

BOTTOM LINE

New Delhi turns its eye on Africa



AS India reinforces its engagement with the continent of 53 countries, Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh

embarked on a six-day visit to Africa on May 23.

He travelled to Addis Ababa, (Ethiopia), the seat of the African Union and the diplomatic capital of Africa, to attend the second Africa-India Forum Summit and then paid a visit to Tanzania.

Since 2008, India's robust foreign policy has directed its attention to Africa. India's rising economic power coupled with influence in other fields has not been unnoticed by African countries. Furthermore, the rise of India and China has shifted the geographic distribution of global power in Asia and forced constitution of the G-20, which deals with global economic and strategic matters.

President Obama, during his visit to Britain on May 25, conceded the shift of power when he said that leadership had to "change with the times" and the days were gone when an American president and UK prime minister could "sit in a room and solve the world's problems over a glass of brandy."

India hosted the first forum summit in April 2008 under Africa-India Framework for Enhanced Cooperation. It was also decided that the next Africa-India summit would be held in New Delhi in 2014.

In his departure statement hours before leaving for India's second

summit with the African continent, Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh underlined that the burgeoning partnership rested on "three pillars of capacity building and skill transfer, trade and infrastructure development. It is designed to respond to the needs and priorities of Africa and for India to learn from Africa's rich experience. It is based on equality, mutual trust and a consultative and transparent approach."

He described the India-Africa partnership as "a living embodiment of South-South cooperation." Taking note of winds of resurgence sweeping through India and the African continent, he underscored that "both Africa and India are on the move. Africa is emerging as a new growth pole of the world, while India is on a path of sustained and rapid economic development."

Against the backdrop of pro-democracy protests sweeping North Africa and more countries in sub-Saharan Africa embracing democracy, Dr. Singh underscored the commitment of both sides to democracy and pluralism.

The second Africa-India Forum Summit has been a landmark event that has for the first time brought together a large gathering of African leaders to meet with Indian prime minister on African soil. The theme of the summit was "Enhancing Partnership: Shared Vision."

Leaders from 15 African countries, chosen by the African Union (AU) under a participatory formula worked out between India and the AU, attended the summit. The countries were: Algeria, Burundi, Chad, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Libya, Malawi, Namibia, Mauritania, Nigeria, Senegal, South

Africa and Swaziland. Jean Ping, the chairperson of the African Union Commission also was present. It is important to note that Libya, chosen by AU, participated in the summit. The two sides sought to fashion a

strong and purposeful partnership between India and Africa that responds to the realities of the 21st Century," he stressed.

India is keen on utilising Africa's energy resources, and it has visual-

- Health, culture, tourism, sports;
- Infrastructure, media and communications.

India's investment in Africa is increasing rapidly. One of its biggest companies, the Tata group, has

worth \$500 million for a host of infrastructure projects and increased the number of scholarships for African students under the Indian government's flagship Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme including 19 training Institutes.

The question of what India hopes to get in return for pouring billions of dollars in aid into Africa was answered on the concluding day of the second India-Africa summit when the co-chair of the India-Africa Forum issued a ringing endorsement of India's quest for a permanent seat in an expanded UN Security Council.

India has watched enviously as Beijing dramatically expanded its trade and investment in Africa in recent years. Just outside the African Union headquarters, where the summit took place, China is building a gleaming new \$150 million expansion for the African Union, including an impressive 30-storey tower -- and the project is being entirely financed by Beijing. It shows how China remains far ahead in the race for influence here.

Both countries are hungry for natural resources, which are plenty in Africa. The latest global scramble for Africa, with China now in the lead, is escalating to new heights as the Indian prime minister's visit to Africa appears to be an effort to counter Beijing's fast-growing control over resources in the continent.

Growing competition between India and China is a boon for African countries, which will get quality expertise and investments from two of Asia's fastest growing economies, say African diplomats.

The writer is a former Bangladesh Ambassador to the UN, Geneva.

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robust strategic partnership that will entail expansion of trade and investment and closer coordination over a range of global issues, including terrorism, piracy, climate change and the UN reforms.

He reportedly said that both Africa and India had the advantage of a youthful population, commitment to democracy, pluralism and spirit of entrepreneurship, adding that bilateral ties "are marked by strong people-to-people interaction and a deep sense of solidarity and goodwill." "These are compelling factors for a

used a partnership anchored in the fundamental principles of equality, mutual respect and mutual benefit. The objective is to cooperate with Africa in its efforts to achieve economic vibrancy, peace, stability and self-reliance.

In a separate document on a framework for enhanced cooperation between Africa and India, the two sides have envisaged a widening of the partnership to areas such as:

- Civil society and governance;
- Science and technology;
- Social development;

invested in nearly a dozen African countries. And the Indian mobile phone company, Bharti Airtel, spent \$9 billion last year to acquire the African operations of Zain, which provides mobile phone services in 15 African countries.

Africa is a big market for India. India's trade with Africa has soared from \$967 million in 1991 to \$45 billion in 2010. But it compares unfavourably with China's trade with Africa (\$110 billion).

At the Summit, Dr. Singh announced fresh lines of credit

Justice for Kibria assassination: We are still waiting

NAZLI and REZA KIBRIA

IT has been over six years. On January 27, 2005, our father, Shah A.M.S. Kibria, former UN Under-Secretary General, finance minister and Member of Parliament of Bangladesh, was brutally assassinated by a grenade attack in Habiganj, Sylhet. We are still waiting for justice.

Shah A.M.S. Kibria's long and distinguished career was one that was defined by public service. He participated in the Language Movement of 1952 and the Liberation War of 1971, defecting from the Pakistan Embassy in Washington D.C. on August 4 of that year. He returned to Bangladesh in 1972, working closely with Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to set up the foreign ministry and to serve as secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He is widely regarded as one of the main architects of the Awami League's return to power in 1996, and during his tenure as finance minister the nation enjoyed a remarkable period of growth with price stability.

Of course much has happened in Bangladesh since that fateful day in 2005. The BNP-Jamaat government that was in power at the time of my father's murder gave way in 2007 to a caretaker government. Since 2009 Awami League, the political party that my father loyally served, has held the reins of government. Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose (there is change but yet there is not). Despite this, we have yet to see a complete, impartial and transparent investigation into the assassination of Shah A.M.S. Kibria. We are still waiting for justice.

In 2005, during BNP-Jamaat rule, the Criminal Investigation Division (CID) submitted a charge-sheet for the case. It named 10 men, including several local BNP leaders, as perpetrators in the assassination without addressing the crucial questions of motive, intent and plan. Steadfast in our determination to get justice, we protested the charge-sheet; it was never taken to trial. And then just last week, we were most surprised to read in the newspapers that the CID

was about to submit a supplemental charge-sheet that named 14 other men as involved in the attack.

From what we know and have heard, the proposed charge-sheet still fails to address several crucial questions, most importantly who were the masterminds behind the attack. Who would go to the extent of murdering a man who, at the time of his death, held no formal position in the Awami League hierarchy and was not viewed as a member of the party's inner circle? What was their reason, their motivation? The investigation cannot be considered complete without answers to these questions along with the evidence to back them up. We are still waiting for justice.

As reported in various newspapers, the new impending charge-sheet names 13 men, many of whom are already in jail in connection with other cases. There is former state minister for home Lutfozzaman Babar who has allegedly admitted to providing shelter and protection to those who threw the grenades. There is the name of Harkat-ul-Jihad (Huji) leader Mufti Abdul Hannan, along with a number of other Huji associates who supposedly participated in the attack or had knowledge of it. The Indian national Abdul Aziz Butt alias Abdul Majed of the international terrorist group Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) is listed as a perpetrator.

Along with producing these 13 names, the Investigating Officer (IO) of the case is also reported to have said that no evidence had been found against the 10 people named in the 2005 charge-sheet. We are still waiting for justice.

For us and other family members, these developments raise more questions than they answer. In light of the reported connection to LeT, have the international terrorist linkages of the case been investigated? Furthermore, while Huji has allegedly taken responsibility for carrying out the attack, their role appears to be one of "hired guns." On whose orders were they operating?

And from what we know, Mr. Emdadul Haque, the Deputy Commissioner of Habiganj at the time of the attack, has never been thoroughly interrogated about what

happened. Why not? Have the investigators actually interrogated Mr. Haris Chowdhury, political secretary to ex-prime minister Khaleda Zia, a person widely reported to have had a role in what happened? (Daily Star: 2009-11-13).

Both Haris and Pintu had threatened Babar to strip him of his ministerial post when he refused to hide the truth and save the perpetrators, Babar said. We understand that Haris is now living comfortably in Britain; did the IO travel to Britain to question him? And what about the speaker of the House in 2005, Mr. Jamiruddin Sircar, who conveniently shut off all channels of communication on the evening of January 27, such that he could not order a helicopter to be sent to bring my father to Dhaka for medical treatment? We are still waiting for justice.

Despite the high publicity given to this case, a complete investigation has so far been carefully avoided. We reject the results of these incomplete investigations. All investigative teams have been hamstrung by political interference, and their lack of forensic capabilities and training in modern investigative techniques has not helped either. There have been many other political murders in Bangladesh in recent years, and the families of the other victims have watched our efforts to obtain justice with dismay.

Our mother, Asma Kibria, often wonders if we will ever see a complete, impartial and transparent investigation. Is there the political will? The recent charge-sheet seemed to both appear and disappear with mysterious abruptness. Its appearance did not seem to follow the achievement of a breakthrough in the investigation but rather out of a sense of stalemate -- of the investigators feeling that they had exhausted their resources and abilities. Given these conditions, we ask the government to consider appointing an international investigative team into the January 27, 2005, assassination of Shah A.M.S. Kibria. What do they have to lose?

The writers are daughter and son, respectively, of Shah A.M.S. Kibria.

Globalisation the 'unequaliser'

M. WALIUZZAMAN

GLOBALISATION as a strategy for achieving technological competitiveness and industrial development by the developing countries was advocated by WTO in the nineties. The concept was well received by the developing countries with the underlying strength of the argument and perception that their existing low-tech industries would be encouraged/or forced to develop competitive technologies or absorb imported advanced technologies from developed countries to survive against imported low priced quality products. It was also expected that there would be awareness among the entrepreneurs and the planners about the technology-led development in the manufacturing sector.

Two decades have elapsed since Bangladesh joined the globalisation recipe of WTO. But have we achieved the desired benefit? In fact, what we have experienced is just the opposite. Technology in Bangladesh still remains too low-tech to be able to meet the challenge of global technology race. Contrary to expectations, technology research and development (R&D) never received the necessary impetus and priorities from the national policy makers. Neither the public sector nor the private sector enterprises were endowed with necessary investment for technology R&D. As a result, the technology level in Bangladesh has remained in a state of stagnancy.

On the positive side however, there have been some developments in the manufacture of some industrial products based on con-

temporary imported technologies/processes. But such development is not likely to be long lasting in the absence of on-going in-house R&D for catching up with global technology development. Consequently, these industrial products are likely to be uncompetitive in course of time.

There has been successful development of some export-led industries with imported technologies --

kets have been flooded will all kinds of cheaper but quality products under local liberalised tariff regime facing no competition from the low-tech indigenous products. Thus, globalisation has benefited the developed countries more than the developing ones by ensuring market outlet for the former's hi-tech products to the latter, rendering their all technology R&D initiative virtually redundant.

Developing countries are no longer in a position to catch-up with the global technology development race for the simple reason that R&D has become too expensive and knowledge based.

One has to realise that, today, technology reigns supreme in determining the market competitiveness. The race for technological superiority among the developed countries has resulted in the development of innumerable hi-tech products. But this has also given rise to inequality in the quality of life among the family of nations.

In the final analysis, therefore, the creativity, mastery and utilisation of modern science and tech-

nology is basically what distinguishes the developing countries from the developed ones. Poverty alleviation, economic emancipation, higher growth rate etc., whatever may be the GOB's target, the way to achieve them will be technology oriented national development policy and prioritised investment in technology R&D.

Under the above scenario of technological dependence of Bangladesh new initiatives in undertaking technological R&D by the public as well as private sectors are imperative for survival of local industries.

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The race for technological superiority among the developed countries has resulted in the development of innumerable hi-tech products.

like textiles, readymade garments and pharmaceuticals -- whose products are globally competitive, but they have made no impact on the local technology growth as both the raw materials and the machinery are imported. These sectors are likely to remain updated in product quality as per requirement of the importers with imported improved machinery and process technologies. Unfortunately, the in-house R&D in these sectors for gradual adaptation to undertake local manufacture of some imported machinery, at least in part, is yet to take place.

The market economy has, however, benefited the consuming developing countries as their mar-