**CPEC and China Pakistan Knowledge Corridor**

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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 Indian Occupied Kashmir, Chinese Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and the enormous allocation of resources to China Pakistan Economic Corridor as part of One Belt and One Road (OBOR) Initiative of President Xi are some of the major dividends of this friendship. To restrain the hegemonic and expansionist designs of the India and Narendra Moodi led, BJP Government, the need for this partnership has further intensified in last few years.

The Chinese New Normal of Economic Development, drawn by current Chinese leadership, is based on the OBOR lately called Belt and Roads Initiative (BRI). These initiatives call for strengthening the regional development strategies through a robust and global trade networks. The road networks at regional and global levels are strengthened with three major systems namely Yangtze River Economic Belt, Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. The principal and strategic component of this network is CPEC which is part of 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. The multibillion USD mega projects under CPEC are destined to usher 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 Gawadar 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.

Develop mechanisms to fully exploit the opportunities arising out of the China’s appetite for global talent, and facilitate absorption of their graduates by Pakistani economy

With huge investment of Chinese Government in Research and Development, today more than 100 Chinese Universities are 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). According to QS Ranking, the top 9 Chinses Universities include Tsinghua University, Peking University, Fujian University, University of Science and Tech China, Zhejiang University, Shanghai Jiao Thong University, Nanjing University, Sun Yat Sen University, Wuhan University, Harbin Institute of Technology, Xian Jiao Thong University. The academic and research collaboration between China and Pakistan have witnessed impressive growth in last few decades, in the areas of graduates studies, joint collaborative research, research funding, exchange programs, short term placement of students and faculty, organizing Conferences, Seminars and workshops etc. While looking at the significance of intellectual and knowledge connectivity, alongside the physical routes, Higher Education Commission has timely established the CPEC center at its headquarter. Under the aegis of this initiatives, a consortium of CPEC Universities has been created, which is comprised of more than 50 Universities now. HEC submitted a series of PC-1s for establishing Knowledge and Research Corridor between the two countries. The two important projects, have started its work, China Pakistan Joint Research Centre at Quaid-e- Azam University and Academic Collaboration under CPEC consortium Universities. In the former mega project, three centers will be established with main seat at QUA for earth Sciences, Labs for Cryosphere and Climate at Karakoram International University Gilgit and Marine Siences Labs at Marine University Karachi.

The objectives of the project for establishing collaboration amongst the CPEC Consortium Universities include

Study the geo-strategic and geo-economic dimensions of the Chinese Belt and Road initiative and CPEC to understand their long-term impact on Pakistan.

Develop mechanisms to fully exploit the opportunities arising out of the China’s appetite for global talent, and facilitate absorption of their graduates by Pakistani economy.

Support higher education institutions (HEIs) in the development of human resource to implement CPEC Long Term Plan.

Develop capacity of Pakistani universities for providing policy inputs to the government on the challenges emerging in the wake of implementation of CPEC Long Term Plan.

Develop an understanding of Chinese history, culture and governance system that has created the Chinese miracle, while drawing lessons for own development.

The various components of this knowledge and research collaboration are summarised below:

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.

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. About 30 faculty member (15 on each side) will be provided with the opportunities for such research.

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: For internationalization of Universities in Pakistan, one option can be joint or dual degree programs. International Dual/Double Degree program: Two or more institutions in different countries collaborate on one-degree program. Upon completion, students receive degree certificates issued separately by each of the institutions involved in the program. These programs generally use the terminology 2+2 or 1+2+1. 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.

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. These ranges have many of the world’s highest peaks and the world’s largest concentration of glaciers outside the Polar Region, also called “Third Pole”. In the Karakorum alone 30 peaks soar over 24,000 fee (7,500 m) and culminate in the 28,250 feet (8,612 m) high K2, second only to Mt. Everest in elevation. Sheer rock walls and ravines, plunging thousands of vertical feet down to the rivers flowing below, mark the unique panorama. These lofty mountains and valleys boast a spectrum of wildlife such as the snow leopard, brown bear, Marco Polo sheep, Himalayan ibex, Astore markhor, golden marmot, woolly flying quirrel and other species, some of which are rare or endangered. Substantial deposits of various minerals and semi-precious stones add to the natural wealth of the region. Glacier and snow melts are the source of fresh water in this arid region. Water flows into the valleys in the form of nullahs (streams) and makes human existence possible.

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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