

# Students heading to China on scholarships go with an open mind

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A GROUP of 32 students are headed to the People's Republic of China to pursue their studies on scholarships provided by that country.

They were given a send-off by the Chinese Embassy and the Department of Higher Education and Training this week and advised to make the most of the opportunity granted them.

They leave as part of an initiative which started in 2003.

This year's crop of students will be studying towards BA, Masters, and PhD degrees.

Some said they would be going back after an initial period of study, having just returned to South Africa after graduating for their first qualifications.

At the occasion, Chinese Ambassador to South African Lin Songtian expressed his love for the programme.

He said it marked the 20th anniversary of the China-South Africa relations.

"Thanks to the joint efforts of



Connor Fenton, Asithandile Nkatha and Lebogang Neo are among the 32 South African students heading to the People's Republic of China.

both sides, China-South Africa relations have achieved a leapfrog development to comprehensive strategic partnership, bringing tangible benefits to our peoples.

"China has, for nine consecutive years, remained South Africa's largest trading partner, and has become South Africa's most important source of foreign investment and



People's Republic of China Ambassador to South Africa, Lin Songtian, during a farewell ceremony for the 32 South African students.

PICTURES: JACQUES NAUDE/AFRICAN NEWS AGENCY (ANA)

foreign tourists.

"For South African students present here, in my view, you are going to China at the right time. I am sure that tomorrow, you will all

become builders and contributors to our relations."

Connor Fenton and Asithandile Nkatha had just returned home but said they were eagerly waiting to

return to the Asian country.

Fenton completed a one-year language programme and would be enrolling for a BA degree in Chinese language and literacy at the Shanghai Normal University.

Nkatha completed an MBA at Peking University and was set to study for a degree in Mandarin at the Beijing Language and Culture University.

An elated Lebogang Neo is going to China for the first time. "I am going to study for a Masters degree in economics and believe I will learn a lot about global economics and the ways of life of the Chinese people."

"I do not want to go there with preconceived ideas, because I want to learn new things from Chinese youth and elderly community."

Department of Higher Education and Training's chief director Ghalib Jeppie congratulated the students and emphasised the importance of the exchange programme between China and South Africa.

He said the graduates would learn so much and come back equipped with skills and knowledge to influence positive change as Nelson Mandela wanted scholars to do.