**Now China-Pakistan Knowledge Corridor**

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The academic and research collaboration between China and Pakistan have witnessed impressive growth in last few decades. With huge investment of Chinese government in research and development, more than 100 Chinese Universities are today placed in the global best 500 universities of the world, according to Times Higher Education Ranking (2021), Shanghai Jiao Thong Universities ranking (2020) and US News and World Report (2020).

While looking at the significance of intellectual and knowledge connectivity, alongside the physical routes, HEC has timely established a CPEC centre at its headquarters. Under this initiatives, a consortium of CPEC universities has been created, which is now comprised of more than 50 universities. Lately, HEC approved a project to establish Knowledge and Research Corridor between the two countries. The main aim of the project is to create collaboration amongst the Chinese and Consortium Universities of Pakistan for strengthening Chinese Road and Belt Intuitive (RBI), to exploit the opportunities of China’s appetite for global talent hunt, and support the universities of Pakistan for human resource development, identifying the long term challenges in implementation of CPEC and analysis of Chinese culture and history for drawing lessons for development of Pakistan.

The components of the project are, Joint Research: For implementation of these strategies, HEC has proposed some of the way forward like joint research on selected themes of joint interest, which can include climate adaptation, sustainable mountain development, food security, urban planning, water resource management, supply chain management, IT entrepreneurship, medicinal plants, gemstones and mineral resource management, etc.

The faculty and students of Pakistani Universities and general and KIU in particular would need to abreast for harnessing the opportunities provided under CPEC Knowledge and Research Corridor

Talent Cultivation and Training: This component mainly focuses on the capacity building of faculty to strengthen the academic and intellectual relations. About 400 faculty members will be trained under this component both at Pakistan and China. Post-doctoral research: Post-doctoral research and trainings provide ample opportunities to faculty for exchange of latest knowledge, research and technologies. Short Term Trainings: Due to shortage of qualified PhD faculty in the newly established Universities in Pakistan, it may not be affordable for them to place most of the faculty on PhD studies or Post Doc research. Hence a window of short term placement of 150 faculty and staff for short term trainings of 2-3 weeks will be provided

Dual degree programs between Chinese and Pakistani Universities: Under the proposed project 10 BS and 20 MS students will be provided with this opportunity to complete their degrees under dual degree programs of Chinese and Pakistani Universities. Conferences, Seminars, Workshops, Colloquia etc. In current phase, about 12 International Conferences will be arranged at Pakistan and China to showcase the research in both countries, which will be focused on the challenges faced by the two countries, with special emphasis over CPEC and BRI. Establishment of China Study Centres: At least 6 China Study Centres will be established across Pakistan, one each in 5 provinces including Gilgit Baltistan and AJ&K. These centres will focus on strengthening the Chinese language teaching, cultural and history studies and act as Think Tank for paving long term understanding about CPEC.

The Chinese New Normal of Economic Development, drawn by current Chinese leadership, is based on the OBOR lately called Belt and Roads Initiative (BRI). The principal and strategic component of this network is CPEC which is part of 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. The multibillion mega projects under CPEC are destined to usher in a new era of economic prosperity and peace in the region. These mammoth projects in the energy sector, strengthening of physical and telecommunication networks, upgradation and strengthening of Gwadar port and establishment of Export Promotions Zones across Pakistan, are collectively called the “Destiny Changer” in the region. The dividends of the first early harvest phase of CPEC have already created trickle-down effects to the masses in Pakistan.

China and Pakistan are time tested friends with shared boundaries, culture and history dating back to the ancient silk route. The two countries have always stood for inclusivity, peaceful co-existence and sustainable growth in the region. While inaugurating the China Pakistan Economic Corridor, President Xi-Jinping said: “Friendship between China and Pakistan is based on trust and mutual support, and we have been devoted friends through both good and hard times. Our friendship is a pacesetter for amicable relations.” The unwavering support of China to Pakistan’s stance on the issue of Kashmir, China’s Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and the enormous allocation of resources to China Pakistan Economic Corridor as part of One Belt and One Road Initiative are some of the major dividends of this friendship. To restrain the hegemonic and expansionist designs of India and Narendra Modi led BJP government, the need for this partnership has further intensified in last few years.

Gilgit Baltistan is a region blessed with unique opportunities by nature. The region has a distinction of being the converging point of three of the mightiest mountain ranges in the world, namely: Himalaya, Karakoram and Hindu Kush. GB being a gateway to CPEC and Karakoram International University, being a pioneer seat of higher learning has been connected to China both physically, historically and traditionally. The flow of services and goods across the two region under regional trade arrangements, provide unmatched opportunities to the people on both sides of the boarder. KIU established its Confucius Centre, years back to impact Chinese Language literacy to the students and youth. All graduates of KIU are bound to learn the two level of Chinese literacy (HESI&II). Every year more than 1000 students are taught Chinese language by native Chinese teachers. A good number of the faculty of KIU also graduated from Chinese top Universities, who have brought, their rich experience to the region for quality education and research to more than 7000 students at KIU. The faculty and students of Pakistani Universities and general and KIU in particular would need to abreast for harnessing the opportunities provided under CPEC Knowledge and Research Corridor. Drew Faust President Harvard University quoted: “Higher Education is the strongest, sturdiest ladder for socioeconomic mobility”. CPEC knowledge and Research Corridor (CKRC), will enhance the intellectual capacity of the faculty and staff of Pakistani Higher Education Institutes, which will turn the youth force of Pakistan, as growth engine as envisaged by HEC.

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