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## BANGLADESH-CHINA-INDIA-MYANMAR (BCIM)– ECONOMIC CORRIDOR: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY AND DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION IN SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

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### Abstract

China is the largest country in terms of the purchasing power parity (PPP); and the country has started to invest hugely in the developing countries of the Southeast Asia, South Asia, Africa, Central Asia and the Middle-East. It wants to be connected with Europe, Africa and Middle East through its economic corridors such as BCIM, BRI, MSR and OBOR. It can be mentioned here that most of the South and Southeast countries are poor and need huge investment in the infrastructural projects. Therefore, the concept of BCIM is a win-win geostrategic and economic policy for South, Southeast and China. On the other hand, India is largest country in terms of the size of population; and its economy is also rising rapidly. And this country also needs huge investment and development cooperation from the different countries including China. Besides, Bangladesh is a lower middle-income country; it also wants to grow rapidly in terms of economic growth, transfer of technology and infrastructural developments. On other hand, Myanmar is a developing country in Southeast Asia which requires vast developments, transfer of technology, foreign investments in the coastal regions and regional connectivity for economic growth and development. Therefore, carrying out study on BCIM economic corridor is extremely important in the region. It's a qualitative study in the context of mythology. This study has found that implementation of BCIM economic corridor is very important for South and Southeast Asia including Bangladesh for regional connectivity, trade and investment and development cooperation.

**Keywords:** BCIM economic corridor, regional connectivity, development cooperation, South Asia, Southeast Asia, ports' facilities, revenue, trade and investment.

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## **Introduction**

Before going to discuss about the BCIM, we have to talk about the theory of regional connectivity and economic development through trade and investment. The theory of regional connectivity represents international trade as a combination of shipping Connectivity and Trade Relativity known as CTR (Y. H. Venus Lun and Jan Hoffmann, 2016). The essential variables for CTR are shipping connectivity, intra-trade and extra-trade. Shipping connectivity shows the efficacies of logistics and transport facilities that affect trading because it may result into a higher cost if the voyage time is longer. Intra-trade (free trade) arrangements are one of the most corporate schemes of economic assimilation as the member countries adopt to decrease tariff-based obstacles between their boundaries (Y. H. Venus Lun and Jan Hoffmann, 2016). Besides, economic and trade corridors are supposed to be of diverse types. Economic passages might be nationwide (such as the corridors of the “Golden Quadrilateral”), regional (e.g., the GMS and Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC)), or universal (e.g., submarine telecommunications cables) (Prabir De and Kavita Iyengar, eds.2014). They can appear through either top-down or bottom-up based actions; or through the different offices of the governments, international development organizations, commercial links, or civil society congregations (Calla Wiemer, 2009). The economic passageway may offer support in undertaking purposes of advanced exchange and financial integration (Calla Wiemer, 2009). Topography certainly plays an enormous part in reckoning out what specific economic corridors may be rational, as do provable, political and authoritative variables (Dani Rodrik, Arvind Subramanian, and Francesco Trebbi, 2004). Pradeep Srivastava has recognized a foundational commitment to the ADB’s reconceptualization of the economic corridor’s approach in his paper titled, “Territorial Corridors Development in Regional Cooperation (Prabir De and Kavita Iyengar, eds. 2014). Srivastava’s proposal comprises a structure understanding and measuring the movement of the development of regional economic corridors in terms of two basic building blocks, to be specific: (i) the degree to which the corridors are national or local; and (ii) the extent to which the corridors can be high or extensive (Pradeep Srivastava, 2011). Ideally, cross-border access strip such as “national projects with regional implications” would be measured a cross construction between regional and national.

One of the recent advantages which should permit sharp responsiveness and importance on the part of all concerned shareholders in Bangladesh is the Bangladesh, China, India, Myanmar Economic Corridor (BCIM-EC) which expected formal authorization through the first inter-governmental study group meeting in Kunming held on 18-19 December 2013. As may be recalled, the cause of developing cooperation in the BCIM region had earlier received gratitude at the highest political level though the communiqués issued ensuing the official visit of the Bangladesh Prime Minister to China in 2010, visit of Indian Prime Minister to China in 2012 and visit of the Chinese Prime Minister to India in 2013 (Akhanda, 2013). The two-member states of BCIM, China and India, is a regional and global powerhouse in terms of population, global GDP and exports-imports (Akhanda, 2013). But, Bangladesh is a lower middle-income country in South Asia; and Myanmar is a LDC member country in Southeast Asia having long borders with China, India and Bangladesh. And China wants to be connected with the Bay of Bengal for its business interests. The Melaka strait is expensive and time-consuming for doing exports and imports business carried out by China. Therefore, the Southeast Bangladesh and the State of Rakhine are equally significant for China and India. Besides, these three countries might be benefitted from the transfer of technology from China, huge investments from Chinese investors and different stakeholders, and of course, people to people contacts in this whole region (Akhanda, 2013).

It is well known that after the establishment of trade relations between China and Myanmar in 1989, China has come ahead to invest in the different industrial sectors of Myanmar such as power plantation, roads and highways, transports, special economic zones, marine drives, resorts, construction of deep seaports, oil and gas, and coal mining. Also, it should be mentioned here that China has come out as the largest investor in the state of Myanmar. It can be said particularly that the state of Rakhine and its coastal bay are the connecting points for the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC) and Bangladesh-China- India-Myanmar (BCIM) economic corridor under China's newly planned Economic Master Plan which is known as Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which ranges from the Rakhine port of Kyukpyu to China's Kunming (Reuters, 2017). Under the BRI project, China is going to invest about US \$ 10 billion in the deep seaports and special economic zones (Reuters, 2017). Crude oils which are imported from the Middle Eastern and African countries will be transported to Kunming, Yunnan Province, China, through this pipeline. Thus, it can be said that this connectivity route would be able to import about 22 million tons of oil per year, which is 5 to 6 percent of China's total oil imports from the World. From the above discussions and statements, it can be said that a regional connectivity and development cooperation among the three countries, China-India and Myanmar are so important for Bangladesh that the country would be greatly benefitted through the relationship.

### **Justification of the Study**

Warm relations among these all countries: China, India, Myanmar and Bangladesh are highly recommended that the cordial relationship will create an environment for trade, investment, regional connectivity through the BCIM and BRI projects in the entire region. Thus, carrying out a study on the above-mentioned topic is very important in the present circumstance. Therefore, considering national economic and geopolitical interests of Bangladesh, the researchers have decided to carry out a study on the relationship among China, India, Myanmar and Bangladesh. It can be mentioned here that Bangladesh is located in a very good geostrategic position that it has connectivity with the Bay of Bengal, Southeast Asia, Northeast India; and the country has an easy access to the Indian Ocean and Arab sea through the Bay of Bengal. Having access to the rest of world through the Bay of Bengal is a potential indicator of regional connectivity and development cooperation in both South and Southeast Asia. Also, the country of Bangladesh can collect a huge amount of revenue by providing ports' facilities to the rest of the world including China, Northeast India and Southeast Asia. Therefore, it is very important to carry out a study on the BCIM economic corridor. On the other hand, Bangladesh is developing country which requires a huge investment, transfer of technology and development cooperation from an advanced economy like China. Bangladesh can serve its economic, geostrategic and geopolitical interests by facilitating the China's economic and geopolitical projects of BCIM and BRI. It is also true that China is a huge economy with a huge foreign currency reserves, where Bangladesh can be hugely benefitted by procuring foreign direct invests, transfer of technology, regional connectivity, development cooperation from China; and collecting a large amount of revenues by providing ports facilities to China and the rest of the world.

## **Objectives of the Study**

1. It is important to note down here that Bangladesh's geopolitical position is very important to China, India, Myanmar and other countries of the world. Therefore, the geopolitical and economic issues of the BCIM must be looked for the economic interests of Bangladesh.
2. To observe the prospect of economic cooperation between the South, Southeast and Northeast Asian countries, particularly China.
3. We have already mentioned that BCIM economic corridor and Belt and Road Initiative of China are the two major economic and development cooperation projects where almost all of the South and Southeast Asian countries including India and Bangladesh can be greatly benefitted from the Chinese investments and development cooperation. That's why we have decided to pursue a study of BCIM economic corridor and its development implications in both South and Southeast Asia.

## **Study Method**

Methodologically it is a qualitative study. We have observed that the strong and friendly triangular relationship among China, India and Myanmar is very much helpful for Bangladesh's geopolitical, geostrategic and economic interests. This study is based on secondary data collected from the different journals, books, newspapers, online archives, and the library of Chittagong University. The researchers have also conducted some focus group discussions in Ukhia, Teknaf and Bandarban where the Rohingya refugee camps are located. Some video documentaries, different kinds of electronic and print media have been employed in carrying out this study. The Researchers have visited the Bangladesh-Myanmar border, and Bangladesh-India border as part of field visits and carrying out FGD (Focus group discussions).

## **Background of the BCIM-Economic Corridor Initiative**

As we have already mentioned that BCIM economic corridor and BRI projects are very crucial for South and Southeast Asia including Bangladesh. One of the leading economists of Bangladesh Professor Rehman Sobhan dreamt of implementing the proposed BCIM economic corridor. One would recall here that, the idea of establishing closer economic cooperation within the BCIM region, with forceful conceptual underpinning and convincing arguments, and backed by sound economic analysis, was first developed by Professor Rehman Sobhan. Two of his pioneering works in this context where he articulated his vision were: "Transforming Eastern South Asia: Building Growth Zones for Economic Cooperation" and "Rediscover the southern silk Route: Integrating Asia's Transport Infrastructure". Professor Sobhan argued that, notwithstanding the contours of the present-day political boundaries, closer cooperation among the countries of the BCIM region merited careful consideration for several reasons (Karim and Islam, 2018). The three institutions which took the lead role in convening the first meeting in Kunming in 1999 were the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) from Bangladesh, Centre for Policy Research (CPR) from India and Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences in Kunming, China; from the Myanmar side it was the Ministry of Trade which represented the country. The objective of the Kunming initiative was to gradually steer the endeavor from an essentially civil society (Track II) one to an intergovernmental (Track I) one (Karim and Islam, 2018). Formation of BCIM Business Council, which brought together leaders of business and trade associations of the four countries, was yet

another important development in this journey. The three BCIM forums which were held in Bangladesh, and hosted by the CPD (in 2002, 2007 and 2013), were attended by Ministers and high-level policymakers of Bangladesh who were exposed to the potential benefits that could originate from closer BCIM-wide cooperation. Indeed, the Kolkata to Kunming (k2k) carry Rally organized at the initiative of the four focal institutions of the BCIM forum, with active support from the four BCIM governments, played an important role in taking the idea of BCIM cooperation from concept to action (Karim and Islam, 2018). As would be recalled, the car Rally coincided with the holding of the eleventh BCIM Forum in Dhaka which was hosted by the CPD in February 2013. The rally which covered a 3000 km journey had followed the route: Kolkata-Jessore-Dhaka-Sylhet-Silchar-Imphal-Ka Lay-Mandalay-Ruili-Tenghong-Erhai Lake-Dali-Kunming. CPD had organized a grand reception for the eighty participants of the rally who travelled in 20 vehicles and arrived in Dhaka on February 23, 2013 (Karim and Islam, 2018).

It can be said that both the BRI and BCIM will be very helpful in promoting economic development, expansion of regional trade, regional connectivity and people to people contacts in the region. More importantly the land-locked Northeast India, Bhutan, Nepal, South China, Pakistan, Bangladesh and the whole region of the Southeast Asia would be enormously benefitted through the project of BCIM. The Chinese foreign policy is non-interventionist; therefore, the small countries of the region would be safe in terms of security and foreign intervention. Both China and the rest of the countries in the region would be equally benefitted from the project (Karim and Islam, 2018).

### **Development Cooperation between China and South and Southeast Asia through BCIM, EC- Corridor and Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**

According to the Development Research Center (DRC)–Center for International Relations and Sustainable Development (CIRSD) Silk Road Forum (2015), the BRI aimed to cover 65+ countries in its project (Bert Hoffman, 2015). Over the past four years, about 100 countries and international organizations have inked deals with China to support the BRI initiatives (Kishan S. Rana, 2017). Potentially the BRI involves an area that covers 63 percent of the world’s population, 30 percent of the world’s GDP and 24 percent of the world’s household consumption which contains around 75 percent of known energy reserves (Helen Chin and Winnie He, 2016).

The country aimed to re-activate the New Silk Road, one of the corridors of the BRI project, by providing reasonable resources of around USD 40 billion to promote investment through its foreign exchange reserves, government investment and lending arms (Bert Hoffman, 2015). Moreover, The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)–BCIM corridor would pass through the parts of Kashmir owned by Pakistan (PoK). President Xi during his visit to Islamabad in April 2015 announced a budget of USD 46 billion for the CPEC. China sees it fit to divert more of its burgeoning USD 3 to 4 trillion foreign currency reserves for the projects (Ashok Sajjanhar, June 2016). The project is also co-sponsored by BRICS members. An initial budget of USD 22 billion had been estimated for the BCIM project, of which 55 percent of the fund might come from various multilateral development partners (George Magnus, 2015).

In addition, China planned to invest over USD 200 billion for construction and USD 1 trillion for other projects, as envisioned in its horizon plan, thereby dwarfing U.S. foreign investment by several orders of magnitude (Shakhawat Liton, 2016). In 2015, under the



supervision of China, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) had been formed with 21 countries with a budget of USD 100 billion for Asian energy, transport and infrastructure projects (Shakhawat Liton, 2016). The China Development Bank was willing to invest almost USD 900 billion into more than 900 projects involving 60 countries to bolster the initiative (Bert Hoffman, 2015). The Gwador port is located on the Arabia Sea and the gateway to the Strait of Hormuz. China and its western and southern provinces can import oil from the Middle East, Europe and Africa (Karim and Islam, 2018). However, to play geopolitics in parts of the world, China has to compete against countries such as the United States, Japan, India and Russia, which have material and contending interests (Karim and Islam, 2018). According to the findings of the survey conducted by Jung Joo-Youn on Chinese perception on active intervention in international issues, the majority replied that China fits the best in the role of bridging the gap between advanced and developing countries and also mediating the conflicts between them (The Daily Prothom Alo, 19 January, 2020). Thus, it might be mentioned here that China, being a great investor and development cooperation partner in Asia and beyond may come forward to investing and initiating different kinds of developments projects in both South and Southeast Asia, where all countries of the region including India would be benefitted. Therefore, the concept of the BCIM is a great opportunity for the low-income countries of the South and Southeast Asia. China and India are keenly interested in these two regions in terms of geopolitics, trade expansion, ensuring influence in both the Bay of Bengal and Indian Ocean; where the middle and low-income countries are looking forward to receiving a huge amount of foreign investments through BCIM. Therefore, the BCIM is a win-win project for the interests of the both sides.

### **Economic Development, Regional Connectivity, and Development Cooperation Opportunities for Bangladesh**

China can help Bangladesh by relocating its sunset industries to Bangladesh since it has surplus supplies of cheap labor. Bangladesh may strengthen its value chain to benefit its textile and clothing sector by reducing its cost of importing garment inputs from China. This can be done in two ways: one, by reducing the time of clearance at the Chittagong port by improving its capacity, and second, China may extend its production base of non-cotton RMG inputs by constructing relevant factories in Bangladesh. Finally, Chinese involvement in Bangladesh's two Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and establishing a dedicated Export Processing Zone (EPZ) for China would contribute to boosting bilateral trade and increase Bangladesh's exports to global markets (Fahmida Khatun, 2016). Bangladesh can also beef up its exports by taking advantage of about 5,000 products for which China has allowed duty-free access, thus forming trade creation (Mahfuz Kabir, October 10, 2016).

All such propositions and projections come under the purview of the Chinese-floated BRI or MSR for a win-win outcome. For such an opportunity, connectivity to the east is essential. Moreover, Bangladesh, which shares three-fourths of its border with India, can connect with the Northeastern region of India, which technically means the rest of India with which the country has a huge amount of trade. An upgrade of the 312 kilometer stretch of Stilwell Road that connects Northeast India with Yunnan through northern Myanmar will be able to reduce transportation costs between India and China by 30 percent and accelerate the already growing Sino-Indian trade through the BCIM-Economic Corridor. This can improve the agro-processing sectors in Yunnan and West Bengal. In terms of conventional and renewable energy resources, BCIM sub-regional cooperation can capitalize on hydrocarbons in Bangladesh, hydro-electric and mineral resources

in Northeast India, natural gas reserves in Myanmar, and coal reserves in East Indian states like Odisha, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand and China's Yunnan province. China is now implementing some infrastructural and development projects in Bangladesh. One of the Chinese major companies have constructed a mega project, which is known as Banga Bandhu Tunnel/Karnaphully Tunnel in Chittagong along with other development projects are ongoing across the country. Therefore, the BCIM economic corridor will be an addition to the ongoing development projects of the country.

### **Prospects and Opportunities of the BCIM Economic Corridor for Asian Countries**

It is true that the BCIM economic corridor is going to play a significant role in promoting regional connectivity, trade and investments, and of course, people to people contacts in the Asian Countries of South, Southeast, Middle east, Central Asia, and even for Northeast Asia. For example, the Gwador port in Pakistan, presumably part of the MSR, is located at the juncture of South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East. It is close to the Iranian border and covers the gateway to the Strait of Hormuz. This is a critical oil supply route. There are visible indications that the port might become China's naval base. Gwador, a deep warm-water port, 470 kilometers away from Karachi, is seen as an ideal outlet for China in the Indian Ocean. Pakistan offered a "trade and energy corridor" via Gwador that runs up to Kasghar in western China. This helps China to import oil from the Middle East, store it in refineries at Gwador and eventually transport it to China via roads, railway or pipelines (Ghulam Ali, September, 2016).

Just like the case of the combination of SAFTA, China and Myanmar, the BCIM project also had the potential to provide Full Liberalization, Moderate Liberalization and Partial Liberalization for their partner countries. Due to the tariff cuts, three different possible scenarios are assumed to occur, "total trade effect," "trade creation and trade diversion effect" and "welfare and revenue effect. As mentioned earlier, the BCIM project is based on five connections: trade, infrastructure, investment, capital and people. An amendment of the ancient maritime silk route, the BCIM focuses on increasing trade and rebooting geopolitical relationships, thus establishing itself as an economic growth engine. Like Gwadar port, many other ports can be built with the Chinese financial and logistics' assistance in the different Asian countries including India and Bangladesh. Many scholars and experts think that the Chinese technology is better than Indian technology. If the BCIM project is implemented in the region, it would be of a great opportunity for the whole of Asia in terms of economic development, development cooperation, trade and investments and people to people contacts.

### **Economic Impact of BCIM–EC on China regarding Regional Connectivity, Trade and Investments**

Many observers think that China likely to lead the South and Southeast Asian Region through BCIM–EC. It is true that through the BCIM project, China is going to influence the whole Asian region by providing a huge amount of financial assistance and loans to the member states of BCIM, BRI and MSR; based on which China would be able to gain an access to all member states, which is a Chinese trade and development expansionist policy in region. Not only China but also all of the member states would be benefitted from the project of BCIM. However, the concept of an "economic corridor" has barely been cited in the BCIM's Forum deliberation, mostly substituted

by terms such as “cooperation zone,” “growth zone,” “growth pole,” “growth polygon,” etc., or simply encompassed within the BCIM “connectivity” agenda. This oversight may raise questions since China had been actively participating in the BRI project, prioritizing the economic corridor approach as its major thrust since 1998. China is likely to get more return on its investment in these projects than investing in American treasury or security bonds. Due to this, special emphasis has been given to transportation routes, infrastructure which would facilitate trade and increase the economic conditions of the South and Southeast Asian region (Karim and Islam, 2018). Considering the interests of the different stakeholders in the region, the important shareholders such China, India, Bangladesh and India would be greatly benefitted. Indian scholars and policy makers think that the proposed BCIM project is a threat to the Indian security and interests in the region; but, it’s the reality that this is the time of international development cooperation, regional connectivity, people to people contracts, diplomacy and negation. India herself needs huge investments and development cooperation from the Chinese huge foreign currency reserves. Therefore, considering the Chinese capacity of economic strength, technological advancement and Chinese foreign policy of non-interventionist attitude, is in favor of Indian development cooperation and regional connectivity policy. Thus all stakeholders including India should come forward to implementing the project of BCIM in time.

### **Reasons of India’s Hesitation regarding the BCIM project**

When China and other stakeholders of the project have come forward to implementing the project, India has started to be confused about the interest of the Chinese government that the scheme might be a threat to the geopolitical and security interests of India in the region including the Bay of Bengal and Indian Ocean. The above statement indicates that China wants the region to be flexible for its exports and imports purposes that it will use the project for its economic interest. Therefore, India considers a separate policy of economic cooperation and development in the region to continue its influence. India has become more conscious and confused when China has come ahead to be allied with Pakistan in relation to the project that Pakistan is an arch-rival of India of in security and geopolitics in the region. In April 2015, the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was announced by President Xi when he visited Islamabad with an investment of USD 46 billion which would pass through PoK, which was not taken positively by Indian government. Most of the development projects, connectivity, infrastructures in West Asia, Central Asia and Western China were funded by China where a huge number of employment opportunities were created in those countries. In order to weaken the BCIM project, India has highlighted stimulating the policy of Act East infrastructure connectivity. The objective of this connectivity is to upsurge the capacity of transportability that will make a connection between the East and the West. This regional connectivity plan will encourage the construction in the northeastern region by removing the “bottleneck” which is an obstacle within ASEAN. In addition, the Indian section of the “Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport (KMMTT)” which is aided by Japan and other countries was completely launched to attach Calcutta to the Sittwe Port of Myanmar (The Diplomat, 7 May 2019). However, regional connectivity and development is a must for economic growth and creation of employment opportunities in the region. Thus all member states of the BCIM economic corridor including India should come forward to implementing the project in time despite the confusing stand of India regarding the Chinese foreign policy and expansion.



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**Problems and Issues regarding the Implementation of BCIM Economic Corridor**

The region of Southeast Asia is filled with immense conventional and renewable energy sources. That said the trade among BCIM member states accounts for five percent of total BCIM trade in comparison to ASEAN where the total intra-regional trade is 35 percent (Daily Star, April 30, 2015). For instance, the fight between the Myanmar Army and the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance on ethnic Kokang rebels, situated near the Chinese border, poses threats to the network. The region of South Asia is in crisis because of the historical political disputes between Pakistan and India that started with the founding of the state of Pakistan in 1947. The comparison by Saira Khan on the pattern between the Indo–Pakistan crisis in the pre-nuclear and nuclear eras indicates that interstate crises have gradually declined in the pre-nuclear era. However, during the nuclear era, the frequency of crises has been increasing (Christoph Bluth, September, 2010). The BCIM project even got delayed due to the proposed connection between the BCIM–CPEC. The Sino–Pakistan’s CPEC agreement has proposed connecting the BCIM through the Kashmir occupied by Pakistan. Even China–India relations stumble in South Asia over Arunachal Pradesh, exacerbating tensions during a month-long standoff between the two armies. From a development and connectivity perspective, the Chittagong Port in Bangladesh can turn into a hub to provide services to Northeast India, Myanmar, Southeast China, Bhutan, Nepal, and Bangladesh. Moreover, the issue of Rohingya is a serious obstacle in promoting relations between the two-neighboring countries, Bangladesh and Myanmar. The stagnant and unfriendly relations between these two neighbors must be settled in a diplomatic way with no further delay for the betterment of the two-nations. Myanmar is a huge country with abundant natural resources that might be utilized by the neighboring Bangladesh. To do so political stability, regional security and peaceful coexistence are badly needed in the region. Therefore, the political system of Myanmar must be replaced by a democratic form where all stakeholders of the country irrespective of caste, creed and religions would be able to ensure their socio-economic, cultural and political rights.

**Bangladesh’s Alternative Suggestion to BCIM: Chittagong—Yangon— Kunming and Thailand—Malaysia—Singapore Regional Connectivity**

If the project is not implemented by the stakeholders on ground of security, geopolitics and national interests of parochial politics, Bangladesh has proposed a new connectivity plan like connecting Chittagong—Yangon—Kunming by both road and rail which might be taken into consideration for implementation. This was part of the grand trunk road established by the Second Mughal Emperor of India which can link India with Myanmar. This will significantly decrease the cost of construction and maintenance. This connectivity has limited geopolitical complications as well. But the plan has to be implemented sooner that the circumstances are changing rapidly due to Rohingya and other geopolitical issues. This can easily be, subsequently, linked with India. In the south it can be stretched to Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore as part of the BCIM Economic Corridor and Trans–Asian road network. Such projects are already underway in ASEAN countries such as the Jakarta–Bandung high-speed rail project under construction while a pan Asian railway network—including the China–Laos and China–Thailand railways—has been launched.

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## **China–Nepal Road Links Complementing BCIM: China–India–Nepal–Bhutan–Bangladesh Connections—Geopolitical Tranquility and Economic Growth**

Northeast India, Nepal, Bhutan, West Bengal and South China can be greatly benefitted through the seaports of Bangladesh. This is a win-win situation for both sides of Bangladesh and South and Southeast Asia and China. Another deep seaport is under construction in Cox’s Bazar which will be playing a significant role for the socio-economic development of Bangladesh and neighboring countries of Nepal, Bhutan, Northeast India and Southern China. It has been observed for many years that Myanmar is a multi-ethnic country with several ethnic insurgencies along the borders of Bangladesh-Myanmar, India-Myanmar and Myanmar-China, where the stakeholders of the BCIM project may think about a different alternative connectivity route by which China, India, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh can be connected easily for connectivity purposes. Anyway, it can be said that both BCIM and BRI will be playing a significant role in promoting economic growth and development in the whole region of South and Southeast Asia including Bangladesh and India. Therefore, India must come ahead in implementing these two projects particularly BCIM economic corridor; and India should not think about the security threat. That China is a non-interventionist country of East Asia with huge potentials of foreign currency reserves and advanced technology. If we look at the European economic integration, we can see that all of the European countries are cooperative in terms of regional connectivity and economic development, where we, the South, Southeast Asian nations can learn from them.

### **Conclusion**

Myanmar and Bangladesh need huge foreign investments, development cooperation and economic growth, where both China and India may come ahead by providing required financial and logistic supports in building different kinds of infrastructural development projects in Bangladesh and Myanmar. On the other hand, both China and India being the two-gigantic trade and development partners of the region, can be hugely benefitted in terms of their trade expansion and regional cooperation. Already these two big-neighbors have achieved a remarkable influence in the South and Southeast Asia regions by promoting people to people contacts, trade and investment and regional cooperation. Both China and India have an ample scope to think about the regional connectivity, development cooperation, trade and investments, and development of different infrastructural projects in the region so as to ensure rapid economic growth and creation of employment opportunities. Both Bangladesh and Myanmar are geopolitically important countries of the region; and these two countries may provide ports’ facilities to both China and India along with the other southeast and northeast Asian countries by which these two developing countries can accelerate their economic growth collecting a huge amount of revenues from the foreign merchant vessels. Therefore, the concept of BCIM economic corridor, BRI, and One Belt One Road (OBOR) is, of course, a great initiative for the entire region for economic growth and development. Both China and India, their policy makers should consider the regional connectivity issue very seriously so that these two neighboring countries can be benefitted in terms of ports’ facilities, exports and imports, special economic zones, gas and oil exploration, hotel and motel zones, tourists’ spots and promotion of the regional trade in the whole region. However, the different interests of India, Bangladesh and Southeast Asia must be addressed by China while implementing the proposed BCIM economic corridor. Particularly China should come ahead in mitigating the gap between India and China; and China should, of course, confirm that it can never be a security threat to India in both Bay of Bengal and Indian Ocean. These two countries, China

and India, are two big neighboring countries with having huge potentials of foreign currency reserves, huge population, advanced technology, development cooperation, regional connectivity, trade and investments, and imports and exports. Thus, these two countries must work together in achieving sustainable development goal and millennium development goal in the region. In addition, it must be mentioned here that the BCIM economic corridor and BRI project must be implemented in accordance with the rules and regulations of the environmental protection and sustainable development goal. Interests of the different indigenous ethnic groups should be protected while implementing the projects. Strong mutual relations among the member states and stakeholders must be maintained in order to achieve the desired goal.

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