

Fostering cooperative and win-win China-Pakistan relationship

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Everyone knows the China-Pakistan friendship is higher than the Himalayas and deeper than the sea. I'm sure everyone here knows the phrase "Iron Pak," batic in Chinese. This phrase bears testimony to the friendship that the Chinese people and the Pakistani people have forged and shared during the last half century.

The term "all-weather strategic cooperative partnership" in the 20-point joint communiqué signed during Chinese President Xi Jinping's state visit to Pakistan in April this year could be interpreted as the highest form of country-to-country relations. It is my personal observation that the joint communiqué has included almost everything about the China-Pakistan relationship. It has outlined the tasks the two countries will have to do to facilitate the future development of bilateral ties. All we need is action, concrete action.

First, we should deepen the bilateral economic cooperation. The utmost important thing is to advance the construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the 3,000-kilometer network of roads, railways and pipelines linking Kashi in Northwest China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region and Southwest Pakistan's Gwadar Port.

As we all know, China is currently sparing no efforts in boosting the implementation of its "One Belt, One Road" initiative. The economic and strategic significance of this ambitious initiative, especially the CPEC, should be fully understood by both Chinese and Pakistani people. It is important for China, as the CPEC will shorten China's routes of oil and gas imports from Africa and the Middle East for thousands of kilometers.

But it is more important for Pakistan, as the CPEC would generate employment opportunities across Pakistan and would enhance trade and poverty reduction. It would benefit both countries if Pakistan could play a model role in facilitating the implementation of the CPEC. Other players involved in the Belt and Road initiative would follow suit if they see the value of the initiative in helping boost their economies.

Right now, more efforts should be made to form a "1 plus 4" cooperation structure with the CPEC at the center and the Gwadar Port, transport infrastructure, energy and industrial cooperation being the four key areas to achieve a win-win result and common development. Other projects listed in the very recent joint communiqué should also be launched as soon as possible and implemented in a proper way.

The Pakistani government has attached great importance to the CPEC project. At the end of October, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was quoted as saying "Delay in completion of projects under the umbrella of CPEC will not be tolerated." He also said "The CPEC is the future of Pakistan and its timely completion is top priority of the government."

It is good to learn that the land use right of the Gwadar Port has been transferred to China recently. We wish the Gwadar free trade area will be set up sooner.

I would also like to suggest that the Pakistani authorities take concrete and effective measures to protect the safety of Chinese people in Pakistan, and to protect the legitimate economic interests of Chinese investors, whether they are State-owned enterprises or companies from the private sector.

The second point is to enhance cooperation in fighting terrorism. Just days ago, France experienced one of the darkest moments in its modern history when at least 129 people were killed in terror attacks in different locations in Paris. This tragic incident shows how serious a task the world is shouldering in fighting rampant terrorism. We all know that Pakistan and China have cooperated effectively in fighting terrorism, separatism and extremism. Cooperation on anti-terrorism is an important part of the all-weather strategic cooperative partnership. We can expect further cooperation from the Pakistani side on this.

My third point is to further cultural exchanges between China and Pakistan. Whenever the word Pakistan is mentioned, what comes into my mind is the iron-clad friendship between China and Pakistan. But what else?

Regrettably, I cannot name many important Pakistani figures except for the Bhutto family and the Sharif family. I don't remember seeing any Pakistani movies or dramas. I know almost nothing about the literature and arts of Pakistan. It's embarrassing to admit this. And I am regarded as a well-educated man with a postgraduate degree.

I don't think I am alone here. This calls for more and fruitful cultural exchanges between our two countries. And this makes our work as people who specialize in gathering and disseminating information all the more important. Also there are many more to do from the Pakistani side to promote and enhance cultural exchanges and to help more and more Chinese people to understand Pakistan.

The author is deputy editor of the Global Times. This is an excerpt from a speech he delivered at the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor Media Forum, organized by the Chinese Embassy in Pakistan in collaboration with the Pakistan-China Institute and held in Islamabad, Pakistan on November 17, 2015.

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