

Tarique Rahman's China Visit: Rhetoric vs. Geopolitical Reality

News:

Bangladesh Prime Minister Tarique Rahman's first four-day official visit to China yielded a predictable flurry of agreements spanning trade and green technology. But its true significance lies in the elevation of a single, long-stalled infrastructure initiative: the Teesta River Comprehensive Management and Restoration Project. Once confined to the margins of diplomatic speculation, the project has emerged as the centerpiece of a deepening strategic partnership between Dhaka and Beijing, signaling a transition from political intent to actual implementation... Rahman's strategy represents the execution of a multi-vector foreign policy. Rather than succumbing to a binary choice between Beijing and New Delhi, Dhaka is attempting to maximize economic concessions from both while jealously guarding its strategic autonomy.

Comment:

Tarique Rahman's visit to China (June 23–26, 2026) is framed as a step toward a "Bangladesh First" foreign policy, drawing from BNP's manifesto of an "independent and self-respecting" approach. In reality, such rhetoric holds little weight. Bangladesh remains a small state in a geopolitical arena where terms are set by Western powers and their regional allies. This subjugation is starkly illustrated by the Agreement on Reciprocal Trade (ART) with the US – an unequal deal forcing Bangladesh to import \$15 billion in US energy over 15 years, purchase 14 Boeing aircraft, and buy \$3.5 billion in American agricultural products annually. The fiscal impact is severe: duty-free access for thousands of US products while Bangladesh's export tariff was cut by a single percentage point – a trade-off where "Bangladesh shall" appears 158 times in the agreement versus "the United States shall" only nine times. Military subjugation advances through negotiations on GSOMIA and ACSA – defence pacts requiring Bangladesh to share classified intelligence and provide logistical support to US forces, effectively surrendering intelligence sovereignty. These agreements compromise Bangladesh's autonomy and expand foreign military access. The previous administration surrendered autonomy to India with tacit US approval, making Bangladesh a "vassal state" unable to escape its subordinate position.

Bangladesh has everything it needs to stand on its own feet and actually start its leadership from this region - not just follow orders from Washington or anyone else. Geographically we're sitting right at the crossroads of South and Southeast Asia, we've got the Bay of Bengal practically in our backyard, a massive young population, growing factories, fertile land - these aren't small things. These are God-given advantages that should make us a player, not a pushover. But somehow, we're still not there. And honestly, it's not because we lack resources or capability - it's because our leadership seems too comfortable pleasing the West instead of standing up for what's actually good for Bangladesh. You can't call yourself sovereign when you keep bending backwards every time someone raises a finger. Real autonomy means making hard calls - diversifying who we trade with, making sure our defense deals don't come with hidden strings, and putting Ummah's dignity first. What we really need is a different kind of leadership altogether one rooted in Islamic values of justice and self-respect, not servitude. A leadership that understands Khilafah (Caliphate) State isn't just a slogan but a real system where no foreign power gets to dictate our choices. Until such leadership emerges, Bangladesh will remain a passive participant in a geopolitical game where its interests are, at best, an afterthought.

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