

Belt and Road initiative boosts common prosperity to China and Central Asia: People's Daily

After 25 years of development, the relationship between China and the five Central Asian nations has become a role model for new type of state-to-state relations and regional cooperation, People's Daily said in a commentary published on Wednesday.

The article, under the byline of Zhong Sheng, came as China and Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan celebrated their 25th anniversary of diplomatic relations in January, 2017.

China and Central Asian countries have undergone three phases in their relations since establishing diplomatic ties 25 years ago.

In the first phase, which lasted from 1992 to 2001, China, together with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, resolved the history-left border issues through friendly negotiations. This success not only turned shared boundary of the Central Asian countries which spans more than 3,300 kilometers into a region of friendship and cooperation, but also laid a solid foundation for upgrade of bilateral ties.

The second phase ranged from 2001, when the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) was established, to 2012. The SCO has served as an important platform for China and the Central Asian countries to launch all-round cooperation and pursue regional integration.

During the third phase, starting from 2013 when the "Belt and Road" initiative was put forward until now, China and the Central Asian countries have brought their ties into a new era of building a community of shared interests and seeking common development.

The article pointed out that the strategic partnerships between China and Central Asian countries have stretched to all political areas.

China staunchly opposes any attempts to intervene in the domestic affairs of the Central Asian countries, and supports them to develop in accordance with their own conditions as well as to maintain independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. The Central Asian countries, in return, are strong supporters of China over the issues of Taiwan, Tibet and the South China Sea.

China's total trade volume with its Central Asian counterparts stands at \$30 billion each year, a hard-won target amid the weak recovery of world economy and low prices of global commodities, the paper praised the cooperation fruits in economic and trade front.

China and Central Asian countries have joined efforts to combat terrorism, separatism and extremism, to crack down on drug trafficking and transnational organized crimes, to deal with regional threats and challenges, in a bid to maintain regional security and stability.

The two sides enjoy increasingly active cultural exchanges, the article wrote, citing the frequent art troupe exchanges, cultural exhibitions and performances as well as deepened people-to-people understanding as examples.

The "Belt and Road" initiative, proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013, has been echoed by the Central Asian countries, the article stressed, adding that the Central Asian countries, in the past three years, have decided to adopt their own development strategies into the framework of the initiative.

Besides, these five countries are beefing up their highway, railroad, port, tunnel, telecommunication line and other flight network constructions with the aim of better connectivity and creating a "modern three-dimensional silk road".

China and Kazakhstan took the initiative to explore a new cooperation model for production capacity, the article said.

In terms of financial collaboration, Central Asian countries have taken an active part in the establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, tried new financing modes for "Belt and Road" initiative and expanded cooperation with China in using local currencies as payment and settlement, the paper noted.