



Japan's shifting attitude on Belt and Road shows importance of ties with China

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The Japanese government appears to have readjusted its attitude toward the China-proposed **Belt and Road** (B&R) initiative, a development that underscores the country's increasing awareness of the importance of the Sino-Japan relationship, especially the economic aspect of it.

According to a report from The Yomiuri Shimbun on Tuesday, the Japanese government is considering economic cooperation surrounding the B&R initiative, which is mainly about providing financial support to projects along the B&R route. Such projects could include those jointly developed by Chinese and Japanese companies and those that are considered beneficial to Japanese companies.

Obviously, it is a move aimed at improving the Sino-Japan relationship as the Japanese government has been increasingly aware of the importance of bilateral economic cooperation, which is why the Chinese government previously welcomed Japan to join the B&R.

Generally speaking, Japan's economy has always been greatly dependent on overseas markets. So for the sustainable development of its economy, Japan needs access to the business opportunities offered by the vast infrastructure projects along the B&R route.

For instance, in a meeting with Premier Li Keqiang in Beijing last week, a record 250-strong delegation of Japanese business and entrepreneurial heavyweights expressed their wish to strengthen economic cooperation with China on the B&R initiative and their desire to participate in infrastructure projects along the B&R route, according to Chinese media.

Moreover, the economic appeal of the B&R seems to be particularly hard to resist as Japan faces growing pressure from sluggish domestic growth and rising US protectionism. It is nearly impossible for Japan to expand further into markets in the US or Europe, but new markets are essential for it to maintain steady economic growth.

Japan was formerly on guard against China's rise and the B&R, but there is no way for the country to totally ignore China and focus on domestic economic development alone. While Japan has been actively working with India and other countries to counter-balance the influence of the B&R,

supporting similar program like the Asia Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC), it is clear that the influence of the AAGC cannot compare with that of the B&R.

Countries like India are indeed big partners to the Japanese economy, but the importance of the Sino-Japan economic relationship is incomparable. Economic interests will eventually lead Japan to make the right choice.

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