

CHINA

Job fairs brought to migrant workers' hometowns

NANCHANG — Hundreds of people packed a room at a job fair in eastern China's Jiangxi province last month where dozens of firms from the coastal province of Zhejiang, to the northeast, sought recruits.

In the past, people left towns in small inland counties like Shangrao, where the job fair was held, after Spring Festival for jobs in more developed coastal regions. But this year, the jobs came to them.

"It is a hard competition to find ideal workers nowadays," said Hu Zhiliang, who headed the enterprise delegation from Zhejiang. "We need to be proactive, and we cannot just wait for them to come to our doors."

Hu brought 16 companies to Jiangxi for a series of job fairs last month.

There are around 280 million rural migrants working in China's big cities, but as businesses in counties and towns grow, many are turning to jobs closer to home.

"We plan to recruit about 200 people this year and are still 40 workers short," said Zeng Xiaowei, general manager of a company making copper pipe and fittings in Zhejiang.

Part of the competition comes from companies in smaller population centers, which have been offering more job opportunities in recent years.

"I am not that curious about the coastal enterprises coming to our county to hire workers. Our hometown is getting better and better, and more people are choosing to stay."

Zheng Xiaoping, 24-year-old college graduate

"I am not that curious about the coastal enterprises coming to our county to hire workers," 24-year-old college graduate Zheng Xiaoping said at the job fair in Shangrao. "Our hometown is getting better and better, and more people are choosing to stay."

Fueling the trend is a narrowing salary gap between inland and coastal regions.

"The basic monthly salary at inland factories was around 1,000 yuan (\$149) five or six years ago, but now the salary is nearly 2,000 yuan, and a worker's total income can reach 4,000 to 5,000 yuan," Zheng said. "That puts the salary gap at just around 1,000 yuan, and with some job positions, there's no gap."

Going to local companies also means workers do not have to be far from their families.

Lai Shuangshou, 43, quit his job and returned to Shangrao in August. He is now looking for a position at a local company so he can attend to his family, even if he might earn less.

"I had night shifts and long working hours at my last job," Lai said. "But local companies usually take better care of my accommodation needs and children's schooling."

For local companies, working conditions have become an important factor to lure workers.

At a job fair held by Jiangxi Holitech Technology, recruiters were often asked about Wi-Fi in dorms, commuting arrangements and skills training.

"Employees' needs have diversified," said Sun Guangke, the company's human relations manager. "They care about not only the money but also work hours, living conditions and work environment."

Jiangxi Holitech has recently built a basketball court, and it provides home appliances like air conditioners and water heaters in the dorms.

"It doesn't matter if the salary is low at the moment," said Zhong Fangyong, a 22-year-old job hunter. "I want to find a technical post where I can learn things and have greater room for personal development."

XINHUA

Care for endangered species



A breeder weighs a South China tiger cub at the Wangcheng Park Zoo in Luoyang, Henan province, on Friday. The zoo reported that six cubs born in January have all passed the critical survival period after birth. There are fewer than 200 of the endangered tigers worldwide. ZHANG GUANGHUI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Plan aims to meet day care demand

Inadequate supply a factor in China's low fertility rate, says expert

By ZHAO XINYING

zhaoxinying@chinadaily.com.cn

Chinese kindergartens only accept children ages 3 and above, with younger ones sent to day care centers or left in the care of a nonworking parent, retired grandparent or part-time babysitter.

But when both parents have to work, hiring a nanny is expensive, and grandparents have other priorities, day care is the only option for many young parents, particularly those in urban areas.

Research conducted by the National Health Commission in 2016 that surveyed thousands of parents in 10 cities, including Beijing and Shanghai, found that more than a third of parents with children under the age of 3 wanted day care centers to look after their children on weekdays.

That need is only likely to have grown in the three years since the country implemented the second-child policy.

Yuan Xin, a professor at the School of Economics at Nankai University in Tianjin, said his research had found that an inadequate supply of care centers for

One factor that leads to the low fertility rate is many young couples get no helping hand to take care of their babies before they enter kindergartens."

Yuan Xin, professor at the School of Economics at Nankai University

children was a factor in China's low fertility rate.

A plan released on Feb 19 aims to establish more day care centers for infants and young children in Chinese cities.

Community centers will be encouraged to make full use of underused facilities, and unoccupied school dormitories will be turned into day care centers, according to the plan issued by 18 central government departments, including the National Development and Reform Commission,

and the education and civil affairs ministries.

"Private investment in such centers will be encouraged, and the government will establish standards for the centers to ensure the quality of services," the plan said.

Beijing resident Wang Chao, who has to ride the subway for an hour from 5:30 pm every workday to pick up her 26-month-old daughter from a day care center in Chaoyang district, welcomed the plan.

The 32-year-old tried to find a day care center near her workplace in the capital's Xicheng district, but failed because "the very few were too expensive."

Looking forward to more day care centers being built nearby, Wang said, "I might find one that is reasonably priced, so that I can see my daughter conveniently on workdays."

Yuan said the plan was "good and timely."

"One factor that leads to the low fertility rate is many young couples get no helping hand to take care of their babies before they enter kindergartens," he said.

The establishment of more day care centers for infants and young children nationwide could greatly ease young people's concerns about having children, Yuan said.

FROM THE FRONT LINE

Guizhou's springs become hot attraction at home and abroad

By CHENG SI in Beijing and YANG JUN in Guiyang

Hot spring attractions in Guizhou, a relatively undeveloped province in southwestern China, witnessed a boom in tourist arrivals during last month's Spring Festival holiday.

Guiyang, the provincial capital, received about 6.1 million visitors during the seven-day break, up 23 percent year-on-year. More than 44,000 visits were made to the hot spring resorts in the city's Wudang district, Guiyang's culture and tourism bureau said.

Chen Bo, deputy general manager at the Wanxiang Hot Spring Resort in Guiyang, said it received 18,000 visitors during the break, up 20 percent year-on-year and the most in any seven-day period since it opened in March 2017.

"The province is rich in geothermal resources," he said. "The hot springs here are mostly at a temperature of 57 C and contain diversified mineral substances — selenium, for example — that benefit the human body."

Chen said high-quality water is the key element for hot spring tourism, but entertainment and traditional Chinese medicine experiences also matter.

"We now offer travelers 65 pools with different therapies including TCM, tea, wine and vegetable extracts," he said. "Massages, a cinema and gym are also available."

Hot spring bathing has become a popular leisure activity for Chinese travelers in recent years, online travel agency Tuniu said in a news release, adding that there had been a significant increase in bookings for hot spring packages since November.

Tian Xinyan, a 35-year-old businesswoman, said: "I really enjoy hot spring spas to get myself relaxed from my busy work. It also moisturizes my skin and makes me sleep well."

Foreign travelers also appreci-

"I really enjoy hot spring spas to get myself relaxed from my busy work. It also moisturizes my skin and makes me sleep well."

Tian Xinyan, 35-year-old businesswoman, talking about her experience of hot spring bathing

ate the hot spring resorts in Guizhou.

Olga Drobnitsyna, a 28-year-old student from Russia, said she had never been to a hot spring in Russia because they were quite expensive and hard to find.

"Guiyang's hot springs were recommended to me by a foreign friend who's lived in Guiyang for a long time," she said. "It was gorgeous, with many clean and spacious pools to go to. The price was reasonable, at 120 yuan (\$18) a person. And the first time I went, there was a winter discount, so it only cost 70 yuan."

Guizhou's provincial government released a guideline for the development of hot springs tourism last year.

It said the province, home to about 260 registered geothermal locations, will be built into a "hot springs power" by 2020, with the revenue generated expected to account for 20 percent of the province's gross tourism revenue by 2025.

By the end of December, 10 hot spring resorts had been built in Guizhou, with investment totaling about 2.3 billion yuan (\$344 million), the guideline said.

Li Hanyi in Guiyang contributed to this story.

Contact the writers at chengsi@chinadaily.com.cn



Children play at a hot spring resort in Guiyang, Guizhou province, last month. LI HANYI / CHINA DAILY

Former serf looks back on 60 years of improvement in Tibet

By PALDEN NYIMA and DAQIONG in Lhasa

Dawa was drinking butter tea and enjoying the sunshine in a



Dawa (right), chats with her daughter Badrol at her home.

LIU FENG / TIBET DAILY

glass-enclosed extension to her living room as she listened to her granddaughter, Tenzin Drolkar, practice her *dhanyan*, a six-stringed Tibetan guitar.

The 82-year-old's son, Phuntsok, was teaching his young niece how to play it, and the room was filled with sunshine, laughter and music.

Dawa, who lives in Khezang village, Lhokha, in the Tibet autonomous region, is one of the few former Tibetan serfs still alive today, according to Tibet Daily.

Sixty years ago, about 1 million serfs were freed after the feudal serf system ended in Tibet. They accounted for 95 percent of the region's population at that time, according to data from the Tibet Academy of Social Sciences.

March 28 this year marks the 60th anniversary of Serfs' Emancipation Day.

Dawa used to be a serf of Khezang Manor, one of six manors of Sokhang Wangchen Gelek, a *kalon* — official — of the local Kasha regime at the time.

Before the democratic reform movement in 1959, the manor she belonged to had 59 serf households with 302 people.

Dawa's village was the first in the region to benefit from the democratic reform movement, and Dawa has become one of the last people to remember the dark system that preceded it.

"I began to work as a serf in the manor when I was only 8, and I suffered a lot from doing different kinds of heavy work," she said.

Dawa said her family had to offer all the harvest to the manor, and always suffered from hunger because they only received about 50 kilograms of barley from the manor each year.

"If we did not hand in enough crops to the manor, the owner would withdraw the land we rented, and we would become beggars in the end," she said.

"Not only did we starve, our living condition was terrible. My house was a dark, small, dirt cottage; the only household appliances were a small table, a teapot, and some bowls. Our clothes and quilt were made from the manor's discarded rags."

After democratic reform in 1959, her family was given 1.27 hectares of land. Previous land titles and debts were all burned, and all the harvest from the land belonged to her family, she said.

"On the day we were given the land, my mom told me with tears, 'our happy time has come!'" she said.

In the six decades since the democratic reform, the overall living conditions of the people in the region have improved dramatically. Dawa's family earned about 100,000 yuan (\$14,900) last year, and they bought an SUV.

"It makes life more convenient, since we always drive to places and have picnics in the remote areas," she said. "Thanks to the government, we have adequate food and a nice house today. Apart from being a bit deaf, I am all good."

Contact the writers at palden_nyima@chinadaily.com.cn