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Belt and Road needs Media Corridor

A shared information platform would serve the countries linked by the initiative and help generate positive synergy

When Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Pakistan in 2015 and delivered a speech at the parliament entitled Building a China-Pakistan Community of Shared Destiny to Pursue Closer Win-Win Cooperation, the entire nation gave him a standing ovation. In his memorable speech, he spoke vehemently about the old and tested friendship between the two countries and how it is meant to get stronger in the years to come.

Hence, with the advent of the Belt and Road Initiative, we not only know more about these economic corridors but are also



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more aware of the benefits the Belt and Road will bring to the countries it travels through. These include integrated networks designed to stimulate development, which are especially common in

Asia and Africa respectively.

With the Belt and Road Initiative, China is actually helping to reshape the world. The plan, proposed by Xi in 2013, aims to boost Asia's connectivity with Europe and Africa with a trade and infrastructure network.

Just a few years back, Gwadar was a forgotten land in the Balochistan province of Pakistan, and now it is the center of the Belt and Road Initiative.

It has been estimated that soon this place will be a new tourist destination, with hotels, a super-highway and high-speed rail. Soon it will be developed into a city of around 2 million people, with facilities and luxuries unknown to the land as of now.

Gwadar carries the vision of opening-up and of cooperation between the two countries by improving the region's infrastructure, and putting in place a secure and efficient network of land, sea and air passages.

This will help lift connectivity to a higher level — further enhancing trade and investment facilitation and establishing a network of free trade areas that meet high standards, to maintain closer economic ties and deepen political trust.

What we need to understand is that belts and corridors do not just mean financial cooperation but also collaboration in education, health, culture, arts and literature, sports,



President Xi Jinping addressing Pakistan's parliament in Islamabad on April 21, 2015. Xi's speech on win-win cooperation resonated throughout Pakistan.

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and so on.

By connecting different civilizations through a belt, we will replace discord and differences with mutual acceptance, understanding and respect for coexistence.

In May 2017, President Xi took it a step further in his address at the opening ceremony of the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation in Beijing. He spoke at length about the five types of connections we should be focusing on, to help countries and nations come together and benefit from each other's strengths and help each other in their weaknesses.

First and foremost is peace, which is the core of world development. In Pakistan, we constantly seek support from our friendly nations to help us maintain peace within and on our borders. No nations can prosper in times of turmoil, hence the Belt and Road Initiative needs peaceful and stable environments to flourish.

With peace and cooperation comes prosperity. With infrastructure connectivity, thriving industries, an inter-region logistics network, finances running smoothly, and development in full swing, prosperity does not remain a far-fetched dream.

The third rule of a successful belt is openness. The reason for organi-

zations is that people cannot work in isolation. One needs to open up to like-minded people, share ideas, learn from each other, and grow economically as well as socially.

Then comes the most important factor in development — innovation. With the world moving at the speed of light and advancements in technology keeping our brains charged up at all times, innovation is, and should be, the key to moving forward.

After checking the boxes for all types of connections, we should remember that people form the crux of every process, and development is not possible without connecting different civilizations and creating an atmosphere of mutual love, respect and acceptance.

These five factors gave a perfect example of collaborative development. But there is one more idea that needs to be implemented so that the above five factors can function smoothly and in collaboration — a Media Corridor.

Where government and corporate support is needed for trade, media is the driving force behind the connectivity of people. Media can provide the right projection of these corridors in front of the world, something that, to date, we have not really focused on.

Therefore, to put everything into

place and make use of this initiative effectively, a Media Corridor should be established that can serve as a meaningful platform for all the respective countries being linked through the Belt and Road Initiative. It should work toward bringing together and connecting the media in the Belt and Road countries.

To explain and clarify what the Belt and Road Initiative is actually about, we need our media to talk about the development within the region.

In order to strengthen mutual assistance and create a positive synergy between all countries, there should be a good tradition of frequent high-level visits and meetings, planning on major strategic issues, and support for each other's core interests and major concerns.

Secondly, with the advent of a Media Corridor, interests of respective countries can be shared that will lead to achieving common development.

It can serve as a great platform for future policies and decisions. Countries utilizing this corridor can work together in times of crisis and even jointly meet security challenges.

Moreover, we should focus on organizing a series of forums addressing the myths, issues and

opportunities of the Belt and Road Initiative and how common men of the entire region will benefit from it.

This media forum should be held in different countries on the belt, inviting academicians and experts from various fields to give their professional analysis on the Belt and Road Initiative and its results.

With the help of this corridor we will be able to address the commonalities instead of differences between the countries, the expertise of each country being utilized by the others for greater good, the economic boom that will help the entire region grow, and the increased human interaction that will bring harmony among different cultures.

Although the concept of the Belt and Road Initiative seems fresh, the concept of the Silk Road is rooted in history. Just as the Silk Route opened the world to China, and China to the world, the Media Corridor will go a long way in creating the right awareness about the benefits that the Belt and Road Initiative offers to the world.

It is now just a matter of time.

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