



Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS)
1/46 Old Elephant Road, Eskaton, Dhaka

Address of Welcome by

Major General Sheikh Md Monirul Islam, ndc, psc
Director General, BIISS

on the occasion of a Round-table Discussion on
Bangladesh-China Dialogue

organised by BIISS

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Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim,

Dr. Dipu Moni, MP, Honourable Minister for Foreign Affairs, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Chair of this Session, Participants from the Chinese Embassy, Excellencies, Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,
Assalamu Alaikum and Good Morning,

I am honoured to have the privilege of welcoming you all to today's Round-table Discussion on **Bangladesh-China Dialogue** organized by Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS).

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Bangladesh and China established their formal diplomatic relations in 1975, while history tells us that fruitful cultural exchanges existed between the two countries for almost two millennia. In June 1974, China supported the admission of Bangladesh's membership in the UN in the Security Council. She also supported the entry of Bangladesh into the World Health Organization. In August 1974, China sent relief goods to the flood victims in Bangladesh and next year invited Bangladesh to participate in the Canton Trade fair. Heads of states and government of the two countries have exchanged frequent visits all these years. The number of visits to and fro between the two testifies the priority of China in Bangladesh's foreign policy. Following these visits a number of important agreements on co-operation were

concluded in areas like agriculture, transport and communications, machinery, energy, science and technology. The most spectacular feature of Bangladesh-China relations have been its relative stability and continuity. Co-operation in the cultural fields between the two countries has also flourished rapidly following the signing of an agreement on cultural co-operation in 1979. It is worth mentioning that Bangladesh and China are very close neighbours with only 100km of Indian territory between their borders. Both countries celebrated the 30th anniversary of their diplomatic relationship and declared 2005 as the 'China-Bangladesh Friendship Year.'

Distinguished Participants,

Over the years, China emerged as a significant development partner of Bangladesh. China is one of the very few countries, which offer development assistance to Bangladesh in the form of grant, interest free loan, Interest Subsidized Preferential Loan (ISP Loan). Its project loans are huge and concentrated, among others, to building physical infrastructures such as roads and bridges. China has constructed power plants and helped to explore its potential water resources and hydropower. China also agreed to provide its expertise and technical assistance to Bangladesh in flood control, disaster prevention, river training, water resources utilisation and irrigation. The bilateral trade between Bangladesh and China has increased tremendously over the years and Bangladesh is the third largest trade partner of China in South Asia. But the trade balance remains in favour of China and existing level of trade and investment between Bangladesh and China are still below their potential. Bangladesh-China military co-operation dates back to 1975-76. China is the largest and most important provider of military hardware and training to the Bangladesh Armed Forces. Between 1975 and 1979, China supplied 78% of Bangladesh's arms imports. China also helped Bangladesh in building its only arms factory in *Joydebpur*. In March 2006, China donated police equipments to Bangladesh as a part of their cooperation. Bangladesh and China also signed a defence co-operation agreement aimed at integrating piece-meal accords by which China becomes one of the main suppliers of defence wares, providing support to Bangladesh's defence establishments.

Learned Participants,

Against this background of Bangladesh-China bilateral relations, the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS), has organized today's Round-table Discussion on **Bangladesh-China Dialogue** in the wake of the Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's scheduled official visit to China from 17-21 March 2010. The objective of this Round-table is to examine the selected dimensions of the existing relations of the two countries. Some broad issues that will be covered in the Round-table could be the following: what are the current state and nature of Bangladesh-China overall bilateral relations? How best to shape the political dimension of Bangladesh-China relationship? What are the problems, opportunities and impediments, if any, regarding the economic dimension of Bangladesh-China relations? What is the current state of Bangladesh-China defence relationship? From the Chinese perspective, what are the useful mechanisms for Political and Economic Development of Bangladesh? These are some, among others, relevant issues that today's Round-table on Bangladesh-China Dialogue will try to address.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Roundtable Discussion on **Bangladesh-China Dialogue** is being held today is part of BIISS yearly academic events. BIISS, as a forum for exchange of knowledge and views, open discussions on national, regional and international issues in a free and academic environment have always been the prime concern of this institute. The Round-table organized today on a subject of vital national importance, prior to the Honourable Prime Minister's visit to China is a manifestation of our continuous endeavour in this regard.

With this, Honourable Chief Guest, Excellencies, Learned Participants, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, let me welcome you all once again and request respected Chair to kindly commence the proceedings of the round-table. Thank you.