

Special Issue

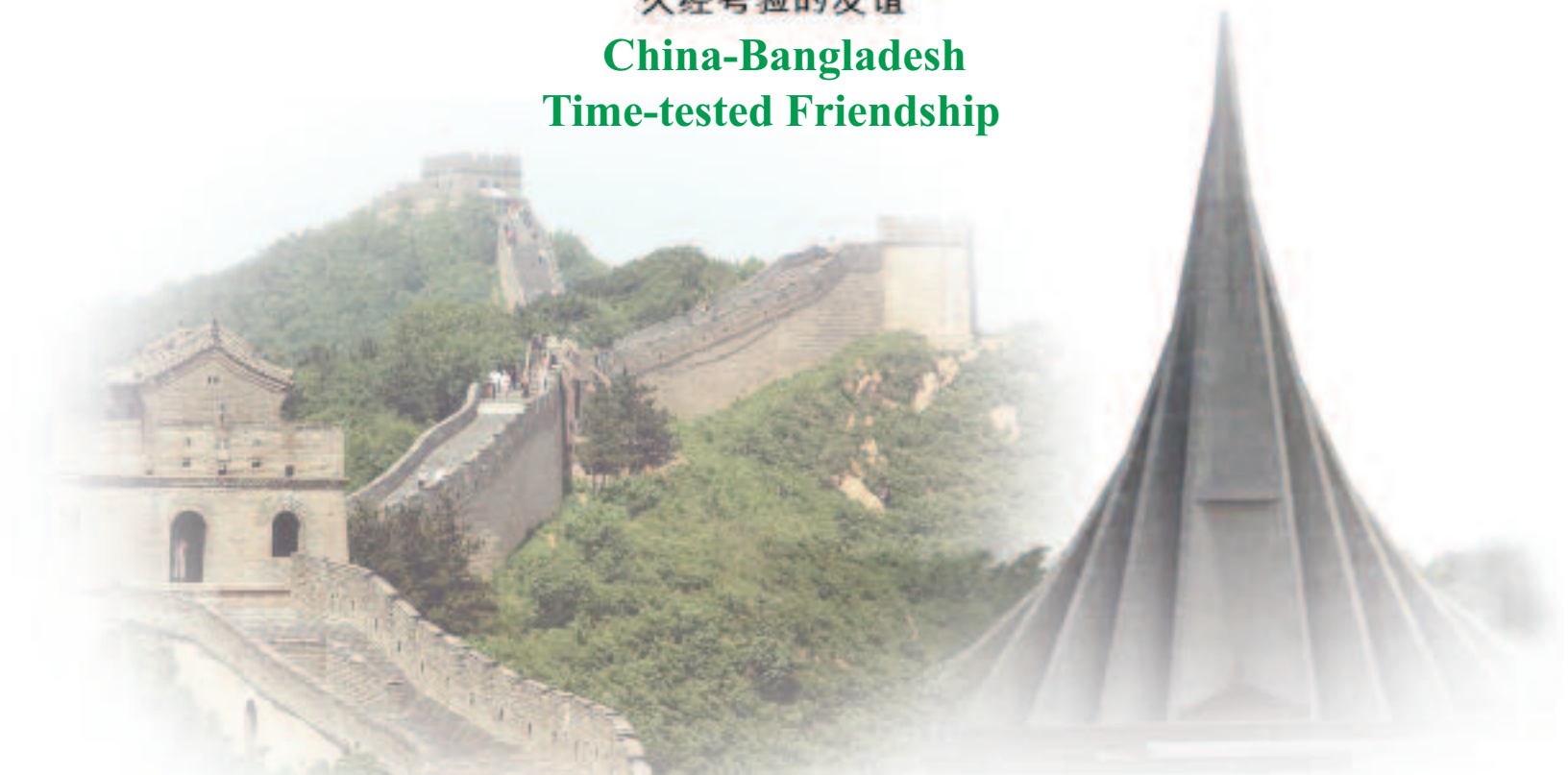
Rising Asia

October-December 2016 Issue 07

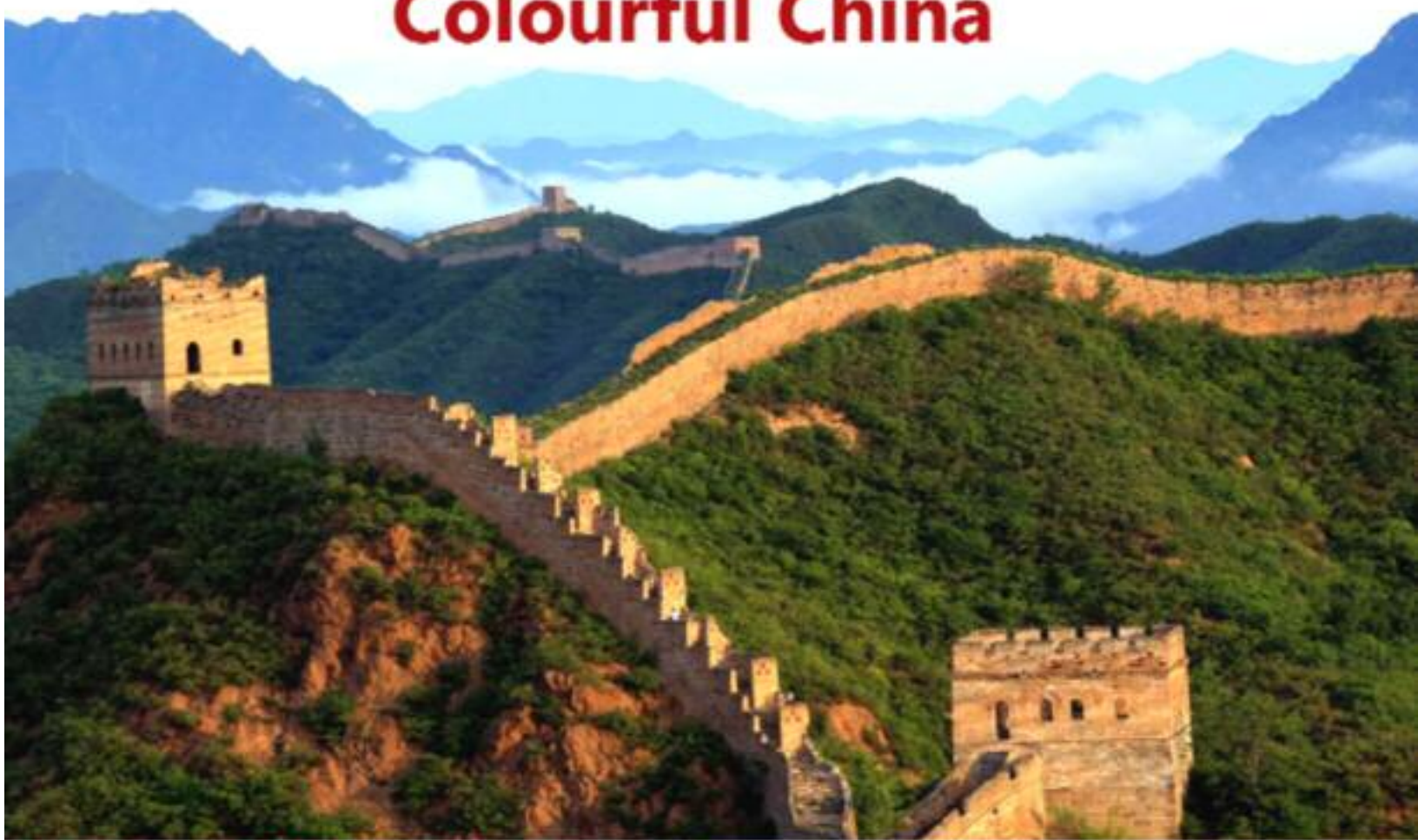


中国-孟加拉国
久经考验的友谊

China-Bangladesh
Time-tested Friendship



Colourful China





Rising Asia

A Quarterly Magazine of CEAF

Issue - 7
October-December, 2016

Striving for Asian Solidarity

Centre for East Asia Foundation (CEAF)
Dhaka, Bangladesh



Rising Asia

A Quarterly Magazine of CEAF

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Editor's Note



As the Great Russian writer-philosopher Leo Tolstoy wrote: "The Chinese nationality is the oldest, the greatest and most peace loving nationality in the world."

The traditional friendship between China and Bangladesh by land across the Himalayas and along the silk routes date back to over 2000 years. Trade relations across the oceans developed in the 15th Century, when a squadron of the Chinese fleet of Zheng He, commanded by Hong Bao visited Sonargaon (near Dhaka), the then capital of Bengal Sultanate.

After formal diplomatic relationship between the two countries, which turned a brand-new page in the history of China-Bangladesh good relations. In 2010, during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to China, the leaders from the two countries announced that they have committed to establish a "Closer Comprehensive

Partnership of Cooperation." China has always been a trustworthy friend of Bangladesh. Over the past 41 years, China-Bangladesh relationship has been developing in a healthy and smooth manner. In the international community, Bangladesh for its part has to have the best of its capacity maintained in unwavering support to one-China policy and China's peaceful rise.

We pay our tributes to the successive governments, respective statesmen and the people of our two countries, who have progressively strengthened the exemplary relationship and contributed to the enhancement of China-Bangladesh friendship.

The Chinese nation has always valued good neighborliness. Keeping its words and promoting harmony among all nations has always been the guiding principles of China's foreign policy. China sees its neighborhood as the key to its well-being and the foundation of its development and prosperity. China has all along believed that "the strong should not oppress the weak and the rich should not bully the poor."

Going forward, China-Bangladesh economic ties, mostly dominated by trade, could continue to drive their bilateral relations. In the last-five years, imports from China grew at about 20 percent and exports growth averaged at 40 percent. Another crucial development has been the two nations' security and military relations. China has become the largest supplier of military hardware to Bangladesh. In fact, Dhaka-Beijing security relations are no less important than their economic ties. Moreover, we are expecting that the two sides will actively expand exchanges and cooperation in culture, press, health, sports and tourism and promote contacts between the media organizations, think tanks, scholars, friendship groups, women's groups, cultural troupes, athletes and youths.

Most humbly, we welcome His Excellency President Xi Jinping for his historical visit to Bangladesh. We welcome you as the visionary president of the People's Republic of China. As a remarkable world leader, as a historic friend of Bangladesh, your visit here is a crown demonstration of the profound relationship between our two nations.

Chinese president Xi Jinping has outlined the vision of the Chinese dream, which is to achieve the great renewal of the Chinese nation. The steady process of attaining the Chinese dream will not only benefit China, but also the world at large. As President Xi Jinping pointed out, the Chinese dream of national renewal is about the pursuit of happiness by every Chinese citizen, and it has much in common with the dream of the people of Bangladesh, as we are on the way to achieve the goal of becoming a middle income country by 2021 and a developed country by 2041.

We are hopeful that Bangladesh and China with joint efforts will be able to develop and maintain practices and policies that will realise these dreams not only for their own people, but also for the Bay of Bengal littorals to attain commensurate levels of happiness and peaceful growth.

Long Live Bangladesh-China Friendship.

Nasim Mahmud

Chief Editor

Rising Asia Magazine (RAM)

Bangladesh.



中 华 人 民 共 和 国 大 使 馆



I am delighted to know that a special issue of the Rising Asia magazine is coming on the occasion of the state visit to Bangladesh by H.E. Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China. I am told that many well-known scholars, journalists, former officials and ambassadors will make their contribution by sharing with us their perception, observation and understanding of the development of China-Bangladesh relationship and its significance both in bilateral and regional spectrum.

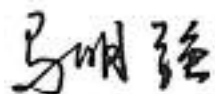
Being the Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh, I look very much forward to reading this special issue and getting inspirations from wisdom, expectation and suggestions of the writers to better execute my duty and bring our relations even closer.

China-Bangladesh relationship dates back to 4th century BC when the two peoples started interaction along the silk road. The legendary Chinese monks like Fa Xian, Xuan Zang, Yi Jing and the great Bengali Buddhist Atisha Dipanka were recognized as the most influential historical figures in the friendly relations.

Today, China-Bangladesh relationship is progressing from strength to strength, thanks to the overwhelming passion and support from the two peoples. China is a time-tested partner of Bangladesh. The "Belt & Road" initiative by H.E. Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China, synergizing with the development plan of Bangladesh, will create abundant opportunities as our economies are highly complementary to each other.

China Dream and Sonar Bangla Dream are parallel. As developing countries, we share the same desire for a better future for our peoples. "If two people are of the same mind, their strength can cut through metal." This old Chinese saying shows the power of cooperation and concerted efforts. It gives me all the reason to have higher expectations of our friendly bilateral relations in future.

My best wishes to the Rising Asia and its readers.



(Ma Mingqiang)
Ambassador of China

中国共产党第十八届中央委员会第三次全体会议



Top Chinese leaders Xi Jinping (C), Li Keqiang (3rd R), Zhang Dejiang (3th L), Yu Zhengsheng (2nd R), Liu Yunshan (2nd L), Wang Qishan (1st R), Zhang Gaoli (1st L) attend the third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee in Beijing, capital of China, Nov. 12, 2013. The session lasted from Nov. 9 to 12. (Xinhua/Lan Hongguang)

THE PARADIGM OF CHINESE REFORMS

Muhammad Zamir



Beset by civil unrest, major famines, military defeats and foreign occupation in the 19th and the early 20th centuries, China emerged as a regional socialist power after Mao Zedong's victory in 1949. The continuous progress of China on the world stage has since been watched with great admiration.

Mao's successor, Deng Xiaoping and the subsequent leadership after 1978 shifted their focus towards a more market oriented economic development process. This released the creative energy of the Chinese people and by the year 2000 their national output had quadrupled. Since then, for much of its population, living standards have improved dramatically because of advances in different sectors including information technology. This synergy has found expression in the phrase 'Chinese Dream'. It has enhanced China's global outreach and participation in international organizations.

Internal reforms have also contributed to China achieving its major economic status. They include phasing out of collectivized agriculture, gradual liberalization of prices, fiscal decentralization, increased autonomy for state enterprises, creation of a diversified banking system, development of the stock market paradigm, rapid growth of the private sector and opening up to foreign trade and investment. All these measures enabled China (on a PPP basis that adjusts for price differences) to become by 2012 the second largest economy in the world after the United States, having overtaken Japan. China is also second to the USA in the value of services it produces.

This rapid economic expansion has however also resulted in unwanted challenges- deterioration in the environment, notably air pollution, soil erosion and the steady fall of the water table, especially in the northern regions of the country. These factors have combined to create uncertain conditions which have led to loss of critically important arable land (in a country with such a large population) because of erosion and rapid economic development. China, because of manufacturing necessity has also ended up becoming the largest importer of fossil fuel- oil, coal and natural gas. These adverse consequences have now persuaded the Chinese authorities to seek additional energy production capacity from sources



other than fossil fuel, focusing more on nuclear and alternative energy development by using renewable energy.

China's latest once-in-a-decade leadership change took place recently through the election of Mr. Xi Jinping and Mr. Li Keqiang being elected by the Chinese National People's Congress as the President and Premier of that country. This new team appears to have taken the common decision to implement a broad-ranging administrative re-structuring plan to forestall any possibility of China sliding down the greased pole of economic progress.

The Chinese measures are principally directed towards reducing loss and diverting savings to more productive areas. Effort is also being made to ensure that anticipated reforms do not suffer because of bureaucratic tangles. The Chinese President has made it clear that the government aims to cut, reduce and simplify the process of review and approval of investment projects to minimize the possibility of inconvenience and high costs involved when enterprises and individuals try to obtain the required services necessary for their entrepreneurial efforts. Another important feature has been the decision to decentralize effectively and to increase funding for local government units.

It is being hoped that successful realization of these factors will facilitate the Chinese people to achieve their 'Dream'. Efforts are also underway to create the necessary administrative structure that will deal with the fallout of any social instability that may arise because of the exercise. The Chinese leadership believes that if their plan can be implemented, it will also help struggling 200 million Chinese migrant workers to integrate into urban China and stop the widening gap between the rich and the poor.

President Xi Jinping's coming into office after Hu Jintao has been described symbolically as assumption of power by the "Fifth Generation" of leaders in China who spent their formative years during the Cultural Revolution. Xi's past leadership experience in running Fujian, Zhejiang, and Shanghai, three economically-advanced regions was particularly stressed earlier as being associated with his choice. The Chinese media pointed out that this prepared him 'for pursuing policies to promote the development of the private sector, foreign investment and trade, and the liberalization of China's financial system'.

It is generally agreed that by 2023, China will be nearing the U.S. as the world's number one economy. This is believed to be inevitable despite the prospect of its hyper-fast growth rate over the last 10 years declining slightly in the near future and China moving from an export and investment led economy to one based on domestic consumer-based growth. This evolving dynamics has however also drawn attention to the growing specter of inequality and income divide. A recent study carried out by Southwestern University of Finance and Economics in China has observed that China's top 10% of households surveyed have 57% of the country's total income and 85% of total assets. The new Chinese leadership knows that they have to address this social issue carefully and initiate required pragmatic reforms urgently. An effective approach to reduce this growing inequality will most certainly require, according to Professor Gan Li 'the shifting of government spending priorities away from massive infrastructure development to social welfare investment'.

Xi Jinping after his assumption of Office correctly highlighted that his target would be to 'deliver a better life' for the Chinese people. In this context he also promised to 'further unleash and develop social productive forces' and 'confront the severe challenge of graft and corruption' within 'the Party members and cadres...out of touch from the general public'. In this regard one however needs to refer to recent steps taken by Chinese authorities to actively take a hard line against bribery and corruption. Since 6 February, 2013, the Provisions of the Supreme People's Procuratorate on Bribery Case File Inquiries have become effective. This has improved China's file-inquiry system within the paradigm of identifying bribery and its compliance with accepted anti-corruption laws. This is also facilitating investigation and enforcement action.

In this quest for better and equitable economic development, the Chinese leadership will also need to find a compromise formula regarding China's cumbersome state-owned banks that pose a huge bottleneck in its economic growth. In addition, the leadership also has to address issues related to government monopolies in sectors like oil, telecommunications and industrial state-owned companies which are generally in debt. Consequently it is clear that Xi Jinping will have to negotiate between competing interests if he hopes to engineer ambitious reforms within the country's state-owned assets.

The Chinese government think tanks have drawn up a "383 Plan", which aims to transform the Chinese economy by 2020. This Plan is attempting to implement a trio of reforms to open up the market, transform government, and reform enterprises to boost innovation. The eight key areas that the Plan is especially addressing include: cutting administrative approvals, promoting competition, land reform, opening up banking including the liberalization of interest rates and the exchange rate, reforming the fiscal system including setting up basic social security, reforming state-owned enter-

prises, promoting innovation including green technology and opening up the services sector. The Planners are hoping that these measures will help to lower market barriers, attract investors and boost competition, set up a basic social security package and allow collectively-owned land to be traded. These are complex tasks but if carried out successfully, it will help China to grow in a more sustainable and stable fashion.

It is also clear that the new Chinese leadership is not only seeking to reduce Chinese reliance on the world market but also giving greater priority towards stimulating domestic demand and raising energy efficiency. Good ideas, but analysts believe that due to rapid urbanization, China will need also to rely on access to more advanced technology from the West to raise energy efficiency. Consequently, this will mean greater technology participation in the fields of energy, construction, environmental protection, transportation, services, urban planning, etc. The whole game can then become more of a win-win situation.

China's latest round of comprehensive reforms in the political, economic, cultural, social and environmental areas will, I believe, be a way forward in its quest for self-improvement and will also help to reduce gaps between urban and rural areas and between the central and western and eastern regions within China. It will also increase transparency and help China to achieve its dream of future development. It will also facilitate, as Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi has noted- "healthy development of economic globalization and economic policy coordination among different countries".

We in Bangladesh need to learn from this dynamics. ~~~~~

Muhammad Zamir, a former Ambassador, is an analyst specialized in foreign affairs, right to information and good governance.

QUOTABLE QUOTE



Happiness does not fall out of the blue
and dreams will not come true by
themselves. We need to be
down-to-earth and work hard. We
should uphold the idea that working
hard is the most honorable, noblest,
greatest and most beautiful virtue.

— Xi Jinping —

China-Bangladesh Relations: Forging a broad-based partnership based on mutual trust and mutual benefit

Farooq Sobhan



Since Bangladesh gained its independence in 1971, it has followed Bangabondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's principle of friendship towards all, malice towards none in dictating its foreign policy. Since the establishment of diplomatic ties 41 years ago, Bangladesh and China have had excellent ties, and embarked on a relationship of shared mutual cooperation in the economic, military, technological and cultural fields. Both countries also share the same outlook on a number of important international and regional issues.

During the 41-year period, there have been state visits by senior officials from both countries. This is a clear sign that Bangladesh gives a lot of importance to its relations with China, and vice versa.

During my tenure as the Bangladesh Ambassador to China from August 1987 to October 1991, I witnessed the early years of China's rapid economic growth. This growth was evident from my travels around China in places like Shanghai, Tianjin, Guanzhou, Qingdao, Nanjing, Dalian, Kunming, Chengdu, Chongking, Wuhan, Xiamen and many other cities all across the country. During this period I witnessed the surge in tourism with countless new hotels being opened across the country and a large number of the worlds leading companies establishing offices in Beijing and other parts of China. Since my departure from China 25 years ago, I have had the opportunity to visit China 15 times. The transformation even within a space of one year has been quite extraordinary. No other country has come close to this type of rapid economic development.

Economic Cooperation

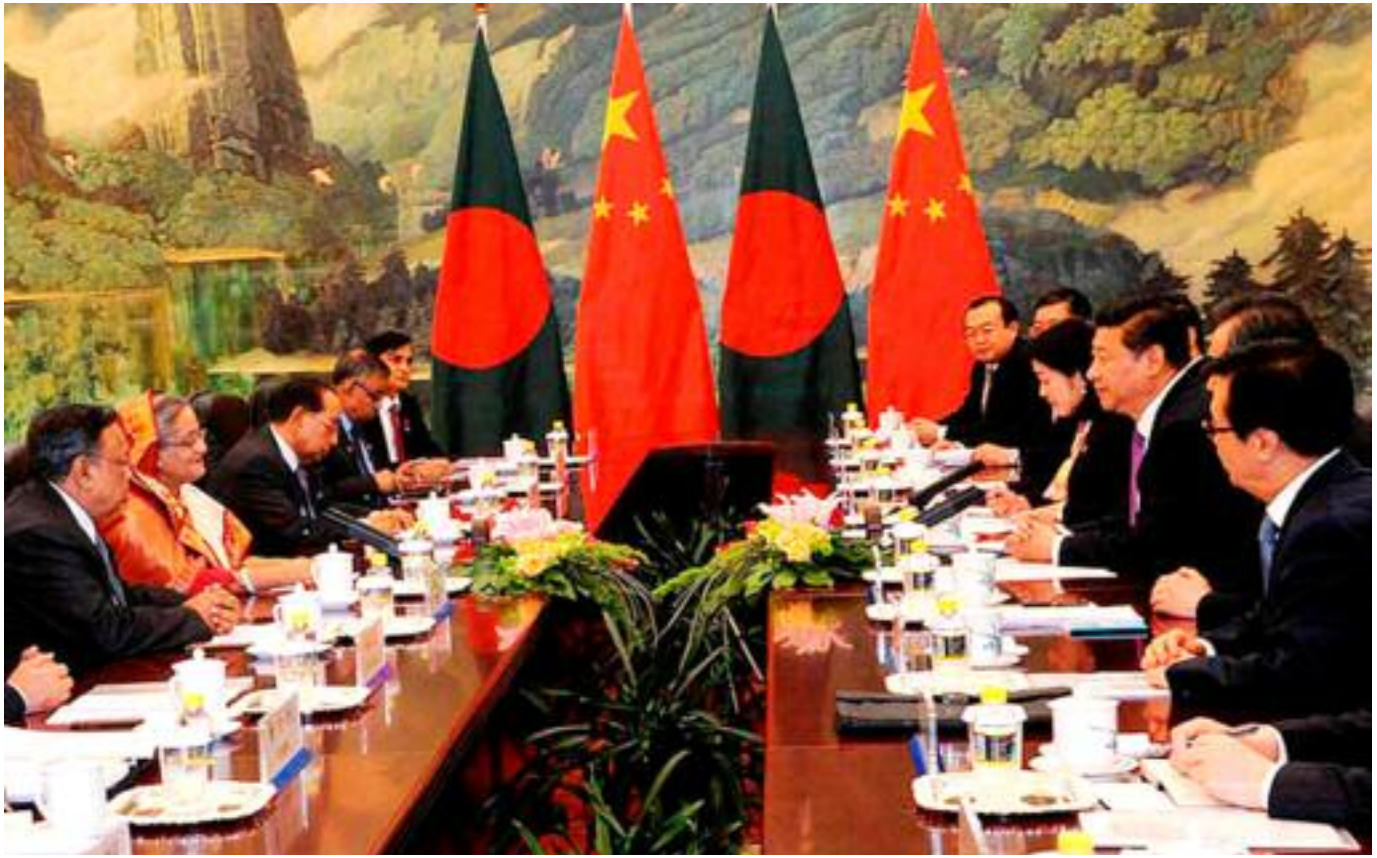
For Bangladesh, economic ties with China are of great significance. The bilateral trade and economic relations between the two countries have strengthened enormously over the years. China is now the largest trading partner of Bangladesh. For China, Bangladesh is its third biggest trading partner in South Asia. However, we believe that there is scope for Bangladesh to increase its exports to China to address the large trade imbalance which favours China. In 2014, bilateral trade between the two countries had increased to over \$12 billion.

In March 2010, during the official visit of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to China, both countries agreed to establish a "Closer Comprehensive Partnership of Cooperation" from the strategic perspective and on the basis of the principles of longstanding friendship, equality, and mutual benefit. Agreements on co-operation in the areas of oil, gas, minerals and agriculture were signed.

As Bangladesh continues to develop its infrastructure, China has become an important partner in this venture. As a result, during Prime Minister Hasina's visit, both countries signed three major agreements and a MOU under which the Chinese Government would assist Bangladesh in infrastructure development projects. Also, during the Prime Minister's visit, the Chinese government agreed to provide grants for seven major projects, including the construction of road and rail infrastructure connecting Chittagong with Kunming through Myanmar, construction of the 8th Bangladesh-China friendship bridge and support for the construction of the Chinese Exhibition Centre.

It is in the areas of trade and investment that China's relations with Bangladesh can truly flourish. For instance, the construction of a road from Chittagong to Kunming will also cut through Myanmar, thereby benefiting the economies of all three countries.

There is also scope for increasing investment ties with China, as the Bangladesh government is making greater efforts to attract greater amounts of foreign direct investment from countries like China. Since the Awami League-led government assumed power following the December 2008 elections, there has been a marked improvement in business relations between the two countries. There is promise of yet further investment from the Chinese side, while the government has offered to set up a special economic zone for China.



Chinese President Xi Jinping has told Sheikh Hasina his country wants a better strategic relationship with Bangladesh.

Recent Developments

In June 2010, at the invitation of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the then Chinese Vice President Xi Jinping, who is now the President of China, paid an official visit to Bangladesh. President Xi and Prime Minister Hasina held discussions on boosting bilateral ties based on agreement on a four-point proposal. The proposals included maintaining frequent high-level exchanges, expanding economic cooperation, exploring more fields for cooperation and strengthening cultural exchanges.

From July 1st 2010, China allowed duty free access to 4,721 Bangladeshi products to its markets. This important initiative in due course of time will help Bangladesh reduce its large trade imbalance with China.

With the aim of opening up new areas of economic cooperation, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina visited China from June 6 to 11, 2014 where she had very constructive discussions with Chinese leaders on various bilateral, regional and international issues. During the visit, both countries signed six instruments for execution of different projects and agreement was reached under which China will support five more projects in Bangladesh at a total cost of US\$5 billion.

In 2014, the Bangladesh government awarded China a US\$1.55 billion contract to build the Padma Bridge. Work on this key project is progressing well and is expected to be completed in 2018.

In a further deepening of ties with Bangladesh, in February 2015, the Chinese government agreed to finance 10 large infrastructure projects estimated to cost over \$ 8.5 billion. China has more than 100 companies that are doing business in Bangladesh in garments, textiles, jute and general manufacturing. China has sought land from the government for a special economic zone for Chinese companies.

In August 2016, China Railway Group, one of the world's largest construction companies, was awarded a US\$3.1 billion project to build a rail network in Bangladesh connecting the capital, Dhaka, to Jessore in southwestern Bangladesh. The four lane Dhaka-Chittagong highway built by a Chinese company is another landmark project.

Chinese companies have also been actively involved in the power, textile, water treatment and telecom sectors. One of the most important projects in the pipeline is the tunnel under the Karnaphuli river in Chittagong. Chinese companies are also expected to build two four lane elevated expressways, which should play an important part in overcoming traffic congestion in the country.

Military and Defence Cooperation

Bangladesh and China have over the last four decades also developed strong military and defence cooperation. China has provided training to Bangladesh's armed forces and members of both armed forces have undertaken courses in each other's defense colleges.

Over the years, there have been regular high-level bilateral visits of military officials from both sides. Most recently, Bangladesh Navy chief Admiral Nizamuddin Ahmed visited China to officiate at a ceremony for the construction of two Corvette warships. Further high level visits are expected to take place during the coming months.

One Belt One Road Policy

In 2013 China's leader President Xi Jinping unveiled the strategic international development strategy and framework known as the One Belt One Road Policy (OBOR). China aims to increase its cooperation with other states in Eurasia, Africa and South and Southeast Asia creating a global 'network of infrastructure partnerships'.

The OBOR has been described as China's 'Marshall Plan'. This grand vision cleverly reflects the history of the old Silk Road trade routes to shape a vision for China's 21st century and beyond. With 'one eye in the past and one eye in the future' China aims to bring economic success to more than 60 states, comprising 60% of the world's population and 46% of the world's GDP. As one of the world's largest economies and the number one trading partner for 120 countries, China holds almost unprecedented power and responsibility.

Bangladesh is fully supportive of OBOR and believes that the OBOR policy has the potential to be a game changer for the global market. It has the opportunity to create opportunities and increase the prosperity of not only developing nations but developed nations.

Bangladesh has been a strong supporter of BCIM economic corridor linking China, Myanmar, Bangladesh and India together. This initiative which was earlier known as the Kunming initiative it is hoped will produce some tangible results in the coming years. Bangladesh has also actively participated in an initiative launched by China last year: The Trans Himalayan Development Forum.

Conclusion

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations over 40 years ago, Sino-Bangladesh relations have expanded significantly to cover a wide range of subjects. Whilst defence and economic co-operation remain the two principal pillars of cooperation, there is a need to expand this cooperation in other areas. Bangladesh needs to attract Chinese investments in to Bangladesh and also improve connectivity between China and Bangladesh.

Bangladesh has continually demonstrated its interest to maintain close and friendly relations with China, and as far as possible to partake in the ever expanding political, economic and defence relations between the two friendly nations. In addition, with President Xi Jinping's scheduled visit to Dhaka, the bilateral relations will be further enhanced between the two time-tested friends. Thus ties between the two friendly nations will undoubtedly continue to grow, and do so for many more decades to come.

Farooq Sobhan, *President, Bangladesh Enterprise Institute.*

A REMINISCENCE Ode to PLA of China

Lt. Gen. M. Mahbubur Rahman (Retd)



On first of August this year, People's Liberation Army (PLA) of China celebrates its 89th Founding Anniversary. PLA indeed has come a long way in its arduous struggle and challenging journey since it took its bloody birth in the armed uprising led by Zhou Enlai in Nanchang, the capital city of Jiangxi province on 1st August 1927. The glorious history of PLA is a long saga of a protracted war of the Chinese Army against imperialist and reactionary forces. PLA went through a long revolutionary process. It started as Red Army, took different names at different times and situations and different theatres of operations namely New Fourth Route Army, Eighth Route Army and finally all transformed to People's Liberation Army.



This great revolutionary Army in the course of its guerilla warfare, undertook the epic Long March unprecedented in the world military history covering a distance of twenty-five thousand li i.e. 12,500 kilometers continuing for a period more than 2 years, from October 1934 to October 1936. The Red Army fought protracted guerrilla battles over a vast area about half of whole China from South to North, from East to West, from Jinggang Shan mountains to the plains of Yanan, crossing the deep primary jungles, endless marshes and swamps, narrow valleys, steep gorges and snow capped rocky mountains, fighting all through. About Long March Mao Zedong wrote a classic poem which is worth quoting.

*"The Red Army fears not the trials of the March,
Holding light ten thousand crags and torrents.
The Five Ridges wind like gentle ripples
And the majestic Wumeng roll by, globules of clay.
Warm the steep cliffs lapped by the waters of Golden Sand,
Cold the iron chains spanning the Tatu River.
Minshan's thousand li of snow joyously crossed,
The three Armies march on, each face glowing."*

This great Army was led by great commanders like Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Zhu De, Chen Yi, Peng Dehuai, Nie Rongzhen, Ye Jianying, Liu Bochen, Shu Xiangqian, Ho Long and many others. It fought against Japanese aggression and Chiang Kaishek's reactionary forces, came out victorious and liberated the country. Post liberation this great Army continuously pursued highest combat excellence, struggled to consolidate the country's independence and sovereignty and always remained a bulwark of national defense as an invincible fighting machine.

PLA, true to its name always maintained its basic peoples' army character. It always bore in mind what Mao Zedong taught, "army is more like a fish and people are like the water in a river." This has been the ethos of PLA and the essence of China's civil military relationship. PLA never was isolated from the broad masses and always remained deeply involved in all national developments and socioeconomic activities. It played a dominant role in national reconstruction and infrastructure building and combating natural disasters, like floods, cyclones, tornadoes, draughts and earthquakes. PLA never forgot Mao Zedong's words, "without people army, people have nothing." PLA always enjoyed the utmost trust, confidence, love and respect of the people of China. It is an all pervasive force with multidimensional characters. It is a fighting force par excellence with highest combat capability and readiness. It is a productive force beyond comparison and a workforce, the colossus of which the world has not seen before.

I recall, I had the opportunity to live in a PLA unit in a garrison very near to Beijing for a month in mid 1977. It was a part of the study curriculum, during my study in Beijing Modern Languages Institute (now university). President Ziaur

Rahman, the visionary leader of Bangladesh, who believed in strong Sino-Bangla relation, sent me to China to study Chinese language for my future employment as military attaché in the embassy. In my outdoor study (kai men ban xue) I was sent to a PLA unit, I lived in the military barracks along with the PLA junior commanders. There was no rank system in PLA at that time and officers were called commanders and soldiers, the fighters. I wore their uniform, ate, worked, played and slept with them like them.

I was introduced with the great master military strategist of ancient China, Sun Tzu's epic work Art of War and was given many tactical combat lessons. I was taken to the firing range to learn the skills of shooting. I found PLA soldiers were most accurate on to their targets and never missed any shot. The PLA unit, I lived was fully self-sufficient to cater its logistic needs. It had its own uniform and shoe making factory, it had its own agricultural fields to grow grains and vegetables, own farm yards to raise cattle and get meat and dairy products. The unit was even running a medicine factory to produce medicine for local use and surplus to be sold outside.



I recall, in my language class text book there were many easy reading short stories. I read stories of Baiquen Daifu (Dr. Norman Bethune), how the Canadian doctor travelled thousands of miles from Canada to help the Red Army in its fights against Chiang Kaishek's reactionary forces, how the Canadian doctor participated in the Long March and selflessly rendered his service in treating wounded soldiers, saving their lives, many a time giving his own blood as he was of blood group 'O' positive, the blood group of universal donors. My text book also contained stories of Lei Peng, the great soldier of PLA, who dedicated his life for the service of poor people and was always available to rush in their crises and difficulties. The motto of PLA, he believed, was wei renmin fuwu, serve the people. Many such moving stories and their valuable lessons and my intimate stay with PLA commanders and soldiers enriched and helped me to know and understand them very closely. They all left a deep impression and influenced me in my life and I still treasure them, dearly cherish them.

I went to China for study at a very significant period of her history. It was a time when the conspiring clique, the Gang of Four (Jiang Qing, Zhang Chunqiao, Wang Hongwen, Yao Wenyuan) had the total fall and the so called Great Cultural Revolution which caused untold sufferings to the people and the masses and brought chaos and disorder in the society had met its ultimate demise. I saw the grand jubilation of Chinese people. I saw their joys, happiness and ecstasies which were so spontaneous. I observed a deluge of flowing masses in the streets. Everybody, men, women and children, old and young was thronging in the streets, carrying big character written large banners, beating drums, blowing trumpets, ringing bells and giving full throated slogans. I never saw such a scene of human outbursts of emotions in my life. I along with all the students, teachers and staff of the Language Institute most joyfully joined the celebration. I carried a big bell made of bronze in my hand which I was ringing all the time. As we walked past the streets and reached Tiananmen Square where already a million strong crowd assembled. For several days the jubilation continued and I participated in all the rallies shouting slogans, dadao si ren bang (down with Gang of Four), dadao wen hua da geming (down with cultural revolution).

Now as I reminisce my good old days in China in my leisure hours at my home in Dhaka, strange spells of emotions do strike me, I feel nostalgic. It makes me immensely proud. China, I always considered my second home, I lived there in the 1970s and 1980s for more than half a decade. About 40 years ago when I lived in China, she made a tiny footprint in global economy and political and military power. Today as I see China, I am totally amazed. What a wonder China has done! China today has emerged as a most vibrant and strong nation already occupying the center stage of world economy and power. China's phenomenal rise within shortest possible time (only four decades or so) is a miracle story. And miracle is a myth. It never happens. But miracles did happen in China. It happened because of country's correct leadership, pragmatic policies, national unity and solidarity, peace and harmony. The unifying factor and



Writer's meeting with the Chinese President Jiang Zemin.

indeed is a yeoman's service rendered. During my meetings with CGS and the Defense Minister, I was loud in expressing my thanks and gratitude and I sought their unabated continuity with multiple returns. During that visit I also had the honored privilege to meet His Excellency Jiang Zemin, the Hon'ble President of China and Chairman of the Central Military Commission, the highest military organ of the country. I recall, President Jiang said, "China has changed a lot. It is not the same China which you saw when you lived here in the 1970s and 1980s. It is a changed China, developed China and it is a new generation, a new leadership. The world is changing. I heard Dhaka skyline has also changed. But in all these changes one thing has not changed and it will never change and that is our relationship with Bangladesh, our policy for Bangladesh." He continued, "I assure you General, China is your friend and will ever remain a friend. Whatever may be the situation and time, she will be always beside you. The relationship between China and Bangladesh is a relationship only of friendship, friendship and friendship and nothing but friendship." His words still ring in my ear. I treasure them. I believe this epitomizes our two militaries and two countries true relationship.

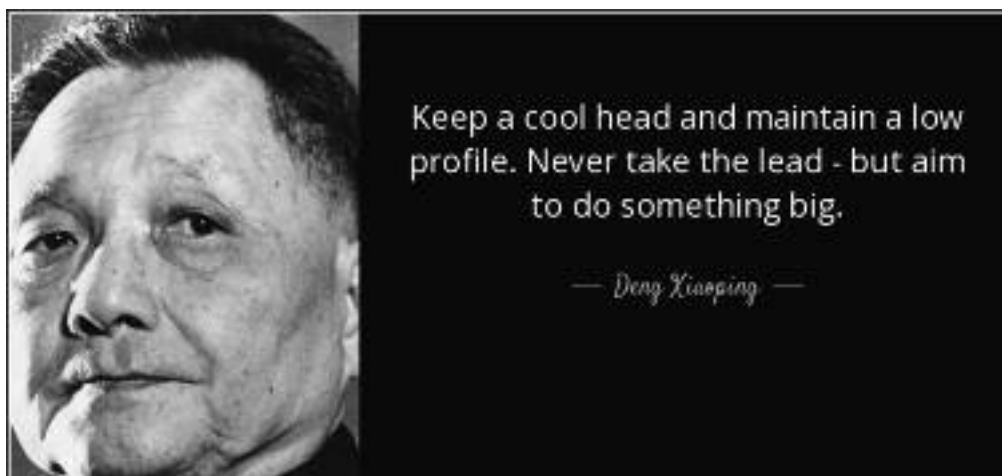
Lt. General M. Mahbubur Rahman (Retd) is a former Chief of Staff, Bangladesh Army.

the stabilizing core element has been always PLA, the liberator, the redeemer, the most patriotic, dedicated, loyal and trusted.

I recall, I was invited to China by PLA in 1996 when I was the Chief of Army staff. General Fu Quanyou, was the Chief of General Staff, PLA and General Chi Haotian the Defense Minister. I knew both of them personally very well. I was looking forward to this visit very earnestly.

Bangladesh Armed Forces received almost their entire military hardware from PLA. Our Armed Forces were built from the scratches by PLA's support and assistance. I, as the first military attaché to China in the 1980s, am a witness, how PLA most generously supported to raise our Army, Navy and Air Force and strengthened our defense capability as we possess today. The services that PLA rendered in equipping, arming and training of our total armed forces are immeasurable. That

QUOTABLE QUOTE





Arduous Journey China's ruling party leads the nation toward prosperity

Kerry Brown

A grand gathering celebrating the 95th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China (CPC) is held at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on July 1(XINHUA)

The Communist Party of China (CPC) was founded in Shanghai in 1921. Its first congress, held in July that year, lasted for nine days. Thirteen people attended, one of whom was a Russian advisor, and the other a Dutch International Communist movement activist. After seven days, the meeting was disrupted by French Concession police. It had to be reconvened in a barge in neighbouring Zhejiang Province.

The Party at that time had only a few dozen members. Ninety-five years on, it has almost 90 million. It is the ruling party in a country which has the world's second largest economy. This is one of the most remarkable histories of any major political movement of the modern era. And yet, even in the second decade of the 20th century, the precise nature, role and function of the CPC often confuses outside observers.

Part of that confusion is simply from the word "party." In Western multi-party democracies, political parties occupy parts of the spectrum from the left (broadly more government involvement in economic and social affairs) to the right (less state involvement). The CPC within itself occupies all of this territory. It offers a home for a huge diversity of opinion. In that sense, conceptualizing it for Western political theorists, commentators, politicians and analysts is challenging. It sometimes looks more like a social movement, or a knowledge community, or a cultural movement. In some ways, it



is all of these things. The ways in which it functions, the principles on which it operates, and how it relates to other parts of Chinese society has particularities that are often hard to convey in an easy to understand way for outsiders because of our lack of an adequate language by which to capture what precisely the CPC is.

What is more easily understood is the ways in which the CPC has presided over one of the greatest phases of wealth creation the world has ever known. This is the achievement it is most recognized for internationally. In 1949, China was emerging from a period of devastating international and then civil war. Between 1937 and 1945 as many as 20 million Chinese people perished and 50 million were left homeless. From 1946 to 1949 Civil War with the Nationalists led to even more destruction and instability. But in 1949, the CPC emerged victorious.



It was faced with a country where the average life expectancy was 32 years of age for men, and where much of the railway and road infrastructure that had existed prior to the Second World War had been damaged or destroyed. China prior to 1949 was a country where 90 percent of its inhabitants lived outside cities, some in great poverty in rural areas, where running water and electricity were rarities. From 1949, the CPC started the epic challenge of reconstructing the country's physical and human capital.

Nearly seven decades later, by 2016, China has an average life expectancy for men and women well into the mid-70s. Adult literacy is over 97 percent. Rules introduced in the last two decades mean that all children are required to attend school till the ages of 15, with many tens of millions now graduated from Chinese universities. Over 1 million Chinese have been educated abroad since 1979. China has the world's most extensive network of high speed rail, and is well on the way to constructing a national motorway system, even into more remote western provinces. Over 50 percent of Chinese live in cities.

The CPC is recognized for its achievements under Reform and Opening Up since 1978 in putting in place a policy infrastructure which has supported even more rapid improvements in development. The World Bank, for instance, has acknowledged that over the last three decades as many as 400 million people have been lifted out of poverty. Compared to India, a country of similar geographical size, population and developmental status in the 1940s, China ranks far higher in the education, literacy levels and health of women, and in general poverty alleviation. Under Reform and Opening



Up China has been able to feed its population. Fears in the early 1990s by researchers like Lester Brown that China would face a food shortage through lack of grain proved unfounded. The diet of the average Chinese now is as varied as that of a European or American.

For all the achievements, the CPC faces challenges in the next decade as it enters its second century in existence. Many of these are the results of rapid industrialization and development. The first is the fact that the Chinese environment has been put under enormous strain, with major air quality and water quality issues. The solution to these has proved elusive. New technology, use of renewable energy sources and rising energy efficiency has been supported under the 12th and 13th Five Year Programmes. The Chinese Government has also supported international accords from the Paris conference convention in late 2015 to an accord sign with the United States a year earlier.

A second side effect of rapid development over the last four decades has been its impact on Chinese society. Inequality is a far larger problem now than it was before 1978. According to the Gini coefficient, an internationally accepted measure of inequality, in 1984 China enjoyed a relatively high level of equality. Since then, the measure has shown rising disparities between the wealthy and the poor. Differences in wealth levels have opened up between the Chinese coastal and interior regions, and between cities and rural areas. Government policy has focused on these, with the lifting of tax burdens for Chinese farmers in the 2000s, and the creation of a national social security system for healthcare in the last few years. Even so, addressing imbalances between different groups remains an important priority.

The third issue is the external dimension. China has travelled in the last seven decades from being a country with a small economy to one which is now of global importance. This has brought with it diplomatic prominence. People outside China take heed of it and watch its behaviour as never before. Chinese leaders are global leaders, and their decisions and actions, even on the most domestic of issues, have global impact, because of this importance that China now has. Communicating China's message to the outside world is crucial, so that misunderstandings don't occur. China's views on issues from the Middle East, to the crisis in Europe, to problems in Latin America or elsewhere, are important. The dangers of the outside world misinterpreting China's ambitions or behaviour are very real. Ideas about the role that China wants to play in the world, through initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative are going to become more important.

Finally, there is the search for a new kind of economic model. Since 1978, under the CPC and through the ideas of the leadership around Deng Xiaoping, a hybrid model was developed, taking methods and processes from industrialized and developed nations like the United States and Japan, and adapting them for use in China. An export orientated, manufacturing model was created which served as the engine of GDP growth at double digit levels for most of the period up to 2010. China is now entering a period of economic transition. GDP has inevitably slowed down (it would be impossible for any economy to continue growing so fast). Chinese policy makers are very aware of the middle income trap, where wage rises for workers in manufacturing make that sector uncompetitive, but services and other sectors have yet to fill the gap left. China is now increasing the role of the services sector in a mixed economy where new sources of domestic growth can appear. This forms the main plank of the journey toward fulfilling the first centennial goal by 2012 when the CPC celebrates its hundredth year in existence and hopes to preside by then over a middle income country.

As in other areas, the distinguishing feature of the Chinese model is scale and speed. A transition like this to middle income status is one that many developed economies have gone through, but none on such a scale and at such a speed as China. Therefore the issue of achieving this transition sustainably, and with stability, is key. The function of the CPC as the entity that gives strategic direction to this process and provided the overarching political narrative is critically important. This is one of the most important things that the outside world needs to understand therefore about the role of the CPC in 21st century China, and what its precise function and objectives are.

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BANGLADESH'S UMBILICAL TIES WITH CHINA

Ashfaqur Rahman



Very few peoples and regions in the world can boast of historical ties as between the people of China and those who inhabited the present Bangladesh. History records that these ties go back almost 2400 years.

From ancient times, three Silk Roads connected China and the Indian sub continent. The first was the Northern Silk Road. It connected the central region of China, passed through India and on to Europe. The second was the southern Silk Road. It operated since 4th century B.C. immediately before the Chinese Qin dynasty. The last was the Maritime Silk Road which operated in the oceans to the south of China and India. The Chinese people in ancient times travelled the maritime route to reach India too.

But it was the Southern Silk Road which connected China with present day Bangladesh. It was first mentioned on the occasion of Zhang Qian's visit to Bactria (North Afghanistan) by a Chinese historian of western Han dynasty. Thus the southern Silk Road connected China with present day Bangladesh via Myanmar. It was mainly used in the ancient time by people who lived along the borders of China, Myanmar and present Bangladesh. The Southern Silk Route was China's main access to India. This road which passed through the mountains of south China reached 'Pundravardhana' – a kingdom along the banks of Bahmaputra River. According to the geography book written in the Tang dynasty (and edited around 1044) it is understood to be located near present day Rangpur or Pabna in Bangladesh. This southern Silk Road helped the people to develop cultural and business connections among the people of China, Myanmar, Bangladesh and India.

It is curious to note what was transported and traded through this crucial route. It is known that parts of Sichuan and Yunnan provinces produced silk. This product was liked by the princes and dignitaries in Bengal and India. Ancient Persia also consumed silk items. Later tea and Chinese sesame came through to various part of this region. The Chinese were experienced in producing ironware. They smelted iron into such products and sent through to Bengal. It was sent to other parts of India, Iran and even was sent to ancient Rome. But remember, Chinese products were not a one way flow. From Bengal and other parts of India went sugarcane, eggplants and other agricultural items to Yunnan and Sichuan in China. Rice was another major product traded between the two regions.

Ethnic people also walked along the Southern Silk Route in China. They came and mainly settled in parts on what is now Bangladesh. Thus in Chittagong Hill tracts, India north east states tribal people emigrated from Chinese region to settle in these places.

But what was most striking was the movement of Buddhism from parts of Northern India like Bihar and parts of Bengal to China. With the religion





went the knowledge of astronomy, mathematics, and sculptures to China. Slowly and gradually Buddhism replaced traditional practices in China. A rich tapestry of Chinese culture and philosophy mixed with Buddhism and became the Chinese way of life in later centuries. It is said that even the practice of self defense without arms was tried by Buddhist priests who went from India to China as they were not allowed in ancient China to use arms to protect themselves. So they became adept in self defense. From there, the Chinese people picked up the style and techniques, improved upon them not only for sports but self defense. So the southern Silk Road was an ethnic and religious passage for these two populations.

Curiously enough, there were Chinese travellers over the centuries to chronicle these mutual developments. They came to ancient Bangladesh too. They sat with our Buddhist sages, recorded their thoughts, religious practices, philosophies and opinions about the future. These travellers crossed mountain ranges, desolate terrain, endured extreme cold and heat to learn from them.

One of the earliest Chinese travellers was Fa Xian. He was a monk during the fourth century A.D. His Journey to this part of the world began from Changan in China. He was already 63 years old. He travelled over 20,000 kilometers and visited many parts of India. He stayed in the territory of Bangladesh for 2 years. During his stay he visited 30 monasteries in Bangladesh. His main interest was to learn about Buddhism and to read Buddhist scriptures here. He took copious notes with the aim of translating them on his return to China. He also wanted to inform his people about Buddhist kingdoms here.

Interestingly Bangladesh was a part of what the Chinese called in those days 'Western Heaven'. The next monk to travel to India and later to what is now territory of Bangladesh was Xuan Zang. He came to Magadha which was a well known kingdom in south Bihar. There was the famous Nalanda Buddhist monastery and where he studied under a famous priest Shila Bhadra for 5 years. He was so impressed with his knowledge that after 5 years Xuan Zang followed Shila Bhadra to the territory of what is now Bangladesh. During his travels inside Bangladesh he found the people very receptive to education and seekers of knowledge. He brought back to China 657 Buddhist classics from what was known as 'The Western Heaven'. He then translated them to Chinese. In fact all these translations became a valuable contribution of Bengal to Chinese knowledge.

The next great Chinese traveller to India as well to the territory of present day Bangladesh was Yi Jing. He came here in 671 A.D. and for 30 years travelled in India. In this period he visited the territory of Bangladesh once. At the end he wrote travel books on the region and crafted a basic dictionary of Sanskrit for Chinese monks and mendicants who intended to travel to this region.

Interestingly, from what is present day Bangladesh and indeed what is Dhaka district, a Bengali monk known as Atisha Dipankar himself travelled to Tibet in China as early as 1038. He was invited by the king of the then Tibet. He walked to the borders of Tibet passing Nepal. He took Bengali Buddhist disciples with him and stayed in China for 17 years and died there. Atisha became a sacred monk in Buddhist history.

The chord of friendship and co-operation that bound these two people – Chinese and Bengalis 2400 years back has been inspiring. The visit of Chinese President H.E. Xi Jinping will indeed reinforce our mutual bonds further in new areas too.

Ashfaqur Rahman is a former Bangladesh Ambassador to China.



Xi Jinping Speaks to Western Returned Scholars Association

Dr. Mahbub Ullah



China is building socialism with Chinese characteristics. In this road to socialism with Chinese characteristics two major policy thrusts are playing the key role, namely, reforms and opening up. The questions to be asked: why reforms and why opening up? China is at the moment the second largest economy in the world. Faster economic growth and accelerated reduction of poverty has been possible due to reforms and opening up. China has been a victim of imperialist encirclement, which kept China isolated. China could not take advantages of gains from trade and technology transfer. Changed geopolitics since 1971 provided China opportunities for opening up. The policy of opening up took concrete shape with the beginning of reforms in 1978 under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping. Setting up special economic zones in the coastal areas and allowing foreign private investment provided China oppor-

tunities to learn about advanced technologies and the art of efficient management. In the rural areas introduction of production responsibility system gave farmers incentives to grow more output. Under this system farmers were granted freedom to sell surplus output in the market. The process of marketization became visible first in the rural areas. All these apparently capitalist type features created confusion among many genuinely socialist minded persons that China was abandoning socialism. However, this was not the case. Before revolution China was a semi-feudal and semi-colonial society. Transition to socialism in such a country is bound to be complex and lengthy, even peculiar too. China could not build socialism in one go without having strong foundation of advanced productive forces. Development of productive forces called for market incentives in many areas. The theoretical premise is that an advanced production relation cannot be realized on the foundation of backward productive forces. It is quite natural that certain negative features may appear in the society. As we all know, it was predicted that opening windows would bring flies and mosquitoes. Despite isolated negative tendencies, the creative development of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong thought in the form of socialism with Chinese characteristics has elevated China to a new height as it stands now.

China's opening up policy also includes sending Chinese students to advanced capitalist countries to acquire advanced knowledge in science, technology and other disciplines. The importance of foreign returned scholars and Chinese overseas scholars have been highlighted in a speech captioned 'Right Time to Innovate and Make Dreams Come True' by Xi Jinping, President of China. This speech is contained in a book titled The Governance of China published by the Foreign Languages Publishing Co. Ltd, Beijing. Myself being an academician I found the speech very enlightening. Admittedly, the whole book is a treasure for learning. The emphasis on innovation and making dreams come true is recognition of the imperatives of development process. Harvard Professor Solow in his growth model gave innovation the central role. Economies tend to stagnate without innovation due to operation of the law of diminishing



Few members of Western Returned Scholars Association.



Officials of Western Returned Scholars Association.

returns. The way out is innovation. Xi Jinping keeps on emphasizing the importance of innovation for making China dream true. First, Xi Jinping expects foreign returned and overseas scholars to adhere to patriotism. Second, he hopes them to study hard. Third, he hopes them to be more innovative and creative. Fourth, he hopes them to work for dynamic exchanges with other countries.

Xi Jinping also narrated the history of the Western Returned Scholars Association. He says, "Founded 100 years ago when

the survival of the nation was at stake, the Western Returned Scholars Association practiced patriotism by organizing its members to participate in patriotic and democratic movements and join the cause for national salvation and people's liberation, thus becoming a famous patriotic association for democracy and science at that time. ...Since the beginning of China's reform and opening up, the Association has energetically carried out the serve the country program," making itself a people's organization dedicated to socialism with Chinese characteristics. In 2003, with approval from the central authorities, the Association was given an additional name – the Chinese Overseas-educated Scholars Association – with its scope of operation expanded to cover the entire country and its members spreading all over the world."

As we read the about the evolution of the Association we see that all foreign educated scholars of China, whether they are living in the country or abroad, carry importance to the nation. Xi Jinping says, "If you decide to stay abroad we will support you in serving the country in various ways. All of you should remember that wherever you are you are a member of the Chinese family; the country and the people back home always care about their sons and daughters, and your homeland is always a warm spiritual land for you." There is a lingering concern in the third world countries about brain drain. But the Chinese leadership has adopted a very pragmatic policy regarding scholars deciding to stay abroad. In a globalized world scholars can serve their nation even staying abroad, provided they are imbued with the spirit of patriotism. The Chinese state commits to support them in various ways.

To me the most fascinating part of this speech is Xi Jinping's emphasis on hard study. He has called upon the foreign educated scholars to keep the perseverance and diligence in reading as related in stories of Confucius, Sun Jing and Su Qin, Kuang Heng, Che Yin and Sun Kang. He also emphasizes upon learning from other people's practical experience. The name of ancient Chinese scholars and philosophers referred by Xi Jinping were all arduous readers. Among them, story of one scholar may be mentioned to press home the point about their persistence in reading and study. Sun Jing of the Han Dynasty (206 BC – 220 AD) loved reading. He tied his hair to a roof beam to prevent himself from falling asleep when reading. Very few state leaders are found urging upon scholars to read following ancient scholars, who maintained serious reading habit under difficult circumstances. In our country there is the example of Scholar Dr. Muhammad Shahidullah who prayed to God to extend his life so that he could read more. Xi Jinping's speech successfully drives home the point that Chinese scholars, irrespective of the fact whether they live in the country or stay abroad have a great role to play for China's modernization and fulfilling the China dream.

Dr. Mahbub Ullah is a former Chairman and Professor of the Department of Development Studies, University of Dhaka.

Visit of the Chinese President: Seizing the Opportunity

Dr. Mustafizur Rahman



The upcoming visit of the Chinese President H.E. Mr. Xi Jinping has justifiably given rise to a lot of excitement and expectations in Bangladesh. There are valid reasons for this.

China is the single most important trading partner of Bangladesh – according to trade map data, in 2015 China's export to Bangladesh was to the tune of about 13.9 billion USD. Indeed, over the past years China has gradually replaced India as Bangladesh's most important import-sourcing country. Bangladesh's export-oriented industries depend significantly on import of cotton, fabrics, equipments, iron and steel from China; Bangladesh's domestic enterprises depend on Chinese machineries; a large part of consumption demand is met from imports of Chinese consumer goods. Thus, both domestic market-oriented and export-oriented sectors in Bangladesh have come to rely, to a large extent, on Chinese imports. Indeed, Bangladesh is not alone in this ascendancy of China as a trading partner. China has emerged

as the preeminent trading counterpart of India, with Indian imports from China exceeding 61.6 billion USD in 2015.

As is known, on the basis of purchasing power parity, China now ranks as the number one economy in the world. Its imports amount to 1,682 billion USD; Chinese overseas investment was 127.6 billion USD in 2015. Many developing economies are taking advantage of closer economic ties with China, particularly those in Asia and Africa. Thus, the critically important factor from the Bangladesh perspective is whether she is being able to benefit by deepening economic cooperation with the fast growing Chinese economy, through increasing exports to, and by drawing larger investment flows from, China. Till now, against the aforesaid import of over 13.9 billion USD, Bangladesh's export to China has been only about 804 million USD in 2015. This is only 0.05% of China's annual import of 1,682 billion USD for that year. From the Bangladesh perspective, the upcoming visit should be looked at as an opportunity to broaden and deepen bilateral relationship with China with a view to expand connectivities, most importantly in the areas of trade, investment, transport and people-to-people movement.

As a least developed country (LDC), Bangladesh is a beneficiary of the duty-free initiative of China in the WTO which offers duty-free market access to a large number of exports originating from the LDCs. Indeed, China was the first developing country to respond to the Hong Kong Ministerial Meeting's decision as regards duty-free market access to be given for at least 97 per cent of all goods exported by all LDCs (for 8036 items out of 8285 items at 8-digit level). This duty-free access, however, leaves out a number of items exported from Bangladesh to China. The upcoming visit is an opportunity to request China, to offer, on a non-reciprocal basis, duty-free market access for all goods exported by Bangladesh to China, under the LDC-friendly rules of origin (for example, 25 per cent domestic value addition requirement).

Attracting Chinese investment that target the Chinese market (as also the global market) is key to reducing bilateral trade deficit with China, by taking advantage of the growing import market of China. However, the major impediment to expanding Bangladesh's export to China is associated with supply-side constraints in Bangladesh. From this view point, Chinese investment in Bangladesh



leaves a lot of opportunities to be tapped. In 2015, FDI from China to Bangladesh was worth a mere 70.0 million USD out of a gross total of 2.7 billion USD (2.6 per cent). FDI flow to the country; if FDI flow from Hong Kong (worth 174.0 million) is added to this, combined flow would account for 10 per cent of the inward FDI flow to Bangladesh in 2015. Total FDI stock, till 2015, from China and Hong Kong (859.0 million USD) was only 6.6 per cent of Bangladesh's total FDI stock of 12.9 billion USD. A large part of Chinese FDI is concentrated in one sector – textiles and weaving (about two-thirds). There is now an opportunity to stimulate and encourage Chinese investment by attracting Chinese investors in a big way, particularly in special economic zones (SEZs), of which Bangladesh has already offered a dedicated one to China. Favourable business environment can also be created to encourage Chinese investment in non-SEZ areas. Long term agreements can be reached with China, in addition to the ongoing one, in areas of infrastructure-building including power generation and transport connectivity to remove some of the key bottlenecks that undermine competitiveness of production enterprises in Bangladesh. Duty-free offer of India to Bangladesh also creates opportunity for Chinese (as also Indian) investment in Bangladesh targeting the Indian market. China's excess supply capacity and the declining competitiveness of some of her sunset industries also open up investment opportunities for Chinese FDI in Bangladesh. As an LDC, under the WTO decision on Services Waiver, Bangladesh is set to get preferential market access in some segments of the services market in the developed countries. The decision of the Nairobi WTO Ministerial meeting has allowed special treatment for pharmaceutical exports from the LDCs such as Bangladesh (DF market access, waiver from licensing/patenting obligations etc. till 2031). These should create new opportunities for Chinese FDI in Bangladesh. Such avenues of investment possibilities may be highlighted during the visit of the Chinese President.

The BCIM-Economic Corridor (BCIM-EC) is an important initiative which could open up new opportunities for Bangladesh, not only through development of economic zones and activities along the corridor, but also by opening up the large hinterlands of Southern China and North-East India to gateways offered by Bangladeshi ports of Chittagong, Mongla and Paira (and the proposed deep-sea port in the Bay of Bengal if and when this materialises). Connecting with the One Belt, One Road (OBOR) initiative through various routes, to ensure seamless transport connectivity with China, India and Southern Asian region, could enable Bangladesh to translate her comparative advantages into competitive advantages through cost-effective movement of goods, development of value and supply chains. This could help emergence of Bangladesh as a regional transport hub, creating opportunities for significant export of services.

Transfer of technology could be yet another opportunity from the view point of deepening Bangladesh-China bilateral relationship. Bangladesh is now at a stage where she will need to graduate from a 'factor-driven economy' to a 'productivity-driven' economy. Here also, China's support will be welcome. Chinese assistance in revitalising such industries as jute, as also some others, could help Bangladesh remain competitive in the regional and global markets of these goods.

Support from the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), established at the initiative of China (of which Bangladesh is a founding member and is the recipient of AIIB's very first loan in developing her power sector) could also be harnessed to mobilise funds towards the much-needed infrastructure development in Bangladesh. A recent World Bank study shows that, Bangladesh will need more than a hundred billion dollars over the next decade to develop her infrastructure in power, road/rail transport, electricity grid and transmission lines etc. Bangladesh has already shown keen interest in getting Chinese support for a number of projects including those relating to expansion and modernisation of Mongla port facilities, extension of underground mining operation at Bara Pukuria, construction of coal-powered thermal plant, conversion of meter-gauge to broad-gauge track from Akhaura to Sylhet, BPDB's pre-payment metering project and construction of marine drive expressway in the southern coastal belt. These projects, worth about 6.0 billion USD, if concluded in terms favourable to Bangladesh, will contribute to Bangladesh's development. China, with its huge forex surplus funds and formidable skills and technical knowhow could be a key partner of Bangladesh in going forward in building the needed infrastructure for the twenty-first century.

It is Bangladesh's good fortune that she is neighbor to two of the rising global economic powerhouses – China and India. Deepening economic ties with these two economies should be at the centre of Bangladesh's strategies in going forward. Thus, from the Bangladesh perspective, the upcoming visit of the Chinese President ought to be seen as an opportunity to realise her ambition of graduating from the lower middle-income to the upper middle-income status of development. Keeping this transformative journey in the purview, Bangladesh should explore all possible avenues to seize the opportunity offered by the upcoming visit of the Chinese President to Bangladesh.

Dr. Mustafizur Rahman, *Executive Director, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Bangladesh.*

Political Economy of Bangladesh- China Relations: Current Trends and Future Direction

Prof. Ataur Rahman



Introduction:

China's 'peaceful rise' as a global power and increasing engagements in its South Asian neighborhood provide the principal dynamics to Bangladesh-China relations. This paper treats political and economic relations in single context as they are intertwined and mostly reflected in high level political visits of two countries where economic promises and commitments form the substance or rhetoric of cooperation. The 40th anniversary of Bangladesh and China ties witnessed spectacular transformation by 2015. Trade between the two countries has grown rapidly, making China Bangladesh's largest trading partner, with the two-way trade accounting more than \$12 billion. Although Chinese investment in Bangladesh is still low, a number of Bangladesh's mega projects, including the Padma Bridge, power stations, highways, roads and tunnels were given to Chinese companies. The

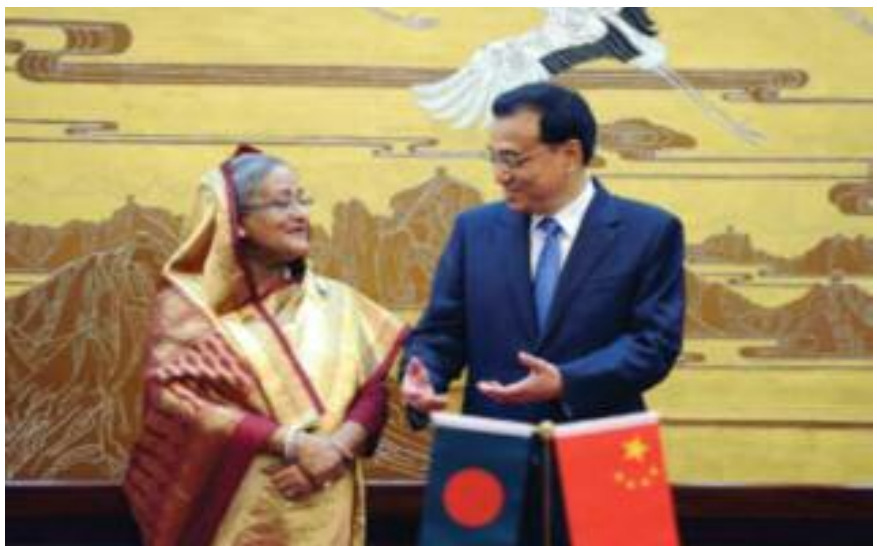
Agreement on 'Deep Sea Port' which was supposed to be signed during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's landmark visit to China in June 2014 could not materialize. But by all indicators, China is fast becoming the most important partner of Bangladesh's development, connectivity and economic progress.

Political Relations

A remarkable aspect in China- Bangladesh political relations from political economy perspective is that changes in regimes in both countries did not affect the relations rather they continued to grow from strength to strength. In fact, there is a noticeable continuity in China's relations with Bangladesh over the years. Today Bangladesh under Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina seems to be inclined more towards the 'East' envisioning future course more towards China than the 'West'. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina undertook the first high-profile five-day official visit to China in March 2009. The much anticipated high level talks between Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina with her Chinese counterpart Wen Jiabao, yielded in a crucial stepping stone in Bangladesh's "comprehensive partnership" with Beijing. The landmark second visit was made in June 2014 that dealt with a spectrum of issues significant for both the countries. During her stay in China from 6th June to 11th June, the Bangladesh Premier met with several key personnel including Premier Li Keqiang, President Xi Jinping and Chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) Yu Zhengsheng. During the visit, various bilateral issues were discussed with the Chinese leadership. Economic issues dominated the agenda, more specifically the Chinese financial support for mega infrastructure projects.

Economic Cooperation

The most powerful dynamic of Bangladesh-China relations over the past decades has come from economic ties and interdependence. China very appropriately looks at Bangladesh as a trading nation and a "bridge between South and Southeast Asia". China's phenomenal rise as the



Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina & Chinese Premier Li Keqiang

world's second largest economic power is indicated by its huge economy and holding 3 trillion dollars in reserves. Bilateral trade relations between the two countries were growing steadily. The volume of trade increased almost six-fold in 10 years reaching to a new height of almost \$12 billion in 2014, although trade imbalance is very high in favor of China. The trade imbalance is a big worry now despite China's zero tariff treatment to 4762 products. China is keen in relocating its business and has sought land from the government for a special economic zone for its companies. In fact, a "high wave" of Chinese investment in Bangladesh in the next five years in critical areas, like infrastructure, energy development, and manufacturing will definitely take China-Bangladesh relations to a new trajectory never imagined before. The formidable expansion of Asian infrastructure projects is a new development that gives increased importance to the Bay of Bengal for China. New ports, air routes, roads, rail systems and pipelines now traverse Asia from West to the East and making access to the landmass of Eurasia and Indian Ocean littoral much easier. Bangladesh is an important part of China's "Belt and Road," concept through the overland component – via the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar corridor – and as a port hub for the Maritime Silk Road. Of course, China is emphasizing specifically on the BCIM initiative in this context for China's connectivity plan.

Strategic – Security Cooperation

The importance of China in Bangladesh security calculus adds a new dimension and exemplifies uniqueness of bilateral cooperation between the two countries. Although the current government in Dhaka led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was favorably inclined toward India, the regime continued its policy of defense cooperation with China. The recent visit of Bangladesh Army Chief to China shows the importance of exchange and cooperation in the security arena. The Bangladesh Army has been equipped with Chinese tanks, and its Navy has an ambitious plan to acquire a number of frigates, large patrol aircraft, patrol craft, two landing craft utility (LCU), hydrographic unit, salvage vessel, missile boats equip some ships with missiles, and high-value submarines in the next five years. The rising importance of the Bay of Bengal in recent years is also linked to growing assertion of India as naval power, and ambitious modernization of its navy, partly in response to China and partly as a power rising on the world stage. Security relations in the bay will assume more importance for Bangladesh in the coming years vis-à-vis India, China and the United States – the triangle which has to be dealt with cautiously.

Future Direction

Will Bangladesh be able to engage China in creative and competitive cooperation and sustain a long-term relationship with this second most powerful country of the world? How will 'India angle' affect the relationship? What will be the role of the United States which many observers feel is already struggling to retain its influence in the region? It is in this context, Bangladesh's relations with China, their goals, motivations and future direction are critical. Bangladesh is currently attracting attention catalyzed by its strategic links, resource endowments and overall geopolitical significance. The focus is more on bridging infrastructure and broader connectivity gaps created by rapid development and the increasing volume of goods, services, people, capital flows between economies of the bay region. Despite the power gap between China and Bangladesh, the two countries have shown clear commitment over the years to building "a positive, cooperative and comprehensive relationships" that will surely pick up the momentum in the coming years.

Bangladesh's relations with China over the next decade clearly present a host of opportunities. Never in history has the Middle Kingdom emerged as an indispensable economic partner to Bangladesh as it stands today. Many people think that Bangladesh's comprehensive economic partnership with China could help Bangladesh become a manufacturing - trading nation pushing the latter's growth trajectory at a new height. Bangladesh's diplomacy at this stage needs to be highly creative and anchored on national consensus. At the same time, Bangladesh needs to be careful that its ties with China should in no way pose any threat to Indian security in the region nor jeopardize relations with the United States that intends to re-engage and play a more constructive role in Asia. But managing a rising global power requires a clear strategy, new and creative thinking. Traditional diplomatic strategies and instruments are not helpful for managing relations with China. It is therefore critical for Bangladesh to keep the big picture and to adopt a strategic long term rather than a tactical short term approach with China. Indeed, Bangladesh's strategic culture must adapt to the new realities of power and balance- between the pragmatism of Kautilya and idealism of Sun Tzu, in order to evolve a more engaged foreign policy and ensure stability, security and prosperity of the nation in a fast-changing regional and global order.



China's foreign policy under Xi: Softer, stronger

Some Aspects of China's Foreign Policy and Bangladesh

Ambassador Munshi Faiz Ahmad



Like all other countries China's Foreign Policy also is an extension of its domestic policies. The most important or basic national policy of China is to deepen "Economic Reforms and Opening Up to the Outside World" with a view to sustain a fast pace of economic development and growth and constantly improve the standard of living of the Chinese people. Domestically, she wants to establish a harmonious society based on more balanced growth in different parts of the country and reducing income inequality. Internationally, China promotes the establishment of harmonious world based on win-win cooperation, inclusiveness, equality and dignity.

China has for most periods in history been a great and powerful nation, a great civilization. However, since the middle of the 19th century till middle of the 20th century, China degenerated into chaos and instability. The Chinese revolution of 1947 saw the country trying to regroup and seek to bring back its place of importance in the world. After years of trial and error she struck a miraculous new path of "Economic Reforms and Opening Up to the Outside World" in 1978. These reforms suddenly released the great energy and potentials of the Chinese nation and put it on course for growth at unprecedented pace. Now President Xi Jinping is encouraging the Chinese people to pursue a "China Dream"- a vision for once again making China one of the greatest nations on earth. China's growth at break-neck speed over the last almost four decades, has witnessed her catching up with and surpassing many countries in development in various fields.

Covering about 9.6 million Km², China is the second largest country in the world in terms of landmass. She is the world's most populous country with about 1.38 billion people. China is the world's second largest economy (behind USA) in nominal GDP, valued at US\$13.98 trillion. However, in PPP terms, China's economy is already the largest in the world surpassing the USA with a total value of US\$20.85 trillion. In recent accounts, her per capita GDP (PPP) was (US\$15,095). The nominal per capita GDP was US\$10,040. With total exports of US\$2.28 trillion and imports of US\$1.68 trillion, China is the largest exporter country in the world and one of the largest importers as well. She is the largest trading partner of more than 120 countries in the world including Bangladesh. China holds the highest foreign currency reserve in the world with a total of more than US\$3.3 trillion, most of which is in US treasury bonds. After more than three decades of sustained double digit economic growth, the pace of growth seems to have slowed considerably in recent years. Last year saw a 6.9% growth, still the fastest growing major economy. The slowdown is partly attributed to a conscious effort on the part of the Chinese government to cool the economy down and prevent overheating. The government also realized that export driven growth could not be sustained indefinitely. They decided on some structural change in the growth model. While continuing to emphasize manufacturing and exports as major pillars of growth, special emphasis has been attached to consumption as a new major driver of growth. The government

is also trying to address the issues of balance in geographical and urban-rural distribution of growth as well as that of growing income inequality.

China has not only grown in terms of manufacturing and trade and in terms of GDP and per capita income over the years, she has also witnessed tremendous improvement in the standard of living of the people, infrastructures, civic amenities, housing, education, health care, science and technology including spread of ICT. China is now among the top three nations in terms of space technology.



She is among the top nations in terms of research and innovation in medical science. China's progress in agricultural science and technology has also been miraculous. China now is the world's biggest infrastructure builder and is also one of the world's biggest exporters of infrastructure. She boasts of three fastest super computers among the top five in the world. Today China spends more than any other country on education and scientific research. She is considered as the third strongest military power in the world behind the U.S.A and Russia.

With the size of the economy, its importance as the topmost trading nation in the world, the fast pace of its growth and the huge reserve and debts held by it, give China an unparalleled position in its potential or capacity to impact world economy and financial markets. China is partnering with other countries in initiatives like SCO, FTAAP, AIIB, BRICS and the NDB. These initiatives are not aimed at challenging the existing world orders in international cooperation and finance. They mainly seek to enrich the existing order by providing alternatives and new options, to create some new space and fill up voids and inadequacies.

With growing economic strength and clout, China's role in international efforts at maintaining world peace, stability and security is also becoming increasingly important. Although China lags behind the USA by far in military power, her military capabilities are also growing steadily. China is aware of the fact that it would not be possible for her to catch up with and challenge the USA in terms of military power in the foreseeable future. Therefore, they are focusing more on modernizing the military in terms of technology and equipment with a view to bolstering her defence and deterrent capabilities, without challenging the predominance of the USA as a global and regional power in her neighborhood, particularly in the Pacific.

China's Foreign Policy is shaped by the paramount importance attached by her on the need for sustained economic growth, allowing her to become a "moderately prosperous nation" by 2030. To achieve this, they need sustained socio-economic stability at home and equally importantly, a peaceful and stable external environment. Therefore, Chinese leaders will try to avoid major conflicts to the best of their abilities. All China's bilateral, regional and global foreign policy initiatives including "new great power relations", "One belt one road" (OBOR) etc are geared to the pursuit of cooperation and friendship aimed at bolstering mutual trust and confidence, ensuring stability and security, avoiding miscalculations and conflicts. China wants to establish networks of connectivity with numerous alternative routes for their strategic supplies like coal, oil, iron ore, soybean, corn etc. In their pursuit of seamless connectivity with the rest of the world, OBOR is a major umbrella initiative which encompasses the various regional and sub-regional cooperative initiatives like SCO, FTAAP, BRICS, BCIM-EC, Trans Himalayan Development Forum, etc.

In recent years, there seems to be increasing tension in the East China and South China seas involving China, Japan and few South East Asian countries. But many observers see it as the product of US pivot to Asia, partially aimed at containing China. They believe that countries challenging Chinese claims of sovereignty to various islands in these waters may



be instigated or encouraged by the US and is actually a proxy for US-China rivalry. However, in recent months there seems to be a perceptible cooling in the tensions in this regard. Parties have shown greater willingness to engage bilaterally in these matters.

China's efforts to establish strong cooperative relations with different countries should not be seen as her effort to recruit support in her favour, against the USA or any other countries. She seriously and genuinely pursues a policy of autonomous relations of friendship and cooperation with neighbours as well as other countries.

Bangladesh enjoys excellent relations with China. The "Closer Comprehensive Partnership of Cooperation" between the two countries seems to be growing steadily. The proposed visit to Bangladesh by President Xi Jin Ping of China in mid October this year is a testimony to this growing partnership. China is perhaps Bangladesh's most important partner in her efforts at sustained economic development. She is the largest source of imports for Bangladesh covering important items like complete plants, machineries, equipment, Chemical and other raw materials, agricultural technology (hybrid crops technology and seeds, modern agricultural equipments), military supplies etc. China has also been a major partner in infrastructure building (roads and highways, bridges, power plants, fertilizer factories, coal mine etc). Chinese investment in Bangladesh has already reached almost US\$2 billion and is growing. The proposed exclusive industrial parks or special economic zones will give a new fillip to investment from China. Cooperation between Bangladesh and China in the field of education, capacity building and human resources development is also very significant. China is an important partner of Bangladesh in various international fora.

Some major recent projects, ongoing and in the pipeline, symbolizing cooperation between the two countries are Shahjalal Fertilizer factory, Water Treatment Plants, Padma Bridge project, a 1320 MW coal fired power plant, Multi Lane Road tunnel under the Karnaphuli river in Chittagong, Broad Gauge Railway from Chittagong to Cox's Bazar (extended upto Gundum), Exclusive Industrial Parks, construction, maintenance and expansion of port facilities and others. A major challenge in furthering economic cooperation between the two countries is the slow decision making process.

Bangladesh on its part should continue to follow a policy of autonomous relations of Friendship and cooperation with China as also with other important partners like India, USA, Japan, RoK, without being unduly worried about "what others may think". If we continue to pursue autonomous relations keeping our national interests in mind, an appropriate balance will fall into place in the process. Since potentially China has greater capacity to cater to our development needs on competitive terms compared to any other country, we need to do our best to tap this potential.

Ambassador Munshi Faiz Ahmad is currently a chairman of Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS).



G20 2016 CHINA

二十国集团领导人杭州峰会 G20 HANGZHOU SUMMIT

中国·杭州 2016年9月4-5日

HANGZHOU CHINA 4-5 SEPTEMBER 2016



Chinese President Xi Jinping and other leaders of the Group of 20 (G20) members, some guest countries and international organizations pose for a group photo ahead of the opening ceremony of the G20 summit in Hangzhou, capital of east China's Zhejiang Province, Sept. 4, 2016. [Photo/Xinhua]

China assumes leading role in global economic management

Tim Collard

President Xi Jinping used his welcome speech to the leaders assembled for the Hangzhou G20 summit to demonstrate that China is steadily growing into its new role as a leading player in global economic management. He made it very clear that there is no room at a hugely influential forum like the G20 for what he called "empty talk," and that discussions must lead to agreements and agreements to action.

This is quite a revolutionary concept in diplomacy. In my twenty years of diplomatic experience it all too often happened that an agreement on a text of a joint communiqué was seen as an acceptable substitute for an action programme and that the wording of such documents concentrated more on avoiding conflict than on providing a basis for moving forward. President Xi has recognised that this will no longer do, and, what is more, is prepared to make his point publicly. The state of the global economy requires more than warm words, mutual flattery and baseless optimism.

The Chinese leader spoke of "a crucial juncture" in the world's affairs. He addressed the issues of persistently slack demand, slowdowns in international trade and investment and dangerously uncontrollable fluctuations in financial markets. And there are no 'magic bullets' in sight: "Growth drivers", he said, "from the previous generation of technological progress are gradually losing strength, while a new round of technological and industrial development has yet to gain momentum." Of course this view fits perfectly with China's domestic economic program, and it is not unlikely that Xi was offering the Chinese approach as a blueprint that other countries might wish to follow - and why not, seeing that China is managing the decline in growth better than most?

So, what did President Xi's proposal for G20 nations might look like? In the usual well-ordered Chinese fashion, he set it out in the form of five key points:

- 1) the macroeconomic policies of G20 members should be more deeply and strongly coordinated, jointly pursuing growth and financial stability (rather than trying to steal a march on each other by seeking short-term advantages):
- 2) G20 nations should prioritise innovation as a driver of growth, collaborating closely to develop mutually beneficial growth engines:



China's President Xi Jinping speaks at a news conference after the closing of G20 Summit in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, China, September 5, 2016.

3) member states should cooperate to improve international economic governance and ensure proper mutual compliance arrangements:

4) all major economic powers should work towards a more open world economy, and make concerted efforts to promote the liberalization and facilitation of trade and investment. (This runs parallel to China's focus on trading infrastructure by means of the One Belt One Road program and

recognises that there is still a way to go in the field of trade finance.)

5) all parties should work towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, aimed at ensuring that growth is directed towards positive social and environmental development.

This last point is particularly significant in the light of China's decision, in company with the USA, to ratify the Paris Agreement on combating climate change. It was often felt, especially by developing nations, that there was a conflict between the requirement to lower greenhouse gas emissions and legitimate aspirations to industrial development and catching up with the developed world. China has here given a lead, by making a clear commitment to combine development with environmental protection while also with ensuring that growth is fairly distributed among the population, so as to avoid the emergence of socially damaging inequality.

Another significant point made by the Chinese president was that it was time for emerging-market economies and developing countries to strengthen their role in international affairs, now that so many of the larger economic powers are mired in economic stagnation.

Prominent among the leaders present in Hangzhou were those of the BRICS countries, whom President Xi addressed separately in the margins. The countries of the developing world are rightly concerned about protectionism, which is a constant temptation in times of economic uncertainty, but one which must be resisted. The establishment and entrenchment of an inclusive, rule-based and open world economy - ensuring a level playing field between developed and developing countries - was a key theme of the President's address. Xi also emphasised the need for reform of the governance structure of the IMF and the World Bank to ensure broader-based representation and influence in these central institutions.

China cannot, of course, take sole responsibility for saving and supporting the world. But President Xi's address made it clear that the nation's re-emergence as a major world power will be matched by a proportionate assumption of responsibility for the world's future. And it shows that President Xi Jinping is not a person to evade difficult questions, either at home or internationally.

Tim Collard is a columnist with China.org.cn.



China: Economy, Governance and Relations with Bangladesh

Prof. Selina Mohsin



In three decades of meteoric economic transformation, China has regained its historic position as a leading and prosperous global power. This followed a century of humiliation and disasters such as the 1890 Boxer rebellion and Japanese invasions. From 1978, with Deng Xiao Ping as leader, China entered a sustained period of headlong growth which has raised hundreds of millions from poverty and massively transformed the lives of its nearly one in five of the world's population. It has out-performed its former Russian mentor, and has learnt lessons from the way the Soviet Union fell apart in 1991 through a failure to adapt an over rigid and increasingly inefficient economic model. Even before that Soviet collapse, Deng had reversed Mao's dictum and declared 'Poverty is not socialism'. He set China on a new course which focussed on growth and combined both Communist party rule and capitalism.

Not only China itself but much of the rest of the world has benefitted from China's sharp boost to global growth. It was particularly helpful after 2007 when the western financial crisis threatened global depression or worse. The world therefore all the more watches China's continued rapid transformation with fascination, although sometimes mixed with apprehension. On the one hand some countries are suspicious of China's military strength and national assertiveness although on the other many more realise how much their own development needs high levels of Chinese trade and investment to continue. If, as some experts fear, the effort and costs of upgrading and re-structuring the Chinese economy, at a time of already high levels of government and corporate debt, were to run into difficulties, such as a significant financial crisis, much of the rest of the world would also suffer. China's recent slowdown in growth has already hit commodity markets and many emerging economies are heavily dependent on commodity exports to China.

Some slowing down of China's growth rate was widely expected. Experts see this as almost inevitable and indeed desirable as an economy matures. But the Chinese leadership is determined to continue an enviable rate of development. They accept that this means that the earlier high growth model, which focussed on industrial exports and very high levels of construction and infrastructural investment, must be considerably adapted. For some time, as labour shortages developed and wages rose, some low tech and labour intensive industries, such as textiles and garment manufacture had started moving to Vietnam, Bangladesh or Cambodia. Problems of pollution, industrial over capacity, low productivity and misplaced capital investment have also to be urgently tackled. At the same time, population ageing and the growth of the middle class in numbers and aspiration all makes it imperative to switch more resources and employment to expansion of the services and welfare sectors. This is an immense and very demanding agenda for change. President Xi is determined to steer the Chinese society and economy to a new form of modern growth with sustainable stability.

China's government has a Prime Minister, central ministries and provincial structures. But officials also have commu-



nist party membership and are subject to party discipline. It is the Communist Party of China which gives overall direction to the government and to society as a whole. It has its own hierarchy headed by the Politbureau and Central Committee. President Xi, like his predecessors, stands at the apex of both party and government, being both General Secretary of the CCP and Head of State. But his powers have been extended still further to ensure unity and efficient implementation of party and government policy at all levels of administration for the vast tasks ahead. He chairs the Central Military Commission and heads a new National Security Commission commanding the internal security apparatus. Last April he became Commander in Chief of a new Joint Operations Centre. New 'Central Leading Groups' have been established for key areas of policy, with President Xi taking direct personal charge of several of them.

As promised at his inauguration, the President has directed a still ongoing, massive anti corruption purge, removing even senior figures, together with measures designed to restore proper levels of discipline in the administration and party cadres, correcting all too frequent examples of arrogance and arbitrary behaviour at local levels. As regards the economy a further gigantic fiscal stimulus has succeeded in preventing too sharp a growth slowdown and efforts are being made to improve efficiency and productivity, especially in the still dominant state owned industries. Huge resources are meanwhile being devoted to a wider national strategy, including the development of rail and roads to Europe across Central Asia, as also to the 'China Pakistan Economic Corridor' giving western China more direct logistical access to the Pakistan coast and ocean routes through a new Chinese built and operated port of Gwadar. At the same time Xi has directed an upgrading of the armed forces, cutting the size of the army while modernising it and expanding the navy and air force to enable China to project force beyond its own borders and region. Such centralised power to set policy and direct funds undoubtedly helps accelerate China's development, particularly as Beijing has long been ready to attract foreign investment and technology and to use experts trained in foreign universities while building up its own expertise and impressive research capabilities.

For over three decades China had prioritised Bangladesh for mutual collaboration. From the mid 1970s diplomatic exchanges between Bangladesh and China enabled the two countries to forge close ties. There are numerous bilateral agreements promoting trade, loans, culture, education and other areas of importance. The Agreement on "Economic and Technical Cooperation" and the "Framework Agreement" on concessional loan provided by China to Bangladesh are two critical treaties signed by the two countries. However, trade has had a heavy imbalance in favour of China. For instance, Bangladesh's imports from China in 2006-7 amounted to US\$ 3 billion while Bangladesh's exports to China were as low as US\$ 200 million. To narrow this huge trade gap China, as a signatory to the 'Asia Pacific Free Trade Agreement' (APTA), extended duty free benefits to 4,700 products from Bangladesh for a long period and is now widening to include 17 more products, such as leather goods and tobacco. China has become the largest single trade partner of Bangladesh. Its economic assistance also extends to investment in Bangladesh like developing natural gas resources.

Bangladesh receives huge military aid, training and technology from China. The year 2005 was celebrated as "China-Bangladesh Friendship Year". Recently China has consented to extend a soft loan of US\$10 billion for 13 projects. For its part, Bangladesh has agreed to establish 'Special Economic Zones' for China and the 'Look East Policy' of Bangladesh has given impetus to a project to develop a highway between Chittagong and China's landlocked South Western province of Yunnan. If this negotiation succeeds the project will give Yunnan access to the Bay of Bengal and also ease Bangladesh's connectivity while increasing its trade opportunities with the Mekong region and South East Asia.

Bangladesh is a relatively small country between two giants, India and China. Its geographical situation, large population and growing economy all give it significant importance to both its giant neighbours. Yet, given their mutual mixture of rivalry and cooperation, Bangladesh has to tread carefully. It wants cordial cooperation with both but needs to maintain equilibrium in its geo-political dynamics.

To conclude: Bangladesh considers China, a trustworthy ally and a close partner in its development agenda and people to people interaction. The current Ambassador of China to Bangladesh, H.E. Ma Mingqiang is a most effective diplomat in further strengthening this relationship for mutual benefit. .

This not only meets popular expectations in Bangladesh but also continues to reinforce the bonds of trust and cooperation between the two friendly nations.

Prof. Selina Mohsin is a former Ambassador of Bangladesh.

Economic and Trade Cooperation between China and Bangladesh: Current Trend and Future Prospects

Dr. Borhan Uddin Khan



In the course of decolonization that started at the end of the Second World War, the struggle for independence and liberation in Asia, Africa, and Latin America surged. The newly independent countries longed for equality in international relations. Echoing this historical trend, China, India and Myanmar jointly initiated the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. This was a major initiative in the history of international relations and a historic contribution to the building of a new type of just and equitable international relations. After the People's Republic of China had its seat restored in the United Nations in 1971, it was able to take part in the major international conferences and meetings; for instance, the 1972 Stockholm Conference on Human Environment and the third UN Conference on the Law of the Sea. In the first few years, however, China's contribution was mostly felt only in the political arena. This situation had changed in the late 1970s when China adopted a new policy to start economic reforms and opened its door to the world. Since the reform and opening-up, China has become an indispensable party in major international institutions and negotiations which not only strengthened China's political involvement but also reinforced its economic, social and cultural contributions.

Riding the wave of economic globalization, China has successfully built a socialist market economy and a corresponding legal system by drawing upon common international practices and the good experiences of other countries in the light of national circumstances. South Asian region, for various practical reasons, is very vital in China's foreign policy. In International relations, South Asia is undoubtedly emerging as an important region. After gaining independence from colonization, South Asian region faced many struggles and conflicts in comparison with other regions. It is a living place of billions of people and consists of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Maldives, and Sri Lanka. In 1985, leaders of these met in Dhaka for the first summit of SAARC and showed to the world that there exists a spectacular region, called South Asia. Among the world's great powers, China not only shares the closest border with South Asian countries but also has good trade relations with them and their relations are based on good neighborhood policy.

China is one of Bangladesh's near neighbor. China's border is 100 kilometers (approximately 60 miles) from Bangladesh in the north over the Himalayas. The historical attachments between the ancient territory of China and Bengal can be traced back to two thousand years ago. A number of factors, including the trade relationship through the southern Silk route, the exchange between these ancient cultures, and their knowledge and technologies have historically fostered the relationship. Since China recognized Bangladesh in October 1975, the countries have persistent promoted and deepened their political, economic, diplomatic and military relations.

The ascent of the bilateral relationship was dramatic and, in that way, China entered into a big way as a development partner in Bangladesh. Afterwards, Bangladesh's bilateral relationship with China has been guided by the key principles of China's foreign policy, which encompass the protection of sovereignty, the preservation of territorial integrity, the development of regional as well as international relations, and, thereby, ensuring international cooperation to advance domestic, socio-political, economic and cultural growth. The Sino-Bangladesh relationship has been termed by a Chinese expert as being a "trusted friendship" or "all-weather friendship".

In 2002, Bangladesh adopted a 'Look East' policy to maximize economic and strategic gains that could emerge from closer relations with eastern countries, especially China. While this shift in policy was primarily aimed at trade diversification, Bangladesh also sought closer relations with China. Marking the 30th anniversary of diplomatic relation, 2005 was declared a 'China- Bangladesh Friendship Year'. During Chinese Premier Wen Jibao's visit in April 2005, a 13 point Joint Communiqué on further strengthening of bilateral relations was signed, along with five agreements and two MoUs. China also offered to assist Bangladesh in water management, nuclear energy, trade and investment, training of security and defense personnel, as well as infrastructural development. The Joint Declaration agreed to promote development, multidimensional and multilevel trade, and economic cooperation, while also allowing the Joint Economic



China's President Xi Jinping (R) shakes hands with Bangladesh's President Abdul Hamid at a photo session prior to the Dialogue on Strengthening Connectivity Partnership at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse on November 8, 2014 in Beijing, China. (Photo : Kim Kyung-Hoon - Pool/Getty Images)

and Trade Commission to develop and expand potential bilateral trade. Both the countries have already concluded a wide range of agreements regarding agriculture, trade, transport and communications, energy, science and technology, and military cooperation. China has made significant contributions especially in the areas of infrastructure development, trade and economy of Bangladesh.

The economy of Bangladesh is largely dependent on agriculture. However, the Ready Made Garments (RMG) sector has emerged as the biggest earner of foreign currency. The textile industry accounts for over 82% of Bangladesh's annual exports, which are valued at close to 28.09 billion USD. With the dissolution of the Multi-Fiber Trade Agreement on 1 January 2005, which ended textile export quotas for countries such as Bangladesh, and with China's entry into the World Trade Organization, the garments industry of Bangladesh will now have to compete with China – the world's largest textile giant. China is considering the option of outsourcing textile jobs to Bangladesh where labor is available at half the cost, and with the comparative low wage levels. Chinese producers might also consider moving operation to Bangladesh. It has already emerged as the third largest trading partner of China in South Asia. While looking at the highlighted segments of Bangladesh-China bilateral trade, in 2003 alone, the total trade volume amounted to \$1.368 billion with an increase of 12.45% from 2002. Besides, bilateral trade between these two countries arrived at \$3 billion in 2005 from \$100 million in 2002. As of 2009, the volume of trade between the countries stood at about \$4.5 billion. Bilateral trade volume in 2011 reached \$8.26 billion, with an increase of 17% compared with 2010. Bangladeshi export to China reached \$449 million, an increase of 67.5%. According to local news reports, Chinese investment in Bangladesh in 2011 amounted to over \$200 million.

The year 2015 marked the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between Bangladesh and China. In the past four decades, China-Bangladesh relations have undergone a speedy transformation. Trade between the two countries has grown rapidly, making China Bangladesh's largest trading partner, with the two-way trade accounting for about \$12 billion in 2014. In the last five years, imports from China grew at about 20% and exports growth averaged at 40%.

A back-of-the-envelope calculation, considering a moderate exports and imports growth scenario, indicates that China-Bangladesh trade could reach \$ 30 billion.

Despite healthy trade links between the two countries, there exists a huge trade surplus in China's favor. To reduce the disparity, under the auspices of the Asia-Pacific Free Trade Agreement (AFTA), China removed tariff barriers to 84 types of import commodities from Bangladesh and has been working to reduce tariffs over the trade of jute and textiles, which are Bangladesh's main domestic products. Moreover, in 2014, China offered duty-free access to some 7800 Bangladeshi products as a 'goodwill gesture' in order to enhance economic ties between the two countries. Few collaborative projects between Bangladesh and China have been announced in the last four months of 2016. In March, China granted Bangladesh 150 million RMB (\$23.8 million) in order to meet the latter's needs for setting up vital economic and technical cooperation projects, in collaboration with China. Additionally, 860 million RMB (\$ 133 million) has been provided by China in the form of a soft loan for the setting up of a Bangladeshi project, aimed at bringing all government offices across the country under one network. This project has been titled 'Development of National ICT Infra-Network for Bangladesh Government Phase'. According to a statement released by Bangladesh's Economic Relations Division (ERD) under the Ministry of Finance, once this project is implemented, it will be possible to bring all government offices at district and sub-district levels under one network. This is also being seen as a stepping stone towards the implementation of current government Vision 2021.



Connectivity is essential to enhance mutual cooperation. In this regard, China and Bangladesh have been negotiating a highway project to connect Chittagong and Kunming through Myanmar. This highway would give Bangladesh an entry into the Mekong sub-region, which already includes China, accelerate trade and facilitate people-to-people contact. In 2012, Bangladesh has taken a move to construct the deep seaport on Sonadia Island under the country's south-eastern Cox's Bazar district. Bangladesh can play a major role in China's plan for reinforcing their trade routes, the 'Belt and Road' initiative. A network of ports has been established by China, called the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road that extends from Chinese coasts through Southeast Asia, the Indian Ocean, and the east coast of Africa and through the Mediterranean to Greece. The Chinese Government has taken up the 'One Belt One Road' initiative to revive the ancient Silk Road connecting the country with Central Asia, Europe, Africa, Middle East, Southeast Asia and South Asia. China has invested USD 40 billion in the Silk Road infrastructure fund. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) Economic Corridor are officially classified as "closely related to the Belt and Road Initiative". In addition, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), first proposed by China in October 2013, is a development bank dedicated to lending for projects regarding infrastructure. As of 2015, China announced that over one trillion Yuan (USD 160 billion) worth infrastructure projects are in the planning or construction phase. AIIB has approved 165 million U.S. dollars in loans for a Bangladesh project - the first batch of loan for the country from the China-led development bank.

One of the key challenges facing Bangladesh-China bilateral relationship is the existing high volume of trade gap between these countries. Since the very beginning of bilateral trade relationship, Bangladesh has long been suffering from huge trade deficits with China. Despite the power gap between China and Bangladesh, the two countries have shown clear commitment over the years to build "a positive, cooperative and comprehensive relationship" that would surely pick up the momentum in future. Indeed, Bangladesh's relations with China over the next decade clearly present a host of opportunities. It may be expected that in the coming years, Bangladesh and China will hopefully overcome the existing constraints in their relationship, and achieve a truly beneficial and strategic partnership, conducive to the establishment of a peaceful and prosperous South Asia. For this to occur, Bangladesh needs to ensure that its foreign policy is informed by a strategic vision as well by economic considerations that realistically gauge the direction of regional and international changes.

Dr. Borhan Uddin Khan, *Professor and Chairman, Department of Law, University of Dhaka.*

China-The tested friend and fore-runner of ancient civilization

Abul Hasan Chowdhury



China represents an ancient civilization. In defining itself as a Middle Kingdom it has enunciated a distinct philosophy of harmony and progress. World is indebted for many discoveries and inventions which has enriched mankind. The Great Wall of China is not merely a wonder it is also a reminder of a people committed to confront the hardest and seemingly insurmountable barriers. Without diluting its values China has enthusiastically engaged with the world 2000 years ago. Confucius expressed his delight in welcoming friends from a far.

Ties with Bangladesh are rooted in antiquity. Message of peace and tolerance carried from Bangladesh by the Saint Philosopher Atish Dipankar was exuberantly embraced and continues to be a glorious point of reference.

Over the past 2000 years many travelers and religious monks traveled to our part of the world. We find detailed descriptions of these visits from the writings of Fahien, Hiuen-Tsang and others.

Interaction with China and ancient India was multidimensional. It encompassed health, science, mathematics, astrology and architecture. Religion, to be more precise Buddhism played a significant role but interests of scholars varied widely leading to a deep engagement in ideas. There were exchange of thoughts and some Indian scholars held eminent positions in China as early as the 7th century.

Some historians have alluded to the primacy of trade which they considered preceded intellectual pursuits. One of the products keenly sought in India was silk. Apart from that porcelain and bamboo products was also popular in India. Modern day reference to Silk Road is an attempt to rekindle the historic silk route. It is now established that there were three silk routes. One runs from ancient central China to Europe cutting across northwest region of China and the Indian subcontinent.

Second, Zheng He a Muslim admiral made several voyages to Bangla landing in the port to the west- Chittagong. In one such visit he ceremonially had an audience with the Sultan of Bengal and gifts were exchanged.

Former Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Zhang Xiayi referred to a third silk road which was inseparably related to present Bangladesh.

The Ambassador writes “many scholars believe that this road has existed since 4th century BC..... It has a history of 2400 years longer than the northern silk road and maritime silk road.”

The discourse on connectivity which looms large in shaping our regional and bilateral relations springs from distilled knowledge of the past. The beneficial aspect overrides the concerns of implementing it. Huge trade, commerce, cultural and tourism possibility strongly beckons towards fast track action in this direction.

Modern China, India and Pakistan started its journey more or less at the same time. Chairman Mao famously said in 1949 “today China has stood up.” India and Pakistan shook of its colonial bondage in 1947. Early days saw great friendship and bonhomie between India and China. Events in 1962 clouded the relationship which is now being revived in fits and starts. Though both countries have uncomfortable baggage, they are increasingly conscious of the indispensability of the other. Pakistan in its early days was mired by its binding relations with the west and strenuously perused an unfriendly attitude towards China. It was a legendary Bengali statesman, Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy who as Prime Minister of Pakistan took the first step towards reaching out to China. It was during his premiership that Prime Minister Chou En Lai visited Pakistan. At Dhaka the welcome address was presented by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman – the young lieutenant of Mr. Suhrawardy. In fact Bangabandhu went to China in 1953 and was received by Chairman Mao.

Maulana Bhasani the iconic leader of the poor had structured a special relationship with China which was reflected in the philosophy of the party which he formed after severing his ties with Awami League.

Sheikh Hasina traveled China as leader of the opposition in 1993. Exactly forty years after Bangabandhu's visit to that great country. Breaking conventional protocol Sheikh Hasina was received at the Great Hall of the people by Hu Jin Tao,

at that time the youngest member of the politburo who went on to become the President of China.

In 1996 upon becoming the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina performed Umrah at Makkah Sharif and went to Madina Munawara for seeking blessings and prayers. However her first state visit was to China. President Ziaur Rahman, President H.M. Ershad and Prime Minister Khaleda Zia have visited China during their tenure. These visits have greatly defined a country to country friendship, not affected by change of Governments in either countries.

China has partnered in many socio economic projects and infrastructure. It has built six friendship bridges and gifted the magnificent Bangabandhu Convention Centre. The foundation stone laying was done by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and the Former Speaker of China in late 1990's. The project was completed in a record 13 months. Bangladesh's bilateral trade is the highest with China. Imports of machineries and military hardware dominate the list.

It is important to recall that immediately after the independence of Bangladesh, Bangabandhu was keen to reinvent the historic ties between our two countries. An eminent diplomat Khwaja Kaiser, who was Pakistan's Ambassador to China was sent to Myanmar to establish links with Bangladesh. French philosopher Andre Malraux, who supported our liberation struggle with utmost zeal and commitment was requested by Bangabandhu to directly talk to Chairman Mao with whom Malraux was on friendly terms. Bangabandhu made similar requests to Hasnan Heikal the famous Egyptian Journalist.

Today in addition to supporting many growth oriented projects China has shown its willingness to build a deep sea port. This offer has been made in response to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's request. It is helping Padma Bridge and has indicated its interest to participate in exploring our blue economy. All these mega projects, which China is most competent both technically and financially to implement will result in a dramatic turnaround of our economy. It remains to be seen how the Government of Bangladesh defines its position and prevails over other sensitivities. Delicate handling and crafting a win win scenario should engage the attention of relevant authorities. It is both essential and pragmatic.

Going beyond bilateral relations China, the second most powerful world power has in recent times revived with marked seriousness the issue of connectivity. The One Belt One Road initiative of president XI Jinping envisions seamless travel between China and Eurasia. In the fullness of time it is hoped that Asia would be connected to Europe and in stages to the world. At present nearly 60 countries of Asia and Europe are considered to be linked in this enterprise projected investment for infrastructure is in the region of US \$ 8 Trillion.

Nearly all the countries which come under this purview are members of the Chinese backed Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). The primary focus of this lending institution is infrastructure development.

The Bangladesh-China- India- Myanmar (BCIM) economic corridor is considered "closely related to the belt and road initiative." For Bangladesh it would foster greater connectivity and bring down both the cost and time for its exports. Our ready made garments will lead the way to penetrate newer markets and since China is moving high end will also secure a good part of its domestic market. We should actively enlarge our basket of exports and avail the possibilities in India and Myanmar.

Recent initiative by Aung San Suki of Myanmar to create stable borders between Myanmar, Thailand and China is noteworthy for Bangladesh. The concern of these three countries are not merely enhancement of trade but also to counter cross border terrorism. A holistic approach has been taken to usher in an ethos of peace in this region. Myanmar has succeeded in balancing the interests of its western backers with taking steps towards enhanced integration with China and Thailand. Bangladesh, Myanmar and Thailand are members of BIMSTEC. So also is India. Looking west for Myanmar and east for Bangladesh the connectivity paradigm may be vigorously under taken. It would complement One Belt One Strategy and boost the BCIM project. Our security concern would also be addressed by focusing in this direction.



Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, H. S. Suhrawardy and Chinese premier Zhou Enlai in Dhaka, 1957

CHINA BUILDS PADMA BRIDGE IN BANGLADESH

Maj. General Imamuz Zaman, BB,psc (Retd)



Crossing the Padma River, the world's third largest has always been a challenge which is often tiring, time consuming and sometimes dangerous due to unreliable and limited crossing facilities and bad weather. The lack of connectivity has prevented timely and effective access to medical care, education, and has also hindered mobility and economic activity. The proportion of the population below the poverty line in the south-western region is about 5% higher than the national average. Primarily due to lack of connectivity, the region economically lagged behind the rest of the country.

Accordingly, Padma Multipurpose Bridge is expected to unlock the potential and transform the lives of nearly 30 million Bangladeshis living in the country's south-western region. By reducing distances to major urban centers like Dhaka by almost 100 km, the bridge will facilitate regional trade, reduce poverty while accelerating growth and development in the country as a whole. Padma Bridge is the highest priority and largest investment project of Bangladesh. The Asian Highway Priority Route No.1 (Tamabil-Sylhet-Dhaka-Mawa-Bhanga-Jessore-Benapole) and Trans-Asian Railway will be established through this bridge. This bridge will establish national, regional and international connectivity through our national road corridors. A World Bank report suggests that after completion of the bridge, the national GDP of Bangladesh will be increased by 1.26% and GDP earned from the south-western region will be increased by 2.3%.

China has assisted Bangladesh in multi-faceted directions, providing aid in infrastructure, power, industrial plant and telecommunications. Over the past few years, China has replaced India as Bangladesh's biggest import source with bilateral trade. China has already assisted in building six bridges in Bangladesh. All the bridges have contributed to the accelerated socio-economic growth in the country. The China Major Bridge Engineering Company (CMBEC) is constructing the Padma multi-purpose bridge, the country's largest-ever infrastructure project, which is estimated to cost about \$1.77 billion or more. Agreement between China and Bangladesh over materializing such a mammoth project like 'Padma Multi-purpose Bridge' is clearly a giant step forward in economic relation of this two development partners. China has also shown its interest in constructing a deep sea port at Sonadia in Chittagong as well as Payra in Patuakhali.

The present government being a strong believer and a promoter of regional connectivity, and given the friendly relations with China and India, the economic corridor among Bangladesh China, India and Myanmar (BCIM) is more likely to come into reality. Pre-feasibility study of Padma Multi-purpose Bridge Project was conducted in 1998 which was funded by Bangladesh Government. Following this, feasibility study under funding of Japan International Co-operation Agency (JICA) was carried out in 2001. Detailed design funded by Asian Development Bank (ADB) was completed in 2009-2010. The project was set in motion in 2011 which is scheduled to be completed in 2018.

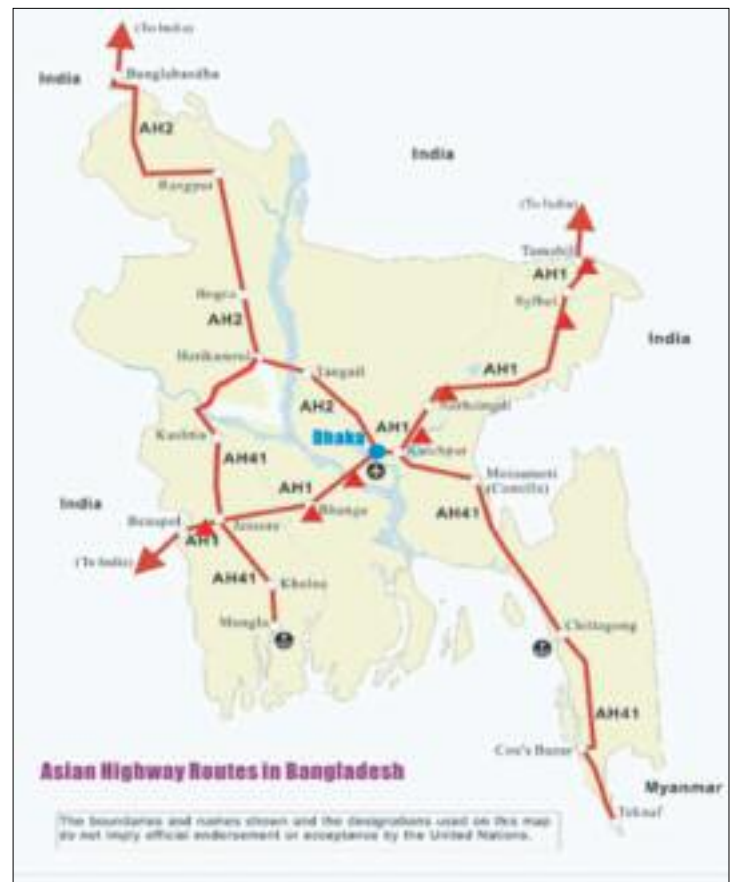


Figure 1: Asian highway priority route 1 through Bangladesh



The project is funded solely by the Government of Bangladesh. Major features of Padma Multi-purpose Bridge are:

- Main bridge, total river span length - 6.15 km.
- Bridge width - 22 meter.
- Two-level steel composite bridge, top level is for road traffic and bottom level is for railway.
- Designed to manage future transport load keeping in view the increased economic activities in the south-western region.
- Lower deck is a dual gauge rail track capable of plying 80 trains per day.
- Designed for maximum permissible speed 160 km/h for passenger train and 120 km/h for freight trains.

Under the overall responsibility of the Bangladesh Bridge Authority, the project is divided in five packages as under:

- Package 1: Mawa Approach Road, Service Area-1 at Mawa end & Bridge-end facilities.
- Package 2: Jajira Approach Road, Service Area-3 & Bridge-end facilities.
- Package 3: Service Area-2 at Jajira.
- Package 4: Construction of main bridge.
- Package 5: River training work.

Alongside the construction companies separate consultants are contracted for consultancy and supervision to ensure adherence and quality in every sphere of the work. On 13 October 2014 the contract worth of Tk 383.15 crore was signed for the supervision consultancy of the construction of main bridge and river training work. The job was awarded to Korea Expressway Corporation and its partners Pyunghwa Engineering Consultants Ltd, Korean Engineering Consultants Corporation, Sunjin Engineering and Architecture Co, ACE Consultants Ltd (Bangladesh), and Dev Consultants Ltd (Bangladesh). Subsequently a Tk 8,778 crore deal for the river training was contracted with Synohydro, another Chinese company on 10 November 2014. River training is the second largest component of the Tk 23,142 crore project.

Bangladesh Army is awarded the job of supervising the Jajira and Mawa approach roads and the service area with the assistance of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET). The cost of the approach roads, service area and the supervision work will amount to Tk 1,642 crore. China Major Bridge Engineering Construction Company (CMBEC) was awarded with the main bridge construction work for Tk 12,133 crore. The scheduled completion of the project is in 2018. Though the Padma bridge project expenses had been estimated initially as Tk 20,507 crore, the costs now have gone up to Tk 23,142 crore. The cost of land acquisition, resettlement of the displaced persons and others may increase the total expenses well over Tk 25,000 crore. The following table shows the companies responsible for construction vis-a-vis the consultants (according to the sequence of signing contract and commencement of work):

PACKAGES	CONTRACTOR	CONSULTANT
Package 1,2 & 3	Abdul Monem Ltd & Highway Construction Malaysia JV (joint venture)	Construction Supervision Consultants, Bangladesh Army
Package 4	China Major Bridge Engineering Company (CMBEC)	Korean Expressway Corp in partnership with: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Pyunghwa Engineering Consultants Ltd Korean Engineering Consultants Corporation Sunjin Engineering and Architecture Co ACE Consultants Ltd (Bangladesh) Dev Consultants Ltd (Bangladesh).
Package 5	Synohydro China	Same as Package-4

The consequent social and environmental impact of the mega project has been taken into account and a detailed mitigation plan has also been formulated. Approximately 1,100 ha of land was acquired for the project. Number of total affected households was approximately 15,200 (80,000 person approximately). Out of which 2000 households were relocated in four Resettlement Sites (RS), two located on each side of the river. 3000 households preferred self-relocation. Every affected household or property owner was well compensated. The other environmental issues like removal of trees for the construction, disturbance to the aquatic wildlife and migratory birds, noise and vibration management



Figure 2: Two - Level steel composite bridges

etc. were also accounted for. Accordingly measures have been taken to mitigate the probable effects on environment and social life in the project area. The measures include Community Environmental Management Plan of RSs, Tree Plantation and Greenbelt Development Plan, Emergency Response Plan, Biodiversity Management Plan, Resettlement Action Plans, Public Health Action Plan etc. Different Government and Non-Government organizations have been earmarked and some have already set in motion to execute these plans at different stages as the project advances.

Given the unprecedented positive future impact on national economy and the value it will add to the regional economy this upcoming mega-structure is going to be the most important strategic asset for Bangladesh. The challenge already embedded in taking up this giant project all by ourselves makes it all the more challenging during the construction phase. Besides, after completion the improved and shortened road network is likely to draw attention as more cost and time-efficient corridor for economic and tactical movement. Strategically speaking, this will also offer the shortest and fastest avenue of approach to the Centre of Gravity of Bangladesh, 'Dhaka'. Therefore it is of great importance that this asset to be tactically guarded at all time. However, the need for fulltime security of the asset is well appreciated and army cantonments have been established on both sides of the river. As the work progress at full steam ahead, numerous foreign nationals along with national experts are working in the project under the direct security supervision of Bangladesh Army. The cantonments are intended for protecting 'Padma Multi-purpose Bridge' during peace and war.

Maj. General Imamuz Zaman, BB,psc (Retd) is a Vice-Chairman of Bangladesh-China People's Friendship Association.

Tourism – A bridge of Friendship for Economic Development Between Bangladesh and China

Prof. Dr. Syed Rashidul Hasan



Importance of tourism in the world economy now a days is widely accepted phenomenon. According to the statistics of UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), 9% of the total world GDP comes from tourism. International tourist arrivals (overnight visitors) increased by 4.3% in 2014, reaching a total 1133 million after topping the 1 billion mark in 2012. The Americas recorded the strongest growth with an 8% increase in international arrivals, followed by Asia and the Pacific and the Middle East (both +5%). In Europe arrivals grew by 3%, while in Africa they were up by 2%. International tourism receipts reached US\$ 1245 billion worldwide in 2014, up from US\$ 1197 billion in 2013, corresponding to an increase of 3.7% in real terms (taking into account exchange rate fluctuations and inflation). France, the United States, Spain and China continue to top the rankings by both international arrivals and receipts. By receipts, China and the United Kingdom both moved up two places, to 3 and 7 respectively. China, the world's top tourism source market, has continued its exceptional pace of growth, increasing expenditure abroad by 27% in 2014 to reach a total of US\$ 165 billion (UNWTO Tourism Statistics Compendium, 2015).

Table : Members of Top-10 club of International Tourist Arrivals (in Millions)

Year :	2013	2014
1. France	83.6	83.7
2. United States	70.0	74.8
3. Spain	60.7	65.0
4. China	55.7	55.6
5. Italy	47.7	48.6
6. Turkey	37.8	39.8
7. Germany	31.5	33.0
8. United Kingdom	31.1	32.6
9. Russia	28.4	29.8
10. Mexico	24.2	29.1

Source: World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) © (Data as collected by UNWTO May 2015)



Monument of Atish Dipankar funded by the Chinese Government in Munshiganj.



Table : International Tourism Receipts US\$ (Billion) by Top-10 tourist importing countries.

Year :	2013	2014
1 United States	172.9	177.2
2 Spain	62.6	65.2
3 China	51.7	56.9
4 France	56.7	55.4
5 Macao (China)	51.8	50.8
6 Italy	43.9	45.5
7 United Kingdom	41.0	45.3
8 Germany	41.3	43.3
9 Thailand	41.8	38.4
10 Hong Kong (China)	38.9	38.4

Top spenders in international tourism China extends its lead as number one tourism source market :

China has been by far the fastest growing source market in recent years and has been the world's top spender in international tourism since 2012. Chinese travellers spent a record US\$ 165 billion abroad in 2014 – an exceptional 27% increase over 2013 and US\$ 36 billion more in absolute terms. Boosted by rising disposable incomes, an appreciating currency, improved travel facilitation and an easing of restrictions on foreign travel, Chinese outbound travel has been growing exponentially over the last two decades. China currently generates some 13% of global tourism receipts, benefiting many destinations around the world, particularly in Asia and the Pacific.

In 2014 the gap in expenditure between top spender China, and second largest spender the United States, widened to US\$ 54 billion, despite a robust 6% increase in tourism spending from the United States, to reach US\$ 111 billion. Germany, the third largest spender, reported a modest 1% increase in expenditure to US\$ 92 billion.



Lalbagh Fort, Dhaka

Table : Top ten Tourism Spender Countries.

Rank and Country	International Tourism Expenditure(billionUS\$)		Population in million	Expenditure per capita in US \$
	2013	2014	2014	2014
1. China	128.6	164.9	1368	121
2. United States	104.1	110.8	319	347
3. Germany	91.4	92.2	81	1137
4. United Kingdom	52.7	57.6	65	893
5. Russian Fed	53.5	50.4	144	351
6. France	42.9	47.8	64	747
7. Canada	35.2	33.8	35	951
8. Italy	27.0	28.8	60	481
9. Australia	28.6	26.3	24	1114
10. Brazil	25.0	25.6	203	126

Source : World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), May 2015.

From above data and statistics in three tables, it becomes quite understandable that China is emerging as the top most tourist importing country in near future. However, by the time China has become top tourism spender in the planet.

Chinese Tourists in Bangladesh : Although 120 million Chinese tourists last year (2015) visited different parts of the world spending around 165 billion US dollars (in 2014), their stepping down to Bangladesh is very very negligible. A sizeable number of Chinese business men, technocrats and others are staying Bangladesh by virtue of their employment or business here, but in true sense no Chinese tourists visit Bangladesh with travel and tourism motives. This is surprising why Chinese people are not coming to Bangladesh. We have unique tourism natural destinations, culture and rituals, archaeological sites including the largest in the world Buddhist monastery at Paharpur. But we failed to attract the Chinese tourists. As far my knowledge goes, I do not know there has been any attempt by the Bangladesh government or any other organization who conducted any research work on identifying the reasons for their not coming to Bangladesh. There has been no research on how to project and promote Bangladesh among the prospective Chinese tourists to come and visit our enormous tourism products.

In my opinion, apart from the wanderlust Chinese tourists, there has been a big scope for Religious tourism by developing a circuitous Buddhist pilgrimage tourism.

Though Buddhist heritage of Bangladesh is amazingly rich, it is little known to the outside world, and even to the general people of this country. At present, there are two and a half million Buddhists in Bangladesh. There are 2000 Buddhist Temples large or small and 1500 Buddhist Monks in our country. Sompuri Bihar has been declared as world Heritage by UNESCO long before. Other renowned Buddhist Temples are Vasu Vihara at Mahasthangarh of Bogra district, Salban Buddhist Temple at Mainamati, Comilla. Dharmarajika Buddhist Temple, at Basabo, Dhaka, Bana Bihar at Rangamati, Golden Jadi (Temple) at Bandarban, Bikrampur Buddhist Temple at Bajrajogini village of Munshigonj district and newly excavated Buddhist temple at Wari-Bateswar in Narsingdi district.

A big percentage of Chinese population follow Buddhism as their religion. Scholars have noted that in China there is no clear boundary between religions, especially Buddhism, Taoism and local folk religious practice. According to the most recent demographic analyses, an average 80% of the population in China, that is hundreds of millions of people,



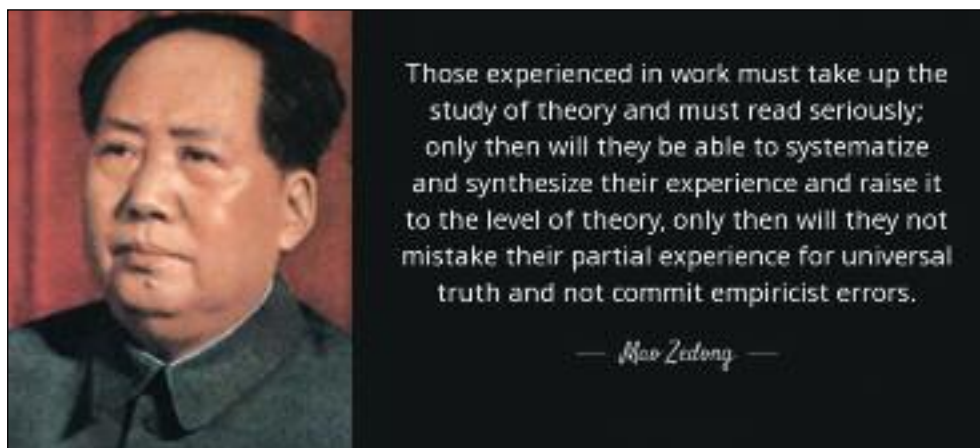
Mohasthan Ghor, Bogra

practice some kinds of Chinese folk religions and Taoism, 10–16% are Buddhists, 2–4% are Christians, and 1–2% are Muslims. (Source : Daniel H. Bays. Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present. Stanford University Press, 1999).

Out of almost 200 million Buddhists in China, is it very difficult to bring only 0.5 percent Buddhist pilgrims to Bangladesh? As a tourism people, I believe if the government of Bangladesh plans to develop the infrastructure and superstructure of Buddhist monasteries and create facilities for the rituals by the Buddhist pilgrims at Ramu, Maynamati and Paharpur or Mahasthangarh, we can attract several hundred thousands of pilgrims not only from China, but also from Japan, South Korea, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand. A circuitous route could be developed to connect to the existing circuit covering India and Nepal. The Chinese government can help us in this regard, specially for developing the infrastructure and superstructure of these neglected but invaluable pilgrimage tourist destination.

Prof. Dr. Syed Rashidul Hasan, *Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management, University of Dhaka.*

QUOTABLE QUOTE



Invisible Threads, Visible Ties

Shamsad Mortuza



My daughter has large eyes. Whenever we took her to a mall in Kunming, we would hear our interpreter whispering Meng-jia-la (guo). People would ask our interpreter where she had come from much to the delight of our teenage daughter who was thoroughly enjoying the attention that she was receiving. These incidents made me ponder about the mutual admiration and curiosity (albeit suspicion) that we have for our neighbors who live only a little over 1000 miles across the border. I say mutual because a 2014 Research Report suggests that 76% Bangladeshis hold a positive view about China (only Pakistan has a one percent advantage over us). We know the Chinese due to their wide range of products or their performance in different global indexes. But do we really know the real China, its people? Do Chinese people know us? Has there been enough study to reflect on the shared history, collective memory, and historical links to connect the two countries at a people to people level? Are these scholarly books avail-

able in popular media or are they shelved in academic database or administrative folders? Of course, people travel between these two countries to pursue trade, academic or administrative interests. But is there a real people to people connectivity outside the State sponsored programs? These are the questions I had while writing the country profile for BCIM, and on the eve of the visit by the Chinese President Xi Jinping, these are the questions that we need to revisit.

It is strange that a level of willful ignorance still persists even at a time when we can fly between the countries in less than two hours. The long history of travel between these two countries are largely ignored. The zeal and dream with which Atisha Dipankar, Rabindranath Tagore or Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman visited China need to be studied and shared to identify the invisible threads of conceptual connectivity that are no less important than the visible ties proposed by the revived Silk Road.

Just imagine even in the eleventh century a sage-philosopher from a remote village of Vikrampur, Atisha Dipankar Srijnan could travel to China. Even the Great Himalayas could not stop him. Named Chandragarbha by his parents, Atisha was born in 980 or 982 AD to a royal family in Vajrayogini village on the outskirts of Dhaka. The stories of his wanderings were discovered by a Bengali scholar in the 19th century when Sharat Chandra Das was sent to Tibet by the British where he came across the writings of Atisha.

Das wrote two books on Atisha that made the venerable sage known as the “eye of Asia,” particularly for his desire to spread knowledge, share culture, and promote peace in the region. Last year, in a rare occasion Bangladesh and China celebrated the 37th anniversary of the return of the ashes of Atish Dipankar to his birthplace. The ashes of the sage, who died in Tibet at the age of 73, was returned to a six-member delegation from Bangladesh in 1978 as a gesture of solidarity and friendship. With the ashes preserved Dharmarajika Buddhist Temple in Dhaka, the relationship between China and Bangladesh has risen like the proverbial Phoenix. A China-Bangladesh joint excavation team has now identified the temple of Atisha at Nateswar in Tongibari Upazilla in Munshiganj. Announcing the discovery, the Chinese archaeologist Hunabo told a press conference: “Touching the soils and walls here, my hands have felt Atish Dipankar's birthplace that had remained in his memories till his last days in Tibet. Here I can feel the religious reformation in Buddhism that had taken place from the 10th to the 12th century.”

The ongoing reconstruction process of this 1000-year old temple will bring new interest in the region, and is likely to promote tourism. Atisha could not return to his birthplace because of ill health and ill weather. The end of the Pala Empire and the assumption of power by the Sultanate could also have contributed to his Tibetan stay.

One of the most memorable Chinese visits to the Muslim Sultanate in Bengal was by an adventurer called Zheng He (who was a contemporary of Christopher Columbus). If you are a Game of Throne fan, you may recognize this hugely built man who was castrated by his captor in the Ming army as Varys. Like his screenplay counterpart, Zheng He rose to prominence from the rank of a derring-do soldier. He undertook seven naval expeditions and was in command of a fleet of ships to establish a Chinese presence and impose control over the Indian Ocean trade ranging from Sumatra to Somalia.

A Muslim by birth, Zheng He went to Mecca to perform Hajj, and came to Bengal during his last two voyages. His visit



also supports the recent finds by the old Brahmaputra River at Wari-Bateswar about the southwester maritime Silk Route—the artery between the Silk Road by the Gobi desert and the maritime route via the Indian Ocean. What made Zheng He's voyage memorable, at least for the Ming dynasty, was the gift that he procured from the Bengal court in 1415. Zheng He brought a live giraffe as a royal present for the Chinese Emperor Yongle. The Chinese took the giraffe to be a living example of the qirin, a mythological animal that was said to herald good luck, auspicious beginnings, and sagely wisdom. The animal was supposed to be horned, hooved, and so graceful that it did not even bother the grass as it walked. A court poet at that time wrote:

“Gentle is this animal, that has in antiquity been seen but once,

The manifestation of its divine spirit rises up to heaven's abode.”



The ferrying of the giraffe may give you an idea of the enormous size of the Chinese vessel. The 2007 rescue of a 30-metre wooden vessel Nanhai-1 shipwreck from the seabed of South China Sea, presently showcased at a museum in Guangdong province is a testimony of China's supremacy in the Maritime Silk Road. The restoration is considered a tremendous feat for marine archeology (comparable only to Vassa museum in Sweden) as well as China's commitment to digging up of the forgotten past with all its former glory.

President Xi Jinping's "One Belt, One Road" initiative of reviving the ancient Silk Road is inspired by the same spirit. A road that once connected the East with the West is not a mere historical fact or a dream of a poet or a sage. It has once again become a reality. With the holding of the Kolkata to Kunming car rally in 2013, the road connectivity in the region has opened up the possibility of generating enormous prosperity for the countries involved. In 2015, China proposed the building of a 3000-mile rail network to foster connectivity in the K2K region.

But these proposed networks need to take the paranoia, suspicion, ambivalence or willful ignorance that I mentioned earlier into consideration. Long after Atisha, Rabindranath Tagore went twice to China with a similar dream of establishing a peaceful Asia. His lectures were interrupted by picketers distributing leaflets against his dream-like spirituality. Bangabandhu too recognized the great importance of China as he visited China in 1952 and 1957 with the Chinese first premier Zhou Enlai visiting Dhaka in 1956. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has taken special initiatives to translate and publish the journals that Bangabandhu kept during his China visits hoping that they would contribute significantly to the remaking of the history of China Bangladesh relationship. I mention the travel timeline to underscore the background of the present initiatives of building a foundation for a solid future relationship.

We live in a different world where we can look at the success of regional cooperation at other parts of the world and pursue a shared dream. But in order to materialize such a dream, we need to promote and culture our shared memory. The finds at the archeological sites, the mentioning of place names in stories and poems will confirm the people to people connectivity. For instance, nobody would have known of Atisha had there been no Sharat Chandra Das. We need similar projects, serious scholarly undertakings and their translation and presentation in popular media such as blogs, TV serials, documentaries, newspaper articles or feature films. I look forward to a day when we won't be needing an interpreter to know where the Other has come from, and when we can engage with the Other with a familiar greetings and stories.

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Bangladesh-China Relationship : A heritage of Knowledge and Culture

Professor Dr. Sukomal Barua



Bangladesh and China are countries with long heritage and culture, and have an ancient history of relations between both.

The first among the Chinese monks who came to ancient Bengal was Fa-hien. He set his foot on this soil in A.D. 399 and stayed here up to A.D. 414. One of his objectives was the collection of Buddhist manuscripts, and the discovery of original copy of the Vinaya text for transcribing the same and introducing it in his country. The only place he visited and now included in Bengal was Tamralipta or the modern town of Tamluk in Bengal (now the district of Medinipur in West Bengal). Fa-hien sojourned here for two years, wrote out his sutras and drew pictures of images. According to him, there were 22 monasteries with residents and thus his evidence is indicative of the prosperity of Buddhism in Bengal in the early part of the fifth century.

Fa-hien was followed by Hiuen T'sang. He came to India in 629. A.D. He toured India more extensively than Fa-hien and his account is much more detailed than that of his predecessor.

Hiuen T'sang's narrative throws welcome light on the condition of Buddhism in Bengal during his time. He gives us information about the number of monks and monasteries in the territories he had visited. According to him, there were 20, 30, 10 and more than 10 monasteries in Pundravardhana, Samatata, Tamralipti and Karnasuvarna (the parts of ancient Bengal) respectively.

I-tsing, another eminent Chinese traveller, come to India and visited Tamralipta in A.D. 673. He has left a valuable account of his knowledge and experiences, in which he has stated that as many as fifty-six Chinese priests visited ancient Bengal (now India & Bangladesh) and the neighbouring countries during the later half of the seventh century. One of these priests named Sheng-chi has furnished valuable information about the state of Buddhism in Samatata.

Among a few other Chinese pilgrims who came to Bengal mention may be made of Ta Ch'eng-teng and Tao-lin. I-tsing met the former at Tamralipti. Ta Ch'eng-teng stayed at Tamralipti for 12 years, and became an adept in Sanskrit Buddhist texts and on return to his country gave an exposition of the Nidanasastra of Ullanga. Tao-lin also stayed in Tamralipti for three years, acquired a well-vast knowledge of Sanskrit and became a master of the Sarvastivadi sect.

The extracts from the Chinese sources quoted above testify to the flourishing condition of Buddhism in Bengal from the beginning of the fifth century onwards, if not from an earlier period. And among the territories where Buddhism enjoyed popularity Tamralipti seems to have been the foremost, though in later times Buddhism found a more congenial home in Samatata or South east Bengal.

Mentioned above that, Hiuen-Tsang, a famous Chinese pilgrim visited samatata kingdom in the 7th century A.D. According to his statement that there were 30 Buddhist monasteries and above 2000 brethren were live in Samatata, all of them were the follows of the sthvir school.

In all respect Pandit Shilabhadra of 7th century was the greatest glorious son of Samatata kingdom. He was born in 529 A.D. and breathed his last in 654 A.D. He was a son of Buddhist Royal khadga dynasty of Samatata (625-725 A.D.) in the 7th century, which was stated by Mr. Dinesh Chandra Sen in his remarkable authentic book of 'Brihat Banga'. Shilabhadra was the principal of Nalanda University. During that time Hiuen T'sang paid a visit in 673 A.D. to Nalanda University and accepted his (Ven. Shilabhadra) discipleship with view to studying the different subjects of Buddhism there. Ven. Shilabhadra himself was an expert to teach the various subjects like Philosophy, Grammar, Philology, Medical science etc. with equal efficiency.

It is notable that, during that time the Karnasuvarna and Pundravardhana, the two important parts of Bengal are carried out the Buddhist heritage. Hiuen T'sang has mentioned two monasteries by name. Lo-to-mo-chi and Po-shi-po, the former in Karnasuvarna and the latter in Pundravardhana. Apparently there were more famous than others in the territories they belonged to. Lo-to-mo-chi is regarded as the Chinese transliteration of the Indian Raktamarttika and its site has been ascer-



tained on the combined testimony of the sealings bearing the legend Sri-Raktamarttika-Mahavihara, the structural remains of stupas and shrines with Rajbaridange near the Ciruti railway station (since named as Karnasuvarna) now in the Murshidabad district of West Bengal.

Another Buddhist Mahavihara, the Salban at Mainamati in the Comilla district in the old-time Samatata was foundations of stupas and structural remains as well as Buddhist images from the eighth century onwards seems to confirm the Chinese evidence regarding the flourishing condition of Buddhism in Samatata though this evidence belongs to about a century earlier.

The accounts of Fa-hien, Hiuen T'sang

and I-tsing show that Hinayana or Theravada Buddhism was predominant during their days, but that it was replaced by Mahayana and its developed form styled Vajrayana-Tantarayana has been amply born out by Tibetan texts and archaeological remains. The Tibetan texts, for instance provide us with valuable information regarding the monastic cum-academic establishments of later days like the Vikramasila, Somapura. Odanta pura and Jagaddala. In other words while the Chinese evidence is to reckoned with for the history of Buddhism of the pre-Pala period, the Tibetan literature is of immense help for that of the Pala age. In the pre-Pala period the list of foreign students and teachers of the viharas of Nalanda and Tamralipti included eminent scholars like Fa-hien, Hiuen T'sang and I-tsing. The academic and cultural exchange missions went on in full swing till the las days of the Palas. Factors responsible for this phenomenon, however, deserve to pondered over.

Sarat Chandra Das, the eminent Buddhist Pandit in Bengal, was a pioneer explorer and a pioneer scholar. Besides an adventurous traveller he was also a famous linguist, historian and expert in geography. He was well-acquainted with religious, cultural, economic and political conditions of Tibet

The book 'Indian Pandits in the Land of Snow' presents the four lectures given by Sarat Chandra Das. The work Pandita thus stands out as a monument of the migration of Buddhism and Buddhist learning into Trans-Himalayan highlands (Introduction). These lectures carried the authority of the great academician and were informed with data, most of which were Das's own discovery. This book contains information taken from Sanskrit, Pali, Tibetan and Chinese sources and gives a picture of Tibet in the last quarter of the 19th century and on all admission Tibet remained much the same till 1950 (First print : 1893- reprinted in 1965). His another work 'An introduction to the Grammar of the Tibetan Language' (1915) is designed not only to help the general reader to grasp the grammatical structure of the Tibetan language, but also the Buddhist scholar who is particularly interseted in the vast Tibetan literature which includes almost all the Buddhist works of India. The monumental work 'A Tibetan-English Dictionary : with Sanskrit Synonyms' was compiled by him in 1902 and was reprinted several times.

The Ven. Atish Dipankar was one of the great disseminators of culture and friendship between Bangladesh and China in ancient times. As an ancient Buddhist master of Bengal (Bangladesh), he has made much contribution of great importance to the Buddhist culture of the Tibetan region in China.

In the last part of the 10th century (982 A.D.) Atisa Dipankar Srignan was born in a Royal family of Vajrajogini under Vikrampur parganas of Dhaka, Bangladesh, His father Kalyansiri was then a Feudal King under the Buddhist Pala Dynasty of the then Bengal. His mother, Queen Prabhavati was a debout Buddhist laity. His original name was Chandragarbha. 'Atish' meaning "Superiority" was the title of honour conferred on him by Tibetan King Byan-Chub hod of Mnahriss, and "Dipankar Srignan", an ordained name, was given by his teacher Mahasangika Acharya Silarakshita of Odantapuri after initiation into Sramanera (novice). At the age of 19 he took the sacred vows from Acharya Silarakshita.

He visited Tibet in the year 1038 A.D. He cleared the Buddhism of Tibet of its foreign and heretic elements which had completely tarnished it, and restored to its former purity and splendour. He was the spiritual guide and teacher of II Bromton, the founder of the first grand hierarchy of Tibet. He was fully a humanist monk and also a dedicated social worker and always prepared to sacrifice his life for the welfare of the people. During that time, Tibet under the Tartar Emperors of China, historically in the 13th century A.D. Tibet is the land of monasteries. Her history chiefly comprises records of the establishment of monasteries and temples and their endowments by the state, chiefs and nobles of the country, commencing from the middle of the 7th century A.D. to the 18th century. Ven. Atish breathed his last at the age of seventy two on the 18th day of September in 1054 A.D. His disciples and followers erected chetiyas (stupas) at the Sne-than and the Ra-sgren monasteries and at Yar-Kluns and some other places to preserve the ashes for the worship of posterity.

By assiduously working for seventeen years in Tibet, the Ven. Atish has made very remarkable contributions to the Buddhism in that region of China in those days. Throughout the following centuries he has always been highly respected by the Buddhists. Many of his personal belongings, including a bronze stupa, several religious robes, etc. are still preserved in the Ra-sgren, the Sñe-than and the Mtho-Idin monasteries separately. After the peaceful liberation of Tibet, the People's Government of China has given careful protection to the monasteries, stupas and other articles connected with the Ven. Atish. We firmly believe that these relics will surely encourage and promote the friendship and solidarity among the Buddhists and people of China and Bangladesh in the future.

As gesture of long friendship between Bangladesh and China through the exchange of holy Atisa Relics by the Government of the People's Republic of China in the year 1978. By the patronization of Sahid (Late) President Ziaur Rahman, Bangladesh Bouddha Kristi Prachar Sangha, a Regional Centre of the World Fellowship of Buddhists brought a part of holy ash relics of the Ven. Atisa from the People's Republic of China to Bangladesh. The presentation of this holy relics by the Chinese Government has cemented and strengthened the cultural relations and prolonged friendship between Bangladesh and China. We hope that it will continue to grow further in the days to come.

Professor Dr. Sukomal Barua, *Former Chairman, Department of Pali and Buddhist Studies, University of Dhaka & President, World Buddhist Federation-Bangladesh Chapter.*

QUOTABLE QUOTE



Confidence is the most important
thing, more important than gold or
currency.

— Wen Jiabao —

RMG Industry: An area of reciprocal benefits for Bangladesh and China

Faruque Hassan



Bangladesh and China has long been sharing a friendly relationship that has only grown stronger over time. The connection between the two nations is historical, dating back centuries. Formal diplomatic relationship established four and a half decades ago has brought Bangladesh and China closer making them trusted friends and development partners. This "time-tested, all-weather friendship" has contribute to deepening trade ties between the two nations. Both neighboring countries have been engaged in bilateral cooperation in several sectors.

While Bangladesh is a huge market for Chinese products, massive structural shift in the former's economy is creating huge opportunities for us, especially for our ready-made garment (RMG) industry. Presently, Bangladesh is the second largest exporter of RMG products after China in the world market which occupies 39.3% of global clothing exports while our share is 5.9% only. China's gradual reduction of bulk apparel production due to higher wages has created room for our apparel industry to increase its share in the world market. Moreover, China is now interested in manufacturing products that require greater skills, better technology and more investment in advanced equipment. Besides, we see China, despite being the largest apparel manufacturer in the world, as a major export destination for Bangladesh due to its fast-expanding middle-class population. With about 1.3 billion population, China has a \$150-billion local apparel market. Presently Chinese garment manufacturers mainly produce high-end products for Western retailers. At the same time Beijing has been offering Bangladesh duty-free access to around 60 percent of entire product lines, including apparel, which will be increased to 97 percent very soon. This has created opportunities for Bangladesh to have a larger share of the Chinese market. Bangladesh exported garments worth \$341.22 million to China in fiscal year 2015-16 (July 2015 – June 2016), an increase of 11.80 percent from the previous year.

However, China has never been a competitor of Bangladesh in the global apparel market; rather extended its cooperation in the development of our RMG industry. Bangladesh imports most of its raw materials for our RMG industry from China. We import machinery, man-made fiber, yarn, fabric, chemicals, dyes, Trims, Accessories etc. from China. Besides, many Chinese experts are working in Bangladesh's RMG and textile industries. Therefore, expansion of our RMG industry means increase in China's export of raw materials to Bangladesh. So, there lies reciprocal trade benefits for both Bangladesh and China.





Bangladesh has witnessed remarkable economic growth in the last few years. Moreover, the country has set the 'Vision 2021' which is a planned articulation of how we will turn to a middle income country. We will need strong and steady industrial growth to achieve the Vision 2021. And it is our RMG industry that has both capacity and potential to supplement Bangladesh's Vision 2021. In line with the 'Vision 2021' Bangladesh has fixed a target of US\$50 billion from RMG exports by 2021.

To achieve this target our RMG industry will need to shift focus from basic items to mid- and high-end garment items. For that we will need modern machinery and expertise. Since China is now shifting to high-tech industries, they can provide Bangladesh with knowledge and expertise in producing high-end and branded fashion items.

Besides, we will need more support from our backward linkage industries to take our RMG industry forward. With the rapid growth of the RMG industry, the backward linkage industry has also grown quite significantly. Bangladesh has succeeded to increase the capacity of yarn production from 1.5 million kg in 1994 to more than 2100 million kg at present. Similarly, production of fabrics for domestic and export markets has also increased. But growth of the woven textile industry remains stagnant as it meets only 30%-35% of the demand. However, most of apparel items produced in Bangladesh are cotton based. It means the country has opportunities in manmade fiber based apparel, specially fabrics made of MMF like viscose, rayon, spandex, polyester, etc. where Bangladesh has a huge market, but production capacity is still insignificant. So Chinese investors can invest in the area of textile production in Bangladesh.

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THE ROMANCE OF CHINA - A JOURNEY BACK IN MEMORY LANE

Abu Naser Wahid



When we talk or think of China, the first thing that springs up in mind is that she is the world's most populous country (1.4 billion people) and area wise a very large country. Not always one is aware of other facts that she is heir to five thousand year long civilization and the world's oldest continuously existing centralised state with almost an unchanged border. Paper, Tea and Silk are the pleasure / vital items which are the Chinese gifts to the world. Also is the interesting knowledge that the Chinese language has no alphabets but only characters which are learnt to be around 3000 in numbers allowing people to express and communicate all aspects of human needs. It was also a country with which Bangladesh enjoyed close contact for over fifteen hundred years. Not only Chinese scholars and travellers came to our land, a renowned scholar Atish Dipankar from Dhaka was persuaded in the eleventh century by a Tibetan king to go to Lasha to head the most prestigious university there. The ash

of his remains was gifted to Bangladesh in 1978 i.e. after about 900 years of his passing away. The fact that a person's last remains were so carefully preserved for so long speaks volume about that person's stature. History also tells us that there was strong maritime relationship between China and Bangladesh in the 12th and 13th centuries. Indeed, a map produced in the 13th century and now displayed at Urumuqi Museum in Xinjiang, China showed Chittagong as the most important port in the Indian Subcontinent. Besides, we also know that in the 15th century Bangladesh sultans had maintained regular contacts with Chinese emperors of Ming dynasty and exchanged gifts. The most important example of such exchanges was the gift of a Giraffe -considered as a highly auspicious animal - sent by Sultan Ghasuddin Azam Shah to the Chinese emperor Yong Le in 1414. A painting record of that important event is kept at the Chinese National Museum in Beijing. So China and the Chinese people had always a place of admiration in our horizon. That sense of adoration was further enhanced when the Chinese economy started growing at a fast rate after the pragmatic leader of China : Deng Xiaoping in 1978 had boldly adopted a new policy of economic management calling it "socialist market economy with Chinese characteristics " replacing the one in vogue since founding of the Peoples Republic of China in 1949. Deng Xiaoping's well known dictum that "the colour of the cat - whether it is black and white - does not matter as long it catches mice had a great appeal to us." That meant result achieved is more important than being tied to an orthodox idea and that the leaders should have the courage to go against the established wisdom.

2. Naturally I was elated when in 1992 an opportunity came in my way to be in China by way of getting an appointment in our Embassy in Beijing. We lived in Beijing for about 5 years. We had an enjoyable and rewarding experience. It was also a great time to be in China and observe the process of high speed transformation of the Chinese economy from that of a fully command economy to a quasi- capitalist economy embracing the concept of having a sizable private sector and making all investment decisions on the basis of market signals. This new course caused the unfolding of the huge possibilities and as would be seen eventually to have propelled China in two decades time to become the world's second largest economy. That also the time when the policy of one child per family was being rigidly enforced to complement the process of accelerating the rate of growth of the economy.

3. The first surprise that struck us on our arrival in Beijing in 1992 was that the foreigners were required to shop at designated shops named : Friendship Shops and pay for the purchases not in Chinese Yuan but in a special currency : Foreign Exchange Certificates received in exchange of US Dollars. The Friendship stores had plentiful supplies of quality items. But the other stores had many empty shelves. Most of those shops including even saloons and tailoring houses were government owned. It was a wired experience to pay before getting a haircut and for using the tailoring services.

The stalls at the fish and vegetable markets were however privately owned. We learned soon to use these private stores despite the legal grey area.

4. The Chinese families at that time had weekly entitlements of milk and eggs similar to our old rationing system. Presumably, these items were in short supply in those days. The varieties of vegetables available in the markets were also not large even in the high summer period: June - September. We also learned that choice of vegetable will get narrower from October onwards. Indeed, we were advised by our Chinese friends to buy a good quantity of Chinese cabbage available in September and stock them on the cornices of the verandas of our flat. We were assured that Beijing winter being severe would preserve those cabbages as if they were kept in a freezer. Most of the Chinese families used to fend off the scarcity of vegetable items during winter months in that way.

5. The rather restricted choice of vegetables available in the normal market (not in the Friendship Stores) was however eased by the second year of our stay in 1993. We were pleasantly surprised to see in April that the vegetable markets were having supplies - though in modest quantities - of a larger number of varieties of vegetables we were told that it was a new phenomenon. By 1994, the vegetable markets were flooded with supplies of various types of vegetables - produced by using a new technology of covering the fields with thin transparent plastic sheets to stave off frost and reduce chill factor. But the real factor behind this stupendous development, we learnt, was the progression and deepening of the government's policy initiated in 1978 of abandoning the commune system and giving the peasants the right to use a portion of the commune land to produce the items of their choice. So many peasants opted to produce vegetables which fetched higher returns for them and thus a kind of rural rejuvenation process started taking roots in the rural areas.

6. At about this time we could see that a number of small shops owned and operated by one or two persons were springing up in droves. Also came on scene a number of hawkers plying different wares on their mobile four wheel cycle vans. These group, we came to learn were primarily from southern provinces like: Guangdong, Fujian, Zhejiang etc which were exposed first to the process of opening up policy on a pilot project basis and where some smart people had mastered the ropes of privately owned and operated businesses.

7. We all know that People Republic of China came into existence in 1949 on the dream of creating an egalitarian society and lifting the standard of living for all Chinese people. To facilitate creation of an egalitarian society, ownership of any form of private property was almost entirely prohibited in 1949. All land - both rural and urban - stood vested in the state as also all commercial, financial and industrial enterprises. In the rural areas, all land in an area were collectivised under a local area commune. All the production and marketing matters of a commune were decided collectively and which eventually sapped the spirit of new initiative and innovation. As a result, the rate of growth of the economy decelerated badly in the seventies. The command economy model was abandoned in 1978 in favour of a new policy which called for creating a socialist market economy with Chinese characteristics. In reality, this new system meant building of a system of quasi-capitalist mode of production and ownership giving personal profit making a place of pride. The operation of the new model was started first as pilot projects in parts of a few provinces in the south and east of the country and then slowly introduced in other areas as experiences were gained. 1990s were the period when a large part of the country had been brought under new dispensation. One could see the fruits of operation of the new policy both in the rural areas and in the streets of the cities. Beijing and other big cities saw a flowering of small and medium scale enterprises created by some of these enterprising migrants. The government in line with its new policy of helping to create a strong private sector came up with many supportive policies and incentives. Private foreign investors were welcomed with open arms. The concept of having joint-ventures combining state owned enterprises with local and foreign private sector partners became a robust vehicle for economy's growth. SEZs (Special Economic Zones) were created in designated places where Tax relief and other incentives were provided to private sector investors - local and foreign. Foreign direct investment started soaring. The guiding principle was to intelligently space the opening up of different sectors and allowing the people to amass wealth.

8. However some vestiges of yesteryear regulations continued to impede the efforts and hard work of many of these budding entrepreneurs from other provinces. A system called : Hukou system stood in the way of an enterprising Chinese person's effort to improve his life. Under this system, a Chinese person could not legally move outside of his village or the city where he was born and acquire the official right of residence for living in a new place. Without this right of residence, no person could access the hospital, educational and banking services in a place out side his own. Aside from impacting adversely on the quality of life of enterprising person who had moved to a place of his choice or requirement, it also stood on the way of the hapless migrant labourers settling in metropolitan areas where their labour could fetch higher returns. Nonetheless, in nineties Beijing and other big cities saw a great influx of migrant workers specially from impoverished provinces like Anhui, Henan, Gansu etc as they were brought in for working in the big infrastructural projects undertaken in those cities.

9. In tandem with the fast changing economic scene of the mid nineties, general peoples' lives were also undergoing fast changes. They had started acquiring 'four rounds' i.e. bicycles, sewing machines, wristwatches & washing machines and yearning for three electrics were (phones, television and refrigerators). We remember to have been pleasantly surprised when our Driver Mr. Wang one day in June, 1995 after coming back from a day's casual leave proudly announced that he had bought a refrigerator on the day before. Along with these visible signs of improvements in material life of an Chinese person, came an undisguised pride and confidence about brighter future and an urge to be counted as a top country specially by the western nations.

10. Another noteworthy change occurred at a surprisingly fast pace in Beijing and other big cities at about the same time. In 1992, the stores including roadside eateries were closed by 6-30 pm. By middle of 1994, a good number of eating places were open until 9 pm. US Fast Food giant Macdonald were allowed to open their shops in early 1995. What a change it induced! Within a year a good number of newly opened western style coffee shops, ice cream parlours and of course Macdonald restaurants were operating past midnight. Increasing number of Chinese people - specially the younger persons ignoring their usual lunch timing of 11-30 am to 1 pm and dinner between 5-30 pm to 6-30 pm were now flocking into these establishments at different hours relishing the choices which were unfolding before them. The Chinese people always considered their cuisine superior to other nations but the young people quickly learned to enjoy cuisines of other countries.



Deng Xiaoping

It would not probably be out of place if a few words are now said about Chinese styles of cuisine. In Chinese banquets, the number of items offered are very large averaging between 15 - 20 items and all to be served individually in sequence and eaten likewise. Sometimes uninitiated guests could not foresee the number of items that would arrive. They would be full by the time more tastier items arrived and served as the banquet moves towards its finale. The Chinese people are always gracious hosts and usually they attend and serve all guests at a table.

11. Despite these changes in Chinese lifestyle and attitude, the Chinese persons continued to hold on to their ardour for hard work and punctuality which deserve special mention. They are always punctual in attending to work and even social functions. We cannot recall a day when our Chinese driver or Chinese maid were late in reporting for work. These workers were also not even our employees but were Chinese government employees and seconded to us by the concerned Chinese government body. But we never noticed any slackness in attitude or work while they were with us. Even the Chinese guests to a party would always arrive on dot.

12. All these qualities of devotion to work, confidence about a better future along with the implementation of intelligent regulations prescribed under the visionary policy of building socialist market economy with Chinese characteristics triggered the unlocking of the potential of the Chinese economy. This process was consciously advanced with consistently high level of investment (9% of GDP) in upgrading the infrastructural facilities by building new road, ports, augmenting supplies of electricity etc. The growth of the Chinese economy in 1992/93 was a staggering 13%. We now know that the momentum generated in 1990s continued almost uninterruptedly till 2015 and the Chinese economy grew at an average of 10% over the last twenty five years. This sustained rate of growth has lifted over 700 million Chinese people out of poverty in this period. Between 1990 and 2014, the average per capita income in China increased 13 fold in real terms whereas it has less than tripled in the world as whole. No wonder that the Chinese shopping malls are now crowded with shoppers as are the roads clogged with unending traffic.

13. Keeping pace with the growth of her economy, China's global trade also increased phenomenally in all these years and by now she has emerged as the worlds largest trading nation. In 1994, the total value of imports & exports was \$200 billion. In 2015, the value of her export grew to \$2.28 trillion while her import was worth \$1.68 trillion. China has by now piled up a big foreign exchange reserve of \$3.30 trillion- mostly stashed in the US Treasury Bonds. To safeguard her future trade interests as also for creating a secured and faster transportation network for carrying goods to and from other markets, China is now proposing new initiatives like: The Silk Road Economic Belt & 21ST Century Maritime Silk Road

or the One Belt, One Road (OBOR). These planned Belt and Road while would provide faster connection between China with European economies would also provide benefits to countries en route through creation of new infrastructural facilities and new trade facilitation measures. One of the routes of the Belt would link China with South East Asian and South Asian countries including Bangladesh and then going onwards to Europe. Another Chinese high profile initiative is the creation of Asian Infrastructural Investment Bank (AIIB) with headquarter in Beijing.

14. While OBOR Initiative of China clearly demonstrates her enlightened concern for a shared prosperity with other countries alongside her own, one could also say that she has been likewise mindful in the past in assisting fellow developing countries as she surged past them. She had been associated with a number of Bangladesh development projects since mid eighties specially in road sector. In the mid nineties her most significant contribution in my understanding was her participation in Bara Pukuria Coal Mine Project which opened a new horizon for Bangladesh. Since then, China had participated in a number of important projects. Of course, the name of China is now associated with a number of iconic projects like: ongoing Padma Bridge and upcoming Karnaphuli River Tunnel Project etc. We are also aware that the continuous march ahead of the Chinese economy means also a boon for Bangladesh as it creates a bigger market for our exportable at our door step. We will be able to derive benefit of this great opportunity if we strive harder to get our acts right.

15. However, any success has also its cost side. The phenomenal growth of Chinese economy has of course occurred at a cost - albeit a great one. The Chinese society since creation of the Peoples Republic of China in 1949 and until the early nineties had been a rather equal society. But it has now become a highly unequal society with 1% of the Chinese households controlling one third of country's assets (as per a Beijing University study carried out earlier this year.) Beijing has now 568 billionaires which is more than New York has and that these 568 Chinese billionaires are worth more than the total GDP of Australia. However, the good news is that a big middle class has also emerged in this period.. It is estimated that the middle class size is over 225 million household (The Economist, 7 JULY, 2016)The presence of this big mass of middle class will hopefully come to play a stabilising role in the country.

16. Another significant cost borne by Chinese people was the requirement of having to be restricted to one child per family over the last three decades needs a special mention here. That policy was initiated in early eighties was quite rigidly enforced to keep down the rate of growth of China's population to allow it to maintain a high rate of growth of the economy. That policy had caused all the emotional and financial resources of a child's two parents and four grand parents to be concentrated on a single child. Thus these children grew as healthier and better schooled but now with hind sight one is not sure if these highly pampered generation has been able to internalise the skills needed to share and shoulder the burden of future social responsibilities. Fortunately, this one child policy has been lately reversed substantially and a family would now be allowed to have two children. This new dispensation would also go a long way to redress the upcoming problem of a low ratio of working age adult in relation to over 65s. It is predicted that the ratio of working adult to over 65s would go down to 2.5:1 by 2050 from the current level of 12:1.

17. Another cost which was not given enough credence earlier but has now come to the fore. It is the issue of rather wide spread degradation caused to environment due the urge for quick implementation of development projects by different authorities ignoring the needs for better coordination and in depth examination of various emission related issues. Lately on a number of occasion Beijing's sky became over cast with smog causing panic and the resultant poor air quality caused the young and the elderly ones to suffer badly. This toxic phenomenon was the result of unplanned citing of many factories in Beijing's neighbourhood. The Chinese authoritative are now resolutely busy in confronting this problem to ensure protection of peoples' health and future.

18. Every society or country confronts different sets of challenges at each stage of its development. China is now facing her fair share of those - some of which was narrated above. We are sure that China will overcome them to continue on the course of fast development to achieve the goals of - Two Hundreds - set in " Chinese Dream " by the Hon'ble President H. E Xi Jinping for : (i) making China a moderately well- off society by 2021 - the 100th anniversary of creation of the Communist Party of China - and for (ii) making China a fully developed nation by 2049 - ie by the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Peoples Republic of China. We as the time honored admirer and friend of Chinese people wish them success in this noble venture.

Abu Naser Wahid is a retired Joint Secretary, Government of Bangladesh and Adviser, Bangladesh-China People's Friendship Association.

Xi Jinping's stopover to Dhaka

Barrister Harun ur Rashid



China is Bangladesh's near neighbour as China's border is just about 200 miles from Bangladesh border in straight line-distance over the Himalayas. The interaction between people of both countries dates back to centuries.

Bangladesh and China have already celebrated 40 years of establishing diplomatic ties. Relationship with China has become one of the priorities of successive governments of Bangladesh.

The heads of government of Bangladesh, irrespective of their political affiliations, invariably visited China and met with Chinese leaders to strengthen relations in every possible sector. Both nations seek partnership based on common interests in meeting the major challenges to global and regional economic growth, peace and security.

China's relations are not confined to state-to-state basis. China has interest to develop party-to-party relations and exchange political party officials between the two countries. For example, at the invitation of the International Department of the CPC Central Committee, a young cadre study group of the Bangladesh Awami League regularly visits China. This year in October AL has invited to its council foreign delegates including from China.

The president of the People's Republic of China, Xi Jinping, is likely to pay a state visit Bangladesh in the second week of October, according to diplomatic sources.

The two sides have started taking preparations for this high level visit though they are yet to announce the date of the tour and itinerary.

Xi Jinping is going to visit Dhaka at the invitation of his Bangladeshi counterpart, President Abdul Hamid. The Chinese president is expected to hold official talks with Bangladesh's Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, sources said.

An inter-ministerial meeting was held at the foreign ministry for chalking out the preparatory works of the visit. Foreign secretary Md. Shahidul Haque presided over the meeting.

The two leaders, Sheikh Hasina and Xi Jinping, are expected to visit Indian state Goa, on October 15 and 16.

Sheikh Hasina will visit India to attend the summit of BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) member states on the sidelines of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) summit, to be held in Goa on October 15 and 16, respectively, Indian high commissioner to Bangladesh, Harsh Vardhan Shringla said on July 24.

Xi Jinping is expected to join the BRICS summit in Goa. India assumed chairmanship of BRICS from Russia on February 15 and the tenure will last until December 31.





Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina visited China in June 2014. The Prime Minister is keen to build infrastructure and development projects in Bangladesh so as to make the country a middle income country by 2021. The important projects include a rail bridge over the Jamuna river and a high-speed “chord” train line between Dhaka and Comilla. Another project envisaged under the loan is the construction of a 4.8km long dual-gauge double-track rail bridge – parallel to the Bangabandhu Jamuna Bridge.

The government of Bangladesh reportedly is seeking Chinese soft loan for 20 years with a grace period of 5 years for 14 infrastructure projects.

It is reported that government has decided that Padma Multi-purpose bridge, the country's largest-ever infrastructure project, is to be built by China Major Bridge Engineering Company (CMBEC). The CMBEC will get the \$1.55 billion job against a revised estimated cost of \$1.77 billion.

China wanted to invest about 350 million US dollars in various sectors of Bangladesh for product diversification, value addition as well as enhancement of exports for mutual benefits of the two countries.

China has been a major supplier of defence materials in Bangladesh. Senior armed officials including chief of the armed services have developed cooperative relations with their counter- parts. China agreed to increase the number of scholarships to Bangladeshi students from 80 to 150 within the next three years.

China's help is necessary in Bangladesh's efforts to mitigate the severe effects of climate change in the shape of floods and other natural calamities. In river training and dredging China has enormous reservoir of technology which it can share with Bangladesh.

Future Cooperation with China may be explored in the following areas:

- Water resource management
- Renewable use energy : solar, wind power and biomass
- Education, family planning, herbal medicine., nuclear power
- Promotion of Chinese trade-related investment in Bangladesh and establishment of an exclusive EPZ for China
- Shifting of low-end industries to Bangladesh from China, (such as garments and leather)
- Maritime Security including sea lanes of communication in the Indian Ocean

It is clear that Bangladesh needs to develop with China a truly modern partnership, one that is practical, open and engaged to meet the global and regional challenges.

Barrister Harun ur Rashid, *Former Bangladesh Ambassador to the UN, Geneva.*



Growing together with an all-weather friend

AKM Moinuddin



China, one of the world's most ancient civilizations, has a recorded history of nearly 4,000 years. Bangladesh has already celebrated 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations with China, a country which has now become an all-weather friend of Bangladesh. The relationship between Bangladesh and China are based on the principles of sovereign equality, peaceful co-existence, mutual trust and respect for each other's sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in each other's internal affairs.

A new dimension in long relations of friendship emerged when the newly independent Bangladesh and China had established diplomatic relations in 1975. In the following years, China's unwavering commitment to Bangladesh's socio-economic development has time and again been substantiated by its continued efforts to assist Bangladesh in fulfilling the wishes and desires of people.

We are now going through a landmark phase in Bangladesh-China relationship, recent activities in various fields show the evidence. If we revisit the history, we find, for centuries, the people of Bangladesh and China have visited each other, shared knowledge and ideas. People from both sides have been benefitted mutually from that process. The long journey of friendship has been enriched by illustrious personalities like Fa Xian, Xuan Zang, Atish Dipankar and Admiral Zheng He. Continuing on that tradition in more recent times, according to our Foreign Ministry document, two great leaders - Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Chinese Premier Zhou En Lai further cemented friendship through exchange of visits.

The friendship between Bangladesh and China has gained significant momentum since 1975. More importantly, the two friendly countries have established the comprehensive partnership of cooperation. The statistics show that the trade volume has reached US\$ 14.7 in 2015. The friendship bridges, the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre, the Barapukuria Coal Mine Development and Coal-fired Thermal Power Plant Projects, to name a few, bear testimony of Sino-Bangladesh cooperation.

China has provided numerous assistances to support Bangladesh's economic and social progress, including the seven China-Bangladesh Friendship Bridges and Bangabandhu International Convention Center (BICC). Recently, Bangladesh and China have reached consensus on the 8th China-Bangladesh Friendship Bridge and China-Bangladesh

Friendship Exposition Center. The Chinese will donate a batch of medical, disaster relief and agriculture instruments to Bangladesh and is working on comprehensive plan of flood prevention and promoting hybrid rice technology. China also provides a large number of scholarship to Bangladeshi students. Last year, according to Chinese Embassy in Dhaka, nearly one thousand governmental officials and students went to China for training and further study.

Today, many people find China as an all-weather friend of Bangladesh. There are many reasons. We know Bangladesh has gone through difficult times after Holey Artisan Bakery attack on July 1. Many foreigners refrained from visiting Bangladesh and a number of countries issued travel alerts and advised their nationals to remain cautious while traveling to Bangladesh. But visits from China to Bangladesh, at different levels, continued even after security alerts issued by some foreign countries. When I met Chinese Ambassador in Dhaka Ma Minqiang at the foreign ministry here, few days back, he confirmed about the uninterrupted incoming visits from his country.

Meanwhile, both sides held the 14th round of the Bangladesh-China Joint Commission on Economic and Trade Cooperation (JEC) on August 22 in Dhaka with focus on specific issues relating to bilateral trade, economic assistance, investment and mutual cooperation.

China's Economy:

China has a strong determination to achieve more balanced, sustainable growth. This growth is driven increasingly by services and consumption. There is impressive progress on structural reforms in many areas, notably interest rate liberalization, internationalization of the renminbi, and urbanization. However, China's economic transition, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), will continue to be complex, challenging, and potentially bumpy, against the backdrop of heightened downside risks and eroding buffers. It is my understanding that China is taking decisive action to tackle rising vulnerabilities; reduce the reliance on credit financed, state led investment; and improve governance, risk pricing, and resource allocation in the state owned enterprise (SOE) and financial sectors. China's economic output had exceeded 10 trillion US dollars. Every percentage point of GDP growth today is equivalent to 1.5 percentage points of growth five years ago or 2.5 percentage points of growth ten years ago.

China, the IMF says, continues its transition to sustainable growth, with progress on many fronts yet also many challenges. Growth slowed to 6.9 percent in 2015 and is projected to moderate to 6.6 percent this year owing to slower private investment and weak external demand. The economy is advancing on many dimensions of rebalancing, particularly switching from industry to services and from investment to consumption. But other aspects are lagging, such as strengthening SOE and financial governance and containing rapid credit growth. Inflation dipped below 1.5 percent in 2015 and is expected to pick up to around 2 percent this year, reflecting the rebound in commodity prices and the exchange rate depreciation since mid-2015. Infrastructure spending picked up and credit growth accelerated in the second half of 2015. Accommodative macro policies are projected to continue supporting activity over the remainder of 2016.

Contribution of China's Economy to the world:

China's overseas direct investment has increased enormously in 2015. The total amount of FDI in 2015 is 127.6 billion USD, which marks 10% growth compared to last year. The year-on-year growth of China's investment to the countries along "belt & road" region is 18.2%. According to data from IMF, the total amount of global economy is over 73 trillion USD, within which China and US share 15% and 24% respectively. Last year, China contributed more than 25% to the global economic growth.

"Road & Belt Initiative"

Countries along the Belt and Road have their own resource advantages and their economies are mutually complementary. Therefore, there is a great potential and space for cooperation. They should promote policy coordination, facilities connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration and people-to-people bonds as their five major goals, and to promote practical cooperation and to achieve mutual benefits. China and 34 countries have signed MOUs or agreements to jointly construct the "Road & Belt Initiative". Industrial capacity cooperation is a major part of "Road & Belt Initiative". As the second biggest economy of the world, China is keen to share its experience and advanced technology with Bangladesh, to provide finance, technology and training personnel to Bangladesh without reservation, to expe-



dite the latter's industrialization, to combine its advanced capacity with latter's needs. China is also willing to help improve the skill of labor forces in Bangladesh, so as to create more employment and strengthen the inner impetus of Bangladesh sustainable development.

Moving Ahead:

Bangladesh has consistently supported China on the issues of her core national interests, among others, by strongly adhering to "One China Policy" on Taiwan and Tibet. Under the dynamic and visionary new Chinese leadership of President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang, China is cruising towards becoming the largest economy of the world in a short time. Bangladesh believes and supports the peaceful economic rise of China and is interested to remain as an active partner in this Asian Century.

Bangladesh is happy to be a party to the recent initiative of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). Bangladesh also supports and appreciates China's renewed emphasis on regional connectivity in the Asia-Pacific region. Bangladesh is engaged with China, India, Myanmar and other neighbours for more regional and sub-regional integration through processes like the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor (BCIM-EC) as well as in SAARC and BIMSTEC. The two countries need to work to strengthen people-to-people exchanges for deepening civilizational ties. Both sides must actively expand exchanges and cooperation in the areas of culture, science, technology, health, and further promote interactions between media organizations, think tanks, academia, research community, scholars, friendship associations, women's organizations, art troupes, sportsmen and sports organizers, as well as young people of the two countries.

The "Vision 2021", envisioned by Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, pledges to transform the country to a middle income country by 2021 and as a developed nation by 2041. China being the fastest growing mega-economy in the globe is a role model for Bangladesh. While Bangladesh moves ahead, it would like to learn from the Chinese experience. Bangladesh and its over 16 crore people are also hopeful that China would continue its support to Bangladesh, specifically in terms of economic cooperation, in its endeavour to reach development targets.

Grounds ready for much-desired visit:

We have long been hearing that Chinese President Xi Jinping will visit Bangladesh. I had the opportunity to meet Ambassador Ma several times over the last one year. Every time we met, I asked the same question. Is your President coming to Bangladesh soon? I got almost the same reply all the time - both sides are working on the visit. We understand, such top level State visit requires some specific things. It seems that the grounds are ready now to welcome the Chinese President to Bangladesh. So far we know the Chinese President is scheduled to visit Dhaka before October 15. Most probably, he will arrive Dhaka on October 14. President Xi Jinping is likely to go to Nepal before landing Dhaka by a special flight. He will hold official talks with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to discuss wide range of bilateral relations.

The visit is taking place before the BRICS Summit 2016 and BIMSTEC Outreach Meeting which will be held in India on October 15-16 as the Chinese President is also scheduled to attend the Summit. India will host the eighth annual Summit of BRICS in Goa in its capacity as chair of the influential bloc comprising five countries with 42 percent of the world population and combined GDP of over USD 16 trillion.

Both Dhaka and Beijing are considering the visit as very important one. A number of deals involving several billions of dollars are likely to be signed during this visit. Dhaka will seek financial support for over two dozen mega projects from Beijing.

There is no doubt that the visit will be extremely important one. It is natural that Chinese President will come up with a big package for Bangladesh what he does usually while visiting other parts of the world. We are not expecting any deviation from that trend. Meanwhile, the visit also has regional and international significance because global powers are considering Bangladesh as their strong partner.

It is hoped that the Chinese President will carry a message for Bangladesh and its people that his country will help further intensify the "Closer Comprehensive Partnership of Cooperation" between the two countries. Dhaka, in fact, is eager to see a productive visit.

AKM Moinuddin is Diplomatic Correspondent of the United News of Bangladesh (UNB).

Pristine State in the Ideals of Confucianism

Brigadier General AF Jaglul Ahmed



The system or some form of social institutions grew up in the tribal or band level societies to deal with the surplus food or protect themselves from the attack of other powerful and harmful animals. Though the idea of kinship prevailed at that period too to decide the ownership of food and authority, there was egalitarianism in those social systems as regards the distribution of food. Social system grew in different forms in different societies largely for economic governance. The social and political entity of the governance grew by default. From the greed of social and political status, patrimonial characteristics of current nation state system spearheaded in most of parts of the world. The root to it can always be traced back to the kinship of band and tribal level societies. The structures that grew to ensure equal and dignified social and political status of people as a whole too failed due to quality of kinship rather than meritocracy with some exceptions of some societies. Gradual growth of centralized and hierarchical characteristics

of state system produced higher degree of social inequality. In most part of the world, state system failed to develop strategy to shift social/political organizations from family and friend based organization to impersonal institution.

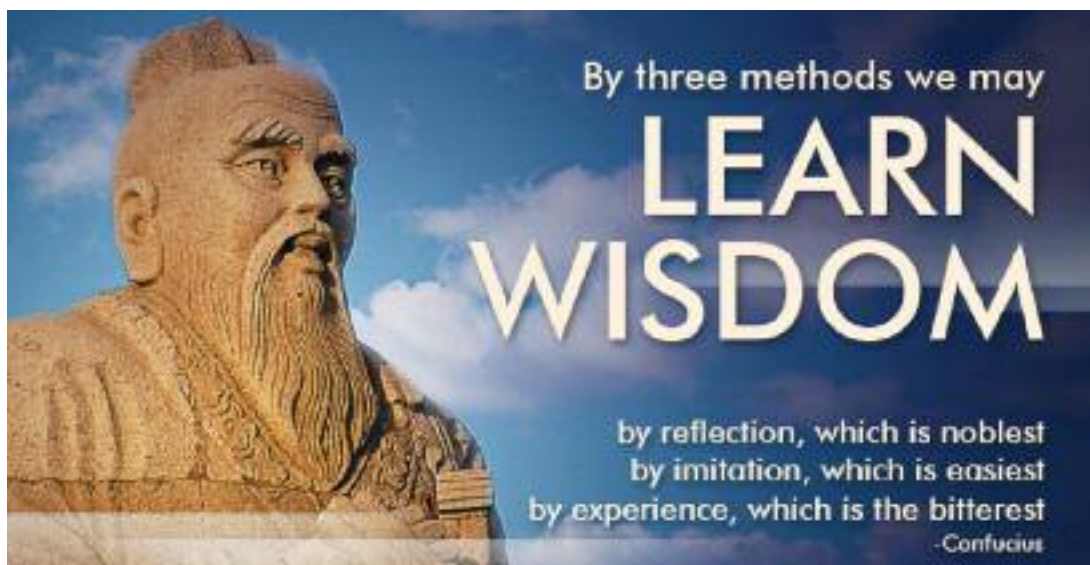
But by and large, the power of the state for this patrimonial characteristics remains in the hand of few which is what is government chosen by all but largely serving to few. John Lock's 'Doctrine of Individualism' and Thomas Hobbes 'Rational Materialism' of fifteenth century engulfed the system of state focusing more on individual material gains rather than community interests. There was restriction of private property in the initial state system developed during Aristotle or Plato. But with the rise of individualism not only restriction was lifted rather further compounded with the inheritance of private property. Transfer of properties from community to individual ownership has always been argued for better productivity against distribution on the basis of equity. From the concept of private property to its inheritance on the basis of kinship limited the distribution of wealth to closed community. Limitless individual liberty, accumulation of limitless wealth absolved human beings from playing roles for larger communities for which state was built to individual satisfaction.

There was noble purpose to form ideal governance to serve the greater community for good social order and justice. Ideal governance entailed the formation of state, establishment of rule of law and accountability in sequence. The sequence didn't find an ideal pattern to suggest ideal governance. The culture, geography, practice of polity, people, religion, etc, mattered differently to different country. In the search of ideal governance, dilemma of chicken or egg was always a prime question between the building of state and creation of governance. The choice of type of polity for establishing good governance varied between countries. Savagery of war and its duration, diversity of ethnicity, geography, climate, and many other factors determine the choice of polity and building of state.

As the state grew modern, the economy turned into major areas of governance largely bereft of social presupposition. From Feudalistic economy to mercantilist and now to the free ride of the current market economy drives some of the national economies totally subservient to the global economy not meant for global good. The recipe of the market economy has been convoluted over time and its purity violated severely from the idea of Adam smith. Theory of market economy may need to be traced back that Adam smith articulated for a self-organizing economy to create equitable and socially optimal allocation of a society's productive resources. David Ricardo explained in his 'Theory of Comparative Advantage' that trade need be balanced and capital be national i.e. capital is nationally owned and remain within national boundary shows way out. Against the principles of its pristine form, the size of the market, buyer or seller has turned so large that even the powerful national governments fail to draw benefit from it to their national interest. Power of the national government shrunk so much that seldom smaller state succeeds in accumulation prosperity for its people. The effect of modern philosophy on state, governance or society has largely changed the role of the state and governance to decide on their role and responsibilities to their people. The modern state philosophies seemed to have brought greater order and developed stronger institutions for sustainable governance. But the egalitarian characteristics of the social structures are largely defeated. The space for ethics and morality has been shrunk drastically. The internal values to drive the state or governance for social good have been subdued to the urge of material substance. Therefore, all that modern do not always do good to humanity as a whole or serve greater community.



There are older philosophies of various regions but none surpassed by quality and authenticity of Confucianism, which many countries follow as their governance philosophy. Confucianism, also known as Ruism is a system of philosophical and "ethical-sociopolitical teachings" sometimes described as a religion. Confucianism developed during the



Spring and Autumn Period from the teachings of the Chinese philosopher Confucius (551–479 BCE), who considered himself a re-transmitter of Zhou values. With particular emphasis on the importance of the family and social harmony, rather than on an otherworldly soteriology, the core of Confucianism is humanistic. Confucianism regards the ordinary activities of human life – and especially in human relationships as a manifestation of the sacred. The worldly concern of Confucianism rests on the belief that human beings are fundamentally good, and teachable, improvable, and perfectible through personal and communal endeavor especially self-cultivation and self-creation. Confucian thought focuses on the cultivation of virtue and maintenance of ethics. Some of the basic Confucian ethical concepts and practices include rén, yì, and lǐ, and zhì. Rén ("benevolence" or "humaneness") is the essence of the human being which manifests as compassion. It is the virtue-form of Heaven. Yì is the upholding of righteousness and the moral disposition to do good. Lǐ is a system of ritual norms and propriety that determines how a person should properly act in everyday life according to the law of Heaven. Zhì is the ability to see what is right and fair, or the converse, in the behaviors exhibited by others. Confucianism holds one in contempt, either passively or actively, for failure to uphold the cardinal moral values of rén and yì.

Confucianism focused on the central belief that human being should seek to live in a good way behaving with humanity and courtesy, working diligently and properly honouring family and rulers. He revolutionized the idea of power or status be earned by moral behaviour rather than heredity. He was concerned more with the cultivation of social harmony than with the machinations of power like Machiavelli. His themes were the principles of compassionate rule, the performance of correct rituals, and the in-calculation of filial piety. Confucian rule is based on the idea of ethical order. Through six of his classics, he heavily emphasized on benevolence and rites. Benevolence concentrates on loving people representing a variety of moral standard. Rites represent social regulation and the estate system, which are essential for a well-ordered life society and country. The adherence to Confucian order offer inspiration of service in pursuit of a greater harmony. His philosophy sought the redemption of the state through righteous individual behaviour oriented towards this world affirming a code of social conduct. The model of both society and government in Confucian order is based on family, an institution intimately familiar to everyone. Confucianism philosophy could be panacea to allow dignified social or political space for every individual and return of community stake from individual preeminence of economic governance.

The inclusive governance in Confucianism philosophy can again shift the dream of prosperity from individual to community. The ideological foundation of individualism can be changed to ideology of collectivism. The prosperity can start with state and end with individual for collective goal rather than unstoppable individual enhancement. Following the philosophy, a link between the past and the future, between history and future, between individual and state and between family and state can be establish to ensure collective prosperity. If productive forces are liberated and developed, and exploitation or manipulations are eliminated from the society, prosperity for which social institutions were built in the early society and state later can be reestablished. The state can turn into a pristine form and eradicate social inequality.

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Seeking Practical Cooperation

How can China ensure the Belt and Road Initiative meets a diverse set of needs?

Li Ziguo

After two years of discussions, evaluations and diplomatic efforts, the China-proposed initiative to build the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road (Belt and Road) has been recognized by most countries along the trade routes. This year, the international cooperation necessary to effectively implement the initiative between China and other countries is expected to yield concrete outcomes.

Many projects that have been discussed first as blueprints are being put into action, with forklifts, cranes and construction crews at the ready. The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), based in Beijing, officially came online on January 16. The AIIB, consisting of 57 founding member states, is expected to become a critical lending mechanism as it provides financing for infrastructure projects along the Belt and Road routes.

To fulfill the Belt and Road Initiative, China and other participating countries need to adhere to the constant pursuit of practicality, and put common benefits ahead of individual interests.

Meeting needs

While promoting the Belt and Road Initiative to potential partners, China must ensure clarity and understanding of each participant's real needs. It should be aware of the strategic demands according to the specific conditions of each region and country, and understand which cooperative fields and projects those countries want and need most under the Belt and Road framework.

Kazakhstan is where Chinese President Xi Jinping first proposed the Silk Road Economic Belt in 2013. There are four strategic demands based on the country's own development strategy: make the country a Eurasian cross-border hub by accelerating the construction of domestic infrastructure; speed up the deep processing of raw materials and industrialization based on stable energy production so as to achieve economic diversification; develop agricultural modernization and fully utilize its abundant farmland resources to make the nation a major player in the global grain market; and advance innovative economies and explore new industries. If the above-mentioned strategic appeals of Kazakhstan can be satisfied, the country will surely become an active partner in building the Silk Road Economic Belt.

Therefore, China should find the common ground with concerned countries, accommodate their needs and search for cooperative areas to work together through project implementation.

In the meantime, there are huge differences in terms of resources, economic scale, geographic conditions and degrees of openness among the over 60 countries along the Belt and Road routes. Each of them has their own domestic concerns



A train stops at the entrance of the Qamchiq Tunnel on the Angren-Pap railway line in Uzbekistan on February 27. The tunnel, the longest in Central Asia, was built by the China Railway Tunnel Group (XINHUA)



and foreign policy precedence. As a result, their priorities for cooperation with China have varied according to their different stage of national development.

In order to facilitate regional trade, the 10-member Association of Southeastern Asian Nations (ASEAN) is cooperating with China to upgrade their existing free trade agreement (FTA) to a 2.0 level, while the China-Japan-South Korea FTA talks are ongoing.

Yet not all countries share this objective. Uzbekistan, for example, has no current interest in signing an FTA with China for the fear that the larger economy's strong production capacity might undermine its relatively outdated manufacturing industry. While China may hope that will change one day, and that common interests can be found, it may not be immediate and will take work and patience.

If China does not clarify and understand what its many partners each want and need—regardless of FTA status—the ambitious initiative will face an enthusiasm gap.

What can China offer?

As the proposer of the Belt and Road Initiative, China should play a leading role in its implementation, especially in the initial stages. That is to say, what shape the initiative takes will largely depends on what China can offer.

To this point, China must be fully aware of what it is capable of doing and doing well in regards to the scale of investment, sources of funds and operational models. The Chinese Government should also be focused on where the nation's competitive edge lies, and where investment opportunities are not only most likely, most wise.

Furthermore, efforts should be made to build mature international financing channels, which should not be limited to the Silk Road Fund established by China and the China-led AIIB. China also needs to develop diversified fundraising channels and seek cooperation with other international financing organizations, such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, since these organizations have rich experiences in poverty alleviation and funding projects in developing countries. Additionally, China should take advantage of the capital and capabilities commercial banks can offer.

Many countries along the Belt and Road routes are badly in need of more investment and financing. In the face of so many investment possibilities, China and its relevant partners should make a careful selection. A successful project in one country can produce a demonstration effect for the whole initiative. In most cases, it is the small and medium-sized projects that are most wanted by those countries, for these projects are likely to benefit local people most immediately.

When the Belt and Road Initiative was first put forward, many Chinese cities and enterprises wanted to take part in it immediately. But the fact was that most of their project proposals were lacking prudent considerations. Later, the

domestic media took a closer look and many mentioned the possible risks involved. Some experts have also expressed their concerns about uncertainties in overseas investment.



Chinese and Pakistani representatives attend a ceremony to lay the cornerstone for the Karot Hydropower Plant in Pakistan, which is funded by the Silk Road Fund, on January 10 (XINHUA)

Beware of risks ahead

In the current stage, at least equal attention should be paid to both potential costs and benefits. Each country has different liabilities in implementing the Belt and Road Initiative, which Chinese investors know well. In the inland of the Eurasian continent, Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan are high-risk destinations for investors because

conflicts in these countries are not likely to end in the near future. Many more Central Asian countries are also facing the threat of terrorism, separatism or extremism, or all of the above. Furthermore, disputes over territory and water resources between neighboring countries could also affect the international cooperation needed to successfully build the Silk Road Economic Belt.

Apart from bilateral disputes, domestic problems, including flawed legal systems, corruption and volatile foreign exchange rates should not be neglected.

Despite the aforementioned challenges, Chinese investors have enough reasons to feel confident about the prospect of the Belt and Road Initiative. After all, the general situation in regions along their routes is stable. Many Asian and African countries have a strong demand for development and investment, and China has prominent advantages in seeking cooperation opportunities with these countries.

While promoting the Belt and Road Initiative, it is necessary for the Chinese Government to help domestic investors keep alert of the possible risks ahead. A risk evaluation system should be established, and investment risk pre-warnings and precautionary measures should be made for potential investors' reference.

In addition, Chinese companies should attach great importance to environmental protection efforts. By participating in the Belt and Road Initiative, more and more Chinese companies will expand their businesses abroad. Apart from the economic benefits and job opportunities, it is natural—and therefore should be expected—that local people around the world will be concerned over environmental protection when a foreign company plans to establish a factory, mine or other project in their community.

For ecologically fragile areas, especially in Mongolia and Central Asian countries, pollution may also be a top concern for residents. Therefore, Chinese investors must be prudent when developing projects. Strict environmental impact assessments must be carried out. If one Chinese company causes environmental degradation, Chinese investment as a whole will incur the opposition of local residents, and the willingness to join the Belt and Road Initiative will be damaged.

Chinese businesses and workers alike cannot afford to underestimate the importance of respecting local cultures, the fragility of local ecosystems and the skepticism that they may face when working abroad. It is therefore essential that every party involved does its part to identify the pressing needs and desires of the local people, areas of potential cooperation with partners and government at all levels, and the terms of that cooperation to ensure the longevity and fruits of such enormous investment and effort.

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QUOTABLE QUOTE





China's cooperation in Bangladesh Power Sector: A milestone for developing Base Load Power Plant

Engr. Sheikh Faezul Amin



Historically, Bangladesh and China share an affluent record of trade and cultural exchange. The People's Republic of Bangladesh and the People's Republic of China established diplomatic relations in 1975. Besides, the economic rise of China in the past three decades as well as Bangladesh's steady growth since 2010 have resulted in better trade ties between the two nations. Further, the current economic junction in Asia and the shifting of global centre of economic growth towards East (centering China), have created a room to re-establish their historic connectivity. At present Bangladesh and China have become good neighbor and trusted partner of its overall development.

The Government of Bangladesh has outlined the vision of joining the ranks of middle income country by 2021 and a developed economy by 2041. Economic development and demand for electricity are directly proportional to each other. Accordingly, huge multi-dimensional development activities are taken on in Power Sector. Under the dynamic and charismatic leadership of Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the power sector has made threefold increase in its installed power generation capacity than the capacity of 2009. At present the installed power generation capacity is 14500 MW. The country will celebrate the reaching of its installed power generation capacity of 15000 MW on 17 November 2016.

Reliable power generation and its uninterrupted supply is the key for economic development of any country. Reliable power comes from base load power plants. Base load power plants are the production facilities used to meet continuous energy demand and produce energy at a constant rate and are available 24 hours a day, usually at a low cost relative to other production facilities available to the system. Base-load power plants provide reliable power to maintain a large-scale electrical grid and generally shut down only for scheduled maintenance or emergency repairs. Typically, they require large upfront capital investments but provide reasonably low-cost electricity. These include nuclear, coal, and combined-cycle natural gas plants which capture and recycle the exhaust heat of traditional gas turbines.

According to the revised Power System Master Plan (PSMP), 24000 MW will need to be generated by 2021 and 60000 MW by 2041. Due to the depletion of natural gas reserves, the proposition of primary fuel-mix has been revised giving more importance on coal instead of natural gas for base load power generation. Accordingly about 20000 MW Power have to be generated from coal based power plant and about 35 billion US dollars will be required to add this capacity. Therefore, power sector is looking for diversified investment from development partners as well as other sources. China is willing to enhance cooperation in power and energy sector of Bangladesh.

North-West Power Generation Company Limited (NWPGL) is a newly created power generation company, which is in need of additional financing to install a coal-based mega project. So, the solution was to establish a strategic alliance of Joint Venture. For in this context, NWPGL signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with China National Machinery Import & Export Corporation (CMC), China on 19.03.2014. Later on, NWPGL signed the Joint Venture Agreement (JVA) with CMC on 09.06.2014 at the Great Hall of the People, Beijing, China in presence of the Hon'ble Prime Minister of the Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina and her Chinese counterpart, Hon'ble Prime Minister of China Li Keqiang in order to implement Payra 1320 MW Thermal Coal based Power Plant Project by using eco-friendly ultra supercritical technology on turn-key basis and by establishing a Joint Venture Company (JVC).

Accordingly, Bangladesh-China Power Company (Pvt.) Limited (BCPCL) was formed and registered with the office of the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and firms (RJSC), Dhaka, Bangladesh on 01.10.2014 under the provision of the Companies Act, 1994.



JVA signing between NWPGL & CMC, China for Payra 1320MW Thermal Power Plant Project on 09.08.2014


EPC Contract signed between BCPCL & Consortium of NEPC-CECC, China on 29.03.2016.

The Company took only 4 (four) months to complete the total bidding process, including tender invitation, pre-bid meeting, tender evaluation, Board approval, issuance of NOA and its acceptance. At last on 29.03.2016 the Company signed EPC contract with the Consortium of NEPC and CECC, China for execution of the project and contract effective date is 30.03.2016. To lessen project implementation time, the company has provided a special clause in the Engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) contract that EPC contractor will have to invest 15% of the EPC cost (Foreign currency Portion) from its own resources and it will be reimbursed after financial closing. Government of Bangladesh through Ministry of Finance has already given consent in principle to issue sovereign guarantee for 50% (NWPGL Portion) of the total debt. On the other hand, Genertec as a parent company of CMC (a Chinese nationalized entity) will issue its corporate guarantee against the rest 50% (CMC) Portion of the total debt. BCPCL convinced the EXIM bank of China and they have submitted their Term Sheet for loan proposal for financing to this project. The Standing Committee on Non Concessional Loan Committee (NCLC) has approved their financial proposal on 15 September 2016. The expected Commercial Operation Date (COD) of First unit (660 MW) will be on 30 April 2019 and Second Unit (660 MW) will be on 31 October 2019.

Due to the special clause under EPC contract, the EPC work of the projects are running in full pace. The soil improvement work is already completed, a lot of equipment and machineries are carried out at the site to accomplish different assigned project works according to CPM/PERT method. A good number of test piles have already been constructed. Milestone dates of the project are in line with the progress of this project. BCPCL will ensure the world's best practices in the selection and installation of main equipment and machineries, as well as will ensure world's best practices in mitigating Environment Management Plan(EMP) for this mega project.

On completion of this mega power plant project, net 1250 MW reliable power will be added in the national grid that would immensely impact the economy in and around Barishal Division as well as contribute in the steady growth of our national economy. Besides, the first unit of this mega project will be completed in 37 months, which is 5 months ahead than any similar project. It will help BCPCL to generate 5 month's additional revenue to incur expenses, which will be the another beauty of this mega project.

Engr. Sheikh Faezul Amin, Joint Secretary (Development), Power Division, Ministry of Power, Energy and Natural Resources, Government of Bangladesh.



A Brilliant plan One Belt, One Road

“One Belt One Road and Maritime Silk Road of the 21st Century”: Great Opportunity for Bangladesh

Rumman Uddin Ahamed



On being elected as the General Secretary of The Communist Party of China (CPC) in November 2012, China's leader Xi Jinping initiated the concept of the Chinese Dream as “the great renewal of the Chinese nation.” Subsequently elected the President of China in March 2013, Xi Jinping developed the concept further to not only mean that China aims to fulfill “the dream of the whole nation as well as of every individual” citizen, but also to revive China's global status as “Zhongguo” or Middle country at the “center of Civilisation” in a benign role as promoter of human well-being and universal “dream for peace, development, cooperation and mutual benefit for all, connected to the beautiful dreams of the people in other countries,” that will change the global landscape, which was shaped by Western countries over the past two centuries during industrialisation: The new global landscape will be established through international rules and experiences of both developed and emerging countries.

‘One Belt One Road’, is his ideas of Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB) and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road (MSR) connecting China to all of Asia, Europe, Africa, Australasia and the Americas by land and sea may be said to be the major corollary of that Chinese Dream.

The “One Belt One Road” concept is rooted in history as there existed through the Middle Ages an overland silk route and a MSR that connected China to countries across Asia, Africa and Europe. In the last three decades of reforms, China has built a network of highways and railroads from north to south and from east to less developed western and south western regions. Having achieved that, China sees an opportunity to link the hinterland with South East Asia, South Asia, Central Asia, Europe, Africa, East Asia, Australasia and the Americas.

The ‘One Belt One Road’ Concept was first mooted by President Xi Jinping during a speech at Nazarbayev University, Kazakhstan on 7 September 2013, where he said that “to forge closer economic ties, deepen cooperation and expand development in the Euro-Asia region, we should take an innovative approach and jointly build an ‘economic belt’ along the Silk Road. This will be a great undertaking benefitting the people of all countries along the route.” Undoubtedly, the economic connectivity is the heart of the matter for which Chinese president Xi Jinping also announced the establishment of a Silk Road fund with 40 billion US dollars to support infrastructure investments in countries involved. The Belt and Road initiative is a way for win-win cooperation that promotes common development and prosperity, builds a road towards peace and friendship by enhancing mutual understanding and trust, and stimulates all-round exchanges. The vision of ‘One Belt One Road’ has become a signpost of China's strategy to engage neighboring countries. The strategic position of South Asia has been recognized as an indispensable part of that strategy. The idea is to develop connectivity among the Belt Road Initiative (BRI) bloc countries that could promote sustainable growth and create huge opportunities like systematic innovation, infrastructure development, improved business environment and cross border transportation. BRI would also facilitate trade & investment, endorse greater trade settlement in local currencies, strengthen bilateral & multilateral financial cooperation, and set up financial institutes for regional development.

The initiative of building Maritime Silk Road (MSR) was proposed by President Xi Jinping, during his state visit to Indonesia in October 2013, as a way to deepen economic and maritime links. The MSR begins in Fuzhou in Southeast China's Fuzhou province and heads south into the ASEAN nations, crosses Malacca Strait and turns west to countries along the Indian Ocean to cross the Red Sea and the Mediterranean before meeting the land-based Silk Road in Venice. The initiative focuses on jointly building smooth, secure and efficient transport routes connecting major sea ports along the belt and road. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM)-Economic Corridor closely related South Asia to the Belt and Road initiative. Under the ambit of MSR, China plans to build hard and soft infrastructure from Indo-Pacific to Africa, including transport, energy, water management, communication, earth monitoring, economic and social infrastructure. It is a step to link the past with the present, revive the glory of Asia, and show case Asian commitment to unity and cooperation.



Belt Road Initiative (BRI) will progressively spur economic growth in the South Asian countries and lift billions of people out of poverty. If all South Asian countries have road connectivity, it would add 1.5 percent to the region's gross domestic product. Connectivity alone can raise GDP growth by 5 percent in Thailand, Vietnam and Myanmar and 2.5 percent in India. With the emergence of China as an economic power house in the region, the revival of the Silk Road is bound to offer vast potentials. The recent launch of Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the BRICS New Development Bank may provide adequate funding for revival of the Silk Roads for inter-Asia Connectivity, and creation of pockets of industrial and commercial growth centres all along the Belt and Road ensuring that all the nations within this belt are able to get economic benefits from respective trade and investment role. Last year, when the Chinese president was visiting South Asia, he put forward some specific initiatives as well. He said that, over the next five years, Chinese investment in South Asian countries will be more than \$30 billion. China has allocated \$20 billion in consortium loans in South Asia, and will provide training opportunity to 5000 youths from South Asia. Apart from India, most of the smaller nations South Asia welcomed the idea as they perceived the initiative as a great opportunity to comprehensively deepen economic and people to people relations in the region. Indian reservations about this ini-



tiative could create some handicaps for the implementation of this visionary initiative in the South Asia region. Indian Prime Minister Modi's last year visit to China appears to have confirmed Indian receptivity to China's "One Belt One Road" blueprint excepting Pakistan's key position in the Belt and some reservations about the MSR. Given the particular version of historical interpretation, and rewriting even, that the initiative involves, India is wary of joining in whole heartedly. While ambivalent about China's initiatives, India seems to clearly understand that it may lose golden opportunities if it turns down Beijing's invitation to jointly build the 'One Belt One Road' programme.

The 'One Belt One Road' initiative has several implications for China's immediate neighborhood that includes Bangladesh. The Silk Road Economic Belt connecting China with Central Asia and onwards to Europe with Xinjiang at its core to the north is of a piece with initiatives to the west and to the south such as the BCIM-Economic Corridor and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Along all these economic corridors Bangladesh may be directly or indirectly linked. In case of BCIM Economic Corridor, Bangladesh is a formal member. In ancient times, Bangladesh was one of the most important destinations of Southern Silk Road and Maritime Silk Road. Now a day's Bangladesh could be one of the hubs of 'One Belt One Road' commerce and connectivity. In Bangladesh, the general people have a little idea about the Belt & Road initiative. Mostly due to poor publicity and little engagements by the print & electronic media. In this regard, the principle initiatives must come from the Bangladesh government. They may formulate short term and long term action plans for popularizing this visionary project among the people of Bangladesh. More media publicity and engagement could accelerate people's awareness and participation for building the Belt and Road initiative program. Moreover, the engagement of major political parties, cultural & social activists, educationists, Business & trade bodies leaders, columnists, NGO workers, civil and military personnel, Youth forums and root level elected public representatives must be increased through exchange programs, seminars, symposiums, art show, festivals & documentary display on BRI & MRI programs.

Implementation of the initiatives will help Bangladesh to transform its geographical position into economic advantage and other benefits of the scheme in the following manner:

- i) The construction of the Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road will bring new opportunities for China-Bangladesh cooperation. Both sides may take the opportunity of celebrating the 40th anniversary of their establishment of diplomatic relationship last year to strengthen cooperation in trade, agriculture, education, human resource development, cultural cooperation, infrastructure development, ocean exploration & in other fields, and deepen traditional friendship.

- ii) The Belt Road Initiative will promote trade and connectivity of Bangladesh with China along belt bloc countries.
- iii) Regional connectivity network will help Bangladesh emerge as a transportation hub in the Asia Pacific region.
- iv) Establishment of exclusive as well as special industrial zones for China and other Belt countries in Bangladesh will attract foreign direct investment (FDI) from China and other countries & contribute to more balanced trade for Bangladesh.
- v) Free trade facilitation will help Bangladesh access to markets in China, India and elsewhere.
- vi) Energy cooperation will ease Bangladesh's energy and power problems.
- vii) The construction of 'One Belt One Road' could speed up the current process of poverty alleviation as well as the dynamics of development of Bangladesh with support and assistance from the China.
- viii) Bangladesh has already joined the AIIB as a founding member. It is expected that Bangladesh will get multi-dimensional cooperation & assistance from this newly formed Bank for participation of its entrepreneurs in projects along the Belt and Road.
- ix) Bangladesh may acquire expertise and advanced technology by working with China and improving capability to address climate change and disaster management.
- x) Bangladesh may benefit from relocation of Chinese industries on account of rise of wages in China as that country may transfer some of its manufacturing base abroad to other countries like Bangladesh.
- xi) It is estimated that in the next five years, China will invest an additional \$500 billion in other countries, import over \$10 trillion of products & send 400 million tourists abroad. Bangladesh, as China's close neighbor and trusted friend, may be able to make good use of "Chinese Opportunities" if the Belt and Road Initiative is firmed up.
- xii) Bangladesh is potentially China's strategic cooperation partner in South Asia and the Indian Ocean Region. Construction and expansion of the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor (BCIM-EC) at the apex of the Bay of Bengal and in the intersection of the 'Belt & Road' is bound to open up immense opportunities for trade, traffic and industrial growth. Since 2013, the initiative of BCIM-EC has maintained good momentum. If the BCIM Corridor is realized, it will have a deep impact on Bangladesh-China trade, and traffic, connect Bangladesh with the Western parts of China. The current route of Maritime Silk Road is not directly linked at any point with Bangladesh. But with the development of a deep sea port in the Chittagong-Cox's Bazar development area linked to Sonadia-Matarbari islands environment. Bangladesh will be a significant part of the Maritime Silk Route.

Development of Sonadia Deep Sea Port (or its possible alternative at Matar Bari in the same environment of Cox's Bazar-Chittagong Development Zone) is very important for the long term development of Bangladesh & the sub-Himalayan region beyond. It has prospects of a natural hub for connectivity with Northeast India, Bhutan and Nepal on the Myanmar ports, Thailand, Sri Lanka and beyond. But it is our leadership that has to pursue it and to qualify for direct foreign assistance from China & other possible partners including India and the US, and for investment funds committed to infrastructure building like the AIIB.

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চীন বিপ্লব ও মাও জে দং

হায়দার আকবর খান রনো



মানব ইতিহাসের মহত্তম ঘটনাগুলির অন্যতম মহান চীন বিপ্লব। গত শতাব্দীর ১৯১৭ সালের মহান অক্টোবর বিপ্লবের পরেই উল্লেখ করতে হয় চীন বিপ্লবের কথা। হাজার হাজার বছরের শ্রেণী শোষণ ও শ্রেণী শাসনের অবসান ঘটিয়ে রাশিয়ার অক্টোবর বিপ্লব বিশ্ব ইতিহাসে এক নতুন যুগের সূচনা করেছিল- সমাজতন্ত্রের অভ্যুদয়ের যুগ। পুঁজিবাদ ও সাম্রাজ্যবাদের বিশ্ব কাঠামোর মধ্যে ভাঙ্গনের সূচনা হল। এর পর ১৯৪৯ সালে বিজয়ী হল জনসংখ্যার দিক দিয়ে পৃথিবীর বৃহত্তম দেশ চীনের বিপ্লব। সাম্রাজ্যবাদের শৃঙ্খল ভেঙ্গে বেরিয়ে এল পৃথিবীর জনসংখ্যার এক চতুর্থাংশ মানুষ। এই মহান বিপ্লব পৃথিবীর ভারসাম্যকে পালটে দিল। চীন বিপ্লবের তাৎপর্য ছিল আন্তর্জাতিক। দ্বিতীয় বিশ্বযুদ্ধের পর তৈরী হল এক সুবিশাল সমাজতান্ত্রিক শিবির। নিপীড়িত ও শোষিত মানুষের সবচেয়ে নির্ভরযোগ্য দুর্গ।

গত শতাব্দীর শেষ দশকে সমাজতান্ত্রিক শিবির আর থাকলো না। সাবেক সোভিয়েত ইউনিয়ন ও পূর্ব ইউরোপে ভয়াবহ ও কুৎসিক রূপ নিয়ে ফিরে এসেছে পুঁজিবাদ। চীন নানা ধরনের অর্থনৈতিক সংস্কার করলেও সমাজতন্ত্রের পতাকা উড্ডীন রেখেছে।

রাশিয়া, চীন ও অন্যান্য দেশে সমাজতন্ত্র অভিমুখে বিপ্লব পরিচালিত হয়েছিল সেই সব দেশের কমিউনিস্ট পার্টির নেতৃত্বে। সর্বহারা শ্রেণীর বিপ্লবী পার্টি হচ্ছে কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি, যার তাত্ত্বিক, দার্শনিক ও মতাদর্শগত ভিত্তি তৈরী করেছিলেন কাল মার্কস ও ফ্রেডরিখ এঙ্গেলস উনবিংশ শতাব্দীতে। মার্কসবাদের বিপ্লবী মতবাদের সফল প্রয়োগ করলেন লেনিন রাশিয়ায়। সফল হল পৃথিবীর প্রথম সমাজতান্ত্রিক বিপ্লব। বিপ্লব করতে গিয়ে লেনিন মার্কসবাদকে বিকশিত করেছিলেন, যাকে বলা হয় লেনিনবাদ। সোভিয়েত ইউনিয়নে সফল সমাজতান্ত্রিক বিনির্মাণ, দ্বিতীয় বিশ্বযুদ্ধে ফ্যাসিবাদকে পরাজিত করে দুনিয়াকে রক্ষা করা এবং দেশে দেশে কমিউনিস্ট মতাদর্শকে ছড়িয়ে দেবার মধ্য দিয়ে আন্তর্জাতিক কমিউনিস্ট আন্দোলনকে নতুন মাত্রায় তুলে আনলেন সর্বহারা শ্রেণীর আরেক মহান নেতা জোসেফ স্টালিন। কালক্রমে অনুযায়ী এর পরই যে নামটি আসে তা হল মাও জে দং। আড়াই দশক ধরে চলা মহান সশস্ত্র বিপ্লবী যুদ্ধের মধ্য দিয়ে চীন বিপ্লবকে যিনি বিজয়ের পথে নিয়ে গিয়েছিলেন, তিনি হলেন মাও জে দং।

বিশ্ব ইতিহাসে এর আগে যার কোন তুলনা ছিল না, এমন এক দীর্ঘমেয়াদী বিপ্লবী যুদ্ধের, কোটি কোটি মানুষের প্রচন্ড রক্তক্ষয়ী বিপ্লবী যুদ্ধের যিনি ছিলেন মহানায়ক মাও জে দং। তিনি কেবল চীন বিপ্লবেরই নেতা নন, তিনি দুনিয়ার প্রলেতারিয়েত ও সকল নিপীড়িত জাতি ও জনগোষ্ঠীর অবিসংবাদিত নেতা। চীন বিপ্লবে নেতৃত্ব দান করতে গিয়ে তিনি মার্কসবাদের তাত্ত্বিক ভাঙারে যে সকল অবদান রেখেছেন, তা শোষিত শ্রেণী ও নিপীড়িত জাতি ও জনগোষ্ঠীর মুক্তি সংগ্রামের জন্য অতি বড় মাপের তাত্ত্বিক ও মতাদর্শগত হাতিয়ার।

চীন বিপ্লবের কয়েকটি পর্যায় আছে। ১৯২১ সালে (১ জুলাই) চীনের কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি প্রতিষ্ঠিত হয়েছিল। জন্ম লগ্নের অল্পদিনের মধ্যেই পার্টি সশস্ত্র অভ্যুত্থানে অংশগ্রহণ করে। চীনের মহান জাতীয়তাবাদী বিপ্লবী সান ইয়েং সেনের নেতৃত্বে দক্ষিণ চীনে যে বিপ্লবী সরকার গঠিত হয়েছিল, কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি সেই বিপ্লবী সরকারে অংশ নিয়েছিল। কমিউনিস্ট পার্টির প্রভাবাধীন সেনাবাহিনীও তৈরী হয়েছিল। সেই সময় বুর্জোয়া জাতীয়তাবাদী দল কুয়োমিনটাং-এর সঙ্গে কমিউনিস্ট পার্টির ঐক্য প্রতিষ্ঠিত হয়েছিল। ১৯২৫ সালে (১২ মার্চ) সাল ইয়েং সেনের মৃত্যুর পর এই ঐক্য ভেঙ্গে যায়। কুয়োমিনটাং-এর নেতৃত্বে আসেন প্রতিক্রিয়াশীল বুর্জোয়ার প্রতিনিধি চ্যাং কাই শেক। শুরু হল দীর্ঘমেয়াদী গৃহ যুদ্ধ। ১৯২৫ থেকে ১৯২৭ সাল এই সময় পর্বটি ছিল প্রথম বিপ্লবী গৃহযুদ্ধ- যা ব্যর্থতায় পর্যবসিত হয়েছিল। তখনও মাও জে দং পার্টির নেতৃত্বে প্রতিষ্ঠিত হননি।

দ্বিতীয় বিপ্লবী গৃহযুদ্ধ চলেছিল দশ বছর ১৯২৭ সাল থেকে ১৯৩৭ সাল পর্যন্ত। এই পর্যায়েই মাও জে দং পার্টির পূর্ণ নেতৃত্বে আসীন হয়েছিলেন। ১৯২৭ সালে (১লা আগস্ট) পার্টির নিজস্ব সশস্ত্র বাহিনী (রেড আর্মি) গঠিত হয়েছিল। মাও জে দং-এর নেতৃত্বে দক্ষিণ চীনে প্রথমে কয়েকটা মুক্তাঞ্চল বা লাল ঘাঁটি, পরে বিপ্লবী লাল রাজ্য প্রতিষ্ঠিত হয়েছিল। এক পর্যায়ে বেজিং-এর প্রতিক্রিয়াশীল সরকার ও ওয়ার লর্ডরা মিলিতভাবে লাল রাজ্যকে ঘেরাও করলে, কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি ও লালফৌজ উত্তর পূর্ব দিকে পশ্চাৎপসরণ করতে বাধ্য হয়েছিল। সেটাই ছিল ইতিহাস বিখ্যাত লংমার্চ। ১৯৩৪-৩৫ সালে এক বৎসর ধরে চলে এই লং মার্চ, যার প্রতিদিনই ছিল যুদ্ধ। দশ

হাজার কিলোমিটার পথ অতিক্রম করে পার্টি নেতৃত্ব ও লালফৌজ উত্তর-পূর্বে সোভিয়েত সীমান্তে স্থায়ী ঘাঁটি ও মেহনতীদের রাস্তা প্রতিষ্ঠিত করলেন। অসামান্য এই লং মার্চের কোন জুড়ি নেই বিশ্ব ইতিহাসে।

চীন বিপ্লবের তৃতীয় পর্যায়ে হল জাপ বিরোধী যুদ্ধ। এই পর্যায়ে কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি বাধ্য করেছিল কুয়োমিনটাংকে জাপবিরোধী যুক্তফ্রন্টে আসতে। দ্বিতীয় বিশ্বযুদ্ধ শেষে শুরু হল কমিউনিস্ট ও কুয়োমিনটাং-এর মধ্যে গৃহযুদ্ধ। সোভিয়েত লালফৌজ বিমান টাংক দিয়ে ও অন্যান্যভাবে চীনের কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি ও চীনা জনগণের পাশে দাঁড়িয়েছিল। অন্যদিকে মার্কিন সাম্রাজ্যবাদ সর্বশক্তি দিয়ে চিয়াং কাই শেককে মদদ দিয়েছিল। শেষ পর্যন্ত চীনা বিপ্লব চূড়ান্তভাবে বিজয়ী হল। চিয়াং তার সেনাবাহিনী ও দলবল নিয়ে চীনের মূল ভূখন্ড ছেড়ে পালিয়ে গিয়ে আশ্রয় নিলেন ফর্মোজা দ্বীপে। ১৯৪৯ সালে কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি ও মাও জে দং-এর নেতৃত্বে নতুন লাল চীন প্রতিষ্ঠিত হল।



মাও জে দং

চীনা বিপ্লবকে বিজয়ের পথে পরিচালিত করতে গিয়ে মাও জে দং মার্কসবাদ লেনিনবাদের জ্ঞানভান্ডারে দুইটি বড় অবদান রেখেছিলেন। (১) জনগণতান্ত্রিক বিপ্লবের তত্ত্ব (২) বিপ্লবী সশস্ত্র যুদ্ধ সম্পর্কিত সামরিক তত্ত্ব। এই সম্পর্কে এই সংক্ষিপ্ত রচনায় বিস্তারিত আলোচনা করার অবকাশ নেই।

এরপর হল জনগণতান্ত্রিক বিপ্লবের স্তর সম্পন্ন করে সমাজতান্ত্রিক পুনর্গঠনের পর্যায়। লেনিন তার বিখ্যাত “গণতান্ত্রিক বিপ্লবে স্যোসাল ডেমোক্রেসির দুই কৌশল” গ্রন্থে “শ্রমিক কৃষকের বিপ্লবী গণতান্ত্রিক একনায়কতন্ত্রের” যে তত্ত্ব নির্মাণ করেছিলেন, তাকেই সম্প্রসারিত করে মাও নির্মাণ করলেন “জনগণতান্ত্রিক বিপ্লবের” তত্ত্ব। বছর দশকের মধ্যেই চীন এই স্তর অতিক্রম করে সমাজতান্ত্রিক পুনর্গঠনের পথে প্রবেশ করেছিল। সেই সম্পর্কিত মাস্ত-এর চিন্তাধারা ও কাজ পৃথিবীর সকল সমাজতান্ত্রীর জন্য শিক্ষণীয়। পরাধীন, আধা উপনিবেশ, সাম্রাজ্যবাদের উপর নির্ভরশীল পশ্চাৎপদ দেশের অধিকাংশের ক্ষেত্রে জনগণতান্ত্রিক বিপ্লবের তত্ত্ব যেমন প্রযোজ্য, তেমনি চীনের কৃষি বিপ্লব ও পরবর্তীতে সমাজতান্ত্রিক পুনর্গঠনের অভিজ্ঞতাও আমাদের জন্য শিক্ষণীয়।

বর্তমান চীনা পার্টি অর্থনীতির ক্ষেত্রে বহুবিধ সংস্কার এনেছে। কিন্তু মাও জে দং-এর নেতৃত্বেই চীনা সমাজতান্ত্রিক সমাজের ভিত্তি তৈরী হয়েছিল। শতবর্ষের সাম্রাজ্যবাদী লুণ্ঠনের ফলে চীন হয়ে পড়েছিল একটি অত্যন্ত পশ্চাৎপদ দেশে। আজ সেই চীন পৃথিবীর দ্বিতীয় বৃহত্তম অর্থনীতি। এই অর্থনীতির ভিত্তিটা কিন্তু তৈরী হয়েছিল সমাজতান্ত্রিক নীতি ও পরিকল্পনার উপর দাঁড়িয়ে, মাও জে দং-এর নেতৃত্বে।

মাও জে দং মার্কসবাদী দর্শনের ক্ষেত্রেও বিরাট মাপের অবদান রেখেছেন। বিশেষ করে “দ্বন্দ্ববাদ প্রসঙ্গে” (On Contradiction) শীর্ষক মাও জে দং-এর রচনাটি মার্কস এঙ্গলস প্রণীত দর্শন “দ্বন্দ্বমূলক বস্তুবাদ”-এর একটি অতি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ সংযোজন।

মাও জে দং-এর আরেকটি মহান অবদান ছিল সংশোধনাদের বিরুদ্ধে দাঁড়িয়ে মার্কসবাদ লেনিনবাদের বিপ্লবী মতবাদকে রক্ষা করা এবং সাম্রাজ্যবাদ বিরোধী সংগ্রামকে অগ্রসর করে নিয়ে যাওয়া। স্তালিনের মৃত্যুর পর সোভিয়েত পার্টির ২০তম কংগ্রেস থেকে যখন সংশোধনবাদের নব পর্যায়ে যাত্রা শুরু হয়েছিল, তখন চীন সংশোধনবাদের বিরুদ্ধে বিপ্লবী পতাকা তুলে ধরেছিল এবং সেই সময়ের মহা বিতর্কে মাস্ত-এর ভূমিকার অনেক কিছু এখনও প্রাসঙ্গিক।

সোভিয়েতের অভিজ্ঞতা থেকে শিক্ষা গ্রহণ করে সংশোধনবাদের উত্থানকে প্রতিহত করার জন্য মাও বেশ কিছু পদক্ষেপ গ্রহণ করেন। বিশেষ করে মাও-এর “গণ লাইন” খুবই প্রাসঙ্গিক ও শিক্ষণীয়।

সমাজতান্ত্রিক অর্থনৈতিক কাঠামোকে অটুট রেখে তিনি “শত ফুল ফুটতে দাও” যে লাইন নির্দেশ করেছিলেন তা চীনা সমাজে অভ্যন্তরীণ গণতন্ত্রকে প্রসারিত করার জন্য গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ছিল।

বুর্জোয়া ভাবদর্শকে চূড়ান্তভাবে পরাজিত করার জন্য সাংস্কৃতিক বিপ্লবের গুরুত্ব লেনিন স্তালিনও অনুভব করেছিলেন। লেনিন তা করার জন্য সময় পাননি। বিশ্বযুদ্ধ ও অভ্যন্তরীণ সার্বভৌমত্ব মোকাবিলা ইত্যাদি কাজে নিয়োজিত থাকার কারণে স্তালিনও সময় পাননি। মাও সাংস্কৃতিক বিপ্লবের কাজটি হাতে নিয়েছিলেন। তাত্ত্বিকভাবে সঠিক হলেও সাংস্কৃতিক বিপ্লব প্রয়োগের ক্ষেত্রে বেশ ক্ষতিকর ভুলত্রুটি হয়েছিল।

পৃথিবী আজ অনেক বদলে গিয়েছে। কিন্তু সাম্রাজ্যবাদ ও পুঁজিবাদকে পরাজিত করা এবং সমাজতান্ত্রিক পৃথিবী গড়ার ঐতিহাসিক কর্তব্য বাতিল হয়ে যায়নি। মানুষের মুক্তি সংগ্রাম যতদিন অব্যাহত থাকবে মাও জে দং-এর কাজ ও রচনা ততদিন প্রাসঙ্গিক থাকবে।

হায়দার আকবর খান রনো, সদস্য, পলিটব্যুরো, বাংলাদেশের কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি।

বরফে বানানো জাদুর জগৎ

নর্থ চায়নার হারবিন শহরে আইস ফেস্টিভাল

নিশাত মাসফিকা



আমার ছোটবেলা কেটেছে পাহাড়ি এলাকায়, সিলেট অঞ্চলে। ছোট ছোট টিলা, পাহাড়ি ফুলের গন্ধ, সন্ধ্যা বেলা শিয়ালের ডাক ছিল প্রতিদিনকার রুটিন। প্রায় বিকালে পরিবারের সবাইকে নিয়ে টিলার উপরে ঘুরতে যাওয়া। তখন সেই ছোটো টিলার উপরে উঠলেই মনে হতো আমি যেন কতো উপরে (!) কার সাধ্য আছে আমাকে ধরার (!) ভাবটা এমন যেন আকাশ ছুঁয়ে ফেলবো ... বড় হয়ে রাজধানী ঢাকার ব্যস্ত জীবন। কাজের প্রয়োজনে প্রতিদিন সকাল বিকাল ছুটে চলা। অনেক সময় এভাবে জীবন অনেক একঘেঁয়ে হয়ে যায়। তাই হাতে কিছুটা সময় থাকলেই মনে হয় ঘুরে আসি দেশে কিংবা দেশের বাইরের কোনো শহরে। সেরকম একটি দারুণ ভ্রমণ কাহিনী আজ আমার লেখার বিষয়।

আমার দেখা জাদুর জগৎ, যেন এক বিস্ময়কর বরফের শহর। হ্যাঁ, আমি নর্থ চায়নার হারবিন শহরের কথা বলছি। বইয়ের ভাষায় হারবিন চায়নার উত্তরে হেইলংজিয়াং প্রভিন্সের মধ্যে একটি সাব-প্রভিনশিয়াল সিটি হলেও বলা যায়, শহরটি এখন সারা বিশ্বের উইন্টার ফেস্টিভাল ক্যাপিটাল। সংগুহা নদীর তীরে অবস্থিত এ শহরটি চায়নার দশম বৃহত্তম শহর। এখানে বছরের প্রায় অর্ধেক সময় থাকে ঠান্ডা। বিশেষ করে নভেম্বর থেকে ফেব্রুয়ারি পর্যন্ত হারবিনের তাপমাত্রা মাইনাসের নিচে থাকে। কোনো কোনো সময় তাপমাত্রা মাইনাস ৩২-এরও নিচে হয়। তাই বলে এ এলাকার মানুষের জীবনযাত্রা থেমে নেই; বরং এ বৈরী আবহাওয়াকে তারা বেছে নিয়েছেন বিনোদনের অংশ হিসেবে। নভেম্বর, ডিসেম্বর আর জানুয়ারি মাসে হারবিনে রাস্তায় রাস্তায় দেখতে পাওয়া যায় সাদা রঙের আইস স্কাল্পচার অর্থাৎ বরফের ভাস্কর্য। বরফ দিয়ে বানানো এক অনন্য পৃথিবী বললেও ভুল বলা হবে না।

আইস স্কাল্পচারের কথা বলার আগে হারবিনের জীবন যাত্রা আর সেখানকার মানুষ সম্পর্কে না বললেই নয়। হারবিনে প্রচন্ড ঠান্ডা সেটা মাথায় নিয়ে আমাদের সাধ্যমতো বাংলাদেশ থেকে গরম কাপড় স্যুটকেসে লোড করলাম। ভাবলাম এতো বড় বড় ওভারকোট, সোয়েটার, হ্যান্ড গ্লাভস নিয়েছি- ঠান্ডা আমাদের কিছু করতে পারবে না! প্লেন থেকে দেখতে পেলাম সাদা চাদরে ঢেকে আছে একটি শহর। কোথাও কিছু দেখা যাচ্ছে না। আমি আমার সেই গরম কাপড়গুলো পরে বের





হলাম। কিন্তু বাইরে বের হয়ে দেখলাম শীত কিছুতেই মানছে না। আমার ভেতরের হাড়গুলো যেনো জমে যাচ্ছে। মনকে বোঝালাম আমি তো অনেকগুলো গরম কাপড় পরেছি, সুতরাং যা হচ্ছে তা আমার মনের ভুল।

পরদিন সকালে যখন আমরা শহর দেখার উদ্দেশ্যে বের হলাম, মনে হচ্ছিল আমি জমে যাবো। আমি বুঝতেই পারছিলাম না, আশে পাশের সব মানুষ খুব স্বাভাবিকভাবে

ওভারকোট পরে চলছে, এমনকি কেউ কেউ একটা কোট পরেছে, তাদের ঠান্ডা লাগছে না কিন্তু আমি অসুস্থ হয়ে যাচ্ছি। পথ দিয়ে জোরে জোরে হাঁটছি হঠাৎ এক বৃদ্ধা আমাকে হাত ধরে থামালেন। সত্যি বলতে কী, আমি প্রথমটায় ভয়ই পেয়েছিলাম। একে তো অচেনা শহর, তার মধ্যে ভাষা আমার জানা নেই। অল্প সময় পরই বুঝতে পারি বৃদ্ধা আমাকে কিছু বলতে চাচ্ছেন। আমার শরীরের বিভিন্ন জায়গায় হাত দিয়ে, এরপরই নিজের কোটে হাত রাখছেন। আশ্রয় ভাবে তিনি আমাকে কোনো কিছু বোঝাতে চেষ্টা করছেন। এর কিছুক্ষণ পরই আমি বুঝে ফেলি বৃদ্ধা আমাকে বলতে চাচ্ছেন আমি যে গরম কাপড় পরে আছি, তা ওখানকার আবহাওয়ার জন্য যথেষ্ট নয়। আমার কাপড়গুলো শীতপ্রধান দেশের জন্য তৈরি না। এতে আমি আর কয়েক ঘণ্টা পরই অসুস্থ হয়ে যাবো। আমি রীতিমতো অবাক হলাম। চিনি না, জানি না, ভাষা জানি না-আমি অসুস্থ হলে সেই অর্থে এই বৃদ্ধার কিছু যায় আসেও না। কিন্তু তিনি আমাকে নিয়ে চিন্তিত। আমি মুগ্ধ হলাম। এরপর যে হোটেলে খেতে বসলাম, দেখলাম সবাই ঘুরে ফিরে আমাদের দেখছে। বোঝা যাচ্ছে আমাদের নিয়ে আলোচনা করছে। খুবই স্বাভাবিক- কেননা হারবিন শহরে আমরা বিদেশি। খুব একটা কেউ ঠান্ডার জন্য সেখানে বেড়াতে যান না।

আমার মনে তখনো সেই পথের বৃদ্ধা, ভাবছি কোথায় যাবো গরম কাপড় কিনতে! এরই মধ্যে আবার এক দম্পতি এলো। ইশারায় হ্যালো বলে মহিলা আগের সেই বৃদ্ধার মতো আমার হাত ধরে দেখাচ্ছেন। এবার আমি এক মিনিটেই বুঝলাম মহিলা কী বলতে চাচ্ছেন। অবাক হলাম এদেশের প্রত্যেকটা মানুষের মন এতো উদার, এতো অতিথিপরায়ণ!

পরদিন দোভাষী ন্যাসি আমাদের সঙ্গে যুক্ত হলেন। মহিলাটি প্রথমেই গরম কাপড়ের ব্যবস্থা করে দিলেন। ন্যাসির সঙ্গে আমার সম্পর্ক একটা পর্যায়ে শুধু প্রফেশনাল রইলো না। আমি আসার সময় ন্যাসি খুব কান্নাকাটি করেছেন। আমাকে ন্যাসির বাসায় নিয়ে গেছেন। রোঁধে খাইয়েছেন। অল্প সময়ের মধ্যে বুঝে গেছেন আমি কী পছন্দ করি, কী করি না.. সব কিছু। এখনো মাঝে মাঝে যখন আমি একাকী থাকি, মনের মধ্যে কোথাও আমার ন্যাসির কথা ভীষণ ভাবে মনে পড়ে। যে কটা দিন আমরা হারবিনে ছিলাম, সকাল বেলায় ন্যাসি চলে আসতেন। প্রথমেই হোটেলে যেতাম খেতে। একবার আমার খুব পরোটা খেতে ইচ্ছে হলো। কিন্তু সেদেশে তো আর পরোটা হয় না আমাদের দেশের মতো।

ন্যাসি ওই হোটেলের মালিককে গিয়ে কী বললেন, মালিক আমাকে তাদের রান্নাঘরে নিয়ে গেলেন। শেফদের বললেন আমি যা চাই, তাই করে দিতে। আমি ন্যাসিকে বলছি, ন্যাসি ওদের বুঝিয়ে দিচ্ছেন-এরকম করে পরোটা তৈরি হয়ে গেল। কী যে আনন্দ আমাদের। কথাগুলো বলার কারণ আছে। আমি চায়নার মানুষ সম্পর্কে ধারণা দিলাম। হারবিনে আইস স্কালচার দেখতে গিয়েছি কিন্তু তার পাশে ওখানকার মানুষগুলো এতো অসাধারণ মনের তা না বললে আমার ভ্রমণ কাহিনী অসম্পূর্ণ

থেকে যাবে। ওদের কোনো কিছুই আমাদের ওপর চাপিয়ে দেয় নি। বরং ওরা আমাদের বিশ্বাস, আমাদের নিজস্বতাকে শ্রদ্ধা করেছে। এতেই বোঝা যায় জাতি হিসেবে ওরা অনেক উঁচুতে। হারবিনের জীবনযাত্রা অসাধারণ। এতো বরফের শহর। কিন্তু ওদের সকাল হয় অনেক আগে। সকাল ৮টার মধ্যে সবাই অফিসে উপস্থিত থাকেন। অফিস ছুটি হয় বিকেল ৫ টায়। কাঁচাবাজারগুলো অফিস শুরুর আগেই শেষ হয়ে যায়। বয়স্কদের ওরা



ভীষনভাবে শ্রদ্ধা করেন। বিশেষ করে যাদের বয়স ষাট বছরের উপরে তাদের চলাচলের জন্য বাস সার্ভিসে রয়েছে বিশেষ ডিসকাউন্ট। আর বিনোদন পার্কগুলোতে সিনিয়র সিটিজেনের জন্য কোনো এন্ট্রি ফি নেয়া হয় না। ওরা পরিবার কেন্দ্রিক। দাদা-দাদি, নানা-নানি সবাই একসঙ্গে থাকতে ভালোবাসেন।

কথার পিঠে অনেক কথায় আইস স্কাল্পচারের কথাই বলা হলো না। হারবিনে জমে থাকা বরফ খুঁচিয়ে খুঁচিয়ে তারা বানিয়ে থাকেন বিভিন্ন সিটি, ভাস্কর্য এমনকি ডিজনিয়াল্ড! প্রথমদিকে একদল মানুষ নেহায়েত শখের বসে বরফ দিয়ে নানা রকম স্কাল্পচার বানাতেন। কিন্তু ধীরে ধীরে এটি আর শখে সীমাবদ্ধ রইলো না। রীতিমতো প্রতিযোগিতা শুরু হলো—কে কার থেকে কতো সুন্দর করে বরফ দিয়ে এসব স্কাল্পচার বানাতে পারে। ১৯৮৫ সালের দিকে হারবিনে প্রথম আইস স্কাল্পচার ফেস্টিভাল অনুষ্ঠিত হয়। সেখানে পৃথিবীর বিভিন্ন দেশ থেকে পর্যটক এসে ভিড় করে বরফের তৈরি এ রাজত্ব দেখতে।

আর এখন? শুধু রাজত্ব বললে ভুল হবে। শীতকালে হারবিন সিটি অপূর্ব এক রূপ ধারণ করে, যা কেবল চোখে না দেখলে বিশ্বাস করা যায় না। দিনের বেলায় সাদা ধবধবে শহরে চলতে-ফিরতে চোখে পড়ে সাদা ক্রিস্টালের মতো সুন্দর সব স্কাল্পচার। আর রাতে সেই বরফের তৈরি স্কাল্পচারের মধ্যে সেট করে দেওয়া হয় রঙ-বেরঙের আলো। সব মিলিয়ে অপূর্ব।

মজার ব্যাপার হচ্ছে, বরফ দিয়ে বানানো এসব ঘরবাড়ি আর ডিজনিয়াল্ড শুধু চোখে দেখার জন্য নয়। ছেলে-বুড়ো সবাই সেই বাড়িঘর ও ডিজনিয়াল্ডের ভেতরে চলাফেরা করতে পারে। এমনকি থাকার সুবিধাও আছে। দিন দিন প্রতিযোগিতা এমন পর্যায়ে গিয়ে পৌঁছেছে যে, এখন আর রাস্তার পাশে জমে থাকা বরফে তাদের কাজ চলে না। রীতিমতো চড়া দামে তারা বরফ কিনে আনেন আইস স্কাল্পচার বানানোর জন্য। কতো কিছু বানানো হয় তা নিজের চোখে না দেখলে ঠিক বিশ্বাস করা যায় না। এতো সূক্ষ্ম কারুকাজ, নিখুঁত নির্মাণ শৈলী। সারা সময় খুঁচিয়ে খুঁচিয়ে বানিয়ে চলছে শিল্পীরা। পৃথিবীতে অসম্ভব বলে কিছু নেই, এ কথাটি প্রমাণ করেছে হারবিনের বরফ জগতের বাসিন্দারা।

সময় পেলে ঘুরে আসুন চমৎকার এই যাদুর শহর থেকে। সেই অভিজ্ঞতা বিশেষ করে সেদেশের মানুষ আর স্কাল্পচার আপনার জীবনে বেঁচে থাকার এক অনন্য অনুপ্রেরণা হিসেবে কাজ করবে।

নিশাত মাসফিকা, সাংবাদিক ও গণমাধ্যম উদ্যোক্তা, সম্পাদক-লাইফস্টাইল ও সোনালি সকাল।

চায়না বাংলাদেশ সম্পর্ক: জিরাফ ডিপ্লোমেসি ও আলোকিত অতীত

মোহাম্মদ মাহমুদজ্জামান



চায়না ও বাংলাদেশ পৃথিবীর দুটো প্রাচীন সভ্যতার প্রতিনিধিত্ব করছে। যখন বিশ্বের বড় অংশ অন্ধকারে পুরোপুরি আচ্ছন্ন ছিল তখনও চায়না এবং প্রাচীন বাংলা মানব সভ্যতার আলো জ্বলে রাখে। চায়নার সঙ্গে বাংলা বা পরবর্তী সময়ের বাংলাদেশের সম্পর্ক তাই ঐতিহাসিক এবং বিশ্ব সভ্যতার জন্য অতি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ। এ সম্পর্ক অন্তত আড়াই হাজার বছরের পুরানো হিসাবে বিবেচনা করা হয়। বিশ্বখ্যাত দক্ষিণাঞ্চলীয় সিন্ধু রুট এবং সমুদ্রপথে এই দুই সভ্যতার মধ্যে গভীর যোগাযোগ ছিল। বাণিজ্য, সংস্কৃতি এবং ধর্ম এই তিনটি ছিল এই যোগাযোগের সবচেয়ে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ মাধ্যম।

সিন্ধু রুটের তিনটি পথ চায়নার সঙ্গে ভারতীয় উপমহাদেশকে সংযুক্ত করেছিল। এই তিনটি হলো উত্তরাঞ্চলীয় সিন্ধু রুট, নৌ সিন্ধু রুট ও দক্ষিণাঞ্চলীয় সিন্ধু রুট। বর্তমান বাংলাদেশ বা প্রাচীন বাংলার সঙ্গে নিবিড়ভাবে সম্পৃক্ত ছিল দক্ষিণাঞ্চলীয় সিন্ধু রুট। এর ইতিহাস ২৪০০ বছরেরও বেশি এবং অন্য

দুটো সিন্ধু রুটের চেয়ে প্রাচীন। চার হাজার কিলোমিটারের এই যোগাযোগে ঢাকার অদূরে উয়ারী -বটেশ্বর যুক্ত ছিল বলে ইতিহাসবিদগণ মনে করেন। গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ব্যবসা কেন্দ্র ও বিখ্যাত নৌ বন্দর উয়ারী -বটেশ্বর আড়াই হাজার বছর আগের চায়নার সঙ্গে বাণিজ্যের জন্যই শুধু সংযুক্ত ছিল না, এখানে বৌদ্ধ ধর্মের ব্যাপক চর্চা হতো। সম্প্রতি উয়ারী -বটেশ্বরে আবিষ্কৃত নবযুগ মৃৎপাত্র উয়ারী-বটেশ্বর অঞ্চলে খ্রিস্ট পূর্বাব্দকালে বৌদ্ধ ধর্ম চর্চার ইতিহাস জানা যায়। পদ্ম-মন্দির ও বিহারের আবিষ্কার পরবর্তীকালে বিকশিত বৌদ্ধধর্মের নির্দেশ করে।

ইতিহাসবিদগণ মনে করেন, চায়নার ছিন রাজের শাসনেরও আগে থেকে দক্ষিণাঞ্চলীয় সিন্ধু রুটের অস্তিত্ব ছিল। মাঝে কিছু সময় বিরত থাকলেও দক্ষিণাঞ্চলীয় পথটি আবার খোলা হয় কারণ উত্তরাঞ্চলীয় সিন্ধু রুটটি ছিল অতিরিক্ত উঁচু নিচু। দক্ষিণাঞ্চলীয় সিন্ধু রুটের মাধ্যমে চায়না মায়ানমার হয়ে বাংলার ভেতর দিয়ে ভারতের সঙ্গে যোগাযোগ করতো।

দক্ষিণাঞ্চলীয় সিন্ধু রুটটি চায়নার সুয়ান প্রদেশের ছেংদু সমভূমি থেকে শুরু হয়ে ইউনান প্রদেশের রাজধানী কুনমিং, দালি, বাওশান ও রুইলি হয়ে মায়ানমার হয়ে বাংলার ভেতর দিয়ে গিয়েছে। আরেকটি শাখা পথ ইউনান থেকে আরাকান উপত্যকা দিয়ে মণিপুর রাজ্যে পৌঁছায়। সবগুলো পথেরই লক্ষ্য ছিল পুন্ড্রবর্ধন। এই এলাকাটি বর্তমান অবস্থান বাংলাদেশের বগুড়া জেলায়।

আখের উৎপত্তি স্থল হচ্ছে ১০০০ খ্রিস্টপূর্বাব্দের আগে আদি বৈদিক যুগের শেষে তিস্তার পলিমাটি অঞ্চলে। চিনি, গুড় ও মিছরি বাংলার মানুষের অবিকার। পুন্ড্র শব্দের অর্থ আখ। পুন্ড্র থেকে পৌন্ড্র। আখ চাষজনিত সমৃদ্ধি থেকে উদ্ভব ঘটে পৌন্ড্র রাজ্যের। মহাভারতে গোধর্মী ঋষি দীর্ঘতমার উপাখ্যানে পৌন্ড্র রাজ্যের নাম আছে। পরবর্তীকালে, পৌন্ড্র নগরীর নাম হয় পুন্ড্রবর্ধন-পুন্ড্র বা আখ থেকে যার বৃদ্ধি। এই সমৃদ্ধ পুন্ড্রবর্ধন নগরীই ছিল সিন্ধু রুটের মিলন কেন্দ্র। এখান থেকেই ভারতের বিভিন্ন স্থানে বাণিজ্য সামগ্রী পৌঁছে যেত।

মহাভারতসহ প্রাচীন সাহিত্যে অভিজাত ভারতীয়দের সিন্ধু বা রেশমের পোশাক পরার কথা জানা যায় কমপক্ষে আড়াই হাজার বছর আগে। এই রেশম আসতো চায়না থেকে। রেশম বয়নের শিক্ষাও সিন্ধু রুট ধরে এক সময় এই অঞ্চলে পৌঁছে যায়। সিন্ধু, চা, লোহার সামগ্রী ও লোহা গলানোর শিক্ষা চায়না থেকে এই অঞ্চলে আসে। বাংলাদেশের ভেতর দিয়ে ভারত থেকে চায়নায় যায় আখ, লাউ, কুমড়া, নাশপাতি, বেগুন ইত্যাদি।

চায়না থেকে অনেকেই এদেশে আসেন। তবে এই অঞ্চল নিয়ে লেখালেখি করেছেন এমন ব্যক্তিদের মধ্যে সবার আগে আসেন চিন রাজবংশের ভিক্ষু ফা হিয়েন। ৩৯৯ সালে ৬৩ বছর



বয়সের একজন প্রবীণের অজানা পথে বেরিয়ে পড়া ছিল অভিনব ঘটনা। ফা হিয়েন বৌদ্ধ ধর্ম শিক্ষাগ্রহণে এদেশে আসেন। তিনি বাংলায় ত্রিশটি মঠ ও দুই হাজারের ওপর ভিক্ষু দেখেছেন।

আরেক জন ভিক্ষু ও পরিব্রাজক এই অঞ্চলে বিখ্যাত হন। তিনি হলেন হিউয়ান সাং। ৬২৯ খ্রিষ্টাব্দে চায়নার থাং রাজবংশের বৌদ্ধ ধর্মগুরু হিউয়ান সাং ভারতবর্ষ ভ্রমণে আসেন। তিনি নালন্দায় বৌদ্ধ ধর্মের ওপর পাঠ নেন। হিউয়ান সাং সেখানে ঢাকার অধিবাসী শীল ভদ্রকে গুরু হিসাবে পান। নিজ দেশে ফিরে গিয়ে তাঁর লেখা ‘মহান থাংয়ের পশ্চিমাঞ্চলের ভ্রমণলিপি’ বইতে ১৩০০ বছর আগেকার বাংলা অঞ্চলের অবস্থা বর্ণনা করেছিলেন। তিনি লিখেছিলেন, এ অঞ্চল ছিল প্রকৃতির অপার বিস্ময় আর সম্পদে ঠাসা। এখানকার মানুষেরা জলের ধারে বাসা বাঁধতো, বৃক্ষরোপণ করতো আর করতো ফুলের বাগান। সামাজিক সম্প্রীতি ছিল অপূর্ব। বাংলার সংস্কৃতি ছিল এমন যেখানে শিক্ষাই ছিল প্রধান। স্থানীয়রা বইপড়া এবং শিক্ষিতজনদের ভালবাসতো। এরা ভিন্নমতকে শ্রদ্ধাভরে গ্রহণ করতো। এটা ছিল এক আলোকিত সমাজ, যার মগজের দুয়ার ছিল খোলা আর যা উৎসাহ জোগাতো পরস্পরের মধ্যে মেলবন্ধন গড়তে।

বৌদ্ধ ধর্মের বিস্তারে বাংলার যে ধর্মগুরু চায়নায় ব্যাপক সম্মান ও শ্রদ্ধা লাভ করেন তিনি বিক্রমপুরের বজ্রযোগিনী গ্রামের অতীশ দীপঙ্কর। যিনি চায়নায় ‘অতিশা’ নামে সুপরিচিত। তিনি শ্রীলংকা ও ইন্দোনেশিয়াতেও গিয়েছিলেন। মর্যাদায় নালন্দার পরেই বিবেচিত বিক্রমশীলা বিহারের প্রধান গুরু ছিলেন অতীশ দীপঙ্কর। হিমালয় পর্বতের দুর্গম পথ পেরিয়ে নেপাল হয়ে তিব্বতে পৌঁছান তিনি ১০৩৮ সালে। চায়নায় বৌদ্ধ ধর্মের প্রচার ও প্রসারে অতীশ দীপঙ্কর সবচেয়ে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ভূমিকা পালন করেন। নেথাং মন্দিরে তাঁর দেহভস্ম রাখা হয়। বাংলাদেশের বৌদ্ধ ভিক্ষুদের অনুরোধে এবং উভয় সরকারের আন্তরিকতায় ১৯৭৮ সালে অতীশ দীপঙ্করের দেহভস্ম বাংলাদেশে আনা হয়। চায়না সরকার বিক্রমপুরের বজ্রযোগিনী গ্রামে অতীশ দীপঙ্করের স্মরণে একটি স্মৃতি স্থাপনা নির্মাণ করে দেয়। এর পাশেই একটি হল রুম ও পাঠাগার গড়ে ওঠেছে অতীশ দীপঙ্করের নামে।

ইসলাম ধর্মের প্রচারের ক্ষেত্রেও চায়না বাংলাদেশের সংযোগ আছে। জানা যায়, মহানবী (সা.) জীবিত অবস্থায় অন্তত তিনজন সাহাবী চট্টগ্রাম হয়ে চায়নায় রওনা হন। তাঁরা হলেন সাদ ইবনে আবি ওয়াক্কাস (রা.), সাঈদ ইবনে জায়িদ (রা.) এবং কায়েস ইবনে সাদ (রা.)। তাঁরা নৌপথে অ্যাবিসিনিয়া থেকে রওনা হয়ে চট্টগ্রাম এসে অবস্থান নেন। সেখান থেকে পূর্ব ভারতের মনিপুর হয়ে চায়নার পথে

রওনা হন। চায়নায় ইসলাম ধর্ম প্রচারে প্রধান ভূমিকা পালন করেন সাহাবী সাদ ইবনে আবি ওয়াক্কাস (রা.)। তিনি সম্পর্কে মহানবী (সা.)-র মামা ছিলেন এবং তিনবার চায়নায় যান। শীর্ষ সাহাবীদের সংক্ষিপ্ত তালিকায় তাঁর নাম ছিল। খলিফা ওসমানের (রা.) সময় সংকলিত পবিত্র কোরআনের একটি কপি সঙ্গে নিয়ে তিনি চায়নায় যান। মুসলমানদের পারস্য জয়ের নেতৃত্বদানকারী বরেন্ধ্য সাহাবী সাদ ইবনে আবি ওয়াক্কাস (রা.) চায়নার গোয়াঞ্জ এলাকায় হুয়াই সম্প্রদায়ের মধ্যে প্রথম





ইসলাম প্রচার করেন। সেখানে তিনি চায়নার প্রথম মসজিদ স্থাপন করেন। যা হুয়াইসাঙ্গ মসজিদ নামে পরিচিত। নানা ধরনের সংস্কারের পর মসজিদটি এখনো আছে। এটি বিশ্বের অন্যতম প্রাচীন মসজিদ হিসাবে বিবেচিত। মসজিদটি লাইটহাউস বা বাতিঘর মসজিদ নামেও পরিচিত। সাহাবী সাদ ইবনে আবি ওয়াক্কাস (রা.) যখন প্রথম চায়না যান সে সময় আরেকজন গুরুত্বপূর্ণ সাহাবী আমির হামজা (রা.) অ্যাবিসিনিয়া থেকে চট্টগ্রামে আসেন। তিনি চট্টগ্রাম থেকে পূর্ব ভারতের মনিপুরে গিয়ে সেখানেই ইসলাম ধর্ম প্রচারে মনোনিবেশ করেন। সম্পর্কে মহানবী (সা.)-র চাচা ছিলেন তিনি।

শিল্প ও কৃষিতে বিশ্বের শীর্ষ পর্যায়ে থাকা প্রাচীন বাংলা জাহাজ নির্মাণেও এগিয়ে ছিল। আরব বণিকদের বহু জাহাজ চট্টগ্রামে ভিড়ত। বর্তমানের সেন্ট মার্টিনস আইল্যান্ড ছিল আরবদের অন্যতম বিশ্রাম কেন্দ্র। বাংলা হয়ে ওঠেছিল সব সভ্যতার এক মিলনকেন্দ্র। যার ফলে বাংলা ও চায়নার মধ্যে নিয়মিত সড়ক ও নৌপথে যোগাযোগ ঘটতো। এ কারণে চায়নায় বাংলা বিশেষ ভাবে পরিচিত ছিল।

চায়নার বিখ্যাত সুং রাজবংশের শাসনকালে বিভিন্ন দেশের ওপর তারা যে অফিসিয়াল রেকর্ড সংগ্রহ করতো তার মধ্যে বাংলা ছিল অন্যতম। এখানে বাংলাকে স্বতন্ত্র রাষ্ট্রের মতোই বিবেচনা করা হতো। জাও রুশি ১২২৫ সালে এই রেকর্ড বুকটি তৈরি করেন। সুং পরবর্তী ইউয়ান রাজার আমলে বাংলার কথা নানাভাবে এসেছে।

চায়নিজ বাণিজ্য জাহাজে চড়ে ১৩৩০ সাল থেকে সাত বছর বাংলা এবং আশে পাশের অঞ্চলে ঘুরে ওয়াং দাই ইউয়ান একটি বই লিখেন

‘বিদেশি দ্বীপসমূহের বিস্তারিত বিবরণ’ নামে। বইটিতে বাংলা সম্পর্কে তিনি লেখেন, ‘অনেক পাহাড় এবং দৃষ্টিনন্দন গাছে ভরে আছে এ অঞ্চল।’ তিনি তাঁর বর্ণনায় জানান, বাংলার মানুষ তিনবার ফসল ফলায়। জমি ফেলে রাখে না। চাষাবাদে তারা চমৎকার নিয়ম মেনে চলে। নিত্য প্রয়োজনীয় সামগ্রীগুলো খুবই সস্তা। স্থানীয় মানুষেরা আন্তরিক, সহজ এবং দয়ালু। তিনি জানান, বাংলায় প্রচলিত রৌপ্য মুদ্রার নাম ‘টাঙ্গা’।

১৪ শতক থেকে শুরু হওয়া চায়নার মিং রাজবংশের তিনশত বছরের শাসনকালে বাংলার সঙ্গে চায়নার সম্পর্ক ছিল সবচেয়ে গভীর। বাংলায় তখন সুলতানী আমল চলছিল। বিশেষ করে সুলতান গিয়াসউদ্দিন আযম শাহর সময় বছরে দুই শতাধিক বারও পত্র বা দূতের মাধ্যমে তথ্য আদান প্রদানের ঘটনা ঘটেছে। এগুলোর মধ্যে ব্যক্তিগত অভিমত এমনকি সুলতানের লেখা কবিতাও ছিল। সুলতান চায়নার সঙ্গে কৌশলগত সম্পর্ক স্থাপন করেন। যার ফলে দিল্লির শাসকরাও বাংলাকে নিয়ে চিন্তিত হয়ে পড়েন। সুলতানের মৃত্যুর পর চায়নার রাজা একজন বিশেষ দূত পাঠিয়েছিলেন তাঁর শেষকৃত্যে অংশ নিতে ঢাকার অদূরে সোনারগাঁও এলাকায়।

সুলতান গিয়াসউদ্দিন আযম শাহর পর তাঁর ছেলে সাইফউদ্দিন হামজা শাহ নতুন শাসক হন। তিনি তাঁর বাবার নীতি অনুসরণ করেন। তিনি দক্ষিণ আফ্রিকা থেকে একটি জিরাফ এনে চায়নার জু রাজাকে উপহার দেন। চায়নিজদের কাছে ‘ছিলিন’ বা জিরাফ ছিল সমৃদ্ধির প্রতীক। সময়টা ছিল ১৪১৪ সাল। এই জিরাফ উপহার পেয়ে রাজা থেকে শুরু করে সাধারণ মানুষ আনন্দে আত্মহারা হয়ে পড়েন। সবার লেখা অভিনন্দন বাণী ষোল খন্ডের বইয়ের আকার ধারণ করে।

এর পরও নানা সময়ে চায়নার সঙ্গে বাংলার সম্পর্ক ছিল আন্তরিকতায় পরিপূর্ণ। অনেকেই প্রত্যাশা করেন, আলোকিত অতীতের এই চমৎকার সম্পর্ক জ্যোতিময় ভবিষ্যতের জন্ম দেবে।

মোহাম্মদ মাহমুদুজ্জামান, সাংবাদিক ও গণমাধ্যম উদ্যোক্তা, সম্পাদক-রুটস, ব্যবস্থাপনা সম্পাদক - রাইজিং এশিয়া ম্যাগাজিন।



THE INAUGURAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS OF THE ASIAN INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT BANK

亚洲基础设施投资银行理事会成立大会

January 16th, 2016 Beijing, China
2016年1月16日 中国·北京



একটি এশীয় নক্ষত্রের অভ্যুদয়

শরীফ মোহাম্মদ খান



২০১৬ সালের প্রথম মাসের প্রথম সপ্তাহে বৈশ্বিক অর্থনৈতিক পরিমন্ডলে সুদূরপ্রসারী একটি ঘটনার আনুষ্ঠানিকতা সম্পন্ন হয়। বিশ্বের দ্বিতীয় বৃহত্তম অর্থনীতির দেশের রাজধানী বেইজিং-এ Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) নামক একটি বহুপক্ষীয় বৈশ্বিক আর্থিক প্রতিষ্ঠানের আনুষ্ঠানিক কার্যক্রমের উদ্বোধন করা হয়। প্রায় দু'বছর আগে চীনের রাষ্ট্রপতি শি জিনপিং এই আর্থিক প্রতিষ্ঠানের গঠনের প্রস্তাবনা উপস্থাপন করেন যা সাথে সাথে ব্যাপক সাড়া জাগাতে সক্ষম হয়। খেট হলের পূর্ব দিকের একটি মিলনায়তনে ৪ জানুয়ারী সোমবার চীনের রাষ্ট্রপতি ৫৭টি দেশের প্রতিনিধিদের উপস্থিতিতে এই ঐতিহাসিক ঘটনার সূত্রপাত করেন।

পৃথিবীর বিভিন্ন মহাদেশের ৫৭টি দেশ AIIB প্রতিষ্ঠাতা সদস্য হিসাবে অংশগ্রহণের সিদ্ধান্ত গ্রহণ করে। সদস্য রাষ্ট্রগুলোর মধ্যে রয়েছে ইউরোপের বড় বড় অর্থনীতির দেশগুলোসহ বিশ্বের প্রায় সকল প্রভাবশালী দেশগুলো। জাতি সংঘের স্থায়ী ৫ সদস্যবিশিষ্ট নিরাপত্তা পরিষদের ৪ জন, ইউরোপীয় ইউনিয়নের ২৮টি সদস্য দেশের ১৪টি আর ৩৪ সদস্যের শক্তিশালী প্রতিষ্ঠান Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) এর ২১টি সদস্য দেশ। এশিয়া-পেসিফিক অঞ্চলের দেশগুলোর মধ্যে এক জাপান ছাড়া আর সব দেশই AIIB-র প্রতিষ্ঠাতা সদস্যরূপে অংশগ্রহণ করেছে। ইজরাইল-এর মত মার্কিনঘেঁষা দেশও অধীর আগ্রহে যোগদান করেছে। এমন কি আঞ্চলিক প্রতিদ্বন্দ্বী ভারতও অংশগ্রহণ থেকে নিজেকে সরিয়ে রাখেনি। আর একমাত্র প্রত্যাখ্যাত হয়েছে চীনের তাইওয়ান অঞ্চলের আবেদন। বলতে গেলে যুক্তরাষ্ট্রকে অস্বস্তিতে ফেলে AIIB-তে অংশগ্রহণের হিড়িক পড়ে যায়। বিশেষ করে যুক্তরাজ্য, ফ্রান্স, জার্মানী ও অস্ট্রেলিয়ার মত যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের ঘনিষ্ঠ মিত্র দেশগুলোর AIIB-তে যোগদানকে কূটনৈতিক কূ হিসাবেই বিবেচনা করা হচ্ছে।

৫৭টি দেশের অংশগ্রহণে প্রতিষ্ঠিত AIIB তার যাত্রালগ্ন থেকেই বিশ্বের প্রধান অর্থনীতির দেশ মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের বিরোধিতার সম্মুখীন হয়। ব্যাংকিং নীতি-নৈতিকতা প্রসঙ্গে বিভিন্ন প্রশ্ন উত্থাপনের মধ্য দিয়ে AIIB-র গ্রহণযোগ্যতাকে প্রশ্নবিদ্ধ বা বিতর্কিত করার প্রচেষ্টা নেয় যুক্তরাষ্ট্র। ওয়াশিংটন AIIB-র পরিচালন প্রক্রিয়ার গুণগত মান সম্পর্কে বিশ্বমানের সমতুল্য হবে না বলে আশংকা প্রকাশ করে। দুর্নীতি প্রতিরোধ ও পরিবেশ সংরক্ষণের ব্যাপারে AIIB-র যথাযথ ভূমিকা পালনের প্রশ্নে উদ্বেগ ব্যক্ত করে যুক্তরাষ্ট্র। তবে সমালোচকদের মতে, বিরোধিতার মূল কারণকে আড়াল করার জন্যই আমেরিকা এই সমস্ত প্রশঙ্গ হাজির করার কৌশল গ্রহণ করে। ওয়াশিংটনের কারো কারো মতে, বিশ্ব ব্যাংক ও IMF-এর মত প্রতিষ্ঠানগুলির ভূমিকাকে অবদমিত করাই AIIB-র গঠনের প্রকৃত উদ্দেশ্য। বিশ্ব অর্থনীতির গতি-প্রকৃতি

নির্ধারণকারী সংস্থাসমূহের নিয়ন্ত্রণের কৌশলগত (স্ট্র্যাটেজিক) প্রশ্নটিই যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের AIIB-বিরোধী ভূমিকার মূল কারণ বলে বিশেষজ্ঞগণ মনে করেন।

বর্তমান দুনিয়ার অর্থনীতির মানচিত্রের গতি-প্রকৃতি নির্ধারণকারী প্রতিষ্ঠান দুটি WB ও IMF-এর উদ্ভব হয় দ্বিতীয় বিশ্বযুদ্ধ শেষ হওয়ার প্রাক্কালে ১৯৪৪ সালের জুলাই মাসে। বিশ্বের ৪৪টি দেশের প্রতিনিধিগণ যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের নিউ হ্যামশায়ারের (New Hampshire) ব্রেটন উডস (Bretton Woods) নামক স্থানে মিলিত হয়ে দ্বিতীয় বিশ্বযুদ্ধোত্তর ইউরোপের পুনর্গঠন ও ১৯৩০ সালের মহামন্দার পুনরাবৃত্তি রোধকল্পে দুটি প্রতিষ্ঠান গঠনের সিদ্ধান্ত গ্রহণ করে। চাহিদার সামগ্রিক অবনতিই মহামন্দার প্রকৃত কারণ হিসেবে চিহ্নিত করে সম্মেলনে অংশগ্রহণকারী ব্রিটিশ অর্থনীতিবিদ কেইন্স তা রোধকল্পে প্রনোদনামূলক আর্থিক নীতি তথা সরকারী ব্যয় বৃদ্ধি, শুল্ক হ্রাস ও ব্যাংক সুদ কমানো প্রভৃতি ব্যবস্থা বাস্তবায়নের অভিমত ব্যক্ত করেন। কিন্তু গত শতাব্দীর ৮০'র দশকে রোনাল্ড রিগ্যান ও মার্গারেট থ্যাচারের সময়ে প্রতিষ্ঠান দুটি (WB ও IMF) উক্ত সম্মেলনের সিদ্ধান্তবলীর বিপরীত অবস্থান নেয়। এ প্রসঙ্গে নোবেলবিজয়ী অর্থনীতিবিদ Joseph stiglitz-এর ভাষ্য Founded on the belief that markets often worked badly it now champions market supremacy with ideological fervor.

সমসাময়িক কালের বিশ্ব অর্থনীতির প্রকৃতি নির্ধারণকারী সংস্থা দুটির উদ্ভবকালে আজকের উদীয়মান অর্থনীতির দেশগুলোর প্রায় সবাই উপনিবেশিক শোষণের জাতাকলে আবদ্ধ ছিল। মাহাখীর মোহাম্মদ তার এশিয়া প্রত্যাশা ও সম্ভাবনা নামক পুস্তকে উল্লেখ করেছেন যে ৫০'র দশকের এশিয়ার আর্থ-সামাজিক অবস্থা দেখে কেউ স্বপ্নেও কল্পনা করতে পারত না যে এশিয়া কোনদিন বিশ্বের অর্থনৈতিক ক্ষমতার আধারে পরিণত হবে। ৯০'র দশকের প্রারম্ভে পূর্বএশিয়ার আঞ্চলিক অর্থনীতি ক্রয়ক্ষমতার মানদণ্ডে পশ্চিম ইউরোপ ও যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের অর্থনীতির সমপর্যায়ে উপনীত হয়। বাজার সংস্কারের মাধ্যমে অর্থনৈতিক উন্নয়নের পথে অগ্রসর হয়ে সমকালীন বিশ্বে চীন অর্থনৈতিক সুপার পাওয়ার রূপে আবির্ভূত হয়েছে। বিশ্বের মধ্যম আয়ের দেশগুলোর অবকাঠামো উন্নয়নে বিনিয়োগ বা আর্থিক সহযোগিতার প্রশ্নে বিশ্ব ব্যাংককে বেশ কয়েক বছর আগেই বৃহত্তম দাতা দেশ হিসাবে অতিক্রম করে গেছে চীন। চীনসহ এশিয়ার অর্থনৈতিক উত্থান সম্পর্কে অস্ট্রেলিয়ার সাবেক প্রধানমন্ত্রী কেভিন রাভ এর ভাষ্য হচ্ছে অর্থনৈতিক ভাবে এশিয়া যে দিকে যাবে ভবিষ্যতে দুনিয়া সেদিকে যাবে। অনেকে মনে করে আন্তর্জাতিক আর্থিক প্রতিষ্ঠানগুলোতে যথাযথ ভূমিকা পালনের সুযোগের অভাবের কারণেই বিশ্বের দ্বিতীয় বৃহত্তম অর্থনীতির দেশ চীন নিজস্ব পথে অগ্রসরের পন্থা অবলম্বন করে। মার্কিন ফেডারেল রিজার্ভের সাবেক চেয়ারম্যান Ben Bernanke-এর অভিমত Beijing was pushed into launching the Aisan Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) by US lawmakers' refusal to give China greater clout in existing multilateral institution.

যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের ধারণা ছিল তার প্রবল AIIB বিরোধী তৎপরতার সাথে অনেক দেশই সামিল হবে। যা পরিবর্তিত বৈশ্বিক অর্থনৈতিক পরিস্থিতির সঠিক অনুধাবণ ছিল না। উদীয়মান অর্থনীতির দেশগুলোর অধিকতর ভূমিকা পালনে IMF-এর ২০১০ সালের সংস্কার প্রস্তাব মার্কিন কংগ্রেস প্রত্যাখ্যান করায় মিত্রদের কাছে যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের গ্রহণযোগ্যতা প্রশ্নবিদ্ধ হয়। বৈশ্বিক বাণিজ্যিক, আর্থিক ও বিনিয়োগ ক্ষেত্রে ঘটে যাওয়া বিশাল পরিবর্তনই যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের ঘনিষ্ঠ মিত্রদের AIIB বিরোধী তৎপরতার সাথে শরীক হওয়ার পরিবর্তে চীনের অর্থনৈতিক মিত্র হওয়ার পথকে প্রশস্ত বা উৎসাহিত করে। চীনের ক্রমবর্ধমান অভ্যন্তরীণ বাজার ও বিনিয়োগ করার মত বিশাল পরিমাণ নগদ অর্থ যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের সরাসরি আবেদনকে উপেক্ষা করার মত পরিস্থিতির সৃষ্টি করে। মার্কিন ট্রেজারী সেক্রেটারীর বক্তব্য এ প্রসঙ্গে প্রনিধানযোগ্য America's "International credibility and influence" is under threat as China sets up rival to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank and draws the support of long time US allies.

কেবলমাত্র এশিয়ার অবকাঠামো উন্নয়নের সুনির্দিষ্ট লক্ষ্য নিয়ে AIIB প্রতিষ্ঠিত হয়েছে। এশীয় অবকাঠামো বিনিয়োগ ব্যাংক (AIIB) প্রাথমিক পুঁজির পরিমাণ ১০০ বিলিয়ন ডলারের সমপরিমাণ অর্থ। আর লক্ষ্যণীয় বিষয় হচ্ছে প্রাথমিক পুঁজির সত্তর শতাংশ এশিয়া হতেই সংগ্রহের বিধান ব্যাংকের নীতিমালা অনুযায়ী বাধ্যতামূলক। মূলত: চীন-ভারতসহ এশিয়ার উন্নয়নশীল দেশগুলোর অংশগ্রহণেই AIIB গঠিত হয়েছে। বৈশ্বিক অর্থনৈতিক মানচিত্রে AIIB পশ্চিমা উন্নত বিশ্বের প্রাধান্য বহির্ভূত প্রথম আন্তর্জাতিক একটি আর্থিক প্রতিষ্ঠান। অবকাঠামো (সড়ক ও রেলপথ, সমুদ্র ও বিমান বন্দর) ক্ষেত্রে ব্যাপক বিনিয়োগ এশিয়ার অর্থনীতিগুলির পারস্পরিক (আঞ্চলিক) বন্ধনকে ঘনিষ্ঠ ও বেগবান করার মাধ্যমে বিশ্ব অর্থনীতির চালিকা শক্তির ভূমিকা পালনকারী এশিয়ার অবস্থানকে আরও সুদৃঢ় ও শক্তিশালী করবে বলে বিশেষজ্ঞদের অভিমত।

লেখক পরিচিতি: শরীফ মোহাম্মদ খান, রাজনীতিক।

বাংলাদেশ-চীন সংযোগ- অতীতের ছায়ায় উদ্ভাসিত বর্তমানের পূর্বাশা

ইমরানুজ্জামান চৌধুরী



বাংলা অভিধানে সম্পর্ক ও সংযোগ দুটি আলাদা ব্যাঞ্জনার অধিকারী। দ্যোতনাগত অর্থে সংযোগ সম্পর্কের চেয়েও নিবিড় হয়ে থাকে। বাংলাদেশ ও চীনের মধ্যে সম্পর্ক নয়, বরং প্রাকৃতিক এক সংযোগ আছে বলেই আমার বিশ্বাস। এই সংযোগের বিস্তৃতি সম্পর্কে লিখতে যাওয়া একটু দুরূহ। কারণ আপনি একেবারে মেঠো চলিত ভাষার উপাদান থেকে শুরু করে প্রতিরক্ষা ভাবনা পর্যন্ত সর্বত্র ফল্গুধারার মতো বহুমান সম্পর্কের এই আবহ আঁচ করতে পারবেন। আবহমানকাল থেকেই এদেশের মানুষ গতানুগতিকতাহীন, অভিনব কোন বিষয়বস্তুর নামের আগে চীনের নাম জুড়ে দিয়েছে। যদিও হয়তো সেই নির্দিষ্ট বিষয়ের সাথে চীনের আদতে কোন সম্পর্কই নেই। উদাহরণস্বরূপ, চীনা হাঁস, চীনা মুরগীর কথা বলতে পারি। এগুলো মোটেই চীনা প্রজাতির পাখি নয়। আমাদের দেশে যা চীনা হাঁস নামে মশহুর, সেটির নাম মাস্কেভি (Muscovy) হাঁস। এদের উৎপত্তি লাতিন আমেরিকায়। চীনা মুরগী নামে পরিচিত গিনি ফাওল বা তিতিরের উৎপত্তি সাবসাহারা আফ্রিকায়। এই যে আবহমানকাল ধরে এই পাখিগুলোকে এদেশে ‘চীনা’ নামে ডাকা হচ্ছে, এর মধ্যেও বাংলাদেশের মানুষের সাথে চীনের সংযোগ ও দৃষ্টিভঙ্গির একটি মনস্তাত্ত্বিক নিদর্শন পাওয়া যায়। বছর দুয়েক আগে কোন এক বিদেশী সাময়িকী এক জরীপের দ্বারা প্রকাশ করেছিলো, চীনের প্রতিবেশীদের মধ্যে বাংলাদেশীরাই দেশটির প্রতি সবচেয়ে বেশি আস্থা পোষণ করে।

বাংলা-চীন মৈত্রীর অতীতের কথা

চীন ও বাংলাদেশের মধ্যকার দ্বিপাক্ষিক সম্পর্কের স্বরূপ ও সম্ভাবনার নানা দিক বিশ্লেষণে ইতিহাসের দ্বারস্থ হওয়া ছাড়া উপায় নেই। কারণ ইতিহাসই আমাদের দীক্ষা দিচ্ছে যে, চীন ও বাংলাদেশের মধ্যকার মৈত্রী একটি প্রাচীন ও স্বাভাবিক প্রক্রিয়ার অংশ। বর্তমান পৃথিবীতে খুব কমই এমন দেশ মেলে যাদের মধ্যকার কূটনৈতিক সম্পর্কের জড় খুঁজতে গেলে মধ্যযুগের ইতিহাসের পাতা উল্টাতে হয়। তবে তা মূলত কূটনৈতিক সংযোগের ইতিহাস। চীনের সাথে বাংলার যোগাযোগ আসলে কবে শুরু হয়েছিলো, তা এখনও জানা যায়নি। তবে লিখিত ইতিহাসের প্রায় শুরু থেকেই দুই দেশের যোগাযোগের প্রমাণ মেলে। এই যোগাযোগ আধ্যাত্মিক ও জাগতিক, উভয় ক্ষেত্রেই প্রসারিত হয়েছিলো। বাংলার অতীশ দীপঙ্কর শ্রীজ্ঞানের তিব্বতে বৌদ্ধ ধর্ম প্রচারে গমনের কথা কারো অবদিত নয়।

চীনের সাথে বাংলাদেশের বাণিজ্যিক যোগের ইতিহাস আরও প্রাচীন। একবার আমি পড়েছিলাম, ব্রহ্মপুত্র ও তিস্তা নদী নাকি পৃথিবীর অন্যতম প্রাচীন নৌপথ। এই নৌপথ ব্যবহৃত হতো উত্তরে চীনের সাথে বাণিজ্যিক কার্যক্রম পরিচালনার স্বার্থে। বাংলাদেশের প্রাচীন চিকিৎসাশাস্ত্রে চীনের সংযোগ সম্ভবত এমনই প্রাচীন কোন এক কালে প্রতিষ্ঠিত হয়েছিলো। আর এভাবেই এদেশে ইউনানি চিকিৎসা শাস্ত্রের প্রসার ঘটে।

বাংলার সাথে চীনের রাষ্ট্রীয় পর্যায়ে কূটনৈতিক সম্পর্ক স্থাপনের প্রথম দলিল মেলে ১৪১৮ সালের দিকে। ২৫০ বছরব্যাপী স্থায়ী বাংলা সালতানাতের গৌরব শিখা তখন প্রোজ্জ্বল। বাংলার তৎকালীন সুলতান জালাল উদ্দীন মুহাম্মদ শাহ তখন ক্ষমতায়। তিনিই সমসাময়িক চীনা সম্রাট ইউং লোর সাথে দূত বিনিময়ের ধারাবাহিকতা শুরু করেন। এরপর বেশ কয়েক জন সুলতান চীনের সাথে দূত ও উপহার বিনিময়ের ধারাবাহিকতা জারী রাখেন। এমনকি বাংলার সুলতান সাইফ উদ্দীন হামযা শাহের উপহারের দ্বারা চীনারা প্রথম জিরাফ দর্শন করে বলে জানা যায়!

বাংলাদেশ ও চীনের মধ্যকার সমসাময়িক সম্পর্কে কৌশলগত ও নিরাপত্তাগত অংশীদারির কথা বোধকরি সবচেয়ে বেশি শোনা যায়। বিস্ময়কর হলেও সত্যি যে বাংলার সাথে চীনের এহেন বিশেষ সম্পর্কের নজিরও কিন্তু মধ্যযুগে আজ থেকে প্রায় ৫৯৬ বছর আগে পাওয়া যায়। ১৪২০ সালের দিকে উত্তর ভারতের জৌনপুরের সুলতান ইবরাহীম শর্কী বাংলা আক্রমণ করেন। কিন্তু শেষমেশ তিনি নিজেকে সত্বরণ করেন। সমসাময়িক চৈনিক বিবরণ মোতাবেক, ইবরাহীম শর্কীর থেমে যাওয়ার পেছনে ছিল চীনের সম্রাট ইউং লোর হুঁশিয়ারি। তিনি হো শিয়েন নামে এক দূতকে ইবরাহীম শর্কীর নিকট এই বার্তা দিয়ে পাঠান যে, নিজের সম্পদ রক্ষার্থে জৌনপুরের সুলতান যেন প্রতিবেশী রাষ্ট্রে আক্রমণ না করেন।

যারা আমার এই লেখাটি পড়ছেন, আশা করি তাঁরা বুঝতে পারছেন যে, বাংলা ও চীনের মধ্যে কতো নিবিড় সম্পর্ক এহেন পরিস্থিতির জন্ম দিয়েছিলো। দুটি রাষ্ট্রের মধ্যে সম্পর্কের এহেন পর্যায়কেই আসলে রাষ্ট্রবিজ্ঞান ও আন্তর্জাতিক সম্পর্ক বিদ্যার আধুনিক পরিভাষায় কৌশলগত মিত্রতা নামে অভিহিত করা হয়। সত্যি বলতে বাংলাদেশের সাথে চীনের কূটনৈতিক সম্পর্ক মাত্র চার দশকের নয়, বরং কমপক্ষে ছয় শতাব্দীর

প্রাচীন। আর এজন্যই চীন-বাংলাদেশ সম্পর্কের নানা দিক সম্পর্কে বিশ্লেষণ করতে হলে আপনাকে দুই দেশের সুপ্রাচীন সম্পর্কের কথা জানতেই হবে। বাণিজ্য সম্পর্ক জোরদার করতে গেলে আমাদের প্রেরণা হতে পারেন মধ্যযুগের প্রখ্যাত চীনা নৌ সমরনায়ক ও অভিযাত্রী ঝেং হের কথা, যিনি ১৪১৭ থেকে ১৪৩৩ সাল পর্যন্ত তিনটি বাণিজ্যিক অভিযাত্রায় এসেছিলেন বাংলায়।

বাংলা-চীন মৈত্রীর বর্তমান ও প্রাসঙ্গিক কথা

অতীত ইতিহাসের পত্রপল্লবে বিকশিত হয়ে চীন ও বাংলাদেশের সম্পর্ক এখন একটি সোনালী সম্ভাবনার সময় অতিক্রম করছে বলেই আমার বিশ্বাস। একটি বৃহত্তম অর্থনীতি কার্যকর বিশ্বশক্তি হিসেবে চীন যেমন তরতর করে এগিয়ে যাচ্ছে, তেমনি একটি উদীয়মান অর্থনীতি হিসেবে বিকাশমান বাংলাদেশের সাথে চীনের সহযোগিতা ও অংশীদারিত্বের ক্ষেত্র দিনদিন বিকশিত হচ্ছে। বলা চলে প্রতি এক দশকে চীনের সাথে বাংলাদেশের সহযোগিতা ও অংশীদারিত্বের ক্ষেত্র বেড়েই চলেছে। বর্তমান সময়কে বলা হচ্ছে বু ইকোনমির যুগ। প্রাণধানযোগ্য বিষয় হচ্ছে, এদেশে বু ইকোনমি নামের বিষয়টি জনপ্রিয় হবার শুরু থেকেই বাংলাদেশ ও চীনের অংশীদারিত্বের এক নতুন সম্ভাবনা জাগ্রত হয়। সাম্প্রতিক বছরগুলোতে ভারত ও মিয়ানমারের সাথে আন্তর্জাতিক শালিসের মাধ্যমে বাংলাদেশের সমুদ্রসীমা নিষ্পত্তি হয়েছে। এখন বঙ্গোপসাগরের বিশাল অংশে বাংলাদেশের সার্বভৌমত্ব নিষ্কণ্টক হবার পর অত্র অঞ্চল থেকে সম্পদ আহরণে বাংলাদেশের নির্ভরযোগ্য সহযোগী হতে পারে চীন।

জুলাই মাসের শুরুতে নেদারল্যান্ডসের দ্য হেগের আন্তর্জাতিক আদালতে নিষ্পত্তি হওয়া দক্ষিণ চীন সাগরে চীন ও ফিলিপাইনের মধ্যকার সমুদ্রসীমা নির্ধারণ বিষয়ক শালিসি মামলায় যে রায় এসেছে, তাতে দৃশ্যত চীন অসুবিধাজনক অবস্থানে এসে গেছে। কিন্তু আমি একে ‘দৃশ্যতই’ বলবো। কারণ পুরো বিষয়টিকে ইতিবাচকভাবে বিশ্লেষণ করলে দেখা যাবে, এতে চীনের জন্য লাভের অনুষ্ণও কম নয়। আমার মতে, এতে করে চীন দক্ষিণ সাগর থেকে তার যাবতীয় প্রচেষ্টা ভারত মহাসাগর থেকে শুরু করে প্রশান্ত মহাসাগর, এমনকি ভূমধ্যসাগরীয় অঞ্চলের সমুদ্র বাণিজ্যে নতুন উদ্যমে নিজেকে নিয়োজিত করার সুযোগ পাবে। আর চীনের জন্য যদি বর্ধিত পরিসরে বৈশ্বিক সমুদ্র বাণিজ্যে শক্তিশালী অবস্থান গ্রহণই সবচেয়ে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ হয়ে থাকে, তবে দক্ষিণ চীন সাগরে ফিলিপাইনের সাথে সমুদ্রসীমার নিষ্পত্তি চীনকে অধিকতর ঝাড়া হাত-পা হয়ে ঋজু হতে সাহায্য করবে। তাছাড়া এর কৌশলগত গুরুত্বও আছে। অনেকেই মনে করছেন, দক্ষিণ চীন সাগর যেহেতু চীনের দেউড়ির মতো, সেহেতু এখানে চীনের যেকোনো হার চীনের অবস্থানকে দুর্বল করতে পারে। কিন্তু আসলেই কি পুরো বিষয়টিকে এহেন সরলীকরণে আবদ্ধ করার সুযোগ আছে? উল্টা এমনও হতে পারে, এই রায় আসলে দক্ষিণ চীন সাগর অঞ্চলে উত্তেজনা প্রশমনে ইতিবাচক ভূমিকা পোষণ করবে, এবং এর দ্বারা অত্র অঞ্চলে চীনের ছোট কিন্তু গুরুত্বপূর্ণ প্রতিবেশীসমূহকে (বিশেষত ইন্দো-চীন উপদ্বীপের দেশসমূহ) চীনের প্রতিদ্বন্দ্বী মার্কিন অক্ষে ভিড়তে ঠেকানো সম্ভব হতে পারে। ফলে চীন দৃশ্যত নিজের দেউড়ীতে শান্তিপূর্ণ পরিবেশ সৃষ্টির মাধ্যমে বাইরে নিজের অবস্থান সংহত করতে অধিকতর নিবিড়ভাবে জড়িত হতে সুযোগ পেতে পারে।

বাংলাদেশ চীন মৈত্রী ও একটি ব্যক্তিগত স্বপ্ন

বিভিন্ন দৃষ্টিকোণ থেকে বাংলাদেশ-চীন নিবিড় দ্বিপাক্ষিক সংযোগের সাথে সম্পর্কযুক্ত এই ব্যক্তিগত স্বপ্নকে উচ্চাভিলাষী বলা চলে। তবে এও সত্যি যে, এটাকে একটা বাস্তবায়নযোগ্য স্বপ্ন বলা যায়, যা করতে পারে দুটি দেশ একজোট হয়ে।

বাংলাদেশের কক্সবাজার জেলার সোনাদিয়া দ্বীপে একটি গভীর সমুদ্রবন্দর নির্মাণের প্রস্তাবনা অনেক দিন থেকে। চীন অত্যন্ত সক্রিয়ভাবে এই প্রস্তাবের সাথে নিজেদের একাত্মতা ঘোষণা করেছে। আমি পুরো বিষয়টিকে আরও বৃহত্তর পরিসরে দেখতে চাই। আর এটাই আমার স্বপ্নের প্রতিপাদ্য। তবে এর বর্ণনা করতে হলে আমাকে ফের যেতে হবে ইতিহাসে- বাংলার স্বর্ণযুগের ইতিহাসে। স্বপ্নটি আসলে বাঙ্গালা নামের একটি সমৃদ্ধশালী নগরের পুনরুজ্জীবনের। সেই শহরের নাম বাঙ্গালা- ইউরোপীয়দের জবানে ‘City of Bengala’। ডঃ আবদুল করিমের ‘বাংলার ইতিহাস- সুলতানী আমল’ গ্রন্থ পাঠে জানা যায়, ইতালীয় বণিক ভারথেমা, ১৫০৩-১৫০৮ সালের মধ্যে বাংলাদেশে আগমন করেন। পর্তুগীজ পরিব্রাজক ডুয়াটে বারবোসা ১৫১৮ সালে এদেশে আসেন। এরা উভয়েই বাঙ্গালা নামে একটি বৃহৎ বন্দরনগরের বর্ণনা করেন যা ছিল একটি সমৃদ্ধশালী আন্তর্জাতিক বাণিজ্যকেন্দ্র। এই নগর সুতি, সিল্ক, ও নানা ধরনের বিলাসদ্রব্যের জন্য বিখ্যাত ছিল। প্রায় চল্লিশ হাজার মানুষ অধুষিত বাঙ্গালা শহর অবস্থিত ছিল চট্টগ্রাম উপকূলে। পর্তুগীজ লেখক তোমে পিরেজও বাঙ্গালা শহরের উল্লেখ করেছিলেন, এদের বর্ণনা মতে বাঙ্গালা শহর ছিল একটি খাঁড়ির ভেতরে। এর পোতাশ্রয় ছিল খুবই গভীর। ভারথেমা, বারবোসা ও পিরেজের বর্ণনা অনুযায়ী এটা স্পষ্টই প্রতীয়মান হয় যে, ষষ্ঠদশ শতকের প্রথম দিকেও সমৃদ্ধশালী বাঙ্গালা নগরের অস্তিত্ব ছিল।

কিন্তু ১৫৬৩ সালে সিজার ফ্রেডারিক, এবং ১৫৮৫-৮৬ সালে রালফ ফিচ বাংলায় এসে বাঙ্গালা শহরের অস্তিত্ব খুঁজে পাননি। আজো বাঙ্গালা শহর ঐতিহাসিকদের কাছে একটি সদা অগম্য ধাঁধার মতো। অনেকে হাল ছেড়ে বাঙ্গালা শহরকে চট্টগ্রামের সাথে অভিন্ন বলে মনে করেছেন। কিন্তু এটা নিশ্চিতভাবে বলা যায় না, কারণ চট্টগ্রাম আগে থেকেই স্বনামে বিখ্যাত ছিল। যাহোক, এক শতকের ব্যবধানে একটি সমৃদ্ধ নগরের



হারিয়ে যাওয়া বিস্ময়কর বৈকি। তবে ধারণা করা যায় যে, কোন বড় জলোচ্ছ্বাস বা সমুদ্রের ভাঙ্গনে এই শহর বিলীন হয়ে যায়।

আমি স্বপ্ন দেখি, বাঙ্গালা শহর আবার পুনরুজ্জীবিত হবে। সিল্কের রফতানিতে বিলুপ্ত বাঙ্গালা শহরের যশ প্রমাণ করে এই শহরের সমৃদ্ধিতে চীনা বণিকদের অংশীদারি ছিল। এখন সোনারদিয়ায় গভীর সমুদ্রবন্দর নির্মাণের কথা উঠেছে। এই পরিকল্পনাকে আরও বর্ধিত করে বাঙ্গালা নামে একটি শহর গড়ে তোলা যায়, যার অবস্থান হবে মহেশখালী, সোনারদিয়া, কুতুবদিয়া ও তৎসংলগ্ন মূল ভূখন্ড, তথা কক্সবাজারের চকোরিয়া উপজেলা সমবায়ে। আর স্বপ্নের এই বন্দর স্থাপনে চীন ছাড়া আর কোন মোক্ষম অংশীদার আমি দেখিনা। সুষ্ঠু নগর পরিকল্পনা ও দৃষ্টিভঙ্গন সেতু দ্বারা পরস্পর সংযুক্ত চারটি ভূখন্ড সমবায়ে গঠিত প্রস্তাবিত বাঙ্গালা শহর নানাবিধ উপযোগিতার অধিকারী হতে পারে, যার দ্বারা বাংলাদেশের মতোই চীন বিপুলভাবে লাভবান হতে পারে। প্রস্তাবিত এশীয় মহাসড়ক ও রেল নেটওয়ার্কের লাগোয়া বহুমুখী সেতু দ্বারা পরস্পর সংযুক্ত এই আন্তর্জাতিক নগর মালাক্কা প্রণালীর বাইরেই চীনের একটি বড় অর্থনৈতিক বিচরণ ক্ষেত্র হয়ে গড়ে উঠতে পারে, অর্থনৈতিক সম্ভাবনা ছাড়াও ভূরাজনীতির নিরিখে যার আছে অমিত সম্ভাবনা। সম্প্রতি আরব সাগরের তীরে পাকিস্তানের গোয়াদরে চীন যে উদ্দেশ্যে বন্দর স্থাপন করতে যাচ্ছে, প্রস্তাবিত বাঙ্গালা শহর তেমনি উপযোগিতা ধারণ করে। এতে সমুদ্র বাণিজ্যে চীনের শক্তিমত্তা আরও দৃঢ় ভিত্তির উপর প্রতিষ্ঠিত হবার সুযোগ পেয়ে যাবে।



এশিয়ার মানচিত্রে চীন কৃত্রিম নির্মীয়মাণ পাকিস্তানের গোয়াদর বন্দর ও সমুদ্রবাণিজ্য এবং ভূরাজনৈতিক কৌশলের দিক থেকে অত্যন্ত গুরুত্বপূর্ণ মালাক্কা প্রণালীর সাথে এখানে প্রস্তাবিত বাঙ্গালা শহরের অবস্থান। মানচিত্র দর্শনে প্রতীয়মান হয়, ভৌগোলিক কারণে প্রস্তাবিত বাঙ্গালা নগর একাধিক গুরুত্বপূর্ণ উপযোগিতার অধিকারী।

শেষের কথা

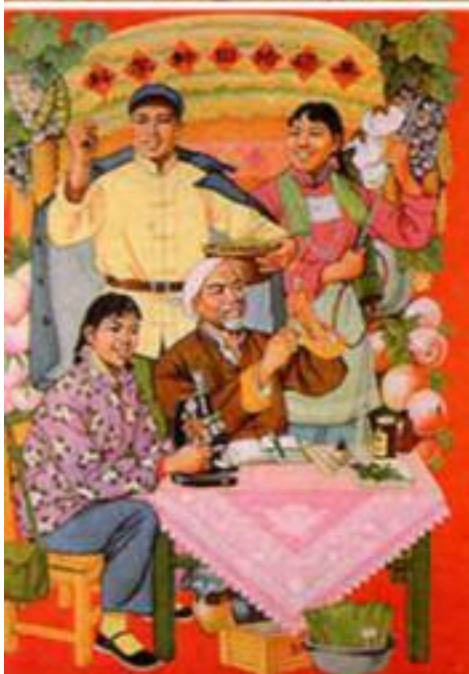
বাংলাদেশে চীনা বিনিয়োগ, অর্থনৈতিক ও নিরাপত্তাগত অংশীদারি যে অর্থনৈতিক চলককে প্রভাবিত করে, তাতে উভয় দেশের রাজনৈতিক স্বার্থও আছে। ইংরেজিতে যাকে পলিটিকাল ইকোনমি বলা যায়। বাংলাদেশ ও চীনের দ্বিপাক্ষিক অর্থনৈতিক অংশীদারির বিরূপ অংশজুড়ে আছে রাজনৈতিক স্বার্থসংশ্লিষ্ট অর্থনীতি। তাছাড়া বাংলাদেশের অর্থনীতি ও রাজনীতি খুব আলাদা কোন বিষয় নয়। আর এজন্যই বিগত শতকের চল্লিশের দশকে বরণ্য বাঙ্গালী রাজনীতিবিদ এ কে ফজলুল হক যথার্থ বলেছিলেন, 'Politics of Bengal is in reality the economics of Bengal'.

ধুপদী রাষ্ট্রবিজ্ঞানে রাষ্ট্রের নীতিনির্ধারণে রাজনৈতিক গোষ্ঠীর সাথে সবচেয়ে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ভূমিকা পালন করে দেশের জনগণের আলোকিত অংশ, তথা বুদ্ধিজীবী সমাজ। হালে নীতিনির্ধারণে আমলাতন্ত্রের আধিপত্য থাকলেও আজো রাষ্ট্রকে আলোর সন্ধান দেন প্রথমত, রাজনীতিবিদরা, এবং দ্বিতীয়ত, বুদ্ধিজীবী সমাজ। বাংলাদেশের এই উভয় গোষ্ঠী যতো দ্রুততার সাথে একটি আটপৌরে দ্বিপাক্ষিক সম্পর্কের উর্ধ্বে উঠে চীন ও বাংলাদেশের মধ্যকার সংযোগের সলুক সন্ধানে ব্যাপ্ত হবেন, ততো দ্রুত আমাদের জন্য মঙ্গল নিশ্চিত হবে।

আমার কথা শেষ করতে চাই বরণ্য রাজনীতিবিদ, সাহিত্যিক ও বুদ্ধিজীবী আবুল মনসুর আহমদের কথা উল্লেখ করার মাধ্যমে। তিনি তাঁর লেখা কালজয়ী রাজনৈতিক আত্মজীবনী 'আমার দেখা রাজনীতির পঞ্চাশ বছর' বইটি শেষ করার সময় লিখেছিলেন নবপ্রতিষ্ঠিত বাংলাদেশের পররাষ্ট্রনীতির সম্ভাব্য রূপরেখা সম্পর্কে, যাতে অপরিহার্যভাবে চলে এসেছিলো চীনের প্রসঙ্গ। উপমহাদেশের সাথে, বাংলাদেশের সাথে চীনের মৈত্রী স্থাপনের অপরিহার্যতা ও অসীম সম্ভাবনা প্রসঙ্গে। তখনও পাঁচ দশক পর চীন ও বাংলাদেশ আনুষ্ঠানিক কূটনৈতিক সম্পর্ক পুনঃস্থাপন করেনি। আবুল মনসুর আহমদ বইটি শেষ করেছিলেন যে আশাবাদ ব্যক্ত করে, আমিও তাঁরই ভাষার অনুকরণে অভিন্ন আশাবাদ ব্যক্ত করে এই লেখা সমাপ্ত করছি- বাংলাদেশ ও চীনের নেতৃত্ব এই বিপুল সম্ভাবনাকে সফল করে তুলুন।

ইমরানুজ্জামান চৌধুরী, অনলাইন লেখক, সহজিয়া রাষ্ট্রচিন্তক।

Colourful China





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Published by
 Centre for East Asia (Foundation), Bangladesh
 House-19, Flat-3AB, Road-1, Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka-1705
 Cell: 01711825799, 01195058354, 01711841040, 01715185125
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