

China Today

SECTION

3

If YOU lived there...

For many years your parents have been farmers, growing tea plants. Since the government began allowing private businesses, your parents have been selling tea in the market as well. With the money they have made, they are considering opening a tea shop.

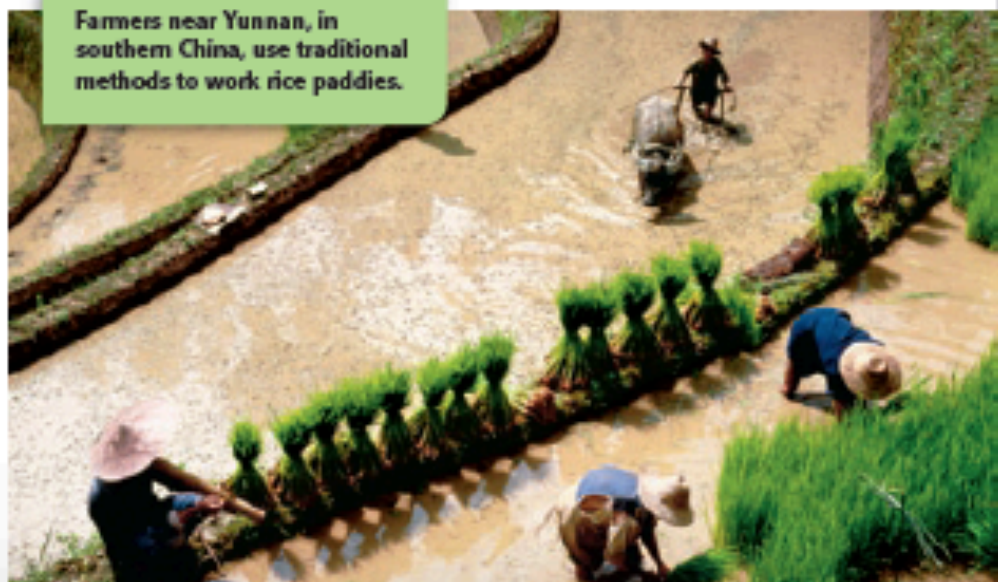
What do you think your parents should do?

BUILDING BACKGROUND When a Communist government took over China in 1949, it began strictly controlling all areas of life. Over time, China's government has loosened control of the economy. Control over politics and other areas of life remains strict, however.

China's Economy

Think ahead to the day you start working. Would you rather choose your career or have the government choose it for you? The first situation describes a market economy, which we have in the United States. In this type of economy, people can choose their careers, decide what to make or sell, and keep the profits they earn. The second situation describes a **command economy**, an economic system in which the government owns all the businesses and makes all decisions, such as where people work. Communist China used to have a command economy. Then in the 1970s, China began allowing aspects of a market economy.

Farmers near Yunnan, in southern China, use traditional methods to work rice paddies.



What You Will Learn...

Main Ideas

1. China's booming economy is based on agriculture, but industry is growing rapidly.
2. China's government controls many aspects of life and limits political freedom.
3. China is mainly rural, but urban areas are growing.
4. China's environment faces a number of serious problems.

The Big Idea

China's economy and cities are growing rapidly, but the Chinese have little political freedom and many environmental problems.

Key Terms and Places

command economy, p. 577

Beijing, p. 579

Tibet, p. 579

Shanghai, p. 580

Hong Kong, p. 580

TAKING NOTES

As you read, use a chart like the one below to take notes on China today.



China developed a mixed economy because it had major economic problems. For example, the production of goods had fallen. In response, the government closed many state-run factories and began allowing privately owned businesses. In addition, the government created special economic zones where foreign businesspeople could own companies. A mixed economic approach has helped China's economy boom. Today China has the world's second largest economy.

Agriculture and Industry

More Chinese work in farming than in any other economic activity. The country is a leading producer of several crops, such as rice, wheat, corn, and potatoes. China's main farmlands are in the eastern plains and river valleys. To the north, wheat is the main crop. To the south, rice is.

Only about 10 percent of China's land is good for farming. So how does China produce so much food? More than half of all Chinese workers are farmers. This large labor force can work the land at high levels. In addition, farmers cut terraces into hillsides to make the most use of the land.

Although China is mainly agricultural, industry is growing rapidly. Today China produces everything from satellites and chemicals to clothing and toys. Moreover, industry and manufacturing are now the most profitable part of China's economy.

Results of Economic Growth

Economic growth has improved wages and living standards in China. Almost all homes now have electricity, even in rural areas. More and more Chinese can afford goods such as TVs, computers, and even cars. At the same time, many rural Chinese remain poor, and unemployment is high.

READING CHECK Summarizing How has China changed its economy in recent times?

China's Government

More economic freedom in China has not led to more political freedom. The Communist government tightly controls most areas of life. For example, the government controls newspapers and Internet access, which helps to restrict the flow of information and ideas.

In addition, China harshly punishes people who oppose the government. In 1989 more than 100,000 pro-democracy protestors gathered in Tiananmen Square in Beijing, China's capital. The protestors were demanding more political rights and freedoms. The Chinese government tried to get the protestors to leave the square. When they refused, the government used troops and tanks to make them leave. Hundreds of protestors were killed, and many more were injured or imprisoned.



China has taken harsh actions against ethnic rebellions as well. As an example, since 1950 China has controlled the Buddhist region of **Tibet**, in southwest China. When the Tibetans rebelled in 1959, the Chinese quickly crushed the revolt. The Dalai Lama (dah-ly LAH-muh), Tibet's Buddhist leader, had to flee to India. China then cracked down on Tibetans' rights.

Because of actions such as these, many other countries have accused China of not respecting human rights. Some of these countries have considered limiting or stopping trade with China. For example, some U.S. politicians want our government to limit trade with China until it shows more respect for human rights.

READING CHECK Analyzing What adjectives might you use to describe China's government?

Rural and Urban China

China is a land in the midst of change. Although its countryside remains set in the past, China's cities are growing rapidly and rushing headlong toward the future.

Rural China

Most of China's people live in small, rural villages. Farmers work the fields using the same methods they have used for decades. In small shops and along the streets, sellers cook food and offer goods. Although some villagers' standards of living are improving, the modern world often seems far away.

Urban China

Many people are leaving China's villages for its booming cities, however. The graph below shows how China's urban population is expected to rise in the future.

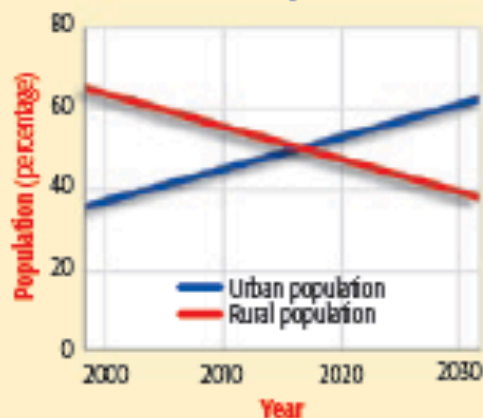
FOCUS ON READING

What is the implied main idea of the text under Rural China?



THE WORLD
ALMANAC
Facts about Countries

China's Projected
Urban Population

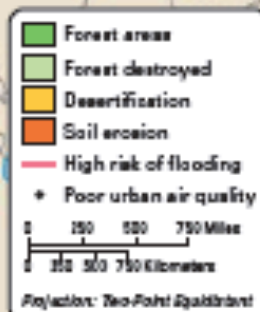


go.hrw.com KEYWORD: SK7 CH22

Many of China's rapidly growing cities are severely crowded, as can be seen in this Shanghai shopping area. Overcrowding is expected to worsen as China's cities continue to grow.

INTERPRETING GRAPHS About when is China's urban population expected to be larger than its rural population?

China's Environmental Challenges



Human-Environment Interaction China faces a number of serious environmental challenges.

1. **Identify** Which rivers does the map show as having a high risk of flooding?
2. **Interpret** Which environmental problem has had the most impact on southern China?

China's growing economy has led to its rapid city growth. Look at the population map in Section 2 and find the cities with more than 4 million people. Most are on the coast or along major rivers. These areas have benefited from growing industry and trade. Places that were rice fields not long ago are now bustling urban centers with skyscrapers, factories, and highways.

China's largest city is **Shanghai**, with some 13 million people. Located where the Chang Jiang meets the East China Sea, it is China's leading seaport and an industrial and commercial center. The city is also known for its European feel and nightlife.

China's second-largest city is its capital, **Beijing**. Also known as Peking, this historic city has many beautiful palaces and temples. A mix of the old and new, Beijing is China's political and cultural center.

In central Beijing, large walls hide the golden-roofed palaces of the Forbidden City, former home of China's emperors. Once off-limits to all but the emperor's household, the city is now a museum open to the public. Nearby, Tiananmen Square is the site of many parades and other public events. Government buildings and museums line this immense square.

In southern China, **Hong Kong** and **Macao** (muh-KOW) are major port cities and centers of trade and tourism. Both cities were European colonies until recently. The United Kingdom returned Hong Kong to China in 1997, and Portugal returned Macao in 1999. The two modern, crowded cities provide a mix of cultures.

READING CHECK **Contrasting** In what ways might rural life differ from city life in China?



- 1** Residents of Baotou, in north-central China, wear masks to keep from inhaling harmful particles in the city's polluted air.



- 2** These children are planting trees to help create new forestland north of Beijing.

China's Environment

China's economic and urban growth has created serious environmental problems. A major problem is pollution. The country's rising number of cars and factories pollute the air and water. At the same time, China burns coal for much of its electricity, which further pollutes the air.

Another serious problem is the loss of forestland and farmland. For centuries the Chinese cut down trees without replanting more. In addition, many of China's expanding cities are in its best farmlands.

The Chinese are working to address such problems. For example, China hopes to lessen pollution by using more hydroelectric power, electricity produced from dams. China is currently building the Three Gorges Dam on the Chang Jiang.

This dam is set to be finished in 2009. When completed, it will be the world's largest dam and generate as much power as 15 coal-burning power plants. On the other hand, the dam will drown hundreds of towns and huge amounts of farmland. Millions of people will have to move, and plant and animal habitats will be harmed.

READING CHECK Finding Main Ideas What are some of China's environmental problems?

SUMMARY AND PREVIEW China's economy and cities are growing rapidly, but its government restricts political freedom and faces environmental problems. In the next section you will learn about Mongolia and Taiwan.

Section 3 Assessment

go.hrw.com
Online Quiz
KEYWORD: SK7 HP22

Reviewing Ideas, Terms, and Places

- a. Define** What is a command economy?

b. Identify Cause and Effect What changes have helped lead to China's rapid economic growth?
- a. Describe** In what ways does China's government restrict freedom?

b. Evaluate What is your opinion of China's handling of the 1989 demonstration at Tiananmen Square?
- a. Identify** What is China's largest city and leading port?

b. Compare How are Hong Kong and Macao similar?
- a. Recall** What are China's environmental problems?

b. Evaluate Do you think China should build the Three Gorges Dam? Why or why not?

Critical Thinking

- Categorizing** Create a table like the one shown to organize the challenges that China faces today.

| Challenges Facing China | | |
|-------------------------|-----------|---------------|
| Economic | Political | Environmental |
| | | |

FOCUS ON WRITING

- Collecting Information about China Today** Note any details about China's current economy, government, cities, or environment that you might include in your legend.