

Xi Jinping's visit to Bangladesh of historic significance: experts

By Liu Hui from People's Daily

Chinese President Xi Jinping's state visit to Bangladesh, the first tour to this South Asian country by a Chinese President in 30 years, will serve as a milestone in China-Bangladesh ties, experts said ahead of Xi's trip.

Ye Hailin, director of the Center of South Asia Studies with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, told the People's Daily that Bangladesh, as an important South Asian country located off the Bay of Bengal, can be China's key partner in building the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road, also known as "Belt and Road".

He further explained that before China proposed the "Belt and Road" initiative, Bangladesh had already played a critical role in China-Bangladesh-India-Myanmar cooperation, a mechanism proposed by China and South Asian nations to encourage collaboration in the Bay of Bengal region.

Bangladesh is not only a hub in the Bay of Bengal, but a key stop along the Southern Silk Road. Given its important geographic location, the country can be one of China's top partners for economic cooperation with South Asia.

What's more, its abundant youth population and robust manufacturing capability can present Chinese enterprises with rich business opportunities.

As neighbors with traditional friendship, China and Bangladesh have enjoyed sound relations since they established diplomatic relations 41 years ago. This favorable momentum has been evidenced by frequent high-level exchanges, enhanced cooperation in trade and investment and expanded cultural exchanges.

Praising the time-honored China-Bangladesh relationship, Chai Xi, former Chinese ambassador to Bangladesh, said that over the years, this South Asian nation, constrained by lack of resources and hit by frequent natural disasters, has received a spate of assistance from China.

China always lent a helpful hand to Bangladesh at the earliest moment when major natural disasters occurred, he added.

Besides such assistance, China also helped improve Bangladesh's transportation and boost its economy. It has built seven bridges in Bangladesh since 1980s and the eighth bridge is now under construction.

To extend its gratitude to China, Bangladesh donated 1 million dollars in 1980s to build new buildings for Beijing NO.1 Experimental Elementary School. In commemoration of the donation, the school was also known as China-Bangladesh Friendship Elementary School.

Moreover, Bangladesh has also supported China in international and regional affairs, turning the two countries into good neighbors and trustworthy partners.

In addition to bright prospects in economic cooperation, the two nations have also reached consensus on regional cooperation. One area of such collaboration is their alignment of industrial chains based on complementarity.

For instance, as Bangladesh hopes to further develop its textile industry and China needs to outsource production or export its production capacity, there is great potential for them to cooperate in this field.

Chai believed that Xi's visit, coming in the new historical background, is of great importance. His visit will surely yield concrete fruits for the construction of the "Belt and Road" and Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor as Bangladesh occupies a key position along both routes, he added.

Ye expected this visit to generate more agreements on infrastructure, industrial upgrade and disaster prevention and management based on the numerous highlights in the bilateral economic cooperation.