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Sun Lijian, professor of economics at Fudan University

10 high-tech zones to be developed

The majority of new industrial areas will be in central and western regions

By ZHANG ZHIHAO
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China will develop 10 new State-level high-tech industrial development zones, the Ministry of Science and Technology said on Wednesday.

The new zones have been selected and the majority of them are upgrades from provincial ones in central and western China, some of which will focus on specific industries and integrate with the Belt and Road Initiative, said Qin Yong, the ministry's director of high-tech development and industrialization.

The State Council, China's Cabinet, has approved the locations and will publish the details soon, Qin added.

With the new zones, the government could ease the uneven development between high-tech zones across China, allocate resources more efficiently to help local high-tech companies grow and expand Chinese companies' global influence via the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, experts said.

China's high-tech industrial development zones, first launched in 1988, are government incentivized industrial parks for developing high-tech industries ranging from biomedicine to electronics.

China now has 146 State-level high-tech zones, and "most of them are experiencing strong growth," said Yin Hejun, vice-minister of science and technology.

From 2011 to 2015, average revenue for all State-level zones combined grew 17.4 percent per year. Last year, projected revenue was 28.3 trillion yuan (\$4.1 trillion), an 11.5 percent

17.4 percent

Average annual revenue growth rate for all 146 State-level high-tech zones from 2011 to 2015

increase over the previous year, Yin said.

"These State-level high-tech zones have become vital engines for innovation and economic reform," he said.

However, Yin added that high-tech zones in coastal provinces generally grew faster and were more competitive than those in central and western China.

Sun Lijian, a professor of economics at Fudan University, said that was because most of China's capital and talent is concentrated in the coastal cities, where infrastructure is more mature. Moreover, some provincial-level zones are pursuing technologies above their capabilities, lowering efficiency.

"The newly added State-level zones can even the playing field for central and western regions because they will enjoy better planning and more resources," Sun said. "They still need to tap into their local advantages, such as cheaper land and labor costs, to attract high-tech industries from coastal provinces."

Wang Yiwei, a professor of international relations at Renmin University of China, said the new zones not only facilitate cooperation for high-tech companies within China, but also allow companies to expand their global presence via the Belt and Road Initiative.

WeChat video used to finalize divorce

By YANG JUN in Guiyang and HOU LIQIANG in Beijing

As Chinese divorce hearings go, it was fairly standard — apart from the fact that one half of the couple was 2,000 kilometers away.

A civil court in Fuquan, a city in the largely underdeveloped southwestern province of Guizhou, finalized a breakup last week in which the husband was present in court, but the wife was in Tianjin, in northern China.

The proceedings were carried out in just 20 minutes over a WeChat video call, a first for the city, said Deng Chao, the judge who handled the case on Thursday last week.

The couple, who were not identified, had been married since 1989 and have five children, Deng said, adding that there were no disputes over finances or custody.

Court hearings using a video link are common in large cities, but are still rare in remote regions.

"We'll continue to try to hear simple cases via video. But for complicated ones, couples will still be asked to show up in court," Deng said.

Pan Degui, a spokesman for the court, added that video link hearings will be promoted, as



A plaintiff shows her ID card in a WeChat video call during a trial. PAN DEGUI / FOR CHINA DAILY

they can significantly reduce costs for couples.

While it may appear economic and convenient, Liu Lin at Beijing Shuangli Law Firm warned that hearing cases via apps like WeChat could cause more complications and open the possibility of potential privacy issues.

Chen Wei, an attorney at Yingke Law Firm in Beijing, agreed and added, "It could be risky for judges to hear cases this way because it's difficult to verify the proof that couples may offer."

Li Jiayu contributed to this story.

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Taking a closer look



A worker from the British Museum checks a chess piece while preparing an exhibition at the National Museum of China in Beijing on Wednesday. One hundred cultural relics from the British Museum will be displayed at the National Museum starting on March 1.

JIN LIANGKUI / XINHUA

Bike-sharing apps vow to prevent underage users over safety concerns

By ZHOU WENTING in Shanghai
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The operators of three major bike-sharing apps have pledged to make their services less accessible to children in response to Shanghai traffic and education authorities' calls for improved safety.

China's traffic law bars children under the age of 12 from riding bikes and tricycles on roads, yet a rapid rise in the popularity of shared bikes in cities nationwide has resulted in more young people breaking that law.

After meeting with Shanghai officials on Saturday, operators of Mobike, Ofo and Bluegogo promised to revamp equipment and security procedures to block underage users from accessing their bikes.

"We will replace the mechanical locks on our bikes with smart ones, which will help put an end to illegal use by children," said Ren Baolun, Ofo's public relations manager.



A girl poses for a photo while sitting in the basket of a bike owned by Mobike, a bike-sharing service provider, at the Bund in Shanghai on New Year's Eve. GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY

Netizens have said that Ofo's bikes are easy for children to access because their locks require only a four-digit combination, which some users forget to scramble when they finish their journey, meaning the bikes can then be ridden for free.

Ren said that with smart locks, which Mobike and Bluegogo bikes already have, users are only able to unlock a bike after receiving a dynamic password on their smartphone, and can only end the

service once a bike is properly locked.

The companies said they will also jointly assign specialists to patrol key areas such as schools and parks, and cooperate with neighborhood committees to crack down on underage cyclists.

"We will place a warning sign on each of our bikes," Ren added.

Authorities responded to the issue after receiving complaints that children had been seen racing bikes owned by

245

non-motor-vehicle-related traffic accidents involving children under 12 were reported in Shanghai last year.

the apps, which, in some cases, had resulted in injuries.

Statistics from the Shanghai Education Commission show that 245 non-motor-vehicle-related traffic accidents involving children under the age of 12 were reported in the city last year, causing one fatality and 85 injuries.

The total number of shared bikes — which are easy to rent through smartphone apps and can be parked at users' convenience — in Shanghai, Beijing and Guangzhou has surpassed 100,000.

Cao Guoxing, head of public relations at Mobike, said that while backing efforts to prevent children from riding bikes on the road alone, they encourage children to learn how to cycle when accompanied by adults in a safe space.

Girl with blood disorder on road to recovery

By ZHENG CAIXIONG in Guangzhou
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A seriously ill girl whose parents had four more children in the hope of finding her a suitable transplant donor is on the road to recovery.

Zhenzhen, 10, from Meizhou in eastern Guangdong province, was diagnosed with thalassemia — a genetic and potentially fatal blood disorder — as a baby and needed a bone-marrow transplant to save her life.

"We were told by a doctor that she wouldn't live past the age of 10 and that the treatment was very expensive," her mother, Zhang Qiubo, told Guangzhou Daily. "She used to have frequent fevers and other symptoms."

After Zhang and her husband failed to prove a suitable

match, the couple realized their daughter's best chance of finding a suitable donor was a brother or sister.

"I can't stop loving my daughter. I just can't. I would do anything I could to save her," Zhang said, who had four more children between 2009 and 2015.

She conceded the expanded family put a financial strain on the family, as the couple, both street vendors, earn only about 3,000 yuan (\$440) a month.

Her husband contemplated giving up after their fourth child failed to be a match for Zhenzhen, just like her other siblings, Zhang said. However, hope was restored when she fell pregnant for a fifth time in April 2014 and doctors said the child would be a perfect donor.

Thanks to donations from

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I can only offer heartfelt thanks to the kind people who donated or helped Zhenzhen, and I hope to be able to repay them one day.”

Zhang Qiubo, mother of a girl who was diagnosed with thalassemia

local foundations and residents touched by the family's plight, Zhenzhen underwent a bone-marrow transplant at a

hospital affiliated to Guangxi Medical University in Nanning, capital of the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, in early 2015.

The child has been recovering well and is enrolled in a primary school in Zhaoqing, a city about 110 kilometers from Guangzhou, according to a report by Guangzhou Daily.

Zhang is living in Meizhou, her hometown in the eastern part of Guangdong, looking after her four other children, while Zhenzhen lives with her father, who is a migrant worker.

"I can only offer heartfelt thanks to the kind people who donated or helped Zhenzhen, and I hope to be able to repay them one day," Zhang said.

Qian Shiye contributed to this story.

Briefly

BEIJING 1.7 trillion yuan to improve land

China will spend about 1.7 trillion yuan (\$247 billion) on increasing the quality of arable land and promoting urbanization. The country will divide its land into nine zones for land consolidation over the 13th Five-Year Plan period (2016-20), according to a plan released on Wednesday. Land consolidation refers to the rational use of land. In the case of farming, parcels of land are consolidated to provide larger holdings.

Infectious diseases kill 1,121 in January

A total of 1,121 people died of infectious diseases on the Chinese mainland last month, the National Health and Family Planning Commission said on Tuesday. A total of 482,019 cases were reported last month, according to the commission. More than 246,000 cases were classified as Class B infectious diseases under China's Law on the Prevention and Treatment of Infectious Diseases, resulting in 1,108 deaths. Class C diseases accounted for 235,280 cases, including 13 deaths.

GUANGDONG Death of rare dolphin probed



An autopsy has been conducted on an endangered Chinese white dolphin that died last week after it swam up a river in Jiangmen. Workers at Hong Kong Ocean Park will report the findings of the autopsy as soon as possible, according to a Guangdong reserve for the dolphins. The mature dolphin, around 30 years old, swam into the Baisha River, a tributary of the Pearl River, on Feb 1.

INNER MONGOLIA Passengers caught smuggling drugs

Two passengers from Mongolia have been arrested for smuggling drugs, local customs officials said on Wednesday. One of the suspects was caught on Saturday evening when taking a train from Beijing to Ulaanbaatar via Erenhot, with police seizing 72.57 grams of methamphetamine from his luggage. Another suspect was caught carrying 53.65 grams of methamphetamine and 0.84 grams of cannabis on Sunday at customs in Erenhot.

HEBEI Groundwater levels rise after project

Deep-lying groundwater levels have gone from falling to rising in Hebei province following a project targeting overexploitation in 2014, the local water authority said on Wednesday. An evaluation conducted by a third-party institution showed the average deep-lying groundwater level, meaning aquifers deeper than 1 kilometer underground, rose by 0.46 meters in the project pilot area in 2015, compared with a decline of 1.04 meters in 2014, according to the provincial water department.

XINHUA