

XI'S VISIT

Boost in profits for regional farmers

Cooperation helps Cambodian farm produce 100 tons more fruit per year

By YANG WANLI
in Siem Reap, Cambodia
yangwanli@chinadaily.com.cn

In Pailin, a province on the northern edge of the Cardamom Mountains in southwestern Cambodia, thousands of longan trees are in full blossom.

According to 63-year-old local longan farm owner Sar Cham Roeurn, this year will see another bumper harvest.

Sar has been growing longan since 1997. His family business has thrived in the past three decades thanks to the cooperation of Chongqing Jinguoyuan Industrial Co, a Chinese company focusing on fresh fruit trade.

Established in Chongqing municipality in 1982, Jinguoyuan has been developing the fresh fruit trade with Cambodia for over 10 years.

In Pailin, the company built its own trading firm, which began operations in 2022 when longan was officially listed among the fresh fruits that can be exported directly from Cambodia to China.

Apart from Cambodia, it also partners with farms in Thailand and Vietnam covering a wide range of tropical fruits such as pineapple and mangosteen.

"Southeast Asia holds great resources of tropical fruits, but they also face challenges due to a lack of scientific management and the support of modern technology," said Pu Jianfei, executive director of Jinkwoyuan Jian Ai Agricultural Technology (Cambodia) Co.

Pu's company is Jinguoyuan's local branch, which has run its own orchard in Pailin since last year. Apart from its huge consumer market, he noted that China has supported the region with its advanced farming skills.



A farmer packs newly harvested longans at an orchard in Pailin, Cambodia. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

"As our fruits are also sold to Saudi Arabia, South Korea and Europe where a higher standard of agriculture chemicals is applied, we provide farmers with the latest recommended pesticides and fertilizers to standardize the planting," he said.

They also invite Chinese experts to provide local farmers with regular technical support to enhance production, he added.

Besides drip irrigation systems, Pu said the company has introduced drones to improve farming efficiency.

A drone can spray one hectare of farmland in an hour — at a cost of less than \$10. They also reduce the health risks to farmers.

"With the support of Jinguoyuan, the amount of fruit produced in my orchard surged from 200 tons to 300 tons per year and the quality of longan has also improved," said Sar, the farmer.

"What's more important is that we no longer worry about demand

fluctuating under the partnership with Chinese companies, which has a large business map covering many other regions," he added.

Strong diplomatic ties between Cambodia and China have led to a significant increase in the value of trade between the two countries.

According to the General Department of Customs and Excise of Cambodia, trade reached a record high of more than \$15 billion in 2024, nearly 30 percent of Cambodia's total trade for the year.

The Council for the Development of Cambodia revealed in January that a total of 414 investment projects worth approximately \$6.9 billion were approved last year, with Chinese investments remaining the largest source, accounting for nearly half of total foreign investment.

To strengthen its partnership with Cambodia, Jinguoyuan launched a self-operated orchard last year. Covering an area of 3,200

hectares with 8,000 trees, the orchard is expected to see a total output of 4,500 tons of longan.

"We aim to build it as a demonstration orchard for local farmers, and help them to better manage their orchards in a more scientific way," said Pu. "Working with Cambodians for years, we treasure their hardworking, honest and kind spirit. Our friendship and partnership will be further developed in the future."

To boost mutual understanding, Pu said the company organizes trips to China for their partners in Southeast Asia. Held once every three years, the trips give partners a vivid picture of China that impresses them a lot.

Among the sites they have toured, he said that Cambodians like the Dazu Rock Carvings most.

"They might find a spiritual connection between Angkor Wat and the Chinese cave temple dating from the 9th to 13th centuries, as I can see their serious faces," he added.

Educational bonds with ASEAN strengthened

By YANG JUN and LIU BOQIAN
in Guiyang

When Yu Dandan received the news that one of her Cambodian students had landed a high-paying job at a Chinese-funded company, she couldn't hide her joy.

Since 2018, Yu has taught international students at Guizhou Vocational and Technical College of Water Resources and Hydropower.

The State-run college, located in Qingzhen Vocational Education City in Guiyang, Guizhou province, has a growing number of students from Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Thailand who are learning skills there. As one of China's largest vocational education clusters, the region has become a beacon for foreign youths seeking quality training and promising careers.

In July 2023, the first group of 35 students graduated from Yalong Silk Road College, a joint initiative between the college in Guizhou and the Regional Polytechnic Institute Techo Sen Battambang in Cambodia. Chinese instructors provided both language training and hands-on technical instruction, with a focus on cultivating talent in electrical automation technology.

"Our first group of students was outstanding. They earned dual certificates from both our institution and our Cambodian partner. Most are now employed by Chinese-funded companies, and some have already been promoted to management roles," Yu said.

Since the program began enrolling international students, Yu has dedicated herself to teaching Chinese language courses. Walking around campus, she remembers the names of every international student she meets.

All technical instruction is delivered in Chinese, so students must quickly adapt to the language.

"Most of them could barely say 'hello' in Chinese when they arrived. Seeing their progress until they could follow lessons in Chinese is rewarding," she added.

"Our curriculum not only imparts practical skills, but also everyday and professional Chinese communication. Learning both the language and technical skills meets the needs of our students," Yu explained.

Keo Souching and Heng Kim Ea from Phnom Penh are among the students enrolled in the college's one-year Chinese language program. After passing the HSK — the official standardized Chinese language proficiency test — they will have the opportunity to further develop their professional skills or apply to other universities in China.

"I've been in China for nearly a year and I want to major in finance," Keo told China Daily in fluent Chinese. "I've applied to Nankai University as I'm hoping to continue my studies and build a career in China. Before arriving, I was worried about adapting to the climate, but Guizhou's weather suits me perfectly — I really like it."

Heng, 19, who was first drawn to China by the traditional costumes and culture she saw in TV dramas, said her favorite class is Chinese traditional culture. After graduation, she hopes to return to Cambodia to become a Chinese language teacher.

"Guizhou stands out for its strengths in vocational education, particularly in fields like water conservancy, hydropower and

Our curriculum not only imparts practical skills, but also everyday and professional Chinese communication."

Yu Dandan, teacher at the Guizhou Vocational and Technical College of Water Resources and Hydropower

transportation," said Song Haijing, the college's director of international education. "Its proximity to Southeast Asia, along with similar climates and dietary habits, makes it especially appealing to students from the region."

According to Song, the college currently hosts 43 international students, 23 of whom are Cambodian. The second round of enrollment for Yalong Silk Road College will begin in September. Chinese teachers will travel to Cambodia for instruction, and top-performing students will be given the opportunity to further their studies in China.

Song's college is not alone in its efforts. Across the province, other colleges such as Guizhou Communications Polytechnic University are also working with Southeast Asian partners to share expertise and expand training programs.

Cambodia and Malaysia both face development needs in transportation infrastructure, including construction and operational management. "Based on student employment feedback, Cambodia still requires a large number of transportation engineering professionals to support the construction and maintenance of roads, bridges and other projects," said Lyu Xinlu, the head of international affairs at the university.

Founded in 1958 and known as the "cradle of Guizhou transportation talent," the college has produced graduates who've played key roles in China's transportation and bridge-building sectors. Now, it's taking its expertise in bridge engineering in karst areas to the global stage.

In partnership with Zhejiang Institute of Communications and Cambodia's Industrial Technical Institute, the college has set up a specialized training center in Cambodia.

Early in 2019, the university sent two groups of instructors to Cambodia to conduct surveying and engineering training.

Lyu explained that the university has sent over 10 teachers so far and has trained a total of 772 local students, with some already gaining practical experience in Cambodia's Phnom Penh-Sihanoukville Expressway project. "Our cooperation and exchanges with ASEAN countries have spanned over a decade, and this year, we plan to send five teachers to Cambodia for further training efforts," Lyu added.

Contact the writers at
liuboqian@chinadaily.com.cn



Online
See more by
scanning the
code.

China and Cambodia sign MoU to coproduce movie

By XU FAN
xufan@chinadaily.com.cn

Producers of *The Angkor Code*, a feature-length movie set to be coproduced by China and Cambodia, signed a memorandum of understanding in Phnom Penh on April 11, as part of a new project to boost cultural exchanges between the two countries.

The film, jointly produced by the Beijing-based Shinework Pictures and Cambodian conglomerate Soma Group, will be set against the backdrop of the centuries-old history of Angkor Wat, the world's largest religious structure.

Iris Wang, the film's producer, told China Daily that the idea for the project emerged in July last year. It marks their third such internationally coproduced project, following megastar Jackie Chan's Sino-Indian blockbuster *Kung Fu Yoga* and *The Composer*, the first Sino-Kazakh film recounting a lesser-known story about late musician Xian Xinghai.

After traveling to Cambodia multiple times over the past half year in search of script inspiration, Wang revealed that the movie will interweave appealing elements of sus-

pense, adventure and action stunts to tell a human-interest story about the friendship between a Chinese martial artist and a Cambodian fighter.

"The story will be about how they team up to stop an international gang that steals precious treasures, with aid from both countries," said Wang, also vice-president of Shine-work Pictures.

With China being one of the world's largest movie markets, Wang said they hope the film will spark the interest of more Chinese tourists to travel to Cambodia, a country rich in history and cultural religious structure.

Scheduled to feature a cast of A-list stars from China and Cambodia as well as actors from other countries, the film will showcase the stone carvings of Angkor Wat; stunts from Kun Khmer, a combat sport that originated in Cambodia; and the Apsara Dance, a traditional performance with roots dating back to the 7th century.

Jonathan Shen, president of Shinework Pictures, recalled that *The Composer* beat over 300 competitors from 12 countries and regions to win the Golden Rumdul Award in the Best Film category —



A promotional poster for the movie *The Angkor Code* which will be coproduced by China and Cambodia. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

the top honor at the 2nd Cambodia-Asia Film Festival — in August last year. The triumph earned acclaim from industry insiders and attendees, including Chinese Ambassador to Cambodia Wang Wenbin.

"Through the new film, created under the Belt and Road Initiative frame, we hope to capture the vibrant spirit of modern Cambodia and celebrate the enduring friend-

ship between our two nations," Shen added.

Krasna Cham, chairwoman and CEO of Soma Group, described the coproduction as a landmark event for cultural exchange between Cambodia and China, commenting that it would vividly showcase Angkor Wat's historical heritage and modern vitality to audiences in China and around the world.

E-commerce firms accelerate push into Southeast Asia

By FAN FEIFEI
fanfeifei@chinadaily.com.cn

Chinese e-commerce platforms are speeding up their push into Southeast Asia to cultivate new customers and rev up sales, as cross-border online marketplaces have become an important new driving force for bolstering the growth of China's foreign trade amid external uncertainties.

TikTok Shop, the e-commerce marketplace of popular short-video app TikTok, which is owned by Chinese tech giant ByteDance, has already entered Malaysia, Vietnam, Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand.

TikTok CEO Shou Zi Chew said the company is planning to invest billions of dollars in Southeast Asia

over the next few years. While TikTok did not provide a detailed breakdown of its planned investments, Chew said the company would provide training and support to small vendors looking to join TikTok Shop.

He added that content on the platform was becoming more diversified as it adds more users and expands beyond advertising into e-commerce, allowing consumers to purchase goods through links on the app during livestreaming.

According to Momentum Works, a Singapore-based venture outfit, TikTok Shop has become the second largest e-commerce platform in Southeast Asia behind Shopee, with Vietnam and Thailand being the fastest growing e-commerce markets.

Online discounter PDD Holdings, the parent company of Chinese e-commerce platform Pinduoduo, has launched its cross-border e-commerce platform Temu in Southeast Asian countries including Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines.

Temu offers a wide selection of merchandise, including apparel, consumer electronics, jewelry, shoes, cosmetics and baby products with deep discounts and coupons as part of its strategy to attract price-conscious consumers in the region. Most of the products are shipped directly from factories or warehouses in China.

Chen Lei, chairman and co-chief executive officer of PDD Holdings, said the company hopes to leverage the supply chain capacity it has

accumulated over the years to create a new channel that enables consumers in different countries and regions to directly purchase products from factories, providing more flexible and personalized supply chains, as well as more cost-effective shopping experiences.

Data from research firm eMarketer shows that revenue from the e-commerce market in Southeast Asia stood at \$113.9 billion in 2023, up 18.6 percent year-on-year, significantly surpassing the global average growth rate of 8.9 percent.

Google, Temasek and Bain & Company said in a report that Southeast Asia's digital economy reached \$263 billion in gross merchandise value or GMV in 2024, with sectors like e-commerce surging 15 percent year-on-year to \$159

billion, fueled significantly by video commerce.

It added that video commerce is reshaping the e-commerce landscape in the region, driving impressive growth and transforming local consumers' shopping experiences. From live shopping to creator-led content, video is now an integral part of how people shop online.

Southeast Asia presents vast opportunities for Chinese cross-border e-commerce platforms aspiring to expand their footprint globally, thanks to the increasing penetration rate of internet and smartphone use, as well as gradually improved logistics networks, payment systems and supply chains in the region, said Chen Tao, an analyst at the Beijing-based internet consultancy Analysys.

"Price, quality and service are the most important factors consumers consider when buying products, and cost-effective commodities have shown obvious advantages amid

global economic downward pressure," Chen said.

He added that one of the core strengths of Chinese cross-border online marketplaces in Southeast Asia lies in products with competitive prices and fast delivery, which are highly dependent on the establishment of supply chains.

China's cross-border e-commerce sector has seen robust growth in recent years. The sector's total imports and exports reached 2.63 trillion yuan (\$359.74 billion) in 2024, an increase of 10.8 percent year-on-year, said the General Administration of Customs.

Moreover, Chinese tech heavyweight Alibaba Group has ramped up investment in Lazada, its online retail unit in Southeast Asia amid intensifying competition. Lazada received its first investment from Alibaba in 2016 when the Hangzhou-based company took a controlling stake.