

**A Remarkable History — and Future
SGI president meets with Chinese officials from Xinjiang.
Courtesy of SGI NEWSLETTER**

On June 8, SGI President Ikeda met with a friendship delegation from the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region of China, headed by Regional People's Government Chairman Abul'ahat Abudrixit, at the Seikyo Shimbun building in Shinanomachi, Tokyo. The SGI leader and his guests discussed Xinjiang's vital role in the eastward transmission of Mahayana Buddhism and the region's history and its present and future.

Quoting the late Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai, "When you drink water, you must not forget the person who dug the well," Chairman Abul'ahat said that the Chinese people will never forget how President Ikeda worked with Premier Zhou to lay the groundwork for China-Japan friendship and contributed to the development of bilateral exchange over the years.

The SGI leader remarked that, if anyone, it is the people of Japan who should seriously strive to repay their great debt of gratitude to China, and he vowed to personally continue exerting himself in that endeavor.

Observing that Xinjiang, 4.4 times the size of Japan, is the largest autonomous region in China, President Ikeda commented on how difficult it must be to govern such a vast area. Noting that under the leadership of Chairman Abul'ahat, in just two years the rate of poverty in the region had been reduced by 50 percent and that its goal is to completely eradicate poverty by the end of the century, the SGI leader commended the government head for his outstanding accomplishments.

Mr. Ikeda also said he has heard that Xinjiang has one of the highest rates of longevity in the world, and that Uygurs account for about 20 percent of China's centenarians. Public Health Department Vice Director Gulibusitan said that she attributed the longevity of the Uygur people to their diligence, working in the sun, eating fresh produce rich in vitamins, as well as their good nature, broad-mindedness and love of song and dance.

Not only does Xinjiang have a remarkable history, Mr. Ikeda asserted, but it will also be a main focus of China in the 21st century. He also said that the development of the region's oil fields, China's most plentiful, has been designated one of the nation's three major projects in the coming century.

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