

## Dr Koh Chin Yee: Singaporean can play a vital role in facilitating BRI's projects and initiatives

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In collaboration with National Library Singapore Eye on Asia, Business China invited Dr Koh Chin Yee, Dean of Nanyang International Business School and Vice President of South Seas Society, to share about China's Belt & Road Initiative (BRI), its origins and what it means for Singapore and Singaporeans. The dinner time talk on 15 January attracted close to 100 eager Singaporeans of diverse backgrounds and ages.



In his sharing, Dr Koh first gave the audience a run through of China's economic history. In particular, he gave an illustration of the radical transformations in the structure of the Chinese economy and society ever since Mr Deng Xiaoping initiated market reforms 40 years ago.

With the context in place, Dr Koh then shared about the compelling forces that drove China President Xi Jinping's to unveil the BRI, then known as the One-Belt-One-Road (OBOR) project, in 2013. Now in its sixth year, the BRI has expanded in scope and reach, with more than 68 participating countries, encompassing 65% of the world's population.



Dr Koh gave his insights into BRI's latest developments, including the reasons for the difficulties confronting several notable projects such as those in Sri Lanka and Malaysia. Most importantly, he was keen to remark to the audience how certain qualities associated with Singapore and Singaporeans, such as a measured approach towards collaborations and emphasis on rule of law, can enable us to play a vital role in facilitating BRI's projects and initiatives.

The talk concluded with a vibrant question-and-answer segment, where several members of the audience sought Dr Koh's further comments and insights on BRI, as well as issues concerning Singapore-China relations.



Business China is a founding partner of National Library Singapore for Eye on Asia. The Eye on Asia is targeted at young Singaporeans who wish to find out more about the region and explore internationalisation opportunities abroad. Focusing on ASEAN countries, China and India, it provides a broad overview of useful resources to help Singaporeans be more aware of developments in these countries as Singapore gears itself for the future economy.

The Eye on Asia Programme Series is conducted monthly, where key figures from the industry and academia are invited to share their insights on trending topics in China, ASEAN and India.



**Eye on Asia**

## China's Belt & Road Initiative: Opportunities and Implications

What comes to your mind when you think about China's "Belt and Road Initiative"? Do you see opportunities, increased investment and trade, improved connectivity, infrastructure development or an expansion of China's influence, global and soft power? These were some questions posed by the speaker, Dr Koh Chin Yee, Vice-President for South Seas Society as he opened his talk on 15 January 2019 to a captive audience.



Announced in 2013, the Belt and Road Initiative is China's most high-profile initiative grounded on dual platforms, namely the Silk Road Economic **Belt** which is land-



based and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk *Road* which is sea-based. It aims to revive the ancient trade routes spanning through Asia, Africa and Europe.

With a balanced perspective, Dr Koh shared comprehensive insights on the opportunities and challenges as he revisited China's economic history and the various mega trends in economics, geopolitics and ideology which set the background as well as lead up to the Belt and Road Initiative. With China as the second largest economy in the world, this mega project is set to be the most ambitious and all-encompassing economic development programme in human history.



Dr Koh advised the participants to be China-savvy, be open minded and read extensively. With China connected to the world now more than ever before, there exists many opportunities for all.

*This is one of the talks under the Eye on Asia programme series for everyone, including young Singaporeans what want to explore opportunities in the region and beyond.*



