

Xi backs China-Myanmar corridor

Closer ties:Aung San Suu Kyi, left, shakes hands with Xi Jinping in Beijing on Friday.AP

Beijing and Naypyidaw have moved a step closer to negotiating the China-Myanmar economic corridor, an initiative being given high priority on account of the stalled Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) connectivity proposal.

Chinese President Xi Jinping on Friday advocated that Beijing and Naypyidaw should “nurture new growth points, such as discussing the construction of China-Myanmar economic corridor, so as to advance bilateral ties,” Xinhua reported.

Mr. Xi made these remarks during a meeting with visiting State Counsellor from Myanmar Aung San Suu Kyi. On her part, Ms. Suu Kyi “agreed with China’s proposal of building the Myanmar-China economic corridor,” the report said.

President Xi’s backing for the corridor followed last month’s announcement of the plan in Myanmar by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi. During his visit to Myanmar, Mr. Wang said the Y-shaped corridor could start from China’s Yunnan province and head towards Mandalay in Myanmar. From there, it could extend towards the east and west to Yangon New City and Kyaukphyu Special Economic Zone in the Rakhine province.

Mr. Wang had also proposed a three-point plan to resolve the Rohingya refugee crisis, for which Ms. Suu Kyi has been widely criticised in the West.

Ethnic Rohingya have flooded into neighbouring Bangladesh amid allegations of human rights abuses by Myanmar’s military.

Mr. Wang had advocated a ceasefire, followed by the repatriation of refugees, followed by a long-term plan with international support for the economic development of Myanmar’s affected Rakhine State.

The state-run *Global Times* reported that Bangladesh-China-Myanmar cooperation would be given first priority given “India’s reluctance to participate in the BCIM cooperation.”

Kolkata link

Negotiations for the formation of the BCIM corridor, which would link Kolkata with the Chinese city of Kunming, have virtually stalled after Beijing went ahead with its plans to establish the China-Pakistan economic corridor.

The daily said the China-Myanmar corridor would connect Beijing with the Indian Ocean.

Transfer of industries

“The China-Myanmar corridor will enhance connectivity between the two countries. The existing highways, oil and gas pipelines, as well as the railroads and expressways under construction will give China the best access to the Indian Ocean,” the daily observed.

“The corridor will also accelerate the transfer of China’s industries to Myanmar. Due to the rising cost of labour, overcapacity and industrial development, China has begun to transfer some of its industries abroad. In this aspect, the corridor will also help turn Myanmar into an important

destination for China and other East Asian countries, and will help create more jobs and bolster development locally," the write-up noted.

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