



China-Pakistan Libraries Association

By Abid Hussain

China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a flagship project of BRI and a framework for regional connectivity. After the visit of his excellency President Xi Jinping to Pakistan in April 2015, the two sides have set up the 1+4 cooperation mode, namely prioritizing, energy, transport, infrastructure and industrial cooperation, which has opened a new chapter for the CPEC construction. The total cost of this mega-venture, CPEC is 62 billion dollar which covers all projects.

CPEC will be more fruitful, if

some educational segments were brought under consideration because today's economy is viewed as a knowledge based-economy. In any global agenda, education is considered to be an indispensable element. Many projects in education under China Pakistan Economic Corridor have already been undertaken, like CPEC Study Centres in academia and study centres at different think tanks, etc. Numerous scholarships for higher studies have already been created under the CPEC umbrella, exchange of educational experts from both sides is also going on. But no encouraging steps have yet been taken in library and publication

exchange programmes. Pakistan is facing numerous challenges like political, cultural, socioeconomic, ethnic-based, etc. But, development of Education sector is one of the biggest challenges for our country. It is said that if 140 Million of our youth are not educated properly, it will create chaos, disarray, discontent and ultimately unemployment in the country in the coming few years.

Maslow's Hierarchy theory represents that basic needs of people in any country are education, health and jobs. The Chinese government model has addressed such issues and

overcome these challenges. Pakistani government is lagging behind and is unable to pay full attention to these challenging issues

China, as all-weather friend of Pakistan, has always supported Pakistan in challenges which it faces. According to the Chinese ministry of education, China was the most popular destination for international students in Asia: year 2018, having attracted 489,200 foreign students. Pakistan was among the top three countries for outbound students to China. According to official figures from Pakistan, in terms of education, it is claimed that approximately 25,000 Pakistani students are currently studying in China, one-third of whom are on scholarships offered by the Chinese government.

CPEC, in the educational spectrum, has paved the way for the youth of Pakistan to some extent. However, proper attention needs to be given to educational sector in order to make Pakistan a leading nation in terms of education.

Libraries and Publications Exchange programmes are interconnecting people across the globe. Since China launched an economic reform and opened itself to the world in 1979, Chinese academic libraries have made great strides towards modernization. Three major areas have attained impressive changes: space, collection, and technology.

China has a prestigious library setup and is becoming a hub of first-hand knowledge. The National Library of China founded by the Qing Government in 1909 at Beijing is one of the largest libraries in China and Asia and third-largest

national library in the world. The library holds largest collection of Chinese literature and historical documents. It is said that this library has more than 32 million volume of books.

On the other side, National Library of Pakistan is the largest repository library of our country situated in Islamabad. It has more than 300,000 books and other material and is one of the finest libraries in Pakistan. Coming to other libraries in Pakistan, sadly they are not in best of conditions and are facing so many challenges, such as lack of proper finance, proper attention of higher authorities, lack of professional staff and scarcity of modern furniture and IT tools.

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China Pakistan Economic corridor should fully cooperate in educational uplift of Pakistan. Libraries and library staff should also be given opportunities to share and care for the people of both republics. Apart from this, Chinese librarians should be given a chance to visit Pakistan and to see the condition of libraries. Similarly, Pakistani librarians should also be granted a chance for short programmes held in China. Resources sharing

and resource development of both countries can be initiated under CPEC. As several American Lincoln centres have been established in Pakistani libraries at University level. China and Pakistan should set up specific corners in many academic and research libraries under the CPEC project and should assign them tentative names. Pakistan Library Association is the largest library association across the country and is representing status of libraries in Pakistan around the world.

What I propose is that China Library Association should also be involved with our Libraries' Association and a memorandum of Understanding should be signed. One such association is CALA: Chinese American Librarians Association. Another thing I would like to suggest is that a new association under China Pakistan Library Association (CPLA) may be established and representatives from both countries can be involved to connect and cooperate in resources and services for the betterment of library services.

It is also suggested, that Chinese Government may establish a state of the art library in each centre at different universities and think-tanks across the country and qualified staff may be hired to deliver services to its researchers working for the betterment of CPEC causes. I am optimistic that such initiatives will promote a chain of confidence-building measurement between China and Pakistan. Such activities will connect people of China and Pakistan to help them to know about the culture, traditions, norms and values of both countries ■



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