

POLICY REVIEW

Guideline protects Yangtze culture

Document looks to preserve river's heritage, promote tourism

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Stemming from the bottom of snowy mountains and glaciers in Northwest China's Qinghai province, the Yangtze River runs through a variety of landforms, from deep valleys to peaks, before flowing down the plains of its middle and lower reaches.

Spanning more than 6,300 kilometers from west to east, it has nourished some of the country's most crucial economic zones.

Since the 1980s — and particularly over the past decade — the nation has attached great importance to the integral economic development and ecological conservation of areas along the Yangtze.

To that end, high-level design is taking into account preservation, inheritance and promotion of the abundant cultural heritage in these regions, from primitive men's remains dating back more than 1 million years to innovations being achieved in modern society. Along the river, there are more than 40 UNESCO World Heritage sites, around 3,200 sites that are under State protection and another 5,000-odd under provincial protection. The regions also feature irrigation engineering, agricultural and industrial heritage, historical cities and cultural relics, as well as intangible cultural heritage items, according to Liu Yuzhu, head of the China Foundation for Cultural Heritage Conservation.

They have collectively made the Yangtze River Basin a treasure trove of cultural resources, Liu said at a seminar concerning the basin earlier this month in Yichang, Hubei province. The city is where the Three Gorges Dam, the world's largest hydropower project, is located.

To better revive and preserve these cultural heritage, a national-level guideline was recently released by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the National Cultural Heritage Administration and the National Development and Reform Commission.

The guideline aims to shore up the insufficient systematic protection of the cultural relics and heritage along the Yangtze. It also looks to address the lack of in-depth research, interpretation and promotion of these objects, and of related artistic works and products, according to a statement released by the ministry. It prioritizes cultural heritage protection, emphasizing the establishment of a systematic and coordinated preservation mechanism, and seeks consistency in the development of national parks with Yangtze River culture as their theme.

Moreover, it aims to give full play to the key role of the cultural and tourism industries in the high-quality development of the Yangtze River Economic Belt, the statement said.

Other major tasks noted in the guideline include improving public services aimed at enriching people's spirituality and cultural knowledge, upgrading the integrated development of the cultural and tourism industries in the basin, and promoting the river's diverse cultures around the world.

Key historical role

He Yun'ao, a professor at the Department of Archaeology and Cultural Relics at Nanjing University in Jiangsu province, said that while the Yellow River Basin played a major role in the early development of the Chinese civilization, the Yangtze River Basin has gradually become China's economic backbone beginning in the middle of the Tang Dynasty (618-907).

He and a group of scholars, including noted historians Li Xueqin (1933-2019) and Zhang Zhengming (1928-2006), have been studying regional cultures along the waterway since the 1980s and have come to view the Yangtze River culture as a whole.

He said their studies have helped them learn about the cultural diversity seen in dif-

ferent regions of China, and they are now able to understand the pattern of civilizational development and its features, connotations and motivations, which will ultimately benefit the high-quality development of the Yangtze River Economic Belt.

Archaeological discoveries have indicated that rice growing originated in the Yangtze River Basin, fueling population growth and contributing to social organization as collective efforts were needed to build paddy fields and water injection and drainage systems, resulting in ancient people dwelling in groups. Among the 16 rice-growing sites found in China that date back more than 8,000 years, 14 were located along the Yangtze, according to Fu Caiwu, head of the National Institute of Cultural Development at Wuhan University, Hubei province.

At the Chengtoushan site in Lixian county, Hunan province, remains of paddy fields with irrigation facilities dating back some 6,500 years have been discovered. And the Hemudu culture at the Yangtze River Delta had developed a relatively mature agricultural civilization as early as around 7,000 years ago.

Since the Sui (581-618) and Tang dynasties, further advancement in rice growing techniques and farming tools helped the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze gradually become major suppliers of rice and cloth, as

well as the main source of tax revenue, Fu said.

Modern achievements

In modern times, He said, the earliest domestic industrialists emerged in the basin, including textile pioneer Zhang Jian (1853-1926), alkali industry founder Fan Xudong (1883-1945) and the Rong clan, which was also prominent in the textile industry as well as in flour production.

The waterway also played a major role in the nation's revolutionary culture, according to Ren Hui, a researcher at the Chinese National Academy of Arts. The basin includes key areas such as Zunyi, Guizhou province, and Jinggangshan, Jiangxi province, and bore witness to historical events such as the founding of the Communist Party of China in 1921 and the Long March (1934-36).

Currently, the region boasts the South-North Water Transfer Project — the world's largest — and the Three Gorges Dam, a bustling aquaculture industry, boat lifts and the Five-hundred-meter Aperture Spherical Radio Telescope, among other notable fixtures and achievements. There are also large

bridges and smart ports and more than 50,000 reservoirs, which make up over 50 percent of the nation's total.

They're all modern industrial legacies, said Chen Jin, former deputy head of the Changjiang River Scientific Research Institute, adding that it's necessary to conduct further multidisciplinary studies of the connotations and main characteristics of the Yangtze River culture by combining natural sciences and humanities.

Cultural studies of the river should contribute to the modernization of the country, and the basin, with its economic base and diverse environments and populations, can serve as a precious demonstration area of China's path to modernization, He said.

The professor added that cultural preservation efforts of provincial-level administrative regions along the Yangtze should be recognized, but there's still work to be done to promote the waterway as a whole. "It requires joint efforts of central and local governments, academia and all sectors of society," he said.

Wang Kaihao and Deng Zhangyu contributed to this story.



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

Policy Digest

SPP handling more public interest litigation

Over the past three years, procuratorial organs in China have filed 365,000 public interest litigation cases related to the protection of the environment and natural resources, as well as food and drug safety, according to the Supreme People's Procuratorate.

The spate of filings was the result of a three-year campaign launched by the SPP in 2020 that aimed to ensure people's well-being through public interest litigation, the SPP said at a news conference on Aug 17.

In terms of environmental protection, the cases involved subjects such as forest pests, rare bird species, endangered plants, cultural relics and natural heritages.

As a result of the cases, about 73,200 hectares of damaged water supply areas have been restored, 33,546 hectares of polluted waters have been cleaned and more than 7.1 million metric tons of household waste have been cleared. Meanwhile, about 787,000 kilograms of counterfeit and poor-quality food have been confiscated, the SPP said.

Recycling of new-energy equipment promoted



Authorities have released guidelines to promote the recycling of decommissioned wind-power and photovoltaic equipment, said the National Development and Reform Commission, the country's economic planner, on Aug 17.

The guidelines state that the country will actively build a recycling system for wind-power and photovoltaic equipment. The system will ensure the equipment will remain eco-friendly and be either refurbished for continuous use or disposed of in a green manner.

China's new-energy industry has developed rapidly, and its installed capacity of wind and photovoltaic power ranks first in the world, according to the NDRC. With the acceleration of industrial upgrading and the refurbishment of traditional energy equipment, new-energy equipment will face the problem of being decommissioned on a large scale.

By the end of April this year, China's installed capacity of wind power reached 380 million kilowatts, while the installed capacity of photovoltaic power came in at 440 million kW. Combined, the two accounted for 30.9 percent of the country's installed power generation capacity, official data shows.

Language protection project shows sign of success

A Chinese language resource protection project launched in 2015 has seen research and protection work completed at over 1,700 sites during the project's first phase, covering more than 120 languages and dialects in the country, the Ministry of Education said on Aug 16 at a news conference in Henan province.

A series of books about the languages and dialects of ethnic minorities and in various Chinese regions, as well as related cultural phenomena, has been published as part of the project, said Tian Lixin, head of the ministry's department of language information management. The project concluded its first phase in 2019 and started its second phase in 2021.

CHINA DAILY-XINHUA

New rural travel routes promote life, cultures in countryside

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The Ministry of Culture and Tourism recently launched 143 high-quality rural tourism routes across the country.

The aim of the routes is to further meet increasing summer travel demands and enable the public to experience the poetic and picturesque life in the countryside.

The ministry also said it hopes the routes will promote the deep integration of rural culture and tourism, allow tourists to better appreciate the unique charm and contemporary style of agricultural civilization, and provide opportunities for young people to foster a deeper connection with their homeland.

The routes revolve around three themes: returning to the simplicity of farming, embracing the fragrance of tea, and poetic dwellings.

They cover distinctive traditional villages and have integrated local agricultural activities, intangible cultural heritages

and historical relics, according to the ministry.

The routes themed on the simplicity of farming primarily feature agricultural heritage, irrigation engineering sites, agricultural experience activities, and rural social research opportunities. They take young people to farming projects that have existed for more than 1,000 years in Jiangxi province, and help them appreciate nature's bounty through a fishing trip to the coast of Jiangsu province.

An immersion experience of traditional rural education has been prepared at a history and culture block in Hebei province that was named after Yan Yangchu (1893-1990), a Chinese educator and organizer known for his work in mass literacy and rural reconstruction.

Visitors can get their hands dirty and engage in farming in Shaanxi province.

In the fragrance of tea routes, visitors can explore plantations and fairs at the country's major tea production areas, including Zhejiang, Fujian and Sichuan

provinces. Highlights include watching tea production and processing, savoring a variety of tea, exploring historical tea trade routes and staying in tea-themed homestays.

The poetic dwelling routes take visitors to the heart of ancient villages in Shanxi, Shandong and Fujian provinces and enable them to soak up the pastoral charm through interactions with local residents. They will have the chance to learn about the positive changes happening in these areas, and they can enjoy folk performances and visit museums during their trips.

Some of the routes can be viewed on the website of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

More will be promoted through official channels, media and market platforms.

Li Zhenni, director of the rural vitalization center of the research institute at major online travel agency Trip.com, believes the move will further incentivize rural tourism development.

The agency rolled out its own rural tour-

ism strategy in 2021, when the country first launched 300 rural tour routes, allowing tourists to take a closer look at the country's poverty elimination achievements and aid rural vitalization efforts.

"Our country's rural areas have already overcome bottlenecks in transportation and infrastructure construction, and rural areas possess excellent tourism resources," Li said.

Trip.com has so far developed more than 20 rural resorts to cater to the rising demands of travelers across 11 provincial level regions, including the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region and the provinces of Anhui, Henan, Hunan, Fujian and Shaanxi, according to the agency.

The homestays embody the theme of integrating local rural features and local intangible cultural heritage.

"They provide an authentic experience for rural tourism," Li said.

"Rural tourism is a golden key for rural vitalization. Rural economic development can be promoted through leverag-

ing rural tourism ... while high-end homestays can be an effective way to promote the high-quality development of rural tourism."

The country's improving rural conditions have drawn in increasing visitors.

The number of tourists visiting rural areas in China reached 867 million in the first five months of 2021, representing a year-on-year growth of 55.5 percent, according to the China Tourism Academy.

Zhou Weihong, deputy manager of the Spring Tour travel agency in Shanghai, said that the vigorous development of rural tourism could not only meet the current tourism consumption needs of urban and rural residents — bringing joy to their bodies and minds through contact with nature and local customs — but it could also help increase farmers' incomes and sustainably solidify and expand the nation's rural vitalization achievements.

Cheng Chaogong, chief researcher from the research institute of Tongcheng Travel in Jiangsu, said the increase in high-quality rural tourism products can help fulfill the leisure and vacation needs of urban residents and promote the transfer of urban consumption to rural areas.