Leshan Grand Buddha

The Buddha is located to the east of Leshan City, Sichuan Province, at the confluence of three rivers, namely, Min River, Qingyi River, and Dadu River. It is carved into the cliffs of Mt. Lingyun. The Leshan Grand Buddha is the largest Buddha in China, towering to 71 meters. Construction on the Giant Buddha began in 713. The massive construction project was finally completed by his disciples 90 years later. Today the Leshan Grand Buddha is one of the most popular tourist attractions in China.
Building the capacity of grassroots unions and promoting innovative development

Speech by Li Shiming

ACFTU Vice-Chair and National Secretary

At a meeting on promoting sector-wide collective bargaining in the catering sector

The Chinese Financial, Commercial, Light Industry, Textile and Tobacco Workers’ Union has convened this national meeting today to get guidance from Li Jiaqiao, Chair of the ACFTU, on further strengthening collective wage bargaining, as well as to exchange views on progress made in the past two years on developing collective bargaining in the catering sector, provide interpretation and training on the 2014 Guiding Opinions on the Work of Wages and Benefits Determination in the Catering Sector, deepen reform, accelerate development, and promote harmonious labour relations in the sector. Allow me to make a few comments.

Achievements of collective bargaining in the sector

Catering services have great relevance for the national economy and people’s livelihoods. There are more than 40 million catering businesses, over 5 million service outlets and tens of millions of small restaurants. The catering sector has a highly open market with a labour-intensive workforce, low barriers to employment and flexible forms of employment. Rural migrant workers, unemployed laid-off workers and college graduates can easily find jobs in the sector. It is also one where industrial and employment relations are the most diverse and complex.

Trade unions at various levels in China welcomed the government’s decision to consider ‘promotion of collective bargaining in enterprises’ an important channel to improve people’s livelihoods, make management innovative and strengthen social governance. The pattern of collective bargaining has now taken shape, with party and government taking the initiative, tripartite bodies cooperating and employers and workers actively participating. The Chinese Financial, Commercial, Light Industry, Textile and Tobacco Workers’ Union, the China Cuisine Association and the China Hotel Association attach great importance to the building of harmonious labour relations. They are among the first employers’ and trade union organizations to have begun to promote regional and sector-wide collective bargaining, and they have scored significant achievements. Good examples have been set in the catering sector, especially in Wuhan, the capital of Hubei province, and in Hainan province,
Focus

reflecting the typical features of the sector, and they have influenced the sector all around the country. These successful cases have become the benchmark for effective collective bargaining by the union, highlighting the role and achievements of trade union organisations at various levels.

The catering sector has now developed increasing awareness and recognition of collective bargaining. In more and more workplaces, conflicts in labour relations are resolved through bargaining, and employers and workers are working together to build harmonious labour relations. Against this backdrop, and drafted by the Social Security Department of the ACFTU together with the union and the relevant employers' organisations, the 2014 Guiding Opinions on the Work of Wages and Benefits Determination in the Catering Sector have taken effect. Jointly issued by the Chinese Financial, Commercial, Light Industry, Textile and Tobacco Workers’ Union, the China Cuisine Association and the China Hotel Association, they take collective bargaining work in the catering sector to a new stage, characterized by early planning, orderly promotion and regulated development.

Experience has proved the significance of promoting collective bargaining in the catering sector, as it can help in the following areas:

1. Building a sense of equality for workers. The prerequisite for bargaining is being on an equal footing. With employers' and workers' representatives sitting together, both employers and workers can feel the bond between them in developing a business, overcoming difficulties and sharing the profits. Consensus and agreement built on shared responsibility, power-sharing and reciprocal interests can link the idea of employers regarding the restaurant as their "home" with workers' feeling of "living the restaurant like their home" to the benefit of both sides.

2. Establishing a fair and reasonable pay pattern. Collective bargaining is a process both of negotiation and of seeking common ground while maintaining differences with reference to the accepted pay standards for the sector in the region. Workers can raise their demands with employers on wages and benefits, while employers can raise their demands with workers on skills, work behaviour and contribution. They reach a consensus and draw up a mutually binding agreement, which can help foster reciprocal relations.

3. Resolving labour conflicts. As there are diverse interests and various demands, it is beneficial for both employers and workers to bargain face to face and even argue forcefully to fully express their views and reduce miscommunication and misunderstandings. By listening to the arguments of the other side, they can walk in their counterparts' shoes and adjust their own opinions to reach a compromise that both sides can accept, and so build mutual trust.

4. Improving the strength and capacity of workers to match those of the employers. Only a few workers have the awareness and capacity to use the law to protect their rights. The collective bargaining process led by trade unions can turn most workers into "free riders" and give the same protection to those without the capacity or time to protect themselves.

Focus and priorities of future work

Since 2013, the catering sector has seen the end of 20 years of rapid development. Annual revenue growth slowed from 20% to 9%. Many luxury hotels restarted to target ordinary people. A new round of restructuring and profit "reshuffle" has begun in the catering sector, and labour relations conflicts are brewing if they have not erupted already. However, the problems in different sectors and businesses have different causes and characteristics. To promote collective bargaining in the catering sector, we cannot solely rely on the government to come up with a policy to solve all the problems. We need to base ourselves on the grassroots, and focus our attention on fundamental work and priorities to promote collective bargaining in "first step".

1. Expand coverage. There is intense competition in the catering sector. One restaurant may be closing just as another is starting up nearby. This kind of uncertainty directly affects the coverage of collective bargaining. If collective bargaining cannot cover enough workers, workers' rights cannot be safeguarded universally, and it will influence the authenticity of the number of collective agreements, number of enterprises covered and number of workers covered. We must be clearly aware that the focus of future work is still to expand coverage. Those "leftover" workplaces are always where we encounter the most difficulties for trade union work.

2. Build consensus. There should be a division of labour as well as cooperation in different systems of trade union, cuisine associations and hotel associations, and at different levels, including the provincial, city, county, district, factory and shop levels, to expand the coverage of collective bargaining. Each level should have its own perspectives and priorities to resolve the problems that are in its own realm and out of the reach of other levels.

3. Enhance the capacity of the grassroots. We should work in accordance with grassroots conditions. As businesses in the catering sector vary greatly, we should take their conditions into consideration in our collective bargaining to resolve their problems. Now the catering sector is facing downward pressure. The game being played between employers and workers becomes more visible the more demands and concerns the workers raise. There are even collective work stoppages or strikes in some workplaces. It is worth noting that, even in workplaces where the employers opposed collective bargaining, the first thing they do to settle a work stoppage, without exception, is to talk to and consult with workers' representatives for the solution. Therefore, collective bargaining at the grassroots level is an important channel to reduce shortsighted attitudes, disorder, hysteria and the broader social impact of the workers' game with the employers. It is also an important means of changing from "work stoppage first" to "collective bargaining first".

3. Focus on key issues. Nowadays, labour relations and collective bargaining in the catering sector are facing new problems and challenges, as profits in the sector are minimal. Whether the content of collective bargaining is reasonable has a direct bearing on the protection of workers' rights. The key issues in bargaining should be workflows, working hours and hourly pay standards. For businesses of different scales and types, and for different trades and positions, pay standards should be bargained in categories and determined in detail to provide a basis for reasonable pay and income for workers. While focusing on wage bargaining, in places where conditions permit, we should guide collective bargaining to expand the content to include benefits such as working conditions, rest and leave, occupational health and safety, social security, protection of the special rights and interests of women workers and workers' promotion and training, and enrich the content of sector-wide collective bargaining. Gradually, we are going to determine all the matters related to the interests of workers through bargaining, coordination and communication to better safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of workers, and build harmonious labour relations in workplaces.

4. Regulate procedures. There is strict rules and standards regulating the drafting of collective agreements and procedures for collective bargaining, such as the election of bargaining representatives, settling up of the bargaining groups, compiling of bargaining topics, proposals for bargaining demands, conduct of bargaining, drafting of agreements, and announcement and implementation of those agreements. But in practice, the effects and results of collective bargaining are weakened by simplified procedures, lowered standards and formalities. In the future, in workplaces covered by collective bargaining, the top priority will be to regulate bargaining procedures.

5. Raise public awareness. As a corporate social system and social phenomenon, collective bargaining cannot be literally explained, as its connotations are much richer. Whether it is collective wage bargaining or collective bargaining in general, the key word is bargaining. Even in modern enterprises with higher wages, the bargaining mechanism is still the bridge for employers and workers to communicate with each other. Moreover, it is more necessary to bargain in enterprises with hardships, where workers' income may be influenced. Although the 200,000 workers in Pinglaole Coal Group in Henan province received 15% less wages this year, the workforce remained stable, with the workers at peace with the situation, as a result of thorough bargaining and communication. We need to raise the awareness of workers, as well as of management and employers, on the role of collective bargaining in benefiting both sides of the labour relationship.

6. Improve step by step. To establish the collective bargaining mechanism relies not only on the awareness and attitudes of employers, but also on the capability and know-how of workers' representatives. We should be a gradual process for the workers' representatives to gain the courage and improve the ability to bargain. Especially in workplaces where collective bargaining has just started, it is progress if the workers and the employers can sit down together to discuss. Therefore, we should allow collective bargaining work to develop a gradual process of improvement, not demanding perfection from the very beginning.

In some catering businesses, collective bargaining started because of intervention and initiatives by trade unions at higher levels, and the initial bargaining yielded agreements accordingly secured sectoral standards. But afterwards, when trade unions at higher levels are no longer participating in the bargaining, the results of collective bargaining between workers and employers themselves often reflect the lack of workers' real power and strength. Therefore, trade unions at higher levels should strengthen their guidance in laying sound foundations during the initial bargaining, and establish a normal working mechanism to overcome the phenomenon of diminishing utility. Trade unions at higher levels should provide timely guidance and supervision of union work in workplaces, and implement follow-up and real-time management.

It is an important task of industrial unions to promote collective wage bargaining at sectoral level. I hope that in the near future we can tackle difficulties, bring innovation and open a new chapter in collective bargaining work at sectoral level, to promote healthy and rapid economic development in the industry.
Seven ministries work with ACFTU to ensure rural migrant workers paid before Spring Festival

Punishing those responsible for adverse impact of wage arrears on government investment projects

Together with seven government ministries, including the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security and the National Development and Reform Commission, the ACFTU held a video conference in January on how to ensure the payment of rural migrant workers before the 2015 Spring Festival. Any delay to wage payments in government investment projects that causes serious adverse impact or collective action would see those responsible being severely punished in accordance with the relevant provisions.

Due to downward pressure on economic growth and other factors, there had been a resurgence of wage arrears for migrant rural workers in 2014, with the number of cases and total amount of unpaid wages increasing compared with previous years. Among the sectors involved, construction was still the main culprit. Some construction projects invested in by local governments held back the wages of rural migrant workers. Meanwhile, sectors such as coal mining, metallurgy, labour-intensive manufacturing and catering services also witnessed significant increases in wage arrears cases.

Yin Weimin, Minister of Human Resources and Social Security, pointed out that the Spring Festival is a critical period to safeguard the rights of rural migrant workers by paying them what they are owed. There need to be more channels opened for reporting grievances, and investigating and settling wage arrears cases in good time; stepping up efforts in the areas of inspection and supervision; and eliminating potential conflicts; strengthening supervision of government investment projects, and setting a good example by ensuring payment of wages; cracking down on criminal behaviour behind wage arrears, and putting strong pressure on those responsible; and improving the effectiveness of mediation and arbitration, and settling wage payment conflicts without delay. According to the principle “keep management local, don’t pass the buck, and in charge means responsible”, the people’s governments at county level or above should fulfill their responsibility to ensure that rural migrant workers’ wages are paid with strict administrative accountability, and establish emergency response mechanisms to settle these workers’ wage arrears cases rapidly and appropriately.

Jiao Kaile, ACFTU Vice-Chair and National Secretary, called on trade unions at all levels to proactively safeguard the rights of rural migrant workers to receive their wages and other remuneration in line with the directives of the CPC Central Committee and State Council. Trade unions should demand clarification of rural migrant workers’ job requirements and responsibilities, make the most of the advantages held by trade union organizations and carry out special inspections on the payment of wages to rural migrant workers. They should also ensure that the workers concerned have access to channels for filing grievances and reports through union legal aid centres, the “12351” hotline for workers’ rights protection, and union assistance centres. Trade unions should make an institutional guarantee, adopting a legal mindset and approach to their work with a view to including the settlement of wage arrears in the national protection system and promoting resolution of the issue by dealing with the root causes.

The ACFTU made settling wage arrears an important part of its services to members this year. Unions organized a wide range of inspection, survey and investigation activities to detect and resolve risks of wage arrears and provide timely assistance to rural migrant workers facing hardship as a result of delayed wage payments. Meanwhile, unions at all levels are to promote the setting up of a credit system for enterprises on timely payment of wages, together with a wage payment monitoring index, a wage arrears reporting programme, a wage reserve fund and a provident fund scheme for wage arrears. They are also going to build a long-term mechanism to prevent or settle wage arrears through the real-name management of employment and the payment of wages by banks.
Special Report

ACFTU issues notice on effective solution of wage arrears problems for rural migrant workers

Unions propose eight specific initiatives to break the “chronic disease” of wage arrears

As the 2015 Spring Festival approached, the number of cases of wage arrears for rural migrant workers was starting to grow again. The ACFTU recently issued the Notice on Effective Solution of Wage Arrears Problems for Rural Migrant Workers, proposing several specific measures to resolve the issue of wage arrears and effectively safeguard the right of rural migrant workers to get paid.

In recent years, in order to solve the problem of wage arrears for migrant rural workers, the authorities issued a series of rules and regulations. However, like a chronic disease, wage arrears have not been cured. Take, for example, the sector where the disease is most rampant: the construction sector. Influenced by the downward pressure of the economy, some construction projects face funding problems, with a number of outstanding payments of construction costs to local government investment projects. There are construction companies that make only slender profits, or even have to pay construction costs in advance from their own accounts; as well as contractors that subcontract their projects, sell their qualifications to other contractors or simply lack proper management, all of which results in wage arrears for rural migrant workers.

“Wage arrears badly influence the normal work and life of rural migrant workers. If we do not take effective measures to deal with the problem, it will not only harm the rights of rural migrant workers, but also affect social harmony and stability,” says an ACFTU Social Security Department spokesperson. The Notice requires trade unions at all levels to conduct special inspections on wage payments for rural migrant workers, make this issue a central pillar of their activities leading up to the New Year and Spring Festival holiday and promote the establishment of a wage payment guarantee mechanism.

In order to ensure that the majority of rural migrant workers receive their wages on time and in full, the Notice proposes eight specific initiatives, including the following:
- nominating someone to collect labour relations information from enterprises and report back to the special inspection team and the union leadership as soon as they discover any instance of delayed payment in an enterprise, or when the owners go into hiding with workers’ wages unpaid;
- making full use of union legal aid centres, the “12351” hotline for workers’ rights protection, and union assistance centres, and deal with individual cases of wage arrears in accordance with the law and following due procedures;
- launching outreach and consultation campaigns on laws and regulations to provide legal assistance and services for rural migrant workers;
- study the situation when visiting workers at home to discover and resolve hidden wage arrears problems;
- give necessary assistance to rural migrant workers who face hardship due to delayed payments.

This year trade unions have put more emphasis on the “institutional guarantee” to solve the problem of wage arrears by tackling the root causes, including efforts to promote and support government efforts to establish and improve the wage reserve system, and a provident fund mechanism for emergency payment of back wages. They also intend to establish an improved reporting system on wage arrears. This requires enterprise unions, in the month when they discover any payment delay, to demand that management report to the workers’ congress on the reason for the delay, the number of workers involved, the total amount and the plan for payment. This plan would be made public as part of the requirement for transparency in enterprise affairs, to ensure that the workers affected are fully informed.

Meanwhile, the ACFTU also called on trade unions in all workplaces to safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of rural migrant workers who fall victim to malicious wage arrears or violence during their struggle to get the money due to them. In addition, it demanded that police and the courts crack down on such behaviour against rural migrant workers, in accordance with the law.

Reforming the investment regime of China’s basic old-age insurance: Past, present and future prospects

The China Labour and Social Security News (CLSSN) recently published an interview with Zheng Bingwen, Director of the Centre for International Social Security Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. It touched on a number of issues surrounding the reform of the investment regime of China’s basic old-age insurance funds.
Clustering: When we talk about basic old-age insurance funds for investment, what are we referring to?
Zheng Bingwen: The basic old-age insurance funds embody the same concept as the enterprise annuity and nationwide social security funds, which run in parallel. The employees' old-age pension insurance scheme, the urban residents' old-age pension insurance scheme and the new rural social insurance scheme for old-age pensions (now combined into the urban and rural residents' social insurance scheme for old-age pensions) have all taken on their fund-raising model that of social pooling plus individual accounts. Due to the fact that the scheme for urban and rural residents was initiated only a couple of years ago, the urban employees' basic old-age insurance scheme constitutes the main component of the first pillar, so the funds for investment we are talking about refer mainly to that scheme. In detail, it includes the social pooling funds and the individual account funds, with a share of about 20% across the board contributed by the former via the employing unit and a share of 8% of total payroll contributed by the latter on an individual basis.

In 1993, the Decision on a Number of Issues concerning the Establishment of the Socialistic Market Economic System required the setting up of a system comprising social pooling plus individual accounts, with the eventual aim of creating a partly cumulative system. Could you please briefly illustrate the sequence of our country's fund accumulations from 1993 to 2015?
In 1993, the annual fund revenue of the urban employees' basic old-age pension scheme amounted to only about 44 billion yuan and the total surplus was just 24.5 billion yuan. By 2013, annual revenue had increased to 2.268 trillion yuan and the surplus had reached 2.827 trillion yuan (US$450 billion approx.).

Overall, while the urban employees' scheme was able to meet its payment needs in the first ten years after the Decision was issued, there was not much in the way of steady resources or, for that matter, efficiency losses. Issues such as the value guaranteed against loss and increments in the investment of the pension funds did not therefore seem so pressing. In the next ten years, however, the situations was completely different, with funds rising quite rapidly. On one hand, this shows that our pension payment capacity has seen constant improvement, the basic physical basis for the social security has been greatly consolidated and the setting up of our system has in this respect been a tremendous achievement. On the other hand, when money was available we were faced with challenges such as issues surrounding increments and value guaranteed against losses. This is the same principle as for management of household finances. When money is not available there is no need to consider the issue, whereas when it is, it needs to be faced. This is one of the reasons why there has been a growing call in recent years for market-oriented investment of the funds. Investment pressure has indeed become so great — for instance, the funds accumulated from the urban and rural residents' scheme have reached over 3 trillion yuan — that we cannot afford to wait any longer.

The reason for these basic old-age pension funds showing such fast growth is twofold. First, the sustained expansion of system coverage and the rapid increase in the number of insured employees. Over the past ten years this has been one of the outstanding achievements of our national social insurance system. It can be said that there is no other country in the world where the old-age pension system has been able to develop on such a tremendous scale. For example, between 2003 and 2013, the number of insured employees increased from 116 million to 242 million, with the additional 126 million insured persons meaning that the number of pension contributors fully doubled. This is quite close to the rate of growth in the numbers of insured retirees during the corresponding period, so that the replacement rate within the system was basically maintained at 32%, thus contributing to the rapid expansion in scale of the funds.

Second, it is always difficult to raise overall levels of pension arrangements, particularly when the basic old-age pension funds cannot be regulated from one region of the country to another. Those regions that are unable to make ends meet in terms of fund operation will have to be dependent on fiscal subsidies from government at various levels, leading to an increase in the funds' total surplus, among other reasons. In the past ten years or so, total subsidies reached as much as 1.69 trillion yuan.

Talking about investment of the basic old-age pension insurance funds, what will be the issues to be faced in relation to the establishment of a kind of model? What other investment models are there at the present time worldwide?
At present, there are mainly three investment models for basic-old age pension insurance funds in the world. The first is the model of investment operation by government departments. The government deposits the funds directly in an ad hoc governmental institution under the auspices of the Ministry of Finance to maintain investment control. This is simply because the department responsible for the control of investment remains a government organ with a government function and it also separately receives the capital market. Therefore, the investment channel for the basic-old age pension insurance funds tends to be unitary and fixed, basically engaged in purchasing national debt. For example, in the United States the ratio of investment in public bonds by the Federal Social Security Trust Funds is as high as 90%. This kind of investment model requires the government departments not to take a rebate on the investment interest rates. Moreover, the funds for investment purposes cannot be mixed with and used alongside other kinds of funds, for instance using basic-old age pension insurance funds directly for medical care, social assistance or other purposes. It also requires the government and society as a whole to have quite a strong built-in immunity against an excessive and overweaning welfare state, and avoid using the accumulated funds for temporary welfare profits.
The second model is that of investment operation by a specialized institution. Here the government hands the basic-old age pension insurance funds to one or several ad hoc institutions set up for the purpose of operating investment control. This kind of institutions usually remain independent of the government and any political group. The Swedish national-old age pension is a good example of this investment model. It requires that throughout the investment operations of the funds, every effort should be made to put an end to government interference, such as designating independent experts or adhering to the principle of maximizing investment returns; apart from designating independent auditors responsible for the annual audit, there is the need to appoint an actuary whose assignment is to undertake actuarial assessment throughout the system and analyze the level of impact of various investment strategies on the balance of system finances. Due to the fact that the funds are so huge, it is difficult to find a peer institution to understand the investment strategies. In the result, there is a shortage of the necessary frames of reference for monitoring the institution operating the funds.
The third mode is the market investment operation model. Here the government transfers the basic-old age pension insurance funds established on the basis of individual accounts directly to several market institutions to operate investment control. Individuals have the autonomous right to choose these market institutions and their investment portfolios. The government's duties are to exercise supervision and regulation over the operation of the funds' investments. The 16 countries implementing this model of operation are mainly scattered across Latin America, Eastern Europe and the Central Asian region. It is necessary to establish a fully-fledged and coordinated legal framework system to ensure the effective operation of this model, supported by such laws and decrees as corporation law, contract law and investment law in particular. There is also a need to consolidate the building up of market fairness, competitiveness and openness in order to guarantee the effectiveness of market investment behaviour and in particular to ensure a sufficient number of candidates to manage the investment of the pension funds and formulate an appropriate competition setup. The government is required to provide a non-contributory type of old-age pension with a guaranteed minimum level so as to control any huge losses that may occur under exceptional circumstances and protect retirees' livelihoods. There is also a need to make strategic arrangements for the investment control model and strengthen cooperation and coordination among the various supervision and control agencies.

What investment models do you think are suitable for our country?
The model of investment operation by government departments is actually a model for national debt investment, along the lines of the American model to purchase national debt. Obviously, such a model is not right for the Chinese situation. It would be difficult to operate under the macroeconomic, financial and taxation environment in China.
The market investment operation model is in fact the Chilean model or, in other words, the much-discussed mandatory provident fund model of Hongkong. The uniqueness of this model is that it is the individual who has the final say in investment decisions on the whole of the old-age pension assets owned by all the insured persons. This exercise would entrust the entire obligations of old-age pension asset increments and value guaranteed against losses to individual in-
ACFTU solidarity with workers in Ebola-hit countries

In December 2014, Li Yufa, secretary of the ACFTU Party Committee, met the ambassadors to China of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone to convey the sympathy and support of Chinese workers to people in Ebola-hit countries. He asked them to pass the ACFTU’s donations on to trade unions and workers in their countries.

Li also discussed the cooperation between Chinese and African trade unions. The ambassadors recalled the long-standing support and assistance received from China, especially since the Ebola outbreak, and expressed the hope that through the ACFTU, the gratitude of the populations of their countries would be made known to China’s government, trade unions and people.

The fourth scheme was highly in demand in 2011. Obviously, this is the “most desirable” way out. If it is going to proceed it means that in China as a result there will be two sovereign old-age pension funds, one of them set up mainly by financial resources, and the other by contributions from the insured persons. They can carry out different investment strategies or even in different international investment areas. This independent institution of legal persons will act as a reference frame with the National Council for Social Security Fund, thus formulating a certain competitive pattern so as to improve one another’s operational efficiency.

In the process of reforming the operational system of fund investment, there exists an issue of how to handle the relationship between the government and the market. What is your view on this matter?

It is very clear that the assets of the social insurance funds remain totally separate from the assets of the central investment institution. If an independent agency with legal personality status is to be set up, the first question is whether it is an undertaking unit or an enterprise unit; the second question is whether its operational costs come from central government budgetary allocations or are included in the cost allocation of operational assets; the third question is whether employee recruitment for such an institution can maintain sufficient independence. At present it seems that in the area of investment, if these three relationships are not treated well, it would mean the relationship between the government and the market has not been resolved in a satisfactory manner.
ACFTU and WFTU stage youth employment seminar

Together with the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), the ACFTU hosted a seminar in December 2014 on youth employment, with special reference to Arab countries.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, ACFTU Vice-Chair Jiang Guangping recalled the traditional friendship between Chinese trade unions and the WFTU. Over the years, the two sides have treated each other on an equal footing, supported one another, and maintained close cooperation with a view to promoting decent work for the working class.

The workshop was a result of the regional exchanges and deepened cooperation between the ACFTU and the WFTU.

Jiang expressed confidence that the workshop would not only offer an opportunity for both sides to have a clearer understanding of the challenges that globalization poses to young people in developing countries and identify solutions but also play a positive role in promoting friendship and cooperation between the ACFTU, the WFTU and the trade union organizations in Arab nations.

Representing the WFTU secretariat, Ahmed Dandim Hassan remarked that Arab nations are still in the grip of the economic crisis, which has triggered widespread social instability and sent youth unemployment soaring. As the social security system is failing apart, jobless young people can barely eke out a living. He believed that the workshop would do much to help them out of their predicament.

Chinese and South Asian trade unionists discuss economic development

Late November to early December 2014 saw the China-South Asia Trade Union Leaders’ Seminar on the theme of economic development and the role of trade unions. ACFTU Vice-Chair Jiang Guangping observed at the opening ceremony that the Chinese people are working toward the “two centennial goals”. These are to complete the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects by 2020; and to build China into a modern socialist country that is prosperous, democratic, culturally advanced and harmonious by the middle of the century. This means deepening reforms across the board, building a socialist country under the rule of law and safeguarding workers’ legitimate rights.

Jiang added that China puts a high premium on developing good neighbourly relations with South Asian countries. Chinese trade unions and those in South Asian countries enjoy long-term friendship and cooperation. He pointed out that the seminar had created a platform for both sides to explore how trade unions can effectively participate in economic development, equally share the benefits brought by development and better safeguard workers’ rights. The ACFTU, he said, is ready to work alongside trade unions in South Asia to fight for the interests of workers and strengthen friendships.

Speaking on behalf of the South Asian participants, Tian Mansoor Rahim Raseed, Deputy President of the Ceylon Federation of Labour, described the seminar as a necessity and also an opportunity to enhance exchanges with Chinese trade unions with a view to exploring how trade unions play their part in economic construction and social development to safeguard workers’ rights.

Canadian union delegation visits China

In January 2015, ACFTU Vice Chair Jiang Guangping welcomed a delegation to Beijing from the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) headed by its president, Hassan Yusseff.

Jiang explained that the Chinese people are working toward the “two centennial goals”, deepening thoroughgoing reforms and building a socialist country under the rule of law. He outlined the efforts Chinese trade unions have made in protecting workers’ rights, organizing trade unions, pushing for collective bargaining and participating in labour legislation. His hope was that through this visit, both sides could enhance mutual understanding and promote in-depth development of the friendship between the two organizations.

China, said Hassan Yusseff, is playing a vital role in the global economy, and both Chinese and Canadian trade unions are confronted with the same challenges in safeguarding workers’ rights and carrying out collective bargaining. He hoped to strengthen friendship with Chinese trade unions and keep in close touch with the ACFTU at 2016’s G20 Summit in Beijing.
Since 2014, the Anhui Federation of Trade Unions has prioritized services for migrant workers, following the Opinions of the State Council on Addressing Migrant Worker Issues, and on Further Improving Migrant Worker Services. Trade unions at all levels are making efforts to provide one-stop services for migrant workers in such areas as business start-up, job-seeking, troubleshooting and health and safety, with a view to protecting their legitimate interests and improving their well-being.

Demand-based job training. In 2014, the Federation allocated 1 million yuan (about US$160,000) to support skills training for migrant workers. It also published the blueprint on “Training 10,000 Employees for 100 Corporations”, requiring trade unions in cities and counties coming directly under the provincial government to provide pre-job training for new employees to help them acquire the vocational skills they need, as well as upskilling training for existing employees to improve the quality and quantity of skilled talent in the labour-intensive enterprises in which trade unions are established. Here, most employees are migrant workers that have signed labour contracts with the respective enterprises, and trade unions should provide migrant workers with legal rights and regulations to raise their legal awareness and skills.

In addition, the training channels themselves should be expanded. Efforts are to be made to encourage and guide best-practice national worker education and training models and a range of colleges where workers will cooperate with large and medium-sized enterprises in pre-job training provision. Enterprises should also cooperate with colleges and universities to provide education and training for workers to be so that they obtain the competencies required in specific posts and professions.

Finally, there needs to be innovation in training patterns. Employment and entrepreneurship policies should be improved and to this end trade unions will organize and implement Employment Assistance Month activities aimed at providing services for migrant workers; public employment services will be provided for migrant workers, including policy consultation, occupational guidance and job introduction; online employment platforms will be rolled out; trade unions should combine their efforts with the relevant departments to develop the domestic services industry, facilitating the employment of women migrant workers; the management of training, job opportunity introduction and follow-up should be optimized, and a regular employment training system for migrant workers gradually put in place.

Further care and support for children of migrant workers. First, the Golden Autumn Education Aid Programme is to be continued and expanded. Trade unions at all levels across the province have seen this programme as an important channel to truly benefit employees and migrant workers. Over the past 17 years, trade unions have financed the cost of education for 172,900 children from disadvantaged employee and migrant worker families, of whom 95,640 went to junior colleges and high schools.

Second, complementary support funds are also raised from social sources by trade unions at all levels. The Federation has set aside an annual contribution of 300,000 yuan (around US$50,000) from the China Mobile Group Anhui Co. Ltd to finance the cost of education for children from disadvantaged migrant worker families. With support from the Anhui branch of the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, Heifei Union Council has continued its Free College Education for Migrant Workers project, financing a college education for 174 migrant workers this year (a total of 200 migrant workers in past years). The Council has also combined efforts with the Heifei Municipal Education Bureau to provide education for disadvantaged migrant worker families as part of the Education Aid for Children of Migrant Workers programme. During the education aid activities organized by Benghua Union Council, Benghua Investment Group Co. Ltd donated 1.2 million yuan (around US$195,000) to fund 100 students from disadvantaged employee and migrant worker families throughout their four-year university education.

actively helping migrants workers to obtain back pay. The Anhui Federation of Trade Unions, the Department of Human Resources and Social Security of Anhui Province and other departments have jointly issued the Notification on Implementing Special Inspection over the Payment of Wages of Migrant Workers. During the Spring Festival and New Year holiday season in 2014, the Federation accompanied the joint inspection team on a visit to Wuhu and Xuancheng to inspect the payment of wages of migrant workers and recovered a total of 183.85 million yuan’s worth of back pay (almost US$30 million) for 14,700 employees and migrant workers.

Organising knowledge contests on safety production. Organized by the Anhui Federation with the joint efforts of the Anhui Provincial Commission of Economy and Information, the Anhui Administration of Work Safety and other departments, the first provincial worker safety production knowledge and skills contest on the theme of “Popularizing Safety Knowledge, Improving Safety Skills, Strengthening Supervision and Inspection, and Realizing Mass Prevention and Treatment” was carried out in four industries: coal mining and non-coal mining, firefighting and chemicals. The contest aims to improve safety production awareness among both employees and employers, encourage enterprises to adopt safety measures into practice and achieve safe development. Participation in the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Cup has now been expanded from state-owned large and medium-sized enterprises to non-public ones. Efforts have been made to attract employees, migrant workers in particular, from more enterprises and public institutions of various types. So far, 2,75 million employees in 145,700 teams from 14,654 enterprises and institutions all over the province have participated in the OSH Cup, representing a year-on-year increase of 18.9%, 23.1% and 18% respectively.

Integrating disadvantaged migrant workers into the union support and assistance system. Trade unions at city and county (district) levels across the province have set up the “Migrant Worker Service Window” and “Migrant Worker Rights Protection Window”, compiled files for over 30,000 disadvantaged migrant workers, provided equal support and assistance for migrant workers and urban employees and established a regular support and assistance system for migrant workers. During the Spring Festival and New Year holiday season in 2014, trade unions at all levels across the province raised a total of 158 million yuan (about US$25.5 million) for 6,814 disadvantaged enterprises and 197,000 disadvantaged employee families (including 36,675 disadvantaged migrant worker families and 3,985 disadvantaged model worker families).

Offering a diverse range of services to migrant workers. Trade unions at all levels have been expanding the range of services they offer by making health care and job training accessible to migrant workers and helping them to get back home for the Spring Festival and New Year holiday season, as train tickets are hard to come by during this period. For many years, especially during the holiday season, Chuzhou Union Council has been doing what it can to help migrant workers in need. Maanshan Union Council has cooperated with the railway and transport agencies to ease migrant workers’ journey home for the holidays by providing a ticket sales and reservation service at the entrance stations where they work and subsidizing their fares. Fuyang Union Council has taken a number of measures to help migrant workers, including chartered vehicles to transport them home free of charge for the holidays, holding dedicated job fairs for them and offering support to those experiencing difficulties. Incomplete statistics show that during the 2014 holiday season, trade unions across the province provided 257 vehicles to transport migrant workers to their hometowns, helped 12,379 of them with their fears and gave a range of assistance to 23,235 to smoothen the journey home.
In December 2014, the Fujian Federation of Trade Unions held a province-wide collective bargaining model meeting to exchange experiences about ways of securing party and government support, promoting the construction of a law-based system, strengthening team building, enhancing model nurturing, integrating social resources and promoting collective bargaining.

Legislation on system construction. The Fujian Provincial People’s Congress revised and issued the Rules for Collective Bargaining and Collective Contracts in Fujian Province Enterprises, stipulating that enterprises throughout the province should establish a collective bargaining and collective contract system according to law, and organizing inspections to ensure the Rules are implemented.

Joint efforts by party and government. The Fujian Provincial People’s Government attaches great importance to collective bargaining, stressing it in its Outline for the Twelfth Five-Year Plan of Fujian Province the efforts to be made to promote the establishment of collective bargaining systems in enterprises, and recalling that since 2012, construction of the collective bargaining system is considered under the annual provincial comprehensive performance assessment. The General Office of the Fujian CPC Municipal Committee transmitted the opinions issued by the provincial government on joint efforts by the party, the government and enterprises to promote collective bargaining. The opinions specify that enterprises which fail to carry out collective bargaining without a justified reason will not be considered for any excellent enterprise appraisal activities, and any honours previously obtained will be cancelled, including the Award for Model Worker, the First of May Labour Medal, Excellent Entrepreneur, Enterprise with Harmonious Labour Relationships, etc.

Active offer and system construction. The Offer Activity Month for collective bargaining will be held every March on the theme of “Active Offer, Standard Operation, Improved System and Win-Win Strategy”. In past years, the Fujian Federation has printed more than 40,000 copies of the Instructions on Collective Bargaining, and over 200,000 copies of other information materials, including a Flow Chart of Collective Bargaining and the Offer Activity Month brochure, and distributed these materials to the communities to guide their activities in this area.

Improving team capabilities. The Federation formulated a provincial plan on training for collective bargaining instructors, and set out its objectives for providing collective bargaining instructors and relevant trade union officials across the province with training. The Fujian Provincial Department of Finance will allocate 1 million yuan and the Fujian Federation of Trade Unions will provide 500,000 yuan (over US$80,000) to fund this training. At the same time, senior trade union officials are encouraged to attend the collective bargaining model meetings to obtain experience. Since 2011, over 40,000 people have attended more than 400 training courses for collective bargaining instructors.

Model demonstration and coverage expansion. The Fujian Federation has distributed a Plan for Further Promoting Collective Bargaining Work (2014-2018). This emphasizes the importance of developing models, and points out that at least one industry-based, two enterprise-based and one regionally based collective bargaining pilots are to be developed by the Federation at the provincial, municipal and county levels. Meanwhile, at least one industrial collective bargaining model should be developed by the provincial industrial trade union. At the meeting in December, ten representatives of state-owned enterprises, foreign companies and Taiwan-funded enterprises at city, industrial park, county, town and village levels exchanged their experiences of industry-wide bargaining. At present, there are 191,900 enterprises which have established the collective contract system, accounting for 94.65% of the total enterprises in Fujian Province, while 199,800 enterprises have established the collective bargaining system, accounting for 94.11% of the total and covering over 8 million workers.
In recent years, Xingtai Union Council has established and improved a comprehensive information network system. It has adopted an information-based work pattern after installing an office automation system, and launched an official website and WeChat social networking account. It now regularly disseminates publicity online, stores materials digitally, operates a paperless office environment and is able to communicate much more effectively with employees.

Actively advocating an office automation system, Xingtai Union Council has connected each computer in the office to a local area network so it can send out meeting notifications, transmit amended document drafts and send and receive information among all its staff and departments.

Since 2011, the Council has allocated over 300,000 yuan (almost US$50,000) in earmarked funds to introduce office automation systems for union councils in 21 counties (cities and districts) and trade unions of institutions directly under the municipal government. As a result, it is always able to efficiently circulate the latest documents issued by higher authorities, make working arrangements as required and without delay, issue all the various notifications, communications and directives, and collect opinions and suggestions from employees in a timely manner, so that the trade unions of enterprises in Xingtai remain in close contact with each other. Automation improves union efficiency, saves on paper and facilitates the transmission of confidential documents. So far, the office automation rate of the Council's member unions stands at over 70%.

Xingtai Union Council has taken three measures to improve the online working capabilities of the staff of community trade unions.

First, it runs specific training sessions on a regular basis. Professionals are brought in to provide training on how to use the system keys and send emails through the system. Each union is required to nominate someone to manage its system keys. A total of 300 people have undergone this training and a number of officials, in particular younger staff, are now well-versed in the system's operation.

Second, specific individuals familiar with the system have been tasked with the responsibility of troubleshooting the issues encountered by staff. It is their job to answer and resolve any questions raised. A rapid response hotline has been opened so they can guide users through the solutions remotely, thus assuring that the system continues to function normally.

The third measure involves reducing the number of hard-copy documents and encouraging trade union staff to embrace the system. At first, many were reluctant. To meet its requirement of building trade unions that are economical with their resources, Xingtai Union Council gradually phased out both out both the printing and distribution of materials on paper and the use of traditional mail, disseminating all its documents via the system. Member unions thus had no option but to become familiar with its operations. Once they discovered how convenient and efficient it is, many have now accepted the new system and are more willing to use it to file their latest situation reports.

Continuous updating of the official website. Having established the office automation system to facilitate the sending and receiving of documents, Xingtai Union Council launched an official website.

The website is divided into sections, including “News”, “Dynamics of Community Trade Unions”, “Exchange and Communication”, “Cultural Activities” and “Introduction to Model Workers”. Departments and divisions of the Council are required to provide updates on the progress of their work and documents related to automated management, achievements and technical exchanges in the pages under their responsibility. Information reported by the community trade unions will be sorted and then uploaded to the website to be nominated for the task. This not only mobilises community trade unions to use their initiative but also facilitates exchange and communication among counties (cities and districts).

The website includes a section entitled...
Closer to the Grassroots

“Laid-off Talent”. To enrich its database, the Council seeks support and job information from trade unions in other cities and in this way increases employment opportunities for local workers. So far, the database has collected over 2,000 items of job search information from workers and recruitment information from enterprises both inside and outside the province. The website also provides a link to the site of the Xingtai Workers’ Legal Aid Centre to provide relevant legal information for employees. Moreover, the Council gets lawyers to provide online legal consultation services for workers on a voluntary basis, and publicizes topical policies and documents on the website so as to help workers to apply for the help they need based on their actual requirements, resolve any difficulties they face and promote the development of enterprises.

Opening an official WeChat account.
Xingtai Union Council opened an official WeChat social networking account in 2014. To spread the word, over 5,000 posters have been printed and sent out to community trade unions and enterprises. Trade union officials are encouraged to invite their friends to follow the account, and it is publicized in journals and other media to attract the attention of more employees and enterprises. In addition to the latest information on services and activities, content related to workers’ rights protection, labour laws and trade union culture, good-quality articles and material written by trade union members will also be shared on the platform. Xingtai Union Council makes full use of this convenient publicity channel. For example, before and after the Inaugural Memorial Day on 30 September 2014, it published a piece about those born in Xingtai who fell in the war against Japan and called on citizens to honour their memory. During the Fourth Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee, a number of laws and regulations were outlined on the platform, including the Labour Law and the Law on the Protection of Rights and Interests of Women Workers, raising workers’ consciousness about legal issues. The official WeChat account makes it easier for workers and trade union officials to obtain relevant information about trade unions and is adapted to the reading habits of workers of the new generation. WeChat information has been commented on, favoured and forwarded by over a hundred workers. The front office of the Council will categorize the problems raised by workers before submitting them to the leadership for review. The reply will then be passed on to the appropriate departments and divisions for prompt resolution.

Xingtai Union Council, by building “digital” trade unions, has improved online work efficiency and made its publicity more effective, as well as putting in place a convenient way of transmitting information, speeding up the process of feedback and updating, following up work progress in timely fashion, delivering a rapid response to public opinion, and not least closely exchanging and communicating with workers and providing them with a range of services. The convenient and efficient web-based office has established a new working pattern for trade unions. The consensus among union officials in Xingtai is that it will certainly bring new content and ideas to the work of trade unions. Working efficiency has been greatly improved by the innovation in office careers, working ideas, methods and content.

Joint meeting system extended to townships

The 21st joint meeting between the municipal government of Fushun, capital city of Fujian province, and trade unions was held on December 9, 2014. The meeting was presided over by Yang Yimin, mayor of the city. Deputy mayors and leaders of Fushun Trade Union Federation sat across the table from one another discussing issues on the agenda.
At the meeting, the government and trade unions informed each other of their priorities for the year and the implementation of the decisions made at the last joint meeting. Both sides examined and adopted the Opinions on Strengthening the Building of the Labour/Government Joint Meeting System, specifying the form, timing, venue of meetings as well as topics for discussion on the agenda. The document ensures that the joint meeting system is institutionalized and standardized and is carried out in accordance with the law.
The joint meeting system was set up in 1990. With the system in place, 94 hotspot issues concerning economic development, workers’ interests and the labour movement have been resolved over the past 24 years. In recent years, the government has put more than 800 million yuan into building workers’ cultural palaces and 500 million yuan into building cultural and sports amenities.

Union unveils measures to ward off health hazards

Coal mining, cement and building materials are China’s pillar industries, yet they also bring with them an abundance of hazards. To eradicate health hazards at the workplace, the trade union federation in Zixhong County, Sichuan province, has been pushing for a collective contract for the prevention of occupational diseases and working hard to make sure that such a contract is signed by all enterprises and compiled with by 93% of enterprises.

To control industrial hazards, Zixhong Trade Union Federation recently conducted a sample survey of 30 enterprises of different ownership and 600 workers in the county, put together an investigation report and formulated the Opinions on the Prevention and Control of Occupational Diseases in Enterprises Exposed to Health Hazards.
While insisting that facilities for prevention of occupational diseases should be designed, built and put into operation simultaneously with the main body of a construction project, the trade union federation will single out a batch of enterprises as exemplary units of production every year. So far, all the 136 enterprises which were previously prone to industrial hazards have signed collective contracts for the prevention of occupational diseases.
Income distribution reform must target SOEs’ executives

Salaries for executives of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) can reach ten times the wage of China’s vice-minister level civil servants.

Some executives were paid more than 1 million yuan (163,934 U.S. dollars) annually, much higher compared to other government appointed positions, said Liu Xieming, head of the Institute for Labour and Wages Studies under the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security.

In some cases SOE executives were paid more than major executives of companies listed in Shanghai and Shenzhen stock exchanges, he said.

The average payment for an executive at a Shanghai or Shenzhen listed company came to 763,000 yuan in 2013, while salary levels for all executives of listed companies averaged 461,000 yuan, Liu said.

The annual payment for urban employees in the non-private sector averaged 31,474 yuan in 2013, according to the ministry.

Compared to an average taken from executives working at private companies in the 30 developed economies under the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, salaries for SOE executives are generally lower.

Liu noted executives in the listed companies can hold stakes as incentives which are not available for the SOE executives, and as civil servants, SOE executives can enjoy benefits in health care, pension and housing, he said.

Meanwhile, the gap between the payment for SOE executives and the public is growing steeper, he added.

When the SOE executives were first paid in annual salaries in the early 1990s, they got about 120,000 yuan annually on average, about ten times of that for urban workers, but now some have annual payment up to 30 times of the average incomes of urban workers, Liu said.

The top leadership of the Communist Party of China approved plans on Friday to cut hefty salaries for executives of large SOEs.

Most SOE executives will see their payments shrink, Qiu Xiaopeng, Vice Minister of Human Resources and Social Security, said on Sunday.

China has thousands of SOEs, 113 of which are directly administered by the country’s central authority. The central government also urged locally-administered SOEs to follow suit.

Statistics showed the average annual salary of executives at centrally administered SOEs ranged from 850,000 to 700,000 yuan in 2010 and 2011.

In addition to high salaries, many top executives at major SOEs carry a vice-ministerial or ministerial-level ranking that brings them so-called “invisible income” such as transportation and communication allowances and other material benefits.

Unions hire college graduates to fill staff shortages

In recent years, trade unions in Anhui province have enlisted the help of the government in boosting youth employment and explored ways to fill public interest jobs with college graduates. In 2013, help and support centers run by trade unions around the province recruited 298 students, thus easing the shortage of hands at the grassroots levels.

The measures they have adopted include:

1. Posting resources and solving problems at sources. The provincial trade union federation has incorporated the hiring of new staff for help and support centers into government recruitment plans. In 2013, the trade union federation issued the implementation plan for public interest jobs and released recruitment information on the internet, thus creating favorable conditions for trade unions to lift more impoverished workers out of poverty.

2. Rolling out policies for public interest jobs. Seeking people for public interest positions requires the province’s human resource bureau, judicial bureau, civil administration bureau, and trade unions to work together. The human resource bureau is responsible for giving exams and working out relevant policies on salaries and benefits. The trade union federation will see to it that new recruits are college graduates who have been jobless for nearly two years. Their annual salaries, set at 18,000 yuan and subsidized by their trade unions, are paid by the provincial government. Those who get hired will sign a three-year contract and must participate in social insurance.

3. Taking on college graduates to carry out poverty relief work. The 298 college graduates the trade unions have signed up are scattered among help and support centers in townships, communities and industrial parks. They are tasked with providing a range of services including poverty relief, employment assistance and legal aid. Some trade unions offer training for new recruits, teaching the rudiments of poverty relief so that they enter into their roles as quickly as possible.
Progress report on national human resources and social security work in 2014

Employment and social security

1. Employment in 2014 was generally stable. Newly created urban jobs numbered 13.22 million over the whole year and the registered urban unemployment rate was 4.09% by the year’s end.

2. Social security coverage further expanded. The numbers of people covered by the different schemes in 2014 were as follows: basic pension insurance, 842.23 million (up by 22.54 million) – 341.15 million of them by employers’ pension insurance and 501.07 million by rural and urban residents’ pension insurance; basic medical insurance, 597.74 million (up by 27.02 million); unemployment insurance, 170.43 million (up by 6.26 million); work-related injury insurance, 206.21 million (up by 7.03 million); and maternity insurance, 170.35 million (up by 6.43 million). The total revenue of the National Social Security Fund was 8,059.2 billion yuan (about US$1.357 billion), up by 12.3%, and total expenditure from the fund was 3,297.7 billion yuan (about US$531.0 billion), up by 18.1%.

3. Construction of the social security system accelerated. There were already 30 provinces (districts and municipalities) which had taken measures to uniformly implement the basic pension insurance scheme for rural and urban residents and relevant supporting policies, while eight provinces and 35 municipalities and cities had made the transition to the scheme. Various regions had issued plans for critical illness insurance and taken specific steps to comprehensively promote the critical illness insurance scheme for rural and urban residents. Plans had been implemented by over 80% of the total number of municipalities (cities and autonomous prefectures).

4. Social security benefits gradually increased. The basic retirement pension for employees of enterprises has gone up for ten consecutive years and the average monthly amount per person now exceeded 2,000 yuan (US$322). The minimum level of basic pension for rural and urban residents increased to 70 yuan (US$11.25) per person per month. The public subsidy for urban residents’ medical insurance reached 320 yuan (US$51.50).

Coordinating labour relations

1. The central government urged local governments to adjust the minimum wage to an appropriate level and 19 regions have adjusted their minimum wage standards, with an average increase of 14.1%.

2. Special enforcement and inspection activities were conducted to address major problems related to labour security in 1,834 million employers; 349,000 cases of violations of laws on labour security were investigated and dealt with; and wage arrears of 27.94 billion yuan (US$4.5 billion) were collected on behalf of the workers affected.
Progress in the protection of workers’ rights and interests by Chinese trade unions in 2014

Trade unions in China made great strides in protecting workers’ rights and interests in 2014. First, unions protected workers’ economic and labour rights and interests, organized employment assistance month activities, provided employment services for 3.19 million people and helped 746,000 people find jobs, as well as, in particular, 93,800 college graduates from worker families in difficulties.

They also participated in the formulation of Opinions on Comprehensively Resolving Wage Arrears to Migrant Workers, promoted the collective contract system programme, and fostered collective bargaining at the regional, industry and enterprise levels. By the end of 2014, a total of 2,456,000 collective contracts had been signed nationwide. Trade unions also cooperated with relevant government departments to conduct specific inspections over wage payments and collected wage arrears of 11.39 billion yuan (US$1.8 billion) for 1.76 million workers.

Unions made great efforts to promote public safety production work, organized more than 100 million workers from over 450,000 enterprises to participate in the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Cup, campaigned to protect the rights of construction workers subject to work-related injuries, and urged the cities and municipalities to establish coordinated systems for the prevention and treatment of occupational diseases.

Second, trade unions improved services for workers. During the Spring Festival and New Year holiday season in 2014, trade unions raised 4.01 billion yuan (US$645.7 million) in funds and visited and expressed condolences to 4.16 million front-line workers, migrant workers and model workers. They provided 1.11 billion yuan (US$178.7 million) to 95,000 students from worker families in difficulties and raised 79 million yuan (US$12.7 million) to help 6,685 migrant workers to get back home safely for the holidays.

Third, trade unions pushed for national worker quality construction projects and promoted the Education Programme for millions of migrant workers. By the end of 2014, a total of 68,410,000 workers, including migrant workers, had received skills training, improving the technical level of 868,000 workers.

Fourth, trade unions spearheaded the Central Special Lottery legal aid project. In 2014, unions’ labour dispute mediation organizations accepted 420,000 cases related to labour disputes, successfully resolving 265,000 of them.

Fifth, trade unions promoted improved democratic management systems in enterprises and public institutions. Some 5,632,000 such bodies established an employee representative congress and 5,494,000 had transparent company affairs systems in place.

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The Analects

The Master said, “A young man should be a good son at home and an obedient young man abroad, sparing of speech but trustworthy in what he says, and love the multitude at large but cultivate the friendship of his fellow men. If, after all these activities, he has any energy to spare, let him use it to making himself cultivated.”