

Panda Beer anyone? Craft beers flow in middle-class China

By Sam McNeil and Fu Ting
The Associated Press

SHANGHAI — “Panda Beer,” “Little General,” “Flying Fist IPA,” and “Mandarin Wheat” were among the offerings on tap at a craft beer exhibition in Shanghai dedicated to expanding the palette of Chinese consumers and promoting sales of high-end brews.

The 2018 Craft Beer of China Exhibition featured breweries such as Rasenburg Beer, Myth Monkey Brewing, Lazy Taps, Goose Island, and Boxing Cat Brewery that were sharing tips on the latest technology and sales trends as Chinese shift from legacy brews to more experimental, refined, and expensive flavors.

From taps at the expo flowed creative mixes of flavors and traditions, a swirling cocktail of Chinese ingredients, barley, hops, and spices from around the world.

“After drinking it (craft beer), it feels much better than the domestic industry beer, and then you just can’t leave it,” said Yu Shiqi, a 40-year old craft beer consumer at the expo who dreams of brewing his own.

There’s money to be made in China, which drinks a quarter of all beer worldwide, and small-batch brewers and giant multinationals are cashing in. Though craft beer is far from upstaging local beer behemoths like Tsingtao that dominate the \$28 billion national beer market, it is rising in popularity as small breweries open up in China’s major metropolitan areas like Beijing, Shanghai, and Shenzhen.

Craft beers are typically more expensive than mass-market, low-alcohol content brews such as Budweiser and China’s Yan-jing. But as China’s middle class grows, so



BETTER BEER. Attendees (top photo) inspect brewing equipment and a vendor (bottom photo) waits for visitors at the 2018 Craft Beer of China Exhibition in Shanghai. Hundreds of craft beer enthusiasts, investors, and brewers attended the exhibition dedicated to expanding the palette of Chinese consumers and promoting the sale of high-end brews. (AP Photos/ Sam McNeil)

growth in the craft beer market every year until 2020. “Beer culture is pretty much on the beginning or starting level.”

Laurel Liu, sales director of Beijing-based Jing-A brewery, said she gets calls from small towns asking how to start up a craft brewery.

“You don’t even expect them to have craft beer there, but now they do,” Liu said. “I’m really surprised and happy to see now that craft beer in China is a thing and it’s really easier to access these products now.”

More money was spent on beer in China than the USA in 2017, according to beer industry research firm Drink Sector. Craft breweries were “rapidly increasing” although foreign imports continue to dominate the high-end beer sector.

The Belgian-Brazilian firm Anheuser-Busch InBev, the makers of Budweiser, has invested heavily in China, building breweries and acquiring craft breweries like Shanghai’s Boxing Cat. Anheuser-Busch also owns Goose Island, which is based in Chicago.

Michael Jordan, brewmaster at Boxing Cat, and his staff experiment with flavors such as egg tart, green tea, peppercorn, chai, kiwi, hibiscus, and sweet potato.

Jordan chalks up some of the success of craft brewing in China to President Xi Jinping sharing a pint of IPA, or Indian Pale Ale, in 2015 in the U.K. with then-prime minister David Cameron.

“The ‘Xi phenomenon’ really kind of opened people’s eyes to IPA,” he said.



too does its tastes for finer products.

A couple of years ago, craft beer made up only 0.3 percent of total beer consumption.

It has since risen to about five percent, said Darren Guo, one of the exhibition’s organizers, who expect to see 30 percent

Malaysia sets up fund for donations to ease national debt

By Eileen Ng
The Associated Press

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia — Malaysia’s new Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamad, said the government will set up a trust fund to allow the public to contribute to easing the country’s huge national debt.

Mahathir’s government revealed that

the national debt and liabilities exceed 1 trillion ringgit (\$250.6 billion), or 80 percent of Malaysia’s gross domestic product, after taking into account government guarantees and other payments. It has blamed economic mismanagement and corruption under former scandal-tainted leader Najib Razak and the long-ruling coalition that was ousted by a surprise

defeat in a May 9 national election.

“There are many Malaysians who were willing to donate to the government when they found out how bad our country’s financial situation is. We welcome their patriotic stand,” Mahathir said.

The finance ministry said in a statement that the “Malaysia Hope Fund” will provide a systematic and transparent plat-

form to manage all public donations.

The move is unusual for a government but it comes as a response to a crowd-funding campaign started recently by a Malaysian to help settle the staggering government debt. The election victory by Mahathir’s alliance inspired patriotic sentiment among many citizens who have

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