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## Thailand strives to connect B&R Initiative with EEC

As soon as 25-year-old Jin Xiang landed a job at a Chinese steel factory in Thailand's eastern Chonburi Province, he knew he would be part of the growing factor in propelling the Belt and Road Initiative and Thailand's Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC).

The young Chinese man said his parent company in central China's Hubei Province will be bringing state-of-the-art steel lathing and molding technology, using artificial intelligence in creating metal spare parts for heavy industries.

"When I arrived in Chonburi six months ago, I can say that Thailand's steel lathing industry was still lagging behind, compared to that of China," he said. "It was a right decision to move to Thailand."

**Board of Investment (BOI) statistics indicate that more than 80 Chinese companies have set up manufacturing facilities, research centers, and operational hubs at the Thai-Chinese Industrial Zone**

**in Rayong Province before the end of 2016, with total investment of 30 billion U.S. dollars.**

With the increasing number of foreign workers filling up job vacancies in the EEC region, a one-stop service center at the EEC Labor Administration has been established to expedite the process of issuing work permits and visas.

Pirote Chotikrasatien, inspector of the Department of Employment from the Ministry of Labor, said that as long as a foreign worker can supply rightful documents including a guarantee letter from a BOI registered company and proper health check documents, the applicant will be granted a work permit in less than three days.

The Thai government is also hoping to tap into China's technological support and experience in managing large infrastructure projects.

It is reported that a Chinese high-speed railway under the Belt and Road Initiative is

under construction. It will be the kingdom's first high-speed railway that will link Thailand with Laos and Kunming in China's southern Yunnan Province, while Thailand's second high-speed train will link Bangkok with the EEC, a project that Thai officials noted would contribute to the integration of the EEC with the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative.

Thai Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha said the high-speed train is an example of connectivity that fits the Thailand 4.0 economic model.

The Thai government is also capitalizing on the Belt and Road Initiative to increase investments, hoping to bring in 43 billion U.S. dollars in the next five years to the EEC.

Kanit Sangsubhan, secretary-general of the EEC Office, said integrating with the Belt and Road Initiative will empower Asia through international cooperation especially between

China and ASEAN.

"Strong economic foundations in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam and Thailand (CLMVT) will lead to a stronger ASEAN, which is why the North-South Economic Corridor from Kunming through Laos to the EEC, which connects with the East-West Economic Corridor, will be beneficial to all countries," said Kanit.

"For example, southern China is linked to the EEC through the Gulf of Thailand, with Laos using it as a channel to the sea and Cambodia using Laem Chabang Port as the main port for exports."

Thitinan Pongsudhirak, an academic in ASEAN affairs at Chulalongkorn University, said that connectivity defines long-term economic prospects.

"China is doing something that has never been done in the history of the world. A large country like China has expanded economic growth at a high level for decades," he said.

(Compiled from XINHUA)

### TRADITIONAL FESTIVAL

## Foreigners enjoy the Chinese Lunar New Year

In recent years, Chinese Lunar New Year has been getting more and more attention from around the world. More and more foreigners join in celebrating the Chinese Spring Festival.

"The Chinese New Year is very lively. As a foreigner, I can feel it," said one 22-year-old girl who came from Bangkok. In her opinion, staying up all night on New Year's Eve and eating dumplings are very interesting. China and Thailand are neighbors. Many Thai people know some customs for the Spring Festival. "If you ask us what we are interested in most, definitely the answer is the luck money in a red bag. Thai people

like this kind of surprising joy."

On New Year's Eve, when the Spring Festival Gala was on TV, Qi Ji from Nigeria was having a great time with some of his friends. "Songs and dances at this year's Spring Festival Gala were great," he said. In the eyes of Qi Ji, watching the Spring Festival Gala is a must-have program for many Chinese people. The Spring Festival provides Qi Ji a window to further understand China.

Today, The Spring Festival has already become a symbol of China. Whether you are Chinese or not, whether you are in China or not, you can feel the unique taste of China during the Chinese New Year.



The Dragon Dance highlighted Chinese New Year. Photo by YDPG

### CONNECTIVITY

## Construction of the China-Laos railway progressing smoothly

At the construction site of the China-Laos railway, about 30 kilometres from Vientiane, a giant bridge-building crane moved slowly. It was lifting a giant T-beam of 32 metres in length that weighed more than 140 tons in weight. The beam was steadily put in place on the Nam Khone super large bridge. The span has a total length of 7,506 metres, setting a new record in the history of Laos infrastructure. The bridge beams began to be laid on February 9. Now construction is advancing at a speed of two holes per day, and the entire bridge will be completed by late May 2019.

Laos is a country with mountains and plateaus account for 80 percent of the land area. NAOW one of its national development goals is to become a landlocked country to a 'land-linked' country. The China-Laos railway stretches for a total length of 414.332 kilometres between Moten in the north and Vientiane in the south. The railway line, with has a designed speed of 160 kilometres per hour, uses Chinese technical standards and equipment.



**Even at the present stage, railway construction has directly driven the country's development of its building materials, electricity, agriculture, animal husbandry, service industry, logistics and other sectors. According to incomplete statistics, construction of the railway has cumulatively created more than 32,000 jobs for Laotian people, and currently 4,300 Laotian employees are on the job.**

In the future, the China-Laos Railway will link up China, Thailand, Malaysia and other countries. It will become an important part of the artery of communication in Southeast Asia, while also improving Laos's transportation situation and facilitating its economic development.

### REMARKABLE 70 YEARS



## The Engel coefficient has fallen sharply in 70 years development

[Editor's note] 2019 is the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China and also the key year for building a well-off society. The column "remarkable 70 years" will show you the earth-shaking changes that have taken place in China over the past 70 years.

Since the founding of China in 1949, the living standards of Chinese people have greatly improved. The Engel coefficient has fallen sharply, and the consumption level and consumption structure of residents have improved significantly. Now, China has become the second largest economy in the world from a country that is poor and weak, and its historical leap of comprehensive national strength is eye-catching in the world.

Picture shows the busy buying in China Yiwu.

## Yunnan's GDP increases by 8.9% in 2018

The second session of the 13th Yunnan Provincial People's Congress, the province's legislature, was held recently in Kunming.

According to the government work report delivered by Yunnan Provincial Governor Ruan Chengfa, Yunnan's GDP reached about 1.79 trillion yuan last year, growing by 8.9% year on year. 15 counties in the province were removed from the impoverished list. The number of visitors coming to Yunnan grew by 20% year on year and the gross tourism revenue of the province increased by 22%.

In 2018, Yunnan authorities rolled out a series of measures to cultivate new momentum driving local economic development, including developing eight major industries such as biological medicine and tourism. Yunnan also decreased production of crude steel and coal, and lowered costs for local companies.

Accordingly, Yunnan's foreign trade volume in 2018 amounted

to 197.3 billion yuan, a year-on-year increase of 24.7%. The trade volume between Yunnan and ASEAN accounted for 46.1% of the province's foreign trade. And trade between Yunnan and the Belt and Road countries recorded a 30.3% growth in 2018, with a total value of 133.16 billion yuan.

Yunnan mainly exported produce, electromechanical products, fertilizers

and labor-intensive products, while importing crude oil, natural gas, metal minerals, sulfur and others from its trading partners.

For 2019, Yunnan aims to achieve a GDP increase of around 8.5%, with the fixed asset investment growing by 12%. A total of 1.3 million impoverished residents in the rural areas will be raised out of poverty.

(Yunnan Daily and Xinhua)



Workers are busy with mouthdoleak production. Photo by YDPG

### TRAVEL

## 34.64 million tourists visited Yunnan in 7 days

34.64 million people visited Yunnan during the just passed seven-day Spring Festival holiday, according to statistics released by Yunnan Provincial Holiday Travel Data-collecting Center. It is a 20.22% increase on a year-on-year basis.

During the holiday, the Fuxian Lake, the Stone Forest, Luoping Jiulong Waterfall, Lijiang Yulong Snow Mountain, Yunnan Nationalities' Village are among the top five scenic spots mostly visited by tourists.

The theme exhibition held by Yunnan Provincial Museum, the rice noodle festival in Yuxi, the lantern show in Dali, the lion and dragon dance in Heshun Town of Tengchong, the rural cultural activity in Yingjiang County, the cultural carnival in Xishuangbanna offered tourists special experiences.

As Yunnan is a Chinese province which are adjacent to South and Southeast Asian countries, the cross-border travel were also booming. "We launched long and short travel routes to Vietnam. And these products were very popular among tourists," said Tao Ying, market manager of Hekou International Travel Agency. According to Kunming Customs, from February 4th to 6th, 16,723 people were checked crossing the China-Vietnam border via the Hekou landport.

The "Travel in Yunnan" app created new smart tourism experiences for tourists. "I entered the scenic spot via facial recognition. It's really amazing. The smart toilet and the digital guide are also very good. I hope the functions can be applied to more spots," said Mr. Huang from east China's Fujian Province.

(www.yunnan.cn)



Visitors are dazzled by activities in Yunnan Nationalities Village. Photo by YDPG

### NEWS

## Myanmar Central Bank take RMB as official settlement currency

The Central Bank of Myanmar issued a notice on 30th January, announcing the RMB and JPY as official settlement currencies.

It was announced that in order to promote the development of international payment and settlement, and border trade, it is permitted to use RMB and Japanese yen as settlement currency for international payments. Except for licensed

banks, other institutions and individuals are not yet allowed to open RMB and JPY accounts. A person in charge at the Central Bank of Myanmar said at an interview that with the RMB included as a settlement currency, the payment and settlement of Myanmar-China border trade will be more convenient.

By Zhuang Beiming