《习近平主席呼吁共建“一带一路”》

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China and Uzbekistan have elevated ties to a comprehensive strategic partnership. The decision comes after talks between Chinese president Xi Jinping and his Uzbek counterpart, Islam Karimov, in the capital Tashkent. Both leaders also agreed to jointly promote the Belt and Road Initiative.

For three years in a row, China has been Uzbekistan’s second largest trading partner and biggest source of investment. In 2015, China’s trade with countries along the route surpassed U.S.$1 trillion, accounting for a quarter of its total foreign trade.

As an important part of the “Belt and Road” initiative, Xi and his Uzbek counterpart, Islam Karimov, inaugurated a railway tunnel in Uzbekistan Wednesday.

Built by China Railway Tunnel Group, the tunnel measuring 19 kilometers is the longest in Central Asia. It cuts through Qurama Mountains, saving passengers plenty of time. The tunnel is part of a railway line connecting the capital city Tashkent and the eastern city of Namangan.

Xi said land transport connectivity is an important aspect of the Belt and Road Initiative, and said China is willing to help with Uzbekistan’s infrastructure construction. Karimov said the project greatly benefits the Uzbek people and expressed gratitude for China’s assistance.

China and Uzbekistan have always shared a close partnership. And after holding talks this time round, the two leaders announced a higher level of political relations. They said both countries should connect development strategies and expand cooperation in areas of production capacity, infrastructure construction, energy and agriculture.

They also vowed to combat terrorism, separatism and extremism, and to support each other in territorial and security issues.

While in Uzbekistan, Xi will attend the 16th Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit. Both leaders agreed to boost the development of the group.