

Premiere Era



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Outstanding transport system springboard for growth



The capital of Sichuan province, Chengdu, is helping to spearhead increased trade with countries involved in the Belt and Road Initiative through its advanced and integrated transport system, further advancing the opening-up of western China, officials said.

On Aug 2, a seemingly routine but nonetheless important China-Europe freight train, loaded with 1,742 metric tons of timber from Russia, arrived at Suifenhe city on the border with Russia. Completing clearance procedures at Suifenhe customs, the train quietly pushed on to Chengdu station.

"Before the China-Europe train route came into operation, timber going to Chengdu mostly came by ship, which would take over 30 days a trip," said Zheng Shuangli, a director of Chengdu International Rail Port Investment and Development Group.

"Now, though, the cargo comes to Chengdu by regular railway container train, saving about half the travel time and cutting the import costs of companies by a lot," Zheng said.

According to Zheng, since June the freight train between Chengdu and Moscow does six runs a month, three times the previous number. More importantly, the railcars are fully loaded with goods all the time.



Chengdu was included in the rail network initiated by the China-Europe freight train service five years ago. The cross-border network had linked 14 Chinese cities and 16 foreign cities by the end of July.

The Chengdu International Railway Port, part of the China (Sichuan) Pilot Free Trade Zone, is the backbone of the region's plan to establish a global logistics system and booming trade with countries along the route of the Belt and Road Initiative.

According to a global metropolis monitoring report issued earlier this year by Washington-based think tank the Brookings Institution Chengdu ranked third among 300 listed global cities because of its outstanding performance in GDP per capita growth and its rising employment growth rate in recent years.

Zhoushan builds hub for river-ocean cargo



For 53-year-old Pan Guohua, his job is similar to the sport of diving: Both require a perfectly clean entry.

But for Pan, it is definitely tougher. He needs to direct a 400,000-metric-ton giant vessel to dock at a speed no faster than 3 centimeters per second. "This poses a tough challenge for port pilots like us," said Pan, a senior pilot at Ningbo Zhoushan Port.

Last year, Ningbo Zhoushan Port group, which manages all the ports in Zhejiang province, handled more than 1 billion metric tons of cargo.

Zhoushan Port in eastern Zhejiang has been focusing on constructing a hub to connect ocean and river transportation in a bid to fully tap the potential of the Yangtze River watercourse.

"One of the keys to linking transportation in the East China Sea with the Yangtze River is building a vessel that can sail both on the ocean and in the river," said Chen Wei, deputy director of Zhejiang Ocean Port Development Commission.



The Zhoushan River-Ocean Combined Transportation Service Center was approved by the State Council in April 2016. Covering the Zhoushan Islands New Area and parts of neighboring Ningbo, it encompasses a land area of 2,500 square kilometers, and a sea area of 21,000 sq km.

The Zhejiang Ocean Port Development Commission, which oversees the building of the center, said that in 2020 a total of 350 million tons of cargo are expected to be handled by ocean-river transportation, with the transaction volume of bulk commodities such as iron ore and soybeans doubling from 2017 to 1.14 trillion yuan (\$166 billion).



Chinese vessel's new voyage along ancient Silk Road

Waves gently pat the hull of COSCO Netherlands, a giant merchant vessel which is sailing on the Indian Ocean towards Greece and plans to finally reach Valencia, Spain on Aug. 31.

It is the first time for the multifunctional vessel, which is owned by China COSCO Shipping Corporation Limited, to take this route.

In November 2013, one month after China proposed the Belt and Road Initiative, the manufacturing of COSCO Netherlands was completed at a Chinese ship engineering company's factory along the Yangtze River.



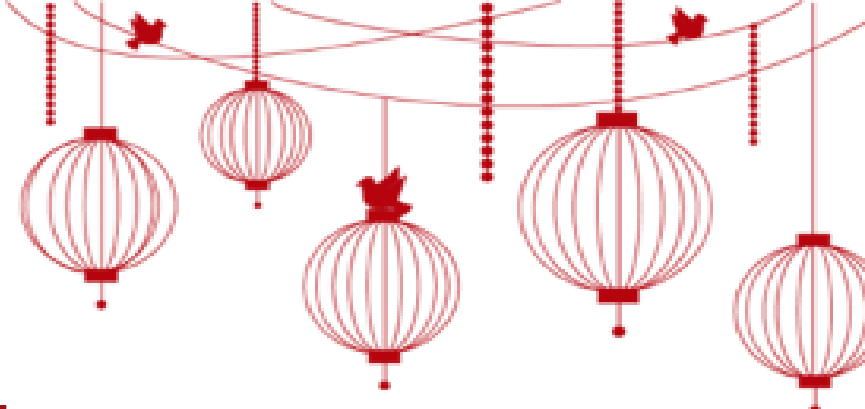
As the fifth anniversary of the Belt and Road Initiative approaches, the nearly-five-year-old COSCO Netherlands departed from Yangshan Deep Water Port in Shanghai at the end of July, starting its new voyage from the East to the Mediterranean.

Today, as hundreds of container freighters like COSCO Netherlands make oceangoing voyages along routes that largely overlap the ancient Maritime Silk Road, an even stronger trade and infrastructure network is being built between countries and regions.

By promoting cooperation and mutual learning under the Belt and Road Initiative, China hopes to share development opportunities, revive the world economy and cement people-to-people exchanges.

Ocean waves have left some rust on the hull of COSCO Netherlands. The giant ship will be examined and repaired after this new voyage. In the near future, it will keep sailing among different continents and cultures, linking the world more closely.

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