

《Belt & Road Initiative ep1: Gansu seeks economic revival》

CCTV is running a special series on the Belt and Road Initiative. Today, we start with Gansu. In ancient times, Gansu Province was a prosperous hub that connected China to the West via the Silk Road. Although these days its fortunes may have taken a downturn, Gansu has hoped that a modern day version of the Silk Road will lead to a revival in its fortunes.

Thousands of years ago, merchants and pilgrims from the East and West traveled through this arid region. They stopped in its towns to exchange goods, beliefs and ideas. Gansu Province was at the heart of a flourishing trade around the ancient Silk Road's northern route, linking China to central Asia and Europe. A museum in the provincial capital, Lanzhou, features some artifacts from the trade route's heyday.

"There are over 600 cultural relics here, which demonstrate the civilization that prospered along the ancient Silk Road. There is evidence of economic, cultural, political, and military exchanges," Head of Gansu Museum E Jun said.

The province's diverse culture and foreign influences, including a religion that entered China from overseas, reflects a country opening up to the world. It's a history Gansu is now seeking to repeat as China revives the Silk Road through the One Belt, One Road initiative.

"Gansu Province has a geographical advantage because it lies between central and western Asia, as well as central and eastern Europe. Because of its location, it has been a very popular hub for the exchange of different cultures since ancient times," Deputy head of Commerce Department of Gansu Province Zhang Shi'en said.

But Gansu isn't a wealthy area with both gross domestic product and GDP per capita lagging behind other provinces. Now Gansu hopes the Silk Road Economic Belt will turn things around for its economy. The local government has released a blueprint that lays down plans for better infrastructure and transportation links to other countries along the belt.

"We have mapped out development plans for the cities along the Silk Road. It's not only about improving transportation conditions, but also boosting industry in those cities by enhancing connectivity. Originally we had a place focused on exporting raw materials, but now we are placing more emphasis on final products like cloth and home appliances. This change requires us to make adjustments in our economic structure," Zhang said.

Banking on its rich history, Gansu is set come out as a hub on the new Silk Road with great fanfare. In the city of Dunhuang, work goes on round the clock for a 125,000-square-meter complex that will host the first Silk Road expo this year. The event will gather countries along the Silk Road Economic Belt.

"We will stage daily shows in our grand theater. There will be large conference rooms and banquet halls that can be used to host international conferences and commercial events. The exhibition hall will function as a tourist center to provide service to visitors," General manager of China Construction 8th Engineering Division Yang Yong said.

The 3 billion-yuan or almost half a billion-US dollar project will host Silk Road expos every year.

This complex will be completed in July, two months ahead of the Silk Road International Cultural Expo. In September, thousands of visitors from different countries will gather here for a showcase of the Silk Road's history as its revival in the 21st century gets into full swing.

