

New measures draw Taiwan people to mainland



Artists from Taiwan and the mainland stage a puppet show during the Ninth Straits Forum in Xiamen, Fujian province, in June. [Photo/ Xinhua]

A growing number of the island's residents are relocating, lured by new policies, financial incentives and a wider range of opportunities.

'Since I opened my first store in Sichuan province in December, the mainland's business potential has exceeded my expectations. I now have four stores,' said Ken Huang, an entrepreneur from Taiwan.

The 37-year-old owner of a handbag brand was among 8,000 people from the island who participated in a weeklong trade exhibition at the Ninth Straits Forum in Xiamen, Fujian province, last month. Most of the attendees were seeking opportunities to expand their businesses in the mainland and exploring the possibility of trading internationally.

Last month, communications and exchanges between people on both sides of the Taiwan Straits continued to rise, despite recent setbacks in political ties.

Although tourism and business activity are developing rapidly, high-level communications between the mainland and Taiwan have been at a low point for more than a year. The relationship between the two sides had been developing constructively based on the 1992 Consensus, a formula for relations between Taipei and Beijing rooted in the understanding that there is only one China, and opposed to "Taiwan independence".

Things changed in May last year, when the Democratic Progressive Party in Taiwan denied the existence of the 1992 Consensus, consigning dialogue to the deep freeze. That means the Straits Forum – composed of 21 major trade fairs, symposiums and exhibitions – is now the biggest platform for people from both sides of the Straits to seek career opportunities and better lifestyles.

During a speech at the forum, Yu Zhengsheng, China's top political adviser, announced a series of new policies to be rolled out in the coming months to benefit Taiwan residents in the mainland, and help them enjoy the same status as mainlanders in terms of financial and public services.

A growing presence

The new policies have been formulated as a response to the growing number of people from Taiwan settling in the mainland. According to a report conducted in April by 1111 Job Bank Co in Taiwan, about 700,000 Taiwan residents live and work outside the island, with about 350,000 of them working in the Chinese mainland. Meanwhile, research conducted in March by the Global Views Survey Research Center in Taiwan suggested that nearly 60 percent of Taiwan residents ages 20 to 29 would be willing to work, study or invest in the mainland.

Last year, the number of new businesses in the mainland owned by Taiwan residents rose 32 percent, and by February, nearly 4,000 sole proprietors from the island were operating in the mainland.

More than 20 new policies will be released in the coming months to help Taiwan residents find their feet in mainland cities.