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The Nation

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REMARKABLE 70 YEARS

Pilot free-trade zones lead the way in China's opening up

China's State Council Information Office held a press conference on August 26 and explained the situation of the six newly set-up pilot free-trade zones in Yunnan, Shandong, Jiangsu, Guangxi, Hebei and Heilongjiang.

So far, China has 18 pilot free-trade zones. The total number of provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities involved in the construction of pilot free-trade zones accounts for nearly 60 per cent of the country's total. In Yunnan, the pilot free-trade zones includes three areas. On the morning of August 30, the unveiling ceremony of the China (Yunnan) Pilot Free-Trade Zone was held simultaneously in the three areas of Kunming, Honghe and Dehong.

Each of the six new pilot free-trade zones has its own characteristics and advantages. The China (Yunnan) Pilot Free-Trade Zone will focus on bringing into play the advantages of Yunnan's location by the border, facing South and Southeast Asia.

The China (Yunnan) Pilot Free-Trade Zone covers an area of 119.86 square kilometres. There are 76 square metres in Kunming, including 0.58 square metres for Kunming Comprehensive Bonded Zone; 14.12 square metres in Honghe; and 29.74 square metres in Dehong.

Through construction of



The unveiling ceremony of the China (Yunnan) Pilot Free-Trade Zone was held on August 30. Photo by Lei tongsu

pilot free-trade zone, Yunnan will actively participate in the construction of the China-Indo-China peninsula economic corridor, the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar economic corridor, the China-Myanmar economic corridor and the China-Laos economic corridor to strengthen cooperation with neighbouring countries, develop new models of cross-border economic cooperation, facilitate free exchanges of investment and trade and people-to-people exchanges with neighbouring countries, accelerate cooperation on cross-border production capacity, cross-border finance, cross-border tourism, cross-border e-commerce, cross-border agriculture, cross-border energy, cross-border logistics, and cross-border renminbi business.

Gu Kejian, professor of Trade and Economics Department, Business School, Renmin University of China, said that the continuous expansion of pilot free-trade zones reveals China's practice of reform and innovation on a larger scale. It demonstrates China's determination to integrate itself into economic globalisation and continue to open wider to the outside world.

STORY:
Chotiga Suntoronnond: Pilot free-trade zones will promote trade between Thailand and China

"I am the finance manager of Yunnan Kun-Thai Trade Company Ltd. We started importing food from Thailand in 2008 and now we sell products including dried fruit, spices, coffee,

drinks and snacks in China."

Initially, we chose Yunnan because of the convenient transportation routes from Bangkok to Laos and to Yunnan. Now, our clients are both wholesalers and retailers, of which wholesalers account for about 70 per cent. They are from Hunan, Sichuan, Guizhou, Guangdong, Beijing, Shanghai, Chongqing and all over China.

At the beginning, we targeted the entire China market and we had new clients every year. Now, we feel Chinese consumers are demanding more and more Thai products. For example, they are concerned about their health and the nutritional content of their food, which brings new opportunities and development direction to our import business.

Yunnan's advantage in connecting Southeast Asia with all parts of China has become more prominent. Our goods are shipped from Thailand to Mohan Port via Kunming-Bangkok road in south Yunnan, and then distributed throughout China. In recent years, we feel the process of transportation and customs clearance is much smoother than before. We hope these processes are becoming more convenient as Yunnan opens to the outside world.

The pilot free-trade zones will bring more convenience to businesses such as faster customs clearance and more favourable taxes. We think it will be of big help to our business. For food imports, time is a key aspect. I hope the pilot free-trade zone will help expand our businesses. **A comprehensive report**

XI'S REMARKS

"China today is more than the country itself; it is very much a part of Asia and the world. In the time to come, China will open its arms wider to embrace the world and contribute the dynamic achievements of Chinese civilization to a

better world in the future.

— Excerpt from keynote speech by Chinese President Xi Jinping at the opening ceremony of the Conference on Dialogue of Asian Civilizations held May 15, 2019

Food an' Fun festival in Kunming

On September 5, the "Food an' Fun" food festival was hosted by the Thai Consulate-General in Kunming. At the event, a promotional film of the traditional Thai festival was broadcast to notice that the Thai royal family's Chao Phraya River

parade to be held in Bangkok in October this year. Tourists from all over the world are welcome to travel to Bangkok to learn about the Thai royal culture.

By Feng Yaxin

COMMUNICATION

MI young scholars warmly received in Kunming



MI young scholars visit Lancang-Mekong River Spatial Information Cooperation and Exchange Center. Photo by Liu Yanqin

Mekong Institute (MI) Young Scholars paid courtesy visits to Kunming from August 27-31. The visits were aimed at enriching their understanding of the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation (LMC) mechanism and its contributions towards regional cooperation and integration as well as knowledge of China's foreign affairs policies and development trends.

Executive Director Dr. Watcharas Leelawath led the delegation consisting of MI staff and seven MI young scholars from China, Laos, and Myanmar.

The visit was followed by a series of courtesy visits in Kunming, that included the Royal Thai Consulate-General, Lancang-Mekong River Spatial Information Cooperation and Exchange Centre, the MI Coordinating Agency for China, Yunnan Academy of Science and Technology Development, Yunnan Power Grid Co., Ltd., and the Foreign Affairs Office of Yunnan Province.

They also visited the Yunnan Vocational

College of Transportation where MI signed a memorandum of understanding with the institute to foster human resource development in the transport sector in the Lancang-Mekong Region.

Wherever they visited, they received warm welcomes. And their questions are immediately responded.

Supported by the government of the People's Republic of China, the MI Young Scholars Program is designed to develop the human resource capacities of public institutions involved in the LMC development and cooperation initiative by providing a structured learning opportunity and hands-on experience over a six-month period to selected nationals of the Lancang-Mekong Region.

The Mekong Institute aims to serve as a platform to strengthen the linkage between the public and private sectors, and promote regional connectivity in the Lancang-Mekong Region.

By YDPG

FOCUS

The 2019 Fortune Global Sustainable Forum held at Fuxian Lake in Yunnan

On September 4, under the theme of Green Grows Up: Forging A New Environmental Consensus, the 2019 Fortune Global Sustainable Forum opened at Fuxian Lake, Yuxi City, Yunnan province.

Chen Hao, Party Secretary of Yunnan province, said that promoting green and sustainable development has become a common responsibility and glorious mission of the international community, and international cooperation is the only way to achieve this goal. Yunnan is actively practising the development concept of "lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets", coordinating efforts to promote economic development, social development and environmental protection, striving to build an innovative, open, high-end, and green modern industrial system to create a world-class green energy, green

food and healthy life destination. It is believed that the forum will not only deepen the people's understanding of China and Yunnan, but also affect the world due to its rich achievements of pooling wisdom, enhancing consensus and promoting practices for sustainable development, and would promote Yunnan's sustainable development goals to be even higher and its practice more vivid.

The Fortune is one of the most prestigious and globally influential forums. The 2019 Fortune Global Sustainable Forum lasted three days. About 300 Chinese and foreign guests, including representatives of international organisations and well-known experts and scholars from Fortune global 500 and NGOs attended the forum, during which 10 parallel forums were held.



Delegates are discussing in the parallel forum. Photo by YDPG

CULTURE

Xinhua: a thousand-year-old silver village



Each day in Xinhua, a seemingly mundane village sitting in northwest Yunnan's Heqing county, begins with some rhythmic clang clang sound shrouded in morning mist. However, only a few know that this is where the secret of the village lays.

Xinhua, as a matter of fact, is an unusual place in which nearly every single household has been involved in the making of silverware for centuries. In here, silver artifacts—even those with the simplest forms—might take a villager's half month of work.

You perhaps can never believe that a quality and well-designed silver pot would entail up to one hundred thousand times of hammering before completion. But this is exactly why these handicrafts, marked by durability and elegance, have gained much popularity among customers from the

U.S., Japan, India, Malaysia, Nepal, Thailand, Pakistan and many more. The production of silverware in Xinhua can be traced back to as early as the period of Nanzhao (738-920AD), one locally-built kingdom in Yunnan which synchronized with the Tang Dynasty (618-907), a peak for the entire history of ancient China.

But nothing seems to have been forgotten or discarded today—some 1,100 years later—as the enthusiasm of producing silver artworks was, and still is infused in the soul of silversmiths from Xinhua. Silverware being created here range widely from rice bowls and kettles to tea cups, from bracelets and earrings to small statues and even fairly sophisticated crowns. And it seems that every one of them retains a good story, waiting to be heard. **By Wang Jingzhong**

Yunnan expands education friends circle



Thai students are performing traditional Thai dance in Kunming.

In recent years, Yunnan province has actively got involved in the Belt and Road cooperation, stepping up international cooperation in education in an all-round way. Here are the highlights.

In March 2019, Yunnan issued *Several Opinions on Expanding and Deepening the Opening-Up in the New Era*, proposing to expand cross-border cooperation in education.

Yunnan has initiated a number of high-quality platforms for educational exchange and cooperation, such as the Yunnan-South Asia and Southeast Asia Education Cooperation Forum and the South and Southeast Asian University Network. Thanks to the platforms, cooperation and exchanges have been widely carried out in the areas of teacher-student exchange, curriculum exchange, mutual recognition

of credits, internship and training, and mutual granting of degrees. Such practices have facilitated mutual learning and joint progress among schools in the regions.

In June this year, the 2nd Yunnan-South Asia and Southeast Asia Education Cooperation Forum was held in Kunming, drawing in 500-plus educational dignitaries from 31 countries and regions. The forum deepened exchanges and cooperation in education, increased the synergy effects of education, culture and academics, and helped cultivate talents for the Belt and Road cooperation.

While bringing in friends, Yunnan also goes beyond the border for more educational exchanges and cooperation. In recent years, Yunnan University, Yunnan Normal University, Kunming University of Science and Technology and others

have cooperated with peers in neighbouring countries. A number of Confucius Institutes or Confucius Classrooms were established in Myanmar, Laos, Thailand and more, popularising the Chinese language through diverse activities. Yunnan has won popularity and fame in international education.

With new progress in pursuit of the Belt and Road Initiative, Yunnan will continue to showcase its own advantages, bring in more educational personages from neighbouring countries, and jointly step up cross-border cooperation in education.

STORY:
Supawade Patkerd: I hope to travel across China while study here

Supawade Patkerd is a Thai public civil servant who works in international relations. In 2014, Supawade studied the Chinese language for one year at Yunnan University of Finance and Economics as an exchange student. When she first arrived in Kunming, language was her biggest barrier. To overcome this obstacle, Supawade tried to communicate with Chinese students as much as possible and asked her teacher whenever she had a problem. Her Chinese improved greatly after one year. "When I was back, I was thinking of coming back to China for further study."

In 2016, Supawade came to study at Yunnan University for a doctorate degree.

"At the same time, I am grateful to my working unit. When I told them my idea of going to China for study, they supported me. When I was in Kunming in 2014, ordering food on phone and online ride-hailing had not started yet. Now, it is convenient for foreigners to stay and live here, so I like Kunming much more now." This summer vacation, Supawade visited Shanghai and Hangzhou. "I like the modern cities in China, full of digital and technological sense."

During her study, Supawade often reads in the library of Yunnan University or the coffee shop in Wenhua Street. "I like Chinese history." Now, Supawade is very confident about her Chinese. She can read and understand the Chinese ancient novel the "Dream of Red Mansions", which is considered difficult. As she says: "Now, I have no problem in travelling all over China."

During weekends, Supawade carries her backpack and takes the high-speed train to Dali, Wenshan, Mile. She homestays with local villagers to get to know the folk customs and experiences the local life. "I like the Bai people in Dali. Their neat houses look very beautiful. It is very enjoyable to read a book in the sunshine with a cup of coffee at the foot of Cangshan Mountain."

"For me, it is a valuable opportunity to study in China. I hope to travel all over the south and north of China while studying here and use what I learn here when I go back to my country." Supawade is looking forward to her study life in the future.