CHINA

Police officer goes beyond duty in Inner Mongolia

By **YUAN HUI** in Hohhot
and **WANG SONGSONG**

The rumble of a motorcycle engine breaks the silence of the grassland, its tires tracing winding paths across terrain where roads often give way to bare rock and scrub.

Behind the handlebars is Baoyindeligeer, a grassroots police officer of the Mongolian ethnic group and a member of the Communist Party of China at the Tsog-Under township police station in Urad Rear Banner, Bayannuur, Inner Mongolia autonomous region. During his 29-year career, he has turned the vast pastures into his daily office — and the scattered herding families who live there into his extended family.

"I'm not just a police officer here. I'm a neighbor, a friend and a member of every herdsman's family," he said.

His jurisdiction spans a vast border region with more than 8,000 residents from seven ethnic groups, including Han, Mongolian, Hui, Manchu, Miao and Li, as well as more than 2,000 migrant workers. Determined to reach every household, he spends no fewer than 20 days each month — up to 260 days a year — traveling across some of the region's most remote grasslands.

The terrain is so rugged that his motorcycle frequently gets stuck, but that has never deterred him. Since 1997, he has logged 1.6 million kilometers on his motorcycles, mediating 583 civil disputes, handling 165 public security cases and helping solve six criminal cases.

One of the most memorable disputes involved two neighboring herding families whose disagreement over access to a shared water well had lasted for more than a decade. According to the local government's division of grazing land, the well was located within one family's designated pasture, leading them to claim unrestricted access. The other family, however, had drilled the well before the land was divided and repeatedly blocked or restricted its use.

Rather than relying solely on formal mediation, Baoyindeligeer made repeated visits to the families' settlements, helping clean sheep pens and assisting with daily chores while patiently building trust. His people-centered approach gradually eased tensions and eventually led both families to agree to share the existing water source.

The dispute was ultimately resolved through broader government support. As part of the national poverty alleviation campaign, authorities drilled separate wells for each household, bringing the decade-long conflict to a definitive end.

His work extends far beyond maintaining public order. During his regular patrols, he realized that many families living across the vast grassland had difficulty receiving mail and essential supplies. To address the problem, he applied for a mailbox at the local post office and invited herders to use it as their permanent mailing address.

Over the years, that single mailbox has grown into a network of 50 designated parcel collection and delivery points across Urad Rear Banner.

The range of deliveries has also expanded significantly. Herders now order veterinary medicines, vehicle parts and daily necessities online, while migrant workers at remote construction sites regularly receive parcels from their families, ranging from instant noodles to clothing.

"We deliver once or twice a week, sometimes more," he said.

His commitment to serving the community also inspired local residents to volunteer. In 2017, he paid the entire 30,000 yuan ($4,433) registration fee out of his own pocket to establish a volunteer service association.

The association has since grown to 189 members, who provide services ranging from doorstep parcel delivery and emergency response to daily assistance for herding families scattered across the grasslands.

"Our entire effort is rooted in grassroots work — mediating disputes, delivering services and handling cases. Because we live in a multiethnic region, every service we provide and every case we handle ultimately contributes to ethnic unity. Over the years, these interactions have brought us together like one family," he said.

For Baoyindeligeer, every patrol across the grassland is a reminder of his calling.

"I may wear a police uniform, but out here, I'm first and foremost a neighbor and a friend."

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Baoyindeligeer (left) makes a field visit to a local herding community at Urad Rear Banner, Bayannuur, Inner Mongolia autonomous region, in May 2020. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Exploring defense tech



Visitors explore a full-scale armed helicopter model during the opening of a national defense science and technology carnival in the Beijing Olympic Central Area on Tuesday. The event features six themed exhibition zones showcasing dozens of 1:1 models of major defense equipment, giving visitors an opportunity to experience the exhibits up close. The carnival runs through the end of August.
CHENG GONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

New IP protection to spur crop innovation

Ministry launches system for plant breeding, aims to bolster food security

By **ZHAO YIMENG**
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China formally launched a new intellectual property protection system for plant breeding on Monday, aiming to encourage original breeding innovation and strengthen the country's drive to develop high-quality crop varieties for food security.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs announced the first list of crops covered by China's agricultural Essentially Derived Variety system, marking the official implementation of the framework after receiving State Council approval.

Under the new rules, if a breeder uses an existing protected crop variety to create a slightly modified version — known as an essentially derived variety — they must obtain authorization from the original owner before commercializing it. This creates a legal mechanism for both parties to share commercial benefits.

An essentially derived variety is an upgraded version of an existing crop. For example, a researcher might improve a popular, high-yielding rice variety by adding resistance to a specific disease while leaving nearly all of its other traits identical. Under the new system, the upgraded variety would still recognize the IP rights of the breeder who created the original foundation crop.

Developing a completely new crop variety typically takes eight to 10 years and requires significant financial investment, according to Yang Haisheng, deputy head of the ministry's Department of Seed Industry. Without legal protection, breeders who make only minor modifications could profit without rewarding original innovators, undercutting motivation for long-term research.

Wan Jianmin, an academician at the Chinese Academy of Engineering and chairman of the national crop variety approval committee, said breeders have long awaited such a system.

In the past, the lack of protection led many organizations to focus on quick, minor tweaks rather than true innovation, while foundation breeders received little return for years of hard work. Over the long term, the system will shift China's seed industry away from simply pursuing more crop varieties toward developing better ones, Wan added.

The first implementation catalog covers 10 major crops: rice, wheat, cotton, rapeseed, peanut, Chinese cabbage, chili pepper, foxtail millet, broad bean and peach.

Yang said these crops were selected because they represent critical food, oilseed, vegetable, fruit and fiber crops with active breeding programs, rich genetic resources, and mature DNA testing and field-identification tools needed to prove whether one variety was derived from another.

By the end of 2025, applications for plant variety rights covering these 10 crops had reached 38,600, accounting for more than one-third of all agricultural plant variety applications in China, according to the ministry.

Liu Lihua, head of the Department of Seed Industry and head of the office for the protection of new plant varieties, emphasized that innovation is vital for seed industry revitalization and that stronger IP protection provides a direct incentive for further breeding breakthroughs.

The measure comes as China continues ramping up efforts to strengthen its domestic seed industry to ensure national food security.

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Affairs Zhang Zhu recently noted that more than 95 percent of China's crop varieties are now independently developed. Domestic varieties also account for more than 91 percent of the vegetable seed market, over 80 percent of livestock breeds and 86 percent of aquatic breeding stock.

China will continue using biotechnology and artificial intelligence to accelerate the breeding of high-yield, disease-resistant and climate-resilient varieties while strengthening intellectual property protection to achieve greater self-reliance in seed technology, Zhang stressed.

China strengthens student safety net by expanding financial aid

By **ZOU SHUO**
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Student aid recipients in China reached 160 million in 2025, up 4 percent year-on-year, a tangible indication of the country's efforts to make education accessible to all so that every child, regardless of family circumstances, has an opportunity to succeed, the Ministry of Education announced on Tuesday.

Total funding exceeded 390 billion yuan ($57.6 billion) in 2025, up more than 14 percent from 2024, according to ministry data.

Government appropriations remained the primary source of funding, reaching about 240 billion yuan, or roughly 60 percent of the total, Liu Yuguang, head of the ministry's Department of Finance, said at a news conference.

China's student aid system is primarily government-funded, with additional support from schools and society. It provides both grants and loans, focusing on helping students from financially disadvantaged backgrounds and simultaneously rewarding academic excellence, Liu said.

"The system guarantees that no student is denied an education because of family financial difficulties," he said.

The ministry also highlighted policy upgrades introduced last year. Beginning with the autumn semester, tuition and educational fees for the first year of preschool at public kindergartens were waived, benefiting more than 14 million kindergarten students, Liu said.

Management efficiency has also improved. Student data is now shared across multiple ministries, enabling schools to identify eligible students with special needs and disabilities, as well as those from low-income households, while safeguarding personal privacy, he added.

State-subsidized student loans increased 34 percent year-on-year to 127.7 billion yuan in 2025, accounting for about one-third of total student aid funding, Liu said.

Chen Shumei, director of the China National Center for Student Financial Aid, said the government-subsidized student loan program was launched in the late 1990s. By the end of 2025, cumulative loans had reached 695.8 billion yuan, benefiting more than 30 million students.

> "For me, the promise that 'no student should be deprived of education because of financial difficulties' has never been just a slogan."
>
> **Xiang Lubin,** a doctoral student who enrolled at Anhui University with a student loan

In 2025 alone, 8.52 million students received loans, accounting for about one-fifth of all college enrollments, she said. The loans require no collateral and cover tuition, accommodation and living expenses.

Since 2012, the maximum annual loan amount has been raised four times, from 6,000 yuan to 20,000 yuan for undergraduates and 25,000 yuan for postgraduates, she said.

Interest is fully subsidized by the government while students are enrolled, and a range of repayment support measures — including lower interest rates, extended repayment terms and grace periods — is available after graduation, she added.

An Juntang, deputy Communist Party of China secretary of Lanzhou University, said the university enrolls a large number of students from western regions and disadvantaged backgrounds, making financial aid not only a matter of educational equity but also a strategic priority for cultivating talent in western China.

Beyond providing financial assistance, the university places a strong emphasis on value-based education, encouraging financial aid recipients to pursue careers in western regions and at the grassroots level, he said.

Over the past five years, more than half of the university's graduates have chosen to remain and work in western China, with many participating in rural revitalization and ecological protection efforts in the Yellow River Basin, he said.

Xiang Lubin, a doctoral student at Anhui University from a mountainous area in Hunan province, shared his personal experience.

Growing up in an impoverished environment, Xiang once considered dropping out of school. However, a middle school principal informed him about local student aid policies that would cover his tuition, fees and living expenses. In 2017, he enrolled at Anhui University with a student loan that covered his tuition and accommodation, supplemented by grants and work-study opportunities.

Over the years, he received more than 180,000 yuan in financial aid. After graduating in 2022, he joined the Go West volunteer program and taught at a rural school in Chongqing for a year.

"For me," he said, "the promise that 'no student should be deprived of education because of financial difficulties' has never been just a slogan. It is the strongest safety net that the national student aid policy provides for students like me."

Tributes pour in for Japanese author

By **YANG YANG**
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Japanese mystery writer Keigo Higashino passed away on July 23 at the age of 68. Following the announcement on Monday, readers in China, his largest overseas market, took to social media to express their sorrow and pay tribute to his literary legacy.

Soon after the news was announced, Higashino's representative works — *The Miracles of the Namiya General Store*, *Journey Under the Midnight Sun*, *Malice* and *The Devotion of Suspect X* — entered the top 10 most-searched titles on WeRead, one of China's leading e-book platforms.

Higashino began his writing career in 1985 with the mystery novel *After School*, which won the prestigious Edogawa Rampo Prize. By the time of his final novel, *Eternal Memory*, which is scheduled to be published on Aug 5, he had authored 106 books.

By 2023, his works had sold more than 100 million copies in Japan and been translated into 37 languages, reaching readers in more than 41 countries and regions. International sales totaled 68 million copies, with China emerging as his largest overseas market, with sales of nearly 50 million copies.

Chinese publisher Thinkingdom Media, known for its mystery titles, has published 52 of Higashino's books, with combined sales exceeding 23 million copies. The simplified Chinese edition of *The Miracles of the Namiya General Store*, released in 2014, sold more than 10 million copies within four years, while *Journey Under the Midnight Sun* sold more than nine million copies.

In 2017, Higashino earned 22 million yuan ($3.1 million) in royalties from China, surpassing British author J.K. Rowling, creator of the *Harry Potter* series, to become the country's highest-earning foreign writer that year. He topped the list of the richest foreign authors in China for three consecutive years from 2017 to 2019, with royalties of 42 million yuan in 2018 and 30 million yuan in 2019.

Many Chinese readers shared memories of discovering his works and the impact they had on their lives.

A reader using the screen name Lakuda recalled first reading Higashino's novels in junior middle school.

"You have put down your pen, but the gentleness, clarity and empathy you left to millions of readers will remain in the world forever. Thank you for accompanying me throughout my youth," the reader wrote.

Chinese mystery writer Zijin Chen reposted the news on Sina Weibo, saying *The Devotion of Suspect X* introduced him to detective fiction.

"I read it in 2012. It was my first encounter with detective fiction, and it inspired me to start writing my own novels. I'm shocked by the sudden news and feel a deep sense of loss," he wrote.

Another Weibo user, AnniweianVivian, commented under a China Central Television news post to highlight how Higashino's novels use intricate suspense as a framework while exploring the complexity of human nature through love, hatred, choices and obsession.

"I deeply admire Higashino's works, including *Mysterious Night* and *The Miracles of the Namiya General Store*, and will always treasure them," the user wrote.

Another reader, WangdaotieBarry, thanked Higashino for creating "such profound emotional worlds".

"*Journey Under the Midnight Sun* drew me into the world of mystery fiction. Works such as *Malice*, *The Devotion of Suspect X*, *The Miracles of the Namiya General Store* and *When the Curtain of Prayer Descends* have amazed me time and again," the reader wrote.