

Syrian People Aspire to Learn from China

Dialogue

By XU Qingqun & LONG Yun

Compared with his first visit to China in 2001, Dr. Hassan Risheh, a former minister of higher education of Syria, said on his visit in 2023 that, "The transformation in China is truly remarkable." Risheh has been committed to international cooperation for decades, focusing mainly on higher education. He said Syrian people aspire to learn from China's successes in this field.

A Syrian education reformer

During his position as the minister of higher education in Syria from 2000 to 2003, Risheh dedicated himself to educational and technological development. He designed and drafted a new strategy aimed at connecting higher education with all sectors of the Syrian economy.

The new strategy was to establish private universities in Syria, promote innovative educational methods such as digital learning and open universities, and establish numerous higher education institutions like the College of Business Administration and the College of Public Management. As part of the upgrade plan for the Syrian higher education system, he forged new academic connections with institutions worldwide.

In addition, Risheh has long been involved in some cooperation projects between Syria and multiple countries, having substantial international influence and academic reputation in fields such as information technology, higher



Dr. Hassan Risheh. (PHOTO: International Talent Magazine)

education, public management, and international relations.

Establishing bridge between Syria and China

On September 15, 2023, Risheh was welcomed by Fan Jiuli, the president of Northwest University of Political Science and Law in China. During the meeting, Risheh expressed his intention to assist in establishing a comprehensive bridge between the University of Damascus and Northwest University of Political Science and Law. During his visit, Risheh toured smart classrooms and delivered a lecture on promoting people-to-people exchanges around the world.

On his 12-day visit to China, Risheh and his Chinese counterparts facilitated

the strategic cooperation agreement between the two universities.

"The Syrian people have always regarded the Chinese people as brothers, holding great respect for China and aspiring to learn from its successful experiences," he said.

During his first visit in 2001, he witnessed China's economic success through visits to economic zones, observing the digitization of many ports. Inspired by the Chinese spirit of innovation and reform, he suggested establishing similar economic zones in Syria. He was keen to draw inspiration from China's advanced social development experience, fostering mutual understanding and trust between the people of

China and Syria.

Enhancing international cooperation

Historically, the spirit of the Silk Road, characterized by peace, cooperation, openness, inclusiveness, mutual learning and mutual benefits has been passed down, pushing human civilization forward and fostering prosperity among countries along the route.

According to Risheh, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) will enhance cooperation between Syria and China in various fields, such as infrastructure, advancing collaboration not only between the two countries, but also with neighboring countries.

Risheh, who has witnessed the long-standing cooperation between China and Syria, believes this collaboration has also driven in-depth cooperation in many fields, especially in the educational sector.

For example, an online Arabic language education platform has been established for Chinese residents in Syria. Risheh hopes to extend this model to Chinese language education, creating a platform for people in the Arab world to learn Chinese.

He values the importance of language as the key to breaking down barriers, facilitating cultural exchange, and truly achieving a "common understanding of the people." Fluent in Arabic, English, French and Russian, Risheh also knows he needs to learn Chinese to further excel in his area of work. He firmly believes that online education in Arabic and Chinese should be integral to construction of the BRI.

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Tech for Better Life in China

A Greener Future from Eco-civilization

By Staff Reporters

In a recent interview with *Science and Technology Daily*, Professor Michael Meadows, a prominent physical geographer and educator at Nanjing University's Geography and Ocean Sciences School, shared his insights on China's ecological development and the significant strides it has taken in environmental protection.

"There's been huge progress in China's ecological development and it's not even only recently," said Meadows, highlighting tangible actions undertaken by the Chinese government. He noted that China has made substantial progress, both historically and in contemporary times.

Earlier this year, Meadows co-authored a paper on environmental sustainability with experts from Beijing Normal University. The paper documented environmental protection measures by the Chinese government, dating back to the 1970s, particularly focusing on soil conservation. "We're seeing huge improvement in land use and management in rural areas of China," he said, underscoring the profound impact of these policies on environmental sustainability and improving people's livelihood.

He also pointed out that China's achievement in poverty eradication is noteworthy, which is accomplished in part through environmental conservation efforts. "China is the only country in the world that's eradicated extreme poverty," said Meadows, emphasizing "the twin benefits of looking after the environment, in particular the soil, are improving the productivity and the livelihoods of the people who are working on the land."

Expressing personal admiration for China's policy-level achievements, Meadows

lauded the concept of "eco-civilization" or ecological civilization, a vision he believes is gradually becoming a reality.

"In China, the air quality has massively improved compared to what it used to be," Meadows said, dispelling misconceptions about the country's air conditions. As a jogger, he fully experiences the air quality in Nanjing and other cities around the world. He acknowledged the progress China has made in addressing air quality, a concern often raised by people in Western countries. He often shows his friends that Nanjing's air quality is better than that of other cities like London via a weather app. "There are still places from time to time where pollution concentrates, but on the whole, there's been huge progress made," he said.

China's commitment to carbon neutrality by 2060 and the increased share of renewable energy in its national energy structure were also highlighted by Meadows. He commended the efforts to phase out consumption of coal mines and increase the number of electric vehicles powered by renewables despite challenges.

"We could work faster and harder" Meadows said, emphasizing the importance of continuous efforts in environmental protection. While expressing his optimism about China's future, he applauded the progress the country has made and encouraged further advancements in the realm of environmental sustainability. As China continues its journey toward a greener future, the world is watching with keen interest the nation's evolving ecological achievements, he said.

ZHANG Rong and JIANG Peiye from Nanjing University also contributed to this article.

Service Info

Shanghai Launches New Portal for Foreigners

By Staff Reporters

Deciding where to go in Shanghai has just become much easier. Clicking on the new version of the Shanghai international service portal (english.shanghai.gov.cn), foreigners not only find the Seven Must-Visit Attractions in Shanghai, but can also access the country's specialty restaurants' information recommended by foreign consuls general in Shanghai.

Called International Services Shanghai, the new website provides a variety

of information for foreigners traveling to and living in Shanghai.

Five landscapes have been designed, namely business, work, tourism, overseas study, and consumption. The portal also has a Living in Shanghai section, which uses scene simulations and corresponding service guides to effectively solve the various needs of foreigners, from express entry, applying for residence permits and bank cards, to necessities such as food, housing, and transportation.

Moreover, a series of offline activi-

ties, such as policy introduction sessions, business consultations, themed salons, cultural experiences, and learning and training events, will be organized to better serve and engage the expat community.

In addition to the English version, the website will soon be made available in eight other languages — Japanese, Korean, German, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian and Arabic.

(PHOTO: Shanghai Municipal People's Government)



Abacus: Chinese Counting Symbol

Traditional Eastern Wisdom

By ZONG Shihan

The abacus, a manually operated counting aid that originated in China, was hailed as "the fifth great invention in China" by Joseph Needham, a renowned British biochemist and historian. Before the advent of Arabic numerals, the abacus was a widely used counting tool globally.

For thousands of years, the ancient Chinese used simple objects for calculations in agriculture and commerce. Over time, counting rods replaced randomly picked up stones and bones used for calculations. Then, the abacus replaced counting rods, and finally the seven-bead abacus replaced the five-bead abacus.

The discovery of counting rods made of animal bones in ancient Han tomb indicates that as early as the Western Han Dynasty (206 BC- 24 AD), the Chinese used wooden or bones rods for calculations. However, the shape of the rods had to be constantly changed during calculations, which was very time-consuming. So they were gradually developed into the abacus.

The early abacus used small round beads instead of long rods, which were comparatively clumsy. The beads were strung into strings with rods, saving cal-

culcation time. Over time, the number of beads increased, leading to the seven-bead abacus from its five-bead predecessor to adapt to the hexadecimal system.

The existing abacuses have different shapes and are made of different materials. A typical abacus is mostly made of wood and consists of a series of beads arranged in a rectangular wooden frame. A crossbeam in the middle divides the beads into two parts. Each bead in the upper half represents five, and each bead in the lower half represents one. Each string of beads represents the values of ones, tens, hundreds, thousands, and tens of thousands from right to left.

As it was simple to make, affordable, and easy to use, the abacus was widely used in China, from where it gradually spread to countries and regions such as Korea, the U.S. and Southeast Asia.

In today's era of computers and other electronic devices, although few people use abacuses, it has become a symbol of counting in China. In recent years, it has often appeared on postage stamps and postcards. It is also part of some special occasions.

For instance, "Zhuazhou" is a traditional Chinese celebration of a child's first birthday when several objects are placed before the child to choose. The chosen object is supposed to indicate the child's future career. The abacus is among these objects, representing business or wealth.



A child plays with a giant abacus at Mozi Memorial Hall in Tengzhou city, Shandong province. (PHOTO: VCG)

Stronger China-Sweden Sci-tech Cooperation for Global Well-being

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China has become one of Sweden's most important scientific research partners. Shortly after the outbreak of COVID-19, 50 experts from the two countries quickly set up a joint research and treatment team to conduct multicenter international clinical trials.

The leading life-science research institutes of both countries have been deepening cooperation in clinical treatment and disease research to jointly address global health challenges and make greater contributions to global health.

Both countries' universities and research institutions have been actively cooperating and exchanging personnel in natural sciences, engineering technology, especially environmental protection, smart cities and clean energy.

In recent years, the number of papers they have jointly published has doubled, and the impact factor has grown. Several technologies developed through

joint research have become world-leading. The new solar energy storage and power generation system developed by China and Sweden can store the captured solar energy up to 18 years and convert it into electricity.

China is also one of the key collaborators of Swedish research funding agencies. The research foundations of the two countries have deepened policy dialogue and exchanges, jointly promoting R&D of high-quality sci-tech innovation achievements.

The cooperation in scientific and technological industries between the two countries has continued to expand and unleash new vitality, making contributions to the global reduction of emission and the carbon footprint, while promoting sustainable development.

Atlas Copco, AstraZeneca, Scania trucks, Sandvik and many other large Swedish technological manufacturing enterprises have invested in setting up factories and establishing R&D centers in China. A series of investment and co-

operation projects have been successfully established in the fields of automobile manufacturing, energy conservation and environmental protection and smart cities.

Sweden's leading enterprises in new energy and new materials have accelerated their cooperation with Chinese firms. Scientific and technological cooperation in clean energy is burgeoning. The China-Sweden Hammarby Eco City Alliance has set up its first ecological city pilot in Yantai, China's Shandong province.

China has launched the Global AI Governance Initiative, upholding the principles of mutual respect, equality, and mutual benefit in AI development. The country for the first time proposed the International Science and Technology Cooperation Initiative, advocating and practicing the concept of open, fair, just and non-discriminatory international cooperation in science and technology.

Sweden also attaches great impor-

tance to international scientific and technological cooperation, continuously enhancing the internationalization of scientific research and encouraging researchers to engage in international exchange, responding to global challenges and economic and social development demands with high-level scientific research.

China and Sweden coincided with each other on the policy of expanding international sci-tech cooperation and improving the common well-being of the two peoples through science, technology and innovation.

It is expected that in the future, more researchers, experts, scholars, business leaders and entrepreneurs from China and Sweden will become friends and partners, promoters, participants and leaders of innovation cooperation between the two countries, to jointly explore the rich mine of innovation, create more practical achievements, and enhance the common well-being of entire humanity.