

Bringing Hunan citizens a more dignified life

Governor promises more jobs and better health care for everyone

By FENG ZHIWEI
AND ZHANG ZHAO

The governor of Hunan province, Xu Shousheng, has said that they will definitely find a long-term method for improving the livelihoods of both urban and rural people.

"Migrant workers are our brothers and sisters," said Xu, who is an economist and son of a fisherman. "And we need a systematic plan to solve their employment and urban living problem."

"We'll find more ways to make sure that people live happier and more dignified lives."

Less than four months ago, Xu was appointed acting governor of Hunan, after having

served as governor of Gansu province. In that time, he visited 14 cities in Hunan and has looked for ways to come up with the money to improve people's lives.

During People's Congress meetings earlier this year, Xu called for an economic model that allows everyone to share the fruits of development.

Last year, Hunan made "a pile" last year, with a GDP of more than 1.5 trillion yuan (\$229.8 billion), or 1.3 times the figure of five years previous.

Its industrial output amounted to 600 billion yuan, up 1.7 times, for the same period.

The provincial govern-

ment also looked for ways to improve the livelihood of people, spending around 170 billion yuan — more than half of its revenues — for just that purpose.

The government has done a number of things: living allowances for urbanites and country folk were increased substantially, while the price of commodities was stabilized. It also came up with a health plan where handicapped children below the age of seven, from poorer families, are given free medical care.

Green growth

Hunan is also making an effort to preserve resources and become an eco-friendly

Migrant workers are our brothers and sisters. We need a systematic plan to solve the employment and urban living problem."

XU SHOUSHENG
GOVERNOR OF HUNAN
PROVINCE



province.

"We're working on a green GDP — one that ensures sustainable development and profits everyone," explained Xu.

In recent years, some scandals involving lead poisoning and cadmium-tainted rice put Hunan's heavy metal pollution problems in an uncomfortable spotlight.

"Now, if your child is found to have high levels of lead with in his blood, the government will treat him for free," Xu declared.

The government said it plans to spend more on these and similar problems, and that Changsha, Zhuzhou and Xiangtan will be pilot cities in the pollution control program. Major industries there are being

put under strict supervision.

Under the 12th Five-Year Plan (2011-2015), the province will develop policies on protecting the environment, which includes paying for resources, restoring the ecology, and a green GDP evaluation process that takes resource consumption and environmental degradation into consideration.

The governor has also promised to give the people of Hunan "clear air, clean water, and safe food".

"The continued improvement of people's lives will come when all low-income people have a place to live, when the price of goods is stable, when employment is no longer a headache for college graduates, when affordable healthcare is easily accessible, and when nature and the environment are pollution-free," Xu concluded.

NUMBERS

1.5

trillion yuan
in GDP last year, a 1.3-fold increase from five years before

600

billion yuan
in industrial output in 2010, up 1.7 times from 2006

170

billion yuan
spent on improving people's lives in 2010

Full employment is the basis of happiness

By ZHOU QING
AND CHAI HUA

In response to a statement by the Chinese premier this year that employment needs to be given priority in economic development, Hunan province is doing just that and has increased employment rates under this Five-Year Plan (2006-2010).

In following Wen Jiabao's idea and putting policy into practice, the Hunan people's congress passed a "Procedures for Implementing the Employment Promotion Act",

describing the exact employment services.

Over the past five years, the provincial government has developed projects that increase employment, and has spent 13.56 billion yuan (\$2.09 billion) on subsidies.

It provided 3.35 million new urban jobs and moved more than 4 million rural people to jobs in other places. It is the first province to achieve zero-unemployment among urban families, in central China.

Hunan now has nine key higher-level vocational high schools and 81 key secondary

vocational high schools. The city government of Changsha, capital of Hunan, has spent 1.48 billion yuan on a vocational education center. Another 4.5 billion yuan has been spent on a vocational science park in Zhuzhou.

The city of Xiangtan has worked with local civil affairs, human resources, finance, and education departments in providing free training and employment programs for military veterans.

The training covers practical skills, such as auto repairs, electrical equipment installa-

tion and maintenance, animal husbandry, crop planting and agricultural product processing.

The graduates get a recommendation from the training school, which is instrumental in finding a satisfactory job, according to the government. Some graduates even start their own businesses.

One such grad, Liu Bing, a veteran from the town of Shitan, is even considered a sort of model: "After being demobbed in 2008, I was totally lost about the future because I didn't have any skills."

But, Liu was able to study vehicle repairs at a government training school and has now opened his own garage where he makes a respectable income.

One other government plan — order-oriented education — has provided a successful solution to the problem of farmers without enough land. One industrial zone in the city of Zhuzhou began using this order-oriented approach for poorer farmers, whose land had been taken for the zone, in September, 2010.

It is expected to retrain 3,200 farmers over a three-year period then recommend them for work in companies in the zone.

Wen Wang, a farmer in a village near Zhuzhou, said he was satisfied with the program. "The training gave us an opportunity to get professional skills and assured us of a better life after leaving our land."

Each year, more than 1.5 million rural laborers get free training. Even though they have lost their land, the training sees to it that they can still benefit. At the same time, the training provides more trained people for the enterprises in the industrial zone.

The decision makers in the Hunan government say they believe that people's livelihood is based on employment, and that increasing the financial and material input in employment will increase their happiness. So, the government will continue developing employable skills and professional training on a larger scale.



PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Children of rural people who work in cities are expected to get the same education opportunities as children of urban workers.

Gov't taking livelihood into consideration

By HAO NAN

Although he majored in law at college, Zhou Qiang still knows exactly how to let economic growth benefit the people.

The 51-year-old Zhou, who is the Hunan Party Secretary, said that he sticks to a people-based idea in governing, one that considers the task of increasing people's happiness a top priority.

"What people are most

concerned about is housing, employment, health, and education," Zhou explained. "So, their livelihood should be something that is considered throughout the government's work."

The Hunan government has increased spending on people's livelihood in recent years. In 2010, it amounted to more than 170 billion yuan (\$26 billion), up from 2009's 120 billion yuan, and accounting for 60 percent of

total spending.

"Housing is one of their most basic needs. Everyone dreams of owning a house," Zhou asserted.

The government has been involved in a project since 2009 for easing the financial burdens of fishermen and helping them settle down on land rather than living on a boat.

In 2009, there were 2,332 households benefiting from this program and beginning a new life.

One of the people affected said, "We want to express our gratitude to the local government. Without their help, it's almost impossible for us to get a house."

The government has also rebuilt some of the poorer houses in rural areas, and has provided employment opportunities by attracting investment to those areas.

In one of these, the government signed an agreement with the Foxconn Group to introduce jobs and technology to the province.

Last year, some 700,000 locals found jobs and 350,000 were re-employed last year, while the number of surplus rural laborers who were relocated exceeded 1.1 million.

Medical resources

The unequal access to medical care has been another problem. People sometimes have to wait a long time just to register for treatment at large hospitals, the Party chief said.

In response, in March,

the Xiangya No.2 Hospital at Central South University, in the capital city Changsha, formed an alliance with 170 hospitals, in various provinces and cities.

They are working on a referral system to facilitate medical treatments by maximizing the use of medical resources.

In addition, there will be frequent training classes and exchanges to produce better doctors and nurses.

In a related move, the government said that the slogan "Let every child have the chance at an education" is no longer an empty one, but something they are actually trying to deliver.

"We'll earmark 100 million yuan annually during the 12th Five-Year Plan (2011-2015) for school expansion and reconstruction," Zhou said.

"And we started a program to be sure there is more comprehensive educational funding within the next three to five years."

By CHAI HUA

The government of Hunan province, like most other places, faced growing pressure from the field of education, so it decided to increase its activity in "developing the province through education".

So, it came up with regulations that were meant to make compulsory education more balanced. These included: better infrastructure to guarantee access to education among the more vulnerable members of society, ensuring that there were enough faculty, and that teaching quality was high.

The result has been considerably improved education and scientific development over the past five years, the government says.

By 2010, the province had 25,300 schools and 11.47 million students. The enrolment rate for elementary school children was an impressive 99.92 percent, and for junior high children, 99.96 percent.

Also by 2010, there were 60,975 teachers who had attended teachers training programs at the province level, and 6,064 college grads teaching in rural schools.

The number of teachers in both urban and rural areas had increased and the quality of teaching has improved.

The government has also increased spending on school construction. In the three-year period, 4.48 billion yuan (\$689.9 million) was spent on construction and 3,693 schools were built. The province expects to build 10,000 schools by 2015.

More talented people

In addition to educating its citizens, the provincial government has established methods to attract more talented people from across the country and overseas.

Changsha, the provincial capital, will focus on attracting innovative, top technical and senior management people, and finance experts, said Zhang Jianfei, the city's mayor and Party head.

The idea is also to bring in

companies in engineering, and the automotive, electronic communications, new materials, biomedical, high-tech, and securities and investment industries.

If foreigners decide to work in the city, they will see that the government appreciates their intelligence and hard work, according to one local government official.

It has even come up with a "Star city friendship award" to honor foreign experts who make a big contribution.

To provide an education for foreign experts' children, the city government also built an international school at a cost of 10 million yuan, in the economic development zone.

The province's advantages have attracted the attention of people from all over the world. The American President Barack Obama has even mentioned the fast computers and high-speed railways that are made in Hunan.

In a knowledge-based economy, talented personnel are a precious commodity and Hunan's decision makers said they will put much more effort into cultivating, attracting and retaining talented personnel.

The province already has around 5,000 overseas students and the government supported 327 university teachers in study-abroad programs during the 11th Five-Year Plan (2006-2010).

One of its most successful international exchange programs is the "Chinese Bridge" competition, a Chinese-language proficiency contest for foreign college students. This provides a stage for young foreigners to perform on, and increases international influences on the province's education.



The Changsha National Economic and Technological Development Zone, rated No 6 on the list of areas with great investment potential in China in 2009.