

## **Report on Trip to Ningxia, Chinese Hui Autonomous Region, 6-9 June 2025 by Academician Dato Ir. (Dr.) Lee Yee Cheong**

I led a nine-member PPMC/AETDEW/UTAR Malaysian delegation to Ningxia 6-9 June 2025 to explore the possibility of establishing a Friendship Villages Forum of Belt and Road countries along the lines of Ningxia International Friendship Cities Forum. The Malaysian Delegation comprised representatives from the Academy of Engineering and Technology of the Developing World (AETDEW) that is registered in Malaysia; representatives from UTAR Kampar Campus; representatives from Kampung Labu Kubong and Kampung Tanjung Tualang, Perak and through the Perak Branch of the Malaysia-China Friendship Association (MMPC), representative from Menteri Besar's office and a Perak tourism advocate. By the way, I was born and bred in Ipoh and is a Perak Dato.

The main objective of the proposed Friendship Villages Forum will be for villages in Belt and Road countries to learn about the successful experiences of Chinese villages in poverty eradication and apply them to uplift their own villages.

In a hectic 3 day visit to Yinchuan Ningxia, we visited Runfeng and Haoyuan Villages in Yichuan; Ningxia University; Goji Farm and Goji Research and Product Development Centre. We advanced with positive response from Ningxia the concept of collaboration between Ningxia and Perak State, Malaysia; Yinchuan and Ipoh, capital city of Perak; Ningxia University and University Tunku Abdul Rahman Malaysia UTAR; and Runfeng/Haoyuan Villages and Labu Kubong and Tanjung Tualang Villages in Perak.

The Friendship Villages Forum of Belt and Road countries will have Ningxia and Malaysia as the twin hubs. Ningxia has thousands of years of close relations with the Land Silk Road through Central Asia since the Han Dynasty and the Tang Dynasty. Malacca in Malaysia was the most important port associated with the seven epic voyages of Admiral Zheng He to S.E.Asia, Indian Ocean, Arabia and East Africa in the Ming Dynasty.

The background is contained in my paper presented in the Ningxia Friendship Cities Forum on 8 June 2025. (Annex)

We are planning a return visit of a corresponding Ningxia delegation to Perak in October 2025. We seek the support of Perak State and Ipoh Municipality for the return visit without any financial obligation.



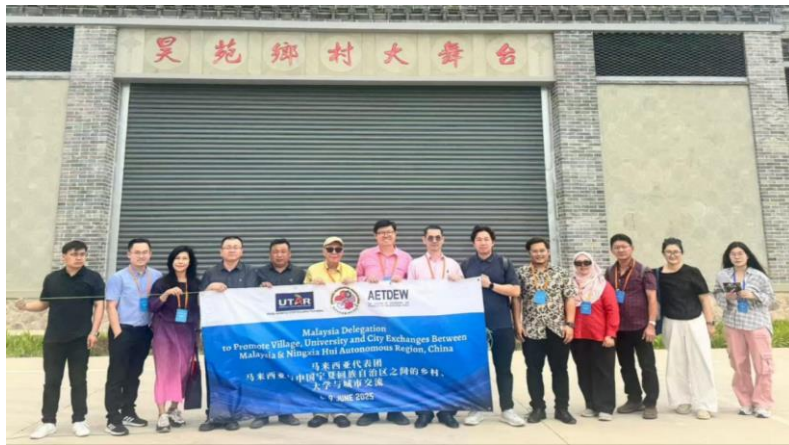
With Li Tao, CEO Ningxia Peoples Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries





Amy presenting Perak Tourism brochure to Haoyuen Village Chief









With Owner of Goji Farm and Goji Products Research and Development Institute



## ANNEX

# The 4<sup>th</sup> Ningxia Friendship Cities Forum Green Development and Desertification Control Session 7 June 2025, Yichuan

## Villages, Universities and Sustainable Development

By Academician Dato (Dr) Lee Yee Cheong, Malaysia  
Honorary President, Academy of Engineering and Technology of the Developing World

On behalf of the Malaysian Delegation to strengthen relationship between Malaysia and Ningxia, I would like to thank the Ningxia Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, and the Foreign Affairs Office of Ningxia Autonomous Region and the Foreign Affairs Office of Yinchuan Municipality for the warm friendship and wonderful hospitality during our visit to Ningxia.

Ladies and Gentlemen

### 1.0 UN Sustainable Development Goals

The United Nations General Assembly in 2016 unanimously the UN Post-2015 Development Agenda with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals for all member nations to achieve by 2030.



In my opinion, the 17 SDGs are too comprehensive and all-embracing for most developing countries with limited resources and human capital to achieve by 2030. For high income

developing countries like Malaysia, they should concentrate on achieving the first five important SDGs, namely:

SDG No.1 No Poverty;

SDG No.2 Zero Hunger;

SDG No.3 Good Health and Well Being;

SDG No.4 Quality Education;

SDG No.5 Gender Equality.

However, I am afraid even the above five SDGs are beyond the reach of most developing countries. They must then devote all their resources to achieve SDG No.1 “No Poverty”. Poverty is the root cause of all the social, economic and environmental ills in any nation, region and the world.

## **2.0 China and Poverty Eradication**

In 2021, China announced the spectacular achievement of lifting 800 million of her population out of poverty. This is without parallel in human history! What is even more amazing is that the 800 million people have joined China’s society of moderate prosperity (小康社会). China has thus been able to take care of all the basic needs of her population, like clothing, food, housing, and transport (衣食住行) as well as access to education, basic medical services, and gainful employment even in her remotest rural regions. In the process, China has been improving her environment, turning desert into grassland, forest and farmland, cleaning up her rivers and lakes, and conserving her wetland, thus protecting its flora and fauna.

China’s poverty eradication success has been anchored by the building of physical and virtual infrastructure throughout the length and breadth of China. There is an old Chinese saying often quoted by President Xi Jinping: “To get rich, build roads first” (要想富先修路). As the Chinese people have become more prosperous, they are able to devote resources to improving their quality of living, as per Chinese saying (琴棋书画) or “music, chess, book, painting”.

Through the Belt and Road Initiative BRI, China is actively building the physical and virtual infrastructure facilities in the Global South as the foundation of their social, economic and environmental uplift. Besides major and high-profile engineering infrastructure projects, China is also building hospitals, stadiums, high-tech parks, scientific farms, schools, colleges and offering thousands of scholarships that are of direct benefit to the people in Belt and Road countries.

### **3.0 Villages in Belt and Road Countries**

In China's spectacular poverty eradication success, villages in remote regions have been the main beneficiary. They have become prosperous and many of their micro and mini industries have become integral parts of China's domestic supply chain and through broadband internet, have even become part of China's global supply chain. Through poverty eradication, China has achieved not only the first five SDGs but also most of the other twelve SDGs for her people.

In my opinion, one of the most important factors in the uplift of social, economic, and environmental of villages in China has been the return of university-trained youth to their home villages. They have applied their knowledge and urban work experience to revive agriculture, horticulture and cuisine and set up profitable downstream production chain with modern branding and packaging. They have also beautified their villages, emphasized their custom and culture, their song and dance to make them thriving tourist centres.

In contrast, villages in most Belt and Road countries are in sharp decline due to lack of education and job opportunities for their youth, forcing them to go to cities in search of work. Their villages are ageing and their social, economic and environmental conditions are worsening day by day. Governments in Belt and Road countries are conscious of urgent challenge of rural urban migration and have devoted much attention to try to meet the challenge without much success.

I believe a solution may be for villages and villagers from Belt and Road countries must learn directly from their counterparts in China.

### **4.0 Universities in Poverty Eradication**

University educated youth in China returning to their villages have been an important element in China's poverty eradication success. Chinese universities and their students have been employed by Chinese Government in the past two decades to visit villages periodically to monitor the progress of their poverty eradication programs and projects. Ningxia University is one such university.

In Malaysia, University Tunku Abdul Rahman UTAR has the New Village Project to get their students to help in the social, economic and environmental uplift of some 600 villages with majority ethnic Chinese population.

It is an important part of our Malaysian delegation to connect UTAR with Ningxia University for them to learn from each other how to help improve the living condition of villages, as well as to collaborate in TVET training of Malaysian and Chinese youth.

### **5.0 Proposal for Friendship Villages Forum of Belt and Road Countries**

The Land Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road are very important platforms of global development, announced by President Xi Jinping in Kazakhstan and Indonesia in 2013.

I would like to propose the Friendship Villages Forum of Belt and Road countries with Ningxia and Malaysia as the twin hubs for villages and universities in Belt and Road countries to learn

from China and from one another on how to eradicate poverty in villages and remote regions. Ningxia has thousands of years of close relations with the Land Silk Road through Central Asia since the Han Dynasty and the Tang Dynasty. Malacca in Malaysia was the most important port associated with the seven epic voyages of Admiral Zheng He to S.E.Asia, Indian Ocean, Arabia and East Africa in the Ming Dynasty.

Thank you all