



Beyond the Great Wall: A Sri Lankan Political Journey to Modern China

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As our plane touched down at Beijing Capital International Airport, the magnitude of the invitation extended by the Communist Party of China (CPC) was beginning to sink in!

Together with fellow political delegates from Sri Lanka and other Asian nations, we had been given a front-row seat to witness the socio-political and economic transformation of a global giant from the inside. It was more than a diplomatic visit—it was an ideological awakening.

The week-long journey from May 24th to June 1st, spanning the power corridors of Beijing to the cultural serenity of Yunnan Province, gave us unparalleled access to the workings of the CPC and Chinese governance. It was an experience marked by deep reflection, candid exchanges, and compelling observations that challenged long-held perceptions. For me representing Sri Lanka's Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB), the takeaways were transformative.

A Ceremony of Shared Vision in Beijing

On the morning of May 25th, we were ushered into a grand ceremonial hall of the Communist party of China, at the heart of Beijing. The meeting, hosted by Liu Jianchao, Minister of the International Department of the Central Committee of the CPC, set the tone for a pan-Asian political dialogue of historical significance.

Flanked by leaders such as Ahmad Muzani of Indonesia, Bidhya Devi Bandari of Nepal, Kim Rithy of Cambodia, and Aktam Khaitov of Uzbekistan, the focus was unmistakable —**“Asia in a Changing World.”**

Minister Jianchao's keynote struck a resonant chord. His emphasis on proactive cooperation, regional mutual trust, and the vision of a shared Asian future underscored China's commitment to multilateral engagement based on mutual benefit and cultural respect. The thought-provoking dialogue that followed—featuring political stalwarts like Damdin Tsogtbaatar of Mongolia and Mushahid Hussain Sayed of Pakistan—reminded us that Asia must rise together, not be divided by Western narratives or domestic indecision.



Lessons in Political Discipline and Organizational Integrity

Among the most profound insights from our engagement with the CPC was their unwavering focus on internal party discipline, ideological clarity, & integrity. As Deng Xiaoping once said, “Correcting mistaken ideas in the Party” is vital. Chinese officials shared that this self-correction that ethos enabled the CPC to regain public trust & credibility. From grassroots organization, to the Central Committee, the message was clear: a political party must first command internal respect before earning public confidence.

There was a particular resonance when they described ideological education not just as rhetoric, but as a binding force that prevents internal contradictions. In Sri Lanka, where ideological ambiguity is common, this was an important reminder—a rudderless party cannot promise direction to the people.

Moreover, CPC officials stressed that closeness to the people, resistance to corruption, & an emphasis on hard work are not just ideals but enforced mandates. At the community level, “work styles” are not abstract concepts but measurable practices. This grassroots engagement reminded us that credibility must be earned from the bottom up.

China’s Multi-Front Transformation: A First-Hand View

Social Frontier: Dignity in Everyday Life

What stood out starkly was the **culture of mutual respect** that permeated Chinese society. In Yunnan Province, we witnessed how **Community Centers** functioned as dynamic social hubs—offering redress, education, & emotional support. These are not ceremonial establishments but institutions of real community empowerment. The sense of human dignity, infused with traditional Confucian values, made a deep impression on us.

The feasts laid out for us at every meal in luxurious hotels were astounding with an amazing variety of dishes of the highest quality. The care and hospitality demonstrated to us by our Chinese hosts was unforgettable. They paid attention to the most minute details to ensure our comfort.



Economic Frontier: Growth with Conscience

In Kunming, the capital of Yunnan, economic growth was evident—but not chaotic or unsustainable. China’s “Socialist Market Economy” operates on dual axes: development and inclusion. Urban landscapes were clean, orderly, and green. Policies prioritize healthcare, education, and poverty alleviation—not as vote-catching slogans, but as state strategy. It was an economy growing not just for GDP numbers, but for people.

A city tour in a driver-less car driven by a robot and a pharmacy prescription being administered by a robot, devoid of human intervention left me spell-bound.

Political Frontier: Action with Credibility

The CPC, as we observed, treats credibility as the cornerstone of governance. Bureaucrats and political leaders are judged on integrity and delivery—not lineage or allegiance. The Belt and Road Initiative and the Global Development Initiative are not merely diplomacy tools but extensions of China’s strategic vision for regional peace and cooperation.

We were particularly moved by their seriousness in combatting nepotism and cronyism. In China, political maturity means the meritocracy is protected—not just in words but by mechanisms.

Cultural Frontier: Modernization with Roots

One might expect a fast-modernizing society to lean heavily into Western models. China does the opposite. The **Confucian ethic**—emphasizing harmony, hierarchy, and education—remains central. The result is a modernization journey that is at once contemporary and rooted. It respects collective progress, family values, and social order, making it relevant to other Asian nations, including ours.



A Sri Lankan Delegation United by Curiosity & Respect

One of the heartwarming aspects of the trip was the camaraderie among the three Sri Lankan political party representatives — government & opposition alike. From the moment our small delegation of six members left Colombo, on May 23rd, there was a shared sense of purpose & feeling of solidarity as Sri Lankans.

Discussions with Gamagedera Dissanaiké, Deputy Minister of Cultural and Religious Affairs, Dr Malshani Hettiarachchi & Chandrika Adhikari of the JVP central committee reaffirmed our mutual concern over Sri Lanka's moral & cultural stagnation. Drawing from Singapore's National Courtesy Campaign, we discussed how shared values could drive national unity.

Meanwhile, long conversations & excursions with UNP's Deputy Leader Ruwan Wijewardene and Milinda Rajapakshe, of the Pohottuwa Central Committee, highlighted a growing consensus across party lines on the importance of ideological clarity & respectful discourse in Sri Lanka's future political culture.

A highlight of our visit was meeting the distinguished Sri Lankan Ambassador to China, Majintha Jayasinghe & Counsellor Niranga Palipana who graciously hosted us to a delicious Chinese dinner & Chinese cultural evening. We were impressed by his high level of professionalism as a senior career diplomat.

Conclusion: A Shared Future Awaits

As Minister Liu Jianchao reminded us in Beijing, the future of Asia lies not in division but in dialogue. China has extended a hand in partnership, not paternalism. It is now upon us—especially those of us in leadership—to shape a new path that is rooted in **pragmatism, respect, & ideological clarity**.

If there is one thing this visit taught us, it is this: **The time to look East with open minds & full hearts is now.**

The writer is the Central Committee member of Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB)