

We are publishing the combined first two issues of the ninth volume of the Journal of Indian Research. The pandemic has caused deep impact over academic output world over. The prolonged lockdown of the academic institutions and the intermittent halting of long distance transportation has caused decline in research based upon fieldwork. Though, there have been spurt in organizing the webinars, the digital meets cannot be the perfect substitute for physical meetings, interviews and social interaction.

Digital access can be seen as a top up to the physical connectivities. The major world powers heavily rely on building new transportation routes. In recent years, China has been on infrastructure-building spree. The Belt and Road Initiative is a humongous challenge. But, once it is accomplished, it has the potential to revitalize the core of Eurasia. During early 1990s, A.G. Frank termed Central Asia as a sort of 'Black Hole' in the middle of the world. The region would soon see bullet trains traversing across the steppes.

Recently, the 435-km long Nyingchi-Lhasa railway line has been opened for public in Tibet. There are plans for expanding the connectivity in South Asia. China plans to build railway line from Lhasa to Kathamandu and further down to Lumbini, just at the Indian border with Nepal. The Gyirong-Kathmandu stretch is likely to be completed by the end of the next year. Similar projects are being pursued in Bangladesh. Bangladesh like many of the South Asian nations is wedged between two powerful Asian nations. The geopolitical balancing requires deft handling. We have received a long essay on options for Bangladesh under such circumstances from Dr. Sujit Kumar Datta of Chittagong University, Bangladesh. Datta argues that India has nothing to worry about China's relations with Bangladesh as the Bangladesh-China relationship is a commercial one. Bangladesh will continue to maintain good relations with its giant neighbour while also wanting to benefit from the new strength of the global economy by maintaining relations with China. Datta opines that India will desperately try to keep Bangladesh intact. For this, India will always want a friendly government to be in power in Bangladesh. India has gained experience from the elections in Nepal, Maldives, and Sri Lanka. It is in that experience that India will decide the policy on Bangladesh. In future, Bangladesh could be another area of China-India proxy war. Bangladesh will have to deal with the pressure from both sides. However, it remains to be seen how Bangladesh balances relations with India by maintaining relations with China.

Another round of political interventions in another South Asian country may spell doom for the new springing tiger of Asia, Bangladesh.

It is the duty of academic researchers to suggest ways to achieve an outcome with two pillars of peace and prosperity. Academics cannot be decoupled from the ethics and ontological anxieties. Researchers also indulge in sadhana of wisdom. Their responsibility in the uncertain times increase manifold.

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