

# Xi applauds ties during Manila visit

President stresses comprehensive and pragmatic ties, proper handling of South China Sea issue

By AN BALJIE

China and the Philippines should deepen pragmatic cooperation, properly handle the South China Sea issue and be good partners for common development, President Xi Jinping said on Nov 21.

Xi made the remarks while meeting with the Philippines' House of Representatives Speaker Gloria Macapagal Arroyo and President of the Senate Vicente Sotto III in Manila.

Calling Arroyo and Sotto old friends and good friends of the Chinese people, Xi spoke highly of the efforts they have made to promote China-Philippines friendship.

Xi said bilateral relations have developed rapidly in recent years, which has brought benefits for people of both nations and promoted regional peace and stability.

Xi said that he and Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte decided on Nov 20 to establish a China-Philippines comprehensive strategic cooperation relationship to better guide the development of bilateral ties.

The two countries should follow the direction of comprehensive strategic cooperation, deepen pragmatic cooperation, boost people-to-people

exchanges and properly manage the South China Sea issue, Xi said.

Calling legislative exchanges an important part of China-Philippines relations, Xi said that he hopes the House of Representatives and the Senate of the Philippines will play a bigger role in promoting ties between the nations.

The legislative authorities of the two countries should enhance mutual learning, exchange experiences of governance and enhance cooperation in global and regional affairs, Xi said.

The two Philippine legislative leaders welcomed Xi's visit. They said that the Philippines-China relationship is at the best level in history.

They expressed gratitude for China's support of the Philippines' development, saying that the Philippines would like to learn from China's experience in rapid development.

The two countries should enhance cooperation in trade and infrastructure, promote people-to-people exchanges and increase the interests of the two sides, they said.

On the evening of Nov 21, Xi arrived in Beijing after wrapping up a week of state visits to Papua New Guinea, Brunei and the Philippines. While staying in Papua New Guinea, Xi attended the 26th Asia-Pacific



President Xi Jinping meets with Philippines' House of Representatives Speaker Gloria Macapagal Arroyo and President of the Senate Vicente Sotto III in Manila, the Philippines, on Nov 21. PANG XINGLEI / XINHUA

Economic Cooperation Economic Leaders' Meeting and met with leaders of Pacific island countries that have diplomatic relations with China.

The president's overseas trip sent strong signals of upholding multilateralism, boosting openness and pursuing common development, said State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

China has demonstrated its role as a responsible major country through upholding win-win cooperation in the face of rising challenges from protectionism and unilateralism, Wang said.

In his speech at the APEC CEO Summit, Xi said that while achieving its own development, China will make greater contributions to helping countries around the world realize shared prosperity.

The president has offered China's solutions and contributed Chinese wisdom to the development and cooperation of the world economy, Wang said.

Xi's state visits to Brunei and the Philippines have brought great opportunities for the development of China-Brunei and China-Philippines relations.

China has a wide range of com-

mon interests with Brunei and the Philippines in the South China Sea, Wang said, adding that the countries should properly handle disagreements through friendly coordination.

Xi's state visit to PNG is the first by a Chinese head of state to the Pacific island nation since the two sides established diplomatic relations in 1976.

The visit is of great significance for China in developing relations with PNG and other island nations, Wang said, adding that China will always be good friends of island nations no matter how the international situation changes.

## Chinese tourists to Philippines surge

Improving bilateral ties, reopening of Boracay Island fuel expectations of sharp increase in travelers in coming months

By CAO DESHENG

The Philippines has seen a surge of Chinese tourists since the start of this year amid improving bilateral ties.

According to a report from the Philippine Department of Tourism, the number of Chinese tourists to the Southeast Asian country during the first three quarters surpassed 970,000, exceeding the full-year total seen in 2017.

In 2017, the Philippines received

around 968,000 Chinese tourists.

The report showed that China, following South Korea, is the Philippines' second-largest source of tourists, with a growth of 34.9 percent and a share of 18.14 percent of total international arrivals in the January-September period.

His country is aiming for between 1.5 and 2 million Chinese tourists this year, the Philippines Ambassador to China Jose Santiago L. Sta. Romana said in an interview with *China Daily*, adding

that people-to-people exchanges are important.

Boracay Island, one of the most popular tourist destinations in the country, reopened in October — six months after it shut down for renovations needed after years of unrestrained mass tourism.

Sta. Romana said he expects more Chinese tourists will go there.

As a tourist destination, the Philippines is loaded with attractions like plenty of sun, gorgeous beaches, picturesque scenery and outdoor

adventure opportunities, said Cao Cheng from Caissa Touristic, a Beijing-based travel agency.

"Boracay is very popular among Chinese tourists going to the Philippines as it's close to China, travel experiences are pleasant and costs aren't too high," Cao said.

As many travelers chose to visit the island before it closed, the number of Chinese tourists going there should increase sharply in the coming months, particularly during the Chinese New Year holiday period in

February, he added.

The surging Philippines tourism market is backed by convenient flights from China. Currently, there are more than 300 flights linking the two countries.

Tourism has now become one of the most critical industries of the Philippines, responsible for more than 5.3 million jobs. In 2017, the Southeast Asian country welcomed 6.6 million international tourists, contributing 12.2 percent to the country's GDP.