

Xi Jinping's visit to push China-Cambodia strategic cooperation to new high: experts

By Li Ning from People's Daily

Chinese President Xi Jinping's state visit to Cambodia, the first of a major Chinese leader to the Southeast Asian country after the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, will push bilateral comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership to a new high, experts said amid rising expectations for the trip.

Describing China and Cambodia as good neighbors and important cooperation partners, Wang Yusheng, a researcher at the China Foundation for International Studies and Academic Exchanges, praised their ever-lasting friendship.

Xi's visit this time will significantly boost China-Cambodia traditional friendship and deepen their comprehensive strategic cooperation partnership established in 2010, the scholar stressed.

"Featuring mutual trust in politics, fruitful all-round cooperation as well as close communication and coordination in global and regional affairs, China-Cambodia ties can serve as a model of good-neighborly friendship for the world," he added.

Fu Xuezhong, former Chinese Ambassador to Cambodia, agreed that as a big event attracting worldwide attention, Xi's visit is of vital importance both to bilateral relations and regional development.

He told the People's Daily that during Xi's Cambodian trip, both sides will review their traditional friendship and intimate ties forged by elder generations.

Since the meeting between then Cambodian King Norodom Sihanouk and then Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai during the Bandung Conference in 1955 and the establishment of diplomatic ties in 1958, China and Cambodia have maintained a close relationship.

Despite international and regional vicissitudes as well as domestic changes over the half century, both sides, following the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-Existence, have become a model in harmonious coexistence of nations with different social systems.

Treating each other with sincerity, respect, equality, trust as well as selfless assistance, the two neighbors have also set an example of sharing prosperity and difficulties together regardless of territorial size.

Fu said that though small in size, Cambodia has considerable global influence, with the country having made vital contributions to the neutral and peaceful diplomatic policy, the Non-Aligned Movement as well as settlement of Indochina conflicts.

The country upholds neutral and peaceful diplomatic policy and fights for a just solution to many big global issues, the diplomat lauded, adding that such kind of wisdom and sense of righteousness can be traced to its national character.

Situated in a favorable geographic environment, Cambodia boasts abundant natural gifts like mountains, rivers, seas, forests, farmland, vegetables and fruits, and experiences few natural disasters.

In history, it was a key stop linking China with South Asian nations and in today's world, it remains a vital link of the "Belt and Road" initiative that aims to benefit neighbors.

"We review the past to achieve better development. This visit will inject fresh vitality into bilateral all-round strategic partnership," Fu said, adding that the two sides will discuss cooperation on some major projects covering economy, culture and society.

Both countries can launch complementary and mutually beneficial cooperation in a wide range of fields and projects, he suggested, citing the examples of agriculture, irrigation, agricultural products processing as well as infrastructure projects closely related with people's livelihood.

Cambodia is now in urgent need to upgrade its infrastructure for energy and transportation, he said. The projects related to rice planting and comprehensive industrial parks launched by China-funded companies need policy support as well.

According to the ambassador, as both countries are now aspiring for economic cooperation, they should build a new type of relationship characterized by the principles of "amity, sincerity, mutual benefit and inclusiveness" and such ties will accelerate the ASEAN integration process and bolster the economic and trade ties between China and the ASEAN.

The major topics this time will also include ASEAN Free Trade Area, China-ASEAN Expo, Lancang-Mekong cooperation and some other multilateral events advocated by China, Fu said, adding that Cambodian governments and officials have played an active role in these agendas, especially the "Belt and Road" initiative.