



Regional autonomy boosts development of China's ethnic minorities

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THE aggregate population of ethnic minorities has never accounted for more than 9 per cent of China's total, currently approaching 1.3 billion. Yet their development and prosperity have always been high on the agenda of the leaders of the People's Republic.

legislature of China, and members in the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC). The ethnic groups, who account for 8.98 per cent of China's population, have 428 NPC deputies, or 14.37 per cent of the total NPC deputies, and have 257 CPPCC members, or 11.7 per cent of the total CPPCC members. The country has 2.7 million officials of ethnic minority background.

women of ethnic minorities has improved. According to a survey conducted by Ethnic Unity, a monthly publication focusing on development issues facing ethnic minorities, 43 of China's 55 ethnic minorities now have women working as journalists.

increase in the region's gross domestic products (GDP), per capita disposable income for urban residents, and net income of average farmers and herdsmen, and the growth rate of the region's revenue have all continuously stood above the national average.

law on using Tibetan language in various certificates and invoices. In the 20 years, the Regional People's Congress of Inner Mongolia has formulated 243 decrees in line with local conditions concerning the development of market economy, consolidation of agriculture and husbandry as the foundation of the regional economy, and promotion of sustainable development.

South-to-north-water diversion
According to the 10th Five-Year Plan, water will be diverted from the south via three channels in the eastern, central and western regions, respectively.

produced in the western regions to the eastern regions where they are needed is a landmark for the campaign to develop the less developed western regions.

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Before 1949, the central government from various periods in China each had their own policies and systems in place for overseeing ethnic affairs. But none of them, whether set up by the Han people or by ethnic minorities, worked to secure any measure of equality among ethnic groups. Chen says. The founding of New China marked a new era in which all ethnic groups in the country could enjoy equality, unity and mutual assistance.

To ensure that the minorities fully govern the affairs of the autonomous areas and local ethnic groups, the Law on Regional Ethnic Autonomy stipulates that the chairman or vice-chairman of the standing committee of the local people's congress of the autonomous areas should be citizens of the ethnic group that exercises regional autonomy. Governors of all autonomous regions and heads of an autonomous prefecture and autonomous county are also citizens of the ethnic group that exercises regional autonomy.

At that time, Tibet was still under feudal serfdom. But the peaceful liberation of Tibet in 1951 and the ensuing democratic reform in 1959 changed the fate of Leggong and millions of Tibetans like him. "We became masters of our own destiny for the first time in history," says the 57-year-old official. "We gained the right to vote and stand for election. And we got directly involved in the administration of our hometown by means of the regional autonomy by ethnic minorities."

One important element of ethnic autonomy is embodied in legislation. "The legislation law stipulates that ethnic minority autonomous regions have the right to formulate autonomy-related regulations and separate regulations of their own to ensure social and economic development and effectively protect the legitimate rights and interests of ethnic minority people," says Leggong. Accordingly, the Regional People's Congress of Tibet has adopted decrees stipulating that courts and procurators in Tibet must guarantee the rights of all citizens in Tibet to file lawsuits in their own ethnic languages. The regional legislature has also passed a

Islam has more followers than any other religion among ethnic groups in China. In China, there are ten Muslim minorities whose total population stands at 20 million. They are mostly in Xinjiang, Ningxia, Gansu, and Qinghai and are also scattered throughout China's vast interior areas.

Upon completion, the project will link up the Yangtze, Huaihe, the Yellow River and Haihe valleys, forming a network of four horizontal and three vertical waterways that allows a rational allocation of the country's water resources nationwide. The project is designed to divert 38.48 billion cubic meters of river water a year, which equal the annual flow of the Yellow River, the second longest in China. It is expected to quench the thirst in the north and break the bottleneck hampering economic and social development in China so as to promote a sustainable social and economic development and benefit future generations, according to the Ministry of Water Resources.

In the west to Shanghai in the east with a total investment of 146.3 billion yuan (about US\$17.7 billion). It will transport rich natural gas from Xinjiang to Shanghai and other cities in east China. According to latest surveys, the western regions have reserves of 22.4 trillion cubic meters of natural gas, capable of providing a steady supply in 30 years. Some 100 billion yuan will be invested in the first phase project alone. Construction of a pipeline

with a diameter of 111.8 cm will start soon from Lunan Oil and Gas Field in the Tarim Basin in Xinjiang. Construction of the two energy projects is expected to spur the development of China's equipment manufacturing industry, power project construction and construction materials industry to a higher level. Observers predict that the energy consumed by the people of the central and eastern regions will be based on natural gas, a much cleaner energy source. Upon completion of the two projects, the western region will become a powerful power base of China while the eastern region will be a manufacturing base with faster operations.

Ngapoi Nagwang Jigme, vice-chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, signed the agreement on the peaceful liberation of Tibet on May 23, 1951 as the chief delegate of the local government of Tibet with the central government. He says, "The establishment and ongoing fine-tuning of the basic political system of regional ethnic autonomy have become the cornerstones of Tibet's development and prosperity." This means Tibetans have enjoyed regional autonomy in legislation, language, management and exploitation of both local human and natural resources, he says.

All of China's 55 ethnic groups now have deputies to the National People's Congress (NPC), the highest

legislature of China, and members in the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC). The ethnic groups, who account for 8.98 per cent of China's population, have 428 NPC deputies, or 14.37 per cent of the total NPC deputies, and have 257 CPPCC members, or 11.7 per cent of the total CPPCC members. The country has 2.7 million officials of ethnic minority background.

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Table with multiple columns: DSE, CSE, Financial Performance, Indicators, Day's Market - September 30, 2001, Non Traded Issues, Turnover Leaders, Capital Gainers, Capital Losers, and various market data.