

## Ningbo Companies on the Global Stage

# Ningbo and ASEAN: Strengthening Ties Through Culture, Industry, and Innovation

By Jin Lu

On the afternoon of February 14, the delegates attending 31st ASEAN-China Senior Officials' Consultation arrived at the final stop of their Ningbo trip—Tianyige Museum. As a key dialogue mechanism between China and ASEAN countries, the consultation not only focuses on regional cooperation but also brings increased international attention to Ningbo.

Let's examine how the delegates, over their three-day visit, engaged with key industries, cultural heritage, and emerging opportunities that showcase Ningbo's dynamic growth and global influence.

## Lantern Festival Comes to Life with Ningbo's Intangible Heritage

On the evening of February 12, the delegates arrived at Laowaitan, the vibrant heart of downtown Ningbo, where they were immersed in cultural activities. A special event featured artisans demonstrating traditional crafts, leaving the participants deeply impressed. "These handicrafts are exquisite; each piece carries profound cultural significance," remarked a participant from Malaysia.

A highlight of the evening was the lantern riddle contest, a quintessential element of Lantern Festival celebrations. The venue was adorned with red lanterns, each displaying a riddle in Chinese and English. The delegates eagerly participated, some contemplating the puzzles thoughtfully, while others engaged in animated discussions.

"This is my first time celebrating Lantern Festival in Ningbo, and it's truly special. The fusion of traditional culture with the modern cityscape is unforgettable," said Karina, a delegate from Indonesia.

In the corridor outside the 31st ACSOC venue, the Impressions of Ningbo photo exhibition offered a comprehen-



The delegates celebrate Lantern Festival in Ningbo. [Photo by Tang Yan]

sive look at the city's rich history, culture, and economic development. Showcasing intangible cultural heritage alongside natural beauty, the exhibition provided delegates with a deeper understanding of Ningbo's unique allure as they anticipated the next phase of their visit.

## A Hub of Growth and Global Connectivity

On the afternoon of February 13, the delegates visited the Ningbo City Exhibition Hall, where they explored the exhibits, gaining a tangible sense of the city's progress.

Among the exhibits, a dynamic model captured the participants' attention. It depicted the bustling activity of Ningbo Zhoushan Port, with brightly illuminated container terminals surrounded by models of ultralarge ships, vividly illustrating the vibrancy of the world's busiest port.

The "Beautiful Ningbo" exhibit offered a compelling glimpse into the city's vast potential. Immersive projections

highlighted Eastern New Town's soaring skyscrapers, massive shipping terminals, and a thriving urban landscape, all reflecting Ningbo's dynamism and rapid development.

"Thailand also has many ports. We could adopt Ningbo Zhoushan Port's best practices, which would enhance China-Thailand cooperation in port operations and logistics, further strengthening our economic ties," said Akkanit, a participant from Thailand.

## A Glimpse into Ningbo's Industrial Strength

Upon entering the Geely 5G Smart Factory, the delegates were awed by its cutting-edge technology. On the expansive, well-lit factory floor, robotic arms seamlessly assembled car bodies, automated guided vehicles zoomed around, and intelligent production lines operated with remarkable efficiency.

At FOTILE Group's product showroom, the delegates were impressed by a wide range of smart kitchen appliances, including stoves with temperature

control, all-in-one steam and bake cooking machines, and highly efficient range hoods.

"In our country, many products are imported from China, including cars and home appliances. This is my first visit to a Chinese factory, and I can see that these products are not only powerful but also beautifully designed," said Chhuon, a delegate from Cambodia.

As ASEAN countries accelerate industrialization with a focus on high-end manufacturing and green energy, Ningbo has much to offer, particularly its expertise in sectors such as electric vehicles, smart home appliances, and green technology—opening up significant opportunities for collaboration.

"Ningbo's manufacturing sector is vast and highly advanced, leaving a lasting impression on me," said Akkanit. "We look forward to deepening cooperation with Ningbo companies to collectively drive the advancement of the regional manufacturing industry."

## Bridging Cultures: A Legacy of Learning and Exchange

As the final stop of the tour,

the delegates visited the Tianyige Museum, an architectural gem that embodies the refined craftsmanship of traditional southern Chinese design and Ningbo's longstanding tradition of book collecting. Many delegates participated in a hands-on woodblock printing experience, carefully applying ink to carved blocks, then pressing paper onto the surface to reveal intricate patterns. Beyond appreciating the charm of Chinese culture, the visit also highlighted Ningbo's commitment to preserving its cultural legacy.

From economic and trade exchanges to cultural dialogue, from industrial collaboration to technological innovation, cooperation between Ningbo and ASEAN countries has yielded meaningful results and holds vast potential for the future.

With shared aspirations for development, a deepening sense of friendship, and a strong commitment to collaboration, the ties between Ningbo and ASEAN nations continue to grow stronger—reinforced by every exchange, every partnership, and every conversation.



## SPOTLIGHT

## Ningbo Artisans Bring Ne Zha to Life Through Traditional Crafts

By Zhao Yu

The recent success of *Ne Zha 2* has sparked a wave of creativity among Ningbo's artisans, who have brought the film's beloved characters to life through traditional crafts such as paper cutting, paper carving, and clay sculpting.

He Peihong, a member of the China Society for the Study of Folk Literature and Art, has been meticulously crafting paper-cut designs of Ne Zha, the Pagoda-Bearing Heavenly King Li, and other characters from the movie in recent days. Working from

her home in Zhaohui Community, Minglou Subdistrict, Yinzhou, she employs traditional techniques to bring the characters to life with striking detail, complete with classic flame patterns, lotus motifs, sawtooth designs, and decorative crescents. For He, Ne Zha's defiant spirit embodies a core value of traditional Chinese culture.

In Ningguang Community, Zhonggongmiao Subdistrict, local blogger Lu Xiaoyan has sculpted lifelike Ne Zha figurines from clay. With millions of online followers, Lu is known for her highly detailed creations. "Although the color options with clay are limited,

after many trials, I've matched them almost exactly to the movie," she said. Beyond sharing her creative process online, Lu also hosts hands-on demonstrations for children in her community, introducing them to the art of clay sculpting.

For paper-carving artist Chen Hong, *Ne Zha 2* left a lasting impression. A resident of Zhonghe Subdistrict, Yinzhou, he has dedicated himself to capturing the film's characters through intricate paper carvings. When our correspondent visited his workspace, Chen sat at a table under the glow of a desk lamp, carefully carving Ne Zha—both child



Local blogger Lu Xiaoyan has sculpted lifelike Ne Zha figurines from clay. [Photo by Wang Bo]

and adult versions—along with the film's antagonist, Shen Gongbao, into delicate sheets of paper.

Chen has been perfecting his craft since the early 1990s, constantly pushing the limits of

precision. "I want to make the lines as fine as possible," he said. Hoping to introduce more people to the art of paper carving, he plans to create a short video showcasing his work and celebrating Chinese animation.

## Dancing with Dragons: Ninghai's 770-Year-Old New Year Tradition

By Yan Yiran

On February 15th, the 18th day of the first lunar month, Xi'ao Village in Changjie Town, Ninghai County hosted a spectacular folk event that has endured for over 770 years—the "Dragon Parade".

Around 8 p.m., three resounding drumbeats signaled the start of the celebration as fireworks erupted over Chengxiang Park. Two giant dragon-shaped lanterns—one cyan, one white—emerged from opposite ends of a street.

Each dragon, towering over three meters high with bodies stretching nearly forty meters long, made their first encounter on an ancient bridge. When their whiskers touched, the sound of drums and music reached a crescendo, and the crowd cheered.

The event officially began at 8:08 p.m., as the two enormous dragons, carried by over a hundred strong men, wound through the village. They passed local landmarks such as Jifu Temple and Shatou Temple.

"In Xi'ao Village, the Spring Festival is just a prelude to the 'actual New Year', which falls the 18th day of the first lunar month," said Chen Longfei, a local resident. On this day, villagers return home from afar to pray for health and prosperity in the coming year.

After an hour, the two dragons completed their journey through the village and reunited at the bridge, before entering an ancient temple for a blessing ceremony.

Chen Wanzhen, a leading figure in preserving the Xi'ao "Dragon Parade" tradition, shared that this practice dates back to the Southern Song Dynasty over 770 years ago.

Traditional bamboo weaving, wood carving, and painting techniques are used to create the majestic dragons, adding to their cultural significance. The Xi'ao "Dragon Parade" is now listed as a provincial intangible cultural heritage, solidifying its status as a unique legacy of Ninghai.

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