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The Best from The 21st Century
— Our Kaleidoscopic World

何兆熊 选编

上海外语教育出版社



外教社



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The Best from The 21st Century
— *Our Kaleidoscopic World*

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编者前言

《21 世纪报》是由国内最大的英文报系中国日报主办，颇受广大读者，尤其是青少年读者欢迎的一份国内出版的英文报纸。这份报纸之所以能拥有较大的读者群，无疑是因为它具有较高的可读性。所谓可读性体现在内容和文字两个方面。就内容而言，除了重大的国内外时事新闻外，这份报纸刊登的许多文章的内容都是广大青少年读者感兴趣的，和他们的生活十分贴近的；就文字而言，这份报纸的英语比较浅近，具有高中以上英语水平的人大体都能阅读。

尽快、尽好地掌握英语，是广大青少年的迫切愿望。大量阅读是学习外语的一种重要方法。但总的来说，目前适合青少年阅读的英语出版物还不够多。于是我们便萌发了从《21 世纪报》中挑选一些精粹文章汇编成册，以飨读者的想法。我们翻阅了 1995 年以来的《21 世纪报》，根据内容分别汇编成《文化篇》、《语言篇》、《科技篇》和《思考篇》四种，为减少阅读过程中的阻力，我们对文集中的部分生词、难点和难句作了一些注释。这样的读物具有很强的知识性和趣味性。读者不仅能获得大量有关世界各国的社会文化知识、有关英语语言的知识、最新的科技发展信息，学会不少做人的道理，同时也必将提高自己的英语水平。可以说是“轻轻松松学英语”的一种好方式。

我们相信我们所做的这项工作是有意义的，广大读者一定能从这套读物中获益。对《21 世纪报》编辑部给予的支持，我们在此表示感谢。

2000 年 5 月

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World's best places to live

UNITED NATIONS — Canada, for the sixth consecutive year, ranks first among places to live, while Norway treats women better than any other country, according to the 1999 UN Human Development Report, released on Monday.

This year's survey, like its predecessors^①, ranks 174 nations according to how people live, factoring in^② health care, life expectancy, education and income.

In the overall index, Norway is in second place, followed by the United States, Japan, Belgium, Sweden, Australia, the Netherlands, Iceland, Britain, France, Switzerland, Finland, Germany, Denmark, Austria, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Italy and Ireland.

At the other end of the scale, the 10 least developed countries in human terms are, from the bottom up, Sierra Leone, Niger, Ethiopia, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Eritrea, Mali and the Central African Republic.

① predecessor 前者, 前任, 此处指前一年的调查

② factor in 考虑以下各种因素; factor v.

The most widespread discrepancy was between the sexes,^① with inequality existing in all countries.

Canada slips to fourth place on this list, and the United States is in eighth place on the “gender empowerment” index^②. This measures how many women are in parliament or government, how many have professional or technical jobs, and how much they earn, based on per capita income.

The 20 top countries here are Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Canada, Germany, Finland, Iceland, the United States, Australia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Austria, the Bahamas, Switzerland, Luxembourg, Britain, Belgium, Portugal, South Africa and Ireland.

The survey shows that high income is not always a necessary condition for creating opportunities for women.

South Africa and Costa Rica, for example, outrank^③ France, which is in 36th place. Israel outperforms^④ Japan.

The Bahamas, the Czech Republic and Slovenia also offer better conditions for women than their income would suggest, illustrating that equality “can be achieved across a range of cultures,” the report said.

Despite major improvements in life expectancy and literacy^⑤ among men and women over the past decade, poverty is pervasive in Benin, Nepal and Niger, among others.

① The most widespread discrepancy was between the sexes,... 最普遍的差别存在于男女两性之间,.....

② “gender empowerment” index “性别特权”指数(实际从另一方面来说也是一种性别歧视程度)

③ outrank 超过,高于

④ outperform 优于

⑤ literacy 文化,读写能力

Pockets of deprivation^① also exist within rich nations. For example, Denmark's average life expectancy is 76 years, but 13 per cent of the population does not reach the age of 60.

In Ireland, 23 per cent of the people are functionally illiterate^② and in the United States, nearly 20 per cent of the population has an income below the national poverty line.

Britain, Ireland and the United States show higher poverty levels than other industrialized countries.

The report said 16 countries suffered major reversals in health care, largely because of the impact of, AIDS in southern and eastern Africa and economic stagnation in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

(21st-Agencies)

① pockets of deprivation 贫穷地带

② functionally illiterate 功能性文盲,指会读写但计算机等现代化设备不会使用的人

Canada rated the best

UNITED NATIONS — Canada, for the seventh consecutive year, ranks as the best place to live in the world.

But if you are a woman, you are better off in Scandinavia^①, says the UN Human Development Report 2000, released last Thursday.

Norway is in second place in overall rankings^②, followed by the United States, Australia, Iceland and Sweden. Britain is in 10th place.

At the other end of the scale, the 10 least-developed countries that provide the fewest services to their people are mostly in Africa.

The survey ranks 174 nations according to income, health care, life expectancy and educational levels.

The statistical rankings have gained such exposure in the past decade that the Canadian province of Ontario is

① Scandinavia 位于欧洲北部的斯堪的那维亚半岛

② in overall rankings 综合指标排名,全面来看

using them in its television commercials to attract business. ①

But the report cautioned Ontario, Canada's richest and most populous province, against complacency②.

It noted the provincial government justified its full funding for Roman Catholic schools but not for those of any other religious group. ③

Income alone, the report says, did not automatically mean better educational or health services.

When progress for women is measured, Canada slips into eighth place and the United States ranks 13th when measuring the number of women in parliament, government, professional or technical jobs and their average earnings compared to men.

The top countries in this category are mostly in North Europe.

Japan, whose high standard of living and widespread education put it in 9th place in the overall rankings, was 41st on the gender equality index④, below that of Costa Rica, in 24th place. The situation in South Korea is similar.

Among the richest nations, the report shows relative prosperity is also accompanied by pockets of poverty. While the United States has the world's highest gross na-

① ... the Canadian province of Ontario is using them in its television commercials to attract business. 加拿大的安大略省把这些统计数字用到电视广告中去以吸引商机。

② complacency 自满, 满足

③ It noted ... not for those of any other religious group. 该报告指出, 省政府为其给罗马天主教会而不是其他宗教团体办的学校提供充分的资金进行了辩护。

④ gender equality index 性别平等指数

tional product, it ranks first in poverty rates among the 18 richest countries.

Ireland is in second place and Britain is in third.

The main aspect of poverty was functional illiteracy — about one person in five — the report said.

(21st-Agencies)

UN cautions ‘aging’ nations

UNITED NATIONS — Fertility rates^① are low and anti-foreigner sentiment is high in Europe. That's why a new UN study suggests that significant increases in immigration might be needed to keep populations from decreasing.

More foreigners would also help Europe compete with the United States. The US's aging population is supported by a constant flow of working-age labourers coming to America — 1.1 million every year between 1990 and 1996, the report says.

The study by the UN Population Division notes that Japan and South Korea also face significant population declines over the next 50 years and that immigration would offset the economic impact.^②

The report examines the populations in eight countries — France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, South Korea, Britain, and the United States; and two regions, Europe

① fertility rates 人口出生率

② ... immigration would offset the economic impact.移民将能抵消由此造成的对经济的影响。

and the European Union.

Because fertility rates in Japan, South Korea and Europe — which have some of the lowest birth rates in the world — aren't expected to increase dramatically over the next few decades, the report suggests that immigration may be the best and only realistic answer.

The UN report estimates that Japan would need 10 million immigrants every year for the next 50 years to maintain the current working-age to retirement-age ratio^①. Without immigration, figures suggest it would be necessary to raise the retirement age to 77 to maintain the ratio.

Paul Demeny, a scholar at the New York-based Population Council think-tank^②, questioned the report's presumption that a declining population was necessarily bad, noting that "Europe's best years — most creative and scientific" in the 18th century occurred when the population was considerably smaller than it is now.

He also suggested that fertility rates could suddenly increase — as they did in the post-World War II years in the United States — which would help correct the declining population.

In South Korea, where 7 per cent of the 47 million people are 65 or older, a health researcher also said that utilizing more women was one way of narrowing the expected workplace shortfall. He said the other option was importing workers from elsewhere in Asia — which South Korea was already doing. About 150,000 foreign workers are in South Korea, about half of them illegally.

The UN report makes no specific recommendations,

① working-age to retirement-age ratio 工作年齡和退休年齡的比率

② think-tank 智囊團

but concludes that the demographic^① changes in store^② in the next 50 years will require a thorough reassessment of “many established economic, social and political policies and programs.”

(21st-Agencies)

① demographic 人口的

② in store 即将发生的