousins and friends to let them know they had the chance to live a better life if they could find a good job.

Since 2015, about 521 villagers have joined her to find jobs in Guangdong, among whom 210 were from poverty-stricken families. In the past five years, she has helped 179 impoverished households earn a living in the province, bringing them incomes totaling 630,000 yuan (\$97,624).

Her work paid off. Recently, she was recognized as a national model worker by the All-China Federation of Trade Unions in Beijing, capital of China.

She also went above and beyond her role as a skilled worker, being warmhearted to people around her.



(Top) Farmers pick megranates in Pishan County of Hotan in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region on October 8, 2020

An employee works at a textile factory in Yuli County of Bayan Gol Mongolian Autonomous Prefecture in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region on August 24, 2020

Since 2015, she has spent over 30,000 yuan (\$4,649) to buy train tickets for her impoverished peers so they could travel out of the village to find work. In 2017, she assisted one of her peers for about 10 days while he was in the hospital and paid his medical fees of about 19,000 yuan (\$2,944). **C**

(China Daily)

Feel at Home

Xinjiang's tourism industry has entered the fast track

As the tourism industry continues to thrive in northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region in recent years, local authorities are exploring new ways to improve tourists' experience.

In Tekes County, building high-quality homestay properties with local characteristics is one of the new approaches to attract more visitors and boost local tourism sector. So far, the county has 227 qualified homestays.

Most of the tourists who traveled to the county chose to stay in local homestay facilities to experience the distinctive ethnic charms and fascinating culture.

Wen Yanjun, Party secretary of the local culture and tourism bureau, said that they had set up a service center in 2019 for homestay properties and issued measures to regulate the market by improving the quality

of the homestay facilities.

Hosts can receive professional training at the local service center to run their business more efficiently and improve the quality of their services.

A classification and rating system has been put in place to strengthen management in this kind of property.

Homestays in the region feature distinctive and innovative architectural styles and local folk culture.

A plan has been rolled out to promote the evaluation of homestays with a star-rating mechanism that eventually aims to reward those that stand out. The outstanding homestays will be an example for others thus boosting the development of the whole industry, said Wen.

Tourism has played an "extremely important" role in helping China's impoverished

families out of poverty. Developing rural tourism has proved to be quite effective in driving the regional economy and improving rural livelihood in Xinjiang.

A project launched in 2016 by Xinjiang's regional tourism bureau for boosting tourism has aimed at getting 300,000 people out of poverty by 2020.

Over the years, the autonomous region has drawn millions of tourists from home and abroad and is still on many travelers' bucket list for mysterious adventures.

Xinjiang will endeavor to attract more than 200 million tourists in 2021, and aims to receive more than 400 million domestic and international tourists in 2025, Shohrat Zakir, chairman of the regional government, said in a government work report presented to the regional legislature's annual session on February 1.



A rural tourism village in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region

Xinjiang welcomed more than 158 million tourists in 2020 despite the impact of COVID-19.

Fifteen civil airports will be completed or under construction in Xinjiang five years from now, Zhang Jun, secretary of the Party committee and chairman of Xinjiang Airport Group, said.

The number of Xinjiang civil airports grew to 22 over the last five years. The 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) will bring the total in Xinjiang to 37.

Xinjiang will accelerate the reconstruction and extension of Kashgar and Turpan airports this year, and start construction of Zhaosu and Tashikurgan airports. Airports in Qitai, Bayanbulak, Barkol, Wusu and Hoboksar are also expected to begin construction by the end of this year. Construction of Aheqi, Baicheng, Qinggil and Jeminay airports is included in the national civil airport layout plan and in the Civil Aviation Administration of China's 14th Five-Year Plan.

In addition to airport construction, Xinjiang is also promoting air routes to attract more tourists. **C**

(CGTN)



Residents have fun in the ancient city of Kashgar, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, on September 20, 2020



A view of the Urumqi Diwopu International Airport



A resident gives a thumbs-up to a volunteer in Urumqi, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, on August 3, 2020

How Xinjiang Tackles COVID-19 Outbreaks

When a localized outbreak of COVID-19 occurred in the middle of July last year, Urumqi, capital of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, northwest China, quickly entered “wartime mode” in its fight to contain the spread of the disease.

The city gave free nucleic acid tests to all 3.5 million Urumqi residents, and also requested they avoid unnecessary outdoor activities to reduce possible cross-infections. To meet city residents’ demand for essential services and commodities, local authorities in Urumqi organized their own staff, community workers and volunteers to participate in community service programs to ensure the stable supply of daily necessities. More than 210,000 volunteers from across the city joined the fight against the outbreak, making

daily deliveries of fresh fruit and vegetables from 491 grocery stores to community residents across the city.

Encouraged by her mother who is also a volunteer, Mukadas Ali, who was born after the year 2000, delivered groceries, dumped trash and took care of solitary seniors in Lengku community in Urumqi.

“In normal times, people can get what they need anywhere and at any time, but this has become a tough task under the closed-off management of residential communities,” said Sheng Xiaoyu, a community Party Secretary in Urumqi’s high-risk Tianshan District.

Sheng had to ensure that some 5,000 people in the community had access to daily necessities.

Urumqi began showing signs of recovery from the outbreak after only half a month. In early August, all farmers’ markets reopened in Urumqi, albeit with intensified COVID-19 prevention and control measures.

Equipped with the country’s tried and true emergency response tips, Xinjiang responded to the epidemic with speed and sophistication.

On October 24, 2020, a 17-year-old female villager from Shufu County in Xinjiang’s Kashgar Prefecture tested positive for the virus during the county’s routine nucleic acid testing, a measure introduced in August 2020 in Xinjiang to improve COVID-19 alert timeliness.

As soon as the alarm was sounded, the Kashgar Government and Xinjiang at large launched immediate emergency responses,

with medical and work teams sent to the prefecture to provide support.

Authorities quarantined all close contacts for medical observation, conducted nucleic acid testing on a massive scale, and launched an epidemiological investigation into the case.

"We have been racing against time," said Kasmu Ehet, a medical worker in Shufu who stayed up late to conduct nucleic acid tests. "Every second counts in stemming the spread of the virus."

By 5 p.m. on October 27, 2020, about four days after the first case, Kashgar had completed nucleic acid testing for all 4.74 million of the prefecture's residents.

The sudden virus outbreak left many living in Shufu isolated in home quarantine. However deliveries of daily supplies and targeted support to households remained in place. One of Shufu's four high-risk areas was Tuanjielu Community, a part of Tokzak Township in Shufu. Community workers there worked around the clock to serve some 4,500 residents living in the community, delivering food and offering medical care in addition to other services.

Meanwhile, for residents in other parts of Xinjiang, life and work generally went on as usual, with necessary epidemic control measures in place. Residents in Hotan, a prefecture neighboring Kashgar Prefecture, also took tests to screen for the virus, but people there could be seen wearing masks while strolling in parks and restaurants were busy catering to diners. Similarly, farmers in Ruoqiang and Qiemo counties of south-east Xinjiang, where Chinese dates are an important source of income, conducted the annual harvest as usual.

Major infrastructure projects, such as the city's Olympic center were also underway in Urumqi, with workers going through disinfection procedures before beginning work.

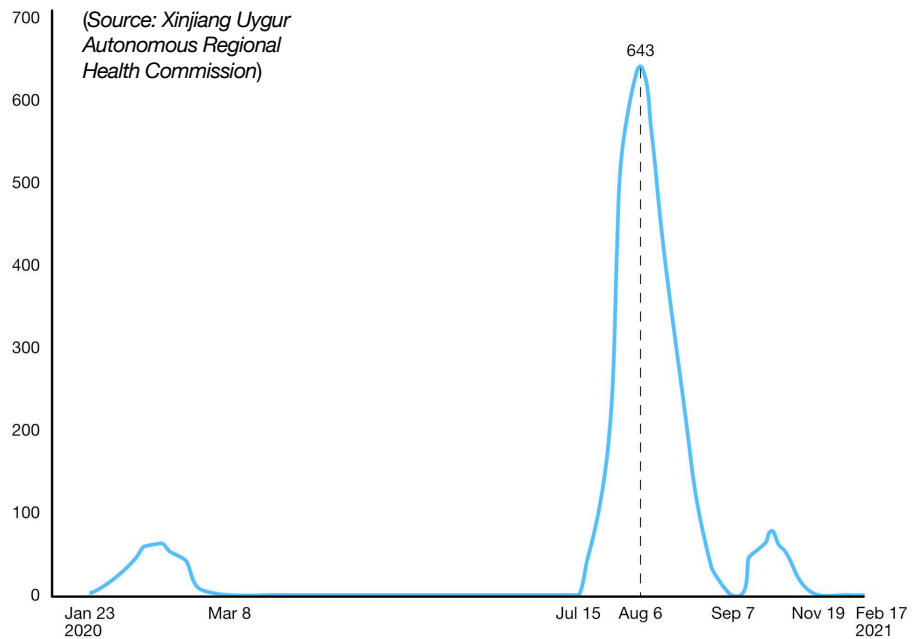
The outbreak in Kashgar came during one of Xinjiang's peak tourist seasons. Air and railway services remained open in Kashgar and throughout Xinjiang, and a specific team was set up to arrange nucleic acid tests for exiting passengers based on their schedules.

In the weeks following the outbreak, content about the large size of Xinjiang went viral on China's Twitter-like social media platform, Weibo. The content reassured visitors to Xinjiang of the limited contagion risk outside Kashgar, with many microbloggers sharing their travel experiences in the region, or their willingness to visit after the outbreak ended.

"Xinjiang is so large that you can just take necessary prevention measures, relax and have fun. Come on, Kashgar!" said one microblogger named Jianyuan. **C**

(Xinhua News Agency)

Active COVID-19 Cases in Xinjiang



Workers at a workshop in Shufu County of Kashgar Prefecture in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, clean vegetables to be delivered to local residents on October 26, 2020

Former Xinjiang Trainees Share Their Training Center Experiences



Shirali Amarjan, who is a former trainee at a vocational education and training center, told reporters that after graduating he started an interior design and decoration company. But before that, influenced by religious extremism, he saw the Han ethnic people as "pagans" and barely associated with them.

Shirali was also encouraged to rebel against national laws. Even the worse, he viewed his wife as a heretic and often abused her because she worked in a government position.

"At the training center, I not only studied law, and standard spoken and written Chinese, but also acquired knowledge of computer science, which was my favorite subject," he said.

"Other skills taught included welding and automotive maintenance, and all my classmates chose to focus on areas aligned with their interest. Another positive point was the courses were all free of charge."

Mamatniyaz Iminniyazi was a trainee at one of such centers in Shache County in Kashgar Prefecture. "In the vocational education and training centers, we were able to choose one or two vocational skills to learn based on our own interest. I chose to learn how to cook naan," said Mamatniyaza, referring to a baked flatbread which is a popular food for locals.

"My friends also chose their favorite skills to learn. Some of them chose e-commerce, some cooking, and some chose beauty and hair-dressing," Mamatniyaz said.

He added the skills he learned at the center have helped him to open up his own business. "After graduation, by taking advantage of the naan cooking skills I learned at the center, I opened a naan co-op with 25 employees. Within one year, I earned over 100,000 yuan (\$15,430)," said Mamatniyaz.

"Early last year, I established a purified water company. At present, our company covers an area of 1,800 square meters and has 20 workers. We produced over 40,000 buckets of purified water a day and my yearly income has reached 300,000 yuan (\$46,290)," he said.



Alimjan Mamatali, 28, was a trainee at a center in Hotan Prefecture. He said the overseas media reports of trainees being exploited for their labor are totally false.

"During my training, no one ever forced us to do anything. From Monday to Friday, we had six hours of class every day, mainly learning vocational skills as well as Mandarin, law and some other courses that help us get rid of extreme ideas," said Alimjan.

"During the weekends and official holidays, we were able to contact our family by phone. We could also ask for leave any time, if necessary," Alimjan said.

Alimjan currently works for a real estate company. He said the computer skills he learned at the center made it easier for him to find a job.

"I learned basic computer knowledge first, then I began to learn how to operate one. Through the training, I learned how to use Word and Excel, how to edit documents as well as other software to edit pictures, design visiting cards and advertisements, which have enabled me to earn a good living," said Alimjan.

Speaking in fluent Mandarin, Alimjan said he's more than satisfied with his current life and work. **C**



A woman works at a factory in Kashgar, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region

Highlights of the White Paper on Vocational Education and Training in Xinjiang

Urgent Need

- To curb frequent terrorist incidents
- To eradicate the breeding ground for religious extremism
- To help trainees acquire better education and vocational skills, find employment, and increase their incomes
- To safeguard social stability and long-term peace in Xinjiang

Trainees

People who were incited, coerced or induced into participating in terrorist or extremist activities, or people who participated in terrorist or extremist activities in circumstances that were not serious enough to constitute a crime;

People who were incited, coerced or induced into participating in terrorist or extremist activities, or people who participated in terrorist or extremist activities that posed a real danger but did not cause actual harm, whose subjective culpability was not deep, who acknowledged their offences and were contrite about their past actions and thus do not need to be sentenced to or can be exempted from punishment, and who have demonstrated the willingness to receive training;

People who were convicted and received prison sentence for terrorist or extremist crimes and after serving their sentences, have been assessed as still posing a potential threat to society, and who have been ordered by people's courts in accordance with the law to receive education at the centers.

Curriculum

- Standard spoken and written Chinese
- Understanding of the law
- Vocational skills
- Deradicalization

Protection of Trainees' Basic Rights

It is a basic principle, enshrined in the Constitution of China, prescribed by its laws, and demonstrated by the efforts of the Chinese government, to respect and protect human rights.

It is an attempt to help the trainees to emancipate their minds, improve themselves and their future prospects.

The only criterion for education at the centers is whether the trainee has been convicted of unlawful or criminal acts involving terrorism and religious extremism. It has nothing to do with their region, ethnicity or religion.

The personal freedom of trainees at the education and training centers is protected in accordance with the law.

The customs of all ethnic groups and the right to use their spoken and written languages are fully protected at the centers.

The education and training centers respect the trainees' freedom of religious belief.

The education and training centers employ bilingual teachers, instructors, doctors and logistics and managerial staff to ensure that the trainees can study and lead a normal life.

The education and training centers fully respect the spiritual and cultural needs of trainees.

The authorities at all levels of Xinjiang help their families and relatives to address problems in work, daily life, employment, education and medical services, thus allowing them to focus more attention on their education and training.



XINHUA

Working in Xinjiang's 'Big Cotton'

A reaper harvests cotton in a field in Manas County, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, on October 17, 2020

As the weather turns cold in October, swathes in northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region gradually turn white, but not because of snow. It's the harvesting season for cotton, a crop that matters a lot in Xinjiang and beyond.

Ample sunshine, arid weather and large temperature differences between day and night make Xinjiang an ideal place to grow the natural fiber.

Xinjiang is the largest cotton growing region in China, ranking first nationally in total output, per unit production and planting area for 26 consecutive years. In 2020, the total cotton planting area in Xinjiang reached 2.51 million hectares, nearly the same as in 2019.

Growing cotton means a lot for the far west region of China. It's the main source of income for many farmers, especially in the poorer regions of south Xinjiang.

Data by the China Cotton Association (CCA) shows that more than half of Xinjiang's farmers grow cotton, with the majority be-

ing ethnic minorities. Cotton farming is the major source of local agricultural income in south Xinjiang.

Xinjiang's cotton fields not only bring income to growers, but also to many migrant workers, who would travel across places to help pick cotton in patches hard to be harvested with machinery.

Nearly 4,000 people in the Aral township in Aksu Prefecture joined the migrant cotton-picking army last year, earning an average of nearly 6,000 yuan (\$895) per capita in two months, with the champion cotton picker pocketing some 23,000 yuan.

Over 90 percent of north Xinjiang's cotton fields are now harvested using machinery. The practice is also becoming popular in south Xinjiang.

The increasingly modernized cotton industry also creates jobs. Zulyar Nijat, a 27-year-old college graduate in south Xinjiang's cotton hub Yuli, made a foray into the cotton fields in early September by work-

ing with his elder brother to spray defoliants using drones for easier harvesting.

"We could spray defoliants on some 13.3 hectares for an entire morning, making about 1,200 yuan. It's quite a handsome payment," Zulyar said.

The downstream cotton textile sector is another major employment provider, offering some 600,000 local jobs, CCA data showed.

The importance of the raw material used in textiles has gained prominence this year amid the COVID-19 epidemic due to rising cotton demand for the production of protective gear and other medical supplies.

Railways in Xinjiang transported some 2.7 million tons of cotton during the January-July period, an increase of over 83 percent year on year, according to China Railway Urumqi Group Co. Ltd.

China's cotton and textile industries have been committed to protecting employee rights and improving their work and life con-



An employee works at a textile plant in Aksu, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region

ditions to produce high-grade products and offer stable and efficient supply chain services for global apparel and retail brands, the CCA said in August in a joint statement with the China Chamber of Commerce for Import and Export of Textiles.

China's cotton farmers and textile workers, among others, have contributed a lot to the growth of the global cotton textile market, and they deserve to be treated fairly, the statement added.

"The industry secures the livelihoods of millions of people in Xinjiang, including cotton growers, cotton textile workers and their family members, improves their lives and promotes the realization of their economic rights," said a report reviewing the history and development of Xinjiang's cotton textile industry released by the Xinjiang Textile Industry Association.

In 2010, Aytlan Mamt started working at a cotton manufacturer—one of the largest cotton processing plants in Awat, a county under southern Xinjiang's Aksu Prefecture. Reputed as the "Town of Cotton," Awat produces one-fifth of the world's long-staple cotton with silkier, lustrous and more durable fibers, filling markets from Europe to North America.

Now responsible for leading one of the mills, she makes 2,800-3,000 yuan after tax each month. "I had worked in a textile plant before I got married, so I chose to come here when my son was 6 years old as I'm already quite familiar with the whole manufacturing process," the 36-year-old woman said.

Established by a textile corporation headquartered in a central China province a decade ago, the company so far has over 200

employees, mostly locals. "When we came from Henan to purchase cotton back then, we found that having a factory here, much closer to the source of supplies, could help us save costs and haulage time," said Liao Yongfeng, head of the factory's commodity department. The move has also increased the income of local villagers who can't find employment in the winter after harvest season.

If working in the mill means staying away from being a housewife and boosting household income, it means a lot more for Atkenm Kuwan, who started working as a knitter at the factory in April 2020. Before that, she was a sanitation worker with a monthly income of 960 yuan, which, on top of her husband's monthly income of roughly the same amount, could hardly make ends meet.

"Now I have 2,300-2,500 yuan per month. That's a big help for my family, especially to the education of my children. I have extra savings for them to take extracurricular classes now," Atkenm said. She noted that her biggest dream is to give a good education to her two kids, and then to buy a car like her colleagues. "I heard some of my colleagues used to come to work by bicycle or moped, but now they drive to work."

Employees work 12-hour shifts and then rest for the following 24 hours. "Though the job requires a lot of energy, I can get enough rest during the next day and attend to many other things," said Aytlan.

Training people to process cotton requires significant time and resources. The tremendous effort that has gone into its employees, however, seems to have paid off. Most of them have worked at the company for years, according to Liao.

Xinjiang's Cotton Textile Industry



Average age of cotton textile employees

33.7

Cotton textile enterprises have

- ✓ Halal restaurants
- ✓ Ethnic minority cuisines
- ✓ Factory classrooms
- ✓ Employee recreation centers
- ✓ Basketball, table tennis and badminton courts
- ✓ Reading rooms



Recreational activities include

- ✓ Sports games
- ✓ Skills competitions
- ✓ Cultural shows



Equal pay for equal work




Gender discrimination prohibited



Automatic and smart production

(Source: *The Xinjiang Cotton Textile Industry Social Responsibility Report*; designed by Pamela Tobey)

Many of them attend to the outsized machines responsible for much of the labor. The entire process is mechanized, with most of the equipment made domestically and the rest imported from Europe. Once ready to leave the factory floor, cotton products, notably threads in the case of this company, are delivered to coastal metropolises including Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Shanghai for subsequent export to clients in Europe and the U.S.

Cotton producers in the region are eyeing further growth, hoping to reduce overheads while continuously improving their technology. "For now, sales and production volume have not dropped, and everything is business as usual," Liao noted. 

(CGTN and Xinhua News Agency)

Basketball Players From Xinjiang

By Wen Qing



Head coach Adiljan Suleyman coaches a game between Nanjing Tongxi Zhouguang and Xinjiang Yilite during the 2020-21 season of the Chinese Basketball Association (CBA) league in Zhuji, east China's Zhejiang Province, on November 14, 2020

Increasing numbers of Uygur players are participating in the top tiers of Chinese basketball, including some who have achieved greatness both in the national league and representing China's national team abroad.

Uygur point guard Adiljan Suleyman was the first basketball player from China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region to play for China's national team. Adiljan made a name for himself on the national team during the late 1980s.

Born in Xinjiang in 1967, Adiljan showed a passion for basketball from a young age, playing basketball before school and practicing his dribbling technique on the bumpy roads of his neighborhood. In 1986, aged 17, Adiljan was selected to play first for Chinese Basketball Association (CBA) team, the Bayi Rockets, and then later for China's national team in 1989.

At just 1.82 meters in height, Adiljan's stature put him at a disadvantage in com-

parison to his teammates and opponents. To realize his dream of becoming a top-tier player, Adiljan put in huge efforts and overcame many obstacles. In addition to practicing his dribbling skills in darkness, he also relentlessly practiced passing and catching, attack organization and defense. He carefully observed his teammates' playing styles and habits, and committed them to memory. He also kept a meticulous training diary, filling notebooks with his notes on dribbling and passing.

Adiljan's efforts paid off, with the player going on to lead the Bayi Rockets to win the CBA championship five times, and then leading the Chinese men's national team to win the FIBA Asia Cup championship three times. Adiljan announced his retirement in 2000, later becoming the coach of the Bayi Rockets and then Xinjiang Guanghui, also known as Xinjiang Yilite.

Following in Adiljan's footsteps, increasing numbers of promising players are

emerging from Xinjiang. Among them are Shirelajan Muxtar and Abdusalam Abudurishit.

Shirelajan was born in Kashgar in 1991, and began playing for the Chinese national team in 2010. Shirelajan joined other Xinjiang players Abdusalam and Du Feng on the national team before becoming a point guard for the Nanjing Tongxi Basketball Club in the CBA.

Abdusalam was born in 1996 in the small city of Altay in northwest Xinjiang. He began his formal basketball training in high school and joined the Xinjiang Guanghui CBA club in 2012. In 2014, Abdusalam was voted the most valuable player in China's youth league, after leading the Xinjiang Guanghui team to victory in the youth league championship. Before Abdusalam joined Xinjiang Guanghui, its youth team had ranked last in the youth league. His talent, modesty and efforts on the court have brought him increasing popularity throughout his career. **C**

Abdusalam Abdurishit celebrates after the Chinese basketball team scores during a game at the FIBA Basketball World Cup 2019 Qualifiers, on December 2, 2018, in Guangdong Province, southern China



Shireliljan Muxtar, a player for Nanjing Tongxi Zhouguang, goes for a layup during the 2020-21 season of the CBA league in Zhuji, east China's Zhejiang Province, on December 21, 2020



Shireliljan Muxtar takes a shot in a game at the 6th East Asian Games on November 11, 2013 in Tianjin, China

This Is Xinjiang



Artisans check on a piece of Kazak embroidery at a village cooperative in Baiquan Village, Jimsar County, Changji Hui Autonomous Prefecture, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, on January 23, 2021. Production of the Kazak embroidery, a national intangible cultural heritage item, has helped female members of the village cooperative increase income

Performers dance during the Dragon Boat Festival at an intangible cultural heritage exhibition park in Taxkorgan Tajik Autonomous County, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, on June 25, 2020



XINHUA



XINHUA

Students read books at a middle school in Akto County, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, on March 25, 2020



XINHUA

A volunteer teacher gives a lesson to students at a primary school in Tawakule County, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, on May 16, 2020



Several residents play traditional instruments in Kashgar, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, on September 22, 2020



A family spends time together in Bachu County, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, on July 21, 2020



At Hotan Night Market in Xinjiang, a vendor makes use of her time to learn at intervals



People dance to music in front of a mosque during Eid al-Adha celebrations in Kashgar, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, on August 11, 2019



Muslims gather in Id Kah Mosque in Kashgar, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, for Friday prayers



Przewalski's horses are seen in snow in this drone photo taken in Jimsar County, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, on January 23, 2021.

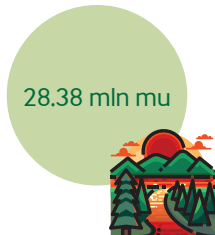
The Przewalski's horse, named after its Russian discoverer, is an endangered species native to the desert grassland of Central Asia. Once extinct in China due to hunting and a deteriorating environment, the horses were reintroduced to the country in the 1980s from Europe and raised in Xinjiang and Gansu. The Xinjiang Wild Horse Breeding and Research Center is the world's largest wild horse breeding base.

Xinjiang's Environmental Protection (2015-20)

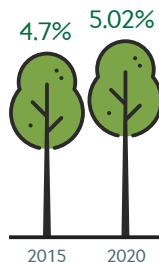
Newly afforested land



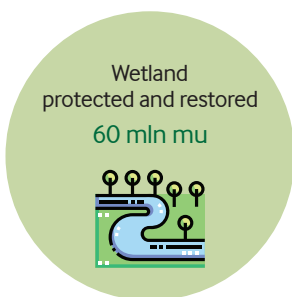
Desertified land treated



Increase in forest coverage



Wetland
protected and restored



Farmland returned to forestry



221
nature reserves



1 mu = 0.067 hectare

(Compiled by Beijing Review; designed by Pamela Tobey)

Migratory birds have arrived at Ulungur Lake, known as "the sea in the Gobi," in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, on March 28, 2020. The area, now a national wetland park, has been a sanctuary for many water bird species

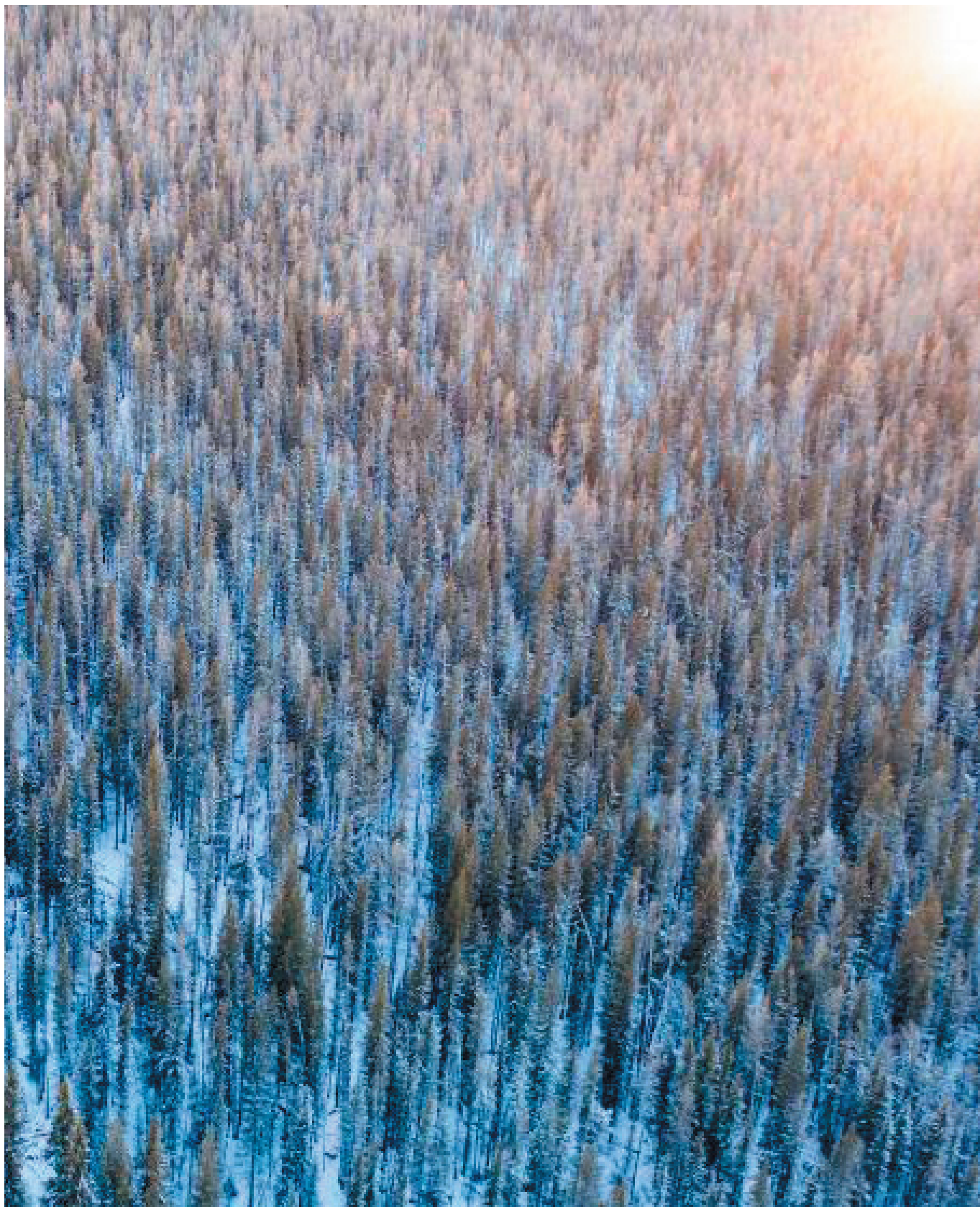




Herdsmen take their sheep to graze at the summer pasture on the Barlik Mountain in Yumin County, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, on June 22, 2018

Patrol officers check on tracks of wild animals in the forest in Jimsar County, Changji Hui Autonomous Prefecture, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, on January 22, 2021. The forest station of the Jimsar Public Security Bureau has joined hands with the Jimsar forest administration and protection station to step up their patrol and supervisory efforts since the beginning of this winter. This move aims to deter criminal behaviors such as unauthorized entry into the forest and hunting of wild animals, which are prone to happen during winter time, and to conserve living resources and biodiversity there





XINHUA

Aerial photo taken on December 29, 2020 shows the winter scenery of Koktokay scenic area in Fuyun County, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region

Xinjiang Active in Cultural Exchanges



Foreigners dance with local Uyghur people at a restaurant in Kashgar, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region

Sonia Bressler, a French writer and expert on China, said that the Chinese delegation frankly addressed many groundless suspicions in Western public opinion. She believes that scholars from the two countries should strengthen exchanges and more French scholars should go to Xinjiang to find out the truth.

Bressler attended a symposium in Paris held by a Chinese cultural exchange delegation from northwest China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region and French scholars in 2019. They exchanged views with the French Council of the Muslim Faith (FCMF) and French scholars, and held a discussion with local overseas Chinese to explain the development status of Xinjiang.

The delegation also visited the Grand Mosque of Paris and briefed the FCMF members and scholars on China's policy on freedom of religious belief and the development of vocational education and training centers in Xinjiang. The delegation suggested that the purpose of the centers is to make the students understand the nature and serious harm done by terrorism and religious extremism.

Dalil Boubakeur, honorary president of FCMF, said that coercing people to participate in violent and terrorist activities in the name of religion is heinous, and that separatist and extremist forces are not tolerated in any country.

Xing Guangcheng, head of the delegation and director of the Institute of Chinese Borderland Studies at the Chinese Academy

of Social Sciences, said that they came to France to tell the truth about Xinjiang and make their voice heard to all walks of life in France.

Xinjiang has been an important gateway for China's civilization to open to the West, and has played a significant role in cultural communication and mutual learning between East and West, said a white paper, titled "Cultural Protection and Development in Xinjiang," released by the State Council Information Office in 2018.

Supported by the Central Government, Xinjiang has created a framework of cultural exchanges with other countries in all sectors and at all levels.

Richard Ludwick, president of University of St. Thomas, said he believed openness is the signal sent out by the delegation. The university is willing to build a bridge so that students from Xinjiang and America will have more chances to visit each other, he said when a delegation from Xinjiang paid a visit to Houston, Texas of the United States in October 2017.

Attending a forum held by University of St. Thomas, then Chinese Consul General in Houston Li Qiangmin said China will continue following the path of peaceful development, pursuing a mutually beneficial and open strategy, and further enhancing cooperation and collaboration with major countries.

Charles Foster, former chairman and a board member of the Asia Society Texas Center, recalled his visit to Xinjiang during the discussion. He said that the participants

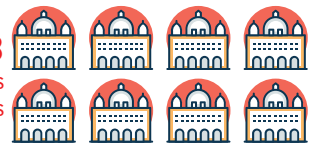
Freedom of Religious Belief in Xinjiang

Xinjiang now has
24,800 venues
for religious activities, including
mosques, churches, lamasteries and
temples

29,300
clerical personnel



8
religious
colleges



including the Xinjiang Islamic Institute
and Xinjiang Islamic School

112
religious organizations



The Koran is translated into
4 languages, and copies of
the Koran are provided to
religious members for free

(Source: *Freedom of Religious Belief in Xinjiang*; designed by Pamela Tobey)

learned more about China's ethnic policies as well as the development of Xinjiang.

Xinjiang has participated in international cultural exchanges and cooperation in various forms. Xinjiang International Ethnic Dance Festival, Chinese and Foreign Culture Week of China-Eurasia Expo, and Publishing Expo have become branded cultural exchange projects of considerable international influence.

Xinjiang presents different ethnic cultures to foreign countries, the white paper said, adding that since the late 20th century, quality exhibitions of Xinjiang cultural relics, such as the "Exhibition of Ancient Silk Road Cultural Relics of Xinjiang" and "Secrets of the Silk Road—Exhibition of Xinjiang Cultural Relics," have been held in Japan, the United States, Germany, the Republic of Korea, and some other countries. **C**

(Xinhua News Agency and Global Times)

Renovation Work Gives Mosques Modern Touch

By Cui Jia and Mao Weihua

Like many devout Muslims in Xinjiang, members of Metkurban Metsedi's family have worshipped at a mosque near their home for generations.

Praying at the Id Kah Mosque in Yutian County, Hotan Prefecture, is an essential part of the 49-year-old's life, so he was puzzled when he heard reports that the building had been demolished.

"My grandfather and father both prayed at the mosque, and I grew up living near to it. It is in good condition, and, after renovation work, it is definitely still in use," he said.

"I have no idea why some people would say it has been demolished. If they really care about us, why not pay us a visit in person to see the truth for themselves?"

After the mosque, which has a history of more than 800 years, was listed as a key national cultural relics site in May 2013, efforts were made to renovate it, he added.

Safety improved at religious venues in Xinjiang

There are some 24,400 mosques in Xinjiang, one for every 530 Muslims on average, a higher proportion than in some Islamic countries, Liu Xiaoming, China's ambassador to the United Kingdom, said.

Many mosques in the region were built in the 1980s and 1990s or even earlier, but some of these mud-and-brick structures or small buildings were not well maintained or repaired.

They became unsafe for religious activities, especially in harsh weather conditions, and posed a serious threat in the event of an earthquake. The mosques were also inadequately designed, making worship difficult, the Xinjiang Islamic Association said in a report in November 2020 on the freedom of religion in the region.

It added that the regional government renovated dilapidated mosques and "made adjustments" to those in a dangerous condition.

The report said the mosques have been improved and modernized to accommodate Muslims' needs. They have been equipped with running water, electricity, natural gas, radio and other communications facilities. Roads leading to mosques have been upgraded to make access easier, and medical and public services have been extended to the venues.

Repairs carried out

Iljan Anayt, spokesman for the regional government, said earlier that the Jiami Mosque, mentioned in a U.S. State Department report, reopened in March 2019 after major renovations were completed.

In September 2018, the gatehouse and gate tower at the mosque, which was built in 1540, were found to pose severe safety hazards. To protect worshippers and ensure religious activities were conducted smoothly, both structures were repaired in February 2019, the spokesman said.

Mosques registered in Xinjiang are protected by law. Democratic management committees are responsible for the internal affairs of mosques and for religious activities. Local governments are required to help mosques improve infrastructure and provide better services to followers to ensure that freedom of religious beliefs is fully protected, the spokesman added.

Leaking roof

In Tuohula Township, Wensu County, Aksu Prefecture, Ablikim Sadiq said he had felt unsafe every time he prayed in the old mosque in the area several years ago.

"There were leaks in the roof and large splits in the wooden pillars supporting the prayer hall. We often feared that the hall would collapse, especially during bad weather," he said.

After carrying out a safety assessment, the local government decided in 2015 to build a new mosque near the old venue.

Ahat Rahman, imam of the township's mosque for 27 years, said: "The new venue can withstand earthquakes and has a bigger prayer hall. The villagers can now concentrate fully during religious activities."

Following urbanization work in Xinjiang in recent years, some worshippers moved to new homes. At their request, the local authorities built new mosques or expanded existing ones to meet demand, according to Bekri Yaqub, director of Yanghang Mosque Democratic Management Committee in Urumqi, the regional capital.

"I've recently seen the blueprint for a new mosque in the city's Saybag District. Muslims there are going to have yet another beautiful and spacious mosque," he said.

Memet Jume, imam of Id Kah Mosque in

Kashgar, said: "A few mosques in the region had to be torn down, but only because they were in extremely poor condition and could not be renovated. New ones were built for people's safety. There hasn't been one case of a mosque being completely demolished."

Minimal disruption

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, little disruption has been caused to religious activities in mosques throughout Xinjiang, especially during the holy month of Ramadan, which fell in April and May 2020.

Musa Asan, the Reste Mosque imam, said, "Mosques in Xinjiang reopened immediately after the regional outbreak was brought under control."

Guidelines for religious venues have been put in place during the pandemic, he added.

"We have carefully disinfected and ventilated the mosque. With the aim of protecting our community, we also require people to wear face masks and keep a safe distance during prayers. We have ensured local communities and residents that they can continue practicing their religion safely during the pandemic."

Religious activities also went ahead as usual during Ramadan at Yanghang Mosque in Urumqi.

The venue, built in 1897, is popular among Muslims from all ethnic groups, including Uyghur and Hui. Muslims from other countries also visit the mosque for prayers, according to Bekri Yaqub, the Yanghang Mosque Democratic Management Committee director.

"Medical workers were at the site during Ramadan to offer health checks to people who were fasting. The pandemic had little impact on religious activities in Xinjiang during the holy month," he said.

No cases of infection have been reported at locations in the region where religious activities take place, according to the Xinjiang Islamic Association.

It said a series of groundless claims have been made, such as restrictions being placed on freedom of religious belief, ethnic groups denied the right to such belief, mosques being compulsorily demolished and religious figures persecuted. **C**

(China Daily)

Xinjiang's Economic, Social Development Praised

By Chen Yingqun and Mao Weihua

Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region has made unprecedented achievements in economic and social development and has achieved a decisive victory in poverty alleviation, a senior official said.

Erkin Tuniyaz, vice-chairman of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, said that under the strong leadership of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, with vigorous support from provinces, regions and cities and the arduous efforts of the 25 million people of all ethnic groups in the region, Xinjiang's economic development and its people's living standards have continued to improve, while ethnic unity is further consolidated with various religions coexisting in harmony and stability.

From 2015 to 2020, Xinjiang's regional gross domestic product grew from 930.69 billion yuan to 1.38 trillion yuan (\$144.05 billion to \$213.6 billion), an annual increase of 6.1 percent.

In 2020, urban residents' per capita disposable income reached 34,838 yuan, increasing by 5.8 percent annually over the past five years, while its rural residents' per capita disposable income was 14,056 yuan, up 8.5 percent annually over the past five years.

A decisive victory has been achieved in poverty alleviation. By 2020, a total of 3.06 million people living under the poverty line were lifted out of poverty. A total of 3,666 villages and 35 impoverished counties shook off poverty in the region, Tuniyaz said in the keynote speech at a videoconference with the theme of "Xinjiang is a Wonderful Land."

"The people of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang fully enjoy the right of life and development, and their traditional cultures, languages and folk customs are well protected and inherited," he said.

More than 80 people attended the event via video link, including representatives of 50 countries and senior human rights officials and experts of United Nations agencies. It was jointly hosted by Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region and the Permanent Mission of China to the UN Office at Geneva.

Tuniyaz also pledged that the government will spare no effort to develop Xinjiang into a region that is united, harmonious, prosperous and culturally advanced, with healthy ecosystems and people living and working in contentment, and a region featuring socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era.

Chen Xu, Chinese ambassador to the UN in Geneva, called Xinjiang a wonderful area and a shining pearl of northwest China, known for its magnificent landscapes and hospitality.

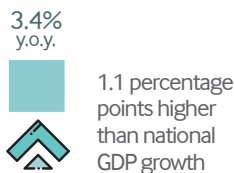
Chen said Xinjiang enjoys stability and people there live and work in peace and hap-

piness. Together with the rest of the country, people of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang are proudly embarking on a new journey to build China into a modern socialist country. **CI**

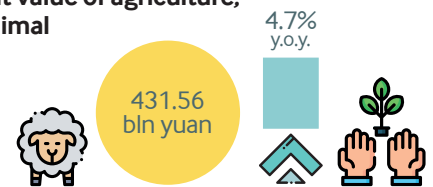
(China Daily)

Xinjiang Economic Highlights in 2020

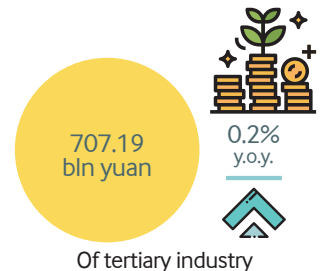
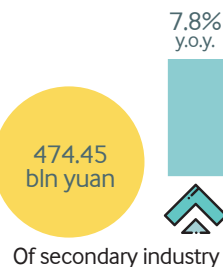
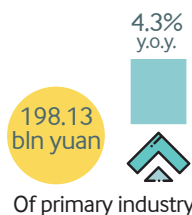
Economic expansion



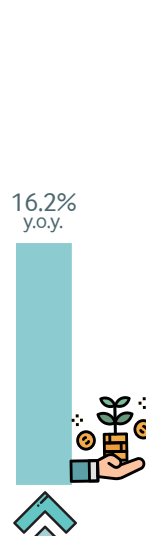
Total output value of agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry and fishery



Added value



Fixed-asset investment



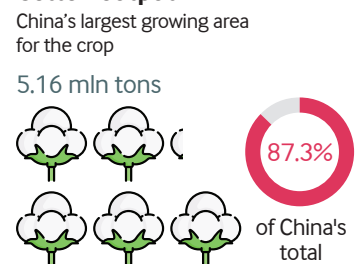
Online retail sales



High-tech manufacturing added value



Cotton output



Per capita disposable income of rural residents



(Source: The 2020 government work report of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region; designed by Pamela Tobey)



Visitors select hats in the ancient city of Kashgar, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, on September 11, 2020



A view of the Urumqi Diwopu International Airport

Xinjiang Achieves Worthwhile Results in Fighting Against Terrorism and Extremism

Having been plagued by terrorism and religious extremism for some time, which pose a serious threat to the lives of the people in the region, Xinjiang has established vocational education and training centers in accordance with the law to prevent the breeding and spread of terrorism and religious extremism, effectively curbing the frequent terrorist incidents and protecting the rights to life, health and development of the people of all ethnic groups, said the white paper titled Vocational Education and Training in Xinjiang.

In an attempt to split China, separatist and religious extremist forces advocated religious extremism and carried out a series of terrorist activities. For years, religious extremism continued to make inroads into Xinjiang, resulting in incidents of terrorism.

From 1990 to the end of 2016, separatists, religious extremists and terrorists plotted and carried out several thousand acts of terrorism such as bombings, assassinations, poisoning, arson, assaults, and riots in Xinjiang. Many innocent people were killed and several hundred police officers died in the line of duty. The property losses incurred were enormous.

Influenced and controlled by religious extremism, many people's minds have been poisoned to the extent of losing reason and the ability to think sensibly about their lives and the law. Without necessary intervention measures, it will not be possible for them to cast off the shackles of religious extremism, get back to normal life, and improve their prospects for a better future.

In accordance with the law, Xinjiang has established vocational education and training centers to offer systematic education and training in response to a set of urgent needs: to curb frequent terrorist incidents, to eradicate the breeding ground for religious extremism, to help trainees acquire better education and vocational skills, find employment, and increase their incomes, and most of all, to safeguard social stability and long-term peace in the region.



Students learn how to arrange flowers at a vocational education and training center in Hotan, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region

Education and training in Xinjiang is practiced in line with the spirit and requirements of the rule of law in China, as well as the basic principles clearly defined in relevant international conventions and initiatives.

The United Nations Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism notes that poverty, unemployment, the absence of alternative employment opportunities, and low levels of education, are the background causes of violent extremism, along with the distortion and exploitation by violent extremist groups of religious beliefs, ethnic differences and political ideologies.

These centers are education and training institutions in nature. To meet the needs of fighting terrorism and extremism, these centers deliver a curriculum that includes standard spoken and written Chinese, understanding of the law, vocational skills, and deradicalization.

The education and training centers respect the trainees' rights to use their own ethnic spoken and written languages when offering standard Chinese courses. There is no intention to deprive or limit the trainees' right to use and develop their own ethnic languages.

Based on local demand and employment opportunities, the courses at the centers include garment making, food processing, assembly of electronic products, typesetting and printing, hairdressing and beauty services, e-commerce, auto maintenance and repair, interior design and decoration, livestock breeding, pomiculture, and the performing arts such as music and dance, to name a few.

The education and training centers combine course learning with practical training to improve the trainees' operational skills. The practical training is conducted in classes rather than through employment in factories



Villagers learn to make handicrafts at Kurti Village, Altay Prefecture, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, on January 30, 2021

or enterprises, or obligatory labor.

Education and training at the centers never interferes in the trainees' freedom of religious belief and the centers have never made any attempts to have the trainees change their religious beliefs.

Education and training is not a measure to limit or circumscribe the freedom of the person. Rather it is an important measure to help trainees to break free from ideas of terrorism and religious extremism. It is an attempt to help the trainees to emancipate their minds, improve themselves and their future prospects.

As education and training has played its role, most trainees have reached the required standards and graduated.

No terrorist incidents have occurred in Xinjiang for nearly three years since the education and training started. Public order and security have returned to society.

Booming tourism is another proof of the

enhanced stability in Xinjiang. From January to June 2019, nearly 76 million tourists visited Xinjiang, up 46 percent year on year.

The international community has made positive comments on Xinjiang's efforts.

Since the end of December 2018, nearly 1,000 people including foreign diplomatic envoys to China, UN officials, Geneva-based senior diplomats of various countries, as well as more than 40 groups (or delegations) from political parties, civil society organizations, news media, and religious organizations of various countries have visited Xinjiang.

Through field trips, many of them have realized the truth and understood the urgency, necessity, legitimacy and rationality of carrying out education and training.

The white paper cited multiple reports published by foreign journalists who have conducted interviews in the education and training centers.

The journalists have published stories that reflect the true role of the centers and express their understanding, approval and support for the education and training programs in Xinjiang.

Xinjiang's vocational education and training programs have contributed experience to international actions against terrorism and extremism, including fighting extremism in accordance with local conditions, putting prevention first while taking firm action on terrorism and extremism, promoting the rule of law, respecting and protecting human rights, and the government taking on the responsibility.

A number of countries, organizations and individuals apply double standards in their approach to terrorism and extremism, which will in effect shield and incite terrorism and extremism. Such acts go against international morality and human conscience. **CI**

(Xinhua News Agency)

Four Sneak Tricks of Western Media in Xinjiang Reports

Trick No.1: Using dark and gloomy filters to build a horrible and oppressive atmosphere

Example: Secret Video Offers Rare Look Inside Chinese Labor Program posted by *The New York Times*

Facts: The video painted a bleak picture of how Uygurs live and work at a sanitation station in Kuitun City, in northern Xinjiang. Even though the station is open to the media, *The New York Times* still decided to do its filming “secretly.” Hushed dubbing, grave background music, and a dark and yellow filter were all used to make audiences feel as though some huge conspiracy is being revealed.

The views of some audiences may be temporarily distorted but facts cannot be buried forever. *The New York Times* claimed the sanitation station is part of a forced labor resettlement program, run by the Chinese Government to enhance control of Muslim minorities, mostly Uygurs, by moving them from southern Xinjiang to work there. The fact is that these workers chose to work in Kuitun because of the better work conditions and more stable salary. The workers live in dormitories with television, 24-hour hot water, and freedom to return home. Reporters with *China Daily* visited factories across Xinjiang and interviewed more than 50 workers and employers to find out whether there was a problem of forced labor. The reporters discovered that the workers had chosen their jobs independently and freely, and that many bought apartments and cars with money earned from their hard work.

Trick No.2: Distortion of facts and confusion of concepts: all buildings with wire and walls are “detention camps”

Example: Mapping Xinjiang’s ‘re-education’ camps, a report full of lies made by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI)

Facts: Xinjiang has never had any “re-education camps.” This report claimed that there were 380 “detention camps” in Xinjiang to imprison Uygurs, but its data, analysis and conclusion are all wrong, and it seemed to include all buildings with walls and wire as “detention camps.”

When tracing some coordinates of

the ASPI research, what people see are not detention camps, but other buildings and facilities. One of them is Hotan Detention Center. Like all institutions imprisoning criminals around the world, Hotan Detention Center has nothing to do with the ethnic groups but rather functions to put people violating the law behind bars. Using the term “detention camp” makes people think about places full of screaming children who were abused and beaten there. Another facility on this report’s “blacklist of detention camps” is Maralbesi No. 3 Primary School.

Trick No.3: Demonizing Mandarin teaching in kindergartens

Example: Xinjiang: China, where are my children? published on BBC

Facts: Yucheng Kindergarten in Hotan was described by the BBC as “this kindergarten for the children of the detainees.” Reporters discovered their parents not only living and working nearby, but also picking them up and dropping them off to the kindergarten every day.

Moreover, the BBC says “only Chinese should be spoken.” But children there are never forced to speak Mandarin. *China Daily*

reporters saw kids speak both Mandarin and Uygur. The children switch between Mandarin and Uygur freely, the same way children do all over China in regions where Mandarin is seldom spoken at home. Learning more than one language provides children with more development opportunities for the future.

Trick No.4: Hyping up claims of Uygurs being “persecuted” without checking the facts

Example: BBC Newsnight once reported that Zumrat Dawut (Zamira Dawut) was “forced to go through sterilization” in a vocational education and training center. Articles were published including She survived a Chinese internment camp and made it Virginia. Will the US let her stay? and Women in Xinjiang shine a light on a campaign of abuse and control by Beijing.

Facts: Zamira Dawut has never studied in any vocational education and training center. Her elder brother Abduhelil Dawut has previously clarified that.

She claimed that after “her release” from a center, she was forced undergo sterilization and her uterus was removed because she had already had three children. In fact, in March 2013, when Zamira Dawut gave birth to her third child in Urumqi Maternal and Child Care Service Center, she signed a childbirth consent form voluntarily to have a cesarean section and tubal ligation, and then the center conducted the operation. She was never subjected to sterilization, let alone uterus removal.

She claimed that her aging father was repeatedly detained and investigated by Xinjiang authorities, and died not long after from an unknown cause. In fact, her father had been living with his children until he died from heart disease on October 12, 2019. He had never been investigated or placed in detention. Her brothers Abduhelil Dawut and Elkin Dawut have both substantiated these facts.

The Western media has never fact-checked these alleged claims, nor even ever tried to check them. Impartiality, objectivity and all other values the media should uphold can never be achieved if reporters only want to report what they have concluded before, rather than what they see on the ground. **❌**



Screenshot of videos by *The New York Times* (above) and *China Daily*. The two videos both were shot at the cafeteria of the same sanitation station in Kuitun City

Hiking Xinjiang

By Pamela Tobey

For many people in China, traveling during the national Golden Week holiday in early October means taking excursions around China or to foreign destinations. And those trips usually involve seeing the famous sites and monuments of whatever place is chosen. For me and my husband, we decided to head off the beaten path to see a side of northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region that not many get to see.

So instead of planning a trip to a famous tourist destination, which would likely be crowded during the holiday, we signed up for a weeklong trip to Xinjiang, organized by Beijing Hikers, an English-speaking group of outdoors enthusiasts. Described as a trip along the Silk Road from Korla to Kashgar, it

was planned to take advantage of the region's beautiful scenery from central to southwest Xinjiang. We were divided among a group of all-terrain SUVs piloted by experienced drivers who took us on a route skirting the northern fringes of the Taklamakan Desert over seven days. We hiked once or twice each day in the sparsely populated wilderness.

The ever-changing scenery was beautiful, with the valleys and mountains of the Tianshan Mountain Range clad in varying shades from red and gold to gray and green, and each place had different hues and landscapes. Our first hike after leaving Korla was among arid, undulating landforms colored in shades of white and gray sand that looked like we could be hiking on the moon. With plenty of water stashed in our small back-

packs, we wove around small conical shapes and wound our way atop narrow ridges, our views only of more white and gray hills and valleys stretching into the distance, the soft sand making us expend more energy with each step.

The next day, after an overnight stay in Kuqa, we headed to the Subashi Buddhist ruins which were built about 2,000 years ago. They cover a large area and encompass both sides of the Kuqa River, although only the east side allows visitors. Under royal blue skies, the colors ranged from the dark green foothills to the golden mud brick ruins of the temples and buildings. After an easy walk among the ancient city ruins, our caravan headed out to the Keziliya Grand Canyon, where we walked along a dry riverbed flanked by tall red mountains framed by bright azure blue skies. The towering red mountains ranged from slanted peaks to eroded yardang landforms that resembled a fantastical ruined city and our hike included a few forays into the lower reaches of the cliff-sides. The third day of our tour was supposed to end with a night of camping in the desert not far from the canyon, but the area was closed so we stayed at a hotel in Baicheng after having a camp-style cookout in the valley.

The fourth day included a visit to the Kizil Buddhist Caves, which didn't involve hiking but instead quite a lot of climbing stairs to see the intricately painted caves carved into the cliffside around 1,800 years ago. It was a rather strenuous trek to see six of the 236 open caves discovered along 2-km jagged rocks. We ended our day with a short hike across a mostly dry riverbed lined with tumbled rocks that snaked along the highway to Aksu. We skirted the base of some small rugged mountains colored with alternating stripes of beige, gray and red, while the more adventurous and experienced hikers climbed to the tops of the steep slopes.

I missed out on our final hike after succumbing to a short illness that had me napping in the back of one of the SUVs to gain enough energy for the last two days of the tour while my traveling companions hiked the nearby mountains. Maybe it was the surfeit of scenery that laid me low. The drivers prepared another camp-style picnic with their portable stoves, large woks and charcoal grills before we bade farewell to the wilderness and headed to Kashgar, where our hiking was limited to walks around the city to see markets, neighborhoods and historical attractions.

Leaving Kashgar by plane allowed us to look over some of the same area we had traversed. Our flight from Urumqi to Beijing led us over imposing black mountains topped with snow, a magnificent goodbye as we left Xinjiang, a land of inspiring beauty. **C**

(Beijing Review)



Tourists hike in the Keziliya Grand Canyon in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region

PAMELA TOBEY