



Vice-premier Liu Yandong met with Helle Thorning-Schmidt, former prime minister of Denmark.



Vice-president Li Yuanchao met with Sir Henry Keswick, chairman of Jardine Matheson Group.



State Councilor Yang Jiechi met with the delegation of Mexican governors.



Lin Wenyi, vice-chairwoman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, together with Oleg Dgomin, Ambassador of Ukraine to China, attended the celebration marking the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Ukraine.

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» Contents

Express News

04 CPAFFC President Li Xiaolin Meets Guests at Belt and Road Forum / *Our*

Staff Reporter

05 CPAFFC President Li Xiaolin Attends Launching Ceremony of Essilor and Xingxian County Poverty Alleviation Program “Bright Sight, Viewing World” / *Fan Lili*

05 Reception Marks 45th Anniversary of China-Madagascar Diplomatic Relations

/ *Fang Ying*

06 Vice-President Xie Yuan Attends Flying Tiger C-47 Dedication Ceremony

/ *Chen Ke*

06 Opening Ceremony of Zhou Enlai Memorial Exhibition Held in Kyoto / *Yu*

Xiaodong

07 Vice-President Lin Yi Attends Events Marking the 60th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Ties Between China and Sri Lanka / *Jiao Tianjiao*

07 China-Japan New Year Concert Held in Beijing / *Gao Hui*

08 CPAFFC Secretary-General Li Xikui Visits Spain and Morocco / *Zhan Xiushuang*

08 China National Peking Opera Company Achieves Great Success in Performances in Japan / *Gao Weimin*

09 Foreign Friends Plant Trees to Make Beijing Greener / *Beijing Friendship*

Association

09 Carry Forward Traditional Culture; Promote International Communication /

Beijing Friendship Association

10 Awards Ceremony of China-Japan Friendly Children’s Art Exhibition Held in

Shenyang / *Shenyang Friendship Association*

10 Internship Broadens Horizons for Chengdu Youths / *Chengdu Friendship*

Association

Cultural Exchanges

09 A Memory of the Adventure of Evacuation of Chinese Nationals from Albania / *Wang*

Runke

- 13** Mr Adnan Kassar, an Old Friend of the Chinese People/ *Ai Lin*
- 15** Israeli Young Ambassadors Delegation Visits China / *Ai Lin*
- 17** Exhibition of Chinese Characters Held in Kyoto / *Yu Xiaodong*
- 19** My Spring Festival in a Sister City / *Chengdu Friendship Association*
- 21** The Globalization Pace of Confucius Institutes / *Li Jie*
- 25** The New Bike Sharing / *Zhao Yang*
- 28** Splashing, Dancing and Making Merry at the Dai Water-Sprinkling Festival
- 30** Clear and Bright / *From China Today*
- 31** Volunteers Breaking Cultural Barriers / *Hou Liqiang, Guo Xiaojun*
- 33** When Crime Pays / *Xu Fan*
- 34** Chinese Urban Dictionary: Yanzhi / *Mia Li*

Interview

- 35** Malta-China Relations—45 Years Later / *Reno Calleja*

Global Vision

- 37** Cooperation Brings Benefits, while Confrontations Wound / *Zhou Lin*
- 40** Chinese Ambassador to Japan: Bilateral Relationships Improve and Progress / *Chen Jing*
- 42** Mexico and China: 45 Years of Diplomatic Relations / *Julián Ventura*
- 44** Mutual Benefits Important to Sino-US Ties / *Martin Steff*

View

- 45** Expats in Jiangsu Focus on Their Second Hometown / *Zhou Weidong, Jiang Lu*
- 47** The Cloud Silver Line / *Zhang Heqiang*

Between Friendship Cities

- 50** Treasures of Folk Art with Bayu Features and Charm
- 52** Chongqing Boosts its International Friendship Cities Program
- 56** The Yangtze River Economic Belt
- 58** China's Capital of Food with a Combination of Ba-Yu Flavors
- 60** Chongqing Pilot Free Trade Zone

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CPAFFC President Li Xiaolin Meets Guests at Belt and Road Forum

Our Staff Reporter



On May 14, CPAFFC President Li Xiaolin, Vice-President Lin Yi and Vice-President Song Jingwu attended the opening ceremony and high-level plenary meeting of the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation. At the same time, they held meetings themed “People-to-People Connectivity”.

Chinese President Xi Jinping attended the opening ceremony and delivered a keynote speech. Twenty-nine heads of state and government, a number of principals of international organizations and 1,500 guests from various social circles from more than 130 countries attended the forum.

On May 15, Li met with leaders of foreign organizations that had been invited by the CPAFFC to the forum. The guests were: Mr Gianfranco Terenzi, former captain regent of San Marino; Mr Dmitry Mezentsev, president of Russia-China Friendship Association and former secretary-general of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and member of Federation Council of Russia; Mr Narson Rafidmanana, minister of state for presidential projects, land management and equipment of Madagascar; Mr William Marlin, prime minister of St Maarten; Mr Adnan Samarah, chairman of Palestinian-Chinese Friendship Society and adviser to president; Mr Sayed Makhdoom Raheen, chairman of the Afghanistan-China Friendship Association; Mr Chkhartishvili, president of Georgian-Chinese Friendship Association; Dr Berndia, secretary-general of United Cities and Local Governments, Asia-Pacific; Mr Edmundo Galiza Matos, chairman of Mozambique-China Friendship League of the Assembly of the Republic Mozambique; Mr Lee Shiyung, president of the Korea Foundation; Mr Thomas Wagner, president of the Swiss-Chinese Association and former mayor of Zurich; and Mr Jesus Osuna, president of Spain-China Friendship Association. CPAFFC vice-presidents Lin Yi and Song Jingwu were present

at the meeting.

President Li said it was a great honor to invite so many representatives from abroad to attend the Belt and Road Forum. She expressed sincere gratitude for their close attention and support of the Belt and Road Initiative. She hoped that a joint effort would further promote the friendship and practical exchanges between China and the rest of the world.

The foreign guests all expressed warm congratulations on the success of the forum, and spoke highly of President Xi’s speech. They expressed hope to work together with the CPAFFC to contribute to the building of the Belt and Road and bring benefits to people of all countries. ■



CPAFFC President Li Xiaolin Attends Launching Ceremony of Essilor and Xingxian County Poverty Alleviation Program “Bright Sight, Viewing World”

Fan Lili

Co-hosted by the Chinese Peoples’ Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, the French Essilor Vision Foundation (FFVE), Secours Populaire Francais (SPF) and the Xingxian county People’s Government in Lyuliang, Shanxi province, the launching ceremony of the poverty alleviation program “Bright Sight, Viewing World” was held at the Xingxian Experimental School on the morning of March 31, 2017. CPAFFC President Li Xiaolin was present and delivered a speech.

Li said that Xingxian, as an old revolutionary base area, had made tremendous contributions to victory in the Chinese People’s War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression 1937-45 and the founding and developing of the New China. It is our common wish, she said, to help the people there improve their lives as early as possible and build a moderately well-off society in an all-round way.



Reception Marks 45th Anniversary of China-Madagascar Diplomatic Relations

Fang Ying

On March 27, the Chinese People’s Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries and the embassy of Madagascar in Beijing jointly held a reception in celebration of the 45th Anniversary of China-Madagascar diplomatic relations. Qiangba Puncog, vice-chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress, and Hery Rajaonarimampianina, president of Madagascar, attended the reception and delivered speeches. Li Xiaolin, president of the CPAFFC, together with about 100 other people also attended.

Vice-Chairman Qiangba Puncog said that since the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Madagascar 45 years ago, the two countries have remained sincere friends who treat each other as equals and with mutual respect.



Vice-President Xie Yuan Attends Flying Tiger C-47 Dedication Ceremony

Chen Ke



A ceremony was held at the Flying Tiger Guilin Heritage Park on March 25, 2017 for the donation of a World War II-era aircraft — a Douglas C-47. CPAFFC Vice-President Xie Yuan read a message from Chinese Vice-Premier Liu Yandong, in which she extended her sincere welcome and best wishes to the family of General Claire Lee Chennault, veterans of the Flying Tigers and their families, members of Flying Tigers Historical Organization and those in the United States who have dedicated themselves to China-US friendship. She also offered congratulations on the donation of the C-47 to Guilin, its final home. Noting that this year marks the 45th anniversary of the issuance of the Shanghai Communique, Liu said history has proved that a sound China-US relationship serves the common good of the people of both countries and the world.

Opening Ceremony of Zhou Enlai Memorial Exhibition Held in Kyoto

Yu Xiaodong



The year 2017 marks the 45th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations between China and Japan. On March 27, the opening ceremony of the Zhou Enlai Memorial Exhibition was held in Miyako Messe, Kyoto, Japan.

The exhibition mainly displays the precious inscriptions, paintings, calligraphy and photography works of Chinese and foreigners in memory of Zhou Enlai, along with related historical data collected during the making of a TV documentary marking the 100th birthday of the former Chinese premier. Also exhibited are inscriptions and photos of Nakasone Yasuhiro, Norodom Sihanouk, Henry Kissinger, and other international dignitaries. The famous calligraphers and painters Guan Shanyue, Ouyang Zhongshi, Shen Peng, Li Duo and Li Qi also created works in memory of Zhou.

Vice-President Lin Yi Attends Events Marking the 60th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Ties Between China and Sri Lanka

Jiao Tianjiao



At the invitation of the Association for China-Sri Lanka Social and Cultural Cooperation, CPAFFC Vice-President Lin Yi led a delegation to visit Sri Lanka for activities celebrating the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries—including the commemorative ceremony, a diplomacy-themed forum and the China-Sri Lanka Women Friendship Forum. Karu Jayasuriya, speaker of Sri Lanka's Parliament; Chandima Weerakkody, petroleum resources minister of Sri Lanka; Chandrani Senaratna, secretary to the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs of Sri Lanka; and Anoop Bhattarai, president of Organization for South Asian Regional Friendship and Cooperation with China, took part in the activities.

China-Japan New Year Concert Held in Beijing

Gao Hui



To commemorate the 45th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations between China and Japan, a Sino-Japanese Friendship New Year Concert was held on February 10 at the National Center for the Performing Arts in Beijing, sponsored by the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries and the China-Japan Friendship Association. More than 120 people were present, including Tang Jiakuan, president of the CJFA; Song Jingwu, vice-president of the CPAFFC; and Yokoi Yutaka, Japan's ambassador to China.

During the concert, Chinese and Japanese youth pianists performed classic music with superb skills, such as *The Girl With the Flaxen Hair* and Chopin's *Scherzo No 2*, and other piano music reflecting the two countries' culture, such as *Silver Cloud in a Moon Night* and *Sakura*, which won praise from the audience.

CPAFFC Secretary-General Li Xikui Visits Spain and Morocco

Zhan Xiushuang



At the invitation of the Public Diplomacy Council of Catalonia, Spain, and the ORU-Fogar—an international nonprofit group that represents the region around the world—Mr Li Xikui, secretary-general of the CPAFFC and council president of the China Friendship Foundation for Peace and Development, visited Spain and Morocco from April 22 to 29, accompanied by a delegation.

While in Spain, the delegation attended the Sant Jordi Festival—a literature festival featuring books and roses—held working meetings with Mr Albert Royo, secretary-general of the Public Diplomacy Council and met with Mr Maria Marin, technical secretary of the Catalan Booksellers Association. In Morocco, the delegation attended the executive council meeting of ORU-Fogar and visited Morocco’s Prime Minister H.E. Saadeddine El Othmani. The delegation also held a working meeting with Mr Abdessamad Sekkal, president of ORU-Fogar and president of Council, Region Rabat-Sale-Kenitra.

China National Peking Opera Company Achieves Great Success in Performances in Japan

Gao Weimin



At the invitation of the Min-On Concert Association, the China National Peking Opera Company performed three masterpieces (*Leopard*, *Imperial Concubine Yang*, and *Suolin Purse*) in Nakano Sunplaza. The performances received positive responses from the audience, which included Cheng Yonghua, Chinese ambassador to Japan; Minoru Harada, president of the Soka Gakkai; Kazuto Ito, executive representative of the Min-On Concert Association; foreign envoys from 47 countries; and Japanese people from all walks of life. Altogether, there were more than 2,000 people. After the performance, Ambassador Cheng stepped onto the stage to praise the performances during the tour. He also encouraged the actors to contribute to China-Japan cultural exchanges.

Foreign Friends Plant Trees to Make Beijing Greener

Third Beijing International Friendship Forest Tree Planting Day held in Changping

Beijing Friendship Association



On April 15, more than 400 foreign diplomats, experts and students from Sri Lanka, Australia, Russia and 33 other countries planted trees at the Changping TBD Science and Technology Park as part of the Third Beijing International Friendship Forest Tree Planting Day.

The activity received high praise from international participants. Shannyn Karunarotni, minister of the embassy of Sri Lanka in China, said the activity not only provided a platform for friendly exchanges between people from different countries but also contributed to environmental protection.

The event has become one of the main voluntary tree-planting activities for Beijing residents.

Carry Forward Traditional Culture; Promote International Communication

2017 Beijing International Kite Festival and Beijing-Tianjing- Hebei Kite Exchange successfully held

Beijing Friendship Association



Under the theme “Release the Hope, Release the Dream”, the 2017 Beijing International Kite Festival and Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei Kite Exchange event was held at Beijing Expo Garden on April 20 and 21. The event attracted master kite-makers, kite lovers and “intangible cultural heritage inheritors” from both China and abroad, with teams from 24 foreign countries, including the United States, Russia, Britain and Germany. There were 10 Chinese mainland teams and six teams from the Hong Kong and Macao regions and Taiwan. During the event, more than 200 Beijing-based foreign diplomats, experts and students were invited to watch the competition and make their own kites with help from the kite masters.

Awards Ceremony of China-Japan Friendly Children's Art Exhibition Held in Shenyang

Shenyang People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries

Shenyang Friendship Association



On March 10, the awards ceremony for the China-Japan Children's Art Exhibition was held at No 2 Hepingdajie Primary School in Shenyang, co-hosted by the Shenyang People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries and the Education Bureau of Heping District. Ms Tsuruyukari, president of the Belle Peau Association, a nongovernmental organization from Japan, presented the awards to the winners from Shenyang.

The Belle Peau Association has been engaged in promoting China-Japan friendship for many years. It participated in developing China's national education program known as the Hope Project by helping build schoolhouses for 16 Chinese schools. The organization also participated in the Green Peace Plan of Yunnan province, planting 320,000 trees.

Internship Broadens Horizons for Chengdu Youths

Chengdu Friendship Association



From March 19 to 27, four outstanding young people from Chengdu went on a trip to Perth, Australia, as the winners of the Perth Professional Development and Internship Competition, an innovative campaign for Chengdu and its sister city Perth, which has had fruitful student exchanges. The competition was designed to select four winners from Chengdu, from age 18 to 27, for a short-term internship in Perth. The first group of Chengdu winners was awarded a nine-day trip sponsored by Perth, where they were invited to feel the charm of the city and experience firsthand its unique professional culture. The special trip enabled the lucky Chengdu winners to broaden their horizons, experience a different life and make new friends while serving as ambassadors of Chengdu.

A Memory of the Adventure of Evacuation of Chinese Nationals from Albania

Wang Runke

China's successful evacuations of its nationals overseas in recent years demonstrates its rising national strength.

In response to the outbreak of the Libyan civil war in 2011, China evacuated more than 38,000 nationals in 12 days, supported by its civil aviation, Air Force and Navy.

During the strong earthquake in New Zealand in 2016, the Chinese embassy—by renting helicopters—immediately and safely evacuated about 125 Chinese tourists from the disaster area.

A rising China gives strong support to its nationals and becomes a source of pride for them.

Twenty years ago, however, such evacuation work was hard-fought.

March 15, 1997 is unforgettable to me. At that time, I worked for the Chinese embassy in Albania, and on that day performed a special evacuation mission.

The beginning of the 1990s saw economic decline and political unrest in Albania. The transformation of the political system led to economic turmoil and downturns. The opening of a market economy gave rise to high-interest illegal fundraising. Everybody dreamed about becoming wealthy overnight.

However, these companies

quickly became insolvent. The government intervened and had their assets frozen in banks, causing them to go bankrupt. Witnessing their years of savings swallowed up, the people took to the streets to call for the return of their money.

Banking on the unrest, which had gone out of control, the opposition party put the blame on the government and called on the public to stage massive protests in a bid to force the ruling Democratic Party out of power. Buildings were set on fire in riots.

On the morning of March 12, an armory in Tirana, the country's capital, was robbed. People wielding guns rampaged through the streets and shot randomly, plunging the city into chaos. Next morning, Tirana International

Airport was shut down, cutting off the only air corridor to the outside world. Western countries including United States, Italy and France sent in helicopters to evacuate their nationals, including diplomats and their families.

Around 7:30 am on March 14, a gang of armed men stormed into the worksite of a Chinese company based in Nanchang, Jiangxi province. Firing into the air, the rioters ransacked dormitories, the canteen and warehouse and made off with everything within half an hour. Workers could do nothing but helplessly watch their possessions and savings earned in the past two years being taken away.

In great disappointment, they went to the Chinese embassy to ask for help. The embassy immediately sent a



On March 15, 1997, the author was on the Greek warship during the evacuation.

commercial counselor to the scene. Though the ambassador's wife advised using an old Mercedes in case of a robbery, the car was held up by thieves the moment it reached the site.

By noon, nearly 200 people, mostly the company's employees and some Chinese shop owners, had come to the embassy, turning the usually quiet premises into a crowded and noisy shelter. The embassy's banquet hall, which was usually used for receptions, was made a temporary dorm for the people.

Given that the Embassy had closed its canteen a few years before, it was quite a headache to prepare food for so many unexpected guests. Heedless of the possible dangers, several staff members and I ventured out of the embassy in a car in search of food. To our relief, we found a few sacks of rice.

Meanwhile, the embassy reported the situation in Albania back to Beijing. The Chinese government attached great importance to the matter and decided that immediate moves must be taken to evacuate Chinese nationals from the country. The embassy contacted the Greek and Italian embassies for help.

Yang Guangsheng, Chinese ambassador to Greece at the time, managed to reach the Greek minister of national defense by phone. The minister promised to try every possible means to assist in China's evacuation effort.

After that, Chinese Ambassador to Albania Ma Weimao met with the Greek ambassador and military attachés to discuss the details of the evacuation plan. Ma also called the Albanian

government to arrange vehicles and police cars to escort the Chinese nationals from Tirana to the Port of Durres. However, vehicles were hard to find, given that the Albanian multiparty reconciliation government was newly established, with top leaders working on warships and the police force not yet fully recovered.

The Greek side requested that the Chinese evacuees arrive at the port by 11:30 am on March 15, otherwise it would be too late for the Greek vessels to depart. At around 10:30 am, the embassy managed to find six buses and two police cars, ensuring that the evacuees left for the harbor on time. With Chinese flags on the first and last vehicles, the convoys drove to the Port of Durres, watched by crowds of local residents at the roadside.

After an hour, the convoy arrived at the wharf. The usually heavily guarded port was filled with Albanians trying to flee the country. The moment the Chinese vehicles appeared, they were surrounded by crowds. The situation turned tense.

Thanks to our police escort, we broke from the crowds to reach the parking place. Guarded by armed Greek soldiers, Chinese women, children, workers and, finally, the embassy staff members boarded the ship.

Seeing this, some local people tried to squeeze in to board. In response, the Greek soldiers fired into the air and the ship lost no time weighing anchor and leaving the dock. It was not until then that everyone, including the soldiers, felt relieved. When the ship made for the open sea

30 minutes later, with the help of the Greek Navy, some evacuees changed to other ships that had been waiting.

After another seven hours, we reached Corfu. It was late afternoon, which is actually a great tourist attraction in Greece. Having left a chaotic city to come to a tranquil and picturesque island, everyone felt as if they had woken from a nightmare.

As the ships sailed close to the wharf, I saw in the distance four Chinese diplomats from Athens already waiting. With their help, we checked into two hotels. Meanwhile, the Chinese embassy in Athens called back to Beijing to ask whether Chinese planes could be sent to complete the evacuation. Because of China's limited economic strength at that time, Beijing declined the request. But the evacuation work went on.

On March 16, 73 engineers and shop owners returned to China from Corfu by way of Zurich, Switzerland. Another five returned from Athens via Macedonia, and the last group of 78 took an Air China flight from Rome back to the motherland the next day.

After seeing them all off, Ambassador Ma and I returned to the Chinese embassy in Athens, waiting for orders from Beijing while watching the situation in Albania. A few days later, we were ordered to go home by way of Frankfurt, which meant that the 158 Chinese nationals in Albania had made it back to the motherland safe and sound.

The special evacuation carried out 20 years ago is an unforgettable memory in my diplomatic career. ■

Mr. Adnan Kassar, an Old Friend of the Chinese People

Ai Lin

“Among countless awards I have received, the China-Arab Friendship Outstanding Contribution Award presented by Chinese President Xi Jinping is the greatest honor of my life. I will not only keep it at my home, but also in my heart.

“Today, I’m very excited that my friendship with China received recognition from President Xi. It reminds me of how I felt when introducing China to the Arab world for the first time 63 years ago. Over half a century, this enthusiasm has never faded, no matter where I lived in the world.

“Although I am now in my eighties, I will continue to contribute my strength to promoting and expanding friendly and cooperative relations between Arab countries and China as long as I am alive.”

These words came from Mr Adnan Kassar, an 87-year-old, vigorous, bright-eyed Lebanese, an old friend of the Chinese people and a well-known entrepreneur and financier.

Kassar, the president of General Union of Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture for Arab Countries, manages the Fransabank Group, the third-largest banking institution in Lebanon. Since 1954, Kassari has been committed to

promoting friendly exchanges between Arab countries and China in the fields of economics, trade and culture. In January 2016, during President Xi Jinping’s visit to Egypt, Kassari was given the China-Arab Friendship Outstanding Contribution Award and had the opportunity to take a group photo with Xi, along with nine other awardees.

Kassar’s friendship with China can be traced back to the 1950s, when he followed his father, the Lebanese ambassador to Pakistan, to live in Karachi and start a business with his brother Adel. In 1954, they met a Chinese entrepreneur who was purchasing cotton in Karachi. Thus began a more than 60-year friendship with China.

Kassar often recalls those days: “When I first set foot on Chinese soil in the 1950s, China quickly entered into my heart and has occupied an important position ever since. It was more than half a century ago, when no one would have predicted the rise of China. But I saw the great potential of the country with its long history, rich resources and industrious and practical people.”

Kassar always thought of China as a great school. He and his brother were in their twenties at that time,

and in their exchanges with Chinese businessmen and officials, they learned the right way to start a business and manage a company—the crucial role of building trust and attracting talent and the importance of having patience and paying attention to detail.

“For what we have accomplished today, we owe China a great deal. We are determined to continue to promote various kinds of exchanges between China and Arab countries to carry out President Xi’s strategic decision of reviving the ancient Silk Road, which started in China and reached Europe via Lebanon.”

Kassar has always supported the “one China” policy. He said: “China is like a motherland for me, so I’m quite aware of the significance of its unity and solidarity. It is a great nation. Unity will bring her progress and prosperity.”

In 1955, when China and Lebanon had not yet established diplomatic relations, Kassari resisted the repeated interference from the Taiwan “ambassador” to Lebanon, and persuaded Camille Chamoun, the Lebanese president, to invite a Chinese delegation for a visit. That resulted in the signing of the first China-Lebanon trade agreement. Kassari then helped set up the Chinese Commercial

Counselor's Office in Beirut. The five-star red flag flew in the sky of Lebanon for the first time.

In 1956, the Kassar brothers were invited to visit China. The flight they took was an American airplane with an outmoded Russian engine that had to stop to refuel every couple of hours. The plane landed on grass fields several times, and the captain had to get off and carry cans of fuel himself. After fueling, the captain would put his hand under the engine to check for oil leaks.

During the trip, the brothers attended the Canton Fair for the first time and brought back food, handicrafts, stationery, glass and porcelain products and thus began to promote Chinese goods in the Arab world. Kassar often said: "I'm very proud to be the first to promote Chinese products in the Arab world, and I'm proud to witness China entering into the ranks of advanced countries and becoming the most important trading partner of major Arab countries."

In the 1970s, Kassar was elected president of the International Chamber of Commerce of Lebanon and Arab countries, and also the Lebanese minister of economy and trade. Throughout his tenure, he always put Chinese affairs in first place.

In 1981, he organized an Arab entrepreneur delegation to visit China for the first time, paving the way for developing China-Arab business relations and partnerships. At the conference of the General Union of Arab Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture held in Damascus

in 1988, he proposed to establish the China-Arab Joint Chamber of Commerce. Approval of this proposal created a platform of strengthening trade and business cooperation between China and the Arab world.

In 1999, Kassar was elected president of the International Chamber of Commerce and became the first Arab president of the organization, which has 140 national committees and represents the world business circle. His first job was to set up the China National Committee of the International Chamber of Commerce, which has become one of the most active committees of the association.

During his tenure as president of the Federation of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture of Lebanon and president of the General Union of Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture for Arab Countries, Kassar warmly received all Chinese delegations visiting Lebanon.

Moreover, he and his brother encouraged high-ranking officials of Arabian chambers of commerce, as well as entrepreneurs, to visit China. In 2007, Vice-Premier Hui Liangyu of the Chinese State Council met Kassar and called him "an old friend of the Chinese people". In the same year Wan Jifei, chairman of the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade, awarded Kassar the title of Honorary Member of the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade.

Despite his many achievements, Kassar still keeps pace with the times and pays attention to China's

development and strategies. He has his own understanding of the Belt and Road Initiative, which he firmly believes will play an important role in deepening bilateral relationships between China and Arab countries in various fields such as economics and trade.

In July and November 2016, the CPAFFC and the Fransabank Group, led by Kassar, jointly organized a series of cultural activities under the themes "Belt and Road in China" and "Belt and Road in Lebanon" to enhance understanding between the people of China, Lebanon and Arab countries through food festivals, commodity exhibitions, book fairs and business dialogues.

Fransabank Group released the first Belt and Road credit card with the UnionPay logo in a bid to use the Belt and Road concept to actively promote economic and trade exchanges between Chinese and Arab banks and enterprises along the route

"China has become an inseparable part of the corporate culture of the Fransabank Group," Kassar says. "Every year, we send specially designed New Year's cards to all Chinese embassies, companies and friends all over the world who have cooperative relations with the group.

"Meanwhile, we encourage employees of the group to learn Chinese culture and language to enhance their understanding of that great country, to which we attach great importance and for which we have special feelings." ■

Israeli Young Ambassadors Delegation Visits China

Ai Lin

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the establishment of China-Israel diplomatic relations. To further strengthen friendly cooperative relations between the two countries, the CPAFFC invited a 38-member Young Ambassadors delegation to visit China from March 8 to 16, a few days before Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's visit. The delegation was led by Mr Yitzhak Eldan, headmaster of the School of Israeli Young Ambassadors and former chief of protocol for the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It was the first visit to China by an Israeli group recommended by the Young Ambassadors program.

During the nine-day trip, the delegation visited several well-known Chinese universities and academic institutions, had discussions with teachers and students from key high schools of Beijing and Tianjin and explored high-tech companies and the China-Israel Demonstration Farm.

Delegation members said the China visit broadened their horizons, enhanced their understanding of the

country and helped build friendships.

General Information about the Young Ambassadors Program

The School of Israeli Young Ambassadors is affiliated with the

Israeli Center for Young Leaders which was founded in 2006, with support from the Israeli Ministry of Education and the prime minister's office. The Young Ambassadors Program is a training ground for outstanding students of Alliance High School in



The delegation of Israeli youth ambassadors.

Tel Aviv who were selected by the School of Israeli Young Ambassadors through organizing various courses and activities. The program aims to cultivate students to be future leaders of Israel, with high values, skills, knowledge and problem-solving ability.

The program lasts three years. In the second year, students will be chosen to go to foreign countries for exchanges.

Before their China visit, the Young Ambassadors delegation had already visited 24 countries, including the United Kingdom, France and Australia. The trip to China aimed to use the 25th anniversary of the establishment of China-Israel diplomatic relations as an opportunity to learn Chinese culture and history, introduce Israeli and Jewish culture, visit local schools and make friends with Chinese students. Also, a Chinese youth delegation was invited to visit Israel.

The Young Ambassadors Delegation Visits China

When visiting the China Institute of International Studies and China Foreign Affairs University, the delegation listened to experts' lectures on bilateral relations and cooperation in the building of the Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. Members had discussions with teachers and students at the university. Mr Eldan, the head of the delegation, said that by recalling past exchanges

between China and Israel members acquired a better understanding about the historical foundation of bilateral relations.

The people of Israel, he said, would never forget how Chinese people provided shelter to Jews in cities such as Shanghai and Harbin during World War II. He himself took part in the process of establishing China-Israel diplomatic ties. He had visited Beijing and developed a profound feeling for China, and he hoped that young people of Israel would remember history and become the core strength in promoting China-Israel cooperation.

Eldan reaffirmed that Israel is willing to actively participate in the building of the Belt and Road. Israeli students also shared their understanding of the Belt and Road Initiative and raised questions about what Israel can do to cooperate in this area. The conversation was lively and at times heated.

The delegation also had animated discussions, in Hebrew, with teachers and students at Peking University, as well as with the anchors of China Radio International. CRI invited the delegation to create a feature program.

The Israeli students said they had learned through Israeli media reports about Itzik, an Israeli host of CRI, and his regular show, *Know Your Way in China*, which had aroused their interest in Chinese culture. The youths were excited to get to know so many Chinese friends proficient in the Hebrew

language, and felt an urgent need to enhance cultural exchanges between the two countries.

The delegation shared their study experience with students of the Beijing BAYI School and soccer No 20 High School and had football and basketball matches with the hosts.

At the farewell banquet hosted by the CPAFFC, BAYI students and members of the Israeli delegation staged a performance and exchanged traditional gifts. CPC Party Secretary Niu Zhenyun of the BAYI School signed an agreement on friendly exchanges with Eldan. When the time came to part, the young people of both sides found it difficult to say goodbye.

The delegation also visited internet giant Tencent and the China-Israel Demonstration Farm to get firsthand knowledge about the science and technology cooperation between the two countries. They said Chinese companies have reached the world's advanced level in science and technology and in providing a favorable work environment for employees. They hoped to have a chance to work and live in China in the future.

During his recent visit to China, Prime Minister Netanyahu said: "Cooperation between China and Israel is the choice of God."

It is believed that fruitful results will be achieved in the future development of China-Israel relations, based on friendships between the two countries' younger generation. ■

Exhibition of Chinese Characters Held in Kyoto

Yu Xiaodong

To commemorate the 45th anniversary of the normalization of Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations, a large-scale relics exhibition of Chinese characters titled *A Legacy and Marvel Perfected over Three Millennia* was presented in Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art from March 24 to April 21.

Attending the opening ceremony were Mr Hu Sishe, vice-president of the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries; Mr Li Tianran, Chinese consul general in Osaka; Mr Yamauchi Shuji, deputy governor of Kyoto; Mr Takeuchi Koichi, permanent member of the Japan-China Cultural Exchange Association; Mr Nakano Akira, senior director of Japan-China Cultural Exchange Association; Mr Shiranish Shinyichirou, director-general of the Japan-China Society; Mr Qi Gaoquan, deputy director of the Bureau of Cultural Relics of Shaanxi province; Mr Shioe Kozo, director of Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art; and around 300 specialists and amateurs from cultural and business sectors from China and Japan.

The exhibition was hosted by the CPAFFC, Art Exhibition China and the China International Cultural Association. The exhibition was conducted by the China Friendship

International Art Exchange Association and Japan KOUZAN Fine Arts Company. More than 114 articles from 17 relics museums in six provinces and cities in China were displayed. Among them, 22 are ranked as national first-class cultural relics.

CPAFFC Vice-President Hu Sishe said in his speech that, since the touring exhibition was launched in Tokyo in October, the unique beauty of Chinese characters has attracted many visitors and received favorable appraisals from specialists and amateurs from cultural sectors in both China and Japan. Around 88,000 visitors came during the 40 days of the exhibition.

Hu said that the exhibition was a

great event for Sino-Japanese cultural exchanges, adding that it has become a "golden bridge" that helps to strengthen understanding and deepen friendship between China and Japan.

He said the exhibition was the first attempt to give a systematic display of Chinese character-related relics in Japan and is an effective way to promote Sino-Japanese friendship using Chinese characters as the medium.

To coincide with the 45th anniversary, Kyoto was honored as the Culture City of East Asia in 2017. Hu said he believes the timing would help make the event a success.

The exhibition, he said, would be an



Hu Sishe, CPAFFC vice-president, addressed the opening ceremony.

important chapter in the history of Sino-Japanese cultural exchanges.

Consul General Li Tianran said in his speech that after 3,000 years of evolution, Chinese characters still retain their youthful vitality. For nearly 2,000 years, China and Japan developed their own cultures based on Chinese characters, which reflect a unique and influential East Asian spirit in the world's cultural sector. The Japanese language, which has its roots in Chinese, contributed to enrichment of Chinese by adding more words and meanings.

Li said Kyoto is among the cities having the closest communication with China, and he believes the current exhibition will become a vital platform for strengthening friendship between the two countries. Because the two are geographically near each other, he said, stable, healthy development of bilateral relations is not only in the interest of both peoples but will contribute to regional peace and stability.

Li said the Chinese consulate general in Osaka will organize a series

of communication activities to mark the 45th anniversary this year. He expressed hope that people from all fields will help to build more platforms for friendly exchanges between the two countries.

Takeuchi Koichi of the cultural exchange association said in his speech that the fact China and Japan share the culture of Chinese characters is of particular significance to both nations. Chinese characters are not only symbols of language communication but also represent a connection of cultures — of China and Japan, as well as other East Asian countries. Visual arts like calligraphy and seal cutting that were derived from Chinese characters are also favored across Asia, he said, adding that he hoped that this exhibition would deepen Japanese people's understanding and fondness for Chinese characters, and would promote cultural exchanges and friendship between ordinary people.

Qi Gaoquan, the Shaanxi relics official, said in his speech that Chinese characters represent one of the world's

oldest and most enduring written languages, and that it has spread the widest. The creation of Chinese characters not only propelled the development of Chinese culture, but also greatly impacted various cultures across the world. In the long history of human civilization, Chinese characters are the only language that is still being used after thousands of years since its birth.

Also, as a medium for cultural exchanges and communication, Chinese characters are an inseparable part of the cultural exchanges between China and Japan over the past 2,000 years, Qi said.

“We believe that after this exhibition, more and more Japanese will discover the beauty of Chinese characters,” he said. “That will deepen understanding between the two peoples.”

In his speech, Shioe Kozo, the Kyoto museum director, read a congratulatory letter from Mr Monkawa Oku, mayor of Kyoto. Oku wished the exhibition great success. Also, Yamauchi Shuji, Kyoto's deputy governor, praised the exhibition for its significance and far-reaching influence, and expressed his thanks for all the people who had been dedicated to promoting friendship between China and Japan.

The exhibition gave visitors an opportunity to see at close range the precious relics, which showed the history, artistic beauty and profound impact of Chinese characters. This will help visitors focus more on the charm and grace of Chinese characters, which are displayed in different forms. ■



People visiting the exhibition.

My Spring Festival in a Sister City

A story of a staff member of Chengdu Foreign and Overseas Chinese Affairs Office

Chengdu Friendship Association

*T*asting delicious local food and watching an NBA basketball game live enabled me to gain a deeper insight into Phoenix, an international sister city of Chengdu.

On the second day after the Chinese New Year holiday, I left Chengdu on an official trip to the United States as a staff member of the Chengdu Foreign and Overseas Chinese Affairs Office. After a flight of 20 hours, we arrived in Phoenix, Arizona.

During our stay in Phoenix, we experienced the local popularity of the Chengdu Lantern Festival and met with local friends. At their invitation, we also tasted delicious local cuisine and attended an NBA basketball game. All these enabled me to gain a deeper insight into Phoenix, an international sister city of Chengdu. I became more sentimentally attached to Chengdu's counterpart in the States.

Experiencing the Chengdu Lantern Festival on the other side of the globe

Before our departure, we were informed that the Chengdu Lantern Festival — *Lights of the World* — was going on in Phoenix. What would it feel like to watch a lantern festival on the other side of the globe? Would it still be spectacular?

Lanterns were in all shapes and sizes, and Chengdu snacks of different kinds made every visitor's mouth water. Even though that day was nearly at the end of festival, and it was a chilly evening, there were still many people around. The vast parking lot was jam-packed and there was a long line in front of every snack stand. During my two-day stay in Phoenix, I gained a deeper insight into American people's love for Chinese snacks.

After a journey of more than 20 hours, our bellies were rumbling and

we accepted with pleasure the gracious dinner invitation of Governor Stephen Roe Lewis of the tribal government of the Gila River Indian Community, and Song Yang, vice-president of the US-China Culture & Education Foundation.

At the dinner, Lewis learned that Chengdu is surrounded by many ethnic minority communities, that three of the four most famous liquors of China are produced in Chengdu and that Chengdu is home to China's largest vegetable supply base. He said excitedly that he would like to visit Chengdu in September and October during the best tourist season, to initiate cultural exchanges between American Indian culture and the ethnic minority culture around Chengdu. He also would like to bring liquors from Chengdu to his restaurant, and consider collaboration with Chengdu's vegetable growers. The head delegate of our group responded with excitement: Chengdu and Phoenix are destined to be sister cities.

The main course of the dinner—filet mignon—finally came after an hour of talk. I suddenly realized the role of waiting: It is an opportunity for socializing. Western gastronomy makes the process of socializing an enjoyable experience by having the gourmet wait for the main course.

Joining hands to promote sustainable development

The next morning, we stopped by Arizona State University, a partner school of Sichuan University. It was an open campus without any walls separating it from the public, so we found ourselves within the campus without knowing it. Everyone walking on campus was smiling and confident, neither languid nor in a hurry. When we were gathering for a group photo in front of the university's official symbol, a blonde woman offered help. We were surprised and grateful.

When we arrived at City Hall at 11:45 am, Mr Rick Gerard, director of the Office of International Relations for Phoenix, was already waiting at the gate. Gerard showed us all the photos of the previous mayors and chief councilors of Phoenix and told us unmistakably which of them had visited Chengdu in which year.

During our tour, an African American woman came unexpectedly. Gerard immediately introduced her as the chief of the Phoenix Police Department, and told us her son was

playing for the NBA's Phoenix Suns. Gerard also mentioned that both chiefs of the city's police and fire departments were female, which is rare in the US.

At the meeting with Mayor Greg Stanton, we extended the invitation of the China (Chengdu) Global Innovation and Entrepreneurship Fairs to him. He was delighted to accept the invitation, and said he would include the fairs in his agenda this year. Stanton also hopes to have exchanges on climate change with the attending delegates at the Sister Cities Mayors Forum to be held in Chengdu and is looking forward to interacting with the citizens of Chengdu.

After the meeting with Mayor Stanton, we met with Phoenix's Chief Sustainability Officer Mark Hartman, who briefed us about his city's ideas on sustainable development. He repeatedly emphasized the city's ambition to build itself into a world-leading sustainable development city, coinciding with Chengdu's goal of becoming one of China's national central cities.

Regarding the problems of traffic congestion and air pollution, Hartman said the desert city suffers from sandstorms in May every year, so it encourages its citizens to use public transportation while developing carbon-neutral projects to improve the quality of life.

Watching an NBA game

Gerard invited us to an NBA game—the Phoenix Suns vs. the

Memphis Grizzlies, at America West Arena, the Suns' home court. The game was broadcast live all over the country. Gerard thought we might bring some luck from the mysterious East to the ill-performing Suns.

When we arrived, Gerard was waiting for us at his seat. He said the city government owns the arena and the Suns rent the facilities. Tickets revenues are income to the Suns. If there are VIP guests, the government may request that some seats be reserved. For that, we felt greatly honored.

Even though the two teams were not at the same level, and the match was lackluster, the excitement of watching an NBA game in person was a great experience for us. We were impressed by the national anthem before the match, the cheering squad's hot dance at half time, the Phoenix Suns mascot gorilla and souvenir Suns' jerseys flung high into the stands with special guns to any lucky fan who could catch one. We were very lucky to see jerseys cast to spectators with a cannon designed for the purpose. Gerard said it was the first time such a cannon had been used in the arena.

Sister City friendship to promote joint development

Some cactus plants around Phoenix—notably the saguaro—grow to two or three times the height of a person. Due to lack of water in the desert, the smaller the saguaro, the less chance it has to survive. So every

saguaro in Phoenix strives to grow taller and stronger, reserving enough water in its trunk and arms to live in the harsh environment. Come to think of it, this is quite similar to Chengdu.

Chengdu is making vigorous efforts to break its stereotype as a geographical basin. It hopes to learn from other places in the world for its development. Establishing sister city relations with foreign cities can expose it to advanced thinking and experience. The establishment of an international advisory board was a wise decision to pull wisdom to help with Chengdu's development.

The city houses the largest number of foreign consulates in western China, facilitating various kinds of external exchanges and cooperation. To address the old problem of Sichuan's notoriously harsh conditions for geographic access, Chengdu built its second international airport. The Chengdu-Europe Plus strategy has been fully implemented to regain the past glory of the ancient Silk Road. Aren't these efforts similar to the tenacious growth of the saguaro cactus in the Phoenix desert?

The warm hospitality we received from our hosts in Phoenix reflected not only the respect brought by China's rise but the sincere friendship established by our colleagues over the years. The two-day stay in Phoenix was short, but it was an integral part of our mission to nurture and grow the Chengdu-Phoenix sister city relationship. ■

The Globalization Pace of Confucius Institutes

Li Jie

Elizabeth, who is from Ireland, is in her late 60s. She adores Chinese fiction, especially the works of Yu Hua and Mo Yan. Thanks to the classes she has been taking at the Confucius Institute for almost a decade, she can read Chinese well.

Wang Hong, the Chinese dean of the Confucius Institute at the University of Helsinki, in Finland, teaches her current course. "Elizabeth never misses any classes and is passionate about learning Chinese," Wang said of her student, noting that she is no exception. "The students in my class include young women whose style of dress reflects their fascination with China; a Finnish girl whose main pastime is Chinese calligraphy, which she executes beautifully; and seniors who have been studying for many years."

Wang is somewhat bemused at this phenomenon, but nonetheless gratified. "These students are truly obsessed with learning Chinese," she said.

Along with teaching Chinese language and calligraphy, and giving classes on traditional Chinese poetry and opera, the tens of thousands of personnel, like Wang, who work abroad

at Confucius Institutes also answer specific questions about Chinese culture and social issues. These include: "Why do some Chinese children wear open-crotch pants?", "Why are the Chinese so keen on soup?" and "What is the Chinese government doing about the smog?"

The 511 Confucius Institutes, 1,073 Confucius classrooms and their 2.1 million attendees in 140 nations have made Confucius Institutes as a whole a bridge-builder and medium for East-West cultural exchanges. They tell the world about China and enhance friendship and cooperation.

Born of "Chinese Fever"

"Ms Li, how do you distinguish big-seal, small-seal and clerical script styles of Chinese calligraphy?" a student asked Li Yiqi, a Confucius Institute volunteer at University College Dublin, during a Chinese language lesson. Li, who got her master's degree in China, was astounded: The student, a retired man in his 60s, was doing research for a book on the evolution of Chinese characters and could not wait to share his opinions with her.

Some students carry the *300 Tang Poems* with them at all times, and engage Li in discussion whenever they have the chance. Chinese language classes are booming in Ireland. Some young women in their teens even asked Li how they could buy branded merchandise of the TF Boys, a popular Chinese band. Her class also celebrates students' birthdays by singing Happy Birthday in Chinese. It would seem that China's popular culture is permeating the daily life of Irish youth.

In Ireland, Confucius Institutes have achieved coverage of all age groups, including students at kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, universities and community colleges. More than 5,000 primary and secondary school students attend Chinese lessons every year. The

Confucius Institute at Dublin's UCD also provides materials for the weekly broadcast of the *Hello, China* radio show.

Courses at the Confucius Institute of University of Helsinki, where Wang serves as dean, have expanded from basic language learning to multidimensional content, such as Chinese media language and Chinese culture. Some of Wang's students go on to become teachers of Chinese at local schools after graduating, which spreads the influence of the institute.

More than a decade ago, when products made in China appeared more often in households throughout the West, the Chinese language, as well as the culture and society behind these products, drew global attention. This led to the establishment of the first

Confucius Institute.

Building on the experience of the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Spain in promoting their national languages, China began its own exploration in 2004 through nonprofit public institutions. Called Confucius Institutes, they aim to promote the Chinese language and culture in foreign countries.

The institutes' guiding principle is laid out in the organization's Constitution and Bylaws, which state: "Confucius Institutes devote themselves to satisfying the demands of people from different countries and regions in the world who learn the Chinese language, to enhancing understanding of the Chinese language and culture by these peoples, to strengthening educational and cultural exchange and cooperation between China and other countries, to deepening friendly relationships with other nations, to promoting the development of multiculturalism, so as to construct a harmonious world."

Global Layout

"Confucius Institutes have developed at a rate beyond our expectations," said Xu Lin, the former chief executive of the Confucius Institute headquarters. The Ministry of Education initially planned to set up 100 of the institutes worldwide within a decade.

To the surprise of all concerned, 46 Confucius Institutes were built globally in the first year, and the



Students from the Confucius Institute at University College Dublin visit Xi'an to learn more about Chinese culture.

number reached 100 the following year. After 12 years, there are now 511 Confucius Institutes in 140 nations across five continents.

The development pattern of the institutes has extended far beyond basic Chinese language teaching. Originally an associate professor of English at Renmin University of China, Wang has been Chinese dean of the Confucius Institute at the University of Helsinki since 2014. This has entailed teaching the language and holding culture-themed activities with Chinese teachers and volunteers, and also inviting Chinese scholars to Finland to give lectures and exchange ideas. Finnish students are encouraged to study in China.

“Chinese language teaching is our foundation; cultural activities expand our impact; and academic activities draw the attention of more scholars and intellectuals to China,” Wang said.

After two years’ experience, Wang is clear about the purpose of her work.

Although the Constitution and Bylaws applies to all Confucius Institutes, conditions vary in different countries. So what should the Confucius Institutes do? Integrating and being welcomed into the local community is a test for each one. In the process of teaching, Wang’s unfamiliarity with the local culture has at times put her in embarrassing situations. Practice has resolved this problem. Owing to Finland’s high altitude, low temperatures and short daylight hours in winter, cultural activities at the Confucius Institute at

the University of Helsinki focus on sunshine and warmth. And because of the generally introverted nature of the Finnish people, the Confucius Institute gives rein to students’ strengths by emphasizing on the teaching of Chinese writing.

Li was responsible for teaching a children’s Chinese language class in Ireland. Their first impressions of China came almost entirely from her descriptions. But she gradually realized that simply pointing out the “importance” or “meaning” of the teaching content did not register with them. They became far more engaged through contact with and use of quintessentially Chinese items such as opera masks, shuttle cocks and paper fans.

“Interest is the key to arousing children’s spirit of exploration,” Li said. “They most enjoy finding out about Chinese culture and life through such activities.”

In 2016, to meet local demand, more than 240 Confucius Institutes in 78 countries worldwide instituted Chinese culture-related courses, such as traditional Chinese medicine and tai chi. Confucius Institutes that specialize in textiles, dance, performance, music, food and tea culture have also been set up. Adjusting to local conditions is the key for each institute to take root and develop in its host country.

Firm Steps Override Doubts

As dean of her institute, Wang’s public relations work is part of the

job. Although filled with trepidation when she first arrived, she gradually found her way. Now, Wang has won recognition and praise from local participants. “Their take on the actual situation is what really counts,” she said.

When Confucius Institutes were first established, fears were sometimes voiced based on the so-called China threat theory. Over the past three years, institutes at the University of Chicago, University of Pennsylvania and Stockholm University have shut down. The international community has become a breeding ground for rumors and controversy about Confucius Institutes in this regard.

Wang wholeheartedly rebuts such rhetoric. In fact, the procedure for establishing a Confucius Institute requires a foreign university or relevant educational institution to first apply to the Confucius Institute headquarters. Upon receiving approval, the local and Chinese parties jointly run the institute. The Chinese dean is responsible for the institute under a governing council, and both Chinese and foreign deans are jointly in charge of the institutes’ daily operations and management.

It is generally the foreign dean who raises demands, and the Chinese contingent that offers cooperation and support.

Take academic activities as an example. The two parties jointly decide on activities and invite researchers specializing in topics relating to China or East Asia to present their views and hold academic debates. Teachers

of Chinese language and culture classes — fundamental courses at Confucius Institutes — do their utmost to teach students the most effective learning methods, and to present a multidimensional image of Chinese society.

“The so-called China threat theory is a false proposition,” Li said. Nobody takes it into consideration in their actual work.

As teachers and volunteers assigned from China, Wang and Li must do their best to accomplish their teaching plan, while at the same time hosting various cultural activities. As they are apart from their families, they devote all their time to their work at the institutes, yet still feel there are not enough hours in the day.

“These rumors themselves perhaps reflect some general misapprehensions about China,” Li said. “Confucius Institutes are a bridge to the Chinese language and culture, as well as providers of learning resources.”

Li believes the institutes play an irreplaceable role because they offer face-to-face, experiential learning. Interaction between workers at the institutes and people in local communities provides a tangible, touchable China.

After reading a newspaper article that arbitrarily attacked Confucius Institutes, Wang’s Finnish colleague showed it to her and angrily challenged its content. Wang just laughed it off, remarking that all we can do is to

mind our own business, as people who understand us know what we have really done.

Next Crossroad

“Confucius Institutes have now reached a crossroad. We must seriously consider how they are going to develop and what kind of path we should take,” said Xu, the former headquarters chief, in reviewing the past decade.

According to the development plan, the global layout will be basically complete by 2020. This will entail unifying standards for quality, test certification and appointing and training teachers; realizing multilingualism and broad coverage of international Chinese language textbooks; establishing a wide-ranging global Chinese language and culture communication system with comprehensive functions; and making Chinese one of the languages learned and spoken widely throughout the world.

Teachers are integral to the future development of Confucius Institutes. At present, they are mainly professionals and volunteers assigned from China. All, including Chinese deans, sign contracts valid for one to four years. Most return to their original posts in China when they finish their overseas assignments. Then groups of newly selected teachers go out.

During her two-year posting at the Confucius Institute in Helsinki, Wang has witnessed two shifts of volunteers and many other staff rotations.

“This actually increases the



Local students are keen to join the Chinese painting course in the Confucius Institute at the University

difficulty of our work,” she said.

Every group of workers needs training in order to be familiar with the work right from the start. Li has returned to China after finishing her year of volunteer work. She was reluctant to say goodbye when the time came to leave.

“Just as I started to feel attuned to the work there, I had to leave. I knew and had achieved a rapport with all my students. But a new teacher needs to start from the very beginning while carrying on with the teaching plan. This is a challenge for both teachers and students,” she said.

Localization of teachers has been frequently mentioned over the past two years in connection with the development of the institutes. However, taking Finland as an example, no more than 10 Finnish teachers hold local Chinese teaching certification. Localization thus appears to be a long-term, complicated project.

“At the moment, at least, it’s a difficult proposition,” Wang said. Ensuring the quality of assigned teaching staff seems a particularly important task

Wang has been pondering another matter lately. She hopes to provide educational and consulting courses for local enterprises in Finland, thereby forging more links between the institute and community. This will, at the same time, make more funds available, something that is also relevant to the future sustainable development of Confucius Institutes. ■

From China Today

The New Bike Sharing

A Concept for Urban Commuters

Zhao Yang

Shanghai saw the launch last April of bike-sharing startup MoBike, with its fleet of station-free bicycles distinguished by their app-activated rear-wheel locks. The company’s aim was to provide urban dwellers with affordable, convenient, short-distance transportation.

The bikes were an immediate success. A few months later they made their debut in Beijing, and soon after in Chengdu and Guangzhou. They were such a hit in Shenzhen after a 30-day trial that the fleet there was expanded to 30,000. Many cities have designated special parking zones for the shared bikes.

MoBike extended its business coverage to 20 cities in February with the launch of its bicycles in Haikou, Hainan province. The company also has its eye on other cities on Hainan Island. MoBike CEO Wang Xiaofeng said the company’s current target is to operate a fleet of 100,000 shared bikes in each city.

Collective Memory

Several decades ago, when China was known as the “kingdom of bicycles”, residents put great store in their two-wheeled personal

transportation. Back in the 1970s, a bicycle meant much more than simply a cheap way of traveling to work. Rather it signified a family’s level of affluence. Along with a watch and a sewing machine, a bicycle was one of the “three prerequisites” for tying the knot.

When China’s economy started to revive in the late 1970s after the launch of the reform and opening-up drive, bikes generally became more affordable. City roads crawled with



Shared bikes prevail in big cities because they are convenient and environmentally friendly.

cyclists at rush hour, and the silvery tinkle of bicycle bells pervaded streets and alleys. Since the turn of the 21st century, however, cars — considered more labor-saving and efficient, as well as comfortable — have steadily superseded human-powered two-wheeled transportation. Today, as autos become ever-more accessible to Chinese families, bicycles are not as apparent in urban areas.

Ministry of Public Security traffic management bureau statistics show that, as of the end of 2016, China’s inventory of motorized vehicles numbered 290 million, among which cars exceeded 194 million — a world No 2 ranking. The number of bicycles, meanwhile, has shrunk. Their percentage as a mode of local transportation dropped from 62.7 percent in 1980, to 38 percent in 2000, to 11.9 percent in 2014.

The convenience of cars is somewhat counterbalanced by the

serious downside effect of traffic congestion and air pollution. Beijing is now the country’s undisputed traffic jam capital. This undesirable accolade throws into sharp relief the merits of the low-carbon, environmentally friendly, resource-saving bicycle. But although both urban governments and individuals are keen to restore two-wheeled transportation, commuting distances present a problem: They are often far longer than what can reasonably be traveled by bicycle. Some people have considered getting around this by traveling part way by bus or subway and part by bike. But making a smooth connection between public transportation and bicycle riding is a common stumbling block to this solution.

The recent advent of shared bikes marks a significant progression from the public bicycle rental service that Beijing first offered around 2008. As of November 2015, the city’s public

bicycles had been ridden an average of 300,000 times each on a daily basis, and more than 400,000 “smart” public bicycle rental cards had been issued, according to the Beijing Evening News. Although these figures reflect the enormous public demand for bicycles, the red tape involved, particularly the documentation required to apply for a rental card, generates frequent complaints. Such bikes must also be rented from and returned to franchised stations, which may be full.

Shared Bikes Solve Problems

MoBike cuts through this red tape with a smartphone app that covers all steps in the rental service, from finding an available bike to payment. Meanwhile, the station-free aspect considerably simplifies matters. Sharers can leave their bikes at any public bicycle parking lot, making them available for the next rider.

Wei Bo of Beijing had her first MoBike experience during a trip to Shanghai.

“I was wearing high heels to look good in photos, but it wasn’t a good idea for sightseeing,” she admitted. “As my feet were killing me, and I’d heard about renting shared bikes, I thought I’d give them a try.”

As she was unfamiliar with the city, it took her a while to find an available bike. But as soon as she had registered online and pedaled out onto Shanghai’s byways, her efforts were rewarded.

“I cycled along the banks of the Huangpu River,” she said. “Becoming familiar with a city at your own pace



A police officer well-known in Chengdu, capital of Sichuan Province, unlocks the shared bike, that took the city’s MoBike fleet to 100,000.

in a ‘light-footed’ way is a wonderful experience.”

A couple of months later, Wei was happy to see Beijing join the shared bike network. “My home is only one bus stop from my company. But getting there takes half an hour on foot and even longer by bus during rush hour,” Wei said. Cycling seemed the best option, but complex registration requirements had always put her off renting a public bike. “Using a shared bike ensures that I get to the office at 9 am on the dot,” she said.

The MoBike design concept removes any worries cyclists may have about flat tires or malfunctioning chains, and a sensor in the rear-wheel lock keeps thieves at bay.

The company upgrades its products according to user feedback, and its bike-sharing system has now reached the third generation. It reduced the weight of the bicycle and placed a basket at the front. The solar panels it has installed also save energy. MoBike seeks, through constant innovation and exploration, the perfect user experience that will restore the popularity of urban cycling.

At the end of 2016, MoBike improved its first-generation product with the launch of the MoBike Lite, which, because it is lighter, saves on manufacturing costs. The fee was reduced from 1 yuan (\$0.15) for 30 minutes to 0.5 yuan.

Go Green on Two Wheels

As most people are keen to “go green”, the bike-sharing business is flourishing. MoBike and its peers



The launch of the first fleet of 500 shared electric bikes in Tianjin on March 16, 2017.

including ofo, U-Bicycle and Xiaoming, are expanding as they compete. The rivalry is beneficial because it motivates companies to constantly improve their products and services.

The collective memory of bicycles cherished by generations of Chinese people was displaced by the blind contemporary stress on speed. But environmental protection awareness and the priority given to quality of life is reviving it. What’s more, the historical affection for bikes and cycling is a good foundation on which to refresh and upgrade this non-motorized transportation.

The government is expected to set up the facilities and infrastructure to encourage more people to commute on two wheels rather than four. For instance, bike lanes are essential for cyclist safety, and many cities have plans to improve access in this respect. Various projects with this in mind, such as the redesign of bike lanes to avoid automobile incursions, are expected in

the capital. By the end of 2020, Beijing will boast a 3,200-kilometer network of bike paths.

Meanwhile, local authorities are also offering shared bike services. Zision, a project to reuse abandoned bikes, has been jointly developed by the Haidian district government and Edaibu Technology Co. Since November, the company has recycled the unwanted bikes of Haidian residents in 29 pilot communities. Those and others abandoned on streets are repaired using new technologies. The first batch of 20,000 bicycles is now in use in the district.

The project has contributed to the city’s shared-bike service resources and has also eradicated the longstanding eyesores of abandoned bikes. The Beijing municipal government intends to encourage bike riding until rises to for 16 percent of local transportation modes by 2020 and more than 20 percent by 2030. ■

From China Today

Splashing, Dancing and Making Merry at the Dai Water-Sprinkling Festival

China Today staff reporter

The Water-Sprinkling Festival of the Dai ethnic group is the most widely celebrated rite among the ethnic minorities living in Yunnan province. This weeklong celebration, marking the Dai Lunar New Year, usually falls around mid-April. People of all ages, dressed in their festival best, take part in the solemn ritual of washing statues of Buddha. They later take great delight in generously blessing all and sundry with splashes of water — as well as getting together to talk and compare notes about the past year. Evening merrymaking activities include watching Dai dramas, performing local dances and flying kongming lanterns.

The festival comprehensively showcases Dai traditional culture and the significance it attaches to water and folklore. The event also highlights the joy the people take in music and dance, feasting and wearing traditional costumes. Other Southeast Asian countries, including Thailand, Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia also share this folk tradition. In 2006 the Water-Sprinkling Festival was among the first items from China to be added to the UNESCO national intangible cultural heritage list.

Buddha's Birthday

Also known as the Buddha's Birthday Festival, the history of the celebration goes back centuries. It originated in India as a religious rite of the Brahman, or priestly, caste, and later was absorbed into Buddhism. The festival was introduced to southwestern Yunnan province via Myanmar at the end of the 12th century. Since then, Buddhism has been the region's predominant belief system.

The first day of the festival is celebrated in a fashion similar to that of Lunar New Year. In addition to cleaning the house from top to bottom and preparing the family reunion dinner, dragon boat races, setting off Dai-style fireworks and taking in dramas, songs and dance performances are also customary. The second day is reserved for water sprinkling, which ritually cleanses people of any residual ill fortune lingering from the old year and is believed to bring good health and happiness. The third day is the Dai New Year's Day, the most important of any other festival on the Dai lunar calendar. Sprinkling people with water on this day is believed to purify their hearts in preparation for the coming

new year.

Water, perceived as nourishing everything yet striving for nothing, is the focal point of the festival activities. According to Dai culture, water, the god of life, symbolizes holiness, happiness and light. People fetch clean water from wells early in the morning, add flowers and take it to their local Buddhist temple. After performing a worshipful ritual, they clean the statue of Buddha with the water and pray for the Buddha's blessing. Everyone then splashes the blessed water on one another to wash away illness and disaster and pray for a happy life. People traditionally fill wooden basins with water and use leafy twigs to sprinkle it gently, first on elders and then others, while uttering sincere wishes for health and harmony.

Younger people use a broader range of containers for the water, which they will soon splash over one another while chasing along streets and through back lanes.

Dai people believe that spraying water through the air brings good luck, felicity and health, and also that the wetter one gets, the more benedictions one may expect. The festival is thus a

veritable ocean of joy.

Later on, the people join in the festival's song and dance activities. Dressed in their finest attire, members of the community as a whole dance for joy to the accompaniment of gongs and elephant-foot drums. The air is vibrant with singing and cheering as people make merry through the night.

Game of Love

The Water-Sprinkling Festival is also a venue for seeking out marriage partners. One of the matchmaking games the Dai people play is that of throwing small bags.

Dai girls carry love tokens with them in the form of small cotton bags they have sewn, decorated with bright fringes and filled with cottonseed.

Carrying colorful parasols, the young women form one line and the young men another, about 15 meters apart. The females throw bags to the males, and the males throw them back. If a young man fails to catch a bag from a girl, he must place a flower in her hair. If a young woman fails to catch a bag, she must insert a flower in the buttonhole of a young man's shirt. The bags fly back and forth, time and again. When a young man and young woman finally take a fancy to each other, they leave and make their way to a quiet place to begin their romance.

Colorful Folk Activities

Local people prepare special dishes and various kinds of sticky rice cakes to present to guests and close friends at this grandest of Dai

festivals. People from all the nearby Dai villages perform dances and pay New Year's Day calls on their neighbors to wish them the best. Other cultural activities include dragon boat racing, peacock dances and the white elephant dance.

The festival highlight is the dragon boat race, which usually falls on the third day. Splendidly attired villagers gather along the banks of the Lancang River and Ruili River as dragon boats, festooned in colorful silk and manned by teams of strong rowers, await the starter's gun. They then shoot forth like arrows from a bow while the riverbanks resound to the throb of drumming, the clash of gongs and rousing cheers as the festive atmosphere reaches its climax.

Setting off *gaosheng* — the Dai's homemade rockets — is another tradition. The fireworks are made by filling the bottom end of a bamboo tube with gunpowder and other materials and attaching them with lead wire to a bamboo ladder frame. When ignited, the rockets soar to the sky and explode in dazzling brilliance. The person whose *gaosheng* goes highest wins a prize and much acclaim.

Flying *kongming* lanterns is another time-honored Dai custom. People gather in the evening in an open space and light the candles inside the lanterns. Aerostatic buoyancy sends them to the sky, where they float like countless stars, paying tribute to deities, sages and men of virtue. ■

From China Today



The wetter one gets, the more benedictions one may expect.

清明

Clear and Bright

Qingming — China's fifth solar term in the traditional calendar — falls between April 4 and 6. This year it fell on April 4 by the Gregorian calendar. Its literal meaning, “clear and bright” describes a transition in the weather. After the “clear and bright” day, birds chirp cheerfully in the trees and the land is flooded with sunshine.

As it rains more often after this, rainbows become a frequent sight. The sun is filtered through the rain, each raindrop refracting light like a prism, releasing multiple colors.

China has long held to the tradition of planting trees on Qingming, as saplings find this an optimum time to establish themselves. The spring sunshine blesses the earth and there is ample rain.

In 1979, the Chinese government officially designated March 12 as Tree Planting Day. People across the country — especially schoolchildren — take part in communal events to plant trees and make their environment greener.

When tung trees bloom, it's a sign heralding the arrival of Qingming.

Spring is almost over, and it's traditional for Chinese poets to use the image of withering tung flowers to lament its passing. At this time of year willow trees are in leaf, and rapeseed flowers blossom bright yellow.

Creatures that have been hiding underground all winter cannot resist the pull of the warmth above ground at this time of year. Field mice emerge from their holes to forage for food, but the glare of the spring sunshine is too much for their sensitive eyes, forcing them to return to earth. Burrowing birds emerge at around the same time to enjoy the sun, giving rise to the ancient belief that field mice actually transform into birds.

Qingming, also known as Tomb-Sweeping Day, is one of the most important festivals in China — a tradition that stretches back more than 2,500 years. No matter how busy they are, people always take the time to tidy up the graves of deceased family members. When the grave is cleaned, people burn incense, and leave offerings of fruit, flowers and distilled spirits before the headstone as a sign of respect, honoring family members who have passed from this world to the next. ■

From China Today



Volunteers breaking cultural barriers

Hou Liqiang/Guo Xiaojun

A growing number of young Chinese are visiting Africa as unpaid workers and engaging more with people from countries across the continent.

In 2014, a friend told Yin Binbin about the bleak lives of the residents of Mathare, a slum area in Nairobi, the capital of Kenya. As he listened, an idea occurred to Yin — then a sophomore at Shandong University in East China — he would volunteer to work in a school in the ghetto.

He never expected that his idea would bind him and children of the slums together for a prolonged period. However, in the past three years, Yin and his peers, mostly college students, have raised more than 300,000 yuan (\$43,450) to rebuild two primary schools in Mathare. In addition, a “free lunch” program they launched with a Chinese NGO has helped more than 1,100 children in the poverty-stricken area, which has a population of about 500,000.

Despite China’s growing economic presence in Africa, there has been a lack of engagement between the general public and their counterparts in the continent, according to experts. Now, young Chinese such as Yin are endeavoring to change the situation.

Despite his early enthusiasm, Yin was shocked by the terrible conditions at the Light Center Primary School in Mathare. About 300 students were crowded into a “stuffy” and “somber” shed of no more than 180 square meters. There was no electric light, so Yin tried to reflect sunshine into the “classroom” by filling transparent bottles with water and placing them in a hole in the roof. The experiment failed, so the volunteers used the flashlights on their smartphones to help students see what had been written on the blackboard.

The worst time every day was when the teachers cooked, because the shed, which was made from rusty sheets of iron, would be engulfed in smoke, making the children’s eyes sting.

Transformation

Depressed by the conditions, Yin, who was majoring in architecture, decided to transform the ramshackle school. With the help of social media, he and three other Chinese students raised 70,000 yuan in a week. They used the money to redesign the building. They purchased construction materials, guided workers with limited construction experience and built a

brand-new school.

The new facility won acclaim from the local community, and when someone asked Yin why he hadn’t made school renovation a long-term project, he decided to launch the Dream Building Service Association.

The association raised a further 270,000 yuan and rebuilt a second school in 2015. Last month, it partnered with Deng Fei, who started the Free Lunches for Children in Rural China program, to provide meals for 1,103 students in five schools in the slum. They plan to expand the project to other schools in Mathare.

In addition to building schools, the association has organized talent shows, art exhibitions and soccer tournaments to enrich the children’s lives. Last year, a soccer tournament attracted 600 students from 20 schools, and more than 1,000 children displayed their works of art at an exhibition organized by the association, which is attracting a growing number of Chinese volunteers.

The association now has five full-time employees in Kenya, and about 70 volunteers arrive from China to help every year. A further 69 contribute via the internet, Yin said.

Other young Chinese have

also rolled up their sleeves to help the people of Kenya. Yuan Xiaoyi, a 21-year-old student at New York University, and three other female Chinese students founded an NGO called Care for All Kids after Yuan volunteered to work in the country in 2013. The organization provides low-cost training for teachers from “informal”, or unofficial, schools. Last year, the NGO organized training for teachers at more than 120 schools in Kenya.

Meanwhile, Zhang Chi, 22, an architecture student at Yale University, collaborated with refugees to set up a school when she volunteered to work in Kakuma, the largest refugee camp in Kenya.

“We want to inspire more people through the work we do. Many young people in China are eager to engage in international development — they just need a channel to begin,” she said.

Lack of engagement

Despite the efforts of young Chinese to connect with people in Africa, there is still not enough contact between the groups, according to experts.

Janet Eom, research manager of the China Africa Research Initiative at Johns Hopkins University in the United States, said the Chinese public has not yet caught up with the country’s growing economic engagement in Africa, even though Confucius Institutes teach Mandarin and Chinese culture, and volunteers help with health programs. For example, Chinese medical teams worked on the Ebola

crisis, and training programs for local workers are emerging via Chinese agricultural and manufacturing projects across Africa.

“I think that in contrast to Chinese companies and investors, the general public in China is less aware of opportunities in Africa,” Eom said.

Isaac Kwaku, chairman of the Sino-Africa Centre of Excellence Foundation in Kenya, said: “To our knowledge, there is not yet a significant presence of regular Chinese citizens on the ground in Africa. However, some organizations are doing an excellent job of expanding exchanges.”

He said the center has worked with AIESEC, one of the world’s leading nonprofit, student-run organizations, and with student associations at Peking University and the University of Hong Kong to bring students to Africa as interns.

“Based on the number of internship applications we receive every year, the number of Chinese students going to Africa as interns or volunteers is definitely rising,” he said. “There has been a change in the interests of Chinese youths. Originally, the projects that brought young people to Africa were wildlife conservation or volunteer programs in informal settlements. Then, an increasing number of students became interested in researching different topics in Africa, and then in internships,” he said.

According to Kwaku, there are still some obstacles to the promotion of mutual exchanges between Africa and China. One of them is “the lack of understanding of Africa as a continent,

more than poverty, disease and wildlife”.

“When young people come only for ‘poverty tourism’, they will never fully understand the dynamics and potential of the development of Africa and China-Africa ties,” Kuaku said.

Some Chinese NGOs have tried their hand at programs in Africa as well.

In June, when Zction, an NGO that mainly involves college students in China, began to organize its first African volunteer program, the move attracted great attention. “Quite a lot of people signed up for it,” said Lin Qianru, head of the organization’s Shanghai branch.

The NGO arranged interviews and chose the 32 best-qualified candidates, but only six made the trip to Uganda, where they had volunteered to teach in a school.

“Most quit because of parental opposition prompted by safety concerns,” said Lin, a student at Shanghai International Studies University, who also met opposition to her trip.

“Although my parents, uncles and aunts were concerned for my safety, they showed support. I experienced more opposition from people of my grandfather’s generation,” she said, adding that seniors have an entirely different impression of Africa than younger people do.

“The village we stayed in is safe and the villagers are honest. We will have more programs in Africa soon,” she said. ■

From China Daily

When Crime Pays

Xu Fan

Alec Su's latest film, *The Devotion of Suspect X*, knocked Hollywood behemoth *Kong: Skull Island* off the top slot in China's box-office charts on its first day.

During the recent Tomb Sweeping Festival holiday break, a profitable time for China's movie market, Alec Su worked nonstop. The actor, singer and now director traveled more than 21,700 kilometers from March 22 to April 3, touring 15 cities to promote his second directorial feature, *The Devotion of Suspect X*.

Su, once a heartthrob on the Chinese screen, says he was "anxious" about his career shift.

But his latest film, based on Japanese author Keigo Higashino's award-winning novel of the same title, knocked Hollywood behemoth *Kong: Skull Island* off the top slot in China's box-office charts on its first day on March 31, according to live tracker Cbooo.cn.

The 112-minute movie, which is seen by some industry watchers as a bid by Chinese-language movies to enter overseas markets, opened in North America, Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom simultaneously on Friday, and will be released in Singapore on April 13.

Meanwhile, negotiations are on in other markets, according to Beijing-

based studio Enlight Pictures, one of the key investors.

But for Su, the film means more than just box-office returns.

Su, who made his debut with the Taiwan band Xiao Hu Dui (Little Tigers) in the 1980s, earned nationwide popularity thanks to a series of hit TV dramas penned by Chiung Yao, then an influential romance novelist.

But the 43-year-old star knows times have changed. "I was once a favorite of the showbiz industry. But it is unavoidable that an idol will be overtaken by someone else. Fame is not everlasting," Su said at a recent Beijing event.

Since taking the producer's job in the 2013 TV series *Destiny by Love*, Su has shifted his attention to the camera.

He won recognition for the 2015 coming-of-age drama *The Left Ear*, his directorial debut. It raked in nearly 500 million yuan (\$7.26 million) at the box office, and was nominated for the best new director award at Taiwan's 52nd Golden Horse Film Festival.

But this success was not enough for Su, who was looking for more challenges.

When domestic media outlets reported in 2016 that Su would direct *The Devotion of Suspect X*, the news sparked interest online.

As filmmakers in Japan (2008)

and South Korea (2012) had already adapted the Higashino novel — seen as one of his best works — into acclaimed movies, fans were wondering if Su was the right choice to make a Chinese film version of the book.

"I didn't think much about this at the beginning. ...But when more comments emerged online, I was scared," he says.

In the movie — unlike most crime thrillers where the audience does not know who the criminal is until the end — the killer is known, and the story is about a cat-and-mouse game between the police and the highly intelligent quarry.

The Chinese translation of the novel was a best-seller on Amazon's China subsidiary in 2016.

"As fans know what will happen, it makes the adaptation more difficult. You need to be faithful to the original story as well as go for innovation," Su says.

Su attempted to maximize localization, revise the emotional aspects, restructure the timeline and focus on details.

The movie, while still centered on a desperate single mother's accidental killing of her abusive ex-husband, makes the plot an intellectual duel between two male protagonists — the woman's next-door neighbor, a

mathematics genius who helps her devise a cover-up, and a physics scholar, who assists the police.

Most of the scenes are shot in Harbin, in Northeast China's Heilongjiang province, to ensure that the details — from the advertisements on shabby buildings and the snack vendors underneath a bridge to women's street dances — give the film an authentic local feel.

The cast says that Su is pretty demanding. To create a depressing atmosphere, he told the crew to be as quiet as possible at work and suggested that the cast read Buddhist volumes to calm their minds, recalls actor Zhang Luyi, who plays the mathematics genius.

Wang Kai, the actor who plays the physics professor, says: "I initially felt weird that people on the set always spoke in low voices and chatted little. But after I got used to the atmosphere, I got immersed in my character."

Su also hired university professors to write mathematical formulas for the scenes.

"If there is a math buff in the theater, I do not want him to say that the set looks foolish," he says.

Su, who says that Ang Lee — the first Chinese director to win the landmark best foreign language film award at the Oscars in 2000 — is his idol, admits that he wants to emulate him.

"It doesn't mean that I expect to get to his level. But I am trying my best to balance art and commerce." ■

From China Daily

Chinese Urban Dictionary: *Yanzhi*

Mia Li

When you're good at math, things are much easier measured when expressed in numbers. Why waste minutes describing the taste of a really good bottle of wine, for instance? In China, we simply say: "It was a \$20,000 bottle of wine" and the job is done, so everyone can get on with generating GDP.

The same can apply to beauty. Shakespeare might compare a pretty face to a summer's day or Romeo to a sweet rose, but some in China prefer a quantitative approach. Literally meaning "face number", *yanzhi* is a mark on the scale of how pleasing a face looks. When someone is good looking, it's said that his or her *yanzhi* is high. If someone has the kind of face that stops traffic, it's said that his or her *yanzhi* is "off the chart".

Another advantage of a quantitative approach is that it has mathematical continuity and can be added, multiplied or squared. Boy bands can be evaluated as the sum total of their individual members' *yanzhi*. A university or a company can be described using the average *yanzhi* of all the students or employees there. Your

yanzhi can be squared if you lose a lot of weight. The most attractive person within a group is called the "*yanzhi* pillar" because the average *yanzhi* of the group would collapse like a tent in a storm if this person left.

When appearances can be expressed as numbers, they join all the other statistics that can be referred to in modern China: income, IQ, age, net worth, BMI, tier of home city, number of houses owned, *gaokao* and TOEFL scores and countless others. When populations become rows of data on a spreadsheet, it becomes easier to look for good employees or potential spouses.

But as with any index, *yanzhi* can rise or drop like stock prices. It drops as you age, but can be boosted by makeup or plastic surgery. There is also, often, a direct correlation between your score and the balance of your bank account. And remember: things like taste in music, compassion, empathy and sense of humor cannot be qualified and therefore have no place in the spreadsheet. ■

From That's Beijing

Malta-China relations, 45 years later

Reno Calleja

President of the Malta China Friendship Society

The article I wrote in the Times on Dec 20, in which I recalled the time when I was chairman of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, aroused great interest.

Friends and “foes” alike—admirers and those who may view me less favorably—urged me to write more about my past. One diplomat told me, “I look forward to your memoirs.” These may never see the light but the encouragement I received did spur me to start writing again.

It is for this reason that I write now on another historical event—the 45th anniversary of the establishment of relations between China and Malta.

During all these years China never stopped helping Malta. This friendship has always been translated into concrete results for the benefit of Malta.

How did my love affair with China get started? I am often asked.

In 1969, as a parliamentary reporter for the G.W.U. newspapers, I was sitting in the press box when Dom Mintoff, leader of the Opposition, called me to his office in Parliament. In a somewhat stern voice that reminded me of my father, he asked me:

“What is this I hear that you are dating Russians?”

Those were the times when the young breed of the Labor Party were gripped by a missionary zeal. We were determined that Malta should get its true freedom, since we considered that the 1964 Independence, though a very important constitutional step, still left our hearts, lungs and throats in the hands of the British.

Western Europe looked with suspicion on Dom Mintoff and the Labor Party. Many of us believed there was a right-wing conspiracy of local conservatives backed by American, Western European and Israeli elements to keep Mintoff and the Labor Party out of power.

It was therefore natural for me and other young and inexperienced members of the Labor League of Youth, to look with sympathy toward the Soviet Union. After all, it was an influential force in the Non-Aligned Movement, which supported the Labor Party in Malta.

In this scenario I answered back “*Ma min tridni ninnamra mal-Amerikani?*”—“Whom do you expect me to date, the Americans?”

Mintoff, as usual did not mince words. “Don’t be stupid. Look toward China,” he told me.

These words astonished me, but I did not lose any sleep over them. However, times were changing. Amid the Sino-Soviet split and the Vietnam



War, American President Nixon entered into negotiations with Chairman Mao, initially through a secret 1971 trip by Henry Kissinger to visit Zhou Enlai.

On Oct 25, 1971, Albania's motion to recognize the People's Republic of China as the sole legal China was adopted as a UN General Assembly resolution.

This event reminded me of what Mintoff had told me two years before. A few weeks after he was elected to power, in June 1971, the well-known progressive journalist and author Richard Gibson came to Malta to write an article for a progressive left-wing magazine called Tuesday. When he asked Joseph Zerafa, the secretary of the Labor Party at that time, to put him in touch with a young member of the party who was active in the international arena, he referred him to me. The meeting I had with Richard was crucial.

"I just came back to Malta from Tanzania and Zambia," he told me. "Thousands of Chinese workers are building the Tanzam Railway to enable these two countries to bypass White South Africa, which is strangling them by blocking their exports of coffee and other products."

I said to myself: That is why Mintoff told me two years ago to look toward China.

I set up the Malta China Friendship Society, finding a supporter in Charles Mizzi, who was the news editor of the Unions newspapers. He was elected as the first president of the society.

When 45 years ago—on Jan 31, 1972—the Maltese ambassador to

Rome, Carmel Mallia, presented his credentials to the Chinese ambassador in Rome, Mintoff ruffled a lot of feathers in the West. Malta had to break its relations with Taiwan,

On March 31 that year, one month after Nixon's visit to China, Mintoff landed in the country. The Chinese gave Mintoff a bigger welcome than they gave the US president. They wanted to convey a message that they supported little Malta in its quest to become an instrument of peace.

That is why I never lost my affection for China, because it fulfilled my dream as a young aspiring politician who believed that Malta must be neutral and nonaligned. Indeed a top politician in China once asked me: "Why do you love China so much?"

"Because I love Malta more," I answered

The Chinese may date you many times, but they do not marry you easily. Malta was an exception.

True, and I may be wrong, that under Labor the Chinese had a marriage of love while under the Nationalist governments they had a marriage of convenience. However the love between our two countries is still warm and producing results.

Witness the win-win agreement entered into by China and Malta that saved Enemalta from bankruptcy and enabled Shanghai Electric to penetrate the European market.

In 1982, when I was no longer part of the Cabinet, Mintoff offered me the post of chairman of the monitoring board of the Free Port Project. There were hundreds of Chinese workers

from Shanghai Construction Co working alongside thousands of Maltese workers. I knew very little about construction but when Mintoff gave you a task it meant he had faith in you. I could not let him down. It was a gigantic task. I often worked 18 hours a day. Day and night I was there.

I am indebted to Victor Galea, a brilliant civil servant from Mosta who was the chairman of the Kalaxlokk Co, one of three Maltese companies that worked on this massive project. Mintoff trusted him completely and whenever I got stuck with a problem, he was always there to guide and advise me.

I am still proud that under my chairmanship, in early 1987, the late President Emeritus Agatha Barbara opened the first phase of this project before the Nationalist Party gained power. The Chinese workers who worked on the project inspired me with their loyalty, honesty, integrity and hard work.

However the event I consider to be the highlight of my political career was in May 1979, when Mintoff sent me to Shanghai to present the Medal of the Republic to the wife of Xu Huizhong, a 42-year-old lathe engineer from Shanghai Port Machinery Factory. In 1974, Xu was accidentally killed when he was hit by a large crane nut while working on the construction of the 300,000-ton Red China dock.

On April 23, 1979, the president of the Republic of Malta, Anton Buttigieg, awarded this medal to the Chinese ambassador to Malta. A month later, Prime Minister Mintoff sent me to Shanghai to present the medal to Xu's

wife. It was the first time the medal had been awarded posthumously. Such was the respect Mintoff had for the Chinese.

I will never forget the sadness I saw on the woman's face when I pinned the medal on her chest in an impressive ceremony attended by 3,000 people. The young Clifford Borg Marks, Malta's chargé d'affaires in China, spoke perfect Chinese. He translated the speech I made in Maltese.

Clifford was and remains a dear friend, and I was delighted when he was appointed Malta's ambassador to China by the present Labor administration.

I still visit the tomb of Mr Xu every year at the Adolorata Cemetery. Twenty-seven years later, in May 2006, I visited his family again. His wife had died, but his son Xu Tongquin, 50 years old, hugged me warmly and cried when he remembered the presentation ceremony of 1979. I blushed when he told me: "Your hair is now white but you are still handsome."

Shanghai Daily reported my visit to the Xu family under the headline: "A tragedy brings two countries together". The Oriental Morning Post printed a front page article. Twenty years ago, at my suggestion, the Paola Local Council convinced the street-naming committee to name one of the streets of Paola, Triq Xu — Xu Street.

On Feb 31, the Malta China Friendship Society organized a discussion on the 45 years of friendship between Malta and China at the Malta University Building on St Paul's Street, Valleta. ■

Cooperation Brings Benefits, while Confrontations Wound Chinese Ambassador to the US Cui Tiankai on China-US Relations

Editor's note: The following article appeared in China Today ahead of President Xi Jinping's visit to the United States in April. The original language has been retained.

Zhou Lin

China and the United States — the largest developing country and the biggest developed country, respectively — are both permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. Hence they wield considerable global influence. The appropriate handling of bilateral relations between the world's top two economies, therefore, could bring benefits to both of them and to the world as a whole.

Cui Tiankai is a member of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) and is the Chinese ambassador to the United States. He was interviewed by China Today on March 4 in Beijing on the sidelines of China's annual legislative meetings, known as the two sessions. Cui reiterated the fundamental consensus reached by the leaders of the two nations that China-US cooperation would be beneficial to both countries and to the world, while confrontation would be disastrous.

Sound and Stable Relations — a Mutual Responsibility

President Xi Jinping and US President Donald Trump have so far had two telephone conversations. In the latest one, Xi commended Trump for agreeing to expand China-US cooperation, thus fostering constructive bilateral relations that are beneficial to them and to the international community as a whole. Trump, meanwhile, confirmed that the US government adheres to the one-China policy. The two heads of state promised to maintain close ties, and both anticipate an official meeting before long.

"The two leaders reached a consensus on establishing powerful bilateral relations that benefits the peoples of both nations and contributes to world peace and stability. It is a positive signal from the governments of China and the US to the whole

world,” Ambassador Cui said. “I am very glad to see the two leaders achieve such a consensus at this early stage of President Trump’s term in office.”

Agreement for nonconflict, nonconfrontation, mutual respect and win-win cooperation — the principles of a new model of a major-country relationship between China and the United States — constitute the fruits of three long conversations between President Xi and the then-US President Barack Obama. The first was in 2013 at Sunnylands in Rancho Mirage, California, the second in 2014 at Zhongnanhai in Beijing and the third was in 2015 at the White House in Washington.

The ambassador reflected on the historical events since former US President Nixon’s first visit to China more than 40 years ago. The two countries have since gone to great lengths to discuss and define bilateral relations. The international environment and national conditions of China and the US have undergone profound changes — most notably marked by the end of the Cold War, the global financial crisis and the onset of terrorism, climate change and communicable disease epidemics. Yet relations have absorbed and overcome all difficulties and continued to advance.

Cui believes that this is attributable to the great importance that several generations of leaders of both countries have attached to bilateral ties, and to their consistent consensus on maintaining sound and stable

relations. China’s pioneering leaders — Chairman Mao Zedong and Premier Zhou Enlai — through to the current president, Xi Jinping, and successive US presidents since the establishment of diplomatic relations, both Democrat and Republican, have indeed upheld sound and stable China-US relations.

“This primarily accords with our respective interests, because sound and stable relations are of benefit to us both; and it is the global responsibility of these two major countries,” Cui said. “It would be disastrous for the two countries and for the world as a whole if bilateral relations were to fail or be challenged by conflict or confrontation. This is something all concerned seek to avoid.”

Differences Under Control

Cui recalled how over the past 40 years bilateral relations have encountered multiple difficulties and

challenges. How may the new model of major country relations between China and the United States be best defined? The principles of nonconflict, nonconfrontation, mutual respect and win-win cooperation have evolved into a consensus. Years of practice testify to its importance to them both.

“If we could insist on these principles, China-US relations could not fail to maintain a sound and stable direction,” Cui said.

When talking about how to heal the rift over the South China Sea, Cui observed that there are misperceptions in the US and elsewhere about China’s policy and intentions in this area. What should be clarified is that the issues in the South China Sea revolve around territorial and maritime jurisdiction between China and nearby countries. Although these disputes are relatively recent and the reasons for today’s situations somewhat complicated,



Chinese Ambassador to the US Cui Tiankai

we now acknowledge the existence of disputes about the territorial and maritime jurisdiction of this region, he said.

However, China and ASEAN countries have agreed on the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea, which clearly states that disputes must be resolved directly between the relevant claimant states, and through peaceful and friendly negotiations, rather than conflict or confrontation. This has been the desired direction and purpose of great efforts on China's part for decades, he said, adding: "In that sense, since the US has no territorial claim in this region, the South China Sea was not originally an issue between China and the United States."

Cui concluded, therefore, that the South China Sea should not be a problem between the two countries.

As to the malicious speculations of a handful of people, Cui's advice to them is not to allow a territorial dispute in a specific region to snowball into a completely different ambit of global strategic competition between China and the US.

"As long as there are no misinterpretations or miscalculations, our differences remain under control," he said.

"The concept of freedom of navigation is frequently used to justify US actions in the South China Sea. China is greatly concerned about freedom and safety of navigation, because its outbound economy is its lifeblood. China is now a major trading nation, and most of its cargoes sail on the South China Sea. A peaceful

and stable environment and freedom of navigation, therefore, accord with China's interests, and remain our stance on the matter."

"Make America Great Again" Compatible with the "Chinese Dream"

This year brings new opportunities for China-US relations but also some uncertainties. The new United States administration has only recently taken office, and the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China will convene this fall. Both countries thus bear the great burden of national development, and also face certain challenges.

"The people's wish for a good life shows us the direction of our endeavors". It was this statement at the news conference after the first plenary session of the 18th CPC National Congress in 2012 by General Secretary of the CPC Central Committee Xi Jinping that most impressed Ambassador Cui.

At the congress, the CPC issued a call for achieving the Two Centennial Goals: building a moderately well-off society, and accelerating socialist modernization.

"China has arrived at the decisive stage of realizing its first Centennial Goal," Cui said. "Our current efforts will determine whether that goal can be achieved on time, and to a large extent the process of the second Centennial Goal. There is no doubt that China faces a major opportunity but also various challenges."

Cui believes that the primary and fundamental challenges to all nations of the world — namely, ensuring the quality of the country's governance, the healthy development of its economy, the stability of its society and the happiness of its people — are rooted in their civil society. "The Chinese government and its ruling party have always regarded the people's well-being as a core value and main interest," Cui said.

He observed that the American people have also made demands for a better life and are desperately appealing to their government for a response. The primary task of the Chinese and American governments, as well as those of other nations of the world, therefore, is without doubt to fulfill the demands of the people and make their lives better.

If the two countries could cooperate, it would surely contribute to the realization of their respective domestic goals, he said. If not, chaos could ensue in the world, which would exert a negative impact on both nations' development goals.

Against the backdrop of globalization, every nation is connected. No one can singly seek development while others wallow in depression and chaos. Achieving rejuvenation is the dream of the Chinese people, while making America great again is the dream of the American people. They should join hands in seeking win-win cooperation and so help each other realize their dreams. ■

From China Today

Chinese Ambassador to Japan: Bilateral Relationships Improve and Progress

Chen Jing

Japan, an important neighbor of China, remains a key focus for China's diplomatic strategy. The bilateral relationship became strained because of historical issues and the territorial dispute over the Diaoyu Islands. But, recently, diplomatic relations have been improving, with a series of encouraging people-to-people exchanges.

During the annual two sessions held in Beijing in early March, Chinese Ambassador to Japan Cheng Yonghua, who attended the meetings as a CPPCC member, gave an exclusive interview to China Today. He shared his views on Sino-Japanese relations, China's method of handling disputes and people-to-people exchanges, and he expressed his hopes for healthy and steady development of the relationship.

Willingness to Improve Relations

This year marks the 45th anniversary of normalized relations between China and Japan. It's a key time for the improvement of diplomacy, Ambassador Cheng said, as the two countries could carry out a series of commemorative activities as a way of promoting ties.

"President Xi Jinping and Prime

Minister Shinzo Abe agreed to improve bilateral relations during their meeting at the Hangzhou G20 Summit in September," Cheng said. At that time, Xi stressed that the Sino-Japanese relationship will roll back unless it is augmented, so efforts should be made to constantly advance the relationship. The 45th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations presents an ideal opportunity.

The ambassador said Xi had noted that "China and Japan are neighbors who cannot move", so both sides should boost positive elements while reducing negative ones. Prime Minister Abe agreed with Xi's remarks during their meeting. "Improving the bilateral relationship is the common desire of both governments," Ambassador Cheng commented. "So both countries — government and society — should move in this direction." On the occasion of the 45th anniversary of the normalization of Sino-Japanese relations, the ambassador stressed that both countries should reflect on the significance of the decision made 45 years ago. It had not been an easy one, he added, but the two sides eventually reached a consensus on principles and rules to govern future relations.

Since 1972, when the Sino-

Japanese Joint Statement was issued, the two countries have signed four political documents. Regarding recent divisive issues, both sides reached a further four-point consensus in 2014. All the documents underline the basic rules for developing bilateral relations, which in themselves became a positive element.

"Should any problems appear, we have the rules to follow and we can discuss them," Cheng said. "But we should prevent any Japanese politicians, in the course of pursuing their own personal interests, from making trouble or scaling up the confrontation — all this undermines the rules."

After reviewing Sino-Japanese relations in recent years, Cheng concluded: "Bilateral relations stalled or have been very complex over the last few years, with problems emerging from time to time."

He is concerned, in particular, about the cooling down of people-to-people exchanges and impaired impressions between the two peoples about each other.

"We should spare no effort in promoting face-to-face communication between our peoples, as well as between all areas of society," Cheng said. "Mutual understanding will lay

foundations for improved diplomacy.”

Say No to Troublemakers

The territorial issue remains the most sensitive and concerning aspect of current Sino-Japanese relations. Cheng explained that issues involving the East China Sea, including the dispute over the Diaoyu Islands, were discussed when drafting the 1972 Sino-Japanese Joint Statement. Both sides reached a tacit understanding, suggesting a method of dealing with the problem. The issue was further discussed during the negotiations that led to the signing of the China-Japan Peace and Friendship Treaty in 1978.

However, the ambassador stressed, some Japanese politicians intentionally hyped the territory issues, or created problems around them.

“We hold a resolute stance over the issue of territory if someone causes problems,” Cheng said. “We will safeguard our sovereignty. The Diaoyu Islands have been part of China’s territory since ancient times, and our claim is well-founded.”

Cheng briefly explained how the problem started: Japan stole the Diaoyu Islands after it defeated China in the Sino-Japan War (1894-95). China, however, has never recognized Japan’s “management and control” of the islands. To resolve the dispute, both countries reached a four-point agreement in 2014, with the third point explicitly addressing and formulating new rules on the issue of sovereignty over the islands and the East China Sea.

Cheng quoted China’s former leader Deng Xiaoping: “Put disputes aside if they cannot be solved now.” The ambassador went on to say that China needs to strengthen its management and control over these issues, and thwart intentional hype and the “China threat” rhetoric.

Enhance Face-to-Face Exchanges

The Chinese government has made great efforts to enhance civil exchanges, despite disputes over historical and territorial issues. Cheng pointed out that Chinese people made 6.37 million visits to Japan in 2016, and the travel flow has surged for several years in a row. The figure in January 2017 was an increase of 30 percent, year-on-year.

To enhance civil exchanges, Cheng and other high-level diplomats often give public lectures, speaking to hundreds of college students and answering their questions.

“Face-to-face exchanges can help

Japanese people understand China,” the ambassador said. The embassy also facilitates exchanges with local government officials. Twinned cities have moved from being merely a symbolic bond toward bringing mutual benefits in the form of cooperation in key areas.

Cheng also expressed his wish to step up youth exchanges. In recent years the Chinese embassy in Japan has encouraged young Japanese, especially college students, to visit China, just as the Japanese government annually invites young Chinese to visit that country. These personal visits will introduce Japanese youngsters to our natural scenery, historical sites and social development in China.

“I think people-to-people, face-to-face exchanges are of great benefit to bilateral relations,” Cheng said.

Control Disputes for Steady Development

Since the normalization of bilateral relations in 1972, 11 Chinese



Chinese Ambassador to Japan Cheng Yonghua

ambassadors have served in the embassy. Ambassador Cheng Yonghua is the longest-serving ambassador. He said that Sino-Japanese relations faced their most difficult challenge several years ago, but the four-point agreement reached in 2014 has propelled the relationship toward improvement. However, the ambassador said candidly, many complicated and sensitive issues remain.

“I am looking forward to both sides properly handling disputes and conflicts to promote the steady development of the bilateral relationship,” he said.

This year marks the 45th anniversary of the normalization of relations between China and Japan. It is an opportunity to promote exchanges in all areas and improve the relationship. In the economic sector, Cheng pointed out, China and Japan can instill mutually beneficial cooperation as China’s industry works toward Japanese levels of achievement. Japan’s experience will be helpful in solving certain problems China is facing, while China’s economic development will bring opportunities to Japan.

In addition, the two countries share common cultural ground. For example, Cheng said, Japanese people still use Chinese characters, and show a deep sense of identification with Chinese traditional culture. Scaling up cultural and people-to-people exchanges will expand common ground for mutual understanding, which, Ambassador Cheng noted, is the basis for improving bilateral relations. ■

From China Today

Mexico and China: 45 Years of Diplomatic Relations

Julián Ventura

The first Mexican ambassador to the People’s Republic of China, Eugenio Anguiano, was officially received by Chinese Vice-President Dong Biwu in October 1972. Since then, both countries have experienced profound transformations in their domestic situations and have assumed greater international roles. They have also established a closer bilateral dialogue and deepened their cooperation.

In 2007, I had the privilege of heading the 35th anniversary celebrations of diplomatic relations along with Yang Jiechi, the deputy

minister of Foreign Affairs, and Li Xiaolin, head of the Chinese People’s Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries. In the decade that followed I have witnessed very significant joint achievements: the institutionalization of the bilateral agenda, with a strategic and long-term vision; increased trade and investment; and stronger cultural, educational and cooperative exchanges.

This recent progress flows from the decision made by President Enrique Peña Nieto and President Xi Jinping to enhance bilateral ties through a pragmatic and results-oriented approach. They have met six



The first Mexican ambassador to the People’s Republic of China, Eugenio Anguiano, presents his credentials to Chinese Vice-President Dong Biwu in 1972.

times in the last four years, ensuring that both governments maintain a clear focus on the established priorities.

Our economic agenda has experienced an unprecedented level of growth. Total trade now amounts to approximately \$75 billion per year. China has become Mexico's second-largest trading partner and the third-largest destination for its exports, as more Mexican goods have made inroads into local markets, from food to manufactured goods such as vehicles and auto parts. Mexico is now China's top trading partner in Latin America. We have also seen our economies become more complementary, and thus our links contribute to our international competitiveness. These have laid a solid basis for the continued development of mutually beneficial bilateral exchanges.

A growing number of Mexican and Chinese companies are also seizing the investment opportunities that this bilateral cooperation has brought. To enhance the positive trend and help bilateral investment flows reach their full potential, the High Level Group was established. In 2016, the Binational Investment Fund, with capital from Mexico and China worth \$1.2 billion, announced its first investments in Mexico's energy and telecommunications sectors, where structural reforms were recently adopted. It is managed by the World Bank's International Finance Corp and has high standards of transparency. Better financial platforms and strategic alliances between Mexican and Chinese companies will further deepen our investment agenda in the coming years.



Mexican Ambassador to China Julián Ventura (third from right) visits the exhibition *Diego Rivera: Pride of Mexico*, which opened in Beijing in October 2014.

The tourism sector has likewise delivered positive results. China is the second tourist destination for Mexico in the Asia-Pacific region, while Mexico is the first Latin American destination for Chinese visitors. New air routes have been established, but it is necessary to further develop connectivity and to continue promoting the many attractions that both countries have to offer.

Mexico and China are both cultural powerhouses with millenary traditions. Cultural activities are an important bridge to bring our people closer together. In 2013 and 2014 the most prominent museums in Beijing, Guangzhou and Shanghai hosted high-profile Mexican exhibitions such as *Diego Rivera: Mexico's Pride*, *Mayas: The Language of Beauty*, and *Mexico in Silver: History and Future*. The Mayas exhibition, inaugurated in November 2014 by Presidents Xi Jinping and

Enrique Peña Nieto, received more than 150,000 visitors in three months. In 2016, Mexico participated in the Meet in Beijing Arts Festival, the Art Beijing Fair and the Visual Arts Festival. Exchanges will continue this year in the context of the 45th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations.

Sustaining high-quality educational systems is a priority for both nations. Language teaching has long been a valuable component of the relationship, and its importance will only grow in an interconnected world. In 1974 the first Chinese language students went to Mexico — the country with the largest Spanish speaking population — to learn at El Colegio de México. Today, Mexico has more Confucius Institutes than any other country in Latin America. Every year 80 students from both countries receive scholarships to pursue undergraduate and postgraduate programs, as well

as specialized courses. Two top Mexican universities, the National Autonomous University of Mexico and the Technological Institute of Superior Studies of Monterrey have a well-established presence in China. In March, the second Forum of Chinese-Mexican Heads of Universities was held in Beijing, allowing the intensification of contacts between institutions of higher learning.

In the field of science and technology the countries have sought to update their cooperation in line with their respective economic and social changes. In 2015, for the first time, China and Mexico issued a call for joint research projects in areas such as clean energy, biotechnology, agriculture, aerospace engineering, water resources, environment and health. This is an unprecedented step that illustrates the depth of the relationship.

Mexico and China also work together within international forums, such as the United Nations, G20 and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation. Our strong political dialogue allows us to actively participate in creating solutions to address global challenges, such as climate change, and to promote common objectives, such as international cooperation for development.

To consolidate achievements and constantly deepen cooperation requires hard work and a clear vision. Mexico and China have laid out a common road map, which will continue to yield fruit for the benefit of our peoples. ■

From China Today

Mutual benefits important to Sino-US ties

Editor's note: The following article appeared in China Daily ahead of President Xi Jinping's visit to the United States in April. The original language has been retained.

Martin Sieff

The first set of meetings between Chinese President Xi Jinping and US President Donald Trump looks likely to prove a great disappointment to the crisis mongers in the media, since both leaders recognize the value of economic cooperation over rivalry, the importance of a balanced and thriving global trade system and the interdependence and shared interests of their nations.

The first face-to-face meeting between the heads of the world's two most powerful nations will be of great significance for the healthy and stable development of ties as well as the peace, stability and prosperity of the Asia-Pacific region and the world. Xi and Trump both know this. They have more in common that meets the eye.

Trump wants to emulate Xi's success in spreading economic growth, opportunity and prosperity throughout the country, not just the eastern coastal areas. The revival of US industry in its heartland is the emphasized priority of Trump and his strategists as well.

Careful listeners to Trump's speeches through the long 2016 US presidential campaign will have heard him repeatedly express his sincere admiration for the achievements of China's leaders in the modern era and

recognize the success of their economic and social policies. Trump's argument throughout his campaign was that US economic policy could learn from China.

Trump's own professional background is crucial to understanding this shrewd pragmatist. Trump defines himself above all as a hard negotiator and dealmaker. He understands the necessity of compromise. His aim as a businessman has always been to achieve the goals he has set for his companies and improve their prospects. That is now the aim for the trade and security goals of the United States.

The 45th US president does not see international relations as a Darwinian struggle to survive where one nation can only prosper and gain at another's expense. His approach is to offer concessions to negotiating partners as the understandable price in order to get the key concessions he seeks for his own country. This conception of international pragmatism, if maintained, will be a welcome relief from the moralism, double standards and ideological fantasies pursued by previous US administrations in the recent past.

Above all, Trump came to the White House with the strongest economic and business background of any US president in the modern era. He

therefore well understands the complex web of interdependence, investment and trade that have benefited the US and China so profoundly over the past four decades.

Trump's message during President Xi's visit was expected to be clear: While seeking cooperation on dealing with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea nuclear issue and a reduction of tensions in such regions as the South China Sea, his focus was to be primarily on mutual respect, cooperation (especially on economic affairs and trade) and win-win results instead of conflict and confrontation.

This does not mean that Trump and Xi will avoid difficulties and challenges going forward. They certainly will, precisely because such inevitable issues need to be recognized and managed. But that is precisely because the mutual benefits enjoyed by China and the US are so important to both nations.

The world has benefitted immeasurably over the past two generations from the flourishing Sino-US interaction. Trump recognizes this. Above all, his strong sense of financial probity will be welcomed by Beijing policymakers and money managers in Shanghai. For decades Chinese leaders have expressed concern about the feckless domestic economic policies of previous US presidents. China continues to recognize that a stable, solvent United States is in its own best interests too. ■

The author is a senior fellow at the Global Policy Institute in Washington.

From China Daily USA

Expats in Jiangsu Focus on Their Second Hometown

Zhou Weidong, Jiang Lu (JSPAFFC)

As Jiangsu is making progress in economic and social development and opening up wider to the outside world, more than 100,000 foreigners work and study here. They not only have become accustomed to our lifestyle but also take Jiangsu as their second hometown.

In order to help them get a better

understanding of Jiangsu and further arouse their love of China, the Jiangsu Provincial People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (JSPAFFC), Jiangsu Provincial Information Office, Jiangsu Federation of Literary and Arts Circles and the Xinhua Daily Press sponsored a photo contest for foreign friends in Jiangsu in



Retired leading officials cut the ribbon at the opening ceremony.

2016—“Focus on Wonderful Jiangsu”. The contest was launched in August and collected around 3,000 photos by nearly 300 foreign friends from 42 countries and regions, of which 145 were awarded prizes, including one Outstanding award, three First Prizes, eight Second Prizes, 15 Third Prizes, 38 Excellent Works awards and 80 Finalist awards. The winning photos were published in an album, *Focus on Wonderful Jiangsu: A Collection of Photos from the 2016 International Photo Contest for Foreign Friends in Jiangsu*. The awards ceremony and opening ceremony of the photo exhibition were held at the Jiangsu Modern Art Museum on Feb 13. More than 300 visitors went to the exhibition.

Council members contribute to success of photo contest

Since the founding of the Sixth Council of JSPAFFC in June 2016, it has fully brought into play its functions and strengths in promoting nongovernmental foreign exchanges. The JSPAFFC, joined by three other Council members—the Information Office of Jiangsu Provincial People’s Government, Jiangsu Provincial Federation of Literary and Art Circles and Xinhua Daily Media Group—sponsored the contest, with each performing its own function and collaborating with one another.

With great influence on foreigners, the JSPAFFC used its own channels to organize expats in Jiangsu to participate

in the contest. The Information Office and Xinhua Daily Media Group invited more than 20 media outlets, including State-run and foreign media stationed in Jiangsu, as well as local media, to provide live coverage of the event. Nearly 50 domestic and foreign media, including People’s Daily, Oushinet.com, USCHINAPRESS.com, Xinhuanet.com, People’s Daily Online and cnr.cn reported on it.

The Jiangsu Provincial Federation of Literary and Art Circles organized experts to select 145 photos for different prizes and gave professional suggestions on making the album and exhibition arrangements. Apart from that, the Jiangsu Provincial Department of Education, Jiangsu Provincial Department of Culture, guest council members, the municipal people’s associations for friendship with foreign countries within Jiangsu, relevant institutions of higher learning and other council members were invited by the JSPAFFC to take part in the awards ceremony and the opening ceremony of the photo exhibition.

Provincial and municipal associations make joint contribution

While playing the leading role in the photo contest, the JSPAFFC urged municipal associations across the province to encourage foreign friends in their cities to participate. It made great efforts in organizing various activities, such as arranging tours for foreign friends in Jiangsu to

get inspiration and holding local photo contests and exhibitions.

It successfully mobilized foreigners who work or study in different cities and counties in Jiangsu to participate in the contest. The JSPAFFC has formed a network of people-to-people diplomacy that connects municipal associations and other organizations in Jiangsu province. With a prominent theme, a novel form and rich content, this activity has set an example for the future work of municipal associations in organizing activities for foreign friends in Jiangsu.

Foreign friends capture Jiangsu’s scenery with affection

The foreign students, teachers, experts and business and trade personnel recorded with their lenses what they saw, heard and felt from various perspectives. Nearly 300 foreign friends from 42 countries and regions participated in the contest and submitted about 3,000 photos.

The Outstanding award winner, Amr Mohamed Bakry Ibrahim of Egypt, made a photo called *Ancient Town Dangkou in Winter*, which shows the beauty of ancient water towns in Jiangsu.

According to First Prize winner Dosmakhanbet Zhansaya of Kazakhstan, his photo shows that he has integrated himself into this city and wants to embrace it.

Many of the photos presented

in the contest were artistically and technically laudable for their excellent composition, color use and details, as well as their aesthetic effect. Yet more soul-stirring are the strong feelings—the love, the smiling faces and the real stories—one finds in these photos. The photographers' love of Jiangsu and the local people is fully demonstrated in the way they used their lenses to tell stories of work, study, life and self-fulfillment. The profound beauty of these pictures all spring from the true sentiments of the photographers, who observed and shot with sincerity of heart. Sincerity is the highlight and soul of this contest.

This contest offered foreigners in Jiangsu a good opportunity to look into the local communities and their lives, a significant step to better understand and familiarize themselves with the province. The beauty of Jiangsu's landscape, culture, life and development is vividly shown to a world audience through these foreign eyes, opening a bigger window for outsiders to learn about Jiangsu. Providing good service to foreigners in Jiangsu will remain the focus of the JSPAFFC's work. The organization will renew its efforts to build more participation platforms for foreign friends in Jiangsu and make their lives more enjoyable and colorful. This will help our foreign friends contribute to Jiangsu's goal of becoming a place with a strong economy, affluent people, beautiful environment and high social civility. ■

The Cloud Silver Line

Zhang Heqiang

Learning that CPAFFC President Li Xiaolin would go to Xingxian county to investigate poverty reduction there, we immediately contacted US-based OSI Group, inviting Deputy CEO Lyu Yong to join the inspection group, which comprised staffs of the association's general office and department of European and Asian Affairs, along with a few representatives of two French companies.

Xingxian, Shanxi province, was chosen by the CPAFFC as the object of its aid in the local poverty reduction efforts. Lyu was also interested in China's poverty relief project.

OSI Group, headquartered in Chicago, was established in 1909. It is one of the largest food processing companies in the world and is especially influential in intensive processing of meat products. Its global turnover was more than \$6 billion in 2013. The group has been doing business in China for 26 years. Its operating philosophy—"In China, For China"—and sense of corporate social responsibility coincide with the CPAFFC's determination to contribute to the country's poverty reduction campaign.

In company with our colleagues at the foreign affairs office of Lyuliang

city, and with Deputy Secretary of the Xingxian county Party Committee Gao Peng, we spent two days looking into the local agriculture and animal husbandry and helped OSI Group find the most suitable place for joining the poverty alleviation campaign in the county.

During our visits to the local leading businesses arranged by the county Party Committee and county government, we found that their management was inefficient. For example, Sanxing Oil Co, a large mustard oil producer, needed improvement in food safety, quality control and brand building. Linquan Vinegar Co boasts mature management, a wide variety of products and attractive packaging, but lacks brand awareness. Xindaxiang Farming Co and Sanhe Farming Co has advanced pig-raising techniques, with automatic feeding and 24-hour closed-circuit TV supervision, but its sales revenue was vulnerable to market price fluctuations.

When meeting with local leaders, including Xingxian county Party Committee Secretary Liang Zhifeng, CPAFFC President Li Xiaolin expressed her thanks for their care and support for CPAFFC cadres who were transferred to work there. For years, a large number of cadres of China's

State organs, with their posts retained, have been transferred to work for short terms in rural areas in order to learn about local realities, promote the work there and become more competent themselves.

Liu Jifeng and Cao Xiaowei, both CPAFFC staff members, were serving, respectively, as deputy county mayor and Party branch secretary of Shahao village.

Talking about the job to help lift 50,000 residents out of poverty, Li noted that poverty alleviation depends on more than the development of local industries.

“Shahao village is not poor at all,” she said. “Look at the blue sky, the fresh air and the beautiful natural scenery. They are much better than in cities. Poverty reduction mainly depends on boosting education, improving the population quality and changing ideas.”

Inspired by Li’s remarks, we

talked enthusiastically all the way to Shanhualanman Grain Co and Shansi-Suiyuan Date Co in the town of Caijiahui. New ideas kept striking us on how to tap the potential of the county and develop the local economy.

I asked Gao: “Are there any unique tourist resources in the county?”

“Yes. We have many, such as the Shanxi-Suiyuan Border Region Revolutionary Memorial and the Wang Ruofei Memorial. Both of them are on the list of China’s top 100 Red Tourism scenic spots. In addition, there’s Heicha Mountain Forest Park and the symbolic Huangtu Loess Plateau.”

Someone challenged the idea that the Loess Plateau is a tourist resource. Hao Wenjie, vice-president of the Shanxi People’s Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, seemed to support the resource argument. She said: “The Acropolis of Athens has nothing more than a few pillars, but Greeks assigned many

myths and legends to them. Well, our Huangtu Plateau also has vivid stories and a long history.”

Everyone seemed to brighten up, and discussion began.

I asked Lyu Yong, “What do we call Huangtu gaoyuan (Huangtu Plateau) in English?” “Loess Plateau,” he answered. I responded quickly: “The Loess Plateau is unique in the world, just like the Danxia landform and karst landform. Why not call Huangtu Plateau ‘Loess landform’? Wouldn’t that add to its attraction?”

Hao Wenjie cut in: “Loess landform, what terminology! I’ll testify that you invented it!” She continued: “These remote villages on the virgin plateau must be attractive to tourists from big cities. There is huge potential for developing original rural ecotourism.”

Her remarks triggered a lively discussion around the new concept of Loess landform and the idea of developing tourism to help with poverty alleviation. Everybody made suggestions.

A brief introduction of the Loess landform in Xingxian county

Exterior features: Ravines go in all directions as Nature likes.

Geological evolution: The soil has been eroded by wind and rain to form faults with different sediment strata, making it an ideal outdoor geology classroom. Located in northern Shanxi province, it is a transitional region between nomadism and agriculture, where nomadic people maintain



Group photo on the Loess Plateau

ancestral customs.

Revolutionary history: Known as “the second Yan’an”, Caijiaya village in Xingxian county was once home to the Shanxi-Suiyuan Military Area Command and a place important to the Chinese revolution. Division 120 of the National Revolutionary Army, led by He Long, lived and fought here for 11 years.

Humanity: The place embodies the indomitable spirit that has encouraged generations of Chinese people to fight against the adverse environment as well as their attachment to this land of Loess as the cradle of the Chinese nation. The Loess shows how human beings can coexist with nature in harmony.

Tourism potential: Unique ecological environment, with fresh air and no smog. Tier upon tier of gullies, carved by rain and wind, present a wonderful pattern of various shapes. The breathtaking natural beauty of the Loess Plateau prompts people to reflect on life and nature and purify the mind.

Aesthetic value: The vast Loess Plateau, barren but vigorous, symbolizes local people’s good qualities, including bravery, inner peace, fortitude and love. It also carries the profundity of the philosophy of life, bringing people aesthetic pleasure and spiritual enlightenment.

On our way back, our van was winding its way around the top of the plateau when someone suggested that we stop and take some photos. Li Sanghua, director of the CPAFFC’s US division, responded cheerfully: “Good

idea. Just do it. Look at this. How beautiful it is!” After several turns, she cheered again: “Wow! Fantastic! Please stop here, it’s amazing!”

When the bus came to a stop, all of us got off and took out our mobile phones for pictures. A magnificent view of the Loess greeted us.

Turning his eyes away from the mountains, Lyu Yong said to me: “This remote county has more resources than the wonderful scenery before us. The oil, meat and eggs it produces are exceptional, thanks to its geographical location, which insulates it from outside contamination. Crops grown here can be processed into pollution-free food. Away from epidemics, antibiotics and pollution, the pigs, chickens, cattle and sheep also have a good mood. Naturally the food products are of good quality.”

“Certainly, there is still much to be done,” Lyu went on. “Long-term planning and situation assessment are needed for investing in factory setup or going into joint development.

“Based on its own advantages, OSI Group is considering ways to help the locals train managers, build a food safety system and improve product quality, as well as procure farm and sideline products locally and provide local poor students with animal protein of fine quality at a low price.”

Hearing Lyu Yong’s remarks and seeing his anti-poverty determination, I suddenly understood why CPAFFC President Li said that “Shahao village is not poor at all.”

With rich natural resources,

an untainted environment, huge development potential, policy support from the central government and help from all circles of society, Xingxian is definitely a shining pearl hidden in the Loess.

We got back on the bus. Out the window, the sun was setting in the blue sky. Rays of sunlight slanted across the plateau’s top, making a sharp contrast to the shadowed lower part. Apart from the eroded gully surface, greeting our eyes from near to far were the flat top formations of the plateau, the continuity of which was regularly broken by gullies and crop terraces.

The plateau tops and terraces in different shapes — some round, others triangle; some big, some small — formed a mystical pattern like alien crop circles. In the dark shade were the rugged gully cliffs rising from the thick groves of mysterious bushes and weeds at the bottom of the gully. The waxing and waning of light and shadow, tranquil and dynamic, was awakened and invigorated by the silver cloud line delineated by the setting sun.

Nature cultivated the magnificent Loess Plateau. Loess nourishes numerous beautiful lives.

The bus started moving. While enjoying the views outside the window, I sank deep into thought. If the CPAFFC and OSI Group can work out an effective plan to help lift the county out of poverty, and if local tourism can prosper, nothing will be a better witness than the vast Loess Plateau and the beautiful silver cloud line. ■

Treasures of Folk Art with Bayu Features and Charm

Foreign and Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of Chongqing Municipal Government

Chongqing, located in Southwest China, has a long history and unique culture. Thanks to the local artisans' wisdom and inheritance, there are many amazing folk cultural heritages. Now, the exquisite artistry and art miracles have become the calling card of Chongqing for the outside world.

Treasure of Folk Art: Qijiang Farmer's Engraving Prints

Qijiang county, located in South Chongqing, has a long history and rich culture, with beautiful mountains and rivers. There are 16 ethnic groups, including Han, Miao, Yi and Tujia, which endow Qijiang with strong ethnic characteristics. It is this wonderful land that has nurtured the Qijiang farmer engraved prints.

Qijiang farmer engravings originate from wood-plank New Year paintings in the Ming and Qing dynasties. First, the patterns are engraved on the plank with a knife. Paper is then placed over the wooden pattern to print the picture by rubbing. Its lively compositions and brilliant colors derive mostly from the lives of the masses, featuring strong folk customs and rural flavor. The prints combine regular painting

techniques with various folk art skills, such as wood carving, stone inscription, cloth-pasting, cross-stitch work, plank painting, paper-cutting and blue-print cloth, achieving a pristine and romantic effect.

The plank print starts with the same artistic concept that is followed in traditional Chinese painting, namely the creation of a mood, the fluency of expression and the subjective application of colors. It rejects rigid realism and advocates free expression, but not without constraint. Although it involves no stereotyped techniques, it is never pretentious. Imbued with the artisans' understanding and love of life, the

prints are vivid and lively. They have become fabulous works for interior decoration and gifts because of their unique artistic charm and aesthetic value. In 2011, Qijiang farmer engraved prints have been listed in the third group of intangible cultural heritage in Chongqing.

Yanxing Paper-Cutting: One of the Three Folk Treasures

Assimilating various presentation techniques like traditional Chinese painting, print, pyrography, and cloth-pasting, Yanxing paper-cutting exhibits its strong Bayu cultural features. It is



known as one of Chongqing's "three folk treasures" together with Qijiang engraved printing and painting of women from the Tang Dynasty in Zhongxian county.

Chinese paper-cutting can be roughly divided into two schools — northern and southern. The former features bold outlines; the latter is delicate. Yanxing paper-cutting, famous for its exquisite fineness, exemplifies the southern school. Absorbing the essence of Chinese paper-cutting, it features delicate craftsmanship that involves both cutting and carving. With a clever combination of thick and thin lines, it skillfully uses spots, lines and blocks to form intricate patterns that change from density to sparseness. All of these techniques give Yanxing paper-cutting a distinctive oriental charm and lyrical flavor, helping the artist to cut many patterns in a small piece of paper.

Moreover, the themes of Yanxing paper-cutting are broad and possesses strong life flavor. Whether it represents a wish for good luck, tells a popular historical story or lauds a legendary figure, it is the brainchild of the artisan's wisdom and rich imagination.

This art not only carries the deep cultural significance of Chinese paper-cutting but is characteristic of unique Bayu folk customs. With the connotations of extensive Bayu culture, it reflects both the local customs and the characteristics of the times. So far, 12 exquisite paper-cuttings have been collected by the China Paper-cut Museum and Chongqing's Three Gorges Museum. In April 2011,

Yanxing paper-cutting was included in Chongqing's intangible cultural heritage list.

Hechuan Ravine Ink-Slab: The Top of Bayu Three Ink-slabs

The Hechuan Ravine ink-slab — also called dark jade ink-slab and Jialing Caojie ink-slab — is a unique creation of the ancient Han people. It is made from natural stone found in Libi Canyon of the Jialing River in Hechuan district. In 2009, Hechuan Ravine ink-slab was included in the first intangible cultural heritage list of Chongqing.

The Ravine ink-slab is characterized by its fine stone texture and pale color. The ink stick grinds easily to produce ink, causing no damage to the tip of the writing brush. The ink in the slab can be kept for days without drying or becoming smelly, and the stone slab itself is hard to be effloresced. As it contains alumina, the ink-slab also provides a hard surface for peeling gold and jade and sharpening knives. The artisans carve the ink-slab with a knife, drill, hammer and other grinding tools — going through more than 10-steps in a procedure of flat carving, relief, hollow carving and intaglio, until the stone becomes an ink-slab in graceful and lively patterns. Men of letters cherished it for hundreds of years and praised it as the top of the three Bayu ink-slabs — Three Gorges Ravine ink-slab, Jinyin ink-slab and Kui ink-slab.

The techniques of Ravine ink-slab originated with the Song Dynasty

and flourished in the Qing Dynasty with a long history. As early as the Ming Dynasty, Jialing Ravine ink-slab enjoyed a high reputation. Li Shiyong, a Hezhou native and minister of personnel affairs at that time, extolled it with the poem:

“The hut is remote near the ravine, and the ingenious artisan carves the stone; I write with the ink like a flying dragon, and words are pouring from my hand; the stone is delicate like a jade, and the slab-making skill passes down to the next generation; the ink-slab is a treasure for calligraphers, and it is one of the Four Treasures in writing materials.”

Contemporary calligraphers and painters such as Feng Yuxiang, Yu Youren, and Xie Wuliang also wrote poems to praise the Ravine ink-slab. As one of the 12 best products in Bayu, the Ravine ink-slab was displayed as one of the finest products in Chinese traditional stationers at such places as the Sibaozhai Shop in Shanghai, the Old Hu Kaiwen Shop in Huizhou, Guangdong province, and the Zou Ziguang Shop in Hankou, Hubei province.

The Folding Fan from Rongchang County: A Good Rival of Fans from Suzhou and Hangzhou

Generally speaking, people tend to think of Suzhou of Jiangsu province and Hangzhou of Zhejiang province when talking about folding fans. As a matter of fact, the folding fan from Rongchang county, which is located in

the economic corridor of Chengdu and Chongqing, enjoys a reputation similar to those.

Rongchang county is characterized by hilly topography, high quality of soil and a subtropical monsoon climate. Thanks to its mild weather and plentiful rainfall, especially its stuffy and wet summer, bamboo plants and tung trees grow everywhere. With the natural advantage, local people make fans to dispel summer's heat by using bamboo to make both the framework and paper for the fan. Sometimes they also use silk or linen fabric with tung oil as an adhesive and coloring agent. The use of these techniques resulted in the unique fan-making art.

The Rongchang folding fan originated in the Song Dynasty. The fans, which were created as a tribute to the imperial court, have enjoyed a high reputation in history.

Making a folding fan is simple: A stack of thin bamboo slats is fastened with a bamboo nail at one end. Paper glued to the slats is creased back and forth between them. Though simple, it needs 16 procedures and 145 operating steps. Each step is strictly required and results in fine pieces. Rongchang folding fans rival Suzhou's silk ones and Hangzhou's painted and calligraphic ones with its precise manufacturing techniques.

In 2008, the Rongchang folding fan was included in the national protection catalog of Chinese intangible cultural heritage. ■

Chongqing Boosts its International Friendship Cities Program

Foreign and Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of Chongqing Municipal Government

International Sister Cities: 5 Times More Than 20 Years Ago

Chongqing paired with its first international friendship city in 1982. By 1997, when the city became a municipality under the direct administration of the central government, the number grew to seven. As of 2016, it had paired with 37 cities in 31 countries, including Seattle, Washington, in the United States and Hiroshima, Japan. Sixteen of these friendship cities were added between 2011 and 2016. Of the 37, nine are in Asia, 14 in Europe, six in North America, five in South America, one in Oceania and two in Africa. Twenty-four are cities, while the other 13 are prefectures or counties.

Chongqing has also signed friendly cooperation and exchange agreements with 65 foreign cities. To better operate the international friendship cities program, the municipal government set up the Chongqing Municipal Commission for International Friendship Cities.

In the past 10 years, the commission has formulated plans and carried out 748 projects to boost the friendly exchange and communication between Chongqing and its foreign friendship cities.

A Good Job in Telling Stories to Enhance Cooperation

Friendly exchanges of science, technology, culture, education, health and sports between Chongqing and its foreign sister cities have facilitated the diplomatic exchange between China and other countries and infused fresh momentum into the city's economic and social development. Three times in a row, the municipality has received the annual International Friendship City Exchange and Cooperation Award. In 2016, it was given the International Friendship City Outstanding Contribution Award.

Several principles are behind the prominent development of Chongqing's friendly cooperation and

exchange with foreign cities:

We should stick to the principle of serving the country's overall diplomatic strategy. The international friendship cities program of Chongqing is an integral part of China's diplomatic effort. Sun Zhengcai, a member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and chief of the Chongqing Municipal Committee, said the city should carry out the program "in accordance with the policies and requirements of the central government" and must be politically correct.

Guided by this principle, the municipality actively pursued friendly exchanges with many foreign cities. For instance, under the instruction of the central government, it established friendly ties with the city of Welsh in the United Kingdom, and Chennai in India.

We should facilitate the non-diplomatic needs of the country. Examples include launching an anti-cult campaign in foreign friendship cities, promoting closer connections with friendly foreign dignitaries, organizing or participating in international conferences and events and establishing a stronger presence in international organizations.

We should also use the right platforms in promoting cooperation. Municipal leaders have actively participated in meetings or forums of mayors and provincial governors. The mayor of Chongqing himself had headed delegations to the China-USA Mayor Forum, the first China-Australia

Provincial Governors Forum, ASEAN-China Governors/Mayors Dialogue and the first China-India Cooperation Forum. These communication channels enabled Chongqing to embark on a platform of smoother multilateral or bilateral cooperation with foreign cities.

We should stick to the principle of serving the economic development of the partners. The international friendship cities program of Chongqing has been integrated with the Belt and Road Initiative. In March 2014, President Xi Jinping visited North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany, a sister city of Chongqing, and attended the arrival ceremony of the Chongqing-Xinjiang-Europe regular cargo train. In January 2016, when Xi inspected Chongqing, he pointed out that the

city is strategically positioned on the map of China's development, as it is a connecting point of the Belt and Road region and the Yangtze River Economic Zone, the only municipality under the direct administration of the central government in western China and a stronghold of China's western development campaign.

The development of the city must be guided by this positioning. In 2014 and 2015, Sun Zhengcai, secretary of the CPC Chongqing Committee, headed a delegation to some Central and Eastern European countries that produced fruitful cooperation. Efforts were made to secure the investments of Pilatus Aircraft Ltd., AT&S. In the meantime, to promote the internationalization of Chongqing, the municipality helped some local



In January 2015, the Duesseldorf Symphony Orchestra performed a chamber concert of German classical wind music for local people in Chongqing.

companies, such as Chongqing Chemical & Pharmaceutical Holding Group, and Chongqing Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation Group, invest in foreign countries. The total investments of these companies amount to 300 million yuan (\$44 million).

More events have been organized to promote economic and trade cooperation. Chongqing Welsh Week, the Chongqing-Zurich Smart City Forum and the Chongqing Swiss Industrial Park Investment Conference are just a few cases in point. Measures were taken to ensure that heavyweight foreign projects are smoothly carried out and foreign companies are adequately served.

As a result, The Robinson Company (based in Seattle) and

Microsoft successfully grounded their projects in Chongqing. Mexico's Nimak, an auto parts manufacturer, came and settled in Liangjiang New District with a total investment of 949 million yuan. In 2014, when Howard Merde, chairman of US-based Ambrose Group, came to China to attend the second round of the Global CEO Roundtable Summit, the Chongqing International Friendship City Commission invited him to visit the city. As a result of that trip, the group invested \$110 million in a comprehensive logistics park in Chongqing's Yufu Industrial Park.

Measures to Promote Friendship and Cooperation

The Chongqing international

friendship cities program also focuses on promoting people-to-people exchanges. Strengthening friendship with citizens of sister cities around the world has been carried out in many walks of life and on multiple levels. People-to-people exchanges with Asian countries are actively pursued. For instance, to promote exchanges with Japanese people, the city hosted a China-Japan baseball game six times. Chongqing Nankai High School and Busan Luodong High School from South Korea, were paired as sister schools thanks to the program.

As part of the people-to-people exchange effort, Chongqing Jihua Middle School hosted the Chinese College Students Korean Speech Contest. The city government also signed friendly cooperation agreements with India, Sri Lanka, Nepal and other neighboring countries to promote people to people exchanges.

The municipality promoted people-to-people exchanges with friendship cities of the big powers: the United States, European Union and Russia. The city has hosted Welsh Week for 10 years in a row, and helped 18 universities of both regions in starting cooperative programs. Plus, more than 80 trips were made by the staff of the universities to promote bilateral exchanges and cooperation. Chongqing and Toulouse, France, co-founded the Chongqing Sino-French Emergency and Disaster Medical Cooperation Center.

The city also pursued friendly



In May 2016, Huang Qifan(back row second from right), mayor of Chongqing municipality, and Liu Zhengfu (back row second from left), mayor of Incheon, signed a memorandum of understanding on boosting friendly cooperation and witnessed the signing of economic and trade agreements between the two sides.

exchanges with about 20 cities, including Moscow, the Russian capital, and Sheffield and Oxford in the UK. Chongqing has cooperated with Seattle in elderly medical care and the retirement industry.

In 2016, Chongqing and Toronto, Canada, celebrated the 30th anniversary of their friendly relations. The two cities organized a series of celebrations, refreshing and furthering their friendship. The municipality has also sought closer ties with South American countries. It signed a number of friendly exchange memorandums with the provinces of Buenos Aires and Santa Fe in Argentina, and with the city of San Jose, Uruguay.

Another important measure is to host international conferences and events. In the past five years, Chongqing has held eight influential international conferences. From November 2011 to April 2012, the municipal government and the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development of the People's Republic of China jointly hosted the eighth session of the China (Chongqing) International Garden Expo, which attracted 30 cities from around the world and 156 foreign guests (mayors and their delegations).

In July 2013, the municipality and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs jointly organized the Summit of China and Central and Eastern European Countries. The meeting drew more than 1,000 participants, among them prominent figures such as then-Romanian Prime Minister Victor Ponta,

Macedonian Prime Minister Nicola Gruevski and mayors or representatives of 56 states (provinces). At the summit, the participants endorsed the Chongqing Initiative, and signed 25 friendly exchange agreements.

The summit laid a solid foundation for further cooperation between Chongqing and cities in Central and Eastern Europe. In February 2014, The First Work Session of the Two-Rivers-Zone Economic Cooperation Group (China's Yangtze River Economic Zone and Russia's Volga River Economic Zone) was held in Chongqing. More than 200 participants from the Chongqing Municipal Government, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Chinese People's Association for Friendship

with Foreign Countries, the Russian Foreign Ministry, the Plenipotentiary Office of the Russia President in the Volga River Region, the Russian embassy in China and the 14 Russian federal states along the Volga, attended the meeting. The gathering has played an important role in speeding up Sino-Russian cooperation in developing the non-coastal regions of the two countries.

In May 2015, Chongqing hosted the Asia-Europe Industry Connectivity Dialogue. Vice-Premier Zhang Gaoli, a member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, attended the opening ceremony and made the keynote speech. Cambodia's Deputy Prime Minister Yin, Slovakia's Deputy Prime Minister Cage Mir and 10 other



The city of Welsh in the United Kingdom, a friendship city, held a contemporary art exhibition in Chongqing in October 2015.

ministerial officials of Asian and European countries were present at the 800-attendee meeting. Representatives of seven ministries and 24 provinces of China also attended the dialogue.

The 2016 China International Friendship Cities Conference was successfully held in November in Chongqing. More than 700 Chinese and foreign representatives from 56 countries and 51 international organizations and 107 Chinese cities attended the meeting.

We have also made efforts to promote friendly exchanges through various publicity channels. Brochures — for example, describing the current situation of Chongqing's economic and social development and its key development areas and industries — are produced to inform the nearly 100 international sister cities or quasi-sister cities of the latest developments and needs of Chongqing.

Wide media coverage of the city's cooperation with international friendship cities is also the norm. People's Daily, the official website of the Chinese Ministry of Commerce, Hong Kong Phoenix TV and other media outlets have carried well-received coverage of the friendly exchanges between Chongqing and its sister cities. One episode of the documentary *The Historical Records of Non-governmental Diplomacy in China*, produced by China Central Television, documented in detail the Belgium-Wuxi (Chongqing) potato cooperation project, which produced

highly effective publicity about Chongqing and its foreign sister city.

When city leaders met with foreign dignitaries, they sometimes make favorable recommendations to the international friendship cities of Chongqing. One case in point is when Zhang Xuan, chair of the Standing Committee of the Chongqing Municipal People's Congress, met with a delegation from the United States. She briefed them about the economic, social and legal achievements of Chongqing, and in response to questions concerning the development of transport, trade, culture and other topics of interest to the guests stressed that "it will benefit both China and the United States if the friendship cities can cooperate closely and learn from each other".

The American guests agreed and said that they would promote cooperation between Chongqing and US cities in the fields of science, trade and technology.

Official receptions like this are good channels to promote cooperation between Chongqing and its international friendship cities. Such channels are concrete and convincing.

Through the measures mentioned above Chongqing has opened itself and has reached out to the world, which is an indication of self-confidence in its guiding political theory, institutions and course of development. This self-confidence again contributes to a brighter future for its international friendship cities program. ■

As China's economy has evolved into the so-called new normal stage, the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council have made timely moves to promote the development of the Yangtze River Economic Belt as part of the country's overall plan for a scientific development of the national economy.

In January 2016, a meeting was held in Chongqing discussing the development of the Yangtze River Economic Belt. President Xi Jinping addressed the meeting, elaborating on the significance, methods and key tasks of its development. Since then, Xi has made several speeches and stressed that the belt should developed in an ecologically friendly way. He said no economic activities concerning the Yangtze River should sacrifice the environment. All areas along the Yangtze River Economic Belt, he said, should make joint efforts to protect the environment and refrain from indulging in overdevelopment. We should try to build the belt into a golden economic zone with a better ecology, a more coordinated economy, a more unified market, a better transport system and a more scientific mechanism, Xi said.

The Yangtze River Economic Belt is vital for the overall development of Chongqing. The city should combine ecological protection with the construction of river channels, along with making an industrial shift, building ecological corridors, making

The Yangtze River Economic Belt: A Booster of Chongqing's Development

Foreign and Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of Chongqing Municipal Government

full use of the shipping capacity of the golden waterway and creating a comprehensive three-dimensional traffic corridor. In this way, it can direct the graded industrial shift from east to west, lead the development of the upper reaches of the Yangtze as a new growth area and provide strong support for the sustainable development of the Chinese economy.

The Yangtze River Economic Belt

covers an area of nearly 2.1 million square kilometers, accounting for 21 percent of the whole country. Within it are two municipalities (Chongqing and Shanghai) and nine provinces (Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Anhui, Jiangxi, Hubei, Hunan, Sichuan, Yunnan and Guizhou). It holds more than 40 percent of China's population and generates as much GDP. Therefore, it is of ecological importance to the country

and has great overall strength and potentials for development.

As an important link in the Yangtze River Economic Belt, Chongqing is a comprehensive functional hub that integrates air, land and water transportation. Moreover, the municipality links the Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, the New Chama (tea-carrying caravan) Trade Route and the Yangtze River waterway.

Based on Liangjiang New Area, Chongqing has further improved its channel for international trade, extended the functions of the platform for opening, upgraded its trading modes and taken a lead in the construction of an opening-up center for China's inland areas.

Now the Outline for the Development and Planning of the Yangtze River Economic Zone has been issued officially. Under it, a developing pattern featuring "one axis, two wings, three poles and multiple spots" has been proposed, where Wuhan and Chongqing would be developed into super big cities. This is another strategy for the development of Chongqing. ■



Chongqing Liang Lu/Cun Tan Free Trade Port Area

China's Capital of Food with a Combination of Ba-Yu Flavors

Foreign and Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of Chongqing Municipal Government

Chongqing impresses the world not only with its landscapes and hot springs, but also with its delicacies.

With rivers in front and mountains behind, the Southwest China municipality enjoys favorable transport conditions and a unique wharf culture that has been an attraction for tourists from across the world. This has helped develop a unique culinary culture — Chongqing cuisine — which has absorbed the essence of other China cuisines.

Generally speaking, the food style of a certain place is inevitably related to its natural environment. For example, the hotpot of Chongqing was born of local people's effort to clear dampness, a special feature of the city's climate. Besides the hotpot, many other well-known dishes also reflect the special geographical and cultural features of the mountainous city.

You can wander around the streets and lanes of Chongqing to have a taste of its uniquely flavored delicacies and feel its dietary culture. Here's some of what you can find:



Marinated Goose

There is a jingle everyone in the city's Rongchang district knows, regardless of sex or age: "Glance at the stewed goose, and your purse is about to loose". Every day at noon and dusk, all the streets and lanes are filled with the aroma of stewed goose. As a matter of fact, stewed goose is a food of the Chaoshan area, introduced here during the late Yuan Dynasty when some Hakka people migrated to Rongchang and turned it into a Hakka village. More than 390 years have passed since then, and the Hakka customs have been penetrating into the living habits and dietary structures of Rongchang

people. The stewed goose, which was originally only received in South China, has become a delicacy here step by step. After years of adaptation and improvement, the stewed goose has become a signature dish of Rongchang.

Location: Rongchang, Chongqing

Zhang Duck

Invented and handed down by three generations of the Zhang family in Liangping county, Zhang duck is processed with an ancestral secret recipe that involves stewing, roasting and a number of other elaborate procedures. As one of the special local



foods of Chongqing, it is known for its dry and thin appearance, distinctive stewed aroma, bright and lustrous color and delicious taste. In 2010, Zhang duck was granted the title of China's Time-Honored Brand.

Location: Liangping, Chongqing

Sauteed Diced Chicken with Chili and Pepper

The red peppery chicken of Gele Mountain had its name spread all over China at the beginning of the last century when it was launched by a



small roadside eatery beside the three-hundred-ladder of Gele Mountain. The raw materials are selected with strict care, including a local village cock who guarantees a fresh and fleshy taste and some auxiliary ingredients like chili and Chinese red pepper, which add spicy and savory edge. When it's finished, the whole place will be filled with the delicious smell, and you cannot help but take a bite that is both spicy and crisp. It melts in your mouth.

The duration and degree of firing could be really hard for a chef

to control, and the first-class peppery chicken must meet the following standards: bright and lustrous color, perfect complement between pepper and chicken, (with crisp chicken accompanied by the refreshing flavor of the fried dry pepper) and a perfectly matched sweet and salty taste.

Location: Gele Mountain, Shapingba District, Chongqing

Grilled Fish

It is said that being in Wuxi without having its grilled fish is like being in Chongqing without tasting its hotpot. The Wuxi grilled fish not only tastes fleshy, fresh and delicious but also is nutritious and has certain pharmacological effects. First, brush some salad oil and sesame oil on both sides of the fish, sprinkle some cumin and pepper powder on it, then put it on the grill to roast until it's done and place it in a specially made iron plate.

Second, fry the mixture of butter, red oil, white sugar, Chinese red pepper, chili and fermented soy beans as seasonings and pour them on the roasted fish.

Third, put some seasonal vegetables like celery and lettuce on top, along with tofu, to remove its fishy smell and enrich the tastes. Wuxi grilled fish was invented by diligent and wise boatmen on the Daning River, drawing from their daily labors. After thousands years of inheritance and improvement, it has evolved into a specially flavored



delicacy and an extremely influential dietary culture.

Location: Wuxi, Chongqing

The Big Steamer

The Big Steamer enjoys a great reputation in Kaizhou district. It is cooked in a big bamboo-bundled steamer with a diameter of 50 centimeters or so, where the rice noodles, which are already mixed with necessary seasonings, are steamed together with segmented pig intestines, mutton, sliced pork and segmented ribs. After it's done, it can come to the dinning table to be sprinkled with coriander or chopped green onions. Then you will be greeted immediately by a strong, refreshing aroma.

Location: Kaizhou, Chongqing



Chongqing Pilot Free Trade Zone: A New Channel for Trade with Europe

Foreign and Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of Chongqing Municipal Government

The Ministry of Commerce announced in August last year that a pilot free trade zone was envisioned for Chongqing and six other provincial-level areas. This means that Chongqing will benefit from favorable policies in trade and investment in the near future, and goods can be imported and exported without tariffs.

In September, Secretary of the CPC Chongqing Municipal Committee Sun Zhengcai presided over a conference of the city's Standing Committee to discuss the Overall Plan for China (Chongqing) Pilot Free Trade Zone. Sun said that the new Free Trade Zone was set up in accordance with the central government's requirement to make full use of Chongqing's role as a supporting and linking point and speed the opening-up of this gateway city in the western region. The zone is an attempt to move Chongqing into a leading role in deeply carrying out the country's Western Development Strategy.

The Overall Plan makes clear that

the Chongqing Pilot Free Trade Zone should focus on system innovation: We should strive to build it into an inland pilot trade zone in which investment and trade are convenient and where supervision is easy and effective. High-quality financial services, a standardized legal environment and prosperous high-end industries should be the norm.

Upon completion, the zone will be an inland international logistics hub, an inland center for service trade, a functional financial center and a hub that connects Belt and Road areas with the Yangtze River Economic Belt. Moreover, it will be a pivot point in the country's Western Development Strategy and a pilot area of the China-Singapore (Chongqing) Demonstration Initiative on Strategic Connectivity.

The FTZ brings Chongqing a new round of opportunities for development. It will bring Chongqing more favorable policies after the China-Singapore

cooperation project.

Covering an area of nearly 120 square kilometers, the Chongqing Pilot Free Trade Zone consists of three parts: Liangjiang New District, Chongqing Western Logistics Park and Chongqing Microelectronic Industrial Park. Of these, Liangjiang New District is the largest, making up two-thirds of the total area. Based on the three bonded areas, it extends to the cloud computing base through the airport, to Guoyuan Port and Jiangbei Financial Center, and to the Tuanjiecun area through the extension of Xiyong Comprehensive Bonded Area.

As the Belt and Road Initiative and the strategy of the Yangtze River Economic Belt are being carried out in an in-depth way, the Liangjiang New District-based Inland Free Trade Zone in Chongqing will echo afar with the Shanghai Pilot Free Trade Zone. This will surely help accelerate the opening-up of the Yangtze River Economic Belt and the western regions of China. ■