



On February 24, 2018, Henan: Home of Chinese Culture—2018 Hong Kong Happy Spring New Year Temple Fair was grandly opened in Kowloon Park in Hong Kong.



On February 18, 2018, Home of Panda: Beautiful Sichuan—The Eighth Cross-Straits Spring Festival Folk Temple Fair was grandly opened at the Nantou County Convention and Exhibition Center in Taiwan.



On February 2, 2018, Universal Celebrations—the People of China and the Philippines jointly welcome the New Year was held at the Commercial Center in Clarke, the Philippines.



On February 22, 2018, the celebration of 2018 EU-China Tourism Year—Chinese Lanterns Light up the heart of Europe was successfully held in the Grand Place in Brussels, Belgium.

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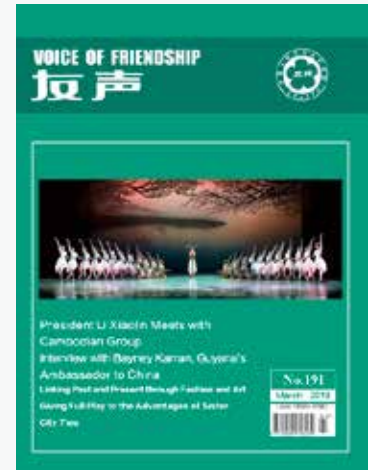
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Published in Chinese and English

Front Cover: On Jan 5, 2018, *Crested Ibis*, a dance drama produced jointly by the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries and the publicity department of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee and performed by the Shanghai Dance Theatre, presented its first performance in the United States at the David Hoek Theater in the Lincoln Center in New York.

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Editor-in-Chief: Gao Weimin

Address: 1 Taijichang St., Beijing, 100740, China

Fax: (010) 65122782

E-mail: yousheng_ys@sina.com

<http://www.cpaffc.org.cn>

<http://www.qikan.com>

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President Li Xiaolin meets with Cambodian group

Wang Bo



On Jan17, Li Xiaolin, president of the CPAFFC, met in Beijing with a delegation of the Cambodia-Hefei Friendship Association led by President Ouk Socheth.

Li extended a warm welcome to Ouk, noting that this year marks the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Cambodia. She expressed hope that the two sides will strengthen their ties, continue to promote effective cooperation and lay a solid foundation of public support between the two countries at the nongovernmental and local government level under the Belt and Road framework.

Vice-President Xie Yuan meets granddaughter of General Chennault

Jin Hanghang



On Jan 22, Xie Yuan, vice-president of the CPAFFC, met with General Claire Lee Chennault's granddaughter Nell Calloway, CEO of Chennault Aviation and Military Museum and CEO of Chennault Flying Tigers Academy.

Chennault, a US major general, was best known for his leadership of the Flying Tigers unit in China from 1942 to 1945.

Xie welcomed Calloway and her delegation, speaking highly of her continuous efforts in carrying on the Flying Tiger spirit, pushing forward China-US relations and commemorating the comradeship of China and the United States in fighting the fascist forces in World War II. He said the CPAFFC would always support the Chennault family and wished the Flying Tigers Academy smooth and successful cooperation with its Chinese counterparts.

Vice-President Hu Sishe attends premiere of documentary film, TCM promotion tour

Yu Xiaodong



A major documentary film—*Traditional Chinese Medicine, New Stories*—has been released to promote traditional Chinese medicine around the world. The film, which was created by the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, the Central Newsreel and Documentary Film Studio and the Beijing Eleven Culture Development Co, is part of a planned international touring exhibition of TCM culture.

A ceremony was held at the conference hall of the CPAFFC on Jan 30 to mark the premiere of the film and the launch of the tour. Among the attendees at the ceremony were Hu Sishe, vice-president of the CPAFFC; Zhang Haitao, president of the China Broadcasting Film and Television Association; Yang Longhui, vice-president of the Academy of Chinese Medical Sciences and Wang Heshan, secretary-general of the Zhongyou International Arts Communication Association.

20th anniversary of China-South Africa diplomatic ties

Zhang Yujun



A reception celebrating the 20th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and South Africa was held in Beijing on Jan 18, co-hosted by the CPAFFC and the South African embassy. In attendance were Qiangba Puncog, vice-chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress; Abdul'ahat Abdurixit, former vice-chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and president of the Chinese-African People's Friendship Association; Tian Xuejun, vice-minister of education; Major General Shen Youqing of the logistical support department of the Central Military Commission; Lin Yi, vice-president of the CPAFFC; Chen Xiaodong, assistant minister of foreign affairs; Dolana Msimang, South African ambassador to China; and 300 other guests from all walks of life.

China-Japan friendship concert held in Beijing

Liu Mengyan



To commemorate the 40th anniversary of the conclusion of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between China and Japan, the annual China-Japan Friendship New Year Concert was presented by the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries and the China-Japan Friendship Association at Beijing's Tianqiao Performing Arts Center on Jan 14. Tang Jiaxuan, president of the CJFA; Song Jingwu, vice-president of the CPAFFC; Japanese Ambassador Yokoyi Yutaka and his wife; and Hirotaka Kawai, general manager of Kawai Musical Instruments Manufacturing Co, attended the concert.

President Li Xiaolin and Secretary-General Li Xikui attend signing ceremony

Jia Ji



A ceremony was held in Beijing on Jan 19 to mark the signing of the agreement for China Isotope & Radiation Corp (CIRC) and MASEP Medical Science Technology Development (Shenzhen) Co to donate a gamma knife to the China Friendship Foundation for Peace and Development.

Attending were Li Xiaolin, president of the CPAFFC and honorary president of the foundation; Cao Shudong, deputy general manager of China National Nuclear Corp; Li Xikui, secretary-general of the CPAFFC and director of the foundation; Meng Yanbin, chairman of CIRC; Xu Tao, chairman of MASEP Medical Science Technology Development (Shenzhen) Co; Ge Wei, chairman and president of China Fortune Media Group, who is also secretary of the company's CPC committee; and other leaders.

The gamma knife is a large, high-tech piece of medical equipment developed by Chinese scientists with independent intellectual property rights.

International sister city exchanges exhibition

Chengdu Friendship Association



On the evening of Dec 29, 2017, *A Close Friend from Afar Brings Distant Land Near: Chengdu International Sister City Exchanges Exhibition* opened at the Chengdu Museum. The unique Tulip Chair from the Netherlands, the exquisite Sousse Tin Olive Branch from Tunisia, the delicate Drum from Gimcheon, Republic of Korea, the indigenous Waka Bowl from New Zealand, the mysterious Talisman Pendant from Canada and many other gifts from Chengdu's international sister cities were put on display. Symbolizing the precious friendship between the people of Chengdu and its international sister cities, the 200 exhibits from 56 countries highlight the rich ethnic characteristics and superb traditional craftsmanship of the foreign cities, while reflecting the international exchanges of Chengdu over the past 36 years.

The Belt and Road: 2018 Walk into Nepal photography competition

Chengdu Friendship Association



On Dec 17, 2017, a photo exhibition featuring tourism in Nepal was held in Chengdu, Sichuan province, marking the first anniversary of the city's establishment of its sister-city relationship with Kathmandu with the launch of a photography contest—*The Belt and Road: 2018 Walk into Nepal* photography competition. The competition was sponsored by the Nepal Tourism Board, with support from the Chengdu Municipal Foreign and Overseas Chinese Affairs Office and the embassy of Nepal in Beijing.

In a speech delivered at the ceremony, which was held at the Wide and Narrow Alley Gallery in Chengdu, Ambassador Leela Mani Paudyal noted that Nepal is a world-class tourism destination, and his government hopes that cultural exchanges in various forms, such as the photo contest, would help promote economic development in both countries.

Kimiyo Matsuzaki, witness of ping-pong diplomacy between China and Japan

He Yan

If the resumption of diplomatic ties between China and the United States by way of ping-pong diplomacy is described as “earth-shattering and heaven-battering”, then the process of forging a profound friendship between China and Japan through ping-pong can be said to be gentle and gradual. From Goto Koji to Koji Kimura, from Kimiyo Matsuzaki to Ai Fukuhara, the gentle stream of the friendship between the Chinese and Japanese peoples has flowed for more than six decades.

The gift Maotai

Kimiyo Matsuzaki was a great success as a ping-pong player in the late 1950s and early 1960s. She took part in the World Table Tennis Championships three times and won the world championship seven times in different events. She was also the first female ping-pong player to win a grand slam in Asia.

In September 2017, Matsuzaki attended the activity marking the 45th anniversary of the normalization of China-Japan relations in Beijing. On the morning of Sept 6, I met her—a lively small woman with an even temperament and pleasant manners.

I was moved when Matsuzaki recollected in plain words her moments with Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai. In March 1961, the 26th World Table Tennis Championship was held in Beijing. It was the first time for China to host a major international sports event since the founding of the People's Republic. Matsuzaki, as one of the Japanese players, was paying her first visit to China.

The welcome banquet was held in the evening at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing one day before the opening ceremony of the championships. While the athletes and team officials were waiting in the lounge, a sudden hush fell over the entrance and the premier, with rosy cheeks and in high spirits, appeared in the spotlight.

Zhou shook hands all around and walked toward the Japanese team. *Konichiwa!* the premier greeted them in standard Japanese. He continued in Chinese: “How is my pronunciation?” The Japanese journalists praised him: “Your Excellency’s Japanese is perfect.” He replied, “Thank you, but I forgot a lot.” The premier stood there to chat with the Japanese players and was amiable throughout the dialogue, which was the longest of all his chats

with guests present at the reception.

As she marveled at the Chinese premier’s charisma, Zhou greeted her with a firm handshake, looking straight into her eyes.

Though it received a warm and friendly reception during the banquet, the Japanese team felt isolated in the games. The matches of the championships were held at Workers’ Stadium in Beijing, where the spectators scarcely applauded the Japanese paddlers. Though young, Matsuzaki understood the frigidity, for she knew that the Chinese people were still agonized by memories of the Japanese aggression in the past and usually bristled at the word “Japanese”.

Facing the invisible pressure posed by the unfriendly atmosphere, she told herself to remain calm and concentrate on the competition.

The Chinese team made remarkable progress compared with their performance two years before and became a strong competitor to topple the Japanese team, which had remained the reigning champion for years in the world table tennis arena. Finally, the Chinese team won the men’s team title and the men’s and women’s singles,

while the Japanese team won the women's team title, the men's doubles and the mixed doubles.

In the 25th World Table Tennis Championships, Matsuzaki won the women's singles title and rose to international notice. In the 26th championships, she was on the list of seeded players. However, she was off her game and lost in the semifinals. In the match against Eva Koczian, a Hungarian player, she was expected to win 3-0, but eventually lost 1-3.

At the beginning of the match, Matsuzaki took the lead. But every time her opponent scored, the applause and cheers raised the roof. On the contrary, when she gained a point, a groan of disappointment would come from the 15,000-strong audience.

Though the atmosphere added stress and worry, she tried to calm down and take it easy. She did her best to concentrate on the game regardless of the noises, but it seemed hard for her to prevent the game turning against her as she had nearly exhausted her strength.

Just when she realized she was going to lose, she felt a subtle change in the atmosphere. Toward the end, the audience cheered her on for her tenacity. Obviously the Chinese audience felt sorry for the unexpected loss of an outstanding Japanese player. After the game, she went smiling to shake hands with Koczian. The Chinese audience applauded her heartily. She perceived a change in the Chinese people's attitude toward the Japanese players.

A day before the Japanese team left for Shanghai, a farewell dinner was held at the Beijing Hotel. Matsuzaki was seated next to Premier Zhou Enlai.

At the time, China was experiencing a serious shortage of food as a result of the Great Famine (1959-61). With a glance, Matsuzaki could see that long-time wear had frayed the premier's shirt cuffs inside his Chinese suit. Realizing that he lived an austere life to tide over the difficulty together with the people, she felt some affinity for him.

Zhou put down his chopsticks and said, "Please feel free to eat while I speak." He then went to the podium to give a 40-minute address, during which he praised Matsuzaki: "I watched Miss Matsuzaki's game on TV when I was on a business trip outside Beijing. Your performance was deeply impressive to the Chinese people. It seemed you lost the game, but actually you won. The Chinese athletes should learn from you—your perseverance and smiles in front of a failure that seemed to be unavoidable."

He added: "The 2,000 years of friendship between the Chinese and Japanese peoples are as lofty as Mount Fuji. And I firmly believe that the friendship will run endlessly like the Yangtze River." Spellbound by his remarks, the Japanese players almost forgot to eat.

As the banquet drew to its end, Zhou asked Matsuzaki, "May I ask if your father loves drinking?" She replied, "Very much. He drinks two small cups every night." Zhou then extended an offer: "I have a bottle of Maotai produced before 1949, which is now scarcely seen in the market. You can take it home as my gift for him." He had apparently learned that Matsuzaki's father worked in the winery business.

When she returned to the hotel at midnight, Zhou's secretary was wait-

ing in the lobby, holding the bottle of Maotai wrapped up with a red ribbon. Receiving the gift, she was too excited to fall asleep that night.

Paternal concern

During the 26th World Table Tennis Championships, China and Japan agreed to new exchanges. In the summer of 1962, the first China-Japan Table Tennis Friendly Tournament was held in Beijing. Matsuzaki, as part of the Japanese team, came to China again, and the Japanese team was soon received by Premier Zhou.

Matsuzaki, lost in the happiness of meeting Zhou again, thought the premier must have numerous foreign guests to meet and it was unlikely that he could remember an ordinary table tennis player. Just then Zhou approached her and asked, "How are your parents?" In a panic she replied: "It was a great honor for my parents to receive the gift of Maotai from Your Excellency. They were very grateful, saying that the wine was mellow and tasted wonderful."

The premier said, smiling: "Since they like it, I will send them a few more bottles." Matsuzaki was greatly moved.

On a later occasion, she recalled what she thought at the moment: "My parents are complete strangers to Premier Zhou. How amazing and moving that he should be so concerned about them!"

Matsuzaki later heard that the premier once speculated that she might be a farmer's child, given the tenacity she demonstrated in sports. Sure enough, her parents were both born to farmers' families in a mountainous area and led

hard lives in childhood. She had never thought about it before. Now, with the premier's words, she suddenly understood why he had shown such concern for her parents.

At the 27th World Table Tennis Championships held in Prague, Czechoslovakia, in April 1963, Matsuzaki took gold in women's singles, doubles and the team event, winning herself the grand slam.

When the championships concluded, the Chinese embassy invited the Japanese team to join the Chinese players for a Chinese dinner. During the meal, a congratulatory telegram from Premier Zhou Enlai was read. Matsuzaki had often heard from Chinese players that Zhou was a table tennis fan, but it was still a great surprise that the Chinese leader would send congratulations to a foreign team. She felt lucky to be a ping-pong player.

When she retired after the 27th championships, Matsuzaki thought she would have no chance to visit China again. But thanks to the support of Zhou and the help of the sports community in China, she developed an even more profound relationship with China.

In October 1964, the International Table Tennis Friendship Tournament was held in Beijing. Matsuzaki was invited to join the Japanese team as an unofficial member. Premier Zhou invited Matsuzaki, Hasegawa Kiyotaro (head of the Japan Table Tennis Association) and Ogimura Ichiro (a well-known player) to his home in Zhongnanhai for lunch. Also present at the meal were Saionji Kinkazu and his wife, and Chen Xian, president of the Chinese Table Tennis Association.

Before the meal, Zhou presented a gift wrapped with a red ribbon to Matsuzaki, saying: "A gift for your forthcoming wedding." It was pink silk.

She was too moved to speak. The premier said: "Please help yourselves to the dishes. They are cooked in my hometown's style." As he placed food on her plate, Matsuzaki could only silently gaze at the premier, nodding and smiling, with tears welling up in her eyes.

Someone asked Zhou at the table: "No offense, Mr Premier, do you feel lonely being childless?" Zhou answered: "No, not at all. All youngsters across China are my children. They are successors to the socialist cause."

Matsuzaki later commented: "How many people can have such a pure and open mind as Premier Zhou's?"

That's true. Dedicated to the revolutionary cause when he was young, Zhou devoted himself heart and soul to the liberation of the Chinese people. Only one with a noble heart can be so genuine a man.

Less than two years later, the "cultural revolution" was launched in China, halting communication between Matsuzaki and Zhou. Quite a number of friends told her: "The premier asked after you. But I found it difficult to answer him." When she got married in 1966, she asked a friend going to China to carry her wedding photos to Zhou.

In August 1972, the first congress of the Asian Table Tennis Union was convened in Beijing, marking the end of an era in which China had been excluded from major table tennis

tournaments in Asia.

Among the delegates to the congress were 10 retired Japanese players, including Matsuzaki, who formed a "veterans team" to participate in the event. The moment the premier saw her, he opened his arms and exclaimed, "Nice to meet you again, my old friend."

Matsuzaki greeted Zhou in Chinese, *Nin hao*, then continued, "It is so pleasing to see you in such good health." The premier replied, "Thank you. But I am getting old. You must have a child now." She replied, "Not yet. May I say I've followed your example?"

She blurted out the words and instantly regretted the unwitting offensive remarks. But the premier laughed heartily.

Since she saw him eight years before, his hair had turned whiter and wrinkles had climbed onto his lean cheeks. She recalled that Zhou readily came to terms with the fact that he had no children, yet he cared deeply about a foreigner's family life. With the help of Zhou, Matsuzaki was treated by world-class fertility doctors in China, but unfortunately did not get her wish.

Maotai returns

When the Asia-Africa-Latin America Table Tennis Friendship Tournament was held in Beijing in the summer of 1973, the 10 retired Japanese players were once again invited to China. Kurimoto Takao, Matsuzaki's husband, was also invited. They visited Yan'an, Xi'an, Suzhou, Nanjing and Shanghai.

It was Kurimoto Takao's first visit to China. The Japanese journalist

had expected to find problems in the country during the visit. On the contrary, however, he was impressed by what he saw in China—Chinese people who were enthusiastic, optimistic and confident about their future, who lived and worked in peace and who were making concerted efforts to build their country.

Premier Zhou watched all the matches in Beijing between the two countries' veteran players. His secretary frequently came in whispering something into his ear and he had to get up from his seat and leave for awhile; then he came back quietly. The agility of Zhou's movements suggested a man much younger than his 75 years. After the match, he stayed to chat with the Chinese and Japanese players until late at night. The players were amazed by the premier's meticulous observations and accurate memory as he reeled off details of their performances.

Zhou enthusiastically commended the Japan Table Tennis Association's role in enhancing China-Japan friendship and the retired Japanese players' contribution to the normalization of diplomatic relations between the two countries. He expressed appreciation for the Japanese friends' courage in coming to China for table tennis matches in the years of tensions. He singled out Matsuzaki: "Please come to China regularly. I often tell my Japanese friends that Matsuzaki should remain on the boat of China-Japan Friendship."

Matsuzaki remarked that that was the highest praise she had received from Premier Zhou. On Jan 9, 1976, she was informed by telephone that the premier had died of cancer that

morning. Her hand trembled, almost unable to hold the receiver. It was scarcely six months since her last visit to China in 1975.

During that visit, her sixth, Vice-Premier Chen Xilian relayed Zhou's message to Matsuzaki: "Your letter of greeting has been received. Thank you so much. ... Please stay in China longer this time for a thorough medical checkup and treatment. ... Hope you will not feel lonely before your husband comes. If you have any needs, please let us know."

Matsuzaki knew that the pain caused by terminal cancer could be so acute that one could not bear to witness it. She realized that when the premier asked Chen to forward his concern for her, he was in the midst of severe suffering. She had known nothing of his ailment and was devastated that he had passed away so soon.

She could not hold back the tears as she passed the news to her table tennis friends in Tokyo. At 7 am local time, many people were waiting in front of the Chinese embassy in the icy wind to mourn the death of the great man. At the front of the line were well-known Japanese table tennis players, including Matsuzaki, Kimura Koji, Miki Keiichi, Takahoshi Hiroshi and Seki Masako.

Matsuzaki said that the death of any great figure in Japan would not evoke the sadness she felt over Premier Zhou. "To honor the memory of the premier who so profoundly understood Japan and so dearly cared for me, I will do more to promote the friendship between Japan and China," she said. Later on, she traveled frequently between the two countries to advance

people-to-people friendship.

For 50 years, the Maotai given by the premier has been treasured as an heirloom in the family of Kimiyo Matsuzaki. Only one-third of the liquor was consumed by her father in gatherings with friends. Then the bottle was sealed for good. Despite the passing years, the liquor inside remains transparent.

The Maotai was carried from Takase, Kagawa prefecture, to Matsuzaki's new home in Ebisu, Tokyo. Whenever it was festival time, she took out the liquor, wiped the bottle and then wrapped it up again with cotton paper, cloth and waterproof oilpaper in several layers. She told her friends that she took care of the liquor as carefully as one would care for a child.

In March 2011, a massive earthquake hit Japan. She thought that as she was already advanced in age, she should find a better place to keep the liquor so that the seeds of China-Japan friendship sowed by Zhou Enlai could be passed on from generation to generation.

On April 20, 2011, she traveled to the Guizhou Maotai Distillery from Japan, accompanied by her friend Qiu Zhonghui, a well-known Chinese table tennis player of her time. At the ceremony honoring her donation of that bottle of Maotai, she said in tears: "This precious bottle ... carrying the admiration of my family for Premier Zhou, finally comes back to its hometown." ■

The legendary life of He Lianxiang, goodwill messenger of Peru-China friendship

Tang Mingxin

The award ceremony Light of China—Chinese Cultural Communication Person of the Year—was held on Dec 15, 2017. It was hosted by the State Council Information Office, the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the State Council, the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, Confucius Institute Headquarters (Hanban), China Literature Art Association and China Central Television. The 10 award winners were from different continents, representing all those involved in the popularization of Chinese culture.

One of the winners, He Lianxiang, was a Chinese-Peruvian in her 90s. She had devoted her life to promoting friendship between China and Peru. When congratulated on winning the Light of China award, she said: "The root of my heart relates deeply with my love and attachment to China. Though in my 90s, I still want to make contributions to the friendship between China and Peru. This is the meaning and value of my life."

Her words impressed and touched us greatly.

Opponent of Japanese invaders

He Lianxiang was born in Lima, Peru in 1926. She grew up under her parents' instruction in patriotism. When Japan launched its attacks against China in 1937, the Chinese people in Peru responded actively to support the anti-Japanese movement for the salvation of their homeland. They organized massive publicity campaigns and collected donations to help their compatriots back home.

He, who was in primary school at the time, participated in her school's repertory theatre to stage dramas, sing patriotic songs and travel across Peru to publicize the Chinese cause. She participated in fundraising activities organized by overseas Chinese organizations.

After several years of effort, they had raised more than \$1 million in donations, and selected a representative to take the money back to China to buy warplanes for the Chinese air force. The donation was highly praised, both by the Kuomintang and the Communist Party of China. Zhou Enlai, who was vice-minister of the Political Department of the Military Commission

of the national government, wrote an inscription for overseas Chinese organizations in Peru: "Six thousand compatriots in Peru raised 2 million Peruvian soles (\$1 million). They set a great example for overseas Chinese and should be glorified in the war against Japanese aggression."

Contributions

The founding of the People's Republic of China and the improvement of its international status drew close attention from the young He Lianxiang. To help overseas Chinese better understand what was happening, she began to work as a translator and editor for Public Thoughts newspaper to present the real situation of the PRC to the Chinese community in Peru. Later, she became editor in chief and published many reports about the changes and achievements in China. Public Thoughts rose in popularity among overseas Chinese in Peru, Ecuador and Panama. He Lianxiang also became an influential public figure in Peru for introducing the new China.

In 1959, she established the Peru-China Cultural Association,

together with some China-friendly Peruvians and leaders of local Chinese organizations. They arranged for people from political, economic and cultural sectors in Peru to visit China to learn about its development. They also established communication channels with social organizations and local governments in China, including the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries. Later, He visited China several times—as a tourist, or to attend National Day celebrations as a member of overseas Chinese delegations such as the Peru-China Friendship Association. Zhou Enlai, China's premier; Zhu De, chairman of the National People's Congress Standing Committee; and Vice-Premier Deng Xiaoping met with her.

She supported the construction of her hometown—Zhuhai, Guangdong—and donated money for its social and financial development. Every year around Lunar New Year and on National Day, He and her colleagues held exhibitions, seminars and culture weeks in Peru to introduce the achievements and cultural development of China.

Goodwill messenger

During the 1950s and 1960s, China's relations with Latin American countries developed slowly. I remember Chairman Mao saying that if negotiations could not lead to the establishment of diplomatic relations soon, both sides could start with commodity trading; and if trade did not work, they could become friends first. Premier Zhou suggested that “we should be patient, do more to

make friends and promote the official relationship through nongovernmental exchanges”, which advanced the relationship between China and Latin American countries from civil exchanges to official governmental interactions.

Peru began to consider establishing diplomatic relations with China in 1969. As He was the editor in chief of Public Thoughts for a long time, and interacted frequently with government departments, the parliament and social organizations in her capacity as a leading member of the Peru-China Friendship Association and other local Chinese organizations, she had developed close relationships with many ministers, lawmakers and foreign ministry officials.

The Peruvian government decided to make use of an opportunity created by the visit of a Chinese vice-minister of foreign trade to Chile in 1971 to find out about China's attitude in the relationship. Fully devoted to friendship between Peru and China, He was entrusted with the secret mission by the Peruvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

He Lianxiang was proud to have the Peruvians' trust. At the same time, she was fully aware of the responsibility on her shoulders. She went to Santiago with a letter from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs before Chinese Vice-Foreign Minister Zhou Huamin commenced his visit to Chile. She visited the Chinese embassy to deliver the Peruvians' letter to Zhou and forwarded the Peru government's invitation for Zhou and its intent to push forward the two countries' relations.

In April 1971, Zhou visited Peru and met with President Juan Francisco Velasco Alvarado. Zhou signed the minutes of the conference with his Peruvian counterpart, who was in charge of economic affairs, with both sides agreeing to set up offices of commercial representatives in the other country's capital. Half a year later, on Nov 2, China and Peru made a joint declaration officially establishing diplomatic relations. He Lianxiang and the leaders of the Peru-China Friendship Association and overseas Chinese organizations were thrilled, and she was subsequently honored as Goodwill Messenger for Peru-China Friendship.

Aspirations maintained

He Lianxiang has worked passionately on cultural exchanges and friendship between Peru and China from her youth to old age. She is now general manager of the Peru-China Chamber of Commerce, a council member for the Latin American and Caribbean-China Friendship Association and secretary-general of the Peru-China Cultural Association. Last year, she presented a book on the Belt and Road Initiative to Peruvian President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski Godard before his visit to China. She believes that the development of China will brighten prospects for relations between Peru and China, which has been her life mission. About her contribution, He said simply: “I am just a Chinese woman who has her roots in China and loves China very much.” ■

Sino-US nongovernmental exchanges continue

Yang Jun

It was 9 am on Oct 18, 2017. The 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China opened at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. At the same time, Sarah Lande, an American woman in her 70s, was watching the live TV broadcast thousands of miles away in a small town in Iowa.

Lande was receiving a delegation of the Shanghai People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries at her home in Muscatine. She told her Chinese guests: "My acquaintance with President Xi Jinping has been over 30 years and I want to congratulate the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China."

Chinese red

Lande was attired in "Chinese red", as she was five years ago when she welcomed the visiting Chinese president. She knew that red is the Chinese people's most favored color, and that it symbolizes festivity and fortune. In this way she showed her sincere respect for Chinese culture.

She found an acquaintance among

the members of the delegation who had been a receptionist on her visit to Shanghai in 2012. The Chinese woman presented her with an album of photos taken during that visit and a Chinese-style red vest. Lande tried on the vest right away in excitement. It fit perfectly as if it were specially tailored. The nostalgia-inducing album and the gift added to the atmosphere of affinity.

The SPAFFC delegation's visit to Muscatine coincided with the convening of the CPC's National

Congress. It was particularly meaningful for the Shanghai guests, joined by a local resident, to review the 30-year friendship between President Xi Jinping and the town at this moment. As a witness to Xi's two visits to Muscatine—in 1985 and 2012—Lande shared her memories of Xi's reunion with his local friends and especially their chats over tea at her residence. She showed the Shanghai guests everything Chinese in her house—Chinese characters on the wall;



Sino-US Friendship House

porcelain standing in a corner; a table napkin with a pattern of peacocks; and a scroll of Chinese calligraphy on the wall of the living room, which was presented by Xi in 1985.

Golden key

Xi is the only Muscatine guest to have received the city's golden key twice. In a speech delivered during his visit to the United States in 2012, he said: "The golden key given to me by Muscatine's City Hall in 1985 opened the door for exchanges and cooperation between Chinese and American peoples at the local level. Once the door is opened, no force can close it again. The door will be opened wider and wider."

Muscatine has named the house at 2911 Bonny Street, where Xi stayed in 1985, the "Sino-US Friendship House". Open to the public for free visits, the house is the city's first building themed for Sino-US friendship.

The old friends of Xi have become envoys of nongovernmental diplomacy between the two countries.

Terry Branstad, the current US ambassador to China, has been a friend of Xi for 30 years. The 71-year-old former governor of Iowa hoped he could visit as many places in China as possible during his tenure, contacting Chinese people widely, to boost cultural and economic exchanges between the two countries.

Over time, as a go-between and a witness to Muscatine's friendship with Xi, Lande developed profound affection for China. She visited Shanghai three times—in May and November 2012 and in May 2014—to promote her hometown's cooperation with the Chinese metropolis in sports, public

health and environmental protection.

Flower of friendship

People-to-people exchanges and cooperation between China and the US at the local level has bloomed in science, technology, culture and art.

In 2013, the Shanghai Songjiang Aquatic Technology Popularization Center introduced in-pond raceway aquaculture technology (IPA) from Iowa, funded by the US state's soybean association. With the new technology, the water in a fish-raising pond can recycle itself without any discharge, ensuring zero pollution of the environment.

According to available data, China had built more than 3,000 running-water, fish-raising troughs by the end of 2016, and the number was expected to exceed 5,000 by the end of 2017, mainly in the Yangtze River Delta. Shanghai pioneered the technology and serves as a promoter, while other provinces in the region—Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Anhui—are major users of the technique.

In February 2016, the China Radio Folk Music Orchestra gave a concert in Muscatine. The performance—themed "Music of Friendship Opens Window to China"—fascinated the locals with a flavor of Chinese traditional music. In July, the Iowa city sent a high school choir to attend the 13th China International Chorus Festival. The teenagers from Muscatine sang a song titled *Love Retains Eternal Memory* in praise of the people-to-people friendship between the two countries. In November, the 2016 Muscatine Chinese Culture Week was held in Muscatine as part of the Chinese

Culture Going Global project. The fair showed Chinese handicrafts such as diabolo, opera masks, calligraphy, dough sculpture and New Year's pictures. Chinese folk musicians played the erhu (a two-stringed instrument), the guzheng (Chinese zither) and other traditional music instruments, to the delight of local listeners.

An Iowa company specializing in the lighting of sports facilities has provided lighting systems for the football fields of Shanghai Century Park and Shanghai Kangjian Community, as well as for Shanghai Jinshan Stadium. The 40-year-old company set up a solely owned subsidiary company in Shanghai's Songjiang district, which has become its global manufacturing center for the Asia-Pacific. The safe and highly efficient lighting systems it produces have contributed significantly to Shanghai's energy-saving campaign.

Friendship for generations

Amity between people—a connection of hearts—is the key to sound relations between states. The connection of hearts begins with exchanges between youths. Addressing a conference marking the 60th anniversary of the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, President Xi said: "In people-to-people diplomacy, we should treat our foreign friends with sincerity, true love and heartfelt affinity, so as to move them and get closer to them. In this way, people from different countries will be more friendly and affectionate to each other and will support each other with greater shared interests. Special efforts should be devoted to exchanges between

Chinese and foreign youths so that they will carry forward the cause of people-to-people friendship.”

In recent years, many from the post-1995 generations have joined in people-to-people communications between Shanghai and Muscatine. In July 2014, eight teenagers from Muscatine took part in the 10th Shanghai International Youth Interactive Friendship Camp in Shanghai on behalf of American youths. They joined nearly 100 youths from 20 countries, including Australia, Canada, Germany, Mexico, South Korea and Tunisia, to mark the occasion.

The 10-day celebration included activities under three themes—Chinese Culture, I Love Shanghai and National Show. Youngsters from other countries expanded their knowledge of Chinese culture by learning spoken Chinese, listening to history lectures, eating Chinese food, watching a dragon dance and shadow puppet show, being carried on a bridal sedan pretending to be a bride, painting masks, making dough sculptures, tying Chinese knots and writing Chinese characters with brushes.

The foreign youths stayed in homes of local volunteers “to be a Shanghai citizen for one day” and took part in an orientation test—called “I Love Shanghai”—during which they visited the Chinese Art Gallery, Shanghai Science and Technology Museum, Shanghai International Automobile Plaza, Oriental Pearl Tower, Madame Tussaud’s wax museum and other places. They also participated in a fine arts contest with the theme of “My Hometown”, in

which they painted pictures depicting their countries and set display platforms showcasing their national cultures.

The youths from Muscatine were most interested in the activity titled “Be a Shanghai citizen for one day”, in which they narrowed the cultural gap with their local counterparts. They said they were impressed by Shanghai’s prosperity and the local people’s hospitality, and would tell their countrymen what they had seen in the city to help more Americans get a better understanding of China. After going home, the Muscatine youths held meetings to brief their schoolmates about Shanghai and reportedly received a warm response.

A total of 1,000 or more youngsters from about 50 countries and regions attended the Shanghai International Youth Interactive Friendship Camp during the 12 years from 2005 to 2017. The annual event for connecting hearts and building friendship has become an attraction for young people around the world.

Window to China

Muscatine launched a program called “Window to China” to promote Sino-US friendship. Through the platform, Chinese businesspeople and nongovernmental organizations have sponsored many high school students from the Iowa city to participate in the Shanghai camp over the past three years. The platform also played a vital role for Shanghai businesses to cooperate with their Muscatine counterparts.

In June 2015, the SPAFFC and the Shanghai Library set up a “Shanghai Window” reading room in the Musser

Public Library of Muscatine, the 117th of its kind, which the Shanghai institutions had set up worldwide. Then, in October 2017, the 139th one was opened at the Community College Library of Muscatine. The books donated by Shanghai were popular among the city’s residents and young people, who got to know Chinese culture and the great changes that have taken place in China. Books about China’s old customs and traditional Chinese medicine were most favored. Through this window, they saw an international metropolis radiating cultural brilliance and the spirit of scientific innovation. Some of them have begun to plan a visit to China.

President Xi said the fate of the world is in the hands of the people of all countries, hence all governments must fully rely on the people. After the 19th National Congress of the CPC, the friendly exchanges and cooperation between the Chinese and American peoples entered a new era.

After watching the opening ceremony of the CPC Congress and President Xi’s report live on TV, the Shanghai visitors were presented with a copy of the monograph by renowned political scientist Greheum Allison—*Doomed to the First War: Can China and America Avoid the Thucydides Trap?* Ms. Rande presented the gift and had read and left commentary in the book. She wrote an inscription on the inside cover: “China-US relations are full of opportunities and challenges. Let us strengthen friendly exchanges and be the defenders of peace; and with love and friendship we will continue moving forward.” ■

Never forget old friends while making new ones

Fan Lily

In the early winter of 2017-18, Xie Yuan, vice-president of the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, visited Belgium to award the title of Friendship Ambassador posthumously to Henri Lederhandler, an old associate of the CPAFFC, and presented the Belgium-China Friendship Award to six other Belgians.

In the early years of exchanges between Belgium and China, a group of Belgian citizens with historical insights and lofty ideals broke through barriers to establish friendly exchanges with China, laying a solid foundation for later developments in goodwill.

Lederhandler was an outstanding representative. One of the founding members of the Belgium-China Association, Lederhandler served as the first chairs of the Belgium-China Economic and Commercial Council. He visited China more than 70 times during his lifetime, and was hailed as a key pioneer of friendly exchanges and economic and trade cooperation between the two countries.

In the 1960s, he helped arrange Belgian Queen Elizabeth's visit to China, which was the first visit to the newly born People's Republic by any member of a Western royal family. It was also an icebreaker in relations.



Xie Yuan, vice-president of CPAFFC and Qu Xing, Chinese ambassador to Belgium, jointly bestowed the Belgium-China Friendship Award on six Belgians.

When China was confronted with an exceptionally tough international environment, Lederhandler persuaded Bekaert, Janssen, Solvay, AGFA and other Belgian companies to invest in China and provide equipment and materials for China's industrialization.

In 1979, thanks to Lederhandler's efforts, the Belgian government provided China an interest-free loan of 900 million Belgian francs for 30 years to support the construction of Pingdingshan Thermal Power Plant in Henan province, which was the first interest-free loan China had received from any developed Western country. In 2012, Li Keqiang, then vice-premier of China, visited Lederhandler during an official trip to Belgium and called

him "a friend of Chinese people forever".

On the morning of Nov 16, CPAFFC Vice-President Xie visited Lederhandler's widow, bestowing the title of Friendship Ambassador. She was moved deeply and shared photos of Lederhandler taken when he was received by Chairman Mao Zedong and Premier Zhou Enlai. She said her husband had devoted his life to promoting friendship between Belgium and China, and that he would be honored to receive the title.

During his visit, Xie also bestowed the Belgium-China Friendship Award on six Belgians—Caroline Tengrootenhuysen, An Tengrootenhuysen, Lale Yuvali, Yvonne

Mainguet, Hans Van Duysen and Philip Vanhaelemeersch.

The Tengrootenhuysens are sisters who, together with two other sisters, Yuvali and Mainguet, founded China Today magazine, published in both Flemish and French. For decades, they have written articles promoting Chinese culture and have shown the Belgian people the real China.

In December 2017, the Tengrootenhuysen sisters visited China for an award ceremony—2017 Light of China—the annual awards for outstanding contributors to the promotion of Chinese culture. They were honored with the Special Contribution award. Hans Van Duysen, the current chairman of the Belgium-China Association, and Vanhaelemeersch, director of the Confucius Institute, represent a new generation of China-friendly Belgians who have taken up the cause of developing China-Belgium friendship by energetically promoting economic and cultural exchanges and cooperation.

No man should forget the well-digger when he drinks the water. In that spirit, people will never forget those who sowed the seeds of friendship which have taken root, sprouted and blossomed in the hearts of the Chinese and Belgian people.

As China draws closer to the center of the world stage and attracts more friends, we Chinese should always remember our old friends. Only by doing so, can we create a favorable international environment for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, and lay a solid foundation for the vision of a world community with a shared future. ■

A visit to Bukhara

Wen Guangmei

On a high-speed train dashing across the vast green grassland, we headed southwest from Tashkent, capital of Uzbekistan, to the Central Asian city of Bukhara, an important node on the ancient Silk Road that has witnessed the prosperity and decline of the ancient trade routes but has now gained new vitality under China's great Belt and Road Initiative.

After more than four hours on the train, we arrived in Bukhara. It was March, but we could still feel the dry, clean coolness when stepping out. Vice-Mayor Olima Nurova of Bukhara, carrying a bouquet of flowers, together with Akramova Khushvakht, chairwoman of the Association of Sister Cities of Bukhara, greeted us at the door of the carriage. Their smiles and enthusiasm warmed us immediately.

Akramova is an old friend and the first Bukharan I made contact with. In November 2016, she was invited by the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries to attend the Second China-Central Asia Cooperation Dialogue, which was organized by the CPAFFC and the Hainan provincial government in Haikou. She

delivered a wonderful speech on behalf of Bukhara at the main forum of the dialogue between local leaders of China and five Central Asian countries. The video clip *Bukhara*, which was shown before her speech, fascinated the audience as it explored the city's mysterious, ancient history and magnificent architecture.

In June, 2016, President Xi Jinping paid a state visit to Uzbekistan and stopped in the historic and cultural city of Bukhara, which was called "a living fossil on the Silk Road". Xi was accompanied by Shavkat Mirziyoyev, Uzbekistan's prime minister at the time (current president).

Xi said: "Bukhara was a shining pearl on the Ancient Silk Road. Today's visit has enriched our understanding of the origin of the relationship between China and Uzbekistan, which will benefit the inheritance of the Silk Road spirit, enhance people's friendship between the two countries and promote the building of the Belt and Road Initiative."

Akramova said in her speech that the beauty of Bukhara and the warmth of its people had been fully presented

during Xi's visit. It's worth mentioning that the distinguished Chinese guest did not choose Tashkent, the capital, as the first stop of his visit to Uzbekistan; instead he decided to take a look at the ancient city of Bukhara first. This demonstrates the Chinese leader's highest respect for the city's heritage of thousands of years of history.

It was a great pleasure to see the old friends who had invited us many times to this alien land. More important, as delegates of the CPAFFC, a national unit entrusted by the Chinese government to coordinate and oversee the work of establishing and developing friendship city relations, we were charged with the important mission of implementing the consensus reached by the leaders of the two countries. We were commissioned to invite Bukhara, on behalf of the ancient Chinese capital city of Luoyang, to actively promote the establishment of friendship city relations.

On the way, Akramova enthusiastically told us about the city she loved so deeply and of which she was very proud. She noted that Bukhara, the third-largest city of Uzbekistan, has changed with each passing day since the country achieved independence. People's livelihoods have also experienced fundamental changes. In 1993, Bukhara was added the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage list. Today, the city's modern industry, agriculture, science, technology, culture and art are being revitalized; infrastructure construction has been carried out on a large scale; its fruits and vegetables are sold all over the world; and its handicrafts such as gold embroidery, silk and lambskin have won praise in interna-



A glimpse of Bukhara

tional markets. Every year thousands of tourists from all over the world come to Bukhara.

By the time we arrived, I was in a trance and wondered whether I had come to the horizon or passed through time and space. Brick buildings in khaki, high walls, uneven lanes, wooden poles carved with Islamic motifs, mosques and theological institutes appeared before my eyes in picturesque disorder. The restored blue-glazed walls and circular domes echoed the blue sky. People in robes and folk costumes occasionally walked through the quiet street. There seemed to be no boundaries between past and present, as if we actually had come to ancient Bukhara.

Our hotel, with historical appeal, was located inside the ancient city. A one-or two-minute walk from the hotel is the bustling Bazaar which showed the vitality of the ancient city. Every business was like a small workshop or museum connected by an arch. Old brick walls echoed with the winding

lanes of the Bazaar. Peddlers sold their wares enthusiastically, just as they did in ancient times. Shops were full of goods, sheepskins, wool carpets, ironware, bronzeware, silks, hats, shawls and more. Walking through the lanes, I felt as though I were in the Middle Ages.

People were celebrating Nowruz, the traditional festival of Central Asian nations, similar to the Chinese Spring Festival. It was as stroke of good fortune that we had the opportunity to experience this wonderful festival in person. In the park square opposite a theological institute, elderly people sat on a couch or a chair, enjoying the festival food while watching the artistic performances. Akramova told us that during every Nowruz the city government invites all the elders of the city to eat here for three days as a show of respect and humanity. It reminded me of China's Thousand Elders Feast, which also has filial piety at its heart as it carries forward the fine tradition of

expressing respect and love toward the elderly.

As friendly neighboring countries, China and Uzbekistan for historical reasons share many similarities in festivals and customs, and these positive measures surely have important significance for uniting the people and creating a harmonious social environment, whether in ancient or modern times.

Our visit yielded positive results. On March 22, the CPAFFC, the Chinese embassy in Uzbekistan and the Council of Friendship Societies and Cultural-Enlightening Relations with Foreign Countries of Uzbekistan jointly presented a symposium on cooperation between China and Uzbekistan—Jointly Building the Silk Road Economic Belt in Tashkent. It was the first time China had been part of a symposium with such a theme, and also the first time for our association to co-host a large-scale academic exchange with cooperative partners. It turned out to be a grand people-to-people exchange in the diplomatic and academic fields of China and Uzbekistan.

Bukhara Mayor IKhtiyor A. Farmonov met the CPAFFC delegation. He first congratulated us on the successful holding of the symposium and then expressed his appreciation and gratitude to the friendship associations of both countries for their positive efforts in promoting the development of bilateral relations. He said, the Silk Road pushed the development of Bukhara in the past and promoted prosperity.

He expressed willingness to actively respond to the initiatives and

directives of the heads of state of both countries, participate in the building of the Belt and Road Initiative and deepen practical cooperation in various fields, especially among local governments. He thanked our delegation for inviting him to the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival on behalf of Mayor Liu Wankang of Luoyang, Henan province, and expressed Bukhara's willingness to establish friendship city relations. He said he would like to build up contacts, strengthen personnel exchanges, consider the possibility of sending delegations to attend the Luoyang Peony Cultural Festival and spare no effort to help establish friendship city relations between the two cities.

Walking out of the city government building, we were glad that another pair of cities in China and Uzbekistan were going to establish friendship city relations through the care of leaders in the two countries, and we lived up to our mission of promoting friendship city relations and city diplomacy.

At the invitation of Chinese President Xi, Uzbekistan's President Shavkat Mirziyoyev made his first state visit to China and attended the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation in Beijing in May 2017. Witnessed by the leaders of their respective countries, Luoyang and Bukhara signed a memorandum establishing friendship city relations in the Great Hall of the People on May 12, laying a solid foundation for ties. A week later, Vice Mayor Aminov led a government delegation from Bukhara on a visit to Luoyang. The two sides discussed the possibility

of carrying out cooperation in economy and trade, tourism, culture, agriculture, medical treatment and cultural relics, as well as opening direct flights between the two cities.

On May 24 last year, CPAFFC Vice-President Song Jingwu hosted a farewell banquet in Beijing for the Bukhara delegation before their return to home. Akramova, who was one of the delegates, was thrilled to see us once again after two months. She thanked the CPAFFC for building a bridge of communication and providing full support for their visit to China. They looked forward to Luoyang's return visit later this year.

Local cooperation is an important part of the development of bilateral relations, and one of the most direct and effective channels for success. The Bukhara government delegation made its first visit to China after leaders of the two countries witnessed the signing of memorandum of friendship city relations—an important step in implementing the important consensus reached by leaders of the two countries and one of the fruits of President Mirziyoyev's visit to China.

Bukhara, a city that once seemed strange and distant, now feels intimate, a land of idyllic beauty that lingers in the memory of history forever. Owing to the ancient Silk Road thousands of years ago, today's Belt and Road Initiative has cemented the everlasting traditional friendship between people of different regions, history and culture. They are now more tightly connected with each other, despite the distance that separates us. ■

Interview with Bayney Karran, Guyana's ambassador to China

Staff reporter

VOF: Since the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Guyana on June 27, 1972, the bilateral relationship has developed smoothly with frequent high-level exchanges and close coordination in international affairs. The 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, which concluded in Beijing on Oct 24, 2017, marked the beginning of a new era for China. After the congress, China's diplomacy has taken on some new looks. Mr. Ambassador, how what do you think China and Guyana should do to inject new vitality into bilateral relations in the new era?



Bayney Karran

KARRAN: Thank you for this wonderful opportunity to interact with your readers. First, please let me wish a Happy Year of the Brown Earth Dog and a Happy 2018 to you and to all readers of The Voice of Friendship.

Indeed, the bilateral relationship between Guyana and China has developed smoothly, with close coordination in international affairs. Such connections between our two countries were forged out of comparable experiences as we

were each seeking correct paths to sustainable development in a post-colonial setting. These common experiences shaped our bilateral relationship which is characterized by reliability, friendship and good understanding.

But we in Guyana are not content to simply reminisce about what great friends we are with China. This new era is the time to build on our excellent track record. Guyana has an immediate desire to intensify the relationship in

the realms of economics, international politics and culture. By economics we are speaking specifically about a Guyana-China bilateral partnership for infrastructure development, investment, industrial financing, trade and business. The new era has ushered in a fresh wave of possibilities that would allow us to harness greater returns in these critical areas. We must grasp these opportunities.

First of all, China has presented excellent prospects for cooperation

on international issues. In his New Year's address, President Xi Jinping spoke of China's readiness to work with others to chart a future that is more prosperous, more peaceful and more secure in a community of a shared future for mankind. The policies enunciated by President Xi will help maintain the international order and uphold the authority and status of the United Nations. Given the current risk of conflicts escalating in several parts of the globe, policies geared to achieve these ends are of deep significance to countries like Guyana. In the absence of peace, security and prosperity, small states would suffer. In this sense, China's determination to fulfill its declared international obligations, or its "new look diplomacy", as you have called it, may itself be a *sine qua non* for improved bilateral ties.

Second, President Xi has reiterated China's commitments to tackling climate change and continuing with your country's contributions to global development. Last November, following the president's visit to Latin America and the Caribbean, China issued its Second Latin American Policy Paper in which it was specifically stated that China intends to promote measures to combat climate change in the Caribbean. As a low-lying coastal state, Guyana, like the rest of the Caribbean, is particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Your readers might be unaware of this, but Guyana is a pioneer in the field of reducing greenhouse gas emissions through forestry conservation. Besides, our development planning takes

place within the framework of the Green State Development Agenda. In addition, Guyana has enormous potential for clean and renewable energy, particularly hydropower. This common commitment to fighting the effects of climate change provides China and Guyana with a natural space to widen our scope for cooperation in an area of vital importance.

Third, at this very moment Guyana's economy is poised for a phase of accelerated expansion. Oil is in the air or, to be precise, is in the waters offshore—3.2 billion barrels of it. These windfall discoveries were made within the last three years, and they have set the stage for Guyana to remodel itself into a significant oil producer. This will eventually revolutionize the country's economy, commencing in 2020. A petroleum-backed economy, taken together with our prolific resources in other sectors such as forestry, minerals, agriculture and even tourism, will multiply the prospects for trade, investment and cooperation between Guyana and China. In this scenario the development of Guyana's infrastructure will be of the highest priority. Chinese capital and construction capability are a natural complement to the development of these sectors. We are a small country with big plans for our future prosperity. We are calculating that Chinese cooperation will be a key to unlocking that prosperity.

VOF: *The Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation was*

held in Beijing in May 2017. President Xi Jinping said in his keynote speech at the opening ceremony that "the Belt and Road Initiative is rooted in the ancient Silk Road. It focuses on the Asian, European and African continents, but is also open to all other countries. All countries, from Asia, Europe, Africa or the Americas, can be international cooperation partners of the Belt and Road Initiative." Guyana boasts rich forest and mineral resources. China and Guyana have a tremendous potential for cooperation in such areas as infrastructure, agriculture, forestry, fisheries and climate change. Mr. Ambassador, what is your expectation for China-Guyana cooperation under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative?

KARRAN: The extension of the Belt and Road Initiative from an intercontinental initiative to a global one must be seen as testimony by the international community to the results that it has achieved thus far.

Evidently, this potentially transformative initiative is capable of unleashing the development potential of the economies in its wake. We have observed that at the core of the initiative lies project cooperation in fields such as infrastructure connectivity, industrial investment, resource development, economic and trade cooperation, financial cooperation, transportation, cultural exchanges, ecological protection and so forth.

In addition to bilateral cooperation on climate change, energy

and infrastructure, which I mentioned earlier, there would indeed be ample scope to increase cooperation in these other areas that you have brought up within the ambit of the Belt and Road Initiative.

Guyana, a word which means “land of many waters”, boasts 50 rivers, 80 waterfalls and an Atlantic Ocean coastline. The country’s waterways harbor great potential for developing hydropower and expanding fisheries and aquaculture.

The land area happens to be the exact size of Hunan province, but in our case 75 percent of the surface is thickly forested. There are over 1,000 species of wood, of which several premium ones are already being exported to China. Investors are welcome to add value to our forestry products and then to export them in keeping with our legal and environmental stipulations.

Beneath the forest floor can be found untapped reserves of rare earth metals, uranium, silica, copper, nickel, iron, semi-precious stones and manganese. Bauxite, gold and diamonds are already being extracted.

Guyana’s fertile soil and large size relative to other Caribbean countries has earned it the sobriquet “the breadbasket of the Caribbean” due to its agricultural potential to feed the region. Improvements in land preparation, technology and species types can significantly boost the production of fruit, vegetables, livestock, seafood and biofuels. Guyana is also a major rice and sugar producer in the Caribbean. In tourism, the country’s tropical climate and

pristine features, including waterfalls, savannahs and virgin rainforests that teem with wild creatures and birds—not to mention the rich and diverse culture, cuisine and festivals—all make for attractive adventure tourism.

Investors in Guyana enjoy preferential access to markets in the US, Canada, Brazil and the Caribbean, with duty free or reduced tariffs to a market of 277 million consumers valued at more than \$130 billion.

In this regard, Guyana and China complement each other perfectly. Our abundance of resources and raw materials fits squarely with China’s financial and technological capabilities, such that the bases for cooperation under Belt and Road are already in place. Should Guyana eventually fall under the Belt and Road rubric, this initiative could best be launched by developing mid- and long-term development plans for economic and trade cooperation and by aligning those with regional cooperation plans.

VOF: On Feb 23, 1970, the Cooperative Republic of Guyana was founded. Arthur Chung, a Guyanese of Chinese descent, was then elected as the country’s first president. The Chinese have made great contributions to the economic development in Guyana since they began arriving in the country in 1853. In 2017, the Guyana government announced that Jan 12 each year would be the day to celebrate the arrival and settlement of Chinese immigrants in Guyana. Mr. Ambassador, would you like to

share with us your views on further enhancing the traditional friendship between the Chinese and Guyanese people?

KARRAN: The Guyanese population, particularly those of Chinese descent, thrilled with pride when President Arthur Chung was appointed. He is the first Chinese head of state of a non-Asian country.

As you have mentioned, from as early as 1853, long before Guyana’s Independence from Great Britain in 1966, Chinese immigrants began to settle in our country. Those pioneers originally came to work on our sugar plantations. Their descendants have played a prominent part in the economic, social, political and cultural dimensions of Guyanese society. From the inception, they applied their well-known propensity for thrift and hard work. They gravitated immediately to professional and business life, gaining prominence in commerce, law, medicine, the education system and so forth, while at the same time making considerable economic and cultural contributions to our society. These bonds between our two peoples have been sewn tightly with the passage of time, such that the threads of China are firmly stitched into the fabric of Guyana’s culture.

Jan12 has been designated as the day to pay homage to ancestors of Chinese origin and to applaud their contribution to our nation. A Chinese arrival monument has been erected at a place called Windsor Forest (village) in Guyana.

President David Granger of Guyana stated earlier this month that Chinese immigrants in Guyana abided with our local laws and regulations and dedicated themselves to building the Guyanese nation through their national spirit of diligence, perseverance and promotion of harmony. They are an integral part of the Guyana story—various ethnic groups working side by side, learning from and supporting each other. Their preservation of traditional Chinese culture has amplified the richness and diversity that already existed in the Guyanese culture. For all of this and more, Guyana became the first English-speaking Caribbean country to establish diplomatic relations with China in 1972.

At this year's ceremony to mark the 165th anniversary of Chinese arrival, President Granger stated that Chinese immigrants are as welcome to settle in Guyana right now as they were back in 1853. The number of Chinese in Guyana is small but growing. And, whereas they formerly came as laborers, today a new wave of Chinese immigrants is arriving, this time as investors and entrepreneurs, bringing along their expertise in areas such as commerce and construction while lending further strength to an already sturdy relationship.

Such bonds can be strengthened by more exposure, more interaction and greater interconnection. Continued traffic in entrepreneurs, tradesmen, technicians and tourists would serve to further deepen our friendship. There is scope to intensify our already excellent cooperation in the fields of education,

economic development, health, infrastructure development, defense and security.

VOF: In September 2017, the 2017 China (Anyang) International Conference of Chinese Characters was brought to the National Museum of Chinese Writing by the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries and the People's Government of Henan province. We have learned that Your Excellency attended and addressed the opening ceremony. In your remarks, you said, "As China's economy and its global presence have grown, so have its interactions with the international community and, understandably, this has caused the Chinese language and culture to be of deeper interest and relevance." Mr. Ambassador, in your opinion, what should China and Guyana do to strengthen connectivity in cultural exchanges?

KARRAN: I was honored to have been invited to deliver some brief remarks at the Anyang Conference on Chinese Characters. I stated then that as China's economy and its global presence have grown, so have its interactions with the international community, and that this has understandably caused the Chinese language and culture to be of deeper interest and relevance. A keen awareness of each other's culture is a prerequisite for increased tolerance, solidarity and cooperation.

Strengthening connectivity in

cultural exchanges between Guyana and China faces the challenge of surmounting barriers of distance and language. There have been regular cultural exchanges between our countries over the years. One notable initiative was a CPAFFC project that produced a remarkable book of paintings of Guyana by a group of visiting Chinese artists. The establishment of a Confucius Institute at the University of Guyana some years ago has given a significant boost to the teaching of Chinese culture in Guyana.

In terms of other worthwhile initiatives, exchanges in visual and literary arts can be promoted. Workshops and performances in music, fine arts and audiovisual arts are probably other areas in which much can be accomplished. To my mind, it would be good to give our young artists exposure to each other and let their creativity roam.

Guyanese culture has sprung from our people's roots in Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas, Caribbean influences and our geographic location in South America's Amazon. The three great religions of Christianity, Islam and Hinduism all flourish harmoniously within our communities. We would like to do more to share the rich, diverse character of our arts, cuisine and fashions along with our vibrant and colorful festivals and traditions framed by our pristine natural beauty.

I am confident that Guyana, a country that is little known in China, would be well-regarded when Chinese audiences discover more of these charms through the mutual exchanges of our cultures and peoples. ■

Uncle Hanzi in China

Mu Yu

“Uncle Hanzi, could you sign your autograph for me?”

“I want it too!”

In a classroom of the 39th Middle School of Anyang, Henan province, Uncle Hanzi was surrounded by his eager fans. In recent years, it has become quite normal for him.

In September 2017, the China (Anyang) International Conference of Chinese Characters was unveiled in Anyang, one of China’s ancient capitals. Uncle Hanzi’s red T-shirt and his head of silver hair were especially eye-catching. Wherever the T-shirt was seen, there would be a crowd of people. Journalists, scholars, working staff, businessmen and fans came here especially for him—they were all Uncle Hanzi’s fans.

At the beginning of 2017, Uncle Hanzi, whose real name is Richard Sears, gave a speech on China Central Television for its program *First Class of the New Semester*. He told the audience about his love affairs with Chinese characters, or *hanzi*. That accounted for his popularity among high school students, as was evidenced in his meeting with the crowd of fans at 39th Middle School. Seeing students writing calligraphic characters, Uncle Hanzi took



“Uncle Hanzi” —Richard Sears

over the pen to write some of his own, to the amazement of the student journalists. In the classroom, Uncle Hanzi wrote a character on the blackboard and shared its origin with the students. The youngsters listened with great interest. They were taught Chinese every day in school but had never heard the stories Uncle Hanzi told. Uncle Hanzi might feel a bit depressed, I thought. “Why,” he might ask, “do Chinese not know and not want to know the stories behind Chinese characters?”

Every time Uncle Hanzi had a chance to share *hanzi* stories, he liked to speak directly without beating around the bush. In writing down

a Chinese character, he tells the origin of every stroke. He was reluctant to tell how hard it had been for him to learn the Chinese language and what difficulties he had overcome to maintain a website about Chinese characters while living alone in the remote US state of Tennessee. All he wanted was to draw people’s attention to Chinese characters, even in China where people should have been much more zealous about studying them.

However, his ignorance of self would not diminish his legendary status as Uncle Hanzi, and his unusual fascination with Chinese characters makes him hard to ignore.

Uncle Hanzi and his *hanzi*

Richard Sears, from the United States, developed an interest in the Chinese language at a young age. In 1972, he spent a year's saving to buy a one-way ticket to Taiwan. At that time, his only wish was to become fluent—and literate—in Chinese. After 18 years of study, he was able to speak the language but was still unable to write it.

Like most other Chinese learners, Sears thought Chinese characters have too many strokes and are structured in illogical ways. However, the difference was that Sears was a physicist and computer expert. One day, on a fortuitous occasion, he learned about the evolution of the pictographic characters. It dawned on him that the seemingly capricious strokes all follow certain rules. But at that time, there were scarcely any etymological works explaining the origin of Chinese characters, either in English or Chinese.

"I found that nearly all Chinese rely on rote memorization to learn Chinese writing and have no idea about the origin of the characters," he said. At the age of 40, Sears determined to computerize the original forms of Chinese characters and find the inner logic of them. The enormous project went slowly for four years.

It seems that all legends need a tipping point to become successful. Sears's tipping point came at the age of 44: He had a near-fatal heart attack. The doctor told him he might have only one year left. Sears decided he would redouble his efforts to complete his etymology research.

Over the next seven years, Sears went to China five times and bought

more than 10,000 Chinese books. He employed a Chinese assistant to help him scan calligraphic characters into the computer. In his database, more than 100,000 ancient Chinese character forms were digitized. After spending all his \$300,000 savings, Sears could no longer afford to pay the assistant. To sustain the giant project, he worked alone in a 10-square-meter low-rent house, racing against time.

In 2002, his website went online. But the obscure website was like a little boat floating in an internet ocean. Even in China, few people knew that there was a foreigner spending all his money and time to search for the origin of Chinese characters.

Things began to turn around in 2011. One night in January, Sears received more than \$100 in donations in just one hour, which nearly equaled a whole year's worth of donations he had received before. On that day, his website received more than 600,000 hits. Thousands of emails poured into his mailbox. It was on that day he was called Uncle Hanzi for the first time. He liked the name very much. After that, Uncle Hanzi learned that a Chinese person had found his website by chance and forwarded it to others. Then more Chinese people found the website. That was the first time, Uncle Hanzi said, that he felt support from Chinese people. Before long, a production unit of Tianjin TV crossed the Atlantic to visit Uncle Hanzi in the United States.

Uncle Hanzi in China

At the end of 2011, Uncle Hanzi received a second invitation from Tian-

jin TV. He made a life-changing decision: go to China. Life in the country did not proceed smoothly. Though he had become popular, he was still financially strained. He was even cornered by visa trouble—once even given a deadline to leave China. Luckily Sina Weibo came to his rescue. An old friend of Uncle Hanzi named Yan Dixin wrote a comment on the social media platform:

"Richard Sears, an American, who is called Uncle Hanzi by Chinese friends, has spent all his savings and 20 years to conduct Chinese etymology research and created a website, www.chineseetymology.org, to promote the study. He devotes himself to *hanzi* and now lives a hard life in China. His visa is nearly expired, and he has to leave China in days. He is in Tianjin now and hopes to get a job as a teacher or translator. He wants to stay in China to continue his research. Hope you can help and forward this message!"

The message was spread across the internet. Finally, Uncle Hanzi was able to stay. Beijing Normal University offered him a job to teach physics in English and thus settled the visa problem.

This year is Uncle Hanzi's sixth in China. He has received increasing numbers of invitations to give speeches and attend conferences and forums. Under his latest social media post there is a comment: "I knew you and your story from the readers' column of CCTV. I was really touched! I am a Chinese teacher teaching foreigners. I really thank for your contribution to Chinese characters!"

At a forum of the China (Anyang)

International Conference of Chinese Characters, Uncle Hanzi sat side by side with scholars from universities. He opened his giant database and referred to Chinese characters one after another to illustrate his points of view.

He asked the audience confidently: “Do you know how the character 蛇 (snake) came to be?” I don’t know how other listeners felt, but I perceived a touch of blame in his voice. Maybe that was because I felt somewhat ashamed. As a Chinese, how can I have no idea about the origin of Chinese characters?

On May 10, 2015, Uncle Hanzi wrote online: “I hope you Chinese love your own culture. Chinese characters best represent Chinese culture.” I was shocked at the word “hope” uttered by a foreigner who had devoted half his life to the study of Chinese characters. It is reassuring that the sentiment expressed by Uncle Hanzi was echoed by some Chinese scholars and volunteers dedicated to the same cause, as indicated by the comments left on his new website.

The first time I logged onto Uncle Hanzi’s website, I saw a page with poorly designed blocks of bold colors. The most eye-catching was a full screen of ancient Chinese characters in disarray. Now, the website has changed its domain name to be hanziyuan.net. A search for “Uncle Hanzi” on the Baidu engine leads to this website. Apparently, the new website was designed by a professional. Later I learned that the professional was Yan Dixin, who helped Uncle Hanzi stay in China through Weibo’s influence. Yan is one of the best engineers in Microsoft, and was recognized as the “Most Valuable



Uncle Hanzi sharing stories about the Chinese characters with students

Professional” in the company.

The new website has a reasonable layout, eye-friendly colors and an easy-to-operate search engine. Type a Chinese character in the search box and you can get all kinds of the forms it has taken at different points of history. Taking “车” (vehicle) as an example, the website lists 13 forms of Oracle characters, 52 forms of Bronze characters, one form of seal characters and 19 forms of Liushutong characters. Every form has been coded by Uncle Hanzi. We can begin to appreciate how big a project this was.

Uncle Hanzi continues to update his official WeChat account, called “Uncle Hanzi’s Story” (汉字叔叔讲故事). The vivid short stories are written in both Chinese and English. Uncle Hanzi plans to make videos using those stories and include them on his website. As he has already written over 1,000 stories, the video plan will be another giant project. But I will not ask him about the funding and time that will be needed. If Uncle Hanzi were

a person who always worries about a slew of questions before taking action, the website wouldn’t have been as successful as it is.

“My principle is not to think too much,” he said in an interview. “If I can begin today, I do it today. Then I try hard to find a way to continue every day.”

Outside the National Museum of Chinese Writing, where the Chinese characters conference was held, Ms Chen, Uncle Hanzi’s assistant, ran toward a crowd of white doves with a yell and happily took photos of them. Uncle Hanzi stood beside me and said with a big smile: “She’s just a child sometimes.”

I was touched by that pure smile. That is a child’s smile. Yes, only a man with the innocent heart of a child can remain true to his original aspiration for decades!

The good thing is that Uncle Hanzi is still in China, and his story of *hanzi* will go on. ■

China's people-centered development

Jinith de Silva

The Communist Party of China has met every five years since 1921 for its National Congress. Founded with just 50 members, it has grown to 89 million, with 4.5 million branches throughout China. It is the world's largest political party.

The 19th Congress of the CPC was held in Beijing, beginning on Oct 18, 2017. At this gathering, delegates evaluated the work done over the past five years and elected new leaders of the Party. Those new leaders will deliver the program that will carry the country forward during the next five years.

At the congress Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, presented an analytical description of the accomplished over the past five years. China's economy has been transitioning from high- to medium-speed growth in that time. The average annual GDP growth rate from 2013 to 2016 was 7.2 percent, higher than the average rate 2.6 percent for the world economy and the 4 percent rate of the other developing countries. China's total GDP of 73.7 trillion yuan (\$11.2 trillion) in 2016 accounted for 14.8 percent of the world economy. It is obvious that China has completed a very successful five years. The initia-

tives taken since 2012, especially the economic reforms, the Chinese Dream, the Belt and Road Initiative and the anti-corruption campaign account for the rapid development.

At the congress Xi was re-elected as general secretary. Also this congress accepted his position as equivalent to that of the great Chinese leaders Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping. He then laid down the CPC's future vision and programs through 2050. The new theme has been called "socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era". The basis for this new concept is Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory and Xi Jinping Thought. The CPC's aim is to arrive at this target in 30 years, and it has laid down the steps for achieving it.

The first step is to turn China into a moderately prosperous society in all aspects by 2020 (*xiaokang* in Chinese). The country plans to eradicate poverty completely by 2020, ahead of the Party's 100-year anniversary in 2021. It has lifted nearly 800 million people out of poverty in the last four decades. During Xi Jinping's most recent five years of service, the country has managed to eliminate poverty among 100 million people. The balance left is

about 50 million. Eliminating that by 2020 will be a landmark achievement.

The Party's ultimate goal is to convert China into a modern socialist country by 2050—one that is prosperous, strong, culturally advanced, harmonious and beautiful. As Xi said at the collective study session of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee in Beijing on Dec 8, 2017: "At the present stage, the basic feature of China's economic development is the transition from a phase of rapid growth to a stage of high-quality development."

Under the CPC's new vision after 2020, every Chinese product will be of high quality and eco friendly. The human resources of the country should also be developed. Fiscal control should be brought to a sound level. All of the country's provinces should be equally developed. China will accelerate introducing new innovations to the world. In the past China introduced many new innovations to the world—gunpowder, paper, printing and the compass, to name just a few. It is clear that the Chinese people have the ability to develop new innovations. The development of high-speed railways over the last 10 years stands as testimony to

this. Today the world's most advanced high-speed train service is found in China. More than 24,000 kilometers are served by high-speed trains traveling up to 350 kilometers per hour. In the United States, high speed trains reach only 170 km/h. Today, China occupies the premier place in the production of high-speed trains, surpassing Canada, Germany, France and Japan. President Xi pointed out in his report delivered to the 19th National Congress of the CPC that innovation is the primary force driving development and the strategic underpinning for building a modernized economy.

Xi, who rose to power in 2012, has managed to create great discipline in the country. Even at the congress he stressed the importance of creating discipline within the Party and country. He pointed out that corruption is a great hindrance to development and insisted that government servants vigorously investigate instances of misuse of State funds. Many officials have been investigated on corruption charges since 2012.

In June, for the first time in Chinese history, the CPC completed inspections, within a five year administrative term, covering CPC organizations at the provincial level, central CPC and government organs, major State-owned enterprises, central financial institutions and universities.

It has coordinated workshops to teach all officials how to carry out public service honorably. No one should earn anything in a dishonorable manner using his position. Any decision one takes should be in the interest of the country.

Today, China speaks of the well-being of other friendly nations. The Belt and Road Initiative put forward by Xi in 2013 is a good example of this. Massive infrastructure development will take place in the countries that come under this plan. It will make the economies of these countries stronger. With that in mind, China created Silk Road Fund and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. It has expanded freight train services to Europe in the past few years under the Belt and Road concept. As a result, Chinese goods arrive in European markets quickly and cheaper. At the same time, European goods also arrive in China faster. Countries such as Spain, Germany, Britain and Poland enjoy the greatest benefits of this train service. Automobile makers Mercedes Benz and BMW, which are considered icons of the German motor industry, send their products to China by train. The Belt and Road Initiative will bring Scotch whisky—a symbol of national pride in Britain—to the vast Chinese market by train. In addition, wine made in France, Spain and Italy now comes to Chinese market more quickly by rail. It has been proved beyond doubt that the Belt and Road Initiative has contributed immensely to the economic development of China and other connected countries. It also has contributed to strong friendly bonds between these countries.

In addition to domestic initiatives, the CPC Congress also reiterated China's role in world peace and development and emphasized the need to continue the path of peaceful development; hold the banner of peace, development, cooperation and mutual benefit; and

uphold its fundamental foreign policy for maintaining world peace and promoting common development.

I recall a statement by our former foreign minister, Laksman Kadirgamar, about the Sri Lanka-China relationship when a bust of Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai was unveiled at the Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall in Colombo on April 9, 2005. Kadirgamar said:

“When a relationship is based on mutual respect and affection, the size, importance and power of one of the two countries in that relationship does not have a disproportionate influence on the other. China has never sought to influence the domestic politics of Sri Lanka. Over the years China has proved to be benign and sincere, with no ulterior motives for befriending Sri Lanka. She has never tried to dominate, undermine or destabilize Sri Lanka.”

The leaders of China who assumed office after the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949 formulated their policies for the well-being of their people. They will definitely eradicate poverty by 2020. This is a message to the entire world, where poverty is rampant in so many places. They have formulated policies that will make every Chinese person happy and content and living in a good environment by 2050.

In 2049 they will celebrate the centennial of the founding of the People's Republic of China. By then, the Chinese people will be among the most prosperous in the world. ■

The author is vice-president of Sri Lanka China Society.

Chinese breeze blows over the Rhine

Sun Yajing

There is a beautiful city in southwestern Germany, lying on the southern bank of the Rhine River, which has flowed quietly nearby since ancient times. The city was the hometown of Johannes Gutenberg, the inventor of modern typography, as well as of an excellent Bundesliga soccer team. It features a combination of ancient flavor and modern fashion, with not only time-honored churches and places of historic interest but also a modern city hall and five-star hotels.

The city is Mainz, the capital of Rheinland-Pfalz state.

In October, I had the honor of joining a delegation of the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries on a visit to Mainz for the Exhibition of Selected Chinese Folk Art Works. Exhibits included Chinese paper-cuttings, shadow puppets and New Year's paintings. For better exhibition effects, we also invited artists from China's Gansu province—a paper-cutter and a shadow puppeteer.

Foreign faces, Chinese hearts

Kurt Karst, our coordinator in Germany, is CPAFFC's old friend. He has a nickname, Lao Ka (short for Old Karst in Chinese), which he likes very much. It was my first meeting with Lao Ka. On seeing him, I was embraced



Zhang Yongxin, a paper-cutting artist, with children at a local Chinese language school

by his enthusiasm, friendliness and directness, which made me feel as if we were old friends reunited after many years of separation.

Lao Ka is now the president of the Federation of Germany-China Friendship Associations. Before this position, he had been working as the managing director of Villa Musica Rheinland-Pfalz. In both capacities he showed his affection for China and Chinese culture and contributed greatly to Sino-German cultural exchanges. To improve publicity for the exhibition, he took part in designing and printing the brochures, and distributed them to members of the federation for further promotion. In addition, he volunteered to be our driver, escorting us to different venues for performances. During the first few days of the visit, I

was a bit lethargic because of jet lag. Seeing the energetic Lao Ka, I couldn't help but doubt that he was 71 years old.

Besides Karst, we also had the company of Udo Lühning, who was also with the federation. He is an affable man who loves the Chinese tea culture. In past years, he traveled to different parts of China visiting tea plantations. The flavor of tea added to his understanding and fondness for China. During our visit there, Udo patiently explained the history and cultural background of Mainz and shared his knowledge of tea. As I saw it, Udo was a typical German craftsman—earnest, meticulous and dedicated.

Art knows no boundaries

On Oct 15, the German stop of

Exhibition of Selected Chinese Folk Art Works opened in the Mainz Landes museum. At the opening ceremony, the lecture hall on the first floor of the museum was packed with audience members. Besides the secretary of the state Ministry of Culture and the director-general of Generaldirektion Kulturelles Erbe Rheinland-Pfalz and other guests, most spectators came after learning about the exhibition through publicity activities. After the opening ceremony, the guests of honor and other visitors went to view the exhibits on the second floor. At the center of the exhibition hall, the two Chinese folk artists' performance areas were surrounded by curious viewers. When Zhang Yongxin, the paper-cutting artist, cut a piece of red paper into a butterfly instantly with a pair of scissors, warm applause broke out from the audience. At the next table, Yang Dengyi, the shadow puppet performer, attracted the audience as soon as he began to sing a selection from a puppetry opera. The audience watched intently as Yang controlled the movements of a puppet with two sticks. They were enchanted by the exotic melody, even though they couldn't understand the words of the ballad.

After the opening ceremony, we gave two more performances at the museum. The size of the audience that came to watch beat our expectations. Once, a silver-haired woman told me that she hoped Mr Zhang would make some paper butterflies and swallows for her. She said she wanted to paste the exquisite paper-cuttings on postcards to be sent to friends. When Zhang handed the vivid paper-cuttings to her, she put them carefully in a book, as if they were her most precious valuables. Yang was a quiet man, always seen sitting

behind a desk making shadow puppets. The audience was amazed to see him use a knife to make figures, one after another, out of translucent ox hide with deft carving and hammering. Every time Yang sang the shadow-puppet opera in a local dialect, the audience responded with warm applause.

Seeing this, I realized the meaning of "Art knows no boundaries".

My Chinese heart

During our stay in Germany, we also visited two Chinese schools, in Mainz and Darmstadt, for folk-art performances. We noticed that the number of Chinese living in Germany is growing. In restaurants, we often met Chinese who had married Germans and became rooted in that country. Whenever they had eye contact with us, they offered a friendly and expressive smile or even came over for a chat.

At a performance in the Mainz Museum, we met a woman surnamed Huang who was born in Hong Kong. Many years ago, she met her German husband, fell in love and followed him to Germany. They heard about the Chinese folk art exhibition and then drove here to have a look. Though she hadn't been back to China for years, she apparently had kept her love for Chinese culture. Knowing that there would be more performances in local Chinese schools, she said she would come again. And sure enough, when we went to the Anhua Chinese School in Mainz, the couple were there waiting.

It was in the Chinese schools that we learned how large the number of Chinese living in Germany was and how profound an attachment they have to China and Chinese culture. Most of

the viewers of our performances were Chinese-German kids accompanied by their parents. I wasn't a performer, so I had the opportunity to see how these children and their parents interacted with the two Chinese folk artists. I saw a father intently reading *The Yellow Storm* by the legendary Chinese writer Lao She; I saw a couple encouraging their child to converse in Chinese with the folk artists; I saw a mother proudly shooting photos of her child, who was learning how to make shadow puppets. For a while, I felt as if I were at a parent-child party in a Chinese classroom. It struck me at that moment that whether or not they still had Chinese nationality, and no matter how long they had been away from China, their attachment to China and Chinese culture had never changed.

How time flies. It was soon the time for us to leave Germany for home. Sitting inside the plane, I watched from a window as the sky darkened and thought of a poem written by Goethe in his late life—*Chinesisch-deutsche Tages und Jahreszeiten* (literally meaning Chinese-German Days and Seasons). "Tiles, windows, pillars, all have been shade-covered; but no matter where to peep, I still see the Oriental Paradise". That's Goethe's yearnings and love for China 200 years ago. Now, given the Belt and Road Initiative, we have every reason to believe that more cultural exchanges can be carried out to facilitate the German people's understanding and fondness for the vast oriental land of happiness. And a warmer Chinese breeze can be felt on the banks of the Rhine. ■

All the way to the west

Liu Jiayun

Back in the Tang Dynasty, the Silk Road extended eastward to Japan, making it the east end of the transcontinental route for exchanges of people and commodities. In September, with the opportunity presented by the China-Japan Silk Road Calligraphy and Seal-Cutting Exhibition, we took 11 professional and amateur calligraphers and seal-cutting artists, all older than 60 years, on a trip to Gansu province to savor the ancient road.

Calligraphy in China and Japan

This year's China-Japan Silk Road Calligraphy and Seal-Cutting Exhibition was jointly presented by the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries; Gansu People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries; Dingxi Municipal People's Government; Ishikawa-ken Japan-China Friendship Association; and Hokushi Tenkai, a Japanese calligraphy and seal-cutting arts association, following a similar display held last year in Japan. The exhibits consisted of nearly 200 works that had been collected by Dingxi and Hokushi Tenkai. Exhibits from Japan included Xixia characters' calligraphy and seal-cutting and poetry of Wang Wei, Chen Zi'ang and Wang Zhihuan. It also



Fragrant grass and desert near Crescent Lake at dusk

reflected the Japanese artists' remote but favorable impression of Gansu and the Silk Road.

Little as I knew about calligraphy and seal-cutting, the passion and earnestness these artists and amateurs demonstrated for the art deeply touched me. After the opening ceremony on the morning of Sept 26, the Japanese guests began to view the exhibition, observing each work hung on the wall with great relish. They seemed to be more immersed in carefully studying the calligraphy techniques than merely taking pleasure in art. Though some of them were veteran artists themselves whose own works are good enough to be displayed, they studied the

exhibits like primary school pupils—innocent and devoted, ready to express admiration for any work they enjoyed.

Nanan Kitamuro, head of the Japanese delegation, has been a friend of the CPAFFC for more than 20 years, devoted to co-hosting a series of exhibitions annually. Past exhibitions embraced themes like the Western Xia Kingdom's characters, ancient written languages of minority ethnic groups, ancient Chinese characters, characters of surnames and the culture of the Heavenly Stems and Earthly Branches, among others, which, as I see them, are more than fascinating. For Kitamuro, these are treasures with great familiarity. The theme of the latest

exhibition—"Silk Road"—is more than a recent hot topic but rather suggests a dream shared by many people of the older generation in Japan.

As early as in the late 1950s, the renowned Japanese writer Yasushi Inoue wrote two books about northwest China. After their publication, *Tun-huang* and *Lou-lan* soon became best-sellers in Japan. His lyrical description of the mysterious northwestern part of China aroused great interest among his contemporaries, who developed a yearning for a look of the region. And his passion for Chinese culture gently caressed the hearts of a generation of Japanese like the soft, fine sand of the Silk Road.

Silk Road anciently and today

After winding up the activities in Lanzhou, we embarked on a journey to the west, following the ancient Silk Road, to learn about local practices and customs.

The average age of the Japanese artists was 68, the oldest being 76. Before we set out, I worried that the weather and geographic conditions in northwest China might not be agreeable, but to my surprise, none of them complained or gave up, despite the harsh environment of mountains, deserts, scorching sun and unbearable aridity. On the contrary, what drew them to the place was exactly the desolate desert and oasis they had never seen before, and the wildness and grandeur they had never experienced. Kitamuro told me that when she told their members about this Gansu trip several months ago, they all were very excited and eager to sign up for the



Japanese artists and amateurs view exhibited works

exhibition so that they could have a chance to appreciate the ancient Huaxia civilization. Yet because of age or physical condition some of them had to withdraw with tears of regret.

Scenery, food, history—everything along the way was intriguing. At Maiji Mountain, the artists took steps steadily upward to worship Buddha statues that had born a thousand years of exposure to the weather. At Jiayu Pass, they looked with great interest at the lonely buildings on the vast expanse of desert. At Mogao Grottoes, they closely followed their guide, attentively listening to him telling stories about the artworks that had been kept there for thousands of years. As the buses traversed the Gobi desert, an old artist used his pencil to sketch scenery along the road. Though the drawings were rather simple, they looked truer to the landscape than photographs. An album of paintings, I thought, would be the

most precious memory this trip for him.

The day before the trip ended, we went sightseeing at the famous Crescent Lake and didn't return to the hotel until the evening. After dinner, the Japanese artists were so excited about what they had seen during the day that they sang *Desert Under the Moon*, a well-known Japanese nursery rhyme composed by a Japanese poet in 1923. Someone played a harmonica to accompany the chorus.

"On the desert under the moon comes from afar a pair of camels. Riding on the leading camel is the prince, while on the following one is the princess—both in white. They trudge straight forward. Where are you two going? In the night with dim moonlight, a couple of camels are trudging forward, crossing sand dunes in quietness." ■

Mystery of Terracotta Warriors attracts Romanian TV viewers

Luo Dongquan

On Oct 1, 2017, *Mystery of Terracotta Warriors* aired on Channel 1 of Romania's state television, introducing the achievements that China's Shaanxi province and the city of Xi'an had made in conserving historic heritages and developing the economy, tourism, education and culture, as well as changes that had taken place in society, urban appearance and people's lives. Shaanxi, especially its capital, Xi'an, was the starting point of the ancient Silk Road and a birthplace of Chinese civilization. The film has aroused much attention and received active responses in the Romanian audience.

It starts with an interview of Xiao Yunru, an erudite scholar who has long been devoted to studying the Silk Road culture and acted as the image ambassador of local culture. Xiao, standing outside the south gate of the Xi'an city wall, told the Romanian guests stories of the region's long history and splendid culture, as well as the great changes that have come to the city in recent years. He invited Marina Almasan, the interviewer, to tour the city on a shared bicycle.

The Romanians made videos of well-known historic sites, including the Shaanxi History Museum, Daci'en Temple, Forest of Steles, terracotta

warriors (formally known as Emperor Qinshihuang's Mausoleum museum), Banpo Museum and the Grand Mosque in Xi'an. They also recorded Shaanxi Television Station, Airport New City in Xixian New Area, Shaanxi Automobile Group, Yangling Farm-Tech Demonstration Zone, Northwest University, Qujiang Film & TV Center, Great Tang West Market and Tang Paradise, which represent the economic, technological and cultural development of Shaanxi province.

The Romanian guests were invited to watch a Qinqiang Opera performance at Yisushe Theatre, and attend an evening gala for Chinese Valentine's Day held by Shaanxi Television Station, where Almasan interviewed well-known singers Wang Jianfang, Sha sha, and Hao Meng, accompanied by Xiao. The film recorded the beautiful night scenes of Xi'an, dazzling small commodities market and stalls selling local snacks, as well as the happy faces of senior citizens and graceful plaza dances.

At the end of the film, Zhuang Changxing, director of the Publicity Department and member of the Standing Committee of the Shaanxi Committee of the Communist Party of China, said: "Shaanxi is a beautiful and hospitable place. We welcome

more Romanian friends to come to visit, do business or go to school. May the friendship between the Chinese and Romanian peoples last forever."

Almasan and her cameraman were impressed by Shaanxi's ancient civilization and the prosperity of Xi'an and the development of its new satellite towns, and were deeply touched by the hospitality of the local people. With great enthusiasm, unique perspectives and high efficiency, they completed editing of more than 20 hours of material within a month after returning to Romania. State television presented the 50-minute documentary to the audience in tribute to the 68th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China.

Narration in the documentary was brief, lively and humorous, matching well the beautiful and clean shots and background music to highlight the theme. After the broadcast, the film received a warm response.

On the evening of its premiere, Romulus Budura, a former Romanian ambassador to China, and his wife, Anna Budura, sinologist and historian, wrote in an email to the film's producer:

"The documentary brought us great pleasure and satisfaction by showing the urban landscape of Xi'an, a city

of both ancient traditions and modern developments. We felt as if we were falling into a mysterious world, but we knew what was shown about Xi'an and Shaanxi was real and true. We've been there several times and have paid attention to its development. Thus we were glad to have seen the new 21st-century appearance of the place. Congratulations on the achievements there and on your successful work."

The well-known Romanian poet Lucian, who was also director of the Lasi Press, wrote in his email sent in on the following day:

"The leading role in the film was played by light—the happy light in people's eyes, the brilliant light of ancient history, the dazzling light of local development, the flickering light of the urban night. The theme was joy—the joy of perfection, the joy of hospitality, the joy of real and close unity against exaggeration. The tone of the film is the color green—on the historic statues, in the streets, in the fields, gardens, and parks."

Almasan, the TV host and producer, together with TV cameraman, Marian Grigore, visited Shaanxi and Xi'an from Aug 22 to Sept 1, 2017, at the invitation of the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries and Shaanxi People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries.

Friendly to China, Almasan has told many of its stories to the Romanian people with her pen and through the lens. In 2014, she came to China at her own expense and later published the book *Ten Days in Beijing*. Invited by the CPAFFC and the Shanghai People's Association for Friendship with

Foreign Countries, she came to China in 2015 for a 10-day visit to Shanghai that resulted in the book *Skyscrapers in Shanghai*. In September 2016, she visited Beijing for a 10-day shooting tour at the invitation of the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television. After returning to Romania, she produced the TV show *Mystic China*, which was broadcast on Oct 1.

Her articles and films were made in the form of travelogues, faithfully and vividly recording what she saw and heard in real time, which won hearty acclaim from audiences.

Almasan worked with high efficiency in conducting interviews in China. After a day's shooting, she seized every available moment in the evening to write a diary-style report about what she visited and saw during the day and mailed it back to Romania to be published in her online magazine, *Women's Charm*. Every article was more than 2,000 words. She even managed to complete her last piece in the series (the 11th) on her flight back to Romania. In this article, which explored her feelings about Shaanxi, Almasan wrote:

"During the last 10 days, I passed by innumerable residential and office buildings, traveled on wide and modern highways, visited terracotta warriors known as the 8th Wonder of the World, as well as many other eye-opening museums, and walked on the ancient city walls.

"In modern shopping malls, I could feel the pulse of the people's fashionable life. In theaters, I watched actors singing and dancing in a totally different style from the stages in Europe. My partner and I took a shot of

the old pagoda which has been standing there for thousands of years, and a bird-eye view of the city from the top floor of the TV Tower, the highest building in the city. I meditated in temples; got in a heavy-duty truck of the latest design; saw pumpkins and peppers growing on trees and dangling in the air; talked with overseas students on a university campus as big as a district in Bucharest; tasted local cuisine of varied flavors endowed by the nature; visited the modern-equipped Shaanxi TV station which made me wonder if some day my TV station could be like this; meandered in a bookstore as big as a mall; and interviewed many local celebrities.

"What I saw and heard during the 10 days almost made me forget to return home, not to mention all the wonderful friends I made there. They were very much interested in the stories I told them about my own country, and eager to forge closer relations with the Romanian people. How wonderful!

"May I conclude my trip by saying this: There is a land of mystery in the East, 8,000 kilometers from Romania, where the people are eager to become our friends and hope to establish a relationship of mutually beneficial cooperation."

At the end of each episode, the film acknowledged the help provided by the Chinese embassy in Romania, the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries and the Shaanxi People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries. ■

The author is the vice-president of China-Romania Friendship Association.

Linking past and present through fashion and art

Yu Xiaodong

The curtain rises to the sound of a magnificent symphony, and a vast expanse of desert appears on the backdrop. Several young students are trekking along the Silk Road, investigating local folk art. The vigorous youths, shocked and moved by what they have seen at historical sites, express their admiration for both the ancient and modern roads as the theme song is sung in chorus, accompanied by the orchestra.

On Nov 24, a large-scale stage play—*Silk Road and Youth*—was staged at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. The play was sponsored by the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries and the Education Department of Liaoning province with the support of the China Friendship Art Exchange Association, the Publicity Department of the CPC Dalian Committee, Dalian Jinpu New Area CPC Working Committee, Dalian Literature & Art Association and Dalian Art College.

The 6,000-strong audience included Chen Zhili, vice-chair of the Standing Committee of the 11th National People's Congress; Li Yi, Party secretary of China Federation of Literature; Hu Sishe, vice-president of the CPAFFC; Zheng Fuzhi, assistant minister of education; Akram Zeynalli, ambassador of Azerbaijan to China;

Meng Na Devi, ambassador of Malawi to China; Li Miaoguang, ambassador of Mauritius to China; and diplomatic envoys from Vietnam, Japan, Singapore, Kyrgyzstan, Cameroon, Gabon, Armenia, Namibia, Liberia, Somalia, the Central African Republic, Angola, Equatorial Guinea, and Congo (Brazzaville); representatives from relevant Chinese government departments; and college teachers and students.

The play was created as an ode to the grand Belt and Road Initiative. For thousands of years, different cultures on the ancient Silk Road shared radiance and beauty as they interacted with one another, giving birth to the "Silk Road spirit" of peace, openness, inclusiveness, mutual trust and mutual benefit, which has won admiration across the world. The concept has developed to include new dimensions. As a legacy of collisions and exchanges between different civilizations, the spirit of the Silk Road is not exclusively Chinese. It has always been the commonwealth of the mankind. The Silk Road is not only a road for trade but also one for culture and innovation.

The core concept of the Belt and Road Initiative is to inherit and carry forward the spirit of the ancient Silk Road. Its history of more than 2,000 years has proved that as long as the



Stage play, *Silk Road and Youth*, at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing

Silk Road spirit is practiced, people of different races, religions and cultural backgrounds can share peace and common development. Today, as we are engaged in the construction of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, we need to carry on such traditions as peaceful cooperation, openness, inclusiveness, mutual learning and mutual benefit. Promoting the Belt and Road helps meet China's need for greater communication and cooperation with the rest of the world.

The Silk Road represents the glorious past of the Chinese nation. The focus on youth aims at the nation's rejuvenation and future development. The drama *Silk Road and Youth* tells the stories of Zhang Qian's diplomatic mission to the Western Regions during the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220) and Zheng He's voyage to South Seas and

Africa during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). The play showcases artistic and literary elements of different regions, countries and nationalities through music, dance, poetry recitation and drama.

The play was smartly conceived to convey a lofty and inspiring theme through the narration of grand stories with rich cultural connotations. In a beautiful and youthful stage setting, it offered the audience an audio and visual feast fusing the historical with the modern and the East with the West.

Among the performances, *Music and Dance of the Prosperous Tang Dynasty* was as graceful as fairies flying gently; *Long Nails Dance of Thailand* and *Foot Bell Dance of Bengal* brought an exotic flavor; the improvisational dance *Zheng He's Voyage to the West* was spectacular; *Desk Dance* was full of youthful vigor; and the little drama *My Father Far Away from Me* was affectionate and touching.

After the performance, experts and scholars from Peking University, Central University for Nationalities, Central Academy of Drama, Central Conservatory of Music, Beijing Normal University and China Academy of Social Sciences had an academic discussion on *Silk Road and Youth*.

The experts spoke highly of the play's artistic ingenuity and the strong political, social and cultural responsibilities embodied in the drama. They also offered many valuable suggestions for improvement. They hoped the drama could be refined and be shown on a larger world stage to propagate Chinese culture. ■

For Greece-China friendship

Wang Runke



Vassilis Xiros, consul-general of Greece in Shanghai

I met Consul-General Vassilis Xiros (Chinese name 习落实 Xi Luoshi) at the Greek National Day reception in Shanghai held by the Consulate General of the Hellenic Republic in March last year. I was impressed by the young, handsome and energetic diplomat.

My trip to Shanghai this time was related to an event I experienced 20 years ago, when I was working at the Chinese embassy in Albania. At that time, a civil riot broke out, triggered by a fundraising scam in Albania, and the embassy organized the evacuation of nationals immediately. On our request for help, the Greek Ministry of National Defense sent three warships to evacuate Chinese to Greece's Corfu Island. The person in charge of the evacuation was Alexandros Xiros, the military attache of the Greek embassy in Albania. He

was the father of Vassilis Xiros. On March 15, the day of the evacuation, he drove to escort our motorcade to Durres from Tirana. We encountered sniper fire on our way, and the rear window was shot through by a bullet. Fortunately, no one was injured and we arrived at Durres safely. We expressed our sincere thanks to the Greek officer, praising his bravery.

Vassilis Xiros, who was a teenager at that time, developed a strong interest in China after he was told the details of the Chinese evacuation by his father. During our meeting in Shanghai, the younger Xiros recalled what his father had said about the event—that he had been deeply impressed by the discipline and organization the Chinese demonstrated during the evacuation. There were no casualties despite all the difficulties and dangers. Everything

went smoothly. In 2003, the elder Xiros died in a traffic accident while visiting Romania in the capacity of president of the Hellenic Military Academy.

The younger Xiros was influenced by his father and developed an interest in China and has closely followed developments ever since. He was particularly interested in ancient China and read several books on Chinese history. He said that China played an important role in global history and noted its world-influencing economy. After becoming consul-general in Shanghai, he became interested in the modern history of China, saying he hoped to read more Chinese books after work to learn more about its contemporary developments. He also made painstaking efforts to learn Chinese. He has greatly improved his Chinese proficiency in the past year, and is able to conduct simple conversations in Chinese now.

In May 2017, the Year of China-Greece Cultural Exchanges and Cooperation year, the Greek prime minister and his team came to China to participate in the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation. Vassilis Xiros said that he has been working hard to boost the bilateral relationship in trade, investment, tourism, education and culture, and will especially promote cultural exchanges. At the Greek National Day reception, he joined the Chinese band for an impromptu performance of Greek music, demonstrating his musical talent. He said the work in Shanghai has been the most enjoyable part of his life. We believe that Consul-General Xiros will help push the Sino-Greek friendship to a higher level. ■

Chinese lanterns light up winter town in France

Kang Jingyuan

On Nov 30, 2017, the Chinese Lantern Festival celebration began at Foucaud Park in Gaillac, a small town in southwestern France. The event, jointly sponsored by the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries and the Zigong Municipal People's Government and Gaillac City Hall—and operated by Zigong Lantern Group—proved to be a great success.

CPAFFC Vice-President Song Jingwu, Chinese Consul-General Zhu Liying in Marseille, Chairman Huang Dechun of Zigong Lantern Group, Chief Executive Christophe Ramond of the French province of Tarn and Mayor Patrice Gausserand of Gaillac attended and addressed the opening ceremony.

In his speech, Song said that amity between people holds the key to sound relations between states, and that amity stems from the connection of people's hearts, which is mostly embodied in cultural exchanges. He noted that China and France are cultural giants in their hemispheres, and their cultural exchanges have continued for centuries. Both peoples, Song said, cherish their cultural traditions, and both are openhearted and have mutual respect. "We hope that the lanterns will convey the Chinese people's wishes for a happy life, a better China-France



The Chinese Lantern Festival celebration at Foucaud Park in Gaillac, France

relationship and a peaceful world, as well as a desire to build a community of shared future for all humankind."

The Chinese Lantern Festival in Gaillac was a substantive move taken by Zigong and Gaillac to implement their agreement on cooperation, after they were introduced to one another by the CPAFFC. The largest event of its kind ever held in Europe, the Chinese lantern show—which ran from Dec 1 to Jan 31—covered an area of 120 acres. More than 500 lanterns in 35 varieties were displayed under themes of traditional Chinese culture and Gaillac's history and wine, which matched each other in interest.

A team of 40 engineers from Zigong completed the huge installation in only three months, winning respect from the French side for "China

speed” and “China quality”. Each piece of the final lighting was a delicate masterpiece. On the opening evening, a set of towering lanterns modeled after Beijing’s Temple of Heaven, and another featuring pandas with bamboo, were lighted at Mayor Gausserand’s “start off” command. Exclamations and applause broke out as the fantastic scene appeared outside the floor-to-ceiling window of the hall. Many media outlets from both China and France covered the event, and Television Francais 1 interviewed Vice-President Song.

For Gaillac, a town of less than 20,000 population, the lantern show was a grand festival and a hot topic of town talk. Streets decorated with Chinese lanterns appeared beaming and joyful. The winter turned warm, with lanterns and light boxes appearing everywhere.

Gausserand was proud of his “big decision”. Earlier in 2017, he had visited Zigong and watched the lantern festival there at the invitation of the CPAFFC. He was impressed by its scale and richness. He then made the decision to hold a festival like this back in his town for five consecutive years. During the construction of the display in Gaillac, the busy mayor managed to find time every day to visit the work site as the blueprint became a reality. When asked about the number of visitors, he said he expected the total to surpass 200,000, more than a dozen times Gaillac’s population.

The festival was a great success. The lighting of lanterns represented the Chinese people’s best wishes to the French people. It would also serve as a prelude to the China-Europe Tourism Year of 2018. ■

From where we started

Huang Yajing



The college student delegation of the Shaolin Boxing Federation visited Shaolin Temple.

The year 2017 marked the 45th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations between China and Japan. Both countries carried out a variety of friendly exchanges. On Aug 31, So Yuki (Zong Yougui), president of Japan’s Shorinji Kempo Group, together with a delegation of 72 undergraduates, paid a two-day visit to Henan province. A series of friendly exchange activities was conducted at Zhengzhou University.

Shorinji Kempo Group was founded in 1947 by So Doshin (Zong Daochen), and inherited by his daughter So Yuki (Zong Yougui) after his death. With 1.9 million registered members, the group currently has 2,900 branches in 29 countries around the

world. It is influential in political and financial sectors, as well as with the royal family in Japan and has set up branches in significant organizations such as Japan Junior Sports Clubs, the Japanese Higher Education Union, Japanese College Union, Japanese Industry League and Japan’s Self-Defense Forces Union. A number of distinguished politicians used to be members of the group, including the former Japanese prime ministers Masayoshi Ohira and Keizo Obuchi.

As a visiting professor from Zhengzhou University and a winner of the Henan Yellow River Friendship Award and the National Friendship Award in Henan province, Ms So Yuki has been actively engaged in promoting

exchanges between the young people of the two countries for many years. She brought a number of student delegations to Henan for diverse and fruitful activities interacting with Zhengzhou University and Zhengzhou Huimin Middle School.

Shorinji Kempo Group has donated more than 34,000 Japanese books to Zhengzhou University to set up the Zong Daochen Library in support of the university's teaching of the Japanese language. In 2015, So Yuki led a delegation of 91 college students to attend the ribbon-cutting ceremony of the library, and carried out exchanges with teachers and students from the university's Japanese department. In 2016, 72 Japanese high school students visited Zhengzhou Huimin Middle School to experience Chinese students' school life, learn about China Central Plains culture, handicrafts and local dancing. They were also paired with Zhengzhou Huimin Middle School students and lived at their homes for one night to experience the real family life of Chinese students.

Compared with all the exchanges between Henan and Shorinji Kempo Group, the friendly exchanges between youngsters are only the tip of the iceberg. Since its establishment in 1947, the group has regarded Shaolin Temple as its "ancestral court" and "hometown of the mind", and admires the Shaolin martial arts and the time-honored culture of Henan. This is why the group values very much the friendship with Henan and Shaolin Temple and has visited Henan almost every year since the 1980s. The group has also provided financial support to Shaolin Temple.

In 1995, the 1,500th anniversary of the construction of Shaolin Temple, So Yuki led a delegation there for congratulations, and donated 15 million yen for repairing the Drum Tower. She also raised funds four times to support the restoration of the temple's White Hall frescoes and other cultural relics. Moreover, in 2006, the group donated 6 million yen for building Dengfeng Shaolin Hope Primary School.

Over the years, by promoting mutual visits between young people and furthering exchanges in martial arts, culture and sports—as well as education and other activities—the group has been proactively carrying forward the spirit of peace and fostering inheritors of people-to-people friendship. Its efforts have enabled more youngsters to be involved in the cause of Sino-Japanese friendship, functioning as a bridge facilitating friendly exchanges between China and Japan.

President Xi Jinping once said: "The key to sound relations between states lies in affinity between their peoples, which largely stems from mutual understanding." The achievements of friendly exchanges between Henan and Shorinji Kempo Group fully attest to the truth of this. Through frequent people-to-people exchanges, mutual understanding has been enhanced, friendship has been strengthened and state relations have been improved. With their visits to Henan, Japanese youngsters have gained a more comprehensive understanding of the development and potential opportunities of Henan. They've come to realize how subjective and one-sided the information they

receive about China from Japanese TV, internet and media outlets can be. Talking to their Chinese peers, combined with what they heard and saw firsthand, enabled them to develop a new and more in-depth understanding of China. "The biggest misunderstanding is not to know at all". They hoped they could share what they had seen and felt about the real China with their friends back in Japan and keep close contact with their new Chinese friends.

China and Japan are separated only by a narrow strip of water. The two peoples have long learned from each other. They have not only promoted the development of their own countries but jointly contributed to the common prosperity and civilization of Asia and the world. Mr So Doshin, founder of Shorinji Kempo Group, always believed that "without China-Japan friendship, there would be no peace in Asia, and without peace in Asia, there would be no peace in the world." So Yuki has been adhering to her father's idea and playing an active role as a bridge in the continuous promotion of friendly exchanges between China and Japan and in the enhancement of understanding and friendship between the two peoples.

In the future, Henan will continue to work with Shorinji Kempo Group as well as other friendly organizations from Japan to carry out all-around friendly exchanges. We will promote cultural and youth exchanges and foster friendship between young people. We will better present China and Henan to the world. We believe that the story of Henan with Shorinji Kempo Group will be continued. ■

Three Kingdoms culture boosts Xuchang's cooperation with international sister cities

Yang Junge

Culture is a bridge linking people's hearts, and a bond to help deepen understanding and trust between countries. In its efforts to foster ties with international sister cities, Xuchang is fully aware of the unique role of culture in communication with foreign counterparts, and thus actively practices the idea of influencing people, promoting friendship and building trust through cultural exchanges.

As one of the cradles of the Three Kingdoms culture, Xuchang has presented Three Kingdoms Culture Tourism Week annually since 2007. Eleven sessions have been successfully held so far, with the event becoming an important platform for Xuchang to develop international sister city relations and further its opening-up to the world. Xuchang, renowned for its pivotal position during the Three Kingdoms period, has attracted foreign friends from all over the world to marvel at its historical heritage and modern prosperity.

Located in China's Central Plain, Xuchang was an early cradle of Chinese civilization. In AD 196, northern warlord Cao Cao and his son moved the imperial court and Han

Dynasty Emperor Xian (181-234) to what is now Xuchang, leaving myriad magnificent historical stories in this land and making Xuchang the political, economic and cultural center of northern China of the time. Therefore, there is a unique Cao Wei cultural heritage and a large number of Three Kingdoms-related historical relics and scenic spots in Xuchang. Chinese writer and poet Guo Moruo once said: "I was eager to go to Xuchang every time I heard a story about the Three Kingdoms." This reflects the charming history and culture of the Three Kingdoms. Xuchang is clearly most authoritative when it comes to the study of Emperor Cao Cao's Wei Kingdom (or "Cao Wei culture", as historians call it). Of China's total 300 cultural relics from the Three Kingdoms period, 80 are located in Xuchang.

Since 2013, official delegations of sister cities and folk art groups have been invited to attend the annual Three Kingdoms Culture Tourism Week, which serves as a good opportunity to enhance understanding of the city's Three Kingdoms culture and current development. A series of activities, including official meetings, joint

performances and visits to historical sites were organized to strengthen cultural exchanges between sister cities. During the period, Xuchang received delegations from Ulsan's Central District (Jung District) of the Republic of Korea, Smolyan Municipality of Bulgaria and Hesse, Germany. A number of evening galas were also held on these occasions for cultural exchanges. Xuchang organized the 9th Henan & Gyeongsangbuk-do Painting and Calligraphy Art Exhibition, co-sponsored by Henan province and its sister province Gyeongsangbuk-do.

Three Kingdoms culture enjoys wide popularity and influence in the Republic of Korea, which creates a natural bond between Xuchang and its South Korean sister city, Central District (Jung District), Ulsan. Since its introduction into Korea, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* has been popular among Korean readers and has been translated and rewritten into 10 or 20 different Korean versions, with its sales reaching 100,000 sets. *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* has become the object of study for many scholars and material to emulate for literati and folk artists. Xuchang has actively carried out

friendly exchanges with Central District (Jung District), Ulsan, by making use of its unique advantage—home to the Three Kingdoms culture. In 2015 and 2016, at the invitation of Xuchang Municipal People's Government, the district sent two delegations to participate in Three Kingdoms Culture Tourism Week. The delegations visited tourist attractions of Three Kingdoms culture with great interest, including the Baling Bridge, where Guan Yu, a general serving under warlord Liu Bei during the Three Kingdoms period sealed up all the gifts he received from Cao Cao and rejected his invitation to serve him. There was also the Spring and Autumn building, where Guan Yu read books throughout night by candlelight, and Cao Cao's residence, from which military affairs were directed. The delegation spoke highly of Xuchang's rich Three Kingdoms cultural heritage and earnestly hoped to learn more about the ancient city's culture, cityscape and development experience.

Having made excellent achievements in history, Xuchang has now released new vigor and vitality in the great cause of building socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era. Xuchang will continue to explore more ways to take advantage of its cultural heritage and further its opening-up to the outside world through cultural exchanges, thus seeking more fruitful cooperation with sister cities and making more contributions to overall national diplomacy and its local economic and social development. ■

Bridge people and inherit friendship

Wang Hui



The delegation of students from Anyang, Henan province, to Lethbridge, Canada

The City of Lethbridge is the fourth-largest city of Alberta, Canada. Located at the foot of the Rocky Mountains, it boasts a vast prairie, magnificent mountains and rivers and beautiful valleys. The time-honored city of Lethbridge is home to numerous indigenous people. With a convenient and well-developed traffic system comprising roads, railways and air transportation, it is famous in Alberta and even across Canada as a business and investment hub.

In May 2005, Anyang, Henan province, formally established an International Sister Cities relationship with Lethbridge. Since then, the two cities have had frequent mutual visits

for government communication, social security training and exchanges of university teachers and students. In recent years, they have launched a number of cooperative projects of regular and institutional nature in a bid to make the bilateral relations everlasting on a people-to-people basis.

Students' study tour passes friendship along

President Xi Jinping emphasized in a speech, delivered at the China International Friendship Conference in commemoration of 60th Anniversary of the CPAFFC, that in our relations with foreign countries we should treat them with sincerity and genuine feeling

so that the Chinese and foreign people can get closer to each other, be more friendly with each other, have better common understanding and be more mutually supportive. He said special efforts should be made to encourage and facilitate exchanges between Chinese and foreign youths, as they will be the successors to the cause of people-to-people friendship. Exchanges by teenagers of Chinese and foreign cities, especially International Sister Cities, are of great significance in establishing in-depth friendly relations between Chinese and foreign youths, with far-reaching influence on the growth of teenagers and the development of their respective cities and countries.

In June 2016, a delegation from Anyang led by Liu Jianfa, deputy mayor of the municipal people's government, visited Lethbridge to study the possibility of exchanges and cooperation in education between the two cities. The campus visits and friendly negotiations led to the signing of two agreements—between Anyang No 1 Senior High School and Lethbridge School District No 51, and between Anyang No 8 Junior High School and Holy Spirit Roman Catholic Separate Regional Division No 4—establishing sister-school relationships. The two sides agreed to set up a mechanism for mutual visits so that Chinese and Canadian teachers and students could learn about each other's national characteristics, traditional culture and education mechanisms.

In February 2017, a 26-member joint delegation of Lethbridge city, Lethbridge county and South Grow—led by Chris Spearman, mayor of Lethbridge—paid a visit to Anyang to pro-

mote in-depth exchanges and cooperation in economy, trade and education. Teresa Loewen, executive director of the International Service Department of Lethbridge School District No 51, visited Anyang in December 2016 and March 2017 for implementation of the sister schools agreement.

In recent years, Anyang has conducted numerous student exchanges with South Korea, Japan and France. The activities not only helped both sides' youths broaden their horizons but also produced good social results. A summer camp was jointly run by Lethbridge and the city of Zhaoyuan, Shandong province. Based on their successful experiences of sending students overseas for cultural exchanges, Lethbridge School District No 51 and the Anyang No 8 Junior High School signed a memorandum for jointly hosting the annual Study Tour Camp in May 2017.

From July 18 to 29 last year, 18 Anyang students, from Anyang No 8 Junior High School, participated in a 12-day study tour camp in Lethbridge. During the period, they attended the ESL (English as a second language) class, enjoying the relaxed and free atmosphere of learning and discussion. They integrated into local life by living with families; learned about the history and development of Lethbridge city and county by visiting government buildings; watched and tried science experiments at the University of Lethbridge and Lethbridge College; and visited Waterton Lakes International Peace Park and Devil's Coulee Museum, relishing the mix of beautiful scenery and a sense of *deja vu* at the historical sites.

The activity not only improved

the Anyang students' English language ability and broadened their horizons but also built a bridge for mutual understanding between citizens of Anyang and the city of Lethbridge. As the first project for establishing routine and institutional cooperation between Anyang and Lethbridge, the study tour camp of middle school students is expected to pass along to the next generation the friendly relations between the two cities.

Travel in sister cities

History, culture, mountains and rivers are a city's soul and spirit as well as a precious resource for foreign relations. Anyang is one of the eight ancient capitals of China and is on the list of National famous historical and cultural cities. Sitting by the beautiful Taihang Mountains, Anyang boasts rich tourism resources of "history, culture and natural landscape". It is the site of the archeological discovery of oracle bone inscriptions, believed to be the ancient origin of Chinese characters. Tourism attractions include Yinxu, a world cultural heritage site and a Grade 5A national scenic area; the National Museum of Chinese Characters; and the Hongqiqu-Taihang Grand Canyon Scenic Area, also a national scenic area of Grade 5A. These sites have become symbols of Anyang city. The city of Lethbridge's tourism resources comprise natural landscapes (such as Waterton Lakes International Peace Park), historical culture (Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park and the Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump World Heritage Site) and leisure experiences, such as kayaking, skiing and climbing. The thriving tourism industry is the major force that

drives the economic development of the Lethbridge.

On June 30, 2017, the Alberta Tourism Bureau and Hainan Airlines announced the launch of a nonstop flight from Beijing to Calgary, which greatly facilitated travel from China. During Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's visit to China in September, the two countries reached agreement on 17 projects, including designating 2018 as the China-Canada Tourism Year and encouraging more mutual tourist visits. Since both cities take the tourism industry as a development priority, Anyang and Lethbridge will conduct two-way promotional activities and develop the Travel in Sister Cities brand based on many favorable opportunities. Governments will take a lead in the development of the Travel in Sister Cities brand, while nongovernmental organizations will play a significant role. The governments of the two cities will integrate their tourism resources and develop several quality tourism routes. They will also formulate preferential policies for the tourism industry to encourage travel agencies and other related organizations to promote the Travel in Sister Cities brand. Branded activities will enhance people-to-people exchanges between Anyang and Lethbridge, not only promoting civil exchanges, enhancing public awareness of internationalization and improving citizens' quality of international exchange, but also facilitating bilateral economic and social development. ■

Giving full play to the advantages of sister city ties

Wang Tao



2016 Henan Economic and Trade Cooperation Fair for International Sister Cities

In recent years, Henan's international sister cities—which are important channels of people-to-people diplomacy—have played a unique role in promoting Henan's opening-up. In 2015, the first Economic and Trade Fair for Henan International Sister Cities was successfully held. With follow-up measures taken for improvement, the second fair was held in the next year. The fair achieved

positive results and was well received. More important, by hosting the fair, we explored ways of boosting pragmatic cooperation and promoting common development with sister cities.

Meticulous preparation

By the end of 2014, Henan had established sister city relationships with 105 cities in some 43 countries, ranking first in China's midwestern provinces

in the sheer number. How to make full use of this large number of sister cities in our communication and cooperation with the world is a significant issue. We hope that sister cities can play a greater role in social and economic advancement and become an effective platform for Henan's opening-up. Having made a series of investigations and feasibility studies, we decided to organize the trade fair.

The leading board of the Foreign Affairs Office of the Henan provincial government attached great importance to the fair, and set up a preparatory panel to formulate a general work plan soon after the idea was raised. The preparatory panel determined that "the key steps are to invite business investors and set up projects". It appointed departments to take charge of different tasks such as inviting guests, setting up protocols, employing interpreters and promoting the event. At the same time, a formal notice was sent to the Foreign and Overseas Chinese Affairs Offices of the cities directly under the provincial government to clarify their tasks.

As an effort to solicit foreign investment, the fair needs to focus on preparing cooperation projects. We made it our main task to find large-scale, prospective projects that have potential for long-term and pragmatic cooperation. We took every opportunity to present Henan when we made overseas visits, went to Beijing to seek support from the central government departments, went to cities and prefectures to inspect our local offices and attended trade fairs domestically or internationally. Meanwhile, we kept in contact with major foreign enterprises that had been invited to look into po-

tential cooperation projects. To ensure the quality and efficacy of the fair, we contacted many local departments at the provincial and municipal levels and local enterprises while frequently communicating with foreign delegations about their schedules and projects, thus increasing understanding between the two sides and ensuring that practical steps would be taken.

Scientific arrangement

High-level representatives and guests from various social sectors attended the fair the previous two years, including government officials and entrepreneurs from foreign sister cities, officials of foreign embassies or consulates, representatives of famous foreign business associations, representatives of overseas Chinese communities, senior managers of transnational corporations and well-known foreign enterprises, representatives of Henan's municipal governments and enterprises and business

board members of the Provincial Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, as well as local and foreign media.

All the activities were well-targeted and organized. In addition to the opening and agreement-signing ceremonies, special activities such as project introduction meetings for key enterprises from sister cities, field visits to the Zhengzhou Airport Economic Zone and key local companies were organized. Moreover, we added special sessions, such as policy interpretation delivered by the Henan Development and Reform Commission and the Commission of Industry and Information Technology, policy introduction meetings given by foreign embassies, introductory meeting on our cooperation with sister provinces and cities in special industries, as well as field visits and other activities. As the fair was a new form of cooperation with a rich content and offered tremendous cooperation opportunities, many foreign representatives



Project signing ceremony for the first Henan Economic and Trade Cooperation Fair for International Sister Cities



Project signing ceremony for the 2016 Henan Economic and Trade Cooperation Fair for International Sister Cities

and local government officials were attracted. Several mayors even requested additional sessions to introduce and present their cities. All the foreign representatives asked to deliver speeches. Their active participation proved that both sessions of the fair fulfilled the expectation of promoting exchanges and cooperation.

Consummate summarization and promote innovation

More than 110 delegations totaling about 1,000 members from more than 30 countries attended the two sessions of the fair. Seventy-seven projects were clinched, 59 of which were economic and trade cooperation projects and 18 of which were for friendly establishment of relations and human resources exchanges, as well as cooperative projects in culture, sports and tourism. The total value of the clinched economic and trade cooperation projects was 32.89 billion yuan while the

contracted value exceeded 5.83 billion yuan.

More than half the delegations were from countries along the Belt and Road routes. Their participation will greatly boost Henan's cooperation with these countries. Twelve signed projects were initiated by well-known international business associations and overseas friendly organizations, accounting for 30 percent of the total value of all the contracts signed at the fair.

Overseas Chinese delegations actively played their parts as "bridges" and facilitated the signing of several projects. What was particularly significant was the project brokered between Henan and three overseas Chinese organizations for setting up a liaison mechanism to introduce overseas talent to Henan. In addition, envoys of foreign embassies showed strong interest in business cooperation with Henan. This has brought many precious opportunities.

The signed projects cover a wide swath of fields, such as new technologies, modern agriculture, new energy, aviation logistics, machinery manufacturing, cross-border E-commerce and culture and education. In the past, foreign investments in our province mostly focused on the industrial sector. Now the fair paid more attention to new industries. It reflects not only the achievements we've made in industrial restructuring and upgrading but also the importance of work related to foreign and overseas Chinese affairs in serving economic and social development.

By the end of December 2017, Henan had established sister city relationships with 112 cities in some 48 countries and regions, covering five continents. Among those, 41 are at the provincial level and 71 at the municipal and county level. Friendly exchanges among sister cities have developed to make up about 70 percent of Henan's main foreign relationship activities. Fruitful cooperation has been carried out in various sectors including economy and trade, science and technology, agriculture, culture and education, infrastructure, equipment manufacturing and environmental conservation.

In the future, we will further leverage the role of international sister cities, continue to innovate working methods and exploit the potential for cooperation. ■

A story of friendship between Kaifeng and Omsk

Zhao Shufen

Located in central China on the bank of the Yellow River, Kaifeng is well-known for its rich history and culture and its position as the country's capital in eight ancient dynasties. The famous scroll painting titled *Riverside Scenes at Qingming Festival* depicts the city's prosperity and patronage by travelers and merchants from both home and abroad.

Today, Kaifeng has quickened its exchanges and cooperation with the outside world, banking on the opportunities brought by the Chinese government's decisions to integrate the development of Zhengzhou and Kaifeng and establish the China (Henan) Free Trade Area Kaifeng Zone. It is encouraged by the spirit of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China. It has taken moves to enhance friendly exchanges with Omsk, a Russian city that has been Kaifeng's sister city for about a decade.

Omsk is located in the south of the West Siberian Plain at the confluence of the Omsk and Irtysh Rivers. As the capital of Omsk state, Omsk is not only one of oldest cities in Siberia but is also an important traffic hub for trade and industry. With developed agriculture and a well-established system of science and education, Omsk is an industrial powerhouse known for its machinery and instruments manufac-



2014 Kaifeng-Omsk One-to-One Business Conference

turing, energy and oil processing, and chemical and aviation industries.

Joint efforts by government and enterprises

Kaifeng and Omsk began exchanges in 2006 and formally established a sister city relationship in August 2009. Since then, the governments of the two cities have encouraged and supported exchanges and cooperation between people and organizations of the two sides. In October 2009, Kaifeng held a book exhibition in Omsk that helped the local people get to know the Chinese city and inspired passion from both sides for increasing friendly exchanges. Jointly organized by the Kaifeng Association of Industrial and Commercial Businesses and its Omsk counterpart, the First Kaifeng-Omsk

Business-to-Business Trade Talk was held in Kaifeng in April 2013. Twenty-two enterprises from Omsk and 60 companies from Kaifeng in the industries of machinery, chemical engineering, food processing, textiles, trade and construction held one-on-one talks. The Russian businessmen went on a fact-finding tour of Kaifeng's industrial and commercial enterprises. The two sides reached consensus on strengthening communication between the two associations, deepening cooperation and holding regular meetings.

In May 2014, organized by the Kaifeng People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, an 11-member delegation of Kaifeng's entrepreneurs paid a return visit to the Russian city. They attended the Second Kaifeng-Omsk Business-to-Business

Trade Talk, joined by 80 entrepreneurs from Omsk and New Siberia state. The two sides signed cooperation agreements and letters of intent with a total value of \$2 million for export of Kaifeng's triangular belt and chemical products to the Russian market. Five months later, the Kaifeng Hongli Rubber and Henan Tonglin Wood Co set up offices in Russia. In October 2014, the mayor of Omsk led a delegation to visit Kaifeng, where he also attended the 33rd China-Kaifeng Chrysanthemum Culture Festival. The two mayors signed a protocol of talks between mayors, agreeing to strengthen exchanges and cooperation in culture and sports and between the two cities' youth on the basis of economic and trade cooperation.

In May 2017, a seven-member Kaifeng Business Delegation visited Omsk for the Third Kaifeng-Omsk Business-to-Business Trade Talk. Letters of intent were signed for Kaifeng to export mechanical and electrical products to Russia. The two sides also discussed the possibility of establishing an agent mechanism between the two cities' businesses and reached a consensus. The two cities' government departments in charge of economic affairs also held successful meetings to establish a communication mechanism.

All-around cooperation starts with pilot projects

In their sister-city relations, Kaifeng and Omsk started with some pilot projects involving economic cooperation. Experience has shown that these projects played an important role in promoting all-around cooperation. Over the past five years, the two cities' governments and enterprises have fo-

cused their efforts on trade cooperation in imports and exports of mechanical, chemical, dynamoelectric and wood products. These successful cooperative efforts brought more motivation to connect people in the two cities through friendly exchanges.

An agreement on establishing a relationship for friendly exchanges between Kaifeng University and Omsk State University was signed in 2015 during the visit of the Kaifeng municipal delegation to Omsk. Since then, the agreed programs such as mutual visits by students and teachers and Mandarin teaching have progressed smoothly.

The successful Book Exhibition Kaifeng, held in Omsk in the first days of bilateral relations, set a good example. In 2015 and 2016, Kaifeng organized two roadshows in Omsk to present the city's image, putting on publicity shows, displaying handicrafts and giving out souvenirs. The two cities also agreed to carry out more mutual visits of performing groups.

Invited by the Omsk city government and Omsk State Taekwondo League, a 12-member delegation from Kaifeng competed in the Fifth Omsk Sister Cities Taekwondo Cup in September last year. Seven Chinese players won one gold, one silver and two bronze medals in their age group. During the visit, the Kaifeng Taekwondo Association and Omsk State Taekwondo League signed a memorandum of understanding for cooperation. Omsk will send a delegation to participate in the 2018 China Zheng-Kai International Marathon. The two cities also developed a common will to cooperate on the construction of sports facilities, along with public fitness promotion and

exchanges and training of athletes in certain prioritized sports events.

The two cities are studying the possibility of establishing sister city pavilions in their respective cities. The pavilions are expected to serve as platforms for enhancing mutual understanding. It is hoped, on the basis of economic and trade cooperation, that substantial cooperation and exchanges can be conducted in various other fields.

Walk hand-in-hand to excellence

In the promotion of exchanges and cooperation between Kaifeng and Omsk, the KPAFFC plays a vital role. It did a lot of work to encourage many nongovernmental organizations to do their part. It contacted the Kaifeng Federation of Industry and Commerce, Kaifeng Wushu Association, Kaifeng Folk Arts Hall and Kaifeng Free Trade Zone to find out how much, and in what way, they can help with the work of putting into practice the friendship with Omsk. During the work, the KPAFFC has followed the principle of encouraging nongovernmental organizations to engage in exchanges and cooperation with their Omsk counterparts under the guidance of the government. The KPAFFC insists that once a cooperation program is launched, it must be carried out and maintained with substantial results.

We believe that whatever difficulties we may meet, we will definitely succeed in our mission. Inspired by the spirit of 19th CPC National Congress and the opportunity brought by the Belt and Road Initiative, the KPAFFC has the determination, confidence and ability to enhance the relationship between Kaifeng and Omsk and lead the way into a new era. ■