

PM Khan's Visit to China Promises CPEC's Prosperity

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PM Imran Khan's maiden visit to China from 2-5 November 2018 will set new milestones for China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and will surely stave off Pakistan's current financial crisis. PM will also address the opening session at the first China International Import Expo (CIIE) which is scheduled to take place in Shanghai from November 5-10. Pakistan has also been regarded as a guest of honour at the CIIE where Pakistani companies have been provided with a major pavilion at the expo in which around 75 companies would be showcasing their outfits. This will help boost Pakistan's exports to China and would enhance bilateral trade. It clearly indicates that China is keen to help Pakistan in its difficult times. The intention behind writing this piece is to bring awareness to the masses that on what areas the new government intends to take CPEC to the pinnacle of success and glory.

Expected MoUs during the visit could be the establishment of JWG on Socio-economic Development between Ministry of Planning, the Development and Reform (MoPDR) and China International Development Corp Agency; Signing of MoU on Cooperation on Poverty Reduction Between MoPDR and the State Council; the Signing of Framework agreement and MoU on cooperation in agriculture sector; the Signing of Framework Agreement/MOU on Industrial Cooperation and setting up Export Promotion Zones between MoC (Pakistan) and the Chinese MoFCOM; Signing of Rashakai Joint Venture Agreement and the License Agreement, or Investment Framework Agreement etc.

It is an irrefutable reality that the relations between China and Pakistan are historic and time-tested, and the continuation of the projects of the CPEC as part of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) are a testament to an all-weather friendship. Our bilateral ties remain strong and backed by the principles of cooperation and incentives for the administrations and citizens of both countries.

Pakistan's administration including the MoPDR remains keen and willful towards the realization of the material, social, and economic benefits brought forth by CPEC. Rest assured, every single MoU and agreed-upon the project under the CPEC umbrella as signed in the past is set to continue with full vigour and speed towards completion. As Pakistan gains additional global shipping capabilities via the facilitation of the Gwadar port, accompanied by a massive overhaul of the country's energy infrastructure, we approach a critical junction where such advancement allows for further branching out of other projects.

A key initiative of the MoPDR is the planning of the creation of millions of new careers and employment opportunities much needed in Pakistan, to provide our youthful population with the foundations necessary for social uplift. More than 70,000 domestic Pakistani personnel are already engaged in the construction and operational phases of several CPEC projects; the impetus remains to allow for CPEC to give rise to a mobile,

educated workforce capable of competing globally alongside serving their homeland. Needless to say, Pakistan assures that such programs will complement pre-existing projects of a similar scope.

A final few initiatives revolve primarily around the combination of tourism and technology. Already, Pakistan is in the process of gaining a fibre-optic line by way of the Chinese border in order to improve connectivity in a country that currently only has the luxury of a single submarine internet cable emanating out of Karachi. Productivity, especially in the IT sector, is set to rise by massive margins, while the environmental focus of CPEC on ensuring Pakistan's landscapes and resources remain untouched and free of blemishes allow for the provision of nation-wide tourism, both foreign and domestic.

The establishment of CPEC centers throughout Pakistani universities, allows for the complementation and policy-driven analysis necessary for the MoPDR to guarantee that the fruits of CPEC are delivered, while also exemplifying the backbone of China-Pakistan relations.

Pakistan's has introduced new dimensions/targets of socio-economic and regional development in order to realign the goals of CPEC to take it to further heights. In the Long-Term Plan (LTP), agricultural development is at the top most priority as our 50 % population is dependent on agriculture related jobs/profession. Similarly, Pakistan inherits a rich history with diversified culture and spectacular landscapes which have all the potential to promote its tourism industry to uplift its economy to a great extent under the CPEC parasols.

The BRI is an engine of rapid growth in Pakistan and manifestation of Pak-China relations that would further promote inclusivity. Russia, Central Asia, European Countries are showing interest to partake in CPEC by investing in different projects. A lot of automotive companies are stepping forward to invest in Pakistan from Europe and China. Recently a Dutch company has indicated interest to invest in the dairy products of Pakistan. Arabian countries are looking for investment especially Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is keen to launch power plants in Gwadar and invest in energy sectors. In the meantime, the United Arab Emirates has also been helping in providing amenities to locals in Gwadar. Running a container service connecting the cities of Sharjah, Abu Dhabi and Jebel Ali with Gwadar, the UAE has recently launched the Karachi-Gulf Express. Based on the principles of "openness and inclusiveness", such collaborations pitch the ethos of the BRI and provide a platform for China as well as other countries located near the routes or 'corridors'.

The present Government accords top priority to the development of Gwadar as a stand-alone project. The port city is going to be transformed as a transshipment hub and a center for industrialization with a special focus on heavy industries with a kind of incentives that produce a high rate of return. Industrial cooperation is the main area of attention where efforts are being made to encourage the relocation of Chinese industries with a purpose to ensure a rise in export and maximize employment opportunities which is basically a priority in the manifesto of the current government.

Industrialization is at the cusp of winning its fortunes while adopting the Chinese model of Special Economic Zones (SEZs). The government has re-prioritised four SEZs and that's where investment from different countries other than China and Pakistan will play a pivotal part to make it a success factor. Pakistan has the potential for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), which will be linked with the SEZs through backward linkages and subsequently connecting with the global markets through forward linkages.

A research study of the Centre of excellence-CPEC reveals that about 75,000 jobs have been created in the past five years on some 22 projects. It also shows that in the six road/transportation-related projects, 51,000 blue-collar jobs were created, out of which 48,000 were held by Pakistanis.

China is relocating its selective labour-intensive industries to other parts of the world because of expensive labour and market saturation. Pakistan is replete with raw material endowments, local skills in this segment, lower wages, and its proximity to the Middle East, Africa and Europe serve best to China to relocate its enterprises and global orders.

Since CPEC is a lynchpin of BRI, both China and Pakistan are committed to taking this mammoth project to new heights by adopting the “Triple Helix Model” of innovation and cooperation. Moreover, the government is also keen on encouraging non-governmental exchanges, entrepreneurial cooperation, media merging, civil society’s association, academia and people-to-people contacts to interact and collaborate so that the “inclusivity” of CPEC is truly achieved by human development to all and sundry.