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BELT AND ROAD

BRI driving world growth, connectivity, analysts say

The Belt and Road Initiative is expected to strengthen connectivity, boost economies and raise people's living standards in countries and regions that are involved in the initiative, analysts from different countries said.

The initiative, first proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013, aims to build stronger links among nations across the globe.

Fabienne Bossuyt, assistant professor at Ghent University in Belgium, said the influence of the initiative will be clear in the field of

connectivity in Central Asia and Europe, especially in the Balkans and in central and eastern parts of Europe.

In Central Asia, the BRI's influence also is strong in local transport infrastructure. For one, China is investing in the improvement of local roads, which is having direct economic effects and helping to increase living standards, she said.

"These projects, for the large part, do have the capability to raise living standards, to boost economies, to do the kinds of things that large-scale international de-

velopment does," she said.

Global trade credit insurance company Euler Hermes said in a recent research report that trade in merchandise between China and other countries involved in the initiative will add \$117 billion to global trade and contribute 0.3 percentage point to global trade growth this year. It would also add 0.1 percentage point to global GDP, it said.

The report said China's exports to BRI partners may increase by \$56 billion in 2019, with top export destinations including South

Korea, members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and Russia.

The BRI will also increase China's investments overseas, and markets that have benefited the most are mainly those located in Asia and Europe, with Pakistan, Malaysia and Russia being major beneficiaries, it said.

Amitendu Palit, senior research fellow and research lead on trade and economic policy at the Institute of South Asian Studies in the National University of Singapore, said that given the scope and the number of

countries involved, the BRI has the potential to establish a new global economic center of gravity in the region with its huge cross-border physical and digital infrastructure projects.

"The BRI proposes a multicountry connectivity plan with various infrastructure projects already underway," he said. He added that other connectivity initiatives in this region should work to complement rather than compete against the BRI.

By Chen Yingqun (Compiled from Chinadaily)

CONNECTIVITY

The construction of China-Laos Railway progressing smoothly

At the China-Laos Railway construction site which is about 30 kilometers from Vientiane, as a giant bridge erecting machine moving slowly, a 32-meter-long simply supported T beam of over 140 tons was being placed on the piers of the Nanko River Great Bridge.

Nanko River Bridge is 7506 meters long. It will be the longest bridge in Laos. The construction started on February 9 at a speed of building two bridge holes daily on average. The whole bridge will be completed by the end of May.

Laos is a mountainous country. Among the total mileage of the China-Laos railway, the bridge accounts for 62 kilometers and the tunnel has 198 kilometers. The two add up, accounting for 62.7% of the total mileage. Local people say, "The China-Laos Railway is not being paved but bridged and dug out."

"The 9020 meters of Konglang Village Tunnel, the 9310 meters of Nake Village Tunnel, the 1651 meters of Bannahan Great Bridge on Mekong River, and 1459 meters of Lanprapang Great Bridge on Mekong River..." Song Zongbo, vice director of the



A bridge-building crane works on the China-Laos Railway.

Engineering Department of China-Laos Railway Company Ltd., gave the reporter a list of key projects of the China-Laos Railway. Since the construction of the China-Laos Railway began, many projects have made the history of Laos.

The railway line, which has a designed speed of 160 kilometers per hour, uses Chinese technical standards and equipment. The railway holds the key to implementing Laos' national developmental strategy.

Even at the present stage, railway construction has directly driven the country's development of its building materials, electricity, agriculture,

animal husbandry, service industry, logistics and other sectors.

According to incomplete statistics, construction of the railway has cumulatively created more than 32,000 jobs for Laotian people, and currently 4,300 Laotian employees are on the job.

2019 will be a decisive year for the China-Laos Railway construction. Over 17,000 Chinese and Lao builders work diligently in Lao forest and mountains. "We are building the China-Laos Railway from a high starting point with high standard and high quality to ensure its opening to traffic in 2021," Song said confidently. (Comprehensive report)

STORY

Impressions of Chinese Lunar New Year

In recent years, Chinese Lunar New Year is getting more and more attention from the world. More and more foreigners join in celebrating Chinese Spring Festival and that has made the Chinese traditional festival more international.

Babu, 46 years old Indian came to China in 2011 for the first time and has spent every Spring Festival in China since then. Before Spring Festival comes, he would take his wife and daughter to shopping, post Spring Festival couplets and visit the market and temple fair with his colleagues. During the Festival, he also pays visits to his colleagues and drives his wife and daughter to the surrounding area.

"I like the atmosphere very much. It is very beautiful everywhere as there are full of lights and everyone is hospitality. We also watch folk performances such as dragon and lion dance and Yangko," said Babu with a smile.

"The Chinese New Year is very lively. As a foreigner, I can feel it." The 22-year-old Thai girl came from Bangkok. Two years ago she came to Beijing Language University to study Chinese. She saw snow for the first time in Beijing and that also drew her close to the taste of Chinese New Year. In her opinion, staying up all night on the New Year's Eve and eating dumplings are very interesting. China and Thailand are neighbors. Many Thai people know some customs for Spring Festival. "If ask us what we are interested in most, the answer is definitely the luck money in a red bag. Thai people like this kind of surprising joy."

Today, the Spring Festival has already become a symbol of China. Whether you are a Chinese or not, whether you are in China or not, you can feel the unique taste of China during the Chinese New Year. (Comprehensive report)

REMARKABLE 70 YEARS



The Engel coefficient has fallen sharply in 70 years development

[Editor's note] 2019 is the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China and also the key year for building a well-off society. The column "remarkable 70 years" will show you the earth-shaking changes that have taken place in China over the past 70 years.

Since the founding of China in 1949, the living standards of Chinese people have greatly improved. The Engel coefficient has fallen sharply, and the consumption level and consumption structure of residents have improved significantly. Now, China has become the second largest economy in the world from a country that is poor and weak, and its historical leap of comprehensive national strength is eye-catching in the world.

Picture shows the busy buying in China's Yiwu of Zhejiang province. By Xinhua

TRAVEL

34.64 million tourists visited Yunnan in 7 days

Around 34.64 million people visited Yunnan during the just passed seven-day Spring Festival holiday, according to statistics released by Yunnan Provincial Holiday Travel Data-collecting Center. It is a 20.22% increase on a year-on-year basis.

During the holiday, the Fuxian Lake, the Stone Forest, Luoping Jiulong Waterfall, Lijiang Yulong Snow Mountain, Yunnan National-

ities' Village are among the top five scenic spots mostly visited by tourists.

The theme exhibition held by Yunnan Provincial Museum, the rice noodle festival in Yuxi, the lantern show in Dali, the lion and dragon dance in Heshun Town of Tengchong, the rural cultural activity in Yingjiang County, the cultural carnival in Xishuangbanna offered tourists special experiences.

As Yunnan is a Chinese province which are adjacent to South and Southeast Asian countries, the cross-border travel were also booming. "We launched long and short travel routes to Vietnam. And these products were very popular among tourists," said Tao Ying, market manager of Hekou International Travel Agency. According to Kunming Customs, from February 4th to 6th, 16,723 people

were checked crossing the China-Vietnam border via the Hekou landport.

The "Travel in Yunnan" app created new smart tourism experiences for tourists. "I entered the scenic spot via facial recognition. It's really amazing. The smart toilet and the digital guide are also very good. I hope the functions can be applied to more spots," said Mr. Wang from east China's Jiangsu Province. (www.yunnan.cn)

IN PICS



In early spring, Lijiang Jade and Dragon Snow Mountain Blue Moon Valley attracts visitors from all over the world with its magnificent snow-capped mountains, blue lakes and beautiful canyon scenery. Tourists are taking pictures in the Blue Moon Valley of Jade and Dragon Snow Mountain in Lijiang. Photo by Yang Zongyou of Xinhua News Agency

ECONOMY

Yunnan's GDP increases by 8.9% in 2018

According to the government work report delivered by Yunnan Provincial Governor Ruan Chengfa in the 2nd session of the 13th Yunnan Provincial People's Congress, Yunnan's GDP reached about 1.79 trillion yuan in 2018, growing by 8.9% year on year. 15 counties in the province were removed from the impoverished list. The number of visitors coming to Yunnan grew by 20% year on

year and the gross tourism revenue of the province increased by 22%.

Accordingly, Yunnan's foreign trade volume in 2018 amounted to 197.3 billion yuan, a year-on-year increase of 24.7%. The trade between Yunnan and the Belt and Road countries recorded a 30.3% growth in 2018, with a total value of 133.16 billion yuan.

Yunnan mainly exported produce, electromechanical

products, fertilizers and labor-intensive products, while importing crude oil, natural gas, metal minerals, sulfur and others.

For 2019, Yunnan aims to achieve a GDP increase of around 8.5%, with the fixed asset investment growing by 12%. A total of 1.3 million impoverished residents in the rural areas will be raised out of poverty.

(Yunnan Daily and Xinhua)

FOCUS

Travel in Yunnan APP tops in four aspects

During the Spring Festival, Travel in Yunnan APP users exceed 2 million. Travel in Yunnan APP was launched online last

October 1, now it ranks the top of China in four aspects.

First, it is the largest live broadcast platform for the scenic spots in China

by accessing live stream 1400 to broadcast the most beautiful Yunnan. Second, it is the most comprehensive platform with geographical information for scenic spots. It has 142 geographical location information and hand-painted maps of scenic spots that rated as 3A National Tourist Attraction or above. Third, it is a platform providing the most tour guide services at 199 scenic spots. The navigation voice can also be personalized on the interface to choose Xiaoyun or Xiaonan. Fourth, it is the fastest platform for handling travel complaints. The 24-hour complaint settlement rates 99% with an average settle-

ment time of 7 hours, which used to be 7 days. Now, the download volume of Travel in Yunnan with a phone has reached 1.67 million and the activation of 11 small programs exceed 14 million.

During the Spring Festival, 39578 new users downloaded Travel in Yunnan APP and its applet served more than 2 million times. Live viewing and smart navigation are especially popular among tourists.

"This is my first time to see face scan at a scenic spot. It is really convenient." Mr. Huang, a tourist from Fujian Province, praised his trip in Yunnan and hoped that smart tourism could be spread to

more places. Now, Travel in Yunnan APP has realized ticket online-purchasing of A-level scenic spots in the province. All the 126 A-level scenic spots in Yunnan support scanning admission and 91 3A or above scenic spots in the province can be accessed in one second by face scan. Over 20 Yunnan products were launched at the APP during the Spring Festival. In January, the online sale increased by 339% from the previous month. Ham, grains and tea cream were popular products.

According to statistics, Travel in Yunnan APP has been installed for 1.67 million times by February 10. By YDPG



Visitors are dazzled by activities in Yunnan Nationalities Village. Photo by YDPG



In 3 days, 500,000 top roses, tulips and other flowers from Yunnan's thousand acres of flower bases were sold out on Taobao Juhuasuan. High quality flowers will be selling on Juhuasuan continuously. A large-scale direct supply model will be started for selling Yunnan flowers. Photo reported by Chen Wenzhong