

Greening efforts pay off in Lhasa

City's transformation reflects Xizang's efforts in ecological conservation and restoration

By **MO JINGXI** and **DAQIONG**
in Lhasa

For people in the Xizang autonomous region, the most common recreational activity between June and September is to “experience *lingka*”.

In Tibetan, *lingka* has traditionally meant garden, but the term now broadly refers as well to activities in a garden, a park or other outdoor setting. So “experiencing *lingka*” is akin to having a picnic or outing, where people spend a day in nature, surrounded by mountains and rivers, enjoying food, drinks and games with friends and family.

Dradul, a resident of Lhasa, the capital of Xizang, had such an experience last month with his wife and some friends along the southern bank of the Lhasa River.

“We just brought some fruit, and then we sang songs and played dice together,” he said.

However, the 58-year-old recalled that things were quite different when he was a child.

Back then, Lhasa had few green spaces. Dradul and his family would sometimes bring homemade dishes and head to Norbulingka Park, one

of the few green places at that time where residents were able to sit on the lawn and enjoy *lingka*. Other times, they would just find a spot in a marsh or sandy area and consider that a day out.

“Now the greenery in Lhasa is much better, and the roads are well-developed,” he said.

This year marks the 60th anniversary of the founding of the Xizang autonomous region. Over the past few decades, Xizang has made numerous efforts in ecological conservation and restoration, adding greenery and beauty to the snowy plateau. Lhasa is a vivid reflection of such efforts.

In 2021, Lhasa launched a new greening project in the mountains to the north and south of the city. It is Xizang's first large-scale ecological restoration effort and a key livelihood project aimed at improving the well-being of local residents.

The project spans 35 towns in nine counties and districts in Lhasa, including Liuwu New District, where Dradul enjoyed his recent *lingka*. The goal of the project is to green an area totaling 137,300 hectares over 10 years, transforming Lhasa into a more ecologically friendly and livable capital city



on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, one of China's most crucial ecological security barriers.

Dawa Yangdron, now in her 40s, has been working in Lhasa since 2002 on the cultivation of native tree saplings such as butterfly bush, silk-hair rose and Tibetan sea buckthorn. “They are all cold-resistant and drought-tolerant species that have high survival rates,” she said.

In 2022, she joined the greening project, taking on a contract to plant trees across 213.3 hectares of mountains.

She said experts on her team who studied botany in Norway in the 1980s found that plants like rhododendron and golden cinquefoil, which are nearly extinct in Xizang, are commonly used for roadside landscaping in Norwegian cities.

“Those plants were cultivated from seeds collected in Xizang over 100 years ago,” Dawa Yangdron said. Now her team is cultivating them with the hope that they will one day be widely planted as ornamental roadside shrubs in Xizang as well.

However, planting trees at high altitudes is not an easy task.

The mountains to the north and south of Lhasa are between 3,600 and 4,050 meters above sea level, with slopes averaging 60 degrees. The soil is thin, rocky and difficult for planting, with up to 70 percent of the land covered in stones.

Tsedan Namgyal, a supervisor for an area of the project, said the mountains were almost barren in the early days of the project. Due to the hard soil, two or three workers could only dig three or four holes a day by hand, and the work had to be completed with drills.

“Because the soil is hard, we had to fill the holes with water the day before, so that the soil would be moist by the time we brought in the saplings,” he said.

Today, Tsedan Namgyal and his colleagues have planted more than 307 hectares of mountain slopes with species chosen according to soil depth, including elm, Chinese

pine, walnut, mountain apricot, juniper, spruce, creeping juniper and sea buckthorn.

He said that one of the biggest challenges in high-altitude afforestation is transporting saplings.

Nowadays, this process has been revolutionized, thanks to drones that can carry up to 45 kilograms. Each round trip takes only three to four minutes, making the process five to eight times more efficient than the traditional method of transporting by mule or horse.

Kelsang Norbu, head of Lhasa's forestry and grassland bureau, said that with the help of drone delivery and smart irrigation technologies, the efficiency of the greening project has significantly increased.

“After more than three years of effort, over 71,330 hectares of mountains have been successfully afforested, with more than 120 million saplings planted. The survival rate has exceeded 85 percent,” he said.

As the greening of mountains is becoming increasingly visible, wild animals such as foxes and wolves are also becoming more common, Kelsang Norbu added.

Contact the writers at
mojingxi@chinadaily.com.cn

Beijing unveils plan to protect Central Axis

On first anniversary of UNESCO listing, city announces 3-year heritage safeguarding program

By **YANG CHENG**
yangcheng@chinadaily.com.cn

Beijing has significantly ramped up efforts to preserve and promote the cultural legacy of its Central Axis, one year after the historic area was added to the UNESCO World Heritage List.

The city released a Three-Year Action Plan for the Protection and Inheritance of the Beijing Central Axis on July 27.

The plan outlines efforts to highlight the cultural significance of the Central Axis, develop venues for international cultural exchange, and enhance the city's role in advancing the Global Civilization Initiative, according to Zhang Lixin, director of the Beijing Municipal Cultural Heritage Bureau.

By 2027, major progress is expected in the relocation and renovation of key heritage sites, including the Temple of Heaven and the Temple of Agriculture.

The National Demonstration Zone for the Protection and Utilization of Cultural Relics along



People gather at Beijing's Bell and Drum Towers Square on July 27 to celebrate the first anniversary of the inscription of the Central Axis on the UNESCO World Heritage List. JIANG DONG / CHINA DAILY

the Central Axis will also bring new achievements, showcasing the historical charm of the area as a vital platform for global cultural exchange and mutual learning.

“Beijing will continue to leverage the unique value of the Central Axis as a World Cultural Heritage site,” Zhang said. “We aim to deepen international cooperation

in cultural heritage and share the essence of Chinese civilization with the world.”

The capital has introduced a wide array of initiatives over the past year, ranging from public education and creative cultural programs to high-tech renovations and international engagement, all aimed at showcasing the enduring value of the 7.8-kilometer-long axis.

Officially announced in Beijing on July 27 last year, the listing has galvanized support from both the public and institutions for the protection of the centuries-old spine of the capital, which includes 15 landmark sites stretching from the Yongding Gate in the south to the Bell and Drum Towers in the north.

To mark the first anniversary, a special 7.8-hour live broadcast was jointly produced by Beijing Radio and Television Station and 10 provincial and regional television stations from across the country. The program highlighted the historical splendor of China's 5,000-year-old civilization and the role of the Central Axis in shaping the nation's

urban and cultural development.

Among the most active participants in these preservation efforts is the Beijing Central Axis Protection Foundation. Last month, in Paris, Mei Song, the foundation's secretary-general outlined the Chinese capital's achievements since UNESCO recognition.

He cited major advances in heritage education, public participation, and cultural innovation, including curriculum development in schools and an annual Central Axis-themed competition that engages youth and communities.

Liu Shudong, a retired interpreter at the Yonghe Lama Temple and member of the Beijing History Association, has been giving lectures in local neighborhoods to raise awareness on the cultural significance of the Central Axis.

“I believe this initiative can enhance local citizens' awareness of cultural preservation and historical inheritance,” she said. “Many retirees, like myself, are happy to give back by sharing our knowledge in schools and community centers.”