

Culture, tourism seen as key to developing new Silk Road

Editor's note: During his visit to Kazakhstan in September, President Xi Jinping proposed that China and Central Asia join hands to build a Silk Road economic belt to boost cooperation. The idea has been widely echoed in Central Asian countries, becoming an encouraging blueprint for Chinese areas along the Silk Road that has linked Asia and Europe for more than 2,000 years. In the next three weeks, China Daily reporters will travel along the belt in China, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkey. They will show the progress and expectations of the countries, businesses and peoples on the route.

By ZHONG NAN
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Tourism and cultural exchanges will be useful tools in building the new foundation for the Silk Road economic belt, officials and scholars from China's northwestern provinces said.

Zhang Shengzhen, secretary-general of the Gansu provincial government, said the modern Silk Road will promote commodity exchanges as well as cultural exchanges.

"Launching more cultural exchanges and tourism activities between China, Central Asia and Turkey will help those trade partners further understand the meaning of the Silk Road economic belt, and realize that China will not be the only winner on the route to the West," Zhang said.

The modern Silk Road is more than just a channel for China to import resources such as crude oil, natural gas or farm products from Central Asia, Zhang said.

"People from Central Asia could visit China's western provinces first to see what the ancient Silk Road did to ben-

efit their countries in the past." China's willingness to explore cultural differences and similarities is seen as one of the concrete achievements of President Xi Jinping's four-nation Central Asian tour last year.

Chen Kegong, Party chief of Zhangye, a city along the ancient Silk Road in Gansu province, said the city has been dedicated to promoting cultural exchanges

with people from Central Asia. The city's Giant Buddha Temple, established in 1098 about 600 kilometers west of Gansu's provincial capital, Lanzhou, received more than 1,100 Central Asian and Turkish visitors in 2013. The number has steadily increased, Chen said.

"The Silk Road economic belt is not a China-controlled geo-economic organization," Chen said. "It is a naturally formed concept offering Central Asian nations new edges over others competing for vessel fleet size and trade volume on the international maritime trade routes."

Yang Xiuqing, a senior researcher at Dunhuang Research Academy in Gansu's



Tourists visit the Giant Buddha Temple on Sunday in Zhangye, Gansu province. The temple was built in 1098 and is located along the ancient Silk Road. In 2013, it received more than 1,100 Central Asian and Turkish visitors. Experts said cultural exchanges between China and Central Asia will be a foundation for the Silk Road economic belt proposed by President Xi Jinping last year.

Dunhuang county, another location rich in ancient Silk Road heritage, said Central Asia needs China to help it build a modern infrastructure network, and it needs to cooperate with China to develop natural resources.

"Knowing more Silk Road cultural background will give foreign visitors an impression that the modern Silk Road economic belt can not only bring goods and wealth to both sides but can also create new business opportunities and expand their market channels in China, Central Asia and Europe from a long-term perspective," Yang said.

In the meantime, businesses from Central Asian

nations such as Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have already brought products ranging from honey and lamb to cotton and tapestries to China's major western markets.

Lyu Jianzhong, chairman of the Shaanxi Folk Museums Association in Xi'an, Shaanxi province, said the Silk Road economic belt will assist China in further unleashing its economic growth potential, as regional cooperation of this kind is expected to stimulate domestic demand and prop up exports.

China is expanding economic and trade cooperation to more fields and building a new platform based on a fresh

cooperative model that focuses on cultural and tourism exchanges with other nations.

Lyu organized more than 30 Chinese artists to travel along the Silk Road and visit 12 countries in 2013, including Turkey, Iran and Central Asian nations, to seek new cultural phenomena and historical inheritances from the old Silk Road.

"Local people from those destinations can definitely share Chinese artists' thought and China's rising openness and tolerance in various cultures during their communication," Lyu said. "As a result, they will be more interested in economic and cultural cooperation with China."

Expo gives momentum to economic belt proposal

By HENA
and LU HONGYAN in Xi'an

895.6 billion yuan

Estimated value of domestic deals signed at a major expo for cooperation along the Silk Road economic belt. Deals signed for foreign investment at the event were worth an estimated \$5.06 billion.

A major expo designed to promote cooperation among countries along the Silk Road economic belt concluded on Monday in Xi'an, Shaanxi province, after the signing of domestic deals worth a preliminary estimate of 895.6 billion yuan (\$144 billion).

The 18th Investment and Trade Forum for Cooperation between East and West China and the Silk Road International Exposition "achieved fruitful results", according to Zhang Xiaoning, deputy director of the expo's organizing committee.

Domestic participants also signed deals during the event for foreign investment worth \$5.06 billion, Zhang said.

The host province was the biggest winner, attracting 613 billion yuan of domestic investment and \$4.65 billion of foreign funds, Zhang said.

The event connected China and countries along the ancient Silk Road, which started in Xi'an and ended in Rome.

President Xi Jinping proposed the concept of a modern Silk Road economic belt on his visit to Kazakhstan in September.

More than 300,000 business delegates from 77 countries and regions attended the four-day event, including around 1,800 foreign delegates. Exact data about contracts involving Chinese companies investing in other countries was not immediately available.

Zhang Wei, vice-president of the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade, called for joint efforts to make significant progress to further reduce barriers of trade between countries along the belt.

"The need to promote trade

facilitation, to improve port infrastructure, to promote customs efficiency and especially to improve and establish a practical commercial dispute-settlement mechanisms are urgent to speed up cooperation along the Silk Road economic belt," Zhang said.

Boosting the economic belt will more closely connect countries along the route and work to the benefit of 3 billion people, he added.

The concept so far has received an enthusiastic welcome from economists and countries.

Representatives from international chambers of commerce and other associations also signed the Xi'an Proposal, vowing to enhance cooperation.

"The boosting of the Silk Road economic belt will bring historic new development opportunities for Asia and Europe. Ukraine hopes to deepen cooperation with China and other countries in more fields such as agriculture and the aerospace field," said Gennadiy Chyzykhov from the Ukrainian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Exhibitions at the event covered 300,000 square meters, three times the forum's size in 2013. The 19th forum and expo will take place in May 2015.

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culturespecial

Nishan Forum: Dialog on ethics at the birthplace of Confucius

By ZHAO RUIXUE
and WANG QIAN

Twenty scholars signed a pledge to foster awareness of human welfare at the third Nishan Forum on World Civilizations that closed on Friday in Jinan, Shandong province.

The gathering is named after Nishan Mountain where Confucius is believed to have been born.

Along with scholars, the pledge was initiated by Xu Jialu, chairman of the forum and vice-chairman of the standing committee of the ninth and 10th National People's Congress, and Hans d'Orville, assistant director-general for strategic planning at UNESCO.

The pledge states that "the goal is to work for common human ethics and morality".

"Ethics and morality are concerned with the respect for other human beings' rights, with the responsibility for the common welfare of local communities, and with the consciousness of responsibilities and duties for the common welfare of human beings," it continues.

The four-day forum that attracted more than 12,000 participants featured 10 dialogs, two speeches, seven academic sessions and two concerts.

"The Nishan Forum shows China is willing to communicate with the other countries in more than just the economic sector," Zhao Qizheng, former chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee and former minister of the State Council Information Office, said in a closing speech.

In his speech, d'Orville said

"the Nishan Forum has gradually gained importance and influence as an international platform for cultural dialog and intellectual exchange".

"From diversity and harmony — two key words of its previous editions — the forum is now putting an emphasis on common ethics, a theme that is gaining importance in national and international debates as the globalization process creates new challenges for decision-makers and citizens alike."

The UNESCO official said it is significant to meet in the cradle of Confucianism — a turn to ancient wisdom for answers to

the problems of modern society. Fred Dallmayr, chairman of the World Public Forum, said tragedies like that at a street market in Urumqi last Thursday happen all over the world almost every day, lending more weight to the issues discussed at the Nishan Forum.

A round-table dialog on gender equality was also part of this year's forum.

"It is of great significance to add the dialog on gender equality," said Zhang Youyun, director of the Bureau for Gender Equality, International Labor Organization.

"Issues of gender equality

matter a great deal in building a healthy and civilized society," she said.

Concerts by symphony orchestras included *Ode to Confucius* and *Symphony No 5 in D Minor*.

As well, ceremonies honored the Nishan Academy, an organization founded in the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) dedicated to Confucius and his thoughts.

The biennial forum is scheduled to be next held in Jining city in 2016.

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Scholars and intellectuals from around the world participated in the third Nishan Forum on World Civilizations in Jinan, Shandong province last week.



Children in traditional clothes read Confucian classics during a ceremony in the Temple of Confucius at Nishan Mountain.

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Chinese culture will play a significant role in the great undertaking of forging new common ethics for mankind thanks to the fact that the outstanding features of Chinese culture make up for the deficiency of modernity and rectify the aberrations from modernization. These features include Chinese people's cosmic views on the harmony of man with nature, social views of harmony in diversity, and values of taking ren (benevolence) as one's own duty and self-cultivation. The Nishan Forum and intellectuals across China are very willing to contribute to the cause."

XU JIALU, chairman of Nishan Forum, vice-chairman of the standing committee of the ninth and 10th National People's Congress

We all know that there are more than 200 countries and 2,000 ethnic groups in the world that use over 6,000 kinds of languages. So it is necessary to promote communication and dialog among civilizations amid the world's rapid globalization. To have a successful dialog, a sincere and frank manner is important to declaring one's point of view and listen to another's voice. It is good to know something we didn't know before. We make great gains if we can reach consensus"

ZHAO QIZHENG, former chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, former minister of the State Council Information Office

Even though ethics systems change with time, and particularly under the influence of globalization and new technologies, basic ethical values — the culture of peace and tolerance, mutual understanding and dialog, harmonious and inclusive co-existence, preservation and transmission of cultures and values, and sustainable and responsible environmental protection — remain the same through all civilizations."

HANS D'ORVILLE, assistant director-general for Strategic Planning at UNESCO

The Nishan Forum and the World Community Forum are part of the UN Alliance of Civilizations. We are not primarily politicians or government officials. Rather we are intellectuals, educators, religious leaders, writers, and humanists from different countries and backgrounds. We are all brought together by our common allegiance to the Golden Rule — to make it not only a formula on paper, but allow it to have an impact on the affairs of our world, guiding these affairs from the perilous cliffs of conflict and destruction to the safe harbor of justice and peace."

FRED DALLMAYR, chairman of the World Public Forum

