

CHINA



An aerial photo shows Qinggangba village at the foot of the Wuling Mountains in Sinan county, Guizhou province.

PHOTOS BY SUN LEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Party secretary propels village into prosperity

Qinggangba has escaped poverty thanks to leader's determination

By YANG JUN in Guiyang and PENG CHAO

Qinggangba, a village near the Wuling Mountains in Sinan county, Guizhou province, that was once known only for its poverty, has become an affluent village envied by its neighbors partly thanks to the efforts of its Party secretary.

There was a popular folk song that described how poor the village was. The lyrics go like this: "Two out of three years there's no yield, and no one wants to marry their daughters off to this land."

Due to infertile land and scarce water resources, the per capita income of the villagers in Qinggangba was less than 1,000 yuan (\$137.60) a year two decades ago, with most families struggling to make ends meet.

Leng Chaogang's family, however, was an exception. Seizing the opportunities brought by China's reform and opening-up, Leng earned over 100,000 yuan a year running a grocery store and selling agricultural supplies. At that time, he was the richest man in the village.

Despite his wealth, Leng didn't feel much happiness.

"Seeing my fellow villagers struggling in poverty, I decided to do something for them," he said.

In 1999 at age 36, Leng was elected chief of Qinggangba by the villagers,



Leng Chaogang inspects a food processing factory in Qinggangba village in Sinan.

ers, who were eager to escape poverty. In 2004, he was elected Party secretary of the village.

Since then, Leng has given up his own business and dedicated himself to finding a path to prosperity for the other villagers.

"To lift the villagers out of poverty, the first step was to change their traditional mindset," he said.

Due to a lack of water, the village's rice crops often failed. So he tried planting crops such as watermelon, chiles and garlic — which were more economically viable and suitable for growing in a water-scarce environment — on his own land.

After achieving success, Leng shared his experiences with the villagers, taught them planting techniques and even mortgaged his own property and used the money to buy seeds and fertilizer for the villagers.

Today, the village grows 66.7 hectares of specialty crops, including

garlic and chiles, sales of which have become one of the main sources of income for the villagers.

In addition, under Leng's leadership, the village collective established a cattle breeding farm that sells over 50 head of cattle annually, with a total output value of about 800,000 yuan.

"Thanks to Secretary Leng's leadership, life is much better now than before," said villager Zhao Xiangyong, who works at the cattle breeding farm. "The salary at the cattle farm alone is more than 3,000 yuan a month."

In recent years, the village collective has also established an agricultural product processing factory, an office paper processing factory, a forest resort and a labor service company.

All 945 residents from 235 households in Qinggangba are benefiting from the village's development, with

their incomes coming from multiple sources, including land rentals, wages from working in the village and collective dividends.

The village collective's fixed assets and working capital now amount to 70 million yuan, and its annual economic income is 3 million yuan. The villagers' per capita net income has climbed to 19,200 yuan per year, according to Zhao Xiaohu, deputy Party secretary of the village.

Qinggangba is now renowned in the region for its wealth and job offerings, with many neighboring villagers seeking employment opportunities here.

Leng said the secret to the village's success was leveraging the role of the grassroots Party organization.

"The power of one person is ultimately limited," he said.

The village's Party branch continues to develop young people with ideas, skills and enthusiasm into members of the Communist Party of China. These young Party members have played an important role in key positions that are driving the economic development of the village's industries.

As the villagers become wealthier, Leng, who relies on his salary as a village cadre to support his family, has a lower standard of living than many of his neighbors. But he said he is not concerned about this.

"Although my income is not as much as it was 20 years ago, I am now the one with the highest level of happiness in the village," he said.

Wang Hui contributed to this story.

Contact the writers at pengchao@chinadaily.com.cn

Architect at forefront of train station innovations

HARBIN — Standing in front of the bustling railway station in Harbin, capital of Heilongjiang province, 43-year-old veteran architect Li Lili vividly recalls how crowded and chaotic it was two decades ago. "A giant gray concrete box filled with deafening shouts and disoriented travelers: that was my first impression of the province's largest train station," Li said.

Over the course of her career coming up with innovative designs at such stations, many of them have evolved from mere passenger entrances into multifunctional modern transport complexes, transforming the travel experience. "For a long time, traveling by train in China was a haphazard choice for many, with constant congestion at station entrances and on platforms," Li said.

She explained that in the past, since railways were mainly built for freight trains, many passenger stations were merely subsidiary facilities, without any guidance, diversion routes or other essential services for passengers.

Things began to change in 2008. The advent of high-speed railways significantly reduced travel times by train, spurring a rapid increase in travel demand and the development of new generations of train stations.

Li noted that many stations seized the opportunity to upgrade their services for the convenience of passengers. "An example is the widely accepted elevated walkway in the renovated or newly built stations, which connects different platforms from above," Li said, adding that this innovation has greatly reduced intersecting passenger routes within the station, thereby avoiding jams and helping travelers reach their trains more easily and quickly.

Train stations have also made more efforts to integrate local culture in their new designs.



Passengers enter the Harbin Railway Station in Harbin, Heilongjiang province, on June 12.

LIU JIANMIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

"This trend has been accompanied by the further expansion of China's high-speed rail network and the rise of personalized travel since roughly 2016," Li said. She added that both tourists and local governments now expect train stations to serve as urban landmarks rather than mere buildings, showcasing the unique characteristics of travel destinations.

"The iconic skyline of the Harbin railway station was refurbished in 2018. I incorporated European-style elements into the redesign of a train station in Mudanjiang city (in Heilongjiang), highlighting its unique history of cultural fusion," Li said.

As an architect, Li has been involved in designing over 100 train stations in her decades-long career, continuously remodeling the train stations for the next generation. "With an increasing number of people favoring new travel modes such as experiential tourism and city walks, train stations are becoming city subcenters. In cities such as Hangzhou (in Zhejiang province) and Chongqing, they now incorporate accommodation, entertainment and urban transport," she said.

XINHUA

Intelligent measurements aid aluminum companies

At an aluminum factory in Zibo, Shandong province, workers are able to scan a QR code, weigh the aluminum products, load them and reweigh them in a process that takes only 20 minutes.

The automated process at a China Aluminum International Engineering Co facility is supported by a set of intelligent measurement systems.

Material measurement, referring to the measuring and calculating of the quantity and weight of goods, is one of the basic tasks of daily production at the enterprise. It ensures accurate, reliable quantity value and is critical for sci-tech innovation, industrial development and livelihood protection.

Traditional manual measurements and the copying of data by hand are relatively inefficient and error-prone, and can no longer meet current requirements, said Wang Zhi, general manager of the aluminum company.

The company uses QR code technology as a replacement for

manual input, image recognition to ensure the safety of vehicle access and infrared technology to maintain measurement operation standards. Such technologies may not be cutting-edge, but they have proved to be an effective upgrade over traditional measurement methods.

The intelligent material measurement system was developed based on more than 6,800 survey participants from over 60 companies involved in the Aluminum Corporation of China nationwide.

The group has applied the intelligent system in these companies and customized improvement programs for them according to their unique characteristics of production and operation.

In Ningde, Fujian province, the China Copper Southeast Copper Co has combined the intelligent material measurement system with its port management system to achieve resource sharing.

XINHUA

Overseas Chinese trader witnesses years of development

By YAN DONGJIE
yandongjie@chinadaily.com.cn

Over the past 30 years, Huang Zhixiao has traveled back and forth between China and Italy nearly 300 times. As a member of the overseas Chinese community, he's witnessed China's transformation from a backward developing country to the world's second-largest economy, and how it has become "a big country that takes responsibilities in the world community."

Huang, 51, hails from Wenzhou, Zhejiang province. Wenzhou is well known as the "home of overseas Chinese", with nearly 700,000 overseas Chinese from there scattered across more than 130 countries and regions worldwide.

"When I first went to Italy in 1992, I was not yet 20 years old," Huang said.

"At that time, China was in the 'spring' of economic reform, and the

government encouraged people to boldly seize opportunities. A wave of people going overseas for business gradually swept across the country," he said.

Huang said that people from one region tended to choose the same country to go to, providing mutual support. For example, people from Zhejiang mostly went to Europe; those from Yunnan province mostly went to Southeast Asia; and people from Guangdong province preferred to go to the United States and Canada.

Huang's relatives were among an earlier group of Wenzhou merchants in Italy. According to them, the market economy in Europe was thriving at that time, offering many opportunities. Encouraged by his relatives, Huang, filled with excitement, boarded a flight to Italy.

In 1992, Italy's GDP accounted for 5.2 percent of the world's total, making it a very developed country com-

pared to China at the time. Although there were many opportunities in the Italian market, the challenges outweighed the opportunities for Huang, who was a newcomer who didn't know the language.

He started out doing basic work, learning the language and familiarizing himself with local business rules. Huang's first job was delivering goods to Chinese restaurants. In addition to working eight hours a day, he also worked a part-time sales job after hours to earn extra money.

"At that time, being young, I didn't feel tired," he said. Huang gradually learned and gained experience with the help of those around him.

In his first month of work in Italy, he received a salary of nearly 5,000 yuan (\$691). "At that time, the average wage in China was probably around 600 yuan," Huang explained.

Faced with an income nearly

eight times higher than the average in China, Huang was very excited, "Not only because my previous aspirations had become a reality, but most importantly, I could exchange my efforts for rewards."

Four years of work experience gave Huang a preliminary understanding of the market environment in Italy.

In 1996, Wenzhou's small commodity trade began to thrive in the European market. Seeing the development prospects of the market, he immediately switched to small commodity trade, exporting goods produced in Wenzhou to Italy.

"From initially half a container to later transporting a dozen or more containers at a time, that's how I slowly built up," Huang said.

In the late 1990s, Huang encountered some setbacks. Due to restrictions on the quantity of Chinese exports to European countries, a portion of the goods were detained

during customs clearance, requiring fines to be paid for normal clearance, resulting in some losses. However, these issues were resolved by 2001.

That year, China joined the World Trade Organization, opening a high-speed channel for China to become the "world's factory". As a result, Huang enjoyed more convenience in his subsequent foreign trade processes.

Since 2000, China has undergone dramatic changes, with standardized urban governance, rapid economic development and increased international status. Last year, China's GDP growth rate was 5.2 percent, while the European Union's was only 0.5 percent.

In March, as an overseas delegate, Huang attended the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. During the two sessions, he proposed to further expand high-level

opening-up and promote a more open world economy. With nearly 30 years of experience in foreign trade, Huang deeply understands the important role it plays in an open economic system.

"Chambers of commerce are like bridges, connecting Chinese enterprises with local governments, promoting exchanges and cooperation between countries, and providing services such as policy dissemination and business sharing for Chinese enterprises engaged in trade activities overseas," Huang said.

Huang joined the China General Chamber of Commerce in Italy in 1999 and became president of the chamber in 2022.

"I hope that with our experience, we can better serve the vast number of overseas compatriots, so that they can avoid some detours," Huang said.

"Nowadays, more and more outstanding young people are engaging in foreign trade. I believe that the next generation will do better and better based on our foundation, and the country will become stronger and stronger," he added.