

The High-end Asia Forum to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the “Belt and Road” Initiative

The Confucius Institute at University of Colombo held the High-end Asian Forum to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the “Belt and Road” Initiative on September 27th, 2023 at the Jasmine Hall of the Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall. Scholars representing different Asian nations including East Asian, Southeast Asian and South Asian, West Asian, Central Asian and other regions participated. The platform was opened for scholars to discuss the pros and cons of the ‘One Belt and One Road’ concept which was an afflatus proposal made by the present Chinese President Mr. Xi Jinping in 2013.

Professor Lasantha Manawadu, Dean of the Faculty of Arts of the University of Colombo, delivered the welcome speech. Senior Professor H.D Karunaratne, Vice Chancellor of the University of Colombo addressed the gathering and he particularly mentioned the activities and programmes conducted by the University of Colombo in close collaborations with world renowned Chinese universities and organizations in China.

Mr. K. K. Yoganadan, Charge d’Affaires of the Embassy of Sri Lanka in China, Mr. Zhu Yanwei, Deputy Chief of Mission and Minister Counsellor of the Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in Sri Lanka, Mr. Zhao Lingshan, Vice Chairman and Secretary-General of Chinese International Education Foundation, Professor Yang Dan, President of Beijing Foreign Studies University, Professor Hong Bo, Chairman of the University Council, Honghe University were added their well wishes to the Forum by participating online.

Both the keynote speakers expressed their views on the BRI, the novel application of ancient Silk Route network paths and its impact to the Asian continent very moderately but confidently. Senior Professor Sampath Amaratunge, Chairman of the University Grants Commission of Sri Lanka emphasized more on the BRI and how it can be used to overcome certain economic dilemmas of present day Sri Lanka. Professor Xie Tao, Dean of the School of International Relations and Diplomacy at Beijing Foreign Studies University caught the attention of the audience because of his analytical speech based recent research and provided insight about how different factors interact on the discourse of Belt and Road Initiative in present global context. Prof. Anuththaradevi Widyalkara, Sri Lankan Director of the CIUC introduced Prof. Sampath Amarathunga whereas Associate Professor Ma Zhongwu, Chinese Director of the CIUC introduced Prof. Xie Tao.

The Forum was conducted under four sub-forums: the ancient Silk Road and the modern "Belt and Road"; educational and cultural exchanges under the background of the "Belt and Road"; economic and trade cooperation under the "Belt and Road" in Asia; and the Confucius Institutes and the development of Chinese education.

The High End Forum on Belt and Road Initiative 10th Anniversary offered an opportunity for scholars, researchers and practitioners to share their knowledge and experiences on diverse aspects of the BRI and related discourses among participants attending the forum. The Forum received strong support and guidance from the University of Colombo and the Chinese partner universities of the Confucius Institute, Beijing Foreign Studies University and Honghe University.

In December 2022, the Confucius Institute at the University of Colombo held similar type of Forum to celebrate the 65th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Sri Lanka.