

Direct Airlines A Boost To NZ-Sino Relations

WELLINGTON, Nov. 30 (Xinhua) -- China is a lucrative market for New Zealand, and direct flight services launched this month will enhance the steady increase in Chinese visitors traveling to New Zealand, said Associate Minister of New Zealand Tourism Dover Samuels here Thursday. Speaking to a seminar organized by China and New Zealand Business Council (CANZBC), Samuels said it's not only the goods and services going out of New Zealand into China that offers opportunities, the growth of Chinese visitor numbers also has the potential to provide positive New Zealand tourism benefits.

Chinese visitor numbers to New Zealand have now hit 100,000 a year, and Chinese visitors spent 244 million NZ dollars (158 million U.S. dollars) in New Zealand, and much bigger figures are expected to be targeted in the next few years. Experts are sure the introduction by Air New Zealand of direct services between Auckland and Shanghai will help boost the Chinese visit to New Zealand.

Samuels hoped the work being done by New Zealand airlines and tourism industry will bear fruit in the form of Chinese visitors to stay longer and happier in New Zealand.

Airlines now fly direct to Shanghai three times a week and eventually hopes to fly daily. In promoting its new Shanghai services, Air New Zealand is taking a modern approach combining the cult of celebrity with the Internet.

Peter Li, Account Executive of Air New Zealand told the seminar there are benefits for both New Zealand and China with the new route. He said the new flights are a logical next step to encourage those people to travel on the national carrier of New Zealand and to encourage a whole new generation of travelers.

Liu Linlin, Economic and Commercial Counselor of Chinese Embassy to New Zealand, told over 70 attendees that given the long time strong bilateral relation and close interactions between the two countries and the people, the direct flight will play a very positive role in facilitating deeper and wider economic and trade integration.

The impact of China's growth on New Zealand's economy is already obvious. According to latest statistics, the two-way trade is valued at over 6.1 billion NZ dollars (3.9 billion U.S. dollars).

Liu Linlin, who is at a position witnessing bilateral free trade negotiations, the first such talks kicked off by a developed country with China, appealed New Zealand trade and commercial industry to lose no time in tapping the vast market of China and form more concrete and direct business linkage between the two countries.