



From left: Yan Jue, president of the Buddhist Association of China. Guests to the Subforum on Religious Harmony and Mutual Learning among Civilizations, a key component of the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2024, held in Hainan province on Friday. Chay Borin (right), head of the Ministry of Culture and Religion of Cambodia, is a special guest at the subforum and walks into the venue with Bour Kry, great supreme Patriarch of Dhammayutta Order of Cambodia. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Buddhists from across world discuss closer ties

Subforum on religious harmony reaches key agreements

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Top Buddhist monks and religious leaders from seven nations gathered in South China's Hainan province on Friday to exchange insights into contemporary challenges and fostering collective progress through the mutual exchange of civilizations.

In the Subforum on Religious Harmony and Mutual Learning among Civilizations, a key component of the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2024, influential leaders advocated for unity among Buddhist communities from diverse nations. They emphasized the need to establish consensus and harness the unique strength and wisdom of Buddhism in the pursuit of global peace.

The subforum has garnered attention from representatives of major world religions, Nobel Prize-winning scientists, experts in Chinese studies, media magnates and other guests from various fields across the globe since its inception in 2015. Notably, this year marks the first time in which the subforum has taken the form of a roundtable dialogue.

Yan Jue, president of the Buddhist Association of China, one of the event hosts, made his inaugural appearance at the subforum, emphasizing China's significant role in the worldwide promotion of Buddhism.

"Chinese Buddhists have, through the large-scale translation of scriptures, elucidation of Buddhist thought, establishment of sects, institutional innovation and cultural integration, embodied the original intention of the Buddha, inherited the essence of Buddhism, enhanced the compatibility of Buddhism with



Buddhist monks and religious leaders discuss at the Subforum on Religious Harmony and Mutual Learning among Civilizations held in Hainan province on Friday, a key component of the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2024.

East Asian cultures, civilizations, societies and people, and promoted the spread of Buddhism to countries such as Japan, South Korea, and Vietnam," Yan said.

He pointed out in the speech that the Chinese Buddhist community is willing to advance peaceful coexistence, mutual respect and win-win cooperation among countries around the world.

Yin Shun, vice-president of the association, is one of the initiators of the subforum and moderator of the round-table forum.

He highlighted that the objective of the event is to unite the efforts of Buddhist communities from different countries, delve into the history of interactions within global Bud-

dham, leverage the wisdom of Buddhism to address global challenges, share responsibilities and attain mutual success.

The theme of the religious subforum is "Flow of Dharma to the East and Thousands of Miles of Fellowship: Confronting Challenges and Achieving Mutual Growth Through the Wisdom and Compassion of Buddha."

Kobayakawa Kodai, abbot of Meikyozan Daichoin Temple of Soto Zen and a permanent researcher at the Soto Zen Comprehensive Research Center, briefly introduced the history of Soto Zen in Japan, which could be traced back to about 800 years ago and revered the Cien Temple in Dahong mountain in Cen-

tral China's Hubei province, where Yin Shun serves as the abbot, as its ancestral temple.

"In different times and places, many people have accepted and inherited it, that's why we have Buddhism as it is today. It is extremely important to respect each other's history and traditions," he noted.

Mu Ae, chairman of the Acharya Review Committee at the Education Institute of Jogye Order and a member of the Sangha Examination Council of Jogye Order, also briefly reviewed the 1,700-year history of Buddhist doctrinal exchange between South Korea and China.

The annual regular exchange visits for practitioners from South Korea and China have been restarted since

late 2023 after a halt caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, he said.

"We look forward to expanding our existing friendly exchanges to actively include exchanges among young people and university student exchanges, exchanges among lay believers and more between China, South Korea and Japan in the near future. This will allow us to share the values of the future of Asia and build a platform for peaceful coexistence," he said.

Thich Duc Thien, vice-president and secretary-general of the Executive Council of Vietnam Buddhist Sangha, affirmed his organization's commitment to deepening cooperation with Chinese Buddhism. This cooperation would encompass Bud-

dhist education, academic exchanges, Buddhist scripture translation, as well as extensive collaboration in the realms of meditation and the preservation of Buddhist cultural heritage.

Kirinde Assaji, deputy chief high prelate of Gangaramaya Temple in Colombo, Sri Lanka, emphasized the commitment of Buddhists in China and Sri Lanka to engage in dialogue and consensus-building.

He envisioned these efforts as a means to witness new insights, pursue new initiatives and forge new friendships that transcend cultural boundaries, enriching the shared Buddhist heritage.

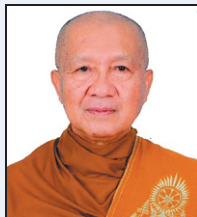
Chen Ruifeng, chairman of the China Religious Culture Communication Association, one of the event hosts, delivered a concluding address.

He stressed the positive significance of Buddhist culture's teaching concepts, particularly compassion, peace and harmony, in addressing the common challenges confronting humanity. He suggested strengthening international Buddhist exchanges and cooperation.

According to Chen, the association will support the Chinese Buddhist community in strengthening connections with Buddhist communities in other Asian countries and around the world through activities such as ancestral site preservation, pilgrimage, commemorating eminent ancestors, establishing friendly temples, and exchanging student monks for mutual learning.

He expressed his hope that the wisdom of Buddhism, through dialogues, exchanges and collaborations, could be used to eliminate estrangement, resolve conflicts and eradicate disputes, contributing to the building of a community with a shared future for mankind.

What they say



From left: Yin Shun, vice-president of the Buddhist Association of China. Harada Mitsunori, deputy superintendent of Zennosato Affairs Promotion Office of Daihonzan Eiheiji of Soto Zen School. Bour Kry, great supreme Patriarch of Dhammayutta Order of Cambodia. Lharkyal Lama, vice-chairman of the Lumbini Development Trust and chief abbot of the Palyul Ling Monastery in Kathmandu. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

On Thursday afternoon, religious representatives from China, Japan, Cambodia and Nepal, representing the three major traditions of Chinese Buddhism, Theravada Buddhism and Tibetan Buddhism, engaged in discussions and shared insights with reporters at a media briefing. This interaction marked the initiation of a dialogue aimed at fostering global religious harmony and promoting the exchange of Eastern and Western civilizations.

The media briefing took place one day before the Subforum on Religious Harmony and Mutual Learning among Civilizations of the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2024.

Key points from the speakers include:

"Today, with the world on the brink of conflict and division, the call for peaceful development is crucial. Buddhism, followed by a significant portion of Asia, is the oldest religious tradition advocating peace. When Buddhism was introduced to China, it integrated with native Confucian and Taoist philosophies, creating a uniquely Chinese form of Buddhism. This tradition spread to Japan, Korea, Southeast Asia, Europe, the Americas and beyond, becoming an influential force in promoting global

peace. Throughout history and today, China has played a pivotal role in the spread of Buddhism."

Yin Shun, vice-president of the Buddhist Association of China

"In the 1980s, the exchanges between the Soto Zen sect in Japan and the Chinese Buddhist community flourished. The trilateral Buddhist exchanges among China, South Korea and Japan are held in rotation annually. In the future, we will pay more attention to, and based on our respective national conditions, deepen Sino-Japanese Buddhist cultural exchanges in more specific ways."

Harada Mitsunori, deputy superintendent of Zennosato Affairs Promotion Office of Daihonzan Eiheiji of Soto Zen School

The Buddhist exchange projects between China and Cambodia, as part of the series of activities for the "2023 China-Cambodia Friendship Year," have progressed smoothly. These initiatives have encompassed the translation of Buddhist scriptures, the compilation of Buddhist history and the advancement of monastic education abroad.

Moreover, the exchanges and cooperation between the Buddhist communities of China and Cambodia have expanded beyond Buddhist culture, per-

meating various fields such as Buddhist education, youth development, public welfare, charity, healthcare and ecological conservation. The Chinese Buddhist community, exemplified by the leadership of Master Yin Shun, has played a significant role in fostering mutual understanding between the two countries.

Bour Kry, the great supreme patriarch of Dhammayutta Order of Cambodia

Nepal's Lumbini, the birthplace of Buddha and a key Buddhist site in Nepal, can only be reached by Chinese flights through a transfer in the Nepalese capital, Kathmandu, which is highly inconvenient.

However, on Jan 17, 2024, in honor of the Buddha's Enlightenment Day and with the strong support of Master Yin Shun, members of the Chinese Buddhist community chartered the first direct flight to Lumbini. This new route offers Chinese tourists a convenient way to visit the Buddha's birthplace. I hope that direct flights from China to Lumbini will open soon. This not only benefits Chinese visitors but also boosts Nepal's tourism economy.

Lharkyal Lama, vice-chairman of the Lumbini Development Trust and Chief Abbot of the Palyul Ling Monastery in Kathmandu

Students discover enlightenment at Nanhai Buddhism Academy

By SONG MENGXING
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Overseas students at Nanhai Buddhism Academy have said they have fallen in love with Chinese culture and enjoyed studying and living there.

Sok Raseak from Cambodia said it was a great honor for him to be selected to study for one year at the academy in Sanya city, Hainan province in September. The 24-year-old said he has developed a deeper understanding of traditional Chinese culture and found that there are some cultural differences between his country and China, especially in the lifestyle of monks.

"I really enjoy the living environment here because the people are very friendly and often help me. I also love the (natural) environment here; the scenery of the academy is pleasant, with mountains in the front and the sea at the back. This quiet and comfortable environment brings me great joy," Sok said.

Other than Chinese language and Buddhism studies, his favorite class teaches students how to brew tea. Before coming to China, he loved coffee, but now he has developed an appreciation for drinking tea. "In tea,

I can feel the strength of tranquility, which coffee doesn't provide," he said.

Sok said he will share Chinese culture with more monks when he is back in Cambodia and ask them to visit China.

Abiskar Karki from Nepal's Lumbini, birthplace of the Buddha, said friendly exchanges between Nepal and China have continued for more than 2,000 years. Despite the world's highest Himalayan mountain range once being a natural barrier between them, today, with the development of air travel, the mountain range can no longer hinder the exchange of envoys from the two countries, he said.

"I experienced Chinese New Year culture for the first time. The streets and houses were decorated in bright red and gold colors. There were also dragon and lion dances, which left me deeply impressed. Of course, the happiest part was receiving *hongbao*, red envelopes containing cash gifts, and many blessings," he said.

Karki said he really likes China and would love to continue to study the Chinese language and stay in the country to continue with graduate studies or work.

After finishing her junior courses, Shova Bhandari, 21, went to the academy in September to learn the Chi-

nese language and deepen her understanding of Chinese Buddhism.

"In the three-plus months at the academy, I have gained a lot. The study atmosphere here is strong, and people are friendly and willing to help. Whenever we encounter difficulties, our classmates and teachers are always enthusiastic to lend a hand. The natural environment here also brings us joy, with pleasant mountains and seas," Shova said.

Her favorite course is calligraphy and she works hard to learn Chinese characters, which are complex. Shova was also very happy to take part in Nepalese dances in ethnic costumes with her classmates at the academy's evening party.

After passing a Chinese language exam this year, she began an internship in March. "I like my work as many people speak Chinese with me every day and I help them with worshipping the Buddha," she said.

The Nanhai Buddhism Academy enrolled its first students in 2017. The total number of students in the school is more than 600, with 72 faculty and staff members. The curriculum for international students is divided into three parts — Buddhist studies, the Chinese language and traditional Chinese culture.



From left: Guests visit Nanhai Buddhism Academy. Overseas students display their calligraphy works. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY