

《捷克总统赞一带一路》

Milos Zeman, president of the Czech Republic, has hailed the Belt and Road Initiative as the greatest infrastructure project in history and said he is looking forward to building greater connectivity between China and his country.

"I will attend the forum, and the topic I am most concerned with is the Belt and Road, the world's largest initiative for infrastructure construction," Zeman said in an exclusive interview with China Daily on Monday.

He was speaking ahead of his departure for Beijing, where he will participate in the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, which will be held in Beijing on Sunday and Monday.

"I am glad to see that the Belt and Road Initiative, which connects China and Europe, also includes the Czech Republic," he said.

Zeman, whose visit to China will be his third since assuming the presidency in 2013, will join 27 heads of state and government leaders, more than 80 leaders of international organizations and more than 1,000 other participants.

A strong supporter of the initiative, which was proposed by President Xi Jinping in 2013, Zeman has met Xi six times in the past three years.

China and the Czech Republic signed a memorandum of understanding on the initiative in November 2015.

The countries upgraded their relationship to a strategic partnership last year, when Xi became the first Chinese president to visit the Czech Republic.

During talks with Xi during the Chinese president's visit, Zeman expressed the hope that his country will become China's gateway to the European Union and a hub for transportation and finance in China-EU trade.

The Czech Republic is a member of the "16+1" group, formed by 16 Central and Eastern European countries and China.

The concept is China's mechanism for engaging with Central and Eastern Europe, and with the promotion of the Belt and Road Initiative.

As a result, Zeman expects to see further developments, especially in infrastructure, transportation and the bilateral exchange of goods and services.

He will witness the signing of a number of agreements during his visit to China.

He added that he was particularly delighted about a project to train a group of Chinese pilots in the Czech Republic, despite the relatively small scale of the undertaking.

Zeman is keen to see more cooperation in aviation between the two countries.

He said opening more air routes will improve people-to-people exchanges between China and the Czech Republic, while cooperation in the rail sector will involve greater transportation of freight.

He pointed out that the number of Chinese visiting the Czech Republic has almost doubled in the past year, mainly thanks to the Belt and Road Initiative and the upgrading of bilateral relations after Xi's visit.

