

《CCTV9英语新闻：中国驻捷克大使访谈》

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Interview with Chinese ambassador to Czech Republic

We also had a chance to sit down with the Chinese ambassador to the Czech Republic, Ma Keqing. She believes that relations between the two countries are at one of their best times in history. And President Xi Jinping's visit will surely add to that.

A state visit at the invitation of President Milos Zeman.

"It is the first time for a Chinese President to visit Czech Republic since the two countries established diplomatic ties 67 years ago. We believe that this is a historic visit, and will play an important role in the future development of bilateral ties. We also notice that this is also President Xi's first visit to a Central-Eastern European country. It shows that we value this area," Ma said.

The Czech Republic, well-positioned in Central Europe, has witnessed stronger economic and trade relations with China in recent years. China is now the second largest trading partner for the Czech Republic, while the country is China's second largest trading partner in the Central-Eastern European country.

Last year saw the first direct flight route between the two countries, and a new Bank of China branch opening in Prague.

"The Czech Republic has two advantages, one is its location. It is in the middle of Europe, and is easily connected to other countries, that makes the logistics convenient. The second advantage is that the country has a strong industrial capacity, like cars, electronic manufacturing and telecommunication," Ma said.

Cultural exchange is another area in which the two countries have achieved great outcomes. The Czech Republic now has a government-sponsored hospital featuring Traditional Chinese Medicine.

And last year, the two signed a contract to jointly produce an animation series "Panda and Little Mole". Both the Chinese and Czech editions of the series have completed production.

"The two countries are expected to enhance their bilateral ties. And they will sign a series of cooperation deals, including sectors such as civil aviation, nuclear power, tourism and infrastructure. It will be a very fruitful visit," Ma said.

Moreover, the Belt and Road Initiative is of strategic importance for both China and Europe. As the Czech Republic draws closer to China, it may start to strive to play the role of China's new bridge to Europe. •

