

TRIGGER HAPPY

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BURGERS SIZZLE BEYOND BORDERS AMERICAN STAPLE BECOMES A MILAN SPECIALTY. P16

Xi proposes a 'new Silk Road' with Central Asia

Enhanced links with the region could advance global economic growth

By WU JIAO in Astana, Kazakhstan and ZHANG YUNBI in Beijing



A nearby neighbor is better than a distant relative.

XI JINPING PRESIDENT

President Xi Jinping on Saturday proposed that China and Central Asian countries build an "economic belt along the Silk Road", a trans-Eurasian project spanning from the Pacific Ocean to the Baltic Sea.

Xi made the official suggestion for the first time during a speech on China's Central Asia strategy at Nazarbayev University in Astana, Kazakhstan.

The proposed economic belt is inhabited by "close to 3 billion people and represents the biggest market in the world with unparalleled potential", Xi said.

Observers said the policy speech outlined the new Chinese leadership's diplomatic priority of accelerating comprehensive cooperation with the inland region that is home to China's strategic partners.

Xi is on the second leg of his first Central Asia tour — a sequence of state visits to Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan from Sept 3 to 13.

"A nearby neighbor is better than a distant relative," Xi said.

He underscored the more than two millennia of exchanges between China and Central Asia.

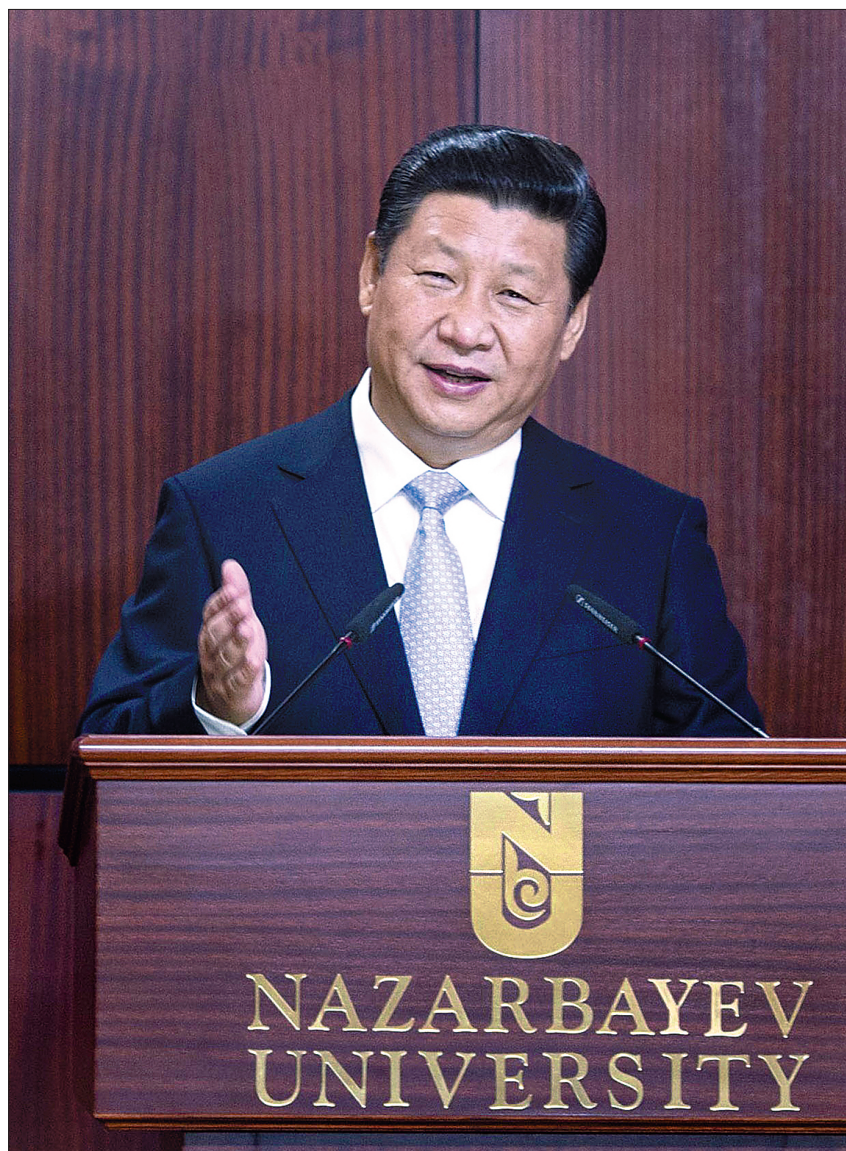
The two sides are witnessing a "golden opportunity" for deeper cooperation, Xi said.

To create the new economic belt, Xi suggested China and Central Asian countries accelerate policy communication, improve road connectivity, promote unimpeded trade, enhance monetary circulation and enhance understanding.

Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Central Asian studies scholar Sun Zhuangzhi said the integration of transportation links propelled by the "new Silk Road" will "revitalize" the region's inland civilizations.

"Cooperation across the continent is expanding and deepening in scope — from the realms of traditional energy and mineral resources to the thriving collaboration in technologies, investment, finance and services," Sun said.

Xi mentioned the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is working on a transportation agreement to improve road connectivity.



President Xi Jinping gives a speech at Nazarbayev University in Astana, Kazakhstan, on Saturday.

WANG YE / XINHUA

"After the agreement is signed, further discussion should be used to improve cross-border transportation infrastructure and forge our transportation network connecting East Asia, Western Asia and South Asia," Xi said.

The new Silk Road will become another global growth locus once western China is better connected with Central Asia, China's former ambassador to Uzbekistan Gao Yusheng said.

Xi also suggested conducting trade in local currencies.

"If our region can realize local-currency convertibility and settle-

ment under current and capital accounts, it will significantly lower circulation costs, increase our ability to fend off financial risks and make our region more economically competitive in the world," Xi said.

The total trade volume between China and Central Asia climbed in 2012 to \$46 billion — 100 times the volume in 1992, the year China forged diplomatic relations with the region's five nations.

Xi announced a 10-year central government plan to provide 30,000 government scholarships

to Shanghai Cooperation Organization member states, and to invite 10,000 teachers and students from these countries' Confucius Institutes to China for study tours.

China's former ambassador to Kazakhstan Yao Peisheng said the proposed economic belt extends beyond a slogan to encompass not only economic but also political and cultural efforts.

"Now, the follow-up measures to realize the new Silk Road are important," Yao said.

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sundaytalk

"Whoever pollutes the air is responsible to clean it up."

FANG LI, spokesman for the Beijing Environmental Protection Bureau and Beijing Commission of Transport, commenting on a move to limit car use in the city center to cut pollution.



"This is a major, major crisis ... There needs to be an apology. It needs to be public. Without that, it's basically impossible for her to go to Washington in October."

An unnamed senior Brazilian official casts doubt on a planned visit by President Dilma Rousseff to the White House following a report that the US government spied on her private communications.

"It seems the match was thrown because of bad referee calls or injuries, but the farces at the games were a result of the sports system's obsession with medaling."

LU YUANZHEN, sports sociologist at South China Normal University, following a decision by the Beijing female rugby sevens team to deliberately throw their match against the Shandong team in Tuesday's final.

"The result of any attack would be traumatic and tragic and this would move our world into a very, very shaky situation."

SERGEI SUTYRIN, head of the department of world economy at St. Petersburg State University, on the United States' likely attack on Syria before the two-day G20 summit.

"The aim of the United States is not to protect human rights ... but to destroy the front of resistance (against Israel). We will support Syria to the end."

QASSEM SOLEIMANI, Iranian Quds Force Commander on possible US-led military strikes against Syria.



"If there is evidence that chemical weapons were used, and by the regular army ... then this

evidence must be presented to the UN Security Council. And it must be convincing."

In an interview with Channel One television, Russian President VLADIMIR PUTIN said he did not exclude Russia agreeing to a US-led military strike against Syria.

Premier calls for new urbanization strategies

By ZHENG YANGPENG zhenyangpeng@chinadaily.com.cn

China should manage the pace and quality of its inevitable urbanization, Premier Li Keqiang said at a recent conference with the nation's top scholars.

New challenges will certainly arise in urbanizing and modernizing, given the country's population of 1.3 billion, he said. And urbanization is a long process that cannot be completed overnight, he added.

"But we should be guided by ordinary people's hopes, and be active and orderly in pushing the process forward," he said.

Li invited more than a dozen experts from the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the Chinese Academy of Engineering to

Zhongnanhai, the central government complex.

It was an apparent sign of his concern about advancing urbanization, which has emerged among his top policy priorities since he took office.

A medium- to long-term urbanization outline is expected to be announced after the 18th CPC Central Committee's third plenary session in November.

Chinese Academy of Engineering experts presented Li the results of interviews and questionnaires with young migrant workers.

The overwhelming majority of these people, born in the 1980s or '90s, are unwilling to return to their hometowns to farm. They want to remain in cities and become "real urbanites".

But most have not yet enjoyed

52.6 percent

of China's population spent at least half their time in cities last year.

equal access to social security, education and housing compared with people with urban hukou (household registration).

Although 52.6 percent of the country's population spent at least half their time living in cities in 2012, only 35 percent had urban hukou.

Upon hearing the presentation, Li said urbanization's new style should be "humanity-centered". "Quality" is the key and "reform" should be the impetus, he said.

Chinese Academy of Engineer-

ing academician Zhu Gaofeng said urbanization should focus on employment. Urbanization without full employment could produce "ghost towns" and slums.

Chinese Academy of Sciences scholar Lu Dadao said that, as China's industrial structure upgrades, its technology advances and its labor costs rise, enterprises will reduce their workplace labor intensity. Consequently, China must advance economic growth to retain the employment rate by creating new jobs. This also suggests it is better to avoid an overly aggressive urbanization rate target.

Li responded by saying enhancing industry improves cities, and only industry can create sufficient jobs.

Foremost concerns include boosting service sectors, and inte-

grating industrialization, informatization and agricultural modernization, Li said.

Chinese Academy of Engineering academicians Qian Yi and Tang Xiaoyan also suggested urbanization must heed environmental and ecological capacities.

Li said energy efficiency and resource conservation should be new urbanization's leading principles.

More than 10 experts spoke during the three-hour conference.

Li summarized by saying that urbanization is "complex" and "systematic", and demands scientific reasoning and careful planning.

He explained the country should identify areas of consensus, such as shantytown redevelopment, as breakthroughs from which other steps can begin.

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