

# Optimism

FROM PAGE 1  
25 agreements and MoUs in the areas of economic cooperation, trade, investment, power and energy, information communication, road-bridge, railway, road and waterway, agriculture and others, he added.

In an exclusive article for The Daily Star, Xi said, "Since the establishment of diplomatic ties 41 years ago, China has always regarded Bangladesh as its true friend and partner for development. China highly values its relations with Bangladesh..."

"China stands ready to offer more assistance and support to Bangladesh to the best of its capability, enhance mutual assistance and cooperation with Bangladesh in areas such as disaster prevention and mitigation, vocational training, medical and health-care services, climate change and women and children..."

A 13-member high-power delegation will accompany the Chinese president. They include two important members of Political Bureau of the Central Committee of Communist Party of China Wang Huning and Li Zhanshu, State Councilor Yang Jiechi, Foreign Minister Wang Yi, Minister of National Development and Reform Commission Xu Shaoshi, Finance Minister Lou Jiwei, Commerce Minister Gao Hucheng and Governor of the People's Bank of China Zhou Xiaochuan.

Bilateral trade between the two countries topped \$10.45 billion in 2015-2016, while China has emerged

as the biggest source of import for Bangladesh since 2007.

A Chinese diplomat in Dhaka told The Daily Star that the foreign direct investment by China in Bangladesh can witness a phenomenal boost when the special economic zone would be in place for Chinese investors.

He said China has taken Bangladesh as an important cooperative partner in South Asia and the Indian Ocean region and will, together with Bangladesh, keep high-level exchanges, and expand cooperation in trade, production capacity, energy development, infrastructure construction and other key fields.

China is the largest defence hardware supplier to Bangladesh, so discussions on enhancement of defence cooperation will be on the agenda as well. The two sides will also discuss regional and international developments, and will agree to make coordinated efforts for peace and security in the region, diplomatic sources said.

The Chinese president is prepared and willing to help strengthen Bangladesh's capacity to fight terrorism and is likely to offer technological support to advance Bangladesh's "zero tolerance policy" towards extremism, they added.

As China is a friend and partner of Bangladesh with huge potentials, a foreign ministry official said, Bangladesh is planning to pair its resources and economic ambitions with the rise of China and seek from China funds, technology, manage-

ment skills, market access and capabilities to build on existing platforms in defence, agriculture, industry, communications and water resources.

India will closely watch Xi's visit, said diplomatic sources in Dhaka and New Delhi.

"We are trying to figure out how much deeper relations between Dhaka and Beijing will go," said an Indian diplomat in Delhi. "The Chinese president's visit is taking place after the visit of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on June 6-7 last year, so we have an interest to see what China offers Bangladesh."

Replying to a question in this regard, the foreign minister said the Chinese president's visit would not affect relations with other countries, including that with India. "We don't want enmity with anybody. We'll proceed with protecting the country's interest following our foreign policy motto: friendship with all, malice towards none."

China, like the US, had sided with the Yahya Khan-led Pakistani military junta during Bangladesh's 1971 Liberation War, but subsequently built a steady relation during Ziaur Rahman and HM Ershad's military rule.

"Bangladesh's location in between South Asia and Southeast Asia is highly important," said a Chinese diplomat in Dhaka, adding that China also had a very positive attitude to connectivity and projects relating to road and rail between the two countries to boost trade and economic

cooperation.

Foreign ministry officials said the ties between Bangladesh and China embarked on a fast track of development since the two nations forged the "Closer Comprehensive Partnership of Cooperation" during the official visit of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to China in 2010.

The two countries established a comprehensive cooperative partnership featuring long-term friendship, equality and mutual benefit in April 2005 during Chinese PM Wen Jiabao's visit to Bangladesh.

Dhaka-Beijing diplomatic relations were established on October 4, 1975, and Ziaur Rahman was the first Bangladesh head of state to visit China in January 1977 as the Chief Martial Law Administrator.

President Zia again visited China in July 1980 when the two countries signed agreements covering loans and aviation transport.

From 1982 to 1990, President HM Ershad paid five visits to China -- in November 1982, July 1985, July 1987, November 1988 and June 1990.

Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina each visited China six times.

Talking to The Daily Star, a senior diplomat of a European country in Dhaka said mutual trust between Bangladesh and China was ever deepening in recent years while the two countries had increasingly mature dialogue mechanisms.

People-to-people exchanges are also flourishing. Recent years have

seen a significant rise in the number of Bangladeshi students in China while many Chinese students are learning Bangla.

In addition, North South University has set up a Confucius Institute while there is a classroom named after Confucius at Shanto-Mariam University. Besides, Brac University and Independent University of Bangladesh have Chinese language courses.

The number of tourists visiting each others' country has also increased greatly.

Ahead of Xi's visit, major roads in the capital have been decorated with colourful lights and flags of Bangladesh and China.

Two Bangladesh Air Force Jet Fighters will escort the Chinese president's aircraft as soon as it enters the Bangladesh airspace.

Upon landing, he will be accorded a red-carpet welcome and a 21-gun salute at the VVIP terminal of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport, where he will also be given a guard of honour.

He will be received at the airport by President Abdul Hamid.

**PROGRAMME SCHEDULE**  
Xi will leave the airport at 12:00pm for Hotel Le Meridien, where he will stay.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will receive the Chinese president at the Prime Minister's Office where they will hold a tete-a-tete from 3:00pm to 3:10pm.

Then the two sides will hold delegation-level talks from 3:10pm to

4:00pm where the Chinese president and the Bangladesh PM will lead their sides.

The talks will be followed by signing of agreements and MoUs.

The two leaders will then make press statements at 4:10pm.

Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury will call on the Chinese president at Le Meridien at 4:35pm for a 20-minute meeting.

According to diplomatic and BNP sources, Khaleda Zia will call on Xi around 5:00pm at the hotel.

After the meetings, the Chinese president will go to the Bangabhaban to meet his Bangladesh counterpart Abdul Hamid at 6:30pm.

He will attend a state banquet to be hosted by the Bangladesh president from 7:00pm-8:30pm.

On Saturday, Xi will leave the hotel for the National Memorial in Savar at 8:20am.

Housing and Public Works Minister Mosharraf Hossain, Liberation War Affairs Minister AKM Mozammel Huq and the General Commanding Officer of the 9th infantry division will receive him there at 8:55am.

The Chinese president will lay a wreath there in memory of the 1971 war martyrs, sign the visitors' book and plant a sapling.

He will reach the airport straight from Savar and leave for Goa, India, at 10:00am tomorrow by the special VVIP flight.

Sheikh Hasina will see him off at the airport.

## High hope for Chinese investment

**PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS**

**INDUSTRIAL PARK**

- China Special Economic Zone in Anwara (\$280 million)
- Garments Industrial Park

**RAILWAY**

- Padma Bridge rail link (\$3.3 billion)
- Double line (Joydevpur-Ishwardi) (\$897 million)
- Double track (Joydevpur-Mymensingh) (\$258 million)
- Conversion of dual-gauge rail line (Akhaura-Sylhet) (\$1.76 billion)
- New ICD near Dhirasram Railway Station (\$200 million)

**ROADS**

- Marine Drive Expressway (Sitakunda-Cox's Bazar) (\$2.86 billion)
- Dhaka-Sylhet four-lane highway (\$1.6 billion)
- Dhaka-Ashulia Elevated Expressway (\$1.39 billion)
- Karnaphuli tunnel (\$703 million)

**POWER AND ENERGY**

- Installation of single point mooring with double pipeline (\$550 million)
- Expansion and strengthening of power system network under DPDC (\$2.04 billion)
- Power grid network strengthening project under PGCB (\$1.32 billion)
- Five million electro meters (\$165 million)
- 350MW Gazaria Coal-fired Thermal Power Plant (\$433 million)
- Replacement of old transformers (\$230 million)
- Prepayment metering project (\$521 million)

**LIVELIHOOD PROJECTS**

- Rajshahi Wasa Surface Water Treatment Plant (\$500 million)
- Five full-fledged TV stations (\$128 million)
- BMRE in public sector jute mills (\$280 million)
- Water supply and sanitation in small municipalities (\$150 million)
- Modernisation of Mongla port facilities (\$249 million)

**INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

- Info-Sarkar-III (\$150 million)
- Modernisation of telecommunication network (\$200 million)
- Establishing digital connectivity (\$1 billion)
- Modernisation of rural and urban lives through ICT

**CHINA'S COMMITMENT IN LAST 14 YEARS**

**FY2002-09**  
\$303.01 million

---

**FY2010-16**  
\$915.82 million

Since independence  
\$1.52 billion

In next 5 years, China will invest \$23 billion in at least 28 projects

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Padma Bridge rail link \$3.3 billion</li> <li>● Marine Drive Expressway \$2.86 billion</li> <li>● Expansion, strengthening of power system network \$2.04 billion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Dual gauge rail line (Akhaura-Sylhet) \$1.76 billion</li> <li>● Dhaka-Sylhet 4-lane highway \$1.6 billion</li> <li>● Dhaka-Ashulia Elevated Expressway \$1.39 billion</li> </ul>
---	---

**PROJECTS ON CHINESE WISH LIST**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Power Grid Network Strengthening Project \$1.32 billion</li> <li>● Establishing digital connectivity \$1 billion</li> <li>● Double railway line (Joydevpur-Ishwardi) \$897 million</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Double railway line (Joydevpur-Mymensingh) \$258 million</li> <li>● Karnaphuli tunnel \$703 million</li> <li>● Installation of single point mooring with Double Pipeline \$550 million</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Rajshahi Wasa Surface Water Treatment Plant \$500 million</li> <li>● Five full-fledged TV stations \$128 million</li> <li>● BMRE in public sector jute mills \$280 million</li> <li>● Special Economic Zone in Anwara \$280 million</li> </ul>
--	--	---

FROM PAGE 1  
cabinet on Monday.

According to the draft Memorandum of Understanding, both sides would encourage organisations and enterprises of the two countries to cooperate in the fields of infrastructure construction, energy and power, transportation, communication and establishment of economic and industrial zones and other fields.

Seeking anonymity, a finance ministry official said the MoU initially contains the names of 28 projects without mentioning the amount of Chinese funds. More projects would be included in it upon consultations between both sides.

Some of the projects have already been approved by the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) and the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, said the official.

According to an initial estimate by the government, Chinese financing would be around \$23 billion, and there would be five cooperation approaches, added the official.

These are: Investment, both direct and indirect; infrastructure construction and operation, planning, design,

supply, construction, operation and technical cooperation; construction of economic and industrial zone, scientific park, process zone, development zones and special economic zones; technology communication and transfer; personal exchange and training; and labour service cooperation.

If needed, the two sides would jointly formulate medium and long-term development plans on investment and capacity cooperation, and adjust the list of the key projects mentioned in the MoU.

According to the draft, in case of projects supported by Chinese concessional funds, Bangladesh would select Chinese enterprises for their implementation in line with the country's existing laws and China's relevant policies.

Under the MoU, Bangladesh's Economic Relations Division and China's Department of Outward Investment and Economic Cooperation would work together so that the commitments are implemented properly.

If necessary, they would hold meetings from time to time and solve the problems.

The official said the tenure of the MoU would be two years, and it would be automatically renewed for two more years unless any of the two sides writes to the other for terminating it six months prior to its expiry date.

The tenure of the MoU may be extended further if both the countries want so.

Since Sheikh Hasina assumed the office of the prime minister in 2009, she visited China twice -- in March 2010 and in June 2014.

After her 2014 visit, Bangladesh sent lists of dozens of projects to the Chinese government for soft loans.

The ministry official said Bangladesh expects big pledges from the Chinese president during his two-day visit.

According to a primary estimate by Bangladesh government, China would finance \$5.52 billion for eight projects in the power and energy sector.

The Asian giant has also shown interest in funding five projects involving \$6.64 billion in the rail sector. The projects include the 172km Padma rail link.

Beijing may offer \$6.65 billion for four projects under the Roads and Bridges Division. The projects include

Dhaka-Ashulia elevated expressway, Dhaka-Sylhet four-lane highway and Sitakunda-Cox's Bazar marine drive expressway.

China is expected to provide \$1.31 billion for five livelihood projects and \$1.15 billion for four projects in the ICT sector.

To attract Chinese investment, Bangladesh government has already allocated two economic zones to Chinese investors in Gazaria and Anwara of Chittagong.

China may offer soft loans for developing these zones, another finance ministry official told this correspondent on condition of anonymity.

Apart from the MoU, a loan framework agreement may be signed for three projects that involve purchase of six ships from China with a loan of \$184 million and setting up of Dasherandi Water Treatment Plant with a loan of \$280 million.

Since Bangladesh's independence, China has provided it with \$1,519 million in soft loans and grants. Of the sum, \$916 million came in seven years from fiscal year 2010 to 2016. The amount was \$303 million in the preceding seven years from FY 2002 to

# China-Bangladesh cooperation will bear golden fruits

FROM PAGE 1  
have the color of emerald green become a sea of golden yellow at the time of harvest. Endowed with rich natural resources, this land is home to a hard-working and talented nation and a time-honored and splendid culture. In fact, famous poet Rabindranath Tagore wrote many of his most notable works in Bengali.

Bangladesh is a land filled with hope. Since its independence, Bangladesh has come a long way. With strenuous efforts, it has started from scratch and successfully met the livelihood needs of its 160 million population, contributing significantly to global poverty reduction. In recent years, by seizing the opportunities of economic globalization and focusing on reform and development, Bangladesh has kept its economy growing at above 6% and made steady progress in industrialization and urbanization. Bangladesh is well on track to achieve Vision 2021 and become a middle-income country.

The people of China and Bangladesh have been good neighbors and friends since ancient times. Stories of our friendship and exchange witnessed by the Southern Silk Road and the Maritime Silk Road throughout the millennia are still being told today. Eminent Chinese monks Faxian and Xuanzang travelled west for Buddhist scriptures. Atiśa Dipankara Shrijnana, a Bengali religious master, spread

Buddhism in China. They were the pioneers of our cultural exchange. Famous navigator Zheng He of the Ming Dynasty visited Bengal twice. According to his description, "This is a richly endowed and teeming land with lovely people and fertile fields." Believed by the Chinese then to be a qilin (an auspicious mythical animal), the giraffe that the Bengali king gave to the Ming emperor brought much excitement to the court and general public in China.

More recently, having endured repeated wars and incessant poverty, our peoples fought tenaciously for national independence and liberation, strove for development and progress and forged unshakable trust and friendship in the process. In the 1950s and 1960s, Premier Zhou Enlai visited Dhaka twice and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman visited China twice. The seed of friendship was thus planted by the veteran leaders of our two countries long before diplomatic ties were established. It has now grown into a giant tree with deep roots and rich fruits.

As a Chinese proverb goes, "Only friendships built on sincerity can last long." Since the establishment of diplomatic ties 41 years ago, China has always regarded Bangladesh as its true friend and partner for development. China highly values its relations with Bangladesh. We firmly support each other on issues concerning each other's core interests.

Successive Chinese and Bangladeshi leaders have maintained sound interactions at bilateral and multilateral events and provided positive guidance to the growth of bilateral relations. In September 2015, I had a good meeting with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in New York on the margins of the UN summits marking its 70th anniversary. We agreed to expand cooperation across the board, jointly advance the Belt and Road initiative and the BCIM Economic Corridor and take bilateral relations to a new height.

With the unremitting efforts of our two peoples, China-Bangladesh practical cooperation has produced fruitful results. China is now the largest trading partner of Bangladesh and Bangladesh China's third largest trading partner and third largest project contract market in South Asia. Bilateral trade soared from US\$900 million in 2000 to US\$14.7 billion in 2015, registering an annual increase of around 20%. Jute products from Bangladesh are increasingly popular in the Chinese market. Chinese companies have built the Shahjalal Fertilizer Factory, the most advanced modern fertilizer plant in Bangladesh, the Bangabandhu International Conference Center, the largest one in Bangladesh, and are now building the Padma Bridge, the dream bridge of the Bangladeshi people. As a matter of fact, one can find Chinese and Bangladeshi people together making tireless and pioneering efforts

in many sectors of Bangladesh such as transportation, electricity, energy and telecommunications. One of the first batch of projects financed by loans from the China-initiated Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank is the Power Grid Network Strengthening Project in Bangladesh, which will benefit tens of millions of rural residents. We have also made significant progress in our cooperation in defense, security, education, culture and other fields.

Both China and Bangladesh are developing countries with a huge population. Our national conditions have a lot in common and our development goals are well-aligned. The "Sonar Bangla" dream of national strength and prosperity is in perfect harmony with the Chinese dream of great national renewal. The Belt and Road initiative put forward by China heralds new opportunities for win-win cooperation between our two countries. Bangladesh, with its favorable geographic location and huge population, market potential and cooperation space, is an indispensable partner for China to advance the Belt and Road initiative and production capacity cooperation in South Asia and the Indian Ocean region.

During this visit, I look forward to working with Bangladeshi leaders to further grow our bilateral relations, identify key areas of cooperation, advance exchanges and cooperation in

various fields and bring China-Bangladesh relations to a new level.

— We need to step up political communication for greater mutual trust. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman put forward the vision of "friendship to all, malice to none". China will always be Bangladesh's trustworthy friend and partner. Our two sides should, from a strategic perspective, strengthen high-level exchanges and top-level planning, cement traditional friendship and political ties, set more ambitious goals and build a better framework for our bilateral relations and lay a solid foundation for lasting friendship and all-round cooperation.

— We need to align our development strategies for win-win outcomes. There is huge potential and complementarity in our cooperation. China is ready to synergize its 13th Five-Year Plan with Bangladesh's Seventh Five-Year Plan with a view to leveraging our respective comparative advantages, increasing economic exchanges and trade, building key projects in areas such as infrastructure, production capacity, energy, electricity, transportation, information, telecommunications and agriculture, strengthening practical cooperation under the BCIM Economic Corridor and delivering to our people tangible benefits of our cooperation.

— We need to enhance South-South cooperation for common

development. China stands ready to offer more assistance and support to Bangladesh to the best of its capability, enhance mutual assistance and cooperation with Bangladesh in areas such as disaster prevention and mitigation, vocational training, medical and health-care services, climate change and women and children, work together with Bangladesh to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and make China-Bangladesh cooperation a fine example of South-South cooperation.

— We need to build a bridge of friendship for greater affinity and mutual understanding. Friendship between our two countries dates back a long time. In fact, both the Chinese and Bangladeshi people drink water from the same river, known as Yarlung Zangbo River in China and Jamuna River in Bangladesh. China will work to increase exchanges and mutual learning between the Chinese and Bangladeshi culture so as to bring our people closer to each other. It is important that we facilitate exchanges and cooperation in areas such as education, media, think tanks, tourism and youth and at the sub-national level so that more of our people will be mobilized to support closer ties between China and Bangladesh.

I believe with the joint efforts of our two peoples, China-Bangladesh cooperation will bear even more golden fruits.