

[China has over 700,000 social organizations](#)

China had about 702,000 social organizations as of the end of 2016, according to data released by the Ministry of Civil Affairs Thursday.

The organizations include 336,000 social groups and associations, 5,559 foundations and 361,000 private non-enterprise organizations.

As of the end of last year, social organizations nationwide had over 7.63 million employees, up by 3.9 percent from the previous year.

In 2016 authorities investigated 2,363 cases of social organization-related violations, closing illegal organizations in 16 cases and handing down punishments in 2,347 cases, it said.

In China, private non-enterprise organizations generally include schools, hospitals, elderly-care centers and museums.

[23-year-old giant panda gives birth to twins](#)

A 23-year-old giant panda has delivered twins in southwest China's Sichuan Province, becoming the oldest panda to ever give birth, a breeding center said Thursday.

The age of 23 for giant pandas is equal to 80 years for a human.

The mother, Haizi, gave birth to a 175-gram female and a 123.1-gram male on July 30 at Shenshuping protection base in Wolong National Nature Reserve, according to the Chengdu Giant Panda Breeding Center.

Haizi became pregnant after mating with a panda called Yibao in April.

To take care of the senior pregnant panda, the center allocated a special vet and breeder and tailored a breeding program for her, said Li Desheng, a panda zoologist with the center.

Haizi also delivered a pair of twins when she was 19 years old.

As of Thursday, 21 panda cubs had been born in the center this year, including seven pairs of twins.

Summer is the peak season for giant panda reproduction.

Former Shanghai work safety chief under investigation

Qi Jun, former director of the Shanghai work safety bureau, is under investigation on suspicion of accepting bribes and unauthorized partition of state-owned assets, a local procuratorate announced Thursday.

Qi has been put under “coercive measures,” which may include summons by force, bail, residential surveillance, detention or arrest.

On April 28, the city’s discipline inspection commission announced on its website that Qi was under investigation for serious violations.

Reserved parking encourages visits to elderly parents

A large residential community in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, has begun to reserve parking spaces for people visiting their elderly parents, making it easier for children to drop by on a regular basis.

The Cuiyuan community in the eastern city’s Xihu district is home to about 10,000 residents, almost 20 percent of whom are age 60 or older—and most of them live alone.

To encourage people to visit elderly relatives, the community management office has marked 18 parking spaces that can be preordered and used for free on Saturdays and Sundays from 8 am to 7 pm. The maximum stay is five and a half hours, according to Shen Yifan, director of the office.

“We visited many families to do research and found that the average family visit lasted for about that length of time,” Shen said.

Cuiyuan, which was built in the 1980s and has room for 600 vehicles, charges 4 yuan (60 US cents) an hour to park, or 20 yuan for a full day. It’s small money, but the management office said it is aimed at improving convenience, so people with limited time will be encouraged to visit lonely loved ones.

“Care for the old is a traditional virtue and part of Chinese culture,” Shen said. “By doing our part, we want to encourage young people to show more love and devotion to their parents. Good culture should be carried forward.”

The service, which started on Thursday and could be extended after a trial run, was used by three people last weekend, including an elderly resident surnamed Yu who reserved a spot for her daughter.

“She and her husband visit every Sunday, but they seldom find a parking space, which means my son-in-law has to wait in the car and my daughter comes to the house. They bring me some fruit, but she always has to leave after a few minutes,” Yu told Qianjiang Evening News.

“This Sunday, they didn’t need to worry about that. My daughter even cooked for me and had dinner with me.”

Platform preserves a disappearing ethnic language

Heilongjiang province is launching a project to encourage more people to use the internet to learn the steadily dwindling languages of some ethnic groups.

The first course in the use of a learning platform for the preservation of the Oroqen language and culture in northeastern China concluded recently in Tahe county. The two-day course attracted about 60 representatives, including experts, officials, teachers and Oroqen people.

The language is only spoken; it has no written form. There are about 3,900 Oroqen people in Heilongjiang, accounting for 45 percent of all Oroqen people nationwide.

Although there are no exact numbers, research indicates that there are “very few people who can speak the Oroqen language”, said Liu Jie, who planned the project. “Most people younger than 50 do not speak the language anymore.”

“Despite government efforts to protect minority languages, these languages are in danger of disappearing due to modernization,” said the retired civil servant, who works for the provincial ethnic affairs authority.

Starting in June last year, the Heilongjiang Ethnic Affairs Commission began to build an online platform offering free learning materials to those interested in learning the dying ethnic language. After a year’s trial run, the platform was officially rolled out in late July.

“Through the platform, anyone who registers can obtain free learning sources, including recordings based on the textbook, vocabulary in Chinese and English, and cultural displays,” he said.

To promote the use of the platform, the commission organized a training course and received positive responses.

“It is a platform that can provide accurate and scientific learning methods for those who want to study the language,” said Guan Jinfang, 62, a master of Oroqen folk songs, dancing, traditional costumes and paper-cutting, as well as Shaman dancing and costume.

“The older people, like me, can speak it fluently,” she said. “But the younger generations of Oroqen are becoming similar to the Han people, and few of them can speak the Oroqen language. I hope the Oroqen traditions can be continued generation by generation.

“Furthermore, in the internet era, the platform provides easy access to spread the Oroqen language and culture all around the world.”

Mo Renjie, 21, a junior at Wuhan University of Technology, is an Oroqen from Heilongjiang. He said he is ashamed every time a classmate asks him to speak his ethnic language.

“I can only speak several words in Oroqen due to the lack of a language environment and good learning methods,” he said. “I registered on the platform the first time I heard about it, and I will introduce the platform to my classmates.”

Liu, the platform project planner, said more training courses will be organized. In the next stage, his team will expand the platform to include other ethnic minority languages, including Hezhe, Daur, Ewenki, Kirgiz, Xibe.