

CASE STUDY

CHONGQING  
CONNECTIVITY INITIATIVE



THE CLIENT

The Chongqing Connectivity Initiative (CCI) is the third bilateral government-to-government project established to strengthen trade links – in other words, the movement of people, goods, services, and capital – between Singapore and China. As part of this project, infrastructure linking the two countries will be further developed, including transport, logistics, aviation, finance and info-communication technology. The CCI is part of China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which was initiated by

President Xi Jinping in 2013. The BRI was conceived to, on one hand, provide assistance to developing countries in need of funding and investment for modern infrastructure; and on the other, promote trade and cooperation between countries participating in the project. Since its inception, the BRI has evolved to become a common endeavour of 126 countries and 29 international organizations, fostering international cooperation in infrastructure projects.

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FOCUS: SINGAPORE 7

A natural fit with Belt and Road plans

Singapore as a major hub for the China-led initiative highlights its benefits to the region

By LOW SHI PING in Singapore  
For China Daily Asia Weekly

Anyone doubting Singapore's relevance to the China-led Belt and Road Initiative should consider this: Already, about one-third of all Belt and Road-related investments have been made in the Southeast Asian city-state.

Chan Chun Sing, a Singapore minister, speaking at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, in January said: "They (Chinese officials) always remind us of this number: 3,265, which means 33 percent of all the outbound investment under the (Belt and Road) initiative comes through Singapore, and 85 percent of all the inbound investment to China comes from Singapore."

Chan said that Singapore is able to achieve this because it is a financial hub and is in a position to syndicate the loans together.

Nicholas Fong, executive director

um by constantly adjusting to changing political, economic, financial and technological conditions," he said.

"Like it or not, the (Belt and Road Initiative) will still proceed without any (one) country's participation. It is important that if we want to be involved, we find our niche," said Li Mingjiang, an associate professor at the S Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) in Singapore.

Li is optimistic that in the coming years, significant Chinese investment will take place in Singapore, and he believes the Belt and Road is a good opportunity for the city-state's economic development.

"Singapore's economy is dependent on international markets and overseas opportunities. It is therefore advantageous for it to have regional and international economic collaborations," he said.

Some of the areas it can make a difference in are finance, logistics, education and manpower. Its expertise in infrastructure design and management – such as ports and airports



People walk along a promenade facing the financial district in Singapore on Oct 14, 2016. Many multinational financial institutions use the country as a regional base for their operations in Southeast Asia. AFP

China," said Gordon Tan, general manager of Sino-Singapore Chongqing Connectivity Solutions, the joint venture company for the Chongqing Logistics Development Platform.

"Recently, in 2017, President Xi said that the CCI should catalyze participation from regional countries in

factor between the two cities.

A report from investment bank UBS said that Chinese banks with operations in Singapore have already committed more than 500 billion yuan (\$9 billion) in financing to Singapore companies involved in Belt and Road projects.

ing its human capital, through drawing up a framework to integrate skills into higher learning, and creating the space for experimental and disruptive technologies.

"A framework would involve both the public and private sector, which is already in place in Singapore. However,

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# SIGNING OF AGREEMENT

## SINO-SINGAPORE CONNECTIVITY

### JOINT VENTURE



## OUR SOLUTION

Despite the BRI's high profile, it has suffered from negative perceptions in Western media, particularly with regard to China's strategic intentions at large. The BRI has been labelled in some quarters as the exemplification of Beijing's brand of 'debt trap diplomacy', trading investment and funding for political influence in poorer countries along the BRI corridor. As the CCI is affiliated with the BRI, and as a government-level project involving the Chinese government, it, too, has had to combat such negative perceptions. In addition, the CCI was also less widely known, and securing media coverage in reputable

media titles was a key objective in IDEA Communication's campaign for the CCI. IDEA pitched to secure a feature article in China Daily on the CCI, and the increasingly broader and deeper trade links between Singapore and China. Last but not least, Helena Ma, founder and managing director of IDEA Communication, also worked to facilitate the China Entrepreneur Golf Club's visit to Singapore in 2015, coinciding with the 25th anniversary of the diplomatic relations between Singapore and China, which paved the way for the deepening of ties between businesses of the two countries.

## TESTIMONIALS

"The launch of the Chongqing Connectivity Initiative was a watershed moment in the traditionally strong relationship between China and Singapore, one built on not only economic ties, but also on a shared culture and heritage," said Gordon Tan, general manager of the Sino-Singapore Chongqing Connectivity Solutions (SSCCS), a joint venture between companies from Singapore and Chongqing, under the umbrella of the CCI. "Good progress is being made on both sides of the CCI, and in a small part due to the work of IDEA, our communications and public relations partner in Singapore. Led by Helena Ma, IDEA's diverse team of PR operators and specialists in other disciplines have been useful in helping the CCI gain traction in both Singapore and China."

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