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## **Commitment to CPEC**

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WITH the dismissal of the Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on 28 July by the Supreme Court, eye brows were raised about the US\$ 62 billion fate-changing project of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The Indian media took advantage of this situation and ran up bogus and delusory stories about CPEC creating a vacuum that whether or not Pakistan would adhere to the project. Some stories also were voiced on Pakistan's press. The confusion was very "well fabricated". However the truth goes contrary to it.

The multi-billion enterprise would continue to be followed by all successive Governments as the crucial project is between Pakistan and China - a relationship that is well known for stability and permanence. Most of the political parties also hold similar views on the CPEC like that of the reigning Pakistan Muslims League-N (PML-N) and so there is no question and not even a single confusion should exist about its discontinuity and disorder in any mode in future.

It must be understood that the CPEC is not a dogmatic or political project. It is a pure economic and commercial project. So far, Pakistan People Party (PPP) and incumbent PML-N yield the title of the CPEC. It is also true that initial discussions

were carried up with the PPP and the project was materialised when the PML-N Government was framed in June 2013.

The incentives of the opposite parties and other groups are there too in this mega-project. This indicates that there is a broad national consensus over the CPEC that makes it an undisputed project for all times. There is no power struggle as such in describing CPEC. The Armed Forces of Pakistan are also backing up the project in its safe execution as its custodians. It is also unquestionably clear that there is no civil-military rift with regard to CPEC. All are standing united and strong on this vital national project and national asset.

The political debate on the CPEC should be kept at arm's length so that no one could don up any biased opinion on the CPEC. Besides political understanding on CPEC between China and Pakistan, militaries from both the sides are deeply involved in the safety and early completion of CPEC projects. Speaking on the occasion of the 90th anniversary of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) on 31st July at Islamabad Chinese Military, Naval and Air Attaché Major General Chen Wenrong said "Pakistan and China are closely working to execute the CPEC project. We are building win-win cooperation and a community of the shared destiny," he told the gathering.

The Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa said that "today, this close collaboration spans over a wider canvas than ever before and ranges across strategic initiatives like China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, defence collaboration in numerous joint projects and united diplomatic front internationally."

China has no reservations about the continuity of the CPEC after the Supreme Court verdict against Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. China will continue to work with Pakistan over CPEC projects without any disruption. This was assured by the spokesman of Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Lu Kang, while commuting on the ousting of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.

Kang said that "we believe that the China-Pakistan strategic cooperative partnership will not be affected by the change of the situation inside Pakistan. China stands ready to work with Pakistan to continue jointly building the One Belt and One Road." The all-weather friendship between China and Pakistan has withstood the test of times, Kang added.

A high-level delegation of Interim Government set up would pay a visit to Beijing in August where it would demonstrate to the Chinese Government its continued commitment towards the CPEC. The Interim Government would inaugurate many major power projects next month including Balloki power project (1,200 MW), Dasu hydropower project (4,320 MW), Port Qasim LNG project (1,320 MW), and Chashma-IV nuclear power plant.

Therefore, assurances from both the sides reinforced their commitment on the CPEC without any iota of shift on its basic policy and on-going projects. It is a bad news for the enemies of the CPEC that it would be pursued rigorously by the Interim

Government and also when the next Prime Minister will be elected next month, until new elections next year.

Over the past four years, PML-N developed a deep sense of CPEC to address fundamental woes of Pakistan's economy to build a strong network of connectivity within and outside the region with many on-going projects. The policy was used as a great leverage with neighbouring countries, Central Asia, Russia, and beyond. The revival of the economy of Pakistan is just based upon this resilience. The change of leadership within the ruling PML-N would not alter or even make a tiny shift in its policy towards the CPEC. Under these prevailing scenarios, Pakistan would achieve its primary interests to transform Pakistan into an Asian Tiger in the given time framework. Pakistan is on the main drag of success and no one can break the durability of this unshakable joint venture.

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