

CHINA

Flying hospital now ready for eye and ENT surgeries

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Following its maiden flight in September, a “flying eye and ENT hospital” — a joint project between the Shanghai-based Eye and ENT Hospital of Fudan University and the Commercial Aircraft Corporation of China — has been upgraded with a Class 1 clean operating room, the hospital announced on Tuesday.

This significant enhancement enables the aircraft to support surgeries in both ophthalmology and otorhinolaryngology, marking a key step in building a high-level aviation medical system in China and boosting the nation's capability to deliver precision medical services via an aviation platform.

“Initially focused on ophthalmology, the service has now expanded to include ENT, setting a global precedent,” said Zhou Xingtao, president of the hospital.

The flying hospital, operating out of a domestically manufactured aircraft, completed its inaugural mission on Sept 5. Equipped with state-of-the-art, domestically developed eye, and ear, nose and throat diagnostic devices, it transported more than 30 medical workers from Shanghai to Shihezi city in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region. This trip explored a new model, integrating a mobile clinic, comprehensive examination, training and practice, and 5G remote consultation, effectively bringing specialists and cutting-edge medical technologies to grassroots areas.

Nearly 50 patients received advanced, one-stop diagnostic and consultant services aboard the aircraft, right at their doorstep. Patients included elderly individuals with retinal diseases, young people seeking laser surgery for myopia, and allergy sufferers with

nasal congestion. Crucially, the use of 5G remote technology allowed some patients to receive consultations from experts in Shanghai, improving access to quality healthcare in distant regions.

The addition of the operating room was a direct response to directives from the National Health Commission to enhance cataract surgery capabilities in county hospitals and to speed up the development of in-flight surgical capabilities, Zhou explained.

The operating room project features customized domestic equipment and a bolt-free connection design, allowing for the quick installation of panels and purification equipment within the aircraft cabin, achieving installation within eight hours without damage.

By innovatively developing a variable wind speed laminar flow module, the hospital successfully integrated eye and ENT surgical functions into the aircraft cabin. These overcome the technical challenges of constructing a Class I clean operating room in an aviation environment, specifically addressing the limitations posed by cabin height.

“This setup of equipment compatible with the homegrown C909 aircraft type and being able to be quickly assembled is also intended for potential use in emergencies, contributing to the country's reserve capabilities,” said Wen Wen, deputy director of the hospital's administrative office.

Wen, who is also head of the blindness prevention and epidemiology disciplines at the hospital, said that surgeries performed at the flying hospital will begin with cataract procedures due to the high demand for this service in grassroots regions. The flying hospital will also conduct common ENT surgeries, such as nasal polyp and sinusitis operations.

New center in Shanghai targets medical tourism

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Shanghai's endeavor to build a diversified healthcare ecosystem by introducing high-quality international medical resources took another significant step with the recent opening of Parkway Medi-Centre Xintiandi, an ambulatory care center, part of IHH Healthcare, one of Asia's leading multinational healthcare services networks.

The new center, which represents an investment of nearly 100 million yuan (\$14 million) and occupies an entire floor covering roughly 7,000 square meters in a shopping mall at the downtown Xintiandi commercial area, marks a new milestone in Shanghai's efforts to boost medical services for international patients.

Shanghai accommodates China's largest expatriate community and attracts one of the highest numbers of inbound travelers.

“Given that Shanghai is a dynamic metropolis teeming with tourists, it presents an excellent opportunity for us to boost medical tourism,” said Prem Kumar Nair, group CEO of IHH Healthcare, whose operating entity on the Chinese mainland is Parkway Shanghai.

Nair said the ambulatory care center is designed to fill the gap between Parkway Shanghai's two clinics and a full-service hospital in the municipality.

“This facility is a key part of IHH Healthcare's global strategy, demonstrating our commitment to advancing an ‘out-of-hospital’ care model by bringing advanced day treatments and personalized outpatient services closer to where patients work and live, making high-quality professional care and advanced facilities more accessible,” he said during the center's opening ceremony in Shanghai on Tuesday.

Bringing together an international, multilingual medical team from 14 countries, the facility supports direct billing with over 60 international insurance providers.

“We entered the Chinese market over two decades ago, drawn by the country's opening-up drive. The number of people being able to afford private healthcare has kept rising, and the influx of foreign enterprises into China brought a large number of expats. This

prompted us to further optimize our services,” Nair said. He added that one clinic located in Changning district's Gubei area is scheduled for an upgrade next year, which will result in the expansion of service offerings and introduction of a multinational physician team.

As Shanghai, and China as a whole, continue to strengthen policies to open up the healthcare sector — allowing full foreign ownership of medical institutions in some major cities since September 2024 — many international healthcare players said such positive regulatory shifts have reinforced their confidence in the market.

In January, Shanghai announced it would encourage wholly foreign-invested hospitals to be established in the municipality's key economic zones, regions where the biopharmaceutical industry gathers, and downtown districts with a high concentration of expat residents.

“The pilot program was initiated to deepen opening-up in the field of foreign-owned hospitals, enhance the diversity of healthcare services, and improve the city's business environment,” said a city government document.

In March, DeltaHealth Hospital Shanghai received approval from the Shanghai Municipal Health Commission to operate as a wholly foreign-owned hospital, making it the first of its kind in the country to specialize in cardiovascular diseases, and filling a gap in specialized medical services provided by foreign investment in Shanghai.

And in March, Shanghai Renji Hospital and Singapore's Raffles Medical Group announced a collaboration to establish a two-way channel for medical resources, injecting momentum into Shanghai's ambition to become a hub for international medical tourism.

Under the cooperation, Raffles will introduce its international standard service system to Renji Hospital, providing comprehensive humanistic care, cross-cultural services, and specialized training in multilingual communication. Meanwhile, leveraging Raffles' cross-border network, the collaboration will export Renji Hospital's specialized medical technologies and establish a platform for promoting Chinese medical expertise globally.



Students take part in a soccer scrimmage at a primary school in Jinlan town, Guizhou province, on Wednesday. A new guideline requires all primary and secondary school students to have at least two hours of daily physical activity by 2027. ZHOU XUNCHAO / FOR CHINA DAILY

Reform mandates PE time in schools

Obesity, myopia in crosshairs as govt seeks to transform sports culture

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China has introduced a sweeping national plan to ensure primary and middle school students engage in at least two hours of daily physical activities by 2027, part of a broader push to strengthen students' physical and mental health.

The key goals of the initiative include a notable hike in the rate of students with qualified and excellent physical health, as well as an increase in the proportion of graduates who maintain regular exercise habits, according to a new guideline issued by the Ministry of Education and four other government departments.

A core requirement of the plan is to guarantee allotted time for physical education. Schools are mandated to offer the required number of PE classes and are encouraged to utilize additional curriculum hours and offer substantial activity breaks — potentially two 30-minute sessions per day. PE will also be an essential component of after-school services.

To improve teaching quality, the reforms promote a cohesive curriculum across all school stages. The focus is on helping every student master at least one sports skill and develop an exercise habit.

Widespread participation in sports is another pillar of the reform. Schools will widely establish sports clubs and teams, organizing regular interclass and interschool competitions. Every school is expected to hold two comprehensive sports meets or festivals annually, fostering a new norm where students participate often in

school sports competitions.

The plan also emphasizes strengthening the teaching force. It calls for building a new type of sports faculty comprised of full-time teachers, coaches, and part-time staff members. Measures include improving recruitment, training, and incentive mechanisms to ensure PE teachers receive equal treatment in professional evaluation and benefits.

Furthermore, schools will upgrade sports facilities and explore sharing resources with communities. Public sports venues are encouraged to open to students at low or no cost.

A senior official with the ministry's Department of Physical, Health and Arts Education said physical education is the most straightforward and effective solution to address health issues affecting students, including obesity and eyesight problems.

The evaluation of school sports will be reformed, shifting the focus from competitive testing to positive incentives and ongoing assessments. Key metrics will include physical fitness, skill development, and sports participation, he said. By 2035, the vision is to establish a modern school sports system that plays a major role in student development and building a nation strong in education.

The Beijing No 2 Experimental Primary School has not only met but significantly exceeded the national “two-hour” physical activity requirement, with a structured system of in-class and extracurricular sports programs, according to Zhu Guohui, director of the school's physical and health education center.

The school's daily schedule systematically integrates physical activity. This includes a mandatory 35-minute physical education class, a 35-minute PE session first thing in the morning, and a 20-minute extended break at noon. Combined with 15-minute breaks between classes, the total structured activity time reaches two hours and 35 minutes, he said.

Beyond the general requirement, a voluntary morning exercise session is offered from 6:50 to 7:30 am, attracting students looking to enhance fitness or build habits, he said.

The school also runs nine major sports clubs, including basketball, swimming, and track and field. A key focus is on students with weaker physical conditions, including those dealing with obesity, myopia, or anxiety, he said. These after-school sessions, along with various sports clubs that operate from 4:00 to 5:30 pm or later, engage approximately 30 percent of the school's 5,000-strong student population, he added.

Zhu said all the measures have yielded positive results, with the school's physical fitness test data showing consistent improvement over the past three years. The rate of students achieving excellent and good grades in the PE test climbed from 91.47 percent in 2022 to 92.71 percent in 2023, and further to 95.60 percent in 2024.

While the 2025 data is not yet fully available, the school has already demonstrated outstanding results in recent exams. All fourth-grade students passed their physical education assessment, while the pass rate for sixth-graders reached 99.44 percent, significantly higher than the average in Beijing's Xicheng district.

Mayors, city planners explore Nanjing

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Mayors and city planners from China and abroad gathered in Nanjing, capital of Jiangsu province, on Wednesday to share and discuss experiences in green transformation, cultural heritage preservation, and smart governance.

On Wednesday afternoon, they visited Yuhuatai High School in Nanjing to watch a campus soccer match and interact with players and coaches.

The city hosted the highly popular “Suchao” this summer. The 2025 Jiangsu Football City League, or “Suchao”, was a phenomenal event that attracted, on average, nearly 30,000 spectators per game.

So far, Nanjing has established 294 national youth campus soccer specialty schools. Over the past five years, the city has built or expanded school sports facilities covering 1.33 million square meters and constructed about 180 new campus soccer fields.

“One of my goals is to show the German people how China really is and try to open their minds about China.”

Thomas Himmler, director of the foreign affairs office of Dietfurt, Germany

Alessandro Rapinese, mayor of Como, Italy, said on the soccer field that he felt the energy, vitality and competitiveness of Nanjing, which have all played a role in the city's current stature.

On the same day officials also visited the Nanjing City Wall Museum and the Zhonghua Gate Wengcheng to experience Nanjing's meticulous management of historical sites as one of China's most famous ancient cities.

The Nanjing City Wall, built in 1366, is the longest, largest, and best-preserved ancient city wall in the world, with 25.1 kilometers still intact, a testament to Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) engineering. The Zhonghua Gate Wengcheng is the largest existing city gate in China and the world's best preserved and most structurally complex fortress wengcheng.

During their three-day exploration tour, mayors and city planners will also board a research vessel to observe precious finless porpoises, visit a bug studio to collect insect traces, and see the green transformation efforts at Nanjing Iron and Steel Group Company to experience the city's achievements in wildlife and Yangtze River protection firsthand.

The mayors from China and abroad will visit the World Literature Salon in Nanjing to read Chinese and English poetry together, experiencing the cross-cultural resonance between Chinese classical poetry and Shakespearean verse.

Mohamed Higazy, a board member of the Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs, said that Nanjing is a city that develops its infrastructure with a focus on youth, sustainability, and inclusivity — key elements of its success. “I view Nanjing as a model city that respects its past and heritage while looking forward,” he said.

Thomas Himmler, director of the foreign affairs office of Dietfurt, Germany, said that it was his third time in Nanjing. “One of my goals is to show the German people how China really is and try to open their minds about China.”

“Nanjing is a nice city with nice people, and it's really a pleasure for me to be here, trying to exchange cultural things between Germany and China.”



Qiang revelry

Qiang people gather for a communal banquet to celebrate the Qiang New Year in the Aba Tibetan and Qiang autonomous prefecture, Sichuan province, on Tuesday. This important festival of the Qiang people was inscribed by UNESCO on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2024.

HE HAIYANG / FOR CHINA DAILY