

Central Asia becomes the main transport hub between East Asia and Europe



The unprecedented results of the next Bishkek summit of the heads of state of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan will undoubtedly go down in the history of relations between the two fraternal peoples. The fruitful talks held in a sincere, open and trusting atmosphere are of great interest, since as a result of them specific agreements were reached to further strengthen friendship and good neighborliness between our countries.

In this vein, the statements of the leaders of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan on the need to intensify efforts to build the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway, which can become a flagship project under the One Belt, One Road initiative, attract special attention.

In addition, on the eve of the visit of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, representatives of the relevant ministries and departments of the two countries announced the signing of a step-by-step road map for its implementation.

A powerful impetus to the promotion of this project, of course, was the signing of the Cooperation Agreement on the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway construction project during the SCO summit in Samarkand on September 16, 2022.

A month later, leading design institutes in China began developing feasibility studies for the construction of the railway, which are scheduled to be completed by the first half of 2023.

Speaking about the advantages of the highway under construction, you should pay attention to the following:

First, the construction of the railway will make it possible to integrate the transport and logistics infrastructure of Central Asia into the global one, as well as expand the economic opportunities of our states by joining maritime trading networks. In this vein, noteworthy is the statement by the head of the

Cabinet of Ministers of Kyrgyzstan A. Japarov that during the implementation of the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway project, Central Asia will become the southern branch of the Eurasian continental bridge and open access to the markets of East, West Asia and the Middle East.

At the same time, this highway is expected to significantly reduce the length of the route from East Asia to Europe (by 900 km), as well as the delivery time of goods (by 7-8 days).

It should also be noted that as a result of the construction of the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway, the countries of the region can gain access to the markets of Southeast Asia by joining the trans-Afghan transport corridor Termez - Mazar-i-Sharif - Kabul - Peshawar. This will turn the region into one of the important links in the East-West international transport corridor, as well as increase the possibilities of the North-South international transport corridor.

Achieving these goals will allow the region to become not only a transit corridor, but also act as a production and logistics hub by increasing the export potential of the entire Central Asian region. At the same time, the transportation of goods by rail will provide the regional market with the necessary goods, as well as accelerate the flow of necessary technologies to modernize the economy of the Central Asian countries.

Second, it is worth emphasizing that the implementation of the railway project will provide Kyrgyzstan with the following opportunities. In particular: 1) additional 20 thousand jobs will be created; 2) the volume of transported goods will increase to 15 million tons per year with revenues of US\$200 million; 3) Kyrgyzstan will have the opportunity to develop minerals deposited along the route of the planned railway (Sandyk aluminum deposits, Jetim-Too iron deposits, etc.); 4) the development of related sectors of the economy, which will increase the volume of the state budget and ensure the socio-economic stability of the fraternal state.

Third, for Uzbekistan, in turn, the construction of the railway will increase its transit potential, as well as in the future, to become one of the important participants in the intercontinental transport corridor, which will provide the shortest land route from Asia to Europe, as well as expand the geography of trade with the countries of East Asia and Europe.

In general, the results of the state visit of Shavkat Mirziyoyev to Bishkek demonstrated the unified position of the heads of states participating in the railway construction project, which, in turn, indicates the strong political will of the leaders of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan in the development of regional and interregional cooperation.

In conclusion, it should be noted that the implementation of the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway project will provide all countries of the Central Asian region with access to the markets of key players in the vast Eurasian continent, as well as open up opportunities for achieving sustainable economic growth and prosperity in Central Asia.

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