

MY EXPO | KHALID ALTOWELLI

Sailing into the future

Friendship between China and Saudi Arabia continues to improve and prosper

I was quite taken by a comment I heard a couple of weeks ago on TV from an American filmmaker who made a documentary about Expo 2010 Shanghai. He told his host, referring to the significance of this Expo: "Expo 2010 will transform Shanghai, Shanghai will transform China and China will end-up transforming the world."

I felt a strange sense of pride because of this comment since I thought that there is a little part that I will have contributed to this transformation by working in a pavilion that has been a factor in the success of Expo — Saudi Arabia.

However, that vanity phase I went through watching the program didn't take away from the reality of what I got from participating in Expo on a professional as well as personal level.

Saudi and China celebrated the 20th anniversary of diplomatic ties in July at the Saudi Pavilion, but the pavilion itself is a manifestation of trade relations between China and the Arab world that have existed for thousands of years and is symbolized by nicknaming the pavilion the "Moon Boat", which is "sailing" west towards Saudi Arabia. The last 20 years of contemporary Sino-Saudi relations were a journey of discovery and trade between the two nations and the people who live in there.

For businesses, the journey started a bit earlier as large corporations, such as Saudi Arabia's oil giant Saudi Aramco — one of the sponsors of the Saudi Pavilion — have set up offices in numerous Chinese cities, along with multibillion-dollar joint-venture projects with Chinese corporations in both Saudi Arabia and China.

In addition, around 1 million barrels per day of Saudi oil is sold to China.

The same could be said of another Saudi sponsor of the Saudi pavilion, the Saudi petrochemical giant SABIC.

Saudi people got to know more about China, and its people and culture through this business route, as corporations such as Saudi Aramco started sending students to study at Chinese universities from 1998.

However, Saudi participation in Expo 2010 Shanghai, the largest-ever participation by Saudi Arabia in a World Expo, is another manifestation emphasizing the significance of this strategic relationship.

It gave Saudis participating in and visiting Expo a unique opportunity to meet and interact with Chinese people and admire their keen sense of curiosity and impressive determination to improve. Saudis have also been impressed by China's strides in development, fully on show in Shanghai.



PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Khalid Altowelli, the Saudi Arabia Pavilion's press manager, says he is proud of his country's contribution to the Expo.

On the other hand, the more than 3 million visitors, mostly Chinese that have passed through gates of the Saudi Pavilion got a rare chance to learn about Saudi Arabia, Saudi culture and Saudi people.

In the end, this Expo and the Saudi participation in it will generate a sense of friendship on both sides as the two nations go hand in hand in their journey of discovery and both may even end up transforming the world in the process.

The author is a journalist and press manager for the Saudi Arabia Pavilion.

newsbites

Eco-presentation

GM China presented two environmentally friendly Chevrolet Equinox vans to the Bureau of Shanghai World Expo Coordination. The automaker said the presentation will add to the Expo's vision of sustainable urban transportation.

Chevrolet Equinox, a milestone vehicle in GM's hydrogen-cell technology, has adopted the most advanced battery technologies from GM, realizing zero-emission discharge.

African exchange

The Kenya China Investment Forum was held in Shanghai on Sept 10, one day after Kenya celebrated its national pavilion day in the Expo Garden.

Supported by the Kenya Tourist Board, the event was held for potential Chinese investors to explore business opportunities in Kenya and also to promote bilateral trade between the two countries. More than 70 Kenyan companies, including Kenya Airways, and 150 Chinese companies participated in the event.

Tea time

The 10th China Pu'er Tea Festival will be held from Nov 5-7 in Shanghai, the first time that the festival will be held in a place outside Yunnan province's Pu'er city. This year's Pu'er Tea Festival features a grand opening ceremony, a demonstration of Pu'er tea, the promotion of the tourism in Pu'er and a forum on scientific research on Pu'er tea, among other events.

The festival aims to give visitors a better understanding of the characteristics and culture of Pu'er tea.

Pretty good pork

Expo 2010 Shanghai allows countries and regions to promote not only their science and technology but also their delicious food. Encouraged by the success of many international food festivals held in the Expo Garden, officials from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture were in Shanghai on Sept 14 to promote the state's quality pork products. According to Hurt Markham, director of the department's Agricultural Marketing Service, the state's pork is tasty, nutritious and safe because pigs are fed high-quality diets consisting of organic corn and soybeans.

Jewelry test

A launch ceremony was held recently at the Okura Garden Hotel in Shanghai to mark the opening of the Lao Fengxiang Cup Souvenir Design Competition. The best designs aim to display the culture of Shanghai, as well as demonstrating the charm of this cosmopolitan city. Winners will be given a chance to work with Lao Fengxiang, a 150-year-old jewelry company.



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