

OPINION: CLOUD-EMPOWERED CLASSROOMS P.22 | FEATURES: SHENZHEN'S ROBOT REVOLUTION P.38

# BEIJING REVIEW

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## TOGETHER TOWARD PROSPERITY

People-centered progress in Xizang

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Cover Photo: Two sisters play at home in a village in Xigaze, southwest China's Xizang Autonomous Region, on January 22, 2023 (XINHUA)

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**Tel/Fax:** 1-201-792-0334  
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### Latin America Bureau (Mexico City)

**Chief:** Miao Ye  
**Tel:** 52-55-55127271  
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### Peru Office (Lima)

**Chief:** Meng Kexin  
**Tel:** 0051-959212702  
**E-mail:** revistachinaperu@gmail.com

### General Editorial Office

**Tel:** 86-10-68996252  
**Fax:** 86-10-68326628

### Editorial Desk

**Tel:** 86-10-68996250

### Partnerships

**Tel:** 86-10-68995807  
**E-mail:** yecong@cicgamericas.com

### Distribution

**Tel:** 86-10-68310644  
**E-mail:** circulation@cicgamericas.com

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## Peak Performance

This year, Xizang Autonomous Region will strive to reach GDP growth of between 7 and 8 percent, higher than the 6.3-percent growth it achieved last year and much higher than the national target of around 5 percent set at this year's Two Sessions in early March. The target reflects continued government confidence, at both the central and regional levels, in the improvement in Xizang's social and economic development prospects.

Like China's other regions, Xizang has experienced rapid development of its economy, society and governance over the past seven decades, exchanging feudal serfdom for modern socialism and participating in the China Miracle brought about by the economic reforms since the late 1970s. Now, the region is moving forward in shared pursuit of China's mid-century goals for continued modernization and national rejuvenation.

Specifically, Xizang is focusing on achieving balanced regional development by promoting high-quality development, strengthening infrastructure, advancing industrial upgrading, safeguarding and improving people's wellbeing, increasing investment, optimizing the industrial

structure, boosting green development, enhancing ecological protection and improving public services.

Some recent accomplishments include: In 2024, the percentage of days with excellent air quality remained above 99 percent, and the water quality of major rivers and lakes met or exceeded Grade III (good) standard; the population of the region increased from 1.23 million in 1959 to 3.66 million in 2020, and the average life expectancy increased from 35.5 years in 1959 to 72.19 years in 2020; the region has taken the national lead by establishing a 15-year publicly funded education system, from kindergarten all the way up to senior high school; in 2023, the region had 1,821 medical institutions (excluding village clinics) with 21,551 hospital beds and 29,379 healthcare professionals.

Most importantly, these achievements, alongside the region's sustained and rapid economic development, have laid strong foundations for the core purpose of improving people's wellbeing. The successes in the improvement of livelihoods, education and health are a vivid example of the Chinese development model in action. **BR**



### WRITE TO US

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# RITUALS AND REVELRY

People of the Dong ethnic group celebrate the Sama Festival in Sanbaodong Village, Qiandongnan Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture in Guizhou Province, on March 15.

The festival commemorates Sama, a heroine from the Dong ethnic group's ancient matriarchal society. It features rituals, dances and songs, with thousands participating in the festivities.



## Robotics to Radiotherapy

A “drone medical transport” demonstration on March 14 during the 2025 China Medical Equipment Conference and Medical Equipment Exhibition in Chongqing. The four-day exhibition, which kicked off on March 13, showcased over 10,000 new products, technologies, applications and methods in the field of medical equipment.

## Reduced Hospital Admissions

A study by medical scientists from Xi’an Jiaotong University in Xi’an, Shaanxi Province, has shown that China’s air pollution control measures may have averted more than 270,000 hospital admissions linked to heart and psychiatric diseases from 2013 to 2017, Xinhua News Agency reported on March 18.

The research analyzed over 48 million hospitalization records across 292 Chinese cities between 2013 and 2017, offering a comprehensive quantification of health benefits from the country’s Air Pollution Prevention and Control Action Plan (APPCAP) launched in 2013.

Fine particulate matter with a diameter of 2.5 microns or smaller (PM2.5) and black carbon have long been believed to be associated with infectious and chronic illnesses, such as respiratory and cardiovascular diseases.

Compared with 2013, the annual average concentrations of PM2.5 and black carbon in 2017 decreased by 28.61 percent and 20.35 percent, respectively, according to a study published in *Nature Medicine* journal on March 14.

The study shows that China’s clean air policies have significantly reduced hospitalizations for nine major diseases, by an average of 30 percent for those linked to PM2.5 and 21.14 percent for those linked to

black carbon.

For mental health, depression-related admissions fell by 34.35 percent, the largest decline among all conditions surveyed, followed by schizophrenia (32.56 percent). Clean air is also found to be related to reduced admissions of lower respiratory infections, Parkinson’s disease and chronic kidney disease.

## Smart Governance

As China deepens its digital transformation drive, multiple cities across the country have adopted DeepSeek-powered AI services to enhance governance and streamline urban management, Xinhua reported on March 18.

DeepSeek is a domestically

developed advanced large language model that made global waves in late January.

China’s southern tech hub Shenzhen has become the first city in the country to announce the deployment of the DeepSeek model in government services. Local government in the city’s Longgang District completed the localization of the DeepSeek-R1 model within its digital infrastructure in early February, providing intelligent support for over 20,000 civil servants.

The district also integrated an AI assistant powered by DeepSeek into a mini-program on the Weixin superapp, known internationally as WeChat, to improve services for enterprises.

However, as AI-driven governance expands, experts say challenges related to data security, privacy protection and ethical considerations remain crucial.

“We should be mindful of the boundaries of AI applications to prevent over-reliance and systemic risks following the integration of AI into government systems,” said Wu Shenkuo, Deputy Director of the Research Center of the Internet Society of China. “The ethical risks and fairness concerns arising from AI-assisted governance decisions also require a careful and comprehensive assessment,” Wu added.

## Free HPV Vaccines

The Chinese capital plans to administer free human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccines to seventh-grade girls starting in September, joining several provincial-level regions and cities that have announced similar initiatives since 2021.

The vaccination campaign

will utilize the domestically produced 2-valent vaccine with an aim to effectively reduce the risk of cervical cancer among women, according to a plan jointly released by the Beijing Center for Disease Prevention and Control and other related authorities on March 13.

By the end of March, girls currently in grade six are expected to be assessed for willingness to receive the vaccine. By October 31, the first dose of the vaccine will be administered to the target group, as per the plan.

The move is a response to a global strategy launched by the World Health Organization (WHO) to ensure that by 2030, 90 percent of girls are fully inoculated against HPV by the age of 15.

Cervical cancer was the fourth most common cancer among women worldwide in 2022, according to the WHO. Against this backdrop, China made free HPV vaccinations accessible to approximately 40 percent of girls aged 13 to 14 in 2024, as part of its ongoing work to tackle cervical cancer, according to the National Health Commission.

## Boosting Births

Hohhot, capital of Inner

Mongolia Autonomous Region, has promised cash rewards in a latest effort to boost birth rate and cope with the aging society.

The city will offer a one-time subsidy of 10,000 yuan (\$1,394) for couples having their first child, according to a new regulation released on March 13.

A second child will receive 10,000 yuan per year until they turn 5 years old. For the third child or more, the annual subsidy is 10,000 yuan until the child turns 10, with the total amount reaching 100,000 yuan (\$13,940), a relatively high amount compared with other cities.

Yang Zhong, deputy director of the city's health commission, said the measures are aimed at boosting the birth rate and spurring population growth.

Figures show that Hohhot, a roughly two-hour train ride north of Beijing, has a population of around 3.6 million. The city's birth rate showed a declining trend from 2019 to 2023, Yang said. The birth rate stood at 5.58 births per 1,000 people in 2023, though it slightly picked up in 2024 as more couples were willing to have babies in the Year of the Dragon, which concluded on January 28.



## Springtime Splendor

Tourists visit the Hong Kong Flower Show in Hong Kong Special Administrative Region on March 14. The show ran from March 14 to 23.

## Counterfeit Crimes

Chinese procuratorial organs prosecuted 21,404 individuals in 2024 for the production and sale of counterfeit and substandard goods, according to the Supreme People's Procuratorate (SPP) on March 14.

In addition, procuratorial organs nationwide approved the arrest of over 7,700 people last year in connection with these crimes.

The SPP also released six

typical cases of making and selling counterfeit and substandard goods that are directly related to people's livelihoods, involving products such as fire extinguishers, diesel, cosmetics, fertilizer and pharmaceuticals.

The SPP said procuratorial organs will continue to crack down on counterfeit crimes, with a focus on addressing issues such as the sale of fake goods on online platforms and live-streaming channels, as well as ensuring food and drug safety in rural areas and urban-rural fringes.



## Silver Adventures

Passengers take selfies with a tourist train for seniors at Beijing Fengtai Railway Station on March 15. The train, carrying 452 silver-haired passengers from the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region, is on a 12-day journey that started from Tianjin and will cover tourist attractions in Jiangxi, Hunan and Guangdong provinces.

## Robust Growth

In the first two months of 2025, China's value-added industrial output, an important economic indicator, increased 5.9 percent year on year, according to data released by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) on March 17. In February, industrial output grew 0.51 percent from January.

The country's fixed assets investment totaled more than 5.26 trillion yuan (\$734 billion) during the January-February period. It increased 4.1 percent year on year and was 0.9 percentage points higher than the full-year growth rate of 2024.

Investment in infrastructure construction during the two months rose 5.6 percent from a year ago, with manufacturing investment increasing 9 percent.

The services sector also registered accelerated growth in the period, with its official production index growing 5.6 percent year on year, a rate 0.4 percentage points faster than the 2024 whole-year growth rate.

Retail sales of consumer goods, a major indicator of a country's consumption strength, climbed 4 percent year on year in the first two months to over 8.37 trillion yuan (\$1.15 trillion), according to the NBS.

The country's overall employment landscape has remained stable, with the average surveyed urban unemployment rate standing at 5.3 percent, level with the same period of last year.

Speaking at a press conference on March 17, NBS spokesperson Fu Linghui attributed the upbeat momentum to the synergistic effects of existing and incremental policies, highlighting the implementation of a more proactive fiscal policy and a moderately loose monetary policy this year.

## Delivery Sector Growth

The courier sector experienced rapid expansion in the first two months of 2025, with significant growth in delivery volume and

capability-building, according to an industry index released by the State Post Bureau.

The express delivery development index was 368.6 during the period, an increase of 11.8 percent compared to the same period last year, according to the bureau.

The index is compiled based on data from major logistics firms operating delivery services. It reflects the overall business activities and trends in the country's courier sector.

China's express delivery volume remained high throughout the first two months, as the sector entered one of its busiest periods during the Spring Festival holiday from January 28 to February 4. During the holiday, the business volume of express delivery enterprises reached 1.15 billion parcels, a year-on-year increase of 31 percent.

The sub-index for development strength also improved during the period, as related enterprises focused on building logistics infrastructure, expanding delivery channels and achieving

breakthroughs in unmanned delivery vehicles, the bureau said.

## Capital Inflow

China's foreign exchange (forex) market operated steadily in February, with a net inflow of cross-border capital, data from the State Administration of Foreign Exchange (SAFE) showed.

The net inflow of cross-border capital from the trade in goods reached \$64.8 billion that month, remaining relatively high compared to the same period in previous years, said Li Bin, deputy head of the administration.

Additionally, foreign holdings of domestic bonds and stocks increased by a net total of \$12.7 billion, according to Li.

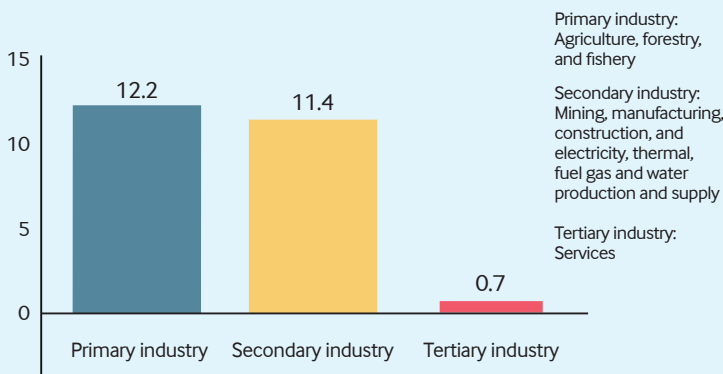
In February, the forex settlement of Chinese banks showed a balanced trend, Li said. "Market expectations and transactions remained rational and orderly, with an overall balance of forex supply and demand in the domestic market," he added.

He said the forex market will

## NUMBERS

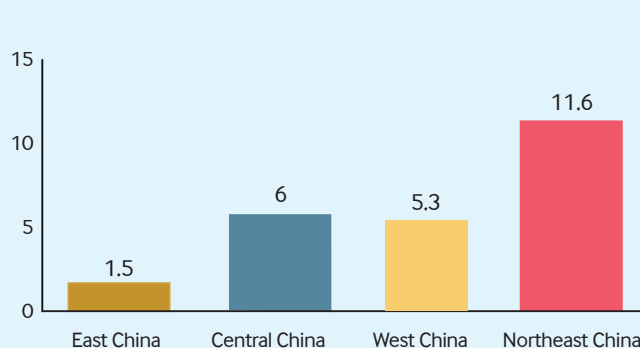
Fixed Assets Investment Growth by Sector

Jan-Feb (% y.o.y.)



Fixed Assets Investment Growth by Region

Jan-Feb (% y.o.y.)





continue to operate on a stable trajectory, thanks to the country's proactive macroeconomic measures to boost consumption and investment, its commitment to high-level opening up, and the market's increasing resilience.

## Cash-Pooling Program

China will expand the coverage of a pilot cash-pooling service that integrates domestic and foreign currency management for multinational companies, the country's monetary authorities said on March 13.

The program is being piloted in 10 localities and will be expanded to various regions, including Tianjin Municipality, Hebei, Anhui, Fujian, Shandong, Hunan, Sichuan and Yunnan provinces, and Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, according to the People's Bank of China (PBC), the country's central bank, and SAFE.

The move aims to improve the efficiency of cross-border fund operations and facilitate cross-border

investment and financing for large multinationals to a greater extent, the PBC said in a statement.

Policies that will be piloted in these additional regions include those that allow multinationals to use their master accounts in China to handle centralized receipts and payments in domestic and foreign currencies for overseas subsidiaries, and those that streamline yuan-denominated cross-border receipts and payments for multinationals.

The cash-pooling service was first launched in Beijing and the southern economic powerhouse of Shenzhen in Guangdong Province in 2021. It was expanded to include Shanghai Municipality, Guangdong and Shaanxi provinces and other regions in 2022, and optimized further in 2024.

## SME Development Index

The small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) development index, an index tracking the

development of China's SMEs rose 0.8 points from the previous month to 89.8 in February, according to the China Association of Small and Medium Enterprises.

In terms of sectors, sub-indices for the industry, transport, real estate, wholesale and retail sales, social services and information transmission software sectors grew 0.7, 0.5, 0.4, 1.1, 0.5 and 0.8 points, respectively.

In terms of regions, the sub-indices for the eastern, central, western and northeastern regions stood at 90.6, 90.5, 88.9 and 81.8, up 0.9, 0.6, 0.8 and 0.8 points, respectively.

In China, more than 90 percent of private companies are SMEs, and more than 90 percent of SMEs are private companies.

## In-car Digital Ecosystem

German carmaker BMW said on March 17 it will work with Chinese tech giant Huawei to develop an in-car digital ecosystem specifically tailored

for the Chinese market.

According to the German auto behemoth, this cooperation means a deep integration with Huawei's HarmonyOS NEXT, the company's self-developed operating system that was built independent of the Android architecture.

Built upon the operating system, BMW's digital key functionality is set to debut later this year, allowing users to unlock, lock and start their vehicles using Huawei smartphones. Additionally, the integration with a Huawei smart interconnection solution will debut in 2026 on BMW's locally produced next-generation electric models, the *Neue Klasse* (New Class).

The German company has approximately 460 local supplier partners in China and is accelerating collaboration with Chinese technology partners, particularly in cutting-edge technologies such as large language models, generative AI and intelligent voice interaction.



(Source: National Bureau of Statistics)



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## PALESTINE

A man inspects a building damaged by an Israeli airstrike in a residential area of Gaza City on March 18



## REPUBLIC OF KOREA

Protesters demanding the impeachment of President Yoon Suk-yeol set up tents and stage a sit-in demonstration in Gwanghwamun Square, Seoul, on March 18



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## GERMANY

Visitors taste wines from Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region in China, at the 2025 International Trade Fair for Wines and Spirits in Düsseldorf, on March 16



## HONDURAS

Rescue workers search near the site of a plane crash on Roatán Island on March 17. A small aircraft carrying at least 15 people crashed earlier that same day. The accident claimed six lives



## UNITED KINGDOM

Shi Yuqi of China wins the men's singles final at the All England Open Badminton Championships in Birmingham on March 16



## YEMEN

Tens of thousands of people gather in the Houthi-controlled capital of Sanaa on March 17, to protest against U.S. airstrikes in the country



## NEW HEAD OF CHINA CDC

Veteran virologist **Wang Jianwei** has been appointed director general and president of the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention (China CDC).

Wang specializes in the pathogenic mechanisms and prevention of respiratory viral infections. At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Wang led a research team that elucidated the virus's epidemiological characteristics, which laid the groundwork for effective pandemic decision making and the development of diagnostics, vaccines and treatments.



Wang has received support from several prestigious talent programs, including the National Outstanding Youth Science Fund. He has published a number of academic papers in major international journals such as *Cell* and *The Lancet*, and his research findings were recognized as one of the Top 10 Advances in Life Sciences in China in 2020.

## Inheritors of Industry

**People's Daily**  
March 18

Across China, family-run factories are being passed on to a new generation of young entrepreneurs, collectively known as *chang er dai*, or “second-generation factory owners.” The term generally refers to the children of entrepreneurs who started up their own private manufacturing businesses in the decades following China's adoption of the reform and opening-up policy in 1978.

Unlike their self-made parents, the second-generation factory owners have been raised with ready access to quality education. The fact that they have grown up in an era of rapid economic growth

and digital transformation means that this younger generation is more open to new technologies and capable of adapting to shifting trends in the global economy.

Compared to first-generation entrepreneurs, who often encountered language and cultural barriers when dealing with international companies, the highly educated younger generation harbors a more global perspective and is therefore taking the lead in driving the overseas expansion of Chinese businesses.

These young successors are also profoundly reshaping workplace culture by introducing a more modern and human-centered approach to business management, one that values employee wellbeing, work-life balance and flexible work arrangements.



## Ports to Prosperity

**Outlook Weekly**  
March 17

Bordered by the Bohai Sea to the east and encircling Beijing and Tianjin, Hebei Province has a 487-km coastline and governs over 7,200 square km of maritime area. In recent years, its three major ports—Qinhuangdao Port, Tangshan Port and Huanghua Port—have risen to become key portals for international trade and the nationwide distribution of energy resources and raw materials.

The province is integrating itself

“We are ready to continue to provide assistance within our capacity according to the wishes of parties involved, which of course includes post-war reconstruction.”

**Li Ming**, spokesperson for China International Development Cooperation Agency, at a press briefing on March 17, in response to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's February call for China's help in restoring peace and reconstruction in Ukraine

“The big cities of China, like Beijing, have significantly reduced pollution. The air is now clean and fresh. Large lakes such as Dianchi Lake in Kunming and West Lake in Hangzhou have been cleaned up, and the water systems are fantastic.”

**Erik Solheim**, former UN Under Secretary General, in a recent interview with Xinhua News Agency, emphasizing China's rapid strides in ecological development and green technology have become a global example of sustainable progress

into the Belt and Road Initiative, a China-proposed initiative to boost connectivity along and beyond the ancient Silk Road routes, by building a logistics network that connects Beijing and its neighboring regions to the global community. Every day, freight trains loaded with goods depart from Huanghua Port for Europe, and Qinhuangdao Port has become an important gateway between China and the Republic of Korea.

Hebei has also been committed to the sustainable development of its ports by leveraging cutting-edge technologies such as cloud computing, artificial intelligence and the Internet of Things. The province is accelerating the digital transformation of its ports, with Huanghua Port standing out as the world's first fully automated port for coal transportation.

According to the blueprint set out by the local government, the province aims to establish itself as a leading coastal industrial powerhouse by 2027. By that time, Hebei's GDP is expected to surpass 2 trillion yuan (\$277 billion), which will position this rapidly developing region as a key driver of economic growth in the Bohai Sea Rim.

## Identifying AI

**Legal Daily**

**March 19**

With its ability to generate human-like text, images and videos, generative AI provides powerful tools to streamline content creation. However, these tools have also turned the Internet into a breeding ground for fake news and misinformation.

To address this issue, the Cyberspace Administration of China and three other government departments have recently issued a new set of rules requiring Internet service providers to label AI-generated content.

The new regulation, which will come into effect in September, requires all syn-

thetic content to be labeled, either explicitly in its description or implicitly via metadata encoding. The former functions like a visible signature by allowing users to quickly identify AI-generated or modified content, whereas the latter ensures traceability and also protects the copyright of original creators.

These rules offer a Chinese solution for managing the many risks associated with AI-generated content. Looking ahead, as generative AI continues to evolve and permeate more corners of modern life, these regulations need to be constantly upgraded to keep up with the speed of technological advancements and to ensure that AI becomes a robust driver of social progress and human wellbeing.



### PROPERTY TYCOON DIES AT 97

**Lee Chau-kee**, founder of Hong Kong's Henderson Land Development and one of the most successful Chinese entrepreneurs ever, died on March 17 at the age of 97.

Born into a merchant family in Shunde, Guangdong Province, in 1928, Lee started his business in Hong Kong in his 20s and established Henderson in 1976.

Lee's decades-long success in real estate development and investment made him one of the wealthiest people in the world. In 1996, he was ranked by *Forbes* as the fourth richest person globally, with a total fortune of \$12.7 billion.

Lee was also celebrated for his charitable works. His charity foundations have supported students and universities throughout Hong Kong and the Chinese mainland, promoting educational development.

On March 17, John Lee Ka-chiu, Chief Executive of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, released a statement mourning his death, saying he had made significant contributions to Hong Kong's economic development, as well as the city's prosperity and stability.



**“The fair, transparent and predictable investment environment fostered by the Chinese Government has facilitated foreign enterprises better tapping into the vast potential of the Chinese market.”**

**Fang Juntao**, Senior Vice President of Nestlé Greater China, in a recent interview with Xinhua, applauding the latest Chinese government work report and a series of policy measures introduced by top government bodies to create more development opportunities and strengthen the confidence of foreign investors

**“Xenotransplantation could be a key way to solve the organ shortage problem and offer new hope for many patients.”**

**Dou Kefeng**, a scientist specializing in organ transplantation, as his research team from Xijing Hospital of the Air Force Medical University recently successfully transplanted a genetically engineered pig kidney into a uremic patient, a major clinical milestone in cross-species organ transplantation



COVER STORY

# FROM SERFDOM TO FREEDOM

A journey from serving masters to serving the people By Li Nan

**P**adma was 17 when the democratic reform was introduced in Xizang in 1959. Before the reform, the region had been ruled by feudal serfdom under a theocracy for centuries. Nearly 1 million serfs were subjected to estate-holders' cruel exploitation and oppression. Padma was one of them.

Born into a serf family in Xainza County, Nagqu, in north Xizang, Padma spent his adolescent years working as a houseboy

for "Masters" in a local noble family. "I rarely got enough food to eat," Padma told *Beijing Review*. In winter, he was not given warm shoes and the only way to keep his feet warm was to wrap them up in rags. He thought at the time he would serve the noble family for his whole life.

## A turning point

The turning point came in 1959 when feudal serfdom was abolished as part of the democratic reform and approximately 1 million serfs were emancipated. The reform abolished the feudal bondage of individual serfs to serf owners, not only granting serfs personal freedom and equal rights, but also providing them land, livestock and other means of production to improve their socioeconomic status.

"Everything changed. We are no longer slaves for masters. Instead, we've become masters of our own lives," Padma told *Beijing Review*. After the reform, he received professional training and became a village veterinarian in 1963. "We work for ourselves and get paid. The more we work, the more we gain," he added.

The reform also enabled former serfs to have a say in public affairs. In 1970, Xainza County established a democratic reform committee and Padma was elected deputy director. "Before the democratic reform, the