

Book of Xi's discourses on poverty alleviation published

A book of extracts from the discourses on poverty alleviation by Xi Jinping, General Secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, has been published by the Central Party Literature Press.

The book, which was compiled by the Party history and literature research institution of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council Leading Group Office of Poverty Alleviation and Development, will be distributed across the country.

Since the 18th CPC National Congress, Xi has put poverty alleviation in a prominent place of state governance, put forward new thinking and new ideas, and made new decisions and new plans, which has helped China make great strides in poverty relief and make significant contributions to poverty reduction around the world.

The extracts were divided into eight subjects, including winning the final battle of poverty relief to create a moderately prosperous society, upholding Party leadership to strengthen the organizational guarantee, sticking to targeted strategies to enhance the effectiveness of poverty alleviation, and continuing to increase spending to strengthen financial support.

The other four subjects are mobilizing the society to



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unite power from all sources, maintaining strict requirements to drive more solid work, ensuring the principal status of the people to stimulate endogenous power, and working together to eradicate

poverty to build a community of shared future for humanity.

The book contains 242 discourses, extracted from over 60 documents including speeches, reports, and instructions given by

Xi between November 15, 2012 and June 2018.

This is the first time for many of the discourses to be published.

(Xinhua News Agency August 15, 2018)

China's anti-poverty drive boosts global human rights progress



On September 23 of 2018, the first Chinese Farmers' Harvest Festival, two Tibetan farmers are chatting in the fields in Songpan Village, Linzhou County, Tibet Autonomous Region (XINHUA)

China, at the annual session of its top legislative body in Beijing, has pledged to lift another 10 million people out of poverty in its rural areas this year.

The ambitious call for action demonstrates the country's earnest efforts to eliminate poverty, after more than 68 million people have been lifted out of poverty over the past five years.

Through nearly 40 years of reform and opening-up, against the existing rural poverty standards, China has lifted 700 million people out of poverty, more than the total population of the United States, Russia, Japan and Germany, accounting for over 70 percent of the global poverty reduction accomplishments.

Besides, the Asian country has established the world's largest social security system and cut the national poverty rate to 3.1 percent, becoming the first country to complete the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.

The successful achievements China has made in poverty alleviation have not only promoted the development of its own human rights endeavor, but also greatly contributed to that of the international community.

Today, poverty remains one of the most serious challenges to the fulfillment of human rights, and the elimination of extreme poverty has been recognized as a global goal.

As the world's most populous country, China had around 30 million people living below the national poverty line at the end of last year due to unbalanced and inadequate development in different regions, though it has seen a remarkable economic achievement over the past decades.

The grave reality has prompted the Chinese Government to set priorities in honoring its firm commitment to improving the people's rights to subsistence and development—the most primary and basic human rights, as China's State Council recognized in 2016 in a white paper. These two rights are also enshrined and secured in the Constitution and make poverty alleviation a must-do.

To realize the goal of eliminating extreme poverty in rural areas by 2020, China is carrying out a basic strategy of targeted approach, which requires officials of all levels to clarify who the actual impoverished are and figure out factors that led to poverty. Each household or even each family member would

be advised with a customized poverty relief plan. In addition, officials who fail to do so would be held accountable.

China's anti-poverty drive has been globally lauded.

China has realized “the most rapid large-scale poverty reduction in human history over the last 25 years,” read a 2016 World Bank document, which was released after the World Bank's one-year research of worldwide poverty reduction efforts in partnership with the Chinese Government.

“We should not forget the fact that China has contributed the most in world poverty alleviation in the past decade,” UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said last year about China's poverty reduction achievements.

Though the battle against poverty is hard, China is determined to fight its battle and win, as it is trying to build a society where its people can share the benefits of development. As Chinese President Xi Jinping said: “On the march towards common prosperity, no one should be left behind.”

(Xinhua News Agency March 14, 2018)

High spirits

E-commerce injects new energy into rural development

By Li Qing

In 2006, Jia Peixiao quit his stable job, determined to set up his own business even though many doubted his success. Longing to return to his hometown, he went back to Wantou Village, Boxing County of Binzhou City in east China's Shandong Province, to try his luck.

After failing several times, Jia turned his attention to a local handicraft made from willow straw. With computer skills learned in college, he opened a shop on Alibaba's Taobao, a major online shopping website in China.

Eleven years later, Jia delivered a speech at the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland, about his successful business and experiences, explaining the new trends in Chinese villages and the development of China's e-commerce industry.

A learning point

For centuries, women in Wantou have woven willow straw into articles for daily use and sale, an essential means of supporting their families despite low profits. Because the landscape of the area limited the development of agriculture, young people used to leave their homes to work in the cities. However, the emergence of e-commerce changed both the willow straw weaving industry and the life of local people in the village.

"The 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics was a turning point for our industry as the public became interested in products with traditional features," Jia told *Beijing Review*. In addition, the consumption style of people today has changed. Hand-made products with natural materials are a welcome part of the market, making willow straw artwork with both ecological and cultural features a big hit on Taobao.

Jia's business took off in 2009, with annual shop sales exceeding 10 million yuan (\$1.44 million) since 2013. Influenced by his success, more and more people in the village began to sell willow straw products on the Internet, leading to the village being selected as one of the first Taobao Villages by Ali Research, a research organization under the Alibaba Group. This title is given to villages where the number of active online stores is more than 10 percent of the number of local households, and where the annual e-commerce transaction volume reaches 10 million yuan. In 2016, the number of Taobao households in Wantou was 800, with online retail sales exceeding 300 million yuan (\$43 million).



A display of products made of willow straw (COURTESY PHOTO)

Competition is inevitable, since people who operate Taobao shops sell similar articles produced with the same materials.

But with the support of the local government, a creative industry park was built in Boxing, which includes production, storage areas and office space. Rents in the park are low and meetings for exchanging experiences are often organized. Customized technical instruction is also available for different groups of people to assist them in adapting to the market.

According to Xia Tao, Manager of the Boxing Liancheng E-Commerce Ltd. Co. in Boxing, the park has conducted market surveys and contacted companies in other countries. By expanding foreign markets, companies can boost sales, while local people can gain a broader platform to know the development trend of the industry.

"I am only one member of the willow straw weaving industry. If the entire industry here develops well, my career will get better," Jia said.

The process of passing on traditional willow straw weaving is another critical issue. With government help, more young people have become aware of the importance of protecting their intangible cultural inheritance. Government and relevant organizations arrange lectures for inexperienced weavers, where they can learn from older experts and gain respect

trends and advanced technologies.

In another Taobao Village, Dinglou of Heze City in Shandong, online costume shops are promoted by the local government. In 2013, villagers working in other places were promised that if they returned, they would receive financial aid. The government offers a 20,000-yuan (\$2,870) initial fund, as well as a three-year interest-free loan of 50,000 yuan (\$7,180). The government also encourages villagers to build their own brand by rewarding them when they register companies and trademarks.

Ren Qingsheng, head of a local e-commerce business, told *Beijing Review* that along with policies for attracting migrant workers and university graduates back home, detailed beneficial policies have been designed to meet the needs of local disabled people. Combined with financial assistance, one-to-one training has been adopted to guarantee these people's online businesses take off in the right direction. "Government officials leave their contact information with each villager so we can call them directly if we have any problems related to our work," Ren said.

The financial, organizational and scientific aid provided by the government helps villagers with different educational backgrounds to prosper. The quality of villagers' lives has greatly improved.

In 2016, some 26 poor households in the village were lifted out of poverty. Young people were encouraged to start e-commerce businesses with poverty-alleviation loans. Older people were offered jobs related to clothing so they could have a stable income. "Our requirements are not very high, allowing people of all ages and backgrounds to find the right job," Ren said.

The government's preferential policies have helped Dinglou villagers achieve progress. In return, they contribute their efforts to the development of the village. In 2014, a road was planned for efficient transport and a better business environment, with a lot of the money donated by villagers. Since the primary materials for costumes are synthetic fibers which can catch fire easily, the villagers organized donations to buy two firefighting trucks.

The improvement in people's lives in Dinglou is closely related to the strengthening of their village community, and as a result of which, common progress is taking place in the village. Villagers are always ready to help those in need, such as university students with financial difficulties or left-behind children in remote areas.

"Spending money on public services is much more meaningful than spending on other things," Ren said with a smile. He has donated more than 1 million yuan (\$143,500), including cash and clothing.

E-commerce is bringing new opportunities for development to rural areas, evidenced by the emergence of Taobao Villages. Protected and led by supportive government policies and modern technologies, village life is now showing new energy and hope.



A weaver shows how to weave willow straw on May 12, 2016 (COURTESY PHOTO)

In addition, for the convenient and efficient operation of e-commerce, a mature and complete industrial chain has been formed including production and express delivery, providing job opportunities for local people. In Wantou, more and more young people are now willing to stay home and are less inclined to look for work elsewhere. The blending of traditional skills with modern technologies has brought them more opportunities in their hometown.

However, some problems have emerged.

for this traditional handicraft. To spread the local tradition, primary schools in Wantou have set up weaving courses for students where they can learn more about their culture in a fun environment.

Benefits and contributions

Supportive government policies play a crucial role in the development of e-commerce in rural areas and the maintenance of a healthy, competitive industry, especially in places where farmers lack understanding of current market

How Internet plus tourism spreads rural Tibet's wings

Tibet has taken on a new outlook thanks to improved infrastructure

By Li Nan



Phuntsok, a family inn owner in Nyingchi, southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region, promotes his inn by live streaming on June 8, 2017 (ZHAO FEI)

Phuntsok, a 70-year-old family inn owner in Nyingchi City, southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region, is remarkably web savvy. On his business card, there is a QR code for tourists to scan to see the virtual reality (VR) panorama of his guesthouse in Tashi Gang Village, Lhulang Town.

"Many tourists decide to stay at my inn when they see the VR presentation," he said proudly. The veteran-turned-entrepreneur was the first Tibetan to offer accommodations to tourists in Lhulang starting in 1998.

Along with VR, Phuntsok also promotes his guesthouse on Weibo, the Chinese equivalent of Twitter, and WeChat, China's most popular messaging app; and through live streaming. He has more than 1,780 contacts on his WeChat account, most of whom were previous guests. Whenever a newcomer asks him about the specific location of the inn, the elderly man expertly shares his position through his cellphone, guiding guests with the help of cyber maps.

Things were different when Phuntsok first started his business. Having not attended school, he had no idea how to use the Internet to promote his homestay. But since 2016, with the help of the local government, free Wi-Fi has been available in rural Nyingchi. A specialized online platform for promoting the city's tourism was also established in the same year and a free training course on how to use online marketing was offered to family hotel owners. This was grist to the mill for Phuntsok, who ran his inn with these promotional tools.

Now, Phuntsok's guesthouse has become one of the most popular inns in Nyingchi. Celebrities and backpackers queue for a room in advance of the peak season. In 2017, he received nearly 7,000 guests, a surge of 133 percent in two years, with a yearly income of 350,000 yuan (\$55,840).

"I could never enjoy my good life today without the good policies," Phuntsok said, referring to the local government's commitment in recent years to pulling herders and farmers out of poverty with Internet Plus tourism.

Tibet aims to become an international tourist destination and an all-in-one tourism demonstration zone in China. In May 2015, it rolled out a plan to build 20 distinctive towns with complete Internet infrastructure and digital public service platforms, including Phuntsok's hometown of Lhulang.

Located along National Highway 318, Lhulang town is known as China's most beautiful passage linking Sichuan Province and Tibet and has long been a tourist stop. Local residents have always offered accommodations or sold native products to tourists. But there was never a specialized online platform to connect tourists with guesthouse owners.

"On the one hand, many tourists wanted to experience the traditional rural Tibetan lifestyle, but few knew where to go before 2016. On the other hand, farmers-turned-homestay managers knew little about marketing and promotion," Tanzin Samdrup, head of the Nyingchi Tourism Development Commission (NTDC) told *Beijing Review*.

The changes began in 2016, when the town was renovated with 3.8 billion yuan (\$601 million) of investment from China's southern Guangdong Province. A paved road network was built to make scattered villages more connected and accessible. Public infrastructure, such as a water supply station, a garbage transfer station and a sewage treatment plant, were erected. Villages were cleaned up and old guesthouses renovated. Up to 90 percent of the town was covered by a mobile communication network. The once simple town was transformed into an international tourist destination with a traditional Tibetan atmosphere.

Since its trial run in 2016, Lhulang town has received over 300,000 tourists, creating many great business opportunities and generating 1,000 local jobs.

Besides the offline facelift, the Nyingchi government teamed up with a private enterprise to digitalize its rural tourism system. An online platform called Nyingchi Smart Tourism (NST) was established, offering tourists specific information about Nyingchi's resorts, restaurants, hotels, travel agencies, dynamic tourist flows, traffic reports and weather forecasts. With a simple click, tourists can now easily find out where to go, where to eat and where to sleep in the region, even when they are in remote highland pastures.

"In the past, when guests came to my inn, I had to pick each of them up. Thanks to the well-developed Internet, tourists now book rooms online and come to my house by themselves with the help of online maps," said Phuntsok.

What's more, an online marketplace called 7782, sells local products such as dried yam meat, mushrooms and Tibetan herbal medicine. This enables local farmers and herders to sell their products to buyers online.

To encourage more local residents to promote their family hotels and products online, staff from the Nyingchi Smart Tourism Development Co. Ltd. (NSTD) went door to door teaching farmers how to use the platform and provided them with free tablet computers.

Data from the NTDC shows that after the platform was launched, the number of guesthouses in Nyingchi went up from 308 to 570, increasing by 85 percent. According to Qin Lei, NSTD General Manager, the platform has amassed over 3 million registered users,

generating a turnover of 14 million yuan (\$2.23 million) in less than two years.

"Local residents can now receive orders without stepping out of their doors," said Tanzin Samdrup. "And tourists can enjoy a cashless trip across Nyingchi with a cellphone."

Nyingchi residents are not the only beneficiaries of the information highway in Tibet. In the past five years, the autonomous region has grown into the first ethnic region in China where all towns are covered by the Passive Optical Network (PON). To date, PON is accessible to 2,055 villages, or 40 percent of the region's rural areas.

Selling farm produce online has become a common practice in rural Tibet. By February, 14 counties in Tibet were named national level e-commerce demonstration counties, including Tsole County in Ngari Prefecture, a remote county with an average altitude of 4,700 meters. Abounding in farm produce and cashmere products, Tsole failed to find a market as a result of poor telecommunications in the past. When it got access to broadband in 2015, however, it established an e-commerce association and opened online and offline stores to engage villagers in e-commerce. In the first six months, over 120 farmers and herders from 21 villages took part, bringing each of them an additional income of nearly 1,000 yuan (\$159.37) per month.

"Nowadays, Tibet has taken on a new outlook. Modern infrastructure is improving and mobile payment is feasible even in border hamlets," said Qizhala, Chairman of the Tibet Autonomous Region, on March 27.

Challenges

But the Internet Plus tourism on the so called "roof of the world" is not without some obstacles, with lack of talent posing a major problem. "Tibet's high altitude puts some talent off. We are badly in need of Internet technicians," said Qin.

Incubation centers, including the Lhulang Startup Center, were launched to lure talent to Tibet. Opened in June 2016, the center aims to be both an incubation center and a brain bank. To date, a dozen enterprises have rooted themselves at the center. New entrepreneurs are given rent subsidies, accommodations and tax breaks. Attractive internship programs connected to five universities are offered to college students. "We rack our brains on how to retain hi-tech talent in Tibet, hoping that they will help enrich Tibet's brain bank," said Qin.

In the past year, the regional government made great efforts to amass talent, with a total of 105 PhD graduates settling in Tibet, outpacing most other provinces and autonomous regions.

Innovation makes farmers rich

NPC deputies talk about rural vitalization

By Zeng Wenhui



Peng Shihua, NPC deputy and Party Secretary of Pingzhai Village, Ziyuan County of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region



Chen Baoshan, NPC deputy, professor at Guangxi University and Director of State Key Laboratory for Conservation and Utilization of Subtropical Agro-Bioresources based in south China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region

Whether agriculture is well developed, the countryside beautiful and the farmers rich will determine the success of building a moderately prosperous society and the quality of China's socialist modernization drive, President Xi Jinping said on March 8 at a panel discussion with deputies from east China's Shandong Province at the first session of the 13th National People's Congress (NPC). Chen Baoshan, an NPC deputy, professor at Guangxi University and Director of State Key Laboratory for Conservation and Utilization of Subtropical Agro-Bioresources based in south China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, told *Beijing Review* that science and technology must be used for the development of agriculture so that farmers can get rich through innovation.

According to Chen, a former senior researcher with the University of Maryland involved in agricultural studies, Guangxi supplies 60 percent of the edible sugar in China, assuming great responsibility in ensuring the safety of the country's sugar supply. Improving sugarcane yield has thus been central to Chen's work. In recent years, the sugarcane yields have been raised from 3-4 tons per *mu* to 6-7 tons per *mu* (1 hectare = 15 *mu*). Chen, focusing on the research of the viruses that affect these plants, has bred new varieties of sugarcane with higher quality and better yields. "Through innovation, we have raised the yield to 10-12 tons per *mu*, and the figure is likely to be 15-20 tons per *mu* in the future," said Chen.

At present, a farmer earns less than 1,000 yuan (\$158) from each *mu* by planting sugarcane. "Since the cost for growing sugarcane is comparatively fixed, if the yield can be doubled, farmers' income will be more than double," said Chen. "I feel proud seeing that my research is applied to increasing the income of farmers."

Peng Shihua, an NPC deputy and Party Secretary of Pingzhai Village, Ziyuan County of Guangxi, is one such beneficiary getting rich from innovations in science and technology.

Five years ago there had been only dirt roads and no access to electricity in Pingzhai Village. Farmers had to walk half an hour to collect water and bring it home. Now paved roads have been built to connect the village with

surrounding towns, and every family has access to electricity and water.

Located in a remote mountain area, Pingzhai Village sits at altitude and its water resources are unpolluted, allowing the village to grow pollution-free vegetables and develop organic agriculture. Peng, 35, used to work for a vegetable wholesale market and returned to his hometown to plant peppers after seeing that how well peppers sold at the market. As the size of his crop expands, more villagers have followed his lead in growing peppers, even electing Peng as the Party secretary of the village.

The villagers are also beginning to plant tomatoes. Establishing a cooperative, they signed a contract with a vegetable company and plant vegetables according to the demand of the company. "Many villagers who had planned to work in cities now choose to stay home and grow green vegetables because the industry is so promising," Peng said.

According to Peng, tomatoes are planted in more than 66.67 hectares of arable land in the village. The yield used to be determined by the weather and if there was too much rain or too much sun, tomato output would be seriously reduced. With the support of the local agricultural bureau, the village has built rain shelters for tomatoes, so that the farmers need not worry about fertilizer being washed away by the rain.

"Tomato yields are secure and the costs have been reduced for growing tomatoes," said Peng, "Tomatoes planted in rain shelters are 1-2 yuan (\$0.16-0.32) more per kilogram than those planted in ordinary ways, and this year our tomatoes are of good quality and sell well." Peng himself also plants tomatoes in about half a hectare of land, and in years of harvest he can earn 50,000-60,000 yuan (\$7,899-9,479). He also raises over 20 cattle, with beef selling at 130 yuan (\$20.54) per kg, and he can earn a lot of money from this as well.

According to Peng, a total of 135 people from 37 households in his village, which has a population of over 2,100, were lifted from poverty through growing green vegetables last year, and the rest of the people in poverty are expected to get rid of poverty this year.

"The farmland in our village is fertile, so we will definitely eliminate poverty as long as people are diligent," Peng said.