

What CPEC means to KP

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The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a mega national project to transform the entire economy of Pakistan. All four provinces including Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Kashmir will reap benefits of development, regional connectivity, and integration irrespective of their geographical size and population.

Benefits for KP province are enormous. After Gilgit-Baltistan, it is KP that will mostly benefit from the project before the connectivity reaches Punjab Sindh, and Balochistan. Let's observe the following facts and see how KP is benefited from the CPEC so far.

The Karakoram Highway (KKH) starts from Havelian in Hazara Division. Its up-gradation has already been done. The project is of national importance. Second, a railway track will be built between Havelian to Kashgar. Third, a feasibility study is underway to built high-speed railway from Peshawar to Karachi.

Fourth, the Suki Kinari hydro dam is going to be built as part of the CPEC energy cluster worth US\$ 30 billion. The project which is located in Mansehra is the largest private sector hydropower initiative in Pakistan that is designed to produce 2,958 MW elasticity. Fifth, major part of the KP will come through the fiber optic communication line from Kashgar to Rawalpindi giving an alternative communication access.

Sixth, a dry-port will be built in Havelian. Seventh, out of 27 industrial zones identified so far by the Board of Investment, eight such zones will be built in KP, increasing its share to around 30 percent, while the total population of KP is 11.9 percent of Pakistan's total population and geographically it is a small province.

And finally the combined route is estimated around 3,000 km from Gwadar to Kashgar, converging the entire provinces and areas of the Federation. Backward and most neglected areas will be in frontline of development. Southern areas of the KP and Hazara Division will be most benefited.

Around 210 km area of southern KP (Dera Ismail Khan) will come under the Western Route, while over 400 km area of Hazara will be the part of the route. With a total area exceeding 610 km at least, the share of KP in Western Route will be around 20 percent. How come the chief minister of KP talked about just 2 percent of share in the CPEC?

In fact, under the present stakes of the CPEC, KP's got extra share as compared to its land and population. This distribution is even beyond the consensus achieved under the Council of Common Interests (CCI). Other Federating units should also be adjusted to strengthen the Federation and the CPEC.

To say that the 'original route' has been altered is a lie. Where is the 'original route' and who has designed and when? Is it the Federal Government or Provincial Government? When it was told that there would be 'motorway' in the remote areas against the concept of feasibility? Projects are always need-base.

Some neglected politicians are just creating a fuss and confusion. They must understand the damage they inflict upon such highly sensitive projects of mass development across the country. JUI Chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman warned of 'extreme measures' if the Federal Government does not remove their reservations on the CPEC. The KP Chief Minister Pervez Khattak asked the Federal Government to halt all kind of work on the Eastern Route, benefiting Punjab.

These politicians do not understand the consequences and implications for their unjust demands by creating inter-provincial disharmony and damaging the cause of the Federation. Their unjust demands and misguidance could also have serious repercussions on country's relations with China – the only reliable partner.

Already such controversial and inter-provincial disharmony and distrust on the Federation has sent and keep sending negative messages to policy-makers in China. The writer has a chance to freely exchange such views with Chinese scholars from time to time in Pakistan and China. Politicians should not drift on the national consensus already archived on the CPEC in May last year. No one has the right to sabotage national consensus achieved on the CPEC. The project moves according to the Constitution and will of the people.

The CPEC is just a "win-win" and "appreciate-appreciate" project of national importance of Pakistan. China has offered to build the project in different phases. Now the CPEC is the part of China's Five Year Development Plan 2016-2020. There is Chinese saying that a thousand miles journey starts from first step and according to another Chinese saying road is the first step for all kind of development. Let's stand by Chinese wisdom of development. We should create more space for them instead of creating fuss and confusion that is entirely against the national interest of Pakistan.

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