



YAO DAWEI / XINHUA

Premier Li Keqiang and leaders from Central and Eastern European countries view a model of a Chinese high-speed train at an exhibition of Chinese equipment in Bucharest, the Romanian capital, on Tuesday.

Li looks to closer relations

China, Central and Eastern Europe vow to double trade in five years

By **ZHAO YINAN** in Bucharest and **ZHOU WA** in Beijing

China and Central and Eastern European countries have vowed to double their trade in five years and will discuss plans to build a new railway link between them.

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Premier Li Keqiang said on Tuesday that closer ties with the region will enrich cooperation between China and all of Europe.

He made the remarks in an address

at an economic forum between China and Central and Eastern European nations in Bucharest, the Romanian capital.

Analysts said that as the region has been forging ahead with economic development and upgrading its industry, cooperation with China will benefit both sides.

Li told officials and businesspeople that China will take measures to boost trade with the region by hosting roundtable meetings with commerce ministers, exhibiting the region's products in China and by holding

agricultural and trade forums.

He also called on China and the region to work on a series of major infrastructure developments such as railways and power projects.

Analysts said the potential for trade between China and the region is huge.

In the first 10 months of the year, trade between China and Central and Eastern European countries reached \$52.1 billion. The figure surpassed the \$50 billion recorded in 2012, but accounted for 10 percent of trade between China and the European Union.

While Chinese investment in Central and Eastern Europe topped \$800 million in 2010, compared with almost nothing in the early 2000s, the

region attracted less Chinese investment than in Sweden alone, according to the Warsaw-based Central and Eastern European Development Institute.

"Further enhancing their cooperation on trade and investment is meaningful and essential for both China and Central and Eastern European countries," said Pan Zhanlin, former Chinese ambassador to the former Yugoslavia.

"Central and Eastern Europe is eager to attract more foreign investment and to increase exports to boost its economies and get over the negative impact of the international financial crisis," Pan said.

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