**Musings on the Orange Line project**

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December 08, 2020

I am honoured, as a railway constructor, to lead the team of Orange Line Metro Train’s project to Pakistan to participate in its construction, which started a wonderful trip to the subcontinent of South Asia. These past four years, though not long enough to put down roots here were sufficient to create numerous precious and unforgettable memories, pieced together by the unique local customs, a different work environment and especially the warm friendship between China and Pakistan.

Some fond reminiscences from our visit to Pakistan in December 2015 are of us being surrounded with sincere and bright smiles of the Pakistani people. These friendly smiles along with warm greetings in English, “Hello, Chinese friend!”, or in simple Chinese “Ni Hao, Zhong guo Peng you”, were encountered everywhere we went, whether it was the residential district, the work site, on the roads or randomly in shopping malls. The anxiety caused by the transition to an unfamiliar place was quickly washed away and turned into relief with these benign expressions.

[South African team to visit Pakistan in January 2021: PCB](https://nation.com.pk/09-Dec-2020/south-african-team-to-visit-pakistan-in-january-2021-pcb)

During the construction period of the project, the Punjab Provincial Government and NESPAK-CEC established a system of weekly coordination meetings to help resolve any difficulties faced by us, whereas the Punjab Mass Transit Authority meticulously coordinated and assisted us with project promotion. We believe the Orange Line project owes its successful opening and operation at the right time to the agility of these organisations in ironing out all the impediments.

Throughout the project’s implementation, the safety of our Chinese staff was ensured by the police from the Special Protection Unit (SPU). Wherever we went during our time here, we were constantly under the protection of these valiant individuals. The diligence exhibited by SPU in guaranteeing the personal safety of our staff in the scorching sun or bitter winds and rain is highly commendable.

Our daily lives were made easier by the warm affection of our Pakistani employees in many ways. For example, our chauffeur Shah Zareen connected us to his friend for fresh fish from his farm, another employee, Lashi brought many ducks and chickens from his native area when joining back after a vacation, yet another employee Kashif did his best to make us a part of his wedding, which unfortunately we couldn’t attend as we had gone back to China during that period. Our most sincere well-wishes to these and many more such Pakistanis for their hospitality, because of whom these sweet little instances are now a part of our memory and will be cherished by us forever.

[Cristiano Ronaldo outshines Messi in UCL clash with Barcelona](https://nation.com.pk/09-Dec-2020/juventus-gets-last-laugh-cristiano-ronaldo-outshines-messi-in-ucl-clash-with-barcelona)

This hospitality was not bound by the project; rather wherever we went, we were constantly reminded that the friendship between China and Pakistan is truly higher than mountains, deeper than the seas and sweeter than honey by small gestures of the locals. For instance, I once took my spectacles for repair at a shop nearby the station I was working at, and upon finding out that I was working on this project, the shopkeeper refused to accept any payment from me despite repeated requests. In his words, “Chinese are our brothers and they are working here to bring convenience to our lives for which we are very grateful.”

On another such occasion, where we were greatly touched by the simplicity and innocence of the rural locals was when we went into a field to buy fresh vegetables, but it was used for rapeseed harvesting only. Upon learning what we had actually come there for, the locals quickly picked fresh cabbages from the neighbouring fields and insisted on giving them to us for free. However, being cognisant of their financial conditions, we left them money and returned with our hearts filled with their generosity. We were met with the same enthusiasm while shopping at local stores too where the shop owners would readily extend discounts between 20-70 percent on their regular prices.

[Two bombs reportedly dropped on oil wells in Kirkuk, Iraq](https://nation.com.pk/09-Dec-2020/two-bombs-reportedly-dropped-on-oil-wells-in-kirkuk-iraq)

Another little memory, which will remain vivid in our minds for a long time is how a teenage boy while serving us at a local restaurant disappeared for a few moments and returned with a bouquet of hyacinth flowers which he had picked himself. At that moment, I was reminded of Zhao Lijian, China’s former Chief Embassy Officer in Pakistan’ words that, “I wish the flower of friendship between China and Pakistan will bloom more and more beautifully”, and here it was, blooming at its peak!

In the culminating stage of the Orange Line project, the COVID-19 spread rapidly and ruthlessly, but the compassion of people remained unaffected. During this time, the Chinese staff of the Orange Line project team also stepped forward and took active steps to raise funds for the materials and make their contribution to the fight against the epidemic in Pakistan. Likewise, the Pakistani employees expressed complete support in security, catering and logistics through voluntary quarantine and extended shift hours. Their great efforts have effectively protected the physical health and personal safety of resident Pakistani and Chinese personnel and ensured the completion of the project as scheduled.

[Opposition parties start receiving resignations from lawmakers](https://nation.com.pk/09-Dec-2020/opposition-parties-receiving-resignations-from-their-lawmakers)

The Orange Line project is the first mega rail transit project signed and implemented under the “One Belt and One Road” initiative, and also is the driving force and flag-bearer of China-Pakistan friendship leading to economic development. I am very glad to be a part of such a meaningful project and dedicate my work to the lasting friendship between Pakistan and China. Here I would also like to express my utmost appreciation for the Governments of Pakistan and Punjab, the owners of the Orange Line project for their support and the hospitality of the Pakistani people. I sincerely hope that the completion and operation of the Orange Line project will benefit the people’s livelihoods and development of Lahore, while opening doors for further economic opportunities. Lastly, I wish the Pakistani people peace and happiness and China-Pakistan dosti Zindabad!