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## CHINA'S XI TO BOOST BILATERAL TIES WITH KAZAKHSTAN DURING VISIT

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A senior Chinese diplomat said on Monday that President Xi Jinping's visit to Kazakhstan this week will help to advance bilateral ties and the development of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

From June 7 to 10, Xi will pay a state visit to Kazakhstan, attend the 17th meeting of the SCO Council of Heads of State and the opening ceremony of the World Expo in Astana.

Assistant Foreign Minister Li Huilai said at a press conference that the visit is Xi's first visit abroad since the Belt and Road Forum on International Cooperation held in mid-May and one of China's major diplomatic activities for Kazakhstan and Eurasia this year.

The visit will help further improve the relationship between China and Kazakhstan as well as Eurasian countries and forge ahead the healthy and stable development of the SCO, Li said.

As China's neighbor and a comprehensive strategic partner, Kazakhstan is an important partner on the Belt and Road Initiative and international production capacity cooperation, he said.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between China and Kazakhstan. Describing bilateral ties as at the best in history, Li said this is Xi's third visit to the central Asian country and the 16th meeting with Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

He said the two presidents will exchange views on bilateral ties, alignment of development strategies and cooperation on the Belt and Road Initiative.

They will also sign and issue a joint statement, participate in a video link event on cross-border transportation and witness the signing of a series of deals in the areas of the economy and trade, finance and water conservation, said Li.

Xi's presence at the opening ceremony of Astana World Expo, which bears the theme future energy, not only shows China's full support to Kazakhstan, but also the importance China attaches to new energy, he said.

On the development of the SCO, Li said that with the accession of India and Pakistan, the SCO will cover three-fifths of the Eurasian continent with nearly half the world population, which would make the regional organization the biggest in terms of area and population in the world and further improve its potential for cooperation and representation.

China said last week that India and Pakistan will complete the process of joining the SCO during the Astana summit, the first time for the SCO to expand membership since its founding in 2001.

The SCO now covers China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The accession procedures for India and Pakistan started in 2015.

Li said China will assume the SCO rotating presidency after the Astana summit and will host a summit in 2018.

China will continue to uphold the Shanghai spirit of equal treatment, win-win cooperation and open and inclusive attitudes and advance cooperation in various fields, which will help the development of the SCO benefiting its members and making greater contribution to regional peace and stability, he said.

Tags: bilateral ties, China President Xi Jinping, China's Xi to boost bilateral ties with Kazakhstan during visit, diplomatic ties, Belt and Road Forum on International Cooperation, Kazakhstan, Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)

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