

care system, covering 10.33 million farmers and herders, with 98.6 percent of them participating in the program; and 56 cities and counties were included in the pilot program of the new pension insurance system, comprising 3.58 million participants, of whom 580,300 had begun receiving their pension.

Social initiatives develop and prosper. Before 1949, Xinjiang had only one college and nine secondary schools. Only 19.8 percent of school-age children attended primary school, and the overall illiteracy rate was a shocking 90 percent. At the end of 2010, the number of institutions of higher learning had reached 32, and the enrolment rate of school-age children had reached 99.8 percent for primary schools and 97.2 percent for junior middle schools. At present, Xinjiang has 15 public art galleries, 94 cultural centers, 94 public libraries, and 64 museums. In addition, it has six radio stations, and 94.9 percent of the local population has access to radio programs. Xinjiang has altogether 6,393 medical service centers (not including XPCC), providing a total of 104,800 beds and 102,300 medical workers.

The cultures of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang have been effectively preserved and developed. In 2005, Xinjiang Uygur Muqam Arts was designated by the UNESCO as “Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.” In 2006 and 2008, 63 intangible cultural heritage projects in Xinjiang, including the Kirgiz epic Manas, Mongolian epic Janger and Kazak Aytes, were listed in the first and second groups of national intangible cultural heritage. By 2008, the Xinjiang Minorities Ancient Classics Office had collected and registered 20,518 volumes or items, with over 100 titles published. China has set up the Work Committee of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region on Languages and Scripts of Ethnic Minorities and research institutes of minority languages at various levels, responsible for regulation, standardization and research, and administration of the languages of the ethnic minorities. Software such as the “Bogda Uygur-Kazak-Kirgiz Languages Typesetting System” and “Xinjiang 2000” has been developed.

The right of freedom in religious belief of people of all ethnic groups is respected. By the end of 2008, the autonomous region had 24,800 venues for religious activities, including mosques, churches and temples, in addition to over 29,000 clerical personnel, 91 religious organizations and two religious colleges. Since the 1980s, more than 50,000 people from Xinjiang have made pilgrimages to Mecca in Saudi Arabia. In recent years, the number of people from Xinjiang who make the pilgrimage each year has been around 2,700. In 2008 alone, 33 million yuan was allocated by the state for the maintenance and repair of Idkah Mosque and the Tomb of the Fragrant Imperial Concubine. In order to develop a body of high-caliber Islamic clerics, since 2001 the regional government has sent 47 clerics for training in colleges and universities in Egypt and Pakistan.

### New Historic Point of Departure

At the turn of the 21st century, China formulated the significant strategy of developing the western region, marking a historic new point of departure for Xinjiang’s development. In 2004 the state set the strategic goal of “stabilizing and developing Xinjiang, enriching the people and consolidating the border,” and gave priority and more support to Xinjiang in implementing the national strategy of developing the western region. In 2005, in accordance with the prevailing circumstances, the central government updated its plan for the work of pairing up other provinces and cities to provide assistance to different parts of Xinjiang, with the southern area as the focus. Eight provinces and municipalities directly under the State Council, including Beijing, and 15 state-owned large enterprises have been paired up with 33 counties (county-level cities) in four prefectures and three XPCC divisions in southern Xinjiang to provide economic, cultural, and scientific and technological assistance. In 2007 the State Council promulgated the “Guidelines on Further

Economic and Social Development of Xinjiang,” emphasizing the guiding principles for Xinjiang’s development, strategic goals, industrial layout, and major policies. In 2010 the National Conference on Partner Assistance to Xinjiang was held in Beijing, starting a new round of pairing work with the addition of 19 provinces and municipalities. The new round of partner assistance work covered a wider geographical scope and more fields, and involved a larger population and more investment than ever before.

In 2010 the Forum on Work in Xinjiang was held in Beijing. In pursuance of the strategic policy of “stabilizing and developing Xinjiang, enriching the people and consolidating the border,” the forum formulated a series of major policies and measures. To accelerate step-change development and long-term peace in Xinjiang, the forum called for full support to and improvements in political, economic, personnel and other work in Xinjiang.

All the above demonstrates the confidence and determination of the Chinese government in accelerating Xinjiang’s development and promoting long-term peace in Xinjiang, as well as the demonstrable support and priority the state gives to work in the region. Today, all initiatives in Xinjiang are standing at a new historic point of departure. With the state’s fully supportive policies and assistance provided by partner provinces and municipalities, the 21.8 million people in Xinjiang will strive hard in a pragmatic manner and draw up plans to bring about a future of wellbeing and prosperity.



# XINJIANG



Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region (Xinjiang for short), situated in the border area of northwest China and the middle of the Eurasian Continent, was historically the passage for land transport and cultural contacts between Asia and Europe. The famous Silk Road linking the ancient civilizations of the East and the West traversed this vast land.

Xinjiang, part of the Western Regions in ancient times, has been an integral part of China for many centuries. The Protectorate of the Western Regions was established at Wulei (in present-day Luntai) by the Western Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 25) in 60 BC, officially incorporating the Western Regions into the territory of China's Han Dynasty. In 1884 the Qing Court (1644-1911) established Xinjiang Province, with Tihwa (present-day Urumqi) as its capital. On September 25, 1949 Xinjiang was peacefully liberated. Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region was established on October 1, 1955, with Urumqi as its capital.

## Overview

Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, one of China's five autonomous regions, covers about 1.7 million sq km, one sixth of China's total land territory. Xinjiang shares international borders with eight countries – Mongolia, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India. Its 5,600 km of national boundary represent one fourth of China's total land boundary. Xinjiang is larger in area than any other administrative division in China, borders the most

neighboring countries, and has the longest national land boundary.

Xinjiang consists of five ethnic autonomous prefectures, seven prefectures and two prefecture-level cities. These are then divided into 98 counties/county-level cities – including 32 on the border and six autonomous counties. Under these county units are 853 township divisions, including 43 autonomous townships. The Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC) is a unique organization in the region to assume the duties of cultivating and guarding the frontier areas. The XPCC has 14 divisions (reclamation areas) and 175 regimental agricultural and stockbreeding farms, with a total population of 2.57 million.

Xinjiang is home to many ethnic groups. Thirteen ethnic groups – Uygur, Han, Kazak, Hui, Kirgiz, Mongolian, Tajik, Xibe, Manchu, Uzbek, Russian, Daur and Tatar – have lived in Xinjiang since ancient times. Statistics from the 2010 Sixth National Census show that Xinjiang has a population of 21.8 million, including 13.1 million people of ethnic minorities, 60 percent of the total.

Xinjiang's topography is characterized by "three mountain ranges embracing two basins." The Altai Mountains in the north, the Kunlun Mountains in the south and the Tianshan Mountains in the middle divide Xinjiang into two basins – the Junggar Basin in the north and the Tarim Basin in the south. The Tianshan Mountains are the dividing line of northern and southern Xinjiang. The area of Hami and Turpan is called eastern Xinjiang.

The Tarim Basin in southern Xinjiang, covering 530,000 sq km, is the largest inland basin in China. With an area of 330,000 sq km, the Taklimakan Dessert in the center of the Tarim Basin is China's largest and the world's second largest shifting sand desert. The Tarim River running through the basin is about 2,100 km in length, making it China's longest inland river. The Junggar Basin in northern Xinjiang, covering 380,000 sq km, is China's second largest inland basin. The Gurbantunggut Desert in the center of the Junggar Basin, 48,000 sq km

in area, is China's second largest desert.

Xinjiang has numerous lakes, covering a total area of 5,505 sq km. The Bosten Lake, 980 sq km in area, is China's largest inland freshwater lake. The Ayding Lake in the Turpan Basin in eastern Xinjiang, lying 154 meters below sea level, is the lowest land point in China.

With over 570 rivers of all sizes, Xinjiang's water reserve accounts for three percent of the national total. Its glacier reserve measures 2.13 trillion cubic meters, 50 percent of China's total. Xinjiang is thereby known as the country's "solid water reservoir."

Xinjiang has about 63 million ha of farm land (including 4 million ha of cultivated land), 7 million ha of forests, and 51 million ha of pasture land. With 20 percent of China's total pasture land area, Xinjiang is one of the country's five major pastoral areas. Xinjiang has abundant solar, geothermal and wind energy resources. It receives the second longest hours of sunshine in China.

Xinjiang also abounds in mineral resources. A total of 138 minerals have been discovered in the region, and the reserves of 99 types have been quantified. Ten of its individual mineral reserves rank top in China, and 58 others rank among the national top 10.

Xinjiang has rich natural and cultural landscapes. Tianchi Lake, Kanas Lake, Nalati Grassland, Loulan Ruins, Kizil Buddhist rock-cut caves, and the Tomb of the Fragrant Imperial Concubine are well known both in China and internationally.

Folk cultures flourish in Xinjiang. Traditional cultural events are widespread, such as the Uygur Meshrep, the Kazak Aytes, the Kirgiz's Kobuz Ballad Singing Fair, the Mongolian Nadam Fair, the Xibe's Westward Migration Festival and the Han people's Lantern Festival.

## Development over the Past 60 Years

Before the founding of New China in 1949, Xinjiang's natural economy mainly comprised farming and animal husbandry. Local development stagnated, with low productivity levels and underdeveloped production modes. The people led a life of poverty and hardship. Since 1949, particularly after China's reform and opening up in the late 1970s, Xinjiang has entered an era of rapid economic and social progress and enhanced comprehensive strength, with local residents enjoying tangible benefits.

The system of regional ethnic autonomy has been effectively implemented. Minority peoples' rights to participate in the administration of state affairs are under special protection. In all terms of National People's Congress, deputies were selected from minority communities in Xinjiang through proportional representation. Minority representation among Xinjiang's officials has grown from 46,000 in 1955 to 360,000 today, accounting for half of the total complement of officials in Xinjiang.

There have been marked improvements across a range of indicators. GDP in 2010 reached 542 billion yuan and the per-capita GDP stood at 24,978 yuan, surpassing \$3,000. In the same year, investment in fixed assets reached 354 billion yuan, local revenues reached 69 billion yuan, and expenditures were 189 billion yuan; retail sales for consumption totaled 132 billion yuan.

Living standards have improved markedly. In 2010, the per-capita disposable income of urban residents reached 13,644 yuan; the per-capita net income of farmers was 4,643 yuan; 8.89 million people were in employment; 1.7 million people were covered by the unemployment insurance program and 2.6 million covered by the basic pension insurance program; 851,000 urban residents were in receipt of the minimum living allowance from the government. A total of 89 counties (county-level cities) were included in the new rural cooperative medical

