

China's fixed broadband speed hits almost 12Mbps

A report released by Broadband Development Alliance, a third party research organization, shows the development of broadband speed in China. According to the report, China's broadband speed grew steadily in the fourth quarter in 2016, with average fixed broadband download speed reaching 11.9 Mbps, that of 3G and 4G network respectively hit 3.89 Mbps and 11.93 Mbps.

With efforts from the Chinese government, broadband speeds have grown very fast since 2015. The coverage of the 4G network expands and the speed increases continuously. China has built the largest 4G network worldwide. The amount of 4G network users accounts for 55% among all mobile users.

There are 13 provincial administrative regions with an average fixed broadband download speed over 12 Mbps. The report ranked the top five provincial administrative regions in fixed broadband download speed as Shanghai, Shandong, Jiangsu, Beijing and Fujian. Among the capital cities and municipalities, Shanghai, Jinan, Fuzhou, Zhengzhou and Beijing are the top five cities in the fixed broadband download speed list.

Judging from the speed of mobile broadband of different operators, China Unicom's 3G and 4G network download speeds are the highest among the three major operators, which are 4.81 Mbps and 13.72 Mbps respectively.

Meanwhile, according to the report, the average time for fixed broadband users to open the first page is 1.15 second in the fourth quarter in 2016, and the average download speed for web video has reached 9.34 Mbps. Both are faster compared with the previous quarter.

That article 50 letter

Yesterday the various amendments proposed to the Leaving the EU Bill were voted down. Labour decided not to press one of their main one to a vote because the government offered assurances that Parliament will get to vote on the final deal, to be held before the European Parliament votes on it. That vote will be about whether to accept the new Agreement or to leave without one.

During the exchanges the fundamental question of whether sending the Article 50 is irrevocable or not came up. I argued it is. The Treaty makes no provision to withdraw the letter or to cancel exit two years later, which is automatic with or without a deal. The Treaty says if you start to leave and change your mind you need to reapply for membership. You do not simply keep

or reinstate the membership you proposed to quit.

I reminded the Commons that both the Attorney General and the Remain lawyer in the Supreme Court case argued that the notice to leave is irrevocable. In finding against the government on one count the Supreme court had to rely on the irrevocability of the process. It is only because the change of leaving becomes inevitable when the letter is sent could the Court say Parliament therefore had to pass an Act and could not just do it by debate and vote. Predictably the Remain side who were so keen to use this argument to win in court now have changed their mind and say it may not be!

I will post the exchanges later today.

[Beijing, Tianjin plan monthly train pass](#)



A driver checks a high-speed train before it heads from Tianjin to Beijing South Railway Station on Jan 25.[Photo/Xinhua]

Beijing and Tianjin are planning a monthly pass for high-speed intercity trains linking the cities, as well as canceling expressway toll fees between the two cities, the mayor of Tianjin said on Monday.

The move will facilitate the integrated development of Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei province, an outline given in 2015 to improve transportation links in the area, while also moving some of Beijing's low-end industries to

neighboring areas.

Wang Dongfeng, mayor of Tianjin, said the plan is to build a modern transportation system. He added that a unified smart prepaid traffic card, called Yikatong, already exists in 12 cities in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region, and the government aims to expand its use to all cities in the area by the end of this year.

In addition to universal traffic cards and expressways, the proposal of a high-speed train network in the region was approved last year, with Beijing-Binhai New Area Intercity Railway expected to be completed by 2020.

The Beijing-Tianjin Intercity Railway was the first of its kind in China. Traveling at up to 350 kilometers per hour, passengers can commute between the cities in about 40 minutes on trains that depart every 10 to 15 minutes.

Officials from Tianjin's transportation bureau said they are still deliberating the monthly pass mechanism and a timetable is not available.

Potential benefactors are eagerly awaiting the implementation of the planned policies.

"We are looking forward to having monthly train passes," said Xiang Nan, the managing director of a Tianjin-based investment company that has offices in Beijing, downtown Tianjin and Binhai New Area of Tianjin. He has rented offices near the train stations to save time on commuting.

Xiang said that he and seven of his employees spend nearly 5,000 yuan (\$730) every month on commuting. "We hope the monthly pass can help frequent passengers save money."

In 2009, a prepaid express card was issued by railway authorities for Beijing-Tianjin intercity trains, offering exclusive entrance channels at stations so frequent travelers don't have to buy tickets in advance or wait in line before boarding.

In 2012, the express card was upgraded into a debit card that also works on about 20 intercity rail transit lines nationwide.

However, in both cases, passengers still have to pay the full price for each trip—54.5 yuan from Beijing to downtown Tianjin.

"If expressway toll fees were lifted, it would save us a lot of money," said Wang Rui, who drives between Tianjin, where she works, and Beijing, where she and her husband own a house.

More second-child assistance sought

A senior health official has called on governments at all levels to help relieve the burden on families wanting to have a second child.

Cui Li, vice-minister of the National Health and Family Planning Commission, said on Tuesday that an array of departments need to introduce measures to help resolve issues that have arisen with the introduction of the second-child policy in January 2016.

Health authorities have been rolling out policies nationwide since family planning rules were relaxed, including improvements to maternal care facilities.

However, Cui warned that families will need help from other government departments to handle some problems, including increased expenses, maternity leave and a shortage of kindergartens.

"We hope through the efforts of governments at all levels ... some tangible policies can be made in areas such as taxation and social security to promote the implementation of the policy so that those who want to have a second child can realize their dream," she said.

"We will focus on problems that emerge as a result of the policy and work to solve them with other departments," she said, adding that the second-child policy has already yielded positive results.

Cui said 18.7 million babies were born in China last year, up by 11 percent on 2015, with 45 percent born to women who already had a child.

Over the same period, the maternal mortality rate fell from 201 per 1 million births to 199, according to data released by the commission last month, despite the fact half of the 90 million women who became eligible to have a second child are over 40—putting them at a higher risk of complications during pregnancy.

A report released in December by the All China Women's Federation and Beijing Normal University also called for more investment in public services to make having two children easier and more affordable.

The report included a survey of 10,155 couples in 21 cities who already have a child that found 53 percent did not want a larger family. The biggest concerns were education resources, healthcare services, the environment and the financial burden.

Cui added that the commission has received a lot of advice from the National People's Congress, the top legislature, and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the top advisory body, on implementation of the second-child policy, including measures to improve pediatric services.

The commission received 1,512 suggestions on various healthcare issues from

the two bodies last year, she said.

Xi Yanchun, a spokeswoman for the State Council Information Office, added that ministries and departments under the nation's Cabinet responded to 7,873 suggestions from the NPC and 3,862 from the CPPCC last year.

They included economic development, poverty alleviation and environmental protection proposals, Xi said.

Progress on transplants puts nation in spotlight

A 10-year reform that has shaken off China's dependence on executed inmates as the primary source for transplant organs has brought the country to the Vatican to share on the world stage its experience in combating organ commercialism.

Huang Jiefu, a former vice-minister of health and now director of the National Human Organ Donation and Transplant Committee, was invited by the Vatican's Pontifical Academy of Science to speak about the "China model" of organ donation and transplant management at the two-day Summit on Organ Trafficking and Transplant Tourism that opened on Tuesday.

"This is the first time that China has been invited to a summit on organ transplanting held by an authoritative international organization," Huang was quoted by the Global Times as saying on Monday. He could not be reached for comment on Tuesday.

Chen Jingyu, deputy director of Wuxi People's Hospital in Jiangsu province and a leading lung transplant specialist, said such an invitation is "a New Year gift for us Chinese transplant surgeons who have been gradually recognized by international peers".

In response to speculation on whether the invitation marks an improvement in China-Vatican relations, Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang said on Tuesday at a regular media briefing that Huang's participation "has nothing to do with the development of the bilateral relationship".

China first performed a transplant in the 1970s, and Huang acknowledged in 2005 that a majority of the organs transplanted were harvested from executed prisoners.

To conform with international practice, China launched a public organ donation system and announced in 2015 that the use of organs from executed inmates had ceased.

By the end of last year, about 28,000 major organs such as livers, kidneys and lungs were harvested from nearly 10,000 donors who had died, according to data from the National Health and Family Planning Commission.

More than 140,000 people have registered under the organ donation system, according to the China Organ Transplantation Development Foundation, an organization under the commission.

"That demonstrates the great benevolence of the Chinese and an ever-increasing voluntarism," Huang said earlier.

That helps China gain international acclaim and, more important, "sustain the development of organ transplantation here", said Guo Zhiyong, a leading liver transplant surgeon at the First Affiliated Hospital of Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou, Guangdong province.

"I consider the invitation by the Vatican a recognition and huge encouragement for China's organ transplantation field," he said.

"An increasing Chinese involvement in global academic exchanges in transplants also benefits the world, since China ranks second in the world in the number of transplants, second only to the United States," Guo added.

Chen, from Wuxi People's Hospital, urged more Chinese surgeons to participate in international academic communications and "inform the world of China's changes".

However, there is still a long way to go before China's organ donations fully satisfy the demand, said Huang, the former vice-minister of health.

Although China performs about 10,000 transplants a year, 300,000 patients are waiting for organs, previous reports said.