



Weaving magic

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BUSINESS, PAGE 13



Shopping frenzy

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US expert assists on telescope project

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Stephen Shectman, an astronomer at Carnegie Observatory and a member of the National Academy of Sciences in the United States, spent most of October at Tsinghua University for academic exchanges with Chinese researchers, sharing his rich experience in the field.

In Beijing from Oct 8 to Nov 3, Shectman spent most of his time talking with young Chinese researchers at Tsinghua, aiming to assist them in the realization of the Multiplexed Survey Telescope (MUST) project.

Chairing the international review panel for the MUST telescope, Shectman reviewed in



detail the design of the MUST project, and made a lot of excellent suggestions, said Cai Zheng, deputy director of the Department of Astronomy at Tsinghua and project manager of the MUST.

"What impressed me a lot was his attitude. He once said the joy of life lies not only in learning more, but also in working together with wonderful friends all over the world," Cai said.

The MUST project, led by Tsinghua, focuses on constructing a wide-field survey telescope with a diameter of 6.5 meters. The data from MUST is expected to help in the understanding of dark matter and dark energy, and will be made available worldwide.

"This project is very challenging and cannot be accomplished solely by the efforts of one country," said Cai. "It requires collaboration between China and the US to explore the vast expanse of the cosmos together."

"If this project succeeds, we will have fruitful science outcomes in the future. Many US professionals, including Shectman, have offered their help, such as Roger Angel, Jeff Kingsley, David Schlegel, Sandra Faber and Robert Lupton. They are highly respected and very kind."

Talking about Shectman, Cai described him as a gentleman who has shown the spirit of an educator who loves to share what he knows with the younger generation.

During his visit, the 75-year-old spent long hours at the office from morning to evening, sacrificing his lunch breaks to engage with Chinese faculty staff and students.

Cai, who met with Shectman every day during his stay, said that Shectman has played a quiet but influential role that has encouraged everyone on the team.

"We have one universe, and basic science research benefits all mankind. This is what I learned from many US professors. They are capable and have high moral character. Through collaboration with them, we will push the MUST project further," he added.

Zheng Yamin, a fourth-year PhD student at Tsinghua, said that Shectman always exercised with them while he was in Beijing.

"It was a lot of fun and everybody enjoyed working with him. To me, he was just like an old friend other than a teacher," Zheng added.