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China open to free-trade agreement with Mexico: Xinhua



A vendor waits for customers during the Expo China Homelife Show, a platform for leading Chinese companies seeking to do business in Mexico, in Mexico City, Mexico June 13, 2017.
REUTERS/CARLOS JASSO

(Reuters) - China is open to negotiating a free-trade agreement with Mexico, the official Xinhua news agency reported on Thursday, citing the Chinese ambassador to the country, a fillip for Mexico as it faces uncertainty over its trade deals with the United States.

Qiu Xiaoqi, China's ambassador to Mexico, said China was willing to discuss a free-trade agreement, although no discussions had been held so far, Xinhua said. Qiu was speaking at an academic event in Mexico City.

"If we negotiate a free-trade agreement, this will greatly favor trade exchanges between our two countries. There is no difficulty from China's side," he said.

"Mexico is China's second-largest trading partner in Latin America and China is Mexico's second-largest trading partner in the world. This is a highly important relationship and we have great interest in deepening and broadening these ties."

Mexico is keen to cut its economic reliance on the United States out of concern that access to its top trade partner may be restricted the policies of U.S. President Donald Trump, who has pledged to protect U.S. jobs from going outside the country.

China and Mexico have been strengthening ties since late last year as the United States has stepped back from global trade agreements such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).

Trump previously also threatened to ditch the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between Mexico, United States and Canada, raising pressure on Mexico to reduce dependency on the United States, where it sends 80 percent of its goods exports