

SPOTLIGHT



China Daily Asia Leadership Roundtable
Belt and Road Networking Reception

Speech from Zhou Li, publisher of China Daily Asia Pacific

Honorable Chief Secretary for Administration Mr Matthew Cheung, honorable consuls-general, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen: Good evening!

Thank you all for joining us today. The coming of the New Year brings a time for renewal of old friendships and forging new ones. It's also a time to embrace the spirit of universal goodwill.

As we all know too well, this is a time of huge uncertainties. In politics, economics, at the corporate level, in matters of forging business ties — as indeed in our relationships with each other — we are often faced with the big question mark. Should one opt for openness or isolation, cooperation or confrontation? The choices we make now will determine the lives we and the younger generations are going to lead in the future.

China's stance is clear in this respect. It was evident at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in October. China believes it is essential to advance peace, development and cooperation between countries, foster a new inclusive form of international relations and build a community with the goal of creating a shared future for mankind.

The Belt and Road Initiative, launched by President Xi Jinping in 2013, is a huge step forward in that direction. President Xi conceived of an economic model that supports much of the world's shared desire for accelerated development. This might sound a bit idealistic but I do believe it's possible to achieve by pooling together our resources and fostering a culture of pursuing shared benefits through collaboration.

Naturally, Hong Kong, with all its talent, expertise, locational advantages and supernetwork across the world, is already a vital link in this international community.

China Daily also has a role in this ambitious enterprise to bring the world closer. Our job is to help add clarity to the understanding of what might look like bumps along



Zhou Li, editorial board member of the China Daily Group and publisher and editor-in-chief of China Daily Asia Pacific.

the road. We look to find common ground and bring these to the attention of our readers.

Our publication, *China Daily Asia Weekly*, now in its seventh year, is already reaching beyond the borders, having become the most widely distributed regional publication in Asia.

Meanwhile, all of us at China Daily Asia Pacific are gearing up to take on the challenges of an increasingly digitalized media age. Last week, in cooperation with our Asia News Network partners, we got right out into the traffic in seven of Asia's most congested cities, during the morning rush hour. The live-streaming, hosted from our Hong Kong studio and featuring expert analysis, drew tens of thousands of viewers over four hours.

Efforts such as these are directed at finding solutions to make our lives a little easier. And one of the ways of doing that is to try and build understanding and trust through dialogue. As China reaches out to the rest of the world, we are happy to provide a platform to foster such dialogues. Today we're not just offering our hands to you but in fact we're ready to welcome you with open arms.

This is the spirit with which we greet you today. You have honored us greatly by your presence here. Let's get to know each other. Enjoy yourselves.
Happy New Year!

Belt and Road to a prosperous 2018

Gathering brings together regional heavyweights including CEOs, other C-suite executives and diplomats to celebrate growing ties the bold initiative has created

By DAVID HO in Hong Kong
For China Daily Asia Weekly

The latest China Daily Asia Leadership Roundtable event — the Belt and Road Networking Reception — united a diverse group of attendees, perhaps reflective of the namesake initiative's broad ripple effect.

"As we all know too well, this is a time of huge uncertainties ... Should one opt for openness or isolation, cooperation or confrontation?" said Zhou Li, editorial board member of the China Daily Group and publisher and editor-in-chief of China Daily Asia Pacific.

China believes in creating a shared future for mankind and the Belt and Road Initiative is a huge step in that direction, he said. Proposed by President Xi Jinping in 2013, the initiative aims to revive ancient Silk Road trading routes.

Consul general at the consulate general of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Abdul Qadir Memon, highlighted the connection aspect of the initiative.

"The Belt and Road Initiative is more than just about building infrastructure, but also realizing President Xi's vision of economic cooperation for all participating countries to realize their full potential," Memon said. "It's a catalyst for bringing about more people and people interaction."

The event, held at the Renaissance Hong Kong Harbour View Hotel on Dec 20, saw consul generals in Hong Kong, CEOs and around 200 C-level senior executives from Fortune Global 500 and China 500 companies, think tanks, academics and media practitioners from public and private sectors across Asia come together under the umbrella of the ambitious Chinese initiative.

As revealed by China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi at the opening of the Symposium on International Developments and China's Diplomacy 2017 earlier this month, China has signed Belt and Road cooperation agreements with 80 countries and organizations, conducted institutionalized cooperation on industrial capacity with more than 30 nations, and built 75 overseas economic and trade cooperation zones in 24 countries under the initiative's framework.

Wang also said Chinese businesses have invested over \$50 billion and created nearly 200,000 local jobs in countries along the Belt and Road route.

It is one thing reading about the initiative's impressive facts and ever growing figures, but it is another hearing about how it has changed the region.



Matthew Cheung Kin-chung (fourth left), Hong Kong's chief secretary for administration, and Zhou Li (far right), editorial board member of the China Daily Group and publisher and editor-in-chief of China Daily Asia Pacific, along with other guests make a toast during the Belt and Road Networking Reception organized by China Daily Asia Leadership Roundtable, which was held in Hong Kong on Dec 20.

PHOTOS BY EDMOND TANG, ROY LIU / CHINA DAILY ASIA WEEKLY



A diverse group of leaders gather to discuss the ambitious Belt and Road Initiative.

Chief Secretary for Administration of the Government of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Matthew Cheung Kin-chung spoke of how another major project — the Greater Bay Area initiative — feeds into the Belt and Road.

He highlighted how related infrastructure, like the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link, and the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Boundary Crossing Point, will open up opportunities by facilitating flow between

the SAR and the mainland. "Hong Kong should seize the opportunities provided by the Belt and Road through the Greater Bay Area," Cheung said.

Tengku Dato' Sirajuzzaman bin Tengku Mohamed Ariffin, consul general at the Consulate General of Malaysia in the Hong Kong SAR, told *China Daily* the initiative has been instrumental in getting Association of Southeast Asian Nations infrastructure projects up and running. "The initiative has blown some extra



Guests receive a copy of Xi Jinping: *The Governance of China* at the Belt and Road Networking Reception.

wind in the sails for projects like the high-speed rail from Singapore to Kunming (in Southwest China's Yunnan province), particularly in the areas of funding and expertise," he said.

He added that Malaysia could and wants to play a role in connecting 15 Islamic countries along the Belt and Road through Islamic finance and halal food.

Even far flung allies chimed in with their say. "New Zealand was the first Western country to sign a Belt and Road agree-

ment," said David Whitwam, chairman of the New Zealand Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong.

He believes that New Zealand, although far away from the immediate geographic circle, will play a role in the Belt and Road, particularly with regard to the food supply chain in the countries involved in the project.

Nicolas de Loisy, president of Supply Chain Management Outsourcing, said the Belt and Road has been particularly helpful in opening up big project opportunities for corpora-

tions. His Hong Kong-based logistics company counts two big projects related to the initiative under its own belt.

The role of media outlets like *China Daily Asia Weekly*, which celebrated its seventh anniversary at the event, was also spoken highly of in terms of promoting the initiative.

"The media has been very important in spotlighting our efforts in the race to build infrastructure," said Sirajuzzaman.

"Media coverage highlights important considerations for these projects," he added.

One such example would be the recent *China Daily* Red Letter Project, which was a live stream on Facebook that highlighted road congestion at its worst in seven Asian metropolises.

"In an increasingly digitalized media age, we brought the issue of traffic congestion into the consideration of over 10,000 viewers through that experimental live stream project," said Zhou.

The four-and-a-half-hour long broadcast also attracted input from viewers across the region, who may well have been stuck in traffic as they tuned in.

"What *China Daily* hopes is to provide a platform for such dialogue, especially as the Belt and Road grows," Zhou added.

Well-developed infrastructure is a critical factor that enables Hong Kong to capture the opportunities arising from the Belt and Road Initiative in the Greater Bay Area development and sustain our economic growth and strength. It will also enhance Hong Kong's connectivity with the mainland by boosting exchanges between Hong Kong and major mainland cities that will create complementary advantages. Hong Kong is often described as having the best of both worlds under the "one country, two systems" principle. Under "one country", we receive preferential treatment and investment facilitation. Under "two systems", we are able to maintain our way of life and the rule of law here.



Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, Chief Secretary for Administration, the Government of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

The Belt and Road Initiative will create an environment for the region to realize its true economic and trade potential and usher in a new era of progress and development. By developing the land and maritime linkages, the Belt and Road Initiative will be a catalyst to help bring more people-to-people interaction which, we believe, is essential for global peace and stability. Pakistan and China have a very special relationship, with both countries working together for regional economic development, peace and stability.



Abdul Qadir Memon, Consul General, Consulate General of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in Hong Kong



Tengku Dato' Sirajuzzaman bin Tengku Mohamed Ariffin, Consul General, Consulate General of Malaysia in Hong Kong

The China-ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Free Trade Agreement was followed by the Hong Kong-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement, which was signed during the recent ASEAN Summit in Manila. This is testimony to the fruitful bilateral relations between Hong Kong and Malaysia.