

FUJIAN EMBOLDENS CROSS-STRAITS TIES

Province hosts 10th annual forum to boost cooperation and exchanges between Taiwan and the Chinese mainland



A bird's-eye view of the Dongdu port area in Xiamen, Fujian province. The 10th Straits Forum is being held in the city. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By YUAN SHENGGAO

The 10th Straits Forum, an annual platform held on the Chinese mainland, got under way on Tuesday in Xiamen, East China Fujian province, aiming to enhance people-to-people interaction, economic exchanges and cultural integration across the Straits.

The general conference is being held on Wednesday in Xiamen and will be followed by a weeklong series of activities that will unfold across Fujian, according to the forum's organizing committee.

Wang Yang, member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, will attend the general conference of the forum and deliver a speech on Wednesday.

Hau Lung-bin, vice-chairman of the Kuomintang Party, and some 8,000 participants from Taiwan including representatives of political parties, cities and counties, and people from all walks of life, have attended the forum, according to the organizer.

The forum has four topics: youth, exchanges between everyday people, culture and economy, and will deal with topics of public interest, such as the future of the next generation, the economy and finance, cross-Straits marriage and traditional culture, said Zhong Zhigang, deputy director of the forum's organizing committee office, at a recent news conference.

A total of 49 activities, including a youth innovation competition, will be held in Xiamen, while another 18 activities will be held in other cities in Fujian province simultaneously, he added.

According to the organizer, this year's forum has 11 more activities than last year, including a youth cultural and creative products market, a sharing session with Taiwan residents who work in Fujian, a graffiti competition, and forums on various topics, including grassroots governance, the creative cultural industry, and beauty and healthcare.

This is the 10th year of the event, which has been running annually since 2009. An exhibition and a story-telling meeting were organized to review the achievements made in the past years.



Above: Locals at Haicang district holds a ceremony for the hiring of Xiamen people to be chief assistants for their communities. HUANG SHAOYI / FOR CHINA DAILY



Left: A graffiti competition is held during the 10th Straits Forum.

Several Taiwan residents will share their personal experiences of living or working in the Chinese mainland at an event held on Tuesday afternoon.

The forum also focuses on the promotion of traditional Chinese culture through activities, including a seminar on traditional Chinese medicine.

Intangible cultural performances and folk tours are presented to increase the common cultural identity between people on both sides of the Straits, according to the organizer.

Zhong said another highlight will be the focus on education, employment and entrepreneurship for young people on both sides.

A total of 30 businesspeople, who started their own businesses in Fujian, will be awarded at the forum, and 10 of them will share their stories with attendees.

Li Chung-kuei, founder of the Chinese Youth Exchange Association in Taiwan, said at the Straits Youth Forum opened on Tuesday that a new era has arrived on the Chinese mainland with fast development, which also brings a good opportunity to Taiwan.

"There are many favorable policies for Taiwan residents who live in the mainland. This year, we notice more high school graduates are applying to study at universities in the Chinese mainland. I hope young people from both sides can better communicate and cooperate with each other," she said.

This year, the central government has rolled out 31 measures aimed at ensuring that people from Taiwan who study or work in the mainland can enjoy equal treatment with people from the Chinese mainland.

Zhou Lianqing, a member of the Standing Committee of the Party's Fujian Committee, said the development of the province provides a good platform for the exchanges of young people across the Straits.

He said Fujian has already launched six investment areas for Taiwan entrepreneurs, and over 50 percent of the top 100 Taiwan companies have launched their factories here.

There are 73 startup bases for Taiwan residents in Fujian, and more than 14,000 young people from Taiwan are building or starting their businesses here.

Development rises on back of effective reform, opening-up

By LIYOU

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Fujian's development is booming in the wake of effective reform carried out by the East China province's economic and industrial zones.

Xiamen, host city of the BRICS Summit, is a part of the China (Fujian) Pilot Free Trade Zone, which is helping to spearhead the reform.

In the past three years, the zone has launched a total of 134 measures in administrative innovation and reform to better serve startup businesses, 49 of which were the first to be rolled out across the whole country, according to authorities.

The Fuzhou part of China (Fujian) Pilot Free Trade Zone was established in 2015. It became an example of the administrative reform carried out by the province after it led the way in initiating 11 batches of 136 initiatives to make institutions more efficient, simplifying the administrative process, as well as better facilitating the area for trade and investment.

By the end of 2017, there were 28,696 new businesses in the area, with a combined registered capital of 485 billion yuan (\$75.76 billion).

Last year, the total trade volume of the Fuzhou section of the free trade zone hit 26 billion yuan, a year-on-year increase of 44.4 percent.

Pingtian, in eastern Fujian, is the closest island county on the mainland to Taiwan.

It has been actively preparing itself to be a common homeland for cross-Straits residents since 2015, when it was also included in the China (Fujian) Pilot Free Trade Zone, with an emphasis on cross-Straits trade and communication.

Investment made in the zone is continuing to expand in the areas of e-commerce, creative culture, logistics, tourism and financial services, making them part of a new growth engine to promote the province's economic development.

Since the Pingtian part of the zone was established, a total of 7,108 new businesses have been registered in the place, consisting of a total registered capital of 329 billion yuan.

The zone has been pushing for institutional reform and attracting business startups since its establishment in 2015.

Data from a survey carried out by a third party organization show that 90.8 percent of the local enterprises



A fleet of fishing boats is docked alongside a seafood exchange in the China (Fujian) Pilot Free Trade Zone. JIANG KEHONG / XINHUA

agree that the zone has made satisfactory measures in the reform and 91.3 percent of them think positively about the business environment.

By the end of March this year, the total number of new businesses has reached 69,183, with a registered combined capital of 1.5 trillion yuan. Along with the reform in administration and development in economic construction, the improvement of Fujian's ecological system has also not lagged behind.

As the first province to be selected as a national-level ecological civilization testing area, Fujian ranked second of all Chinese provinces in the overall evaluation of ecological civilization construction in 2016.

Pioneering measures such as garbage classification have been adopted and repeated throughout the province.

Through enforcing strin-

gent environmental law and implementing solid supervision, environmental protection projects have shown effect in a wide range of environmental issues.

According to authorities, the proportion of the 12 main rivers in the province with excellent water quality is 95.8 percent; the proportion of days with excellent air quality in Fujian's nine prefecture-level cities reached 96.2 percent, which is 18.2 percentage points higher than the national average. The forest coverage rate is 65.95 percent and ranked best in the country.

Last year, Fujian's GDP exceeded 3 trillion yuan for the first time. For its next move, the province will pave the way for urbanization projects, improve its infrastructure and gather more industrial projects, as well as optimize its institutional system.

Xiamen spearheads measures to foster better relationships

By LIYOU

Taiwan businesspeople, students and workers are for the first time eligible to use public rental housing in Xiamen, Fujian province, according to Fujian provincial government.

The move is part of a series of beneficial policies rolled out by Xiamen in April for Taiwan people who live, work and study in the city.

As a supplement to 31 measures released earlier by the central government, Xiamen's new policies include a total of 60 measures across five major areas.

A total of 23 measures involve economic cooperation, 10 deal with cultural and social exchanges, three with studying or internships in the city, seven working or starting a business and 17 deal with social welfare.

"The public rental house I now live in is equipped with good tables, chairs, beds, water heaters as well as fast internet, which enables me to live happily in the house from the moment I arrived," said Hsu Limin, a Taiwanese resident who lives in Xiamen. "My friends in Taiwan all appreciated the pictures of the house I posted on my WeChat."

With more than 5,000 Taiwan enterprises now, Xiamen aims to provide equal treatment for Taiwan people.

Pingtian in eastern Fujian province is another place that has attracted a lot of people from Taiwan.

In recent years, aiming to encourage young people from Taiwan to work or study in Pingtian, the place has issued a series of supporting policies in the fields of entrepreneurship, financial support, research and

development and receiving professionals.

"Plenty of Taiwan people want to start their own business but they are not familiar with the overall business environment in Pingtian. Therefore, they are eager to know more about the place," said Lin Chihyuen, one of five Taiwan people who were awarded as model workers in 2018 in the province.

In the future, Lin said he would write about his experience in Pingtian and share what he saw with Taiwan's young people through his social media network such as Facebook and his micro blog.

In February, officials from the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council said the mainland will continue to promote the implementation of 31 preferential policies for Taiwan, which were introduced during the fifth Straits Forum in 2013.

The policy package covers legal rights, education, culture and tourism, and aims at improving the lives of all Taiwan people.

Wu Jiaying, president of the Xiamen Taiwan Association, said that the measures of equal treatment fit the voice of the people of Taiwan at the grassroots level.

According to Wu, the Chinese mainland's main aim is to take the greatest consideration of the close interests of Taiwan and Taiwan people, and to promote peaceful development of cross-Straits relations.



Children from the Chinese mainland and Taiwan read Chinese classics together at a previous Straits Forum.