



# HAPPY SPRING FESTIVAL

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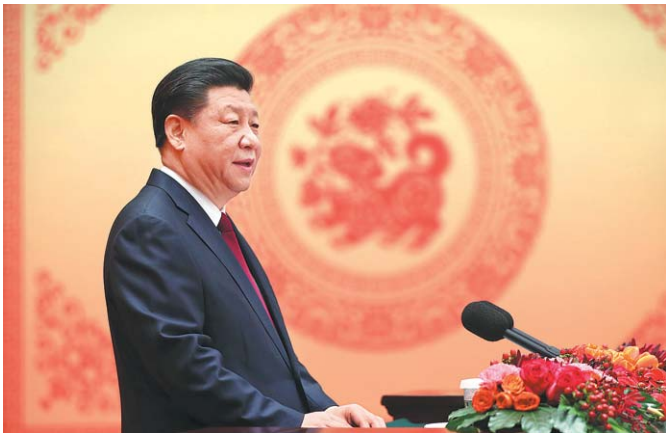
# CHINA DAILY

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## NATIONAL REJUVENATION AIMS TO BRING PEOPLE JOY

# Xi: Now is time to win poverty war

### President sets goal of assisting 30 million people within 3 years

By ZHANG YUNBI  
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President Xi Jinping has called on boosting the quality of poverty relief efforts as the country targets 30 million more people it plans to lift out of poverty in the coming three years.

The pressure on and difficulty of conducting relief missions are intense, as are the unsettled die-hard challenges they will face, Xi said at a symposium on Monday about poverty alleviation in Chengdu, capital of Sichuan province in Southwest China. At the symposium, held during his just concluded inspection tour in the province, Xi listened to briefings on poverty relief by officials at various levels, according to an official release of the symposium issued on Wednesday.

The symposium studied policies in the fight against poverty to be implemented during the next three years.

Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, sent Spring Festival greetings to the public and officials working at the forefront of poverty alleviation.

Steps should be taken to boost preparedness for various potential challenges at a time when problems such as bureaucracy and corruption still exist, Xi said.

A clear mind is needed to understand the difficulties ahead to win the war against poverty. One also is needed to realize the urgency in identifying and resolving demanding issues, Xi said.

Efforts to fight poverty must be maintained and the quality of poverty relief missions should be improved even as their aim targets the poorest areas to ensure substantial progress is made, Xi said.

The president put forward eight detailed requirements on the relief missions.

Officials, particularly high-ranking local leaders, should enhance poverty relief efforts and departments involved at the central level should research and formulate an action plan for the poverty fight, map out the timeline and roadmap for the fight over the coming three years and offer effective guidance, Xi said.

Goals and standards should be fulfilled to ensure all people living in poverty gain a better living standard by 2020, effectively eliminated poverty from all poor counties, Xi said.

The system for managing nationwide poverty relief missions should be reinforced

See *Poverty*, page 2

Inside

See more > p3



Top: President Xi Jinping, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, gives a speech at the 2018 Spring Festival reception of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Wednesday. Above: President Xi and top CPC and State leaders gather with guests at the reception. JU PENG AND LI TAO / XINHUA

By AN BAIJIE  
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President Xi Jinping called on Wednesday for diligence and hard work by people across the country to achieve national rejuvenation.

Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, extended Spring Festival greetings to all Chinese at a reception in Beijing on behalf of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council.

This year's Spring Festival, or Chinese Lunar New Year, falls on Friday.

Addressing the event, Xi spoke highly of the country's progress in 2017 in such areas as improving people's lives, advancing the rule of law, strict governance of the CPC and reducing poverty.

"Time is the most objective witness," Xi said while lauding achievements made last year. Those advances were obtained through the diligence and hard work of all Chinese people, he said.

The president highlighted the importance of diligence and hard work to complete the creation of a moderately prosperous society in all respects.

Those who bring happiness to the majority are the happiest, Xi quoted Karl Marx as saying, adding that the CPC will continue in its goal of bringing happiness to all Chinese people.

The 19th CPC National Congress held last year has set the direction for the country's development in the new era, Xi said, adding that this year is the first to implement the spirit of

the congress and coincides with the 40th anniversary of reform and opening-up.

Xi called on everyone in the Party, the military and nation to unite around the CPC Central Committee and implement the spirit of the 19th CPC National Congress. The Party's policies and decisions should be translated into real benefits to the people, he said.

In his speech, Xi stressed the importance of the more than 400 million families in the country and their role in building a strong nation.

The Chinese people have always valued family, Xi said, adding that the country's prosperity is related to the happiness of every family.

Xi called on the country's more than 1.3 billion people to integrate their love of family and nation, thus to forge great forces to assist in the nation's rejuvenation.

Mentioning that the Year of Dog is always deemed auspicious, Xi extended his wishes that the country's well-being will become better and better every year.

## Ambassador to US voices hope

By CHEN WEIHUA  
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China's top diplomat to the United States called for the two countries to continue working together to keep their relationship on track.

Cui Tiankai, the Chinese ambassador to the US, made the remarks on Tuesday evening at a Chinese Lunar New Year celebration at the Chinese embassy, attended by more than 700 people, including US Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross and several other senior US administration officials and

lawmakers.

Cui said China is looking forward to new progress in relations. "Indeed, China-US relations are at another important juncture now," he said.

Tensions have increased in recent months as the Trump administration singled out China as its major strategic competitor in its national security and national defense strategies. The US also has imposed a number of protectionist measures on Chinese trade and investment.

Cui spoke highly of the important progress in the relationship during the past year.

He said President Xi Jinping and US President Donald Trump have maintained strategic communication, which gives clear guidance to the relationship.

The two leaders launched four dialogue mechanisms when they met at Trump's Mar-a-Lago resort in Palm Beach, Florida, in April.

"Going forward for the months and years ahead, let's work together to keep this important relationship on the right track, on the basis of mutual respect and maybe

See *Festival*, page 2



Ambassador Cui Tiankai displays a New Year's drawing with an embassy guest. Spring Festival falls on Friday. ZHAO HUANXIN / CHINA DAILY

## Central bank to rein in risky State businesses

By CHEN JIA  
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China's monetary authority set up its multitasking goals this year to better balance economic growth, financial deleveraging and risk prevention while maintaining a tough regulatory stance.

People's Bank of China, the central bank, kept the 2018 monetary policy tone as "prudent and neutral" in its monetary policy report released on Wednesday, pledging to control the total money supply and maintain reasonable credit growth while keeping its eye on the liquidity situation.

With the leveraging level high and the debt burden even higher for State-owned enterprises, the key task is to further enhance regulations on shadow banking activities and real estate financing, the central bank said, adding it also must regulate local governments' credit risks.

Considering China's current economic situation, "an easing monetary policy may lead to asset bubbles, financial fragility and polarization between the rich and the poor, while a slower growth of money supply could still support high-quality development of the real economy", it said.

The central bank plans to include interbank financing using negotiable certificates of deposit and green financing in the enhanced regulatory framework this year.

The central bank also will monitor a potential global inflation rebound and the withdrawal of major economies' quantitative easing policies.

Liu Ligang, chief China economist with Citigroup, said regulatory overhauls and the so-called macro prudential assessment implementation will keep China's monetary policy relatively tight in 2018, but the room for tighter monetary policy will be limited.

"The PBOC may delicately manage interbank liquidity to avoid spikes in interbank rates against a backdrop of tighter liquidity conditions due to financial deleveraging and expected rate hikes by the US Federal Reserve," said Zhao Yang, chief economist in China with Nomura Securities.

The country's yuan-denominated new loans surged to a record 2.9 trillion yuan (\$460 billion) in January, climbing fivefold from 584.4 billion yuan in December, according to the central bank's data released on Monday.

## TRADITIONAL FOOD FOR THOUGHT FOR LUNAR NEW YEAR'S EVE DINNER

### Catering companies are offering new stress-free ways of enjoying the most important meal of the year, as Wang Keju reports.

Su Qin was on the edge of losing her composure because her mother-in-law was coming from Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, to spend Spring Festival with Su and her husband for the first time.

The 29-year-old Beijing resident had called six restaurants to book a table for dinner on

Lunar New Year's Eve, but with no luck.

While that would not have been a problem last year, before Su got married, it is unacceptable now.

"I cannot afford to mess up the first family reunion dinner with my mother-in-law after my wedding. I want her to feel at home and have a perfect fes-

tival after traveling so far," she said.

The Lunar New Year's Eve dinner, also known as the Family Reunion Dinner, is the most important annual tradition in China. Irrespective of distance, family members travel home to be together for the event, whose significance is similar to Christmas Day in

the West.

There is no way that Su — "a kitchen disaster" — could magically turn an empty table into a feast. That is despite the fact that she enjoys a sideline as an amateur magician.

Her seventh call was to a res-

See *Fest*, page 6

**INSIDE**  
Self-service libraries now in Beijing  
Image, p7

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**President Xi cooks** fried pork at a restaurant in Yingxiu, Wenchuan county, on Monday during his inspection tour in Sichuan province.

JU PENG / XINHUA



**President Xi learns** about how the development of the tea industry has benefited people in Yingxiu, Wenchuan county, Sichuan province, on Monday.

JU PENG / XINHUA



**President Xi communicates** with residents who welcome him warmly in Zhanqi village, Chengdu, Sichuan province, on Monday.

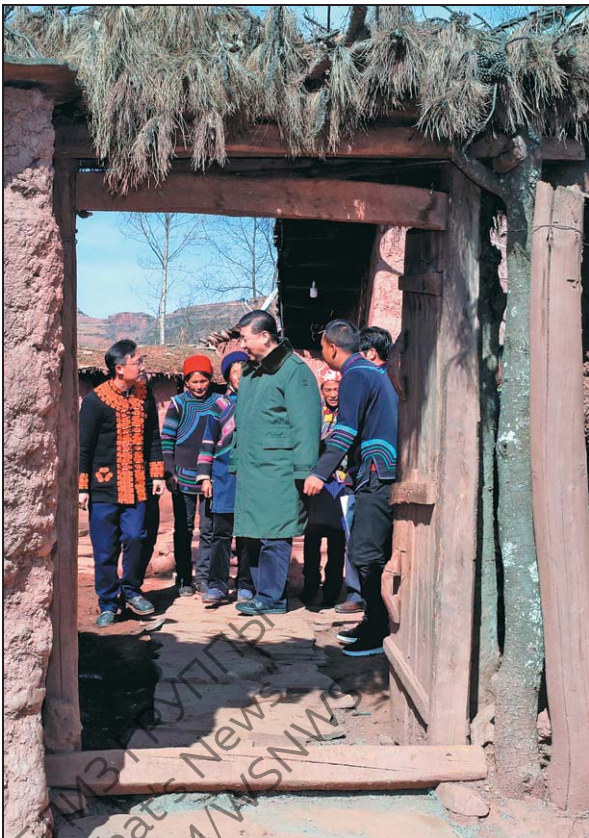
ZHANG DUO / XINHUA



**President Xi Jinping**, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, extends Spring Festival greetings with the Chinese character *fu*, or good fortune, in Zhanqi village, Chengdu, Sichuan province, on Monday. Xi made an inspection tour in Sichuan and extended greetings ahead of Spring Festival, which falls on Friday. XIE HUANCHI / XINHUA

## President listens, learns and shares ideas

During his inspection tour of Sichuan province before Spring Festival, he lends a hand to help improve circumstances



**President Xi talks with** residents in Sanhe village, Liangshan Yi autonomous prefecture, Sichuan province, on Sunday. XIE HUANCHI / XINHUA



**President Xi makes** buttered tea with local people of the Yi ethnic group in Yingxiu, Wenchuan county, Sichuan province, on Monday. JU PENG / XINHUA



**President Xi listens** to the planning of a relocation site for residents from impoverished areas as he visits Sanhe village, Liangshan Yi autonomous prefecture, Sichuan province, on Sunday. JU PENG / XINHUA



**President Xi visits** the home of impoverished people in Sanhe Village, Liangshan Yi autonomous prefecture, on Sunday. JU PENG / XINHUA



Pupils taking part in the Mandarin Excellence Program participate in a classroom activity at UCL Institute of Education in London on July 14.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

# ENCOURAGING WORDS

With a program to make 5,000 UK teenagers fluent in Mandarin by 2020, students are learning the language, reports **Wang Mingjie** in London.

It is Wednesday evening and Sarah Evans' friends are enjoying a drink at a pub but the 25-year-old, who works for a hedge fund company in the City of London, does not join them because she is at her weekly Mandarin class.

"I think to be able to speak Mandarin fluently is very important to me as it can undoubtedly give me an edge at my job," said Evans, who is already able to make good conversation in Chinese.

Her story is one example of the growing interest in Britain in learning Mandarin. As relations between China and the United Kingdom have improved during the last 45 years, learning Mandarin has become increasingly popular.

According to the British Council, the number of people taking Mandarin exams at the General Certificate of Secondary Education level increased by 92 percent over the past five years to 4,044 students in 2016.

There are about 130,000 British students of all age groups studying Mandarin at the moment, according to figures from the Chinese embassy.

Wang Yongli, minister counselor for education at the Chinese embassy in London, said Mandarin was of little interest to British people decades ago, but the expansion of the Confucius Institutes and the smaller Confucius Classrooms, with support from local governments and universities, has played an important role in the rise of Mandarin in the country.

"They are seen as centers of excellence to provide great support to teachers and schools in Mandarin teaching through a wide network. To date, there are 29 Confucius Institutes and 135 Confucius Classrooms in the UK," Wang said.

His view was echoed by the UK's Minister of State for School Standards, Nick Gibb, who believes that a high level of fluency in Mandarin will become increasingly important in the competitive global economy.

"As part of our drive to extend opportunity, we want to give young people the opportunity to study the language and to acquire fluency in both spoken and written Mandarin," Gibb said.



School pupils take part in a Talking Treasure Hunt around the UCL campus in London on July 14.

In 2016, the British government launched its 10-million-pound (\$13 million) Mandarin Excellence Program, which aims to get 5,000 students on the way to fluency in the language by 2020.

The program is being run by UCL's Institute of Education and the British Council. On average, the students study Mandarin for eight hours a week.

Progress test results in October indicated that the first cohort of almost 400 pupils from 14 schools across England are excelling when it comes to learning Mandarin Chinese. The majority of pupils achieved marks of 80 percent or higher across specially created tests in reading, writing, listening and speaking.

Katharine Carruthers, director of the UCL Institute of Education Confucius Institute, said: "This program provides a real boost and unique opportunity for more motivated pupils to be on track toward fluency in Mandarin, and intensive learning is an important part of that. All of the pupils who attended this innovative teaching day are clearly benefiting from being part of the program."

Chijioke Davies, 12, from Dartford Grammar School in Kent, joined the program because he wanted to have a bigger challenge than regular Chinese lessons.

"The best thing about being part of the (program) is that I have something to be proud of and I can say that I am good at a language," he said, adding "if anyone is thinking about joining the program, I would say that they should join because it is an amazing experience."

Speaking about her experience of the program, 12-year-old Carla Turbides from the Anglo European School said: "The best thing about the Mandarin Excellence Program is learning about another language and culture, and doing it together with your friends. It's a great program that offers amazing opportunities for the future."

In 2013, the British Council introduced its Generation UK campaign, which aims to increase the number of British students and interns with placements in China to 80,000 by 2020.

Carma Elliot, director of the British Council in China, said there are now some 7,500 young British people gaining experience in China. This number has grown by around 40 percent in the last three years.

British students' ambition to excel in Mandarin follows strong interest among Chinese students to learn English, which began in the late 1970s. As a result, China now boasts the largest English-learning population in the world, with an estimated 200 million students. In China, most students take their first English lesson during the first or third year of primary school.

While there has been a surge in the number of Britons learning Mandarin, the number of Chinese students studying at British universities has also continued to rise during the past four decades, making Britain the most popular destination in the European Union.

More than 90,000 Chinese students were enrolled at UK colleges and universities in 2015-16, which was up 94 percent on the number from a decade ago (46,960).

Contact the writer at wangmingjie@mail.chinadailyuk.com

## Children make early start on China classes as schools launch lessons

By WANG MINGJIE

In a bright new classroom on the second floor of a West London building, Christie counts to 10 confidently and then identifies parts of the body when prompted by her teacher.

Not bad for a 3-year-old, but Christie is carrying out the tasks in Mandarin rather than English.

She didn't speak a word of Chinese until eight weeks ago, when her parents enrolled her at Kensington Wade in London, the first prep school in the United Kingdom to offer English and Chinese education to pupils aged 3 to 11.

Jo Wallace, the headmistress, said she hopes her students will be able to live and work comfortably with Chinese people.

"What we aim to give our students is not only just a bilingual brain but also the ability to speak Chinese and understand Chinese culture," she said.

The school opened in September, with 16 pupils, half of whom are from families from the UK, the United States, Russia, South America and elsewhere in Europe. Half of the class comprises children with some kind of Chinese background.

"The common factor with all these families is that most of them are international and have an international understanding about China," Wallace said. "Most of them speak two languages and they know the importance of being bilingual and how great it is."

The school charges fees of 17,000 pounds (\$22,435) a year and aims to blend the rigor and efficiency of the Chinese teaching style with the creativity and imagination of the British system. Pupils move between an English and a Mandarin classroom throughout the day.

Kensington Wade was the brainchild of Hugo de Burgh, a Chinese media specialist, who named the school after Sir Thomas Wade, a 19th century diplomat who wrote the first Chinese-English textbook, which was published in the 1860s.

De Burgh said: "The desire to open a school of this kind has been founded on the belief that future generations of British opinion formers and decision-makers will benefit greatly from learning Chinese at an early age."

He said being able to speak the language will give them an edge because China has become influential.

"China now is the biggest trading partner for 124 countries, while the United States is the biggest trading partner for 58 countries, and parents see the growing influence of China economically and culturally," he said.

Michael Pritchett, the father of 3-year-old Kasper, said being bilingual expands the learning capacity of the brain and studying Mandarin, the most spoken language in the world, could open up all sorts of possibilities for further cultural study, secondary school and university.

Pritchett said he was delighted when his

“

**A high level of fluency in Mandarin will become increasingly important.”**

**Nick Gibb**, Minister of State for School Standards

son started talking to a waitress in Chinatown in Chinese, and he likes to hear his son singing in Chinese while playing with toys.

"The immersion thing is obviously kept up at home," he said.

The Pritchett family chose Kensington Wade so their son could learn a second language but Stephanie Tsang, another parent, decided to send her son Harry to the school because of his Chinese roots.

Tsang's family just moved back to London from Beijing, and she said that, while China is perceived as the future by many people, she also wants it to be the present.

"We want to have it as a new thing, because I want him to understand Chinese, and be able to talk to his grandma and grandpa," she said.

**'Confident and capable'**

For parents who want their children to learn Mandarin even earlier, there is Hatching Dragons, the UK's first Chinese-English nursery school in central London. Its founder, Cennydd John, set up the nursery because he wanted his son to learn the language.

John said he hopes to get children to break down prejudices and understand that there is much more that joins them than divides them. He read modern Chinese studies at the University of Edinburgh and went on to work as a China consultant.

"I want to help children be globally confident and capable in a changing world," he said, "We cannot deny the fact that there are 1.37 billion people in China who will be globally integrating in some way."

John's concept seems to be working. This year, he launched a second nursery, in Southwest London's Twickenham, two years after the Barbican branch opened. He is planning to open a third, in Westminster, next year.

The interest in learning Mandarin in the UK aligns with UK government policy. In 2015, the government launched its 10-million-pound Mandarin Excellence Program, which aims to get 5,000 students on the way to fluency in the language by 2020.

Nick Gibb, Minister of State for School Standards, said: "A high level of fluency in Mandarin will become increasingly important in our globally competitive economy."



Staff help children with their artwork at Hatching Dragons, the UK's first Chinese-English nursery school.



Children play with traditional Chinese shadow puppets at Hatching Dragons. A third nursery is planned for next year in Westminster, London.

## It's a rap: Teacher finds method in music

By WANG MINGJIE

Mandarin can be a massive challenge for people trying to pick it up as a second language, but a London teacher has introduced a novel way to teach it — by rapping in Chinese to make classes memorable and fun.

Adam Moorman, a teacher at Fortismere School in North London, said rapping makes things easy to remember, and Chinese has a good rhythm, so it is natural to combine them.

"As Chinese words are monosyllabic, and there's a very limited number of sounds in Chinese, many words rhyme with each other. If you discount tones, there are about 400 sounds in Chinese, compared with more than 10,000 in English, so it's easier to come up with rhymes in Chinese than in English," he said.

Moorman first got his class to rap in Mandarin as a way to prepare students for their speaking exams. He said rap made it easier to memorize longer pieces of text. Writing

and performing rap gives students motivation to find new ideas, learn new words and express their meaning. Rapping requires students to be creative and independent, all of which helps fluency.

Tamzin Sherzad, a sixth-form student at Fortismere, likes the new way of learning.

"Through the process of creating rap lyrics, I have familiarized myself with so many new, popular phrases and I feel that I have really extended my vocabulary of the modern language Chinese young people use," she said.

As a result, Sherzad feels more confident chatting with her Chinese friends and feels better prepared and excited about her gap year in China.

Moorman said that introducing rap to sixth-form students improves their fluency "by combining rhythm, rhymes and repetition in an enjoyable and memorable way that shifts the focus from painstaking book-based learning, but achieves the rewards of independent research, drafting and practicing."

Keisha Asare, another student who has studied Mandarin for five years, said: "In order to write the rap I had to learn and search for new vocabulary that I otherwise would not have known. The raps are also very catchy and this makes it easier to remember the new phrases and vocabulary that I learned."

Asare believes rapping and listening to raps in Mandarin can benefit students who are learning Mandarin, "because whilst creating the raps, students can expand their vocabulary and better their tone as I did."

So far, Moorman has been able to compile an album of 12 original tracks, all featuring raps on varied topics such as healthy lifestyle, social media and the environment.

With the funding he recently won from the London Teacher Innovation Fund, which is financed by the Mayor of London and run by education charity Shine, Moorman launched the Mandarin Rap Podcast to help students learn Chinese with rap.



Zhu Zhaoyun, center, and her students survey plants in Fugong county in the Nuijiang Lisu autonomous prefecture in June, 2007. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

# Diagnosing the health benefits of nature's bounty

Scientist's journey of discovery takes her into the lush highlands and lowlands of Yunnan to uncover the medical secrets of ethnic groups and share them with the world

By HU YONGQI and LI YINGQING

For more than three decades, Zhu Zhaoyun has been studying herbs, plants and the bounty of nature, to promote the medicine and medical knowledge of ethnic groups in Southwest China's Yunnan province.

Both far-flung mountains and labs are the battlefield for the 64-year-old senior engineer, who is now the director of the Yunnan Institute of Materia Medica and the research and development director of the listed pharmaceutical company Yunnan Bai Yao Group.

For her outstanding contribution to this field of medicine, Zhu was rewarded 3 million yuan (\$476,190) by the provincial government of Yunnan in 2015. Before that, she also received first prize at the National Science and Technology Progress Awards and won a national model worker award in 2012.

In June 1982, Zhu became a member of the Communist Party of China when she was studying at the Yunnan University of Traditional Chinese Medicine. After graduation, she completed a survey of TCM resources in the Dali Bai autonomous prefecture where she worked as a technician at the Dali pharmaceutical factory.

In 1999, the Yunnan Institute of Materia Medica was set to be overhauled into a self-financed State-owned enterprise from a public institute previously funded by the government. Zhu, then 45, was appointed the institute's director, a decision that changed her life.

## Difficult start

The institute, one of the 22 research institutes to be overhauled and thereby receive no more fiscal support from the government in 2000, was in desperate need for new medicines, researchers and marketing professionals. Many employees lost hope in the institute's future. At this uncertain time, Zhu took the lead in shouldering the responsibility to revive the institute's fortunes.

Zhu still remembers what the institute was like when she first arrived. "Inside the building were intertwined spider webs and rats jumped out of a drawer when I opened one in the office," she said. "It was a difficult environment to conduct experiments, not to mention research."

Cui Tao, the institute's deputy director, described that year as "a state of poverty and blankness." "Everything was started from scratch and the institute had been weighed down with too many negative things," he said.

Wang Jingkun, executive deputy director of the institute, depicted Zhu as an example of being both pragmatic and hardworking.

To get funds to restart research and the development of new medicines,



Zhu Zhaoyun checks samples at the Yunnan Institute of Materia Medica in 2015. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Zhu Zhaoyun asks local residents about ethnic medicines in the Dali Bai autonomous prefecture in April 2010. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Zhu began asking for help from every department she could think of. On many occasions she was turned down but there was no time to linger on the embarrassment.

However, her persistence finally paid off when she was granted more than 1 million yuan to renovate the institute's labs. Her journey to produce new ethnic medicines could finally start.

## Survey and industrialization

Yunnan is known for its biodiversity with its mountains, rising more than 5,000 meters, and lush plains.

"Mountainous areas account for 94 percent of Yunnan's land. If we can develop new medicines, herb planting in rural areas can be strengthened. In this sense, the local economy can get a boost when our medicines are sold all over the world," Zhu said.

However, ethnic medicines are not well-known in the outside world. But the knowledge and expertise behind

them are deeply rooted in local culture and should be cherished as unique and precious resources, Zhu said in one of her books *The Innovative Development for Ethical Medicines*.

"Many fine medicines created by China's ethnic groups have not been developed and my responsibility is to promote them," she said. "We also want to bring them to the global market as well."

Innovation has been one of her priorities since she led a team, for the first time, to complete a wide-ranging survey on Yunnan's natural medicines.

Zhu's team collected more than 80,000 samples for more than 10,000 medicinal substances. About 160,000 pictures were taken to record original conditions.

She also chaired the compilation of the nine-chapter *Illustration on Yunnan's Natural Medicines* and other two books on medicine, to support the protection, research and development of such medicines. As the first author, Zhu was picked by the central govern-

ment for the 2012 National Science and Technology Progress Award.

Based on the surveys, the institute accelerated the industrialization of ethnic medicines. Zhu and her team compared thousands of prescriptions and trialed medicinal materials to make a slew of Yi-ethnic-group medicines. Five of them were approved and patents were granted to six medicines.

Over the decades, the institute's researchers have left their footprints all over the province as they visited ethnic doctors and translated medical books. The efforts resulted in three databases to record more than 4,000 medicines.

"My team has found how to develop ethnic medicine mainly in three key steps; resource surveys, standardized research and then industrialization," she said.

## Recognition and confidence

In 2012, the Yunnan Institute of Materia Medica was merged into the Yunnan Bai Yao Group, a listed company that had 2.6 billion yuan in net profit in the third quarter last year, an increase of 10 percent compared with the same period in 2016. For Zhu, the merger will provide her team with better support in technology and funds to produce more medicines.

The institute has 10 research departments, including one specifically for natural medicine research. A systematic chain of research and development has been built with world-leading hardware.

In January last year, Premier Li Keqiang visited the Yunnan Bai Yao Group in the provincial capital Kunming. As the company's chief scientist, Zhu was the one to introduce *The Illustration on Yunnan's Natural Medicines* to the premier.

"The premier told us that natural medicines belong to ethnic groups and the world, so the healthcare industry should be promoted to be bigger and stronger. Originating in China, natural medicines should go globally," Zhu recalled. "I will make more concerted efforts in study and research to formulate higher-quality medicines and bring Yunnan's indigenous medicine to the rest of the world."

In October, Zhu attended the 19th CPC National Congress as a member of the Yunnan delegation, a recognition of her achievements in the field of ethnic medicine and this gave her confidence to continue her course.

"As a Party congress delegate, I also want to make contributions to local economic development by integrating my research with the poverty alleviation campaign," Zhu added.

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# Panamanian politician blazes a trail for China ties

By ZHOU JIN  
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A Chinese-born Panamanian politician, who acted as a key intermediary for the China-Panama diplomatic relationship, is in many ways blazing a trail for that relationship.

Chen Guoji, advisor to Panamanian President Juan Carlos Varela, is a Panamanian official who still cares deeply for his country of birth.

During two years working at the Panama-China Trade Development Office, Chen devoted himself to promoting friendship between the two countries.

According to Chen, the two countries began negotiations on establishing diplomatic relations in 1994, and Varela expressed his wish to establish diplomatic ties with China about 10 years ago. Finally in June 13, 2017, the two countries established diplomatic relations.

Chen witnessed the entire process of the establishment of diplomatic ties between China and Panama, and accompanied the Panamanian foreign minister to sign the diplomatic memorandum with Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Beijing.

"Seeing the two countries establishing diplomatic relations is seeing years of hard work and hope finally come true," Chen said during a ceremony in January in Beijing honoring his work.

"When I look back at the moment when the two foreign ministers signed the memorandum and seeing the flags of the two countries rise together, I felt excited," he added.

Chen accompanied the Panamanian president during his visit to China in November.

China and Panama signed 19 cooperation agreements during Varela's visit, and the two countries' trade ministers said in December that they will begin negotiations in June to sign a free-trade deal, consolidating a relationship that has strengthened after the Central American nation ditched ties with Taiwan.

Air China will open the first direct flights to Panama in March.

"Opening direct flights will make it convenient for those ethnic Chinese in Panama to come back to China and visit their families," Chen said, adding that trade cooperation between the two countries will boost their businesses in Panama.

Panama could take advantage of its abundant resources, geographical position and experiences in shipping, logistics and finance to cooperate with China and the two countries are highly complementary in industry, he said.

"More and more Chinese enterprises will invest in Panama, and exchanges and cooperation in bilateral trade, culture and other

fields will also become more frequent," he said.

Originally from South China's Guangdong province, Chen's family immigrated to Panama when he was 16 years old.

He has been living and working in Panama for 36 years. Initially, he started working for the family business, and later began his own business career, engaging in retail, trade and real estate.

Although he is successful in business, he raised concerns about the local Chinese community in Panama over their lack of political involvement.

The ethnic Chinese community in Panama began to form in the latter half of the 19th century after a group of 705 Chinese workers arrived in Panama on the clipper *Sea Witch* in 1854.

They have had a presence in the country for more than 160 years, and about 200,000 live there now.

The Chinese who came to Panama in the early years worked as laborers, repaired railways and built the famous canal. Gradually, they started their own businesses.

Their dedication, hard work and ambition have seen many Panamanians of Chinese origin reach influential positions as successful entrepreneurs and professionals, and they have contributed greatly to the economic, cultural, social and technological development of Panama.

In 1996, the Panamanian government issued a set of postage stamps to mark the contribution of those with Chinese heritage. In 2004, the government set aside March 30 as an annual day of commemoration.

However, most ethnic Chinese, despite their commercial success, stay clear of political involvement.

"In many other countries, those of Chinese ethnicity are involved with politics," Chen said, adding that their lack of involvement may hinder their community's development.

With the intention of "making a voice for the Chinese community," Chen started his political career in 2005 and joined the Panameñistas Party led by Varela.

In the following years, he and Varela have been working together. In 2014, Varela won the presidential election and Chen became one of his key advisors.

Since then, Chen has been dedicated to championing the interests and status of ethnic Chinese.

In 2016, as a member of Panama's National Ethnic Chinese Council, Chen and other ethnic Chinese members lobbied the government to issue a special administrative order, to provide long-term legal residency for Chinese citizens who stayed in the country illegally for various reasons.



Chen Guoji, advisor to the Panamanian president, has been at the forefront of China-Panama ties. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



# FEAST: NEW YEAR'S EVE DINNERS AROUND CHINA

On New Year's Eve, people around the country enjoy the Spring Festival Eve dinner with their families. It is considered the most important meal of the year, and every region and province has its own distinctive dish that is deemed indispensable at this time of the year.

LIU LUNAN / CHINA DAILY

From page 1

restaurant called The Jade Garden, a popular eatery for Huaiyang cuisine — one of the four classic styles of Chinese cookery — but unsurprisingly it was fully booked months ago.

## A silver lining

However, the silver lining for Su is that she can order a partially prepared festival dinner of restaurant quality, most of which only needs to be cooked in the microwave for a few minutes.

She said the partially prepared dinner is an ingenious invention for a poor cook such as herself. The meat dishes are already fully cooked, while the vegetable dishes are all sliced and neatly packaged with the appropriate condiments. They only need to be fried quickly in a wok.

"This way, we can satisfy our appetites while enjoying the warmth and coziness of our own home at the same time, which will add a more traditional atmosphere to the dinner," she added.

The New Year's Eve dinner is at the heart of a proper Chinese New Year celebration, and like Su, many people are looking for new ways of preparing the family reunion dinner ahead of the special day.

For example, partially prepared dinners, like the one Su has chosen, have become increasingly popular.

More than 300 stores, including chain restaurants such as Shanghai Mm and Meizhou Dongpo, are selling semi-finished products on Taobao, an e-commerce platform owned by Alibaba, ranging in price from less than 100 yuan to more than 3,000 yuan (\$15.80 to \$477).

According to Taosi.com, a Taobao-targeted data platform, between Jan. 1 and 15, the volume

## Expats find new ways to enjoy the holiday period

As Lunar New Year becomes increasingly recognized across the world, expats who spend the traditional festival in China are discovering a wide range of enjoyable pursuits.

Huda Mohammed, a doctoral student at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing, is looking forward to spending her third Spring Festival in China.

"My favorite part of Lunar New Year is the fireworks," the Yemen national said. "I went out with my friends to the street at 11pm on New Year's Eve in 2016 to see the fireworks. It was so nice."

She said her friends even searched online to check locations where fireworks could be seen, and we visited them to enjoy the displays.

"After the stunning fireworks, we returned to the campus and had some dumplings made by my Chinese friends," she said.

She also had fun with the online red envelope games on WeChat.

People can give and receive digital red envelopes, or *hongbao*, containing real money, on their phones.

"We just kept receiving and giving red envelopes, which was really fun," she said.

For Huda, the best thing about spending Spring Festival in Beijing is the lack of passengers on public transportation, which she called "super good".

According to data from the city's department of statistics, as many as 8 million people of Beijing's population of 21 million are from other parts of China, which means that about 40 percent of the city's residents may return to their hometowns to spend the traditional festival with their families.

In addition, a large number of people choose to travel abroad during the holiday, meaning traffic congestion is not an issue during the festival period.

For expats who stay in the capital, it's a good time to travel around and enjoy the city. "I like Beijing during

Spring Festival. Many people leave the city and it's really easy to get around," said Bill Siggins, 60, an editor from Canada.

Siggins' wife hails from Xi'an, capital of Shaanxi province.

He said he goes to *Miaohui* — a type of fair held during Spring Festival — where people can enjoy traditional food and cultural shows in public parks.

"I'll eat some weird traditional Beijing food — duck intestines or some other organ — and buy a Chinese New Year symbol to hang on the door," he said.

He often travels to his wife's hometown to spend the festival with her family.

"It's always good to see my mother- and father-in-law, and we always have a great time on New Year's Eve. We eat way too much food, have too much fun watching the TV gala and then get way too crazy with fireworks at midnight," he said.

This year, he plans to drive to Xi'an for the coming holiday.

Newcomers always have a good time during Spring Festival.

Gopolang Molale, a 24-year-old master's student at UIBE, will be celebrating his first Spring Festival in China.

"I'm excited that I'm going to experience this festival in China and be part of it," the South African national said. "I know some of the traditions about this festival such as people going back home and getting together. I wonder if it's like Christmas for Westerners? The Beijing municipal government has invited us to a traditional concert. I'm very much looking forward to it."

He also plans to travel to Shanghai during the holiday and visit the Disneyland resort there, the sixth in the world, which opened in 2016. According to the theme park, cartoon characters will dress in traditional Chinese costumes during the holiday period.

- DU JUAN

“With the biggest problem of the New Year's Eve dinner having been solved, I now have nothing to worry about but worry itself.”

Su Qin, Beijing resident

5,888 yuan

The peak price of a chef cooking in person at a customer's home on New Year's Eve

of trade for partially prepared meals on Taobao reached 1.46 million yuan, a rise of 230.55 percent on a quarter-on-quarter basis.

Liu Guiliang, manager of a branch of the Xinghuaacun restaurant in Shanghai, said the outlet offers four different partially prepared festival dinner sets for varying numbers of diners, the cheapest of which consists of six dishes plus rice, and costs 598 yuan.

"More customers are choosing to have the New Year's Eve dinner at restaurants, and some booked more than six months ago. With a

limited number of tables, more people — especially those from the post-80s and post-90s generations — have turned to our partially prepared festival dinners this year. We have sold 130 sets in the past month," he said.

## Cultural content

Qin Yu, professor of hospitality management at Beijing International Studies University, said the New Year's Eve dinner is considered one of the most important family banquets, and eating it anywhere outside of the family home means losing the inherent cultural content

and values.

"However, frankly speaking, restaurants do provide better-quality cuisine and save people a lot of trouble. So partially prepared products combine many advantages and enable customers to enjoy the traditional festival in a tasty way," he said.

The high demand in the catering market also spurs many restaurants to sign up for online food ordering platforms, such as Ele.me and Meituan-Dianping, to provide delivery and takeout services for partially prepared dinners for New Year's Eve.

Song Yi, manager in the South

Memory restaurant in Beijing, said the festival dinner delivery market is seeing more opportunities as takeout food gradually becomes a mainstream way of dining in large cities such as Beijing and Shanghai, and as many families retain the tradition of eating at home.

"We have to consider the lack of staff members because many delivery drivers have also headed home, but we promise that our partially prepared festival dinners will be delivered one day ahead of New Year's Eve to ensure that customers will enjoy them on time," he said.

For those who do not want to

dine out and have no faith in either partially prepared festival dinners or their own cooking abilities, many chefs are offering their services online, offering to cook in person at a customer's home on New Year's Eve. The lowest price online is about 2,888 yuan, rising to 5,888 yuan for the most expensive.

"With the biggest problem of the New Year's Eve dinner having been solved, I now have nothing to worry about but worry itself," Su said.

Contact the writer at wangkeju@chinadaily.com.cn



# READING FOR THE MASSES

Self-service libraries pop up around Beijing's Chaoyang district

Liangyue self-service library in Langyuan Vintage residential community in Chaoyang district of Beijing is open to the public 24/7. PHOTOS BY WANG JING / CHINA DAILY

The government of Beijing's Chaoyang district had opened eight self-service libraries by the end of last year, forming the largest group of such public libraries in the capital city.

The eight libraries, which are mainly located in Chaoyang's commercial and cultural zones, have entered Beijing's public library service system. Readers can borrow books from and read books in these libraries for free. They are able to return their borrowed books at any of the eight libraries, as well as other public libraries in the district.

The libraries cover a combined area of more than 40,000 square meters and provide a total of 30,000 books, as well as simple reading areas.

One of them is in the Beijing Children's Hospital East Branch, the first public library to open in a hospital in China. Another at Zuojiazhuang is equipped with special facilities for visually impaired people.

Li Kai, curator of Chaoyang Library, said the self-service facilities allow people to take part in running them, and make it easier to borrow and return books.

"The city is lacking in public reading spaces. The purpose of building these libraries is to not only inspire but also gather the people," he said.

Li said that Chaoyang district will build more of these libraries and stock books according to readers' needs.



A reader chooses an e-book at Menggongfang self-service library in Xibahe on Jan 3.



A reader selects a book at Liangyue self-service library in the central business district in Chaoyang on Jan 3.



A pediatrician from the Beijing Children's Hospital East Branch reads a story book to a child patient at the self-service library located in the hospital in Chaoyang on Jan 3.



Two readers talk about a book at Chenbing self-service library in Dongdaqiao on Jan 5.



People read books at a self-service library in Sanlitun on Jan 3.

## GUANGZHOU

## SEES FLOWER MARKETS FLOURISH

Tradition of buying plants ahead of Spring Festival gets a boost from rising living standards

By LI WENFANG in Guangzhou  
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Xiao Aiting, a doctor in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, buys a potted kumquat tree and flowers such as rhododendrons, chrysanthemums, narcissi and orchids before Spring Festival every year to create a festive floral corner in her home.

The word for kumquat in Cantonese sounds like the word for luck and Xiao sticks a red envelope on the pot of the tree to wish for abundant luck in the coming year.

She spends 400 yuan to 600 yuan (\$63-95) on her floral decorations, depending on the price of flowers each year.

To Lu Shaoqin, 25, who works in an internet company in Guangzhou, shopping for flowers in a nearby flower market has been an important family tradition since her childhood, without which Lunar New Year celebrations would be incomplete.

A kumquat tree and chrysanthemums, which also symbolize luck; *Pachira macrocarpa*, also known as the money tree; *Dracaena sanderiana*, or lucky bamboo; and *Solanum mammosum*, which is called five generations living under the same roof, are the blooms favored by Lu's family.

A mini peach blossom tree, signifying good luck in relations with the opposite sex, is also a must.

Other flowers popular at Lunar New Year in the city are cockscomb, dahlia, gladiolus and lily.

Ruan Lin, dean of the Guangzhou Institute of Forestry and Landscape Architecture, said most families in Guangzhou, buy flowers for Spring Festival.

The love of flowers by the people of Guangzhou, which is known as the "City of Flowers", was recorded in ancient writings as early as in the Western Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 24).

Su Lisi, chairwoman of the Guangdong Floral Culture Club of the World Flower Council, said there is no official definition of the meanings of festival flowers, but rather customary understanding of local people.

All flowers are beautiful and offer hope for the future. But, positive connotations are sought during



A flower grower at Datian village in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, waters roses on sale in her shop. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Guangzhou citizens purchase flowers at a market before Spring Festival. LING ZI / FOR CHINA DAILY



Customers choose flowers at Guangzhou's Xihulu Flower Market. CHEN JIMIN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Spring Festival and so some flowers have become popular, Su said.

Peach blossom is a favorite of Su's family because it means love and prosperity. This is also why businesspeople prefer the flower, she said.

The tradition of shopping in the city's flower markets is due to its warm weather and great selection of flowers available, Su said.

Ye Chunsheng, a retired professor

from the Sun Yat-sen University and a folk culture expert, said Guangzhou's flower trade can be traced back more than 1,000 years to the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms (907-960), when farmers sold flowers in what is now Zhuangtou village in Haizhu district to the south of the Pearl River.

Flower markets assumed their current form gradually between the 1860s and 1920s when visiting them

became a Lunar New Year custom in the provincial capital, with bamboo frames built to display and sell flowers as well as arts and crafts in designated streets closed temporarily in the few days before Spring Festival, he said.

Abraham Morse, a doctor from the United States working at Guangzhou Women and Children's Medical Center, visited the flower market in Liwan district

with his wife last year.

"It was busy and crowded with lots of activity and people of all ages. There was definitely a festive atmosphere. The entire wide avenue was closed off for a distance of about 1 kilometer.

In the middle of the avenue were stalls mainly selling plants, flowers, pots, and other arts and crafts. Also some snack foods. The stores along the sidewalks of the street were also

"The flower markets in Guangzhou will surely become larger in the future, because living standards are higher and people's expectations have risen."

Su Lisi, chairwoman of the Guangdong Floral Culture Club of the World Flower Council

busy," Morse said.

The couple bought flowers, potted plants and decorative pots as well as snack foods.

"It is not hard to spend your money if you have a place to put what you can buy. We were primarily buying things to decorate the entrance to our apartment and in our apartment as well as the balcony. A few things were for gifts," Morse said.

"It would be a great place to visit to see many beautiful local products and get some sense of the culture of Chinese New Year."

Ye's family moved to Guangzhou when he was 16 and at that time jasmine was widely available in the flower markets.

Over the past 40 years, the varieties of flowers on offer have increased vastly and so have the prices, with balloons and toys also occupying the stalls now, Ye said.

"Folk culture comes from life and develops with life. The content has changed but the meaning of bidding farewell to the old and ushering in the new by walking in the flower markets remains," Ye said.

With higher living standards, people now have more aesthetic demands with many families now pursuing artistic shapes and forms, Su said. "The flower markets in Guangzhou will surely become larger in the future, because living standards are higher and people's expectations have risen, hence the increased spending on festive flowers," Su said.

Official statistics indicate the flower markets in the 11 districts in Guangzhou drew 5.35 million visitors and generated revenue of 120 million yuan last year.

The flower markets marking the coming Year of the Dog started on Feb 12 in Guangzhou, with New Year's Eve falling on Feb 15.

Sheng Wuhan contributed to this story.



From left: Colorful flowers adorn a public park on Ersha Island in Guangzhou, Guangdong province. Flower beds bring color to a walkway beside the Pearl River. Visitors look at plants on display at the Guangzhou International Floral Art Exhibition held last year in Guangzhou. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



## Floral landscaping brings a riot of color to city's streets

By LI WENFANG in Guangzhou  
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Drivers and pedestrians crossing overpasses and footbridges in Guangzhou in November could expect to see *Bougainvillea glabra* in full bloom against the backdrop of an azure autumn sky.

The flowers, which can range in color from purple, red and pink to white and yellow, cover the sides of 353 overpasses and footbridges measuring 330 kilometers in length in Guangzhou, bringing a riot of color to the cityscape.

Thirteen species have been selected out of a total of 150 to decorate the bridges together with some other plants. Careful management, means there are flowers in bloom all year round, up from two seasons in 2003 when the work began to beautify the bridges, said Ruan Lin, dean of the Guangzhou Institute of Forestry and Landscape Architecture.

As well as looking attractive, the flowers also bring marked ecological benefits in terms of improvements to air quality and mitigation of urban heat island effect — where a

metropolitan area is warmer than surrounding rural areas due to human activity.

Guangzhou has applied for a national habitat award for the project after winning the Guangdong provincial award last year, Ruan said, adding that the city's experts have helped a number of other cities on the southeast coast garnish their bridges.

The floral bridges are only part of authorities' efforts to enable the city live up to its nickname of the "city of flowers".

Last year, the city's forestry and

gardening administration implemented a five-year floral landscape plan, Ruan said.

Through careful selection and placement of species and thanks to the warm climate, significant blooms are available year round. Kapok, peach blossom and pink *Bauhinia* adorn the city in spring; *Delonix regia*, or flame tree, and *Lagerstroemia indica*, also known as crepe myrtle, in summer; *Ceiba speciosa*, or silk floss tree, and red *Bauhinia* in autumn; and plum blossom in winter. Flower sight-seeing tips are posted on the

administration's website to allow residents to appreciate the displays.

Floral spots across the city have been upgraded since last year to show more aesthetic sense and efforts are being made to promote the love of flowers in Cantonese culture through activities such as floral exhibitions, promotion of floral science and support for the decoration of residents' balconies.

In September last year, as a highlight of the city's floral affairs, the Guangzhou International Floral

Art Exhibition was held along with the annual conference of the World Flower Council in Guangzhou.

Floral artists from more than 32 countries and regions participated in the events, and over 400 international flower art works were displayed in the city.

In addition, experts from Guangzhou led a team with members from across the country in formulating a national standard on floral decoration along overpasses and footbridges, which has been approved, Ruan said.



# Pricey parkas make inroads in chilly China

Younger, trendy consumers buy leading Canadian and other brands

By LIU YUKUN  
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Wearing a \$900 parka with real coyote fur and Canadian Hutterite goose down, originally designed for expeditions to the South Pole, on her three-minute walk to work, sounds perfectly fine to Amber Zhang who makes less than \$800 a month.

"It's all worth the price considering Canada Goose coats are the warmest I can find in the market," said Beijing-based Zhang.

Sales of winter jackets rose sharply as the unusually cold wind forced people to buy protective garments that could shield them from harsh winter. Compared with function and design, the price tag seems less important for Chinese middle-income consumers.

"Female consumers now focus more on how the clothes make them look when making decisions, compared with the past when they looked at sales prices," said Neil Wang, president of the Chinese operations of consulting firm Frost & Sullivan Inc.

"Chinese consumers in general want jackets that are light in weight, good in quality and trendy in design," Wang added.

In demand more than ever before, the latest high-end jacket brands coming to the market meet most consumers' needs.

According to a report from consulting firm Bain & Co Inc, the market in China for high-end brands in general is now fueled mostly by younger generations, especially millennials. The Bain report also noted that China represented 32 percent of the global luxury market in 2017 and emerged with the biggest market share.

Italian luxury outerwear brand Moncler SpA, whose prices range from \$1,000 to \$2,000, for instance, has continued its global sales growth,



Tourists wear thick down jackets walking on Chang'an Street in Beijing. DU JIA / FOR CHINA DAILY

“Female consumers now focus more on how the clothes make them look when making decisions, compared with the past when they looked at sales prices.”

Neil Wang, president of the Chinese operations of consulting firm Frost & Sullivan Inc

powered in part by China. In the full year to March 31, total revenue climbed 16 percent to \$292.7 million compared with \$261 million in 2016.

Asia accounted for around 40 percent of its global revenue, while the combined total for the Chinese and South Korean markets posted a 23 percent rise.

Another example of the fast-growing appetite for luxury down jackets in China is the Canadian extreme weather outerwear brand Canada Goose.

Compared with recent years, when consumers would balk at \$500 to over \$1,000 price tags, customers now fall over themselves to buy them.

According to a quarterly report released by Canada Goose, the company's total

revenue to end-Sept was \$211 million, up 27.2 percent year-on-year. Its gross margins were 63.6 percent, up from 57.5 percent for the same period the previous year.

Its shares on the Toronto Stock Exchange and New York Stock Exchange, surged from its Initial Public Offering price of \$12.78 on March 16 last year to a peak of \$38.25 a share.

According to a sales representative who is unwilling to reveal her name, Chinese consumers have contributed greatly to its growth.

Although the brand shows little official presence in China as yet, its products are becoming noticeably more visible on the streets of major cities there as many consumers utilize cross-border e-commerce

platforms, go to fashion buyer stores in China or employ personal overseas shopping agents or daigou.

Daigou agents offer overseas products that are usually missing in Chinese markets — with prices 30 to 40 percent lower than in Chinese stores — by avoiding customs duties. Some of those agents are students who study abroad, and some are professionals with marketing and distribution lines in China.

"We are working on a China strategy," CEO Dani Reiss told the Canadian business newspaper the Financial Post. "China is a huge potential market for us."

Originally designed for extreme weather expeditions, Canada Goose got a higher public profile after being used

by crews in such productions as *Game of Thrones* and *The Danish Girl*.

"Its success is also closely connected with its marketing and promotional strategies," Neil Wang said.

The brand has benefited from celebrity endorsement in its promotion in China. Jack Ma, the founder of Alibaba Group and one of the country's richest men, was spotted wearing a Canada Goose woman's parka at a number of international forums and during a meeting with US President Donald Trump.

Social media tags with "Jack Ma" and "Canada Goose" leaped to the top of key search words the next day, and Canada Goose, or similar looking products, became one of the top choices for purchases using

online e-commerce retailer Taobao, the Alibaba unit.

As high-end brands like Moncler and Canada Goose enjoy a growing customer base, down coat brands with good quality but affordable prices enjoy a major customer base.

According to China top e-commerce platform Tmall, sister company to Taobao and subsidiary of Alibaba, the top five brands for menswear and womens wear with the largest sales volumes during Singles Day were priced between \$150 and \$200 for their down jackets.

During the Singles Day (an annual online shopping day for sale which falls on Nov 11) sales, clothes brand HLA, known as the "Chinese Zara," was number one in menswear on Tmall, bringing in over 400 million yuan (\$64 million) in sales. HLA's down jackets outsold all other categories. More than 220,000 were sold, for over 100 million yuan.

Uniqlo Co Ltd, a Japanese brand specializing in casual wear, ranked second in menswear sales and came in top for women's sales.

During the Singles Day sales, the brand sold more than 100 million items within 1 minute.

According to Uniqlo China, down jackets are among the best sellers this winter, with "light" and "trendy" the key search words used the most.

"Customers now want a down jacket not just as cold weather gear, but also something that is light, chic, and cool," Uniqlo China said.

According to Uniqlo China, 75 percent of consumers ranked "quality" as their primary concern when making purchase decisions, while 70 percent ranked "light" when choosing down jackets.

"Of course I also buy down jackets from Uniqlo, and other brands as long as the jackets can keep me warm and make me look pretty," Amber Zhang said.

"After all, quality and fashion matter the most for down jackets, and then comes the price."

## Canuck firm goes for gold in market

By WANG ZHUOQIONG  
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Canadian athletic apparel retailer Lululemon Athletica Inc said it expects to cash in on China fast-growing passion for sports and keeping-fit by opening more brick-and-mortar stores in major cities, as well as expanding its reach online.

So far the yoga-inspired brand for men and women, started in Canada in 1998, has established 10 stores in China while globally Lululemon had 425 stores in operation by the end of last year. According to the company it has achieved its highest level of brand awareness in Canada, at 80-85 percent of the market, while in the US its brand awareness is 45-50 percent and in China it is about 12 percent.

The company, however, considers its brand awareness in China actually to be quite high, especially in cities like Shanghai and Beijing. It said it will continue to build a significant and sustainable business in the country, starting with a presence in local communities, hooking up with gyms and sports studios, and understanding where people get together to work out — rather than making a major push with heavy marketing or in television commercials.



Visitors shop at a Lululemon store in Beijing. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Lululemon said its strategy is to start with tier-one cities and initially populate them with six or seven stores, before branching out, and to date it has achieved average growth in the Chinese market of about 350 percent annually.

Last year the brand expanded its presence to Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Chengdu as well as expanding its digital footprint on WeChat and Tmall. The company said its Tmall business in 2017 surged by 175 percent, fueled by a more-than-doubling of online traffic.

Lululemon says yoga fashion is a \$10 billion market in China and its stores there achieved profitability of \$15,000 per square meter in 2017, much higher than its stores in North America.

The Canadian group says it is in a high-end market, driven by innovation, and has a vertical business structure. This means it has directly-operated stores — rather than the wholesale model many sportswear brands have adopted in China — which has been key to its successful performance in China.

Research and development and technology has also played its part in boosting sales. The company launched its "Enlight Bra" last May — after two years of research in collaboration with several universities, as well as working with a number of athletes — which was the most expensive bra it had ever sold. Although priced at \$98, however, two weeks after its launch it had become the company's top-selling bra.

The men's category is also a key driver in China and will continue to be so, Lululemon said.

Lululemon's global revenue by 2020 is expected to hit \$4 billion. The company said of that, \$1 billion would come from its international operations, \$1 billion from digital sales and \$1 billion from menswear.

According to the company women and life partners are the largest buyers of its menswear products.

The company estimates that internationally, 80 percent of its revenue comes from women's products. In China, however, the bulk of its sales is in menswear.

## Colder weather perks up winter sales

By WANG ZHUOQIONG  
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This winter's colder weather and strong snow have contributed to the strong Chinese sales of UGG boots, boosting its parent company's financial results.

According to financial results for the third fiscal quarter ended Dec 31, 2017, of Deckers Brands, which designs, markets and distributes footwear, apparel and accessories, net sales increased to \$810.5 million, up 6.6 percent from the \$760.3 million for the same period last year.

Operating income was \$193.2 million compared to \$53.3 million for the same period last year.

UGG brand net sales for the third quarter increased 4.3 percent to \$734.7 million compared to \$704 million for the same period last year.

"We saw success in China due to increases in brand awareness and growing consumer demand following our first holiday season with our brand influencer, youth icon Angelababy Yang," a Chinese celebrity model and actress, said Dave Powers, president and chief executive officer.

Revenue in China increased 10 percent from October to December, and the company's overall performance and growth are very positive, according to Olivier Lorans, Deckers China's vice-president and general manager.

But Lorans does not consider cold weather as the key reason for the growth. He primarily credits the compa-



UGG China credits its sale growth this winter to better communications with younger consumers, such as inviting Chinese actress Angelababy to be its brand influencer. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

**\$734.7 million**

net sales of the UGG brand in the third quarter in 2017

ny's storytelling abilities — particularly its store displays and its efforts to communicate with younger consumers. Its new Pom-pom collection launched in September, which sold out quickly.

"We believe that the increase in sales is natural and we are expecting higher growth in the future," he said.

The China unit, which oper-

ates 150 outlets, opened its first concept store on Sept 23 at a signature shopping center in Beijing; the unit plans to open 45 more concept stores in the future. That kind of ambitious strategy stems from fast growth — 15 percent last year — in the country.

"We expect (growth) to reach 20 percent this year," Lorans said of 2018.

Lorans plans to grow UGG into a four-season lifestyle brand through measures including rejuvenating the men's category and fast-tracking the children's range — particularly its mini-me collection — as well as leveraging the fan base on social media. The company is looking for a male celebrity as well

to create some buzz in the men's category.

For Deckers, the United States remains its No 1 market and China accounts for 10 percent of its global sales revenue.

"I'm expecting it to increase to 25 percent in the near future," Lorans said.

Powers said last year that the group has made efforts in preserving the UGG Classic's franchise with a focus on core brand positioning, reaching a younger consumer with existing and new distribution, growing the men's business with an improved and focused product line, and creating compelling and segmented year-round offerings.

"The third quarter is an indication that those efforts are paying off as we successfully executed on delivering seasonal, relevant product from UGG with standout items, such as innovative winter and waterproof boots, slippers, the Classic Mini and the new men's styles," he said.

Powers said their "refined product strategies, enhanced consumer messaging and wholesale account optimization efforts resulted in much stronger full price selling for its brand portfolio during the key holiday season.

"While more favorable weather also contributed to our year-over-year improvement, hard work by the entire organization enabled us to capitalize on additional upside opportunities," the CEO said.

Deckers now expects fiscal year 2018 results to produce net sales in the range of \$1.873 billion to \$1.878 billion. The gross margin is expected to be about 49 percent.



A view of the Panyang River in Bama in September.

LIANG SHAOEN / FOR CHINA DAILY

# FOR OLD TIME'S SAKE

Bama county in the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region enjoys an enviable reputation as the home of longevity

By LI YANG

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Although it has been questioned whether the Japanese health organization that bestowed on Bama the title of "The Hometown of Longevity" in 1991 actually had the legitimacy to do so, there is no denying the county in the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region has a high proportion of centenarians.

With 300,000 residents in total, the county has around 100 centenarians, nearly five times the United Nation's standard for a place of longevity, which is 7.5 per 100,000.

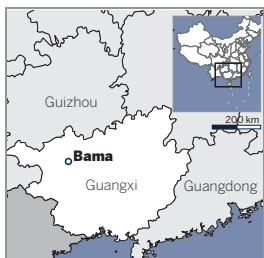
More important, the population in Bama over the age of 90 has been rising steadily, since the longevity of its residents first caught the attention of domestic researchers in the 1960s. According to the county government, by the end of last year, Bama had nearly 800 people over 90 years old.

Many organizations from home and abroad have conducted field researches in Bama since the 1990s, concluding the air is rich in negative oxygen ions, the soil and water contain healthy microelements and there is a strong geomagnetic field, all of which are good for health.

These inherent characteristics have turned Bama into a magnet for visiting senior citizens across the country. They flock to the county hoping to cure their high blood pressure, diabetes and asthma. There are even some with cancer for whom the magical powers of Bama are a last ray of hope.

The government counts these people, whom the locals address as "migratory bird people", as travelers although they usually live in Bama for months, even years. It is estimated more than 100,000 of these "migratory birds" live in the houses of local farmers or the houses they helped the local farmers build.

In the morning and evening, hundreds of people dance and do exercises in front of Baimo Cave, a tourist spot that is believed to have the best air quality. Besides the cave is a deep valley through which the Panyang River flows where people line up to drink the



**They enjoy singing folk songs, and have no desire for money and the other material comforts. It is a mentality that is hard to develop in the modern world."**

Zhang Yuan, a photographer who has shot pictures in Bama for years

water, which they believe to be the elixir of longevity.

Ten years ago, Bama received about 260,000 visitors. Last year, the number soared to about 5 million, and they accounted for more than half of the county's economy.

Concrete buildings dot the mountains. Almost all the families in the villages along the Panyang River, the core longevity region, manage homestays, eateries or specialty shops, selling local cereals, beans, corn and barbecued pork.

Some villagers, who had gone to work in neighboring Guangdong province, have returned to cater to the needs of tourists.

"The inflow of the travelers has changed the locals' lifestyle which had not changed for hundreds of years," says Liang Shaoen, a local civil servant.

Few young people work the land anymore, since running a small business catering to tourists makes them more money than farming.

However, for most of Bama's centenarians, most of whom are illiterate and have never left home, farming was their livelihood.

The centenarians have something in common that even the locals today can't share, said Zhang Yuan, a photographer who has shot photos of 120 centenarians in Bama over the years.

"Aside from their simple lives, they invariably have simple minds. For most of their lives, they have lived a hand-to-mouth, but self-sufficient life. They enjoy singing folk songs, and have no desire for money and the other material comforts," Zhang said.

"It is a mentality that is hard to develop in the modern world," he added.

Some centenarians sit in the halls of the homestays or shops their offspring operate, acting as a form of advertising and revenue, visitors are expected to give them red envelopes containing cash when taking a photo with them and seeking their blessings.

However, not all attribute the longevity of Bama's residents to the external conditions, there are some who think it is in the local people's genes. Sun Liang, a genetic researcher at the National Gerontology Center, said that among the factors contributing to long life, genes contribute about 20 to 30 percent, and the living habits and medical care conditions account for 70 to 80 percent.

"How many years people can live after they reach 90 is mostly decided by their genes. Bama's longevity is in the first place determined by local people's genes," said Sun.

Studies by Yang Ze, deputy director of the Beijing Gerontology Institute, indicates that Bama people came from the Southeast Asia thousands of years ago, and the genes of Bama people are much purer than the modern average.

"The difficult transport conditions made Bama an isolated island for genes. Except during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) when the genes of some new settlers from North China mingled with the genes of the local people," Yang said.



Villagers of the Yao ethnic group perform a traditional bronze drum dance in the Zhuzhu Festival celebrations in Dongshan, Bama, in June. HUANG DAYOU / FOR CHINA DAILY



Huang Miegui and her husband Huang Juanguang, and Huang Juanhui and his wife Yang Miehou (from left to right) pose for the camera in front of their home in Bama last year. The two men are twins, 106 years old, and their wives are both 103 years old. HE FUGAO / FOR CHINA DAILY



A photographer looks for a good location to shoot photos beside the Panyang River in Bama one morning in October. HUANG DAYOU / FOR CHINA DAILY

## 'Migratory birds' put an end to old ways

A small fish that locals catch in the subterranean rivers is regarded as a delicacy after being fried in its own fat.

The price has increased more than 10 times since my first visit to Bama in 2013, because it has almost vanished now.

I have been to Bama three times, and it was noisier and more crowded on the second visit than it was on the first, and even more so on my third visit.

The coming of visitors, especially the "migratory birds", represents a stable source of revenue for the locals.

But a big concern of the longevity villages, which are concentrated in the valley along the Panyang River, is how to dispose of the sewage and solid waste, which have increased rapidly with the growing number of "migratory birds".

Although the county government arranges for trucks to carry the solid waste to a refuse processing plant in the town, some garbage is directly burned by local dustmen in the dustbins on the side of the road in the mountains. The pungent smoke is repulsive and can be smelled miles away from where it is being burned.

And some eateries and homestays directly discharge waste into the simple sewer system that goes directly into the Panyang River.

Although locals admit the environmental concerns must be addressed as soon as possible, the visitors have made it impossible for the locals to return to the old way of life in the county.

Now almost all families are engaged in businesses related to tourism, which has seen their incomes increase over the past decade.

Bama's popularity has attracted more than 60 billion yuan (\$9.53 billion) in investments since 2016. Hopefully, some of that investment will be used for environmental protection.

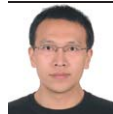
The county government should set a ceiling on the number of visitors each year based on carrying capacity of the local environment. This will benefit Bama in the long run.

Also, the commercial exploitation of the mineral water in Bama must be planned, if not controlled, carefully.

There are already 13 bottled water companies in Bama, with an output of 1.23 billion yuan last year, up 10.8 percent year-on-year.

Once the groundwater lowers to a certain level, it is very difficult to recover and will trigger a chain reaction in the local ecosystem.

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Li Yang

## SUBTERRANEAN MARVELS

By LI YANG

The longevity of Bama people, to some extent, distracts the attention of visitors from its picturesque karst landscape, especially the caves.

The most popular one is Baimo Cave, or the Cave of a Hundred Devils. Although rather than being the abode of malevolent spirits, it was home to serpents, bats and boars before it was discovered.

The cave is a sinkhole, a saucer-shaped surface depression produced when underlying limestone dissolves, or when caves collapse. It is 80 meters high and 70 meters wide on average, and the tourist route within the sinkhole is more than 4 kilometers long.

The subterranean netherworld hosts dozens of types of karst formations, including crystalline stalagmites and stalactites, with the

tallest standing nearly 40 meters high. The sands of time have fused some into hourglass-shaped pillars, and some are mirror images of each other. It's said water dripping from the ceiling adds one-fifth of a millimeter to the stalagmites' tips each year. Their surfaces undulate with the accumulations of sedimentary minerals collected over hundreds of millennia.

What constitutes the cave's ani-

ma is the jade-green subterranean water, which is the Panyang River, Bama's mother river, which meanders through a valley forming a huge Chinese character of *ming*, or life.

In the lower reaches of the river is Baimo Cave, or the Cave of Hundreds of Birds. The Panyang River flows into the cave and becomes a subterranean river again. The cave is more than 1,000 meters deep, 40 to 50 meters wide and about 16 meters high. The ceiling of the cave is like a dome above the river spiked with stalactites of

various shapes. There are some openings in the ceiling in the middle of the cave, like skylights.

Another cave not far from Baimo Cave is called Crystal Palace. The entrance to the cave is in the middle of the slope of a karst peak. The cave was not found until it was accidentally found by local residents in 2004.

The cave is more than 1,000 meters deep, 8 to 50 meters wide and 10 to 80 meters high. It boasts the largest group of crystal and translucent stalagmites and stalactites groups in China.



## SPORTS

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Pyeongchang Winter Olympics

## Perfectly poised



China's Sui Wenjing is held by partner Han Cong as they compete in figure skating's pairs short program at Gangneung Ice Arena in Gangneung, South Korea on Wednesday. Sui and Han skated a flawless, season-best routine to hold a slim lead over Evgenia Tarasova and Vladimir Morozov of OAR (Olympic Athletes from Russia). JOHN SIBLEY / REUTERS

## White gold has added value

PYEONGCHANG — The pressure was real. So were the tears of joy, relief and redemption.

This is why Shaun White keeps going. This is why the American snowboarding superstar returns to the Olympics again and again, a journey that's seen him evolve from teenage phenom to global icon.

Standing atop the halfpipe on a gray Wednesday morning at slushy Phoenix Snow Park with his hopes for a third gold down to one final shot. White never wavered.

"I honestly knew I had it," he said. "I knew I had to put it down."

The stakes left him little choice. Rising star and heir apparent Ayumu Hirano of Japan had snatched the lead out of White's hand during the halfpipe final, throwing a spectacular epic second run to vault into the lead and put a portion of White's Olympic legacy at risk.

Not that it mattered. One deep breath, a half-dozen near flawless tricks — including back-to-back 1440s, a trick he never landed in competition before these finals — and one seemingly interminable wait later, White's return to the top of his sport was complete.

When his score of 97.75



Shaun White of the US celebrates winning the halfpipe finals at the Winter Olympics on Wednesday. ISSEI KATO / REUTERS

flashed, more than two points clear of Hirano and almost six clear of Australian bronze medalist Scotty James, it all seemed worth it.

White's victory erased the long road back from disappointment in Sochi four years ago, along with memories of his painful recovery from a crash in New Zealand last fall that required emergency surgery.

"He wears the weight of the country on his shoulders for this," said JJ Thomas, White's longtime coach. "This is our Super Bowl — but bigger because it's only once every four years."

White's stomped third run made him the first American male to win gold at three sep-

arate Winter Olympics. Speed skater Bonnie Blair earned gold in the 1988, 1992 and 1994 Games.

All four US golds at these Winter Games have been won by snowboarders.

"What can I say? I won the Olympics," White said.

"Three gold medals. I was just hoping they'd give it to me. I was pretty sure I put it down but it took a little while. Just trying not to make eye contact with the judges."

James, White and Hirano have eyed this showdown on the world stage for months and Hirano — who edged James in the X Games last month, an event White opted to skip after locking down a spot on the US Olympic team

— shrugged when asked if he was concerned about the 98.50 White put up on Tuesday to earn the right to go last in the finals.

"I know what he does and he knows what I do," Ayumu said.

Namely, put on a show.

White put together a dazzling first run, throwing a single 1440 early that scored a 94.25 to storm into the lead.

Hirano responded immediately, uncorking back-to-back 1440s. When the crowd exploded as his 95.25 posted, he simply shrugged his shoulders.

Hirano missed an opportunity to go even higher when he washed out on his final run. James put together an unspectacular last set, setting the stage for White.

He called the opportunity to go last his "good luck spot." And with good reason. He went last during his gold medal runs in Turin in 2006 and in Vancouver in 2010.

Yet White had the top of the podium locked up during his last sprint down the pipe on both occasions.

"He's an amazing athlete, an amazing rider and he's achieved a lot of great feats in his career and today he did so again," James said.

"Yeah, it's really cool."

ASSOCIATED PRESS

## Boutin's bronze triggers abuse

Canadian short-track speed skater Kim Boutin's dream of winning an Olympic medal has quickly turned into a nightmare, with her social media accounts inundated with abuse and threats from angry fans of South Korea after she won bronze on Tuesday.

The 23-year-old grabbed third place in the women's 500m final on Tuesday, but her joy was short-lived.

By Wednesday the disqualification of local Choi Min-jeong, who had finished second, triggered a wave of verbal attacks targeting the Canadian, seen as benefiting from what some Koreans think was an unfair ruling of interference.

"Congratulations on the dirty medal," one angry fan wrote. "Did your papa teach you to cheat for the medal?"



Canada's Kim Boutin

"If I find you, you will die," wrote another online user before Boutin was forced to block her accounts.

Short-track speed skating is the host nation's favorite winter sport, with Koreans having won more medals in

the event than in all other winter sports combined.

"None of us can control social media and the public has the right to say what they want, but we would ask anyone to respect the athletes and support their work," IOC spokesman Mark Adams said on Wednesday.

"We occasionally have these issues and it is something we don't approve of. Let's stick to supporting the athletes and some great performances."

Canada's Olympic Committee issued a brief statement saying all team members' safety was a top priority.

"We are working closely with Speed Skating Canada, our security personnel and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)," it said.

"We will not make further comment on this issue, so that Kim can focus on her upcoming events."

This is not the first time South Koreans have vented their anger at a foreign speed skater, with Britain's Elise Christie receiving similar on-line treatment at the Sochi 2014 Games after she collided with a South Korean skater.

US Olympic champion Apolo Ohno also felt South Korean wrath in Salt Lake City in 2002 after protesting against what he said was blocking by a South Korean skater who was then disqualified.

The American quickly became the most reviled man in the country, earning the nickname "king of fouls."

REUTERS

## Sliding headlong into big challenge

## Former sprinters power Nigeria's bold bid to make bobsled history

By SUN XIAOCHEN

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The arrival of Africa's first Olympic bobsled team — pilot Seun Adigun and brakemen Ngozi Onwumere and Akuoma Omeoga, representing Nigeria — has become a hot topic at the Winter Olympics for their groundbreaking qualification in the speedy sliding sport.

"She (Onwumere) hates it and she loves (Omeoga) it, while I am in the middle," Adigun said of their common interest in "relaxing" by riding roller coasters.

Onwumere further elaborated that racing in a bobsled doesn't feel quite so scary because they crouch in the cabin and don't feel the speed and gravity as much as when riding a coaster.

Omeoga cut in, adding: "Unfortunately".

The repartee between the three Nigerian-American

former track and field athletes makes every interview fun, while the obstacles they have overcome en route to becoming winter Olympians could inspire a generation.

"This makes a very bold statement about what it means to be African," said Adigun, a former sprinter who represented Nigeria in the 100m hurdles at the 2012 London Summer Olympics.

"The expectation was that Africans would not be represented at the Winter Olympics due to the climate — but here we are, showing that anything is possible."

Having seen her athletics career approaching the end in 2014, Adigun drew inspiration from other cross-sport bobsledders competing at the Sochi Winter Olympics and soon realized she had what it took to make the transition.

With the fire of another Olympic dream burning, Adigun recruited fellow NCAA sprinters Onwumere and Omeoga to prepare for Pyeongchang.

The lack of a frozen track in their training base of Houston, Texas, was a challenge — as was acquiring a wooden sled, nicknamed *Mayflower* — to

practice pushing on dry land in preparation for competing in the World Cup series.

To facilitate their Olympic dream, the trio launched an online GoFundMe campaign to raise more than \$75,000 in 14 months.

That inspired effort attracted the attention of Visa, which signed on as a major sponsor.

"A lot of the skills we have as track and field athletes are transferable, so we were able to remain explosive, strong and fast," said the 25-year-old Omeoga, a graduate of the University of Minnesota.

Onwumere, 26, agreed, adding: "That's something we are confident about. That's our familiar territory."

The three will make their Olympic debut in the opening heats on Feb 20.

According to OlympStats, Nigeria has won 25 Summer Olympic medals, making it the third-most successful Summer Olympic nation competing in a Winter Games for the first time, behind Cuba and Indonesia.

A total of 55 Africans from 13 nations have competed in the Winter Games, but none in bobsled.

**BOAO FORUM FOR ASIA ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2018**  
博鳌亚洲论坛2018年年会  
April 8-11, 2018 Boao, Hainan Province, China 2018年4月8-11日 中国海南博鳌

**ASIA**

*An Open and Innovative Asia for a World of Greater Prosperity*  
开放创新的亚洲 繁荣发展的世界

On behalf of the Boao Forum for Asia (BFA), we sincerely wish you a happy Chinese New Year. The BFA is dedicated to promoting Asian countries to achieve common development through further integration of regional economy. The purpose of the BFA is to promote and deepen the economic exchange, coordination, and cooperation within Asia and between Asia and other parts of the world. The BFA annual conference 2018 is to be held from April 8-11, in Boao, Hainan Province of China under the theme of "An Open and Innovative Asia for a World of Greater Prosperity". We look forward to welcoming you.

Initiated by 29 countries and inaugurated on February 27, 2001, the BFA is the premier forum for Asia and emerging markets. Each spring, the forum's annual conference brings together approximately 100 presidents and prime ministers, ministers and heads of international organizations, 50 economists, 150 Fortune 500 companies, 1,600 business delegates and 1,000 editors & journalists from Asia and around the world. Top leaders of the host country, China, preside over the opening each year.

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