

pre-school, primary and middle schools, secondary vocational and technical schools, institutions of higher learning, and adult and special education institutions.

Prior to liberation, there were only three small government-run institutes of Tibetan medicine and a small number of private clinics, representing fewer than 100 medical workers altogether. By the end of 2010 there were 1,352 medical institutions of all types and at all levels in Tibet, with 8,838 hospital beds and 9,983 medical workers. A healthcare system in farming and pastoral areas has been established, with funds from the government comprising the major component, backed up by family accounts, and there are comprehensive arrangements for serious diseases and medical relief. A medical and healthcare network covering all counties and townships, with Lhasa as the hub, has taken shape. All townships in Tibet now have health centers and all villages have clinics. Thanks to these improvements in medical services, the general health of the people of Tibet has been raised. Tibet has established a social security system that covers all urban and rural residents whose main provisions comprise basic pension insurance, basic medical insurance, unemployment insurance for urban workers, industrial accident insurance and maternity insurance.

Ethnic culture in Tibet is flourishing. The study, use and development of the Tibetan language are protected by law, and Tibetan has become the first ethnic-minority script in China with international text coding standards for information exchange. The state has altogether apportioned 1.45 billion yuan to maintain and repair the Potala Palace, the Norbulingka and Sakya Monastery, and other cultural relics and historical sites. Tibet's 76 distinctive cultural elements such as folk handicrafts, folk art and Tibetan opera have been listed among items of state-level intangible cultural heritage, and 53 individuals have been granted recognition as representatives of state-level intangible cultural heritage. The Potala Palace, Jokhang Monastery and Norbulingka have been listed as UNESCO World Cultural Heritage sites. Tibetan opera

and the famous Legend of King Gesar have been formally listed as items of World Intangible Cultural Heritage. Tibetan medicine, with its unique local features, has penetrated international markets, and Tibetology research is flourishing as never before.

Freedom of religious belief of all ethnic groups is respected and protected in Tibet. The Living Buddha reincarnation system, unique to Tibetan Buddhism, is fully respected. People are free to practice Buddhist rites. Academic degrees in Buddhism are also promoted. Tibet now has more than 1,700 venues for religious activities, and about 46,000 monks and nuns. More than one million worshippers make pilgrimage to Lhasa each year.

Ecological conservation has made rapid progress. Tibet is home to 21 ecological function conservation areas, seven national forest parks, three geological parks, one state-class scenic area and 47 nature reserves at various levels, which account for just over one third of the total land area of the region, a proportion that exceeds any other part of China. The forest coverage rate has risen from less than 1 percent before liberation to 12 percent at present, and more than six million ha of wetland have been protected. In 2009 the central government approved the Plan for Ecology Safety Barrier Protection and Construction in Tibet (2008-2030), with projected investment amounting to 15.5 billion yuan.

New Stage of Development

In January 2010 the Fifth Forum on Work in Tibet was convened in Beijing. The forum formulated the strategic goal of maintaining step-change development on the basis of the rapid development already achieved, and establishing ongoing stability on the basis of the existing stability, by focusing on the conditions prevailing in Tibet and on national development.

President Hu Jintao has announced: "The main objectives for

Tibet's economic and social development by 2015 are: to markedly reduce the gap between the per-capita net income of Tibetan farmers and herdsmen and the national average, significantly enhance Tibet's basic public services, further improve the ecosystem, greatly develop Tibet's infrastructure, and consolidate the foundation for a moderately prosperous society in all respects. The objectives set for 2020 are: to bring the per-capita net income of Tibetan farmers and herdsmen close to the national average, improve people's living standards in all aspects, raise the level of basic public services close to the national average, comprehensively improve infrastructure, achieve significant results in building a protective zone to safeguard ecological security, considerably increase Tibet's capacity for self-development, make society more harmonious and stable, and ensure that a moderately prosperous society in all respects is established."

We have every reason to believe that the Tibet Autonomous Region will enjoy the prospect of a better future through the combined efforts of all ethnic groups in Tibet and the help of the entire nation.



TIBET





Tibet Autonomous Region (Tibet for short), located in the southwest of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, is a major gateway on China's southwest border. Lying at an average altitude of over 4,000 meters above sea level, Tibet has been called the "Roof of the World."

China is a united multi-ethnic country. Tibet has been an integral part of China's territory for many centuries. The region, called "Bod" in ancient times, was officially incorporated into the central administration of the "Middle Kingdom" during the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368). It was renamed "Xizang" (Tibet) during Qing Dynasty Emperor Kangxi's reign (1662-1722), thus its present-day name.

Tibet was peacefully liberated in 1951. Democratic Reform was carried out in the region in 1959, abolishing the theocracy of feudal serfdom system. On September 1, 1965 the Tibet Autonomous Region was officially established, with Lhasa as its capital.

Overview

Tibet Autonomous Region, one of China's five autonomous regions, covers 1.2 million sq km, about one eighth of China's land territory. Internally it adjoins Xinjiang to the north, Sichuan to the east, Qinghai to the northeast, and Yunnan to the southeast, while it has external borders with Myanmar, India, Bhutan and Nepal to the south, and the Kashmir region to the west, sharing over 4,000 km of land boundary.

Tibet is composed of the capital city of Lhasa and six autonomous

prefectures – Xigazê, Shannan, Nyingchi, Qamdo, Nagqu and Ngari. Under their administration are 71 counties, one county-level city, one county-level district, and one county-level special district, including 140 towns and 543 townships. The local population is three million, including 2.7 million Tibetans, 90.5 percent of the total.

Due to its high elevation, the region features complex and varied terrains and landforms. It is roughly divided into four geographical areas – the northern plateau, the southern valleys, the eastern mountains and canyons, and the Himalayas. Tibet's unique and complex climate is mainly characterized by severe cold in the northwest and warmth and moisture in the southeast. As a result of its long hours of sunshine, the region receives the most solar radiation in China. It is also marked by low temperatures and a high temperature variation between day and night, low air pressure, and low levels of oxygen.

Tibet boasts abundant water, geothermal, solar and wind resources. Statistics show that its natural water reserve represents potential of 200 million kilowatts, about 30 percent of the national total. Its geothermal reserve ranks top in the country and is expected to generate 150,000 kilowatts of heat. Most parts of Tibet receive 3,100-3,400 hours of sunshine annually.

Tibet is home to numerous species of wild animals and plants. It has the biggest populations of large and medium-sized animals in China. The numbers of Tibetan antelopes, wild yaks, and black-necked cranes wintering in the territory account for 70-80 percent of total world populations. There is a wide variety of plant species in Tibet, including over 4,000 higher species. Twenty nature reserves at autonomous region level and above have been established to cover a total area of 42 million ha, about 35 percent of China's land territory, ranking top in the country. These nature reserves include three national-level ones listed in the World Network of Biosphere Reserves and one state-class scenic area.

Tibet is rich in minerals. Over 100 minerals have been discovered in the region, and the reserves of 36 types have been quantified. Its deposits

of uranium and borax both rank top in the country; its lithium deposit accounts for half of the world's total; the Yulong mine in Qamdo has the largest porphyry copper deposit in Asia.

Tibet's natural landscape and cultural heritage are unique. Its natural landscape is characterized by the snowy mountains of the Himalayas, the Changtang grasslands in northern Tibet, the forests and canyons in southeastern Tibet, and the sacred mountains and lakes in Ngari. More than 1,700 monasteries have been carefully preserved, forming an important part of Tibet's unique cultural heritage.

Development over the Past 60 Years

The old society of Tibet was a feudal serfdom theocracy that suffocated its vitality and drove it into decay. The peaceful liberation in 1951 marked a crucial turning point in the history of Tibet. Over the following 60 years Tibet has experienced Democratic Reform, establishment as an autonomous region, socialist development, and reform and opening up. Since 1980 the Chinese government has convened five Forums on Work in Tibet to make strategic plans for Tibet's economic and social development. Under the leadership of the central government and with the support of people of all ethnic groups in China and the hard work of all ethnic groups in the autonomous region, Tibet has achieved international recognition through its success in a number of notable initiatives.

Tibet has seen remarkable progress in both its political and social systems. It has abolished feudal serfdom, implemented regional ethnic autonomy and established socialism featuring people's democracy. People of all ethnic groups in Tibet enjoy equal rights to participate in the administration of state affairs and the right to handle local and ethnic affairs on their own.

The economy has achieved step-change development. GDP grew

from 129 million yuan in 1951 to over 50 billion yuan in 2010, a 112-fold increase which represents average annual growth of 8.3 percent at comparable prices. Since 1994 GDP has grown at an annual rate of 12 percent, registering double-digit growth for 18 consecutive years. In 2010 the per-capita GDP was 17,319 yuan, and local budgetary receipts reached 3.665 billion yuan, showing an average annual growth of over 20 percent for eight consecutive years.

Living standards for the local population have steadily improved. In 1951 the per-capita housing of urban dwellers was less than three square meters, but the figure reached 34.72 at the end of 2010. In 2010 the per-capita net income of farmers and herdsmen was 4,138 yuan, registering double-digit growth for eight consecutive years. The per-capita disposable income of urban dwellers stood at 14,980 yuan.

There was no modern industry in old Tibet. But the region now has a modern industrial system with distinctive local features covering more than 20 sectors, including energy, light industry, textiles, machinery, mining, building materials, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, food processing, folk handicrafts and Tibetan medicine.

Tibet's energy, transportation and other basic industries are also flourishing. An extensive energy system has been formed, with hydropower as the mainstay, backed up by geothermal, wind and solar energy sources. A comprehensive transportation network for people and goods has taken shape, with a backbone of highway, rail and air, and a pipeline transportation network for petroleum products.

Social programs have flourished. In old Tibet there were no proper modern schools. The enrolment rate for school-age children was less than two percent, while the illiteracy rate was as high as 95 percent among the young and the middle-aged. Understanding of modern science and technology was rudimentary. From 1951 to 2010 the central government invested 40.73 billion yuan in Tibet's education system and structures. Through this investment Tibet has established a basic educational system with local specifics and ethnic minority characteristics, which includes

