



BELT AND ROAD

China-Thailand rail deal will also benefit region

There's no gain without pain, as the saying goes, and that's certainly been true of the China-Thailand high-speed railway, which has found its way strewn with obstacles before the first phase finally got the green light to go ahead on July 11.

After years of delay, Thailand's Cabinet finally approved \$5.2 billion in funds to build a 252-kilometer railway that will cut the travel time between the Thai capital and its northeastern province of Nakhon Ratchasima from the nearly six hours it takes now to less than one and a half hours when it is completed in 2021.

According to the deal, Thai companies will be responsible for construction of the railway, due to start in September,

while Chinese enterprises will design it, advise on its construction and provide technology and technical training, among other things.

With a maximum speed of 250 km per hour, the railway will help facilitate Thailand's trade and investment, and attract more tourists. More important, it will help restore the confidence of foreign investors. The Thai economy has already rebounded, with growth expected to reach 3.4 percent this year, but the railway project will further propel that good momentum.

The second phase of the project will see the railway extend from Nakhon Ratchasima to Nong Khai, across the

Mekong River from Vientiane, capital of Laos, paving the way for a railway from Kunming, capital of Southwest China's Yunnan province, to Bangkok, and finally to Singapore.

The two sides first agreed to build the railway in Thailand as early as in 2010. That it has taken so long for the project to finally be put on track, after Thai Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha invoked an executive order last month to clear the legal and political hurdles standing in the way, speaks of the need for China to better communicate the benefits of the Belt and Road Initiative to all members of society in countries along the new Silk Road routes. **(China Daily)**

There were disagreements on costs, loan interest rates and labor rules, but failure to kick-start the infrastructure project earlier was mainly due to the concerns among Thais about how much ordinary people would benefit from the railway.

However, both countries believe that their and the region's economic development potential will be further boosted by the railway, which will serve to promote the construction of a trans-Asian high-speed railway network.

And it shows that China and countries in the region are willing to join hands to create a favorable trade and investment environment from which all can benefit.

VOICE

BRICS countries entering new decade of cooperation

BY TIAN HUIFANG

Beginning with the first meeting of foreign ministers in September 2006, BRICS countries have carried out fruitful cooperative efforts of various sorts concerning many regional and global issues of common concern.

Over the past decade, in the spirit of wide consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits, BRICS countries have jointly made outstanding contributions to the world's economic growth. With their combined share of the world's economy growing from 12 percent to 23 percent, BRICS countries have become the biggest drivers of global economic growth.

In order to further promote pragmatic cooperation, BRICS countries established the BRICS New Development Bank, which approved seven projects in 2016 involving more than 1.5 billion US dollars, and 15 loan projects in 2017 involving between 2.5-3 billion US dollars. These projects focus primarily on green energy and transportation. It can be said that BRICS countries have blazed a trail of mutually beneficial, win-win cooperation defined by the ideas of mutual respect and common progress.

For more than ten years, BRICS countries have evolved from a concept into a mechanism. The scope of cooperation has expanded to cover economic, politics and culture. In recent years, BRICS countries have also strengthened cooperative efforts regarding cyber

security, anti-terrorism and other fields. Together, these countries have made important contributions to world peace, prosperity and stability.

Over the past decade, BRICS countries have gradually changed their roles as onlookers and have now become important authors of international economic rules. While actively building internal economic coordination mechanisms, BRICS countries have also committed to creating a fairer and more equitable international order.

The year 2017 marks the beginning of a new decade of BRICS cooperation. In the current complex international economic and political context, BRICS countries must cooperate closely to address a variety of global challenges. As Chinese President Xi Jinping has said, the common task of BRICS countries is to maintain stability and development in each respective country, while building a favourable international environment. They must also hold high the banner of development and firmly follow the principles of multilateralism, as well as uphold the basic norms of international relations and continue to drive the international order in a more fair and more reasonable direction.

(The author is Deputy Director and Associate Research Fellow of the Global Governance Office of Institute of World Economics and Politics, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. This article is originally published on people.com.cn.)

ARCHAEOLOGY

Neolithic remains unearthed at site in Yunnan

BY XU WANHU

Recently, Yunnan archaeologists unearthed a large number of Neolithic remains at the Haimenkou site in Jianchuan County in Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture.

The finds include daws, arrowheads, knives, axes and many pieces of pottery. The discoveries will further enrich the understanding of the prehistoric history in western Yunnan.

The Haimenkou site, located west of the Haiwei River in Jianchuan County, covers an area of about 100,000 square metres. The finds span the late Neolithic Age and Bronze Age. They are also the single largest early waterfront wooden "ganlan style" settlement ever to have been discovered in China.

During their excavations, archaeologists discovered 123 ash pits, 24 ash ditches, five house sites and two burial chambers. They also unearthed more than 800 small cultural relics, which mainly consist of grinding awls, arrowheads, and sand and grit pottery. **(Xinhua)**

TRAVEL

Face-smearing carnival

BY JING HUIHUI



On July 18, the annual Hualian (Face-smearing) Festival kicks off in southeast Yunnan's Qiubei County. Thousands of local Yi people and tourists joined in the carnival. Dating back more than 1,000 years, the Hualian Festival is traditionally celebrated by local Yi people who believe that the one whose face is smeared the blackest during the festival is the most happiest. So they express their best wishes by smearing black rice ash on each other's faces to get good luck. Nowadays, the festival is getting popular among other ethnic groups in Qiubei. **(Xinhua)**

Photo by Jing Huihui

ECO

Getting to know picturesque Five Lakes Wetland Park

BY LI HANYONG

During summer, the blooming lotus flowers in Xima Lake Wetland in Simao District, Pu'er City, in Yunnan Province are attracting a large number of tourists. Not far from Xima Lake, tourists and local residents are also seen walking or jogging on the wooden plank road by the crystal clear Meizi Lake.

Xima, Meizi, Yeya, Xinfang and Nahe lakes collectively form Pu'er Five Lakes National Wetland Park, which covers a total area of 1,148 hectares surrounding Simao District. Among these five bodies of water, Yeya Lake is natural while the other four are artificial. The five lakes are interconnected by canals and the Simao River. All of the lake water flows into the Simao River before joining the much larger Lancang River.

Pu'er Five Lakes Wetlands is 1,200 to 1,500 metres above sea level and is located in a region dominated by river valleys and dense forests. Together, these attributes form a unique forest-wetland ecosystem that is representative of many of the ecosystems in southwest China. According to surveys and monitoring conducted between 2011 and 2016, Pu'er Five Lakes National Wetland Park is home to 1,039 species of plants. In addition, 30 species of mammals, 206 species of birds, 15 species of amphibians and 21 species of reptiles in the region.

Kunming connected to ever more S and SE Asian countries

BY HUANG ZHECHUN

In 2017, Kunming Changshui International Airport continues to expand its international routes. In particular, the airport launched large numbers of new flights to cities in South and Southeast Asian countries.

As of May 2017, Kunming Changshui International Airport

operates a total of 52 South and Southeast Asian air routes, including 41 to Southeast Asia and another 11 to countries in South Asian. The rapid growth of international passenger numbers and freight transport indicators are the pride of the airport. In July, Changshui is scheduled to operate 188 flights to Southeast Asia and 36 flights to

South Asia on a weekly basis.

From January to June 2017, the airports of Kunming Airport Group have cumulatively handled 248,000 aircraft take offs and landings, seen 31.026 million passenger visits and 214,000 tonnes of cargo throughput, up by 9.2 percent, ten percent and 9.8 percent respectively over the same period in 2016.

CULTURE

Tradition plus fashion, Yi embroidery conveys ethnic culture to the world

BY YAN JIAFEN

Over the past eleven years, Jin Yongshu has grown from an unworldly Yi girl into the chairman of Chuxiong Yi Commune National Culture Development Company.

"Behind every piece of embroidery is a skillful young woman." Since Jin Yongshu was 25 years old,

she has been walking through each village in central Yunnan's Chuxiong Yi Autonomous Prefecture, looking for ladies doing local hand-made embroidery. In her opinion, through each embroidery stitch, the traditional embroidery style of Yi ethnic group is demonstrated in its original essence, displaying Yi culture.

"The Tiger pattern is the histor-

ical pattern of the Yi and the most representative of the ethnic culture. The most traditional and modern elements must be put together," said Jin Yongshu holding a tiger patterned straw bag in her hand. "Ethnic plus popular elements brings a top brand. I see vitality when fashion is integrated with traditional Yi embroidery."

Behind the Yi Commune is a spectacular production line formed by a large group of Yi ladies. Jin Yongshu said that last year her company's output value was 1.8 million US dollars, of which more than half was paid to the embroiderers.

Now, over 400 embroiderers are on fixed contracts of cooperation and 6,000 ladies from Chuxiong and its surrounding areas are engaged in embroidery making.

Having embroidery products exhibited several times in foreign countries, Jin Yongshu said "foreigners not only like our embroidery products but the stories behind them. We mustn't lose our own culture."



Yi women are doing embroidery. Online Photo

CHINA STORY

Yunnan electricity to illuminate more lights in surrounding countries

BY HAN CHENGYUAN

As an important channel from China to South and Southeast Asia, Yunnan electricity is being transmitted to surrounding countries by using high voltage, long distance and large capacity transmission technology. A total of 8 high voltage transmission lines currently connect with the Vietnam, Laos, and Myanmar power grids.

China Southern Grid Corp is one of the suppliers. By the end of 2016, its power supply volume with Vietnam, Laos, and Myanmar had reached 48.5 billion kilowatt hours.

"Next to the Ruili River Hydro-power Station which was built by us, is a Myanmar village called Daban with 820 villagers. There had been no power supply until we sent power to each

household in 2012," said Zhou Jian, the General Manager of Huaneng Lancang River Hydropower Co. Ltd.

Last year, LongjiSolar began a large-scale photovoltaic manufacturing investment in Yunnan. "We also had a blue print in Malaysia, hoping to create a combination of new energy," said Xia Aimin, the global strategy and business development director of LongjiSolar. In the future, as it participates in the process of promoting energy and processes, Yunnan will provide not only the power grid connection, but also rich renewable energy products through clean energy. Adhering to the principle of "joint contribution and shared benefits", Yunnan Power will illuminate more lights in the cities and towns in its surrounding countries.

Yunnan citizens can enjoy a leave after donating blood



Lv Lin (right) has donated blood for 30 years. Under his influence, his son also donates blood. In this picture, the father and son are donating blood in Kunming Blood Center. Photo by Chen Fei

BY CHUTIAN

Recently, Yunnan Province promulgated the "Opinions on Further Strengthening Voluntary Blood Donation" so as to establish an incentive mechanism for collecting more of this precious substance. After successfully donating certain amounts of blood, donors can receive overtime meal allowances and transportation subsidies and enjoy a leave of one or two days.

The "Opinions" encourages local

authorities to introduce preferential policies for the winners of national gold, silver and bronze blood donation awards and guide the citizens of the right age to actively donate blood. By 2020, at least one blood donation room will be set up in every county, county-level city and district in the province. Kunming, the provincial capital, is expected to achieve a donation rate of 20 donors per 1,000 people, while other prefectures and prefecture-level cities expect a rate of 20 donors per 1,000 people.