

## WORLD

# Deeper regional links stressed at BRI event

Connectivity, trade gains make clear multilateralism edge, meeting hears

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Greater connectivity courtesy of the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership will boost both development and security in a region that has also been exposed to pressures on multilateral mechanisms, the seventh Belt and Road Summit has heard.

And efforts must be made to ensure the values of connectivity, joint contributions and shared benefits that come with the BRI meet the needs of people in diverse countries in order to ward off the forces opposed to these principles, senior officials and experts said at the event, which was held in Hong Kong on Wednesday and Thursday.

"It is significant that ASEAN and like-minded partners, including China, come together to form the world's largest free-trade agreement, RCEP", Singaporean Deputy Prime Minister and Coordinating Minister for Economic Policies Heng Swee Keat told the audience, including those participating online, on Wednesday.

Noting it is important that infrastructure projects are sustainable, Heng said that the Belt and Road International Green Development Coalition has been pulling together expertise and data on the Asia-Pacific region's green transition. "As co-chairs, Singapore and China will continue to work with our partners on environmentally responsible developments along the Belt and Road," he said.

John Key, New Zealand's prime minister from 2008 to 2016,

expressed his appreciation for the progress achieved through the BRI and the RCEP for multilateralism and common development.

Key's sentiments were echoed by Rod Eddington, chairman of Infrastructure Partnerships Australia.

"The case for free trade has to be constantly made by both political leaders and business leaders," said Eddington, who is also chairman of JP Morgan's Asia-Pacific Advisory Council and nonexecutive chairman of Lion group.

"There are forces in all countries which resist the movement of free goods and services around the world."

Eddington noted these forces come from a broad political and business spectrum.

Key said that some people are trying to change the global supply chain, and he named the United States as a key driver behind such attempts.

## 'Breathtaking' impact

The trade barriers and sanctions imposed on China by former US president Donald Trump have had a "breathtaking" impact on consumers, said Key, who is the chairman of lender ANZ New Zealand.

Moreover, the changed rhetoric of Trump in relation to China has "created another obstacle" that confronts the region, Key said.

Lim Sidenine, secretary of state at the Ministry of Public Works and Transport in Cambodia, stressed the importance of connectivity, both domestic and international, for transportation infrastructure to help deliver prosperity.

"For the ASEAN strategy we

need to connect people to people in the country first," he said, adding that his nation has also tried to connect physical infrastructure, and to connect the institutions together. "Where there is a road, there is hope," he said.

M.L. Chayotid Kridakon, the Thai trade representative and an adviser to the prime minister, said Thailand is embarking on a new chapter in its economic recovery, which is strongly linked to green growth, including a bio-circular green economy.

Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan, Indonesia's coordinating minister of maritime affairs and investment, said the pandemic had changed the global landscape, so "a sustainable infrastructure development is imperative not only for Asia but also for all our global partners".

Lim Ban Hong, Malaysia's deputy minister of international trade and industry, said he believes that the BRI can elevate the value of regional cooperation, through strong multilateral partnerships forged through innovative and inclusive solutions.

"The BRI serves as a major impetus for economic growth that addresses not only infrastructure gaps that constrain mobility and development but a fundamental issue of shared progress and prosperity," he said.

Speakers at the event also stressed digital connectivity. Heng said this can be boosted by multilateral partnerships such as the Digital Economy Partnership Agreement and regional mechanisms such as the ASEAN Data Management Framework.

"So through these different forms of connectivity will bring the region and the world closer together in a digital world," he said.

## Cleaning up



Workers on Wednesday clear away sand from a hotel that was damaged by flash floods after heavy rains hit the Swat Valley town of Bahrain in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. Floods have killed at least 1,191 people in Pakistan since mid-June, authorities said on Thursday. ABDUL MAJIED / AFP

## EU complicates travel rules for Russians

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European Union foreign ministers agreed on Wednesday to suspend the bloc's visa facilitation agreement with Russia, but failed to agree on a tourist visa ban urged by several member states.

The suspension of the 2007 agreement as a result of the Russia-Ukraine conflict is expected to make the process for Russian citizens to apply for visas to enter the EU more lengthy, difficult and expensive.

"This will significantly reduce the number of new visas issued by the EU member states. It's going to be more difficult, it's going to take longer," EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said after a two-day meeting of foreign ministers in Prague.

He said the bloc has seen a substantial increase in border crossings from Russia since mid-July, and "this has become a security risk" for countries in the region.

The Kremlin on Thursday denounced the decision, and warned of potential countermeasures.

"This is bad for Russians," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters, saying this would "make the situation more difficult for Europeans as well."

"Another ridiculous decision in a series of ongoing absurdities," he said.

Borrell has expressed on several occasions that he opposed a total ban against Russian citizens, saying that the EU needs to be "more selective".

He said "we don't want to cut ourselves from those Russians" who are against Russia's special military operation in Ukraine.

The decision reached on Wednesday will still have to be formally endorsed by all states involved in order for it to become effective.

Government leaders from several EU member states, such as Finland, Poland and the three Baltic states of Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia, have

been pushing for a strict ban on tourist visas for Russians in the past weeks.

But German and French leaders have opposed a total ban. Several other countries such as Spain and Portugal have also expressed that punishing ordinary Russian citizens may not be a good idea.

"Our visa policies should reflect that and continue to allow for people-to-people contacts in the EU with Russian nationals not linked to the Russian government," stated a document by Germany and France.

As a compromise, EU foreign ministers informally agreed on Wednesday that individual countries, or a group of countries, can impose their own restrictions.

They also agreed to ask the European Commission to examine the millions of visas already issued to Russian citizens, Borrell said.

Agencies contributed to this story.

## District collaborates with university to promote innovation



The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (Guangzhou) opens on Sept 1 in Nansha district. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

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Nansha district in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, is joining forces with the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (Guangzhou), which started its first semester on Thursday, to share their strengths and promote scientific and technological innovation in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

HKUST, one of the trailblazers in Nansha, took part in the construction of the Nansha Information Technology Park in 2003 and established the Guangzhou HKUST Fok Ying Tung Research Institute in 2007. The institute so far has served more than 300 enterprises in the Bay Area on key technology research and development and obtained nearly 200 invention patents.

Lionel Ni, president of HKUST (Guangzhou), said the university's development will be oriented towards Nansha and connected with Hong Kong. It will rely on the established manufacturing industries in the Bay Area, seize the opportunity of comprehensive cooperation among Nansha, Hong Kong and Macao, and focus on transforming knowledge into products.

Ni added the university will serve to complement the scientific and technological innovation collaboration between Nansha and Hong Kong and help build an innovation base for science and technology industries in the Bay Area.

The Overall Plan for Promoting Comprehensive Cooperation among Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao by Further Deepening Opening-up in Nansha District of Guangzhou was released by the State Council, China's Cabinet, on June 14.

According to the plan, the major tasks for Nansha's future development include the construction of an innovation base for scientific and technological industry by joining forces with Hong Kong and Macao, the development of high-tech industries, the creation of a major scientific and technological innovation platform, and the promotion of international high-end talents.

Ouyang Jianhua, deputy head of Nansha district government, said HKUST (Guangzhou) is a major undertaking that showcases Nansha's collaboration with Hong Kong and Macao. It will buttress Nansha's development into a major world-oriented strategic platform rooted in the Bay Area and collaborating with Hong Kong and Macao, he added.

He said: "HKUST (Guangzhou) designs a curriculum that aligns with Nansha's scientific and technological innovation, which is expected to have spillover effects on related industries."

"HKUST (Guangzhou) will boost the flow of talents, capital, scientific and technological innovation across Hong Kong and Macao."

Zhu Gang, chief engineer of Nansha district's science and technology bureau, said that Nansha has progressed in the construction of innovation platforms. For example, Nansha and the Chinese Academy of Sciences are jointly building the Nansha Science City, which will be the main base of the comprehensive national science center in the Bay Area. Its core — the Guangzhou Mingzhu Science Park — will finish construction by the end of this year.

The Southern Marine Science and Engineering Guangdong Laboratory (Guangzhou), focusing on the sustainable use of marine resources and ecological sustainable development, is scheduled to be completed within this year.

In Nansha, a cold-seep ecosystem is listed in the nation's 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25). Projects such as a hypersonic wind tunnel, facilities for marine research expeditions and

drilling ships are making headway steadily.

Data from the Nansha district's science and technology bureau show that during the 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-20), the R&D investment intensity, that is the percentage of revenue reinvested in R&D, reached 3.67 percent. The number of patents granted increased by 5.5 times and the number of high-tech enterprises surged eight times.

Nansha is home to 23 research institutions. It has four provincial high-level innovation institutes, accounting for one-third of Guangzhou's total, and 14 provincial-level new R&D institutions, taking up about 20 percent of the city's total. A total of 128 innovation platforms have been built, which have promoted breakthroughs in major scientific and technological infrastructure.



## Open model makes for unique structure

The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (Guangzhou) officially opened on Sept 1 with more than 500 postgraduate students beginning a new chapter of campus life in Nansha district.

Different from traditional universities, HKUST (Guangzhou) has no faculty. Instead, it adopts a hub structure with each hub comprising several thrust areas.

HKUST (Guangzhou) said that the core of the academic framework is an enquiry-based cross-disciplinary active learning model. It blends enquiry-based and problem-focused experiential learning, aiming to assist cross-disciplinary education, research and knowledge transfer.

Currently, the university has four hubs with 15 thrust areas covering natural science, humanities and many other academic fields for candidates of master's and PhD degrees.

The function hub provides thrust areas of advanced materials; Earth, ocean and atmospheric sciences; microelectronics; sustainable energy and environment. The information hub, meanwhile, has artificial intelligence, data science and analytics, internet of things, and computational media and arts. The system hub has bioscience and biomedical engineering, intelligent transportation, robotics and autonomous systems and smart manufacturing. Finally,



Palm trees and sculptures decorate the campus.

the society hub has urban governance and design; innovation, policy and entrepreneurship; financial technology.

In addition to the hubs, HKUST (Guangzhou) will use flexible learning areas and make regular adjustments to respond to global demands and challenges, it said.

The university plans to recruit undergraduate students from the provinces of Guangdong, Henan, Shandong and Sichuan as well as Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macao in 2023. Three majors of artificial intelligence, data science and big data technology, and intelligent manufacturing engineering, will be available.

Undergraduate enrollment is expected to be expanded nationwide from 2024, according to the university.

A raised walkway offers students convenient access to the modern buildings.