

0 Striving Towards a Modern Coastal Metropolis

Ningbo's Imprint in China-Benin Relations

By Dong Na

Patrice Talon, the Beninese President's four-day state visit to China has once again focused people's attention on China-Africa friendship and cooperation.

In recent years, China-Benin relations have enjoyed a sound development momentum, with solid progress achieved. To echo, Benin and Ningbo are inextricably linked.

Last year marked the 50th anniversary of the restoration of diplomatic relations between China and Benin. In the meantime, Ningbo and the city of Cotonou celebrated the 10th anniversary of their friendship.

Benin Center as a Bridgehead

Dated back to 2008, the Chinese government and a Ningbo enterprise, Teams International, jointly invested in the construction of the Benin Center in the city of Cotonou, which opened a window for cooperation and exchange between Chinese and Beninese enterprises.

When President Talon visited China for the first time in September 2016, the head of Teams International was invited to have an audience as the only representative of a Chinese private enterprise.

The Benin Center is the 11th national cooperation centre set up by China in Africa, and the first national centre operated by a private enterprise. It is in the downtown business district of Cotonou, covering an area of nearly 10,000 square meters. The centre attracts businessmen from West African countries to order and local citizens also like to buy daily necessities there.

The Benin Center has created a new model of helping enterprises to explore emerging markets: with the



In recent years, China-Benin relations have enjoyed a sound development momentum. [Photo provided to Ningbo Times]

Benin Center as a platform, more and more Ningbo enterprises have entered the vast West African market and made efforts to build deeper ties with it.

Over the past decade, the Benin Center has provided consulting services to 1,200 China-Africa enterprises, provided legal, financial and employee management assistance to more than 50 Chinese enterprises investing in Benin, and promoted the export of 150,000 tons of agricultural products from Benin with a total value of more than 200 million US dollars.

Build More Diversified Communication

In addition to economic and trade cooperation, Ningbo is also widely seen in cultural events.

In 2014, Ningbo Polytech-

nic, Teams International, and Benin CERCO College reached an agreement to jointly build the "China-Africa (Benin) Polytechnic". In 2015, Ningbo Polytechnic faculties went to Benin for the first time to teach, and students from Benin also came to Ningbo to study.

On August 20 last year, the "Luban Workshop in Benin" launched by Ningbo Polytechnic was approved as the first batch of such projects by the Chinese government, which is the first overseas school project in Zhejiang to win this honour.

In the future, the "Luban Workshop in Benin" will also train local technical skills for non-Chinese enterprises and bring the strength of Ningbo to improve local people's livelihood.

In recent years, the development of tourism in Benin has gradually gained speed, becoming

the second-largest foreign exchange-earning industry after cotton.

"Every time I go to Benin, I can see new changes, and international brands like Marriott are investing in the cities," said Ni Guoming, General Manager of Teams International.

Wide Scope of Cooperation in Future

Benin, which borders Nigeria to the east and can reach a market of over 200 million people, will serve as a "bridgehead" for the West African market, and the establishment of the Benin Center is exactly the bridge for the import of brands and products of SMEs.

At present, Benin is working to transform the country, which is currently under-indus-

trialized, into an industrial centre for agricultural product processing. In this regard, China is supporting Benin's industrialization and diversified development strategy with concrete actions.

"Ningbo's manufacturing is well developed, while West Africa's is relatively weak, I think the two can form a complementary. At the same time, China and Benin can further exchange in the cultural field via Ningbo," said Zhang Jinxian, Vice President of Benin Center.

As he sees it, Ningbo and Cotonou are both port cities. Ports are important infrastructure for economic and social development and a strong engine for the seaward economy, China and Benin can carry out in-depth cooperation and exchanges on how to develop the port economy and expand the economic benefits of the ports.

0 SPOTLIGHT

The 19th Asian Games Torch Made in Ningbo

By Xu Zhuowei

On the afternoon of September 4, the torch delivery ceremony for the 19th Asian Games was held in the headquarters of Fotile Group in Ningbo, marking the maiden show of the torch.

On that day, over 2,000 torches were loaded and transported from Ningbo to 11 cities for the torch relay event of the 19th Asian Games from September 8 to 20.

The torch, symbolizing the transmission of Chinese civilization, the unity and integration of athletes from different countries, and demonstrating the charm of Zhejiang intellectual manufacturing, is named "Eternal Flame" and produced by Fotile, a Ningbo enterprise.

The overall contour curve of the torch is like holding firewood. It is the first firewood shape that adopts a "square barrel body" with a curve that grows from bottom to top.

The design inspiration comes from the jade Cong, a form of ancient Chinese jade artifact, in Liangzhu culture, while the circular torch body evolved from the spiral pattern. The overall height of the torch is 73 centimetres, with a net weight of 1.2 kilograms.

"To maximize the firepower, as well as the wind and rain resistance, of the torch, the 'Eternal Flame' has applied three invention patents and seven utility model patents from Fotile," said Du Zuofeng, Deputy Commander of the Torch Relay Command of the 19th Asian Games Event Headquarters, who added that third-party evaluation showed that it can resist strong wind or rain up to level 8, while the flame remains visible. Not only so, but the large hole diversion rainproof design also can effectively prevent rainwater blockage and improve performance.

"There is more. From the sandblasting process used on the surface of the torch to the dimensional accuracy of component bonding, the R&D team has conducted dozens of tests on each process. During technical testing, three fire tests were also conducted to verify the airtightness of all connections and ensure that each torch meets the quality," said Li Yongsan, manager of the Manufacturing Department of Fotile Gas Factory.

Adding to the important spiritual and cultural inspiration the Asian Games torch bears, it also highlights the upgraded technological innovation and production capacity of Chinese manufacturing.

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0 双语汇 Different Tongues

西坞古镇：“微改造、精提升”重焕水乡生机

By Jin Lu

In the ancient town of Xiwu in Fenghua, you can find many poetic scenes: the mist veiling the river, stone arches overlooking the river, and a network of ancient alleys connecting beautiful buildings standing amidst the drizzling charm of southern China.

在奉化西坞古镇，这里有雾满拦江，有石拱临河，还有阡陌相连的古弄和伫立在江南烟雨下的美好建筑。

This town, cradled by gentle waterways, fulfils most people's imaginations of a Jiangan, or southern Yangtze River, water village.

这个被水系温柔环抱的古镇，满足了人们对江南水乡的大部分想象。

To promote rural tourism with local features and create a water village service system fitting local conditions, the

Xiwu area embarked on a "micro-renovation and refinement" project for the granary building in town.

为助推特色小镇文旅业发展，因地制宜打造具有本地特色的水乡旅游，西坞街道通过“微改造、精提升”专项工作，将现有的粮仓建筑进行修缮提升。

Moreover, the authorities will take this opportunity to further integrate its existing tourism resources during the preservation and upgrade project of the Xiwu Granary.

不仅如此，以西坞粮仓的改造为基础，西坞街道对辖区现有旅游资源进一步整合。

A 28-million yuan investment was made to create a comprehensive tourist destination, including a visitor service area, an open-air scenic park, a photography exhibition area, and an urban cultural book café on the site of the Granary,



Ancient town of Xiwu in Fenghua. [Photo by Tang Yan] 奉化西坞古镇。唐严 摄

and some of them sit in the old warehouses.

在西坞粮仓原仓内，当地投资2800万，建造了游客服务

区、露天观光公园、摄影展示区、城市文化书咖等设施。

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