**AMBASSADOR**

Li’s tour significant to China-Laos partnership

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang’s tour to Laos will significantly enhance relations between China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and China-Laos comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership, Chinese ambassador to Laos said recently.

Guang Huabing, Chinese ambassador to Laos, said that since this year marks the 55th anniversary of the establishment of China-Laos diplomatic ties and the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the China-ASEAN dialogue relationship, Li’s visit is expected to push forward regional integration in East Asia.

China and Laos, linked by rivers and mountains, have enjoyed a long history of friendship and are “good neighbors, good friends, good partners and good brothers,” said Guang.

Since the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries 55 years ago, the development of China-Laos relations has witnessed tests and scored substantial progress featuring deepened comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership, closer high-level exchanges and fruitful achievements from pragmatic cooperation in all sectors, thus benefiting the peoples of the two countries, he said.

Guang also said China believes that Laos, which took over the rotating chair of ASEAN immediately after the establishment of the ASEAN Community on Dec 31, 2015, will play an important role in boosting regional cooperation and maintaining regional peace and stability. China will continue to fully support Laos’ role as ASEAN’s chair for 2016, he added.

The ambassador said that during the visit to Laos, Li exchanged views with Lao leaders on further deepening the China-Laos comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership, pushing forward the implementation of the Belt and Road initiative, and boosting cooperation in various fields.

Shared river, shared future, peoples of the two countries hope that the traditional friendship between China and Laos will be injected with new vigor in the new era, and bring about more benefits for all, Guang said.

**FRIENDSHIP**

China and Laos knot closer ties

Liu Tian

As Laos’ strategy of turning itself from a “landlocked” country into a “land-linked” country resonates China’s Belt and Road Initiative, the destinies of the two countries are now more closely linked than ever before.

It is said that Laos is the only landlocked ASEAN country. However, after the China-Laos railway opens to traffic, the current 16-hour bus trip from the China-Laos border to Vientiane will be shortened to only a three-hour train ride.

The railway will traverse Laos, connecting the China-Laos border in the north, and the Laos-Thailand border in the south, via Vientiane. The railway will also become part of the railway network of the Indochina Peninsula.

In June 2010, China and Laos signed an MOU on the construction of the Saysatta Development Zone, which is noted as a priority project of the Belt and Road Initiative.

According to Liu Hu, general manager of China-Laos Joint Investment Company, and operator of Saysatta Development Zone, the zone is expected to attract around 150 companies with an annual output value of up to USD 6 billion. It is also expected to create more than 30,000 jobs and generate annual fiscal revenue of USD 300 million.

The cooperation between China and Laos is not only confined to infrastructure, but also includes high-tech projects. In November 2015, the Lao Satellite was jointly launched by the two countries. In March of this year, the satellite in-orbit delivery was completed, and the China-Laos joint venture Lao Asia Pacific Satellite Company was established.

The company is responsible for the commercial operation of the satellite and represents China’s first commercial satellite export to an ASEAN country.

Ding Yongqing, general manager of the company, hopes, the satellite will enhance cultural exchanges between the two countries. He also said that connectivity between China and ASEAN should include not only transport interconnection and other infrastructure necessities, but also foster cultural interconnectivity.

This year marks the 55th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Laos. Standing at a new starting point, the two countries still have many ways to cooperate, including in the fields of infrastructure, energy and more.

**FESTIVAL**

Thai Food Festival opens in Kunming

The Thai product exhibition at the festival.

Photo by Wang Jing

Wang Jing

A Thai Food Festival is jointly launched by the Thailand Consulate General in Kunming and Holiday Inn Kunming from September 1 to 30.

The organizers invited two chefs from the School of Cookery of the well-known Suan Dusit University in Thailand, so as to bring more authentic Thai delicacies to Kunming residents. Visitors can enjoy Thai food cooked in the most authentic ways and with extremely fresh food materials and spices flown in from Thailand. During the food festival, there are also Thai product exhibition, traditional Thai dance performance and other activities.

**PEOPLE**

Legendary variegated copper

Hu Chao

In northeast Yunnnan’s Huize County, a legendary copperware with motifs of patterns on the surface in make. It is known as variegated copper. Twenty-eight-year-old Zhang Wei is the 13th generational descendant of the Zhang family, and a master craftsman of variegated copperware. In order to carry forward his ancestral skills, Zhang quit his job and picked up the family business.

With beautiful motifs and a hefty feel, variegated copperware is difficult to craft. It takes a chunk of natural copper of more than 90% purity, more than 20 complicated steps, and two to three months to complete a single exquisite work.

In June 2008, variegated copperware production was listed as a national intangible cultural heritages. As there are very few hand-forged works on the market today, the inheritance of this unique craft faces huge challenges.

Zhang Wei said he will sometimes take his casting kit out of his workshop to show people how his wares are made. “I hope that my efforts can help more people know and like variegated copper, so that we can better preserve and develop this age-old craft.”