**Gwadar Rights: Round Two**

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December 29, 2021

People in Gwadar have won the battle of basic rights in a convincing way. Indeed, it is the first phase of victory. The second phase, believed to be most crucial, has now kicked off. It centres on arduousness that will lead to the finishing line in which people will feel practically whether all demands met by the government have been materialized in true letter and spirit or not.

Since there is much a slip between the cup and lip, signs of final victory in the battle of rights for Gwadar people are yet to be witnessed. If people and protest leader, Maulana Hadayat Ur Rehman Baloch, will keep doing follow-ups, results will be desirous. Otherwise in Pakistan’s history, many winsome demonstrations have mesmerized people, but they lost their steam soon afterwards, due to many reasons.

Gwadar protest gained the fame as Gwadar Spring with the slogan of “Gwadar Ko Haqooq Do Tehreek” like Arab Spring that erupted in the Middle East to reclaim common public’s rights. Similar to Arab Spring that took everybody by storm due to its nature and formation (amazingly driven by the common man, irrespective of gender, profession, caste, ethnicity and any affiliation) Gwadar Spring, an epic crusade charged up to get fundamental rights, was a purely public-led movement in totality.

Usually, the movements are led by high-profile personalities. They carry motives for political gains or some vested interests. In the Gwadar Spring case, motivational personalities were local fishermen, shopkeepers, labourers, daily wagers, teachers, students, traders, government employees, transporter, poets, kids, women, the elderly and many others.

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Recently, I had a chance to observe those who took part in the sit-in. I fraternized Maulana Hadaya ur Rehman and also met women that participated in the historic women rally in Gwadar. These socialisations were to feel the pulse of “Gwadar Spring” and to get the wind of whether some hidden hands are behind it or not.

Having analyzed from all aspects, I have concluded that the movement was undoubtedly rooted in the common man and the general public were the master of their own Gwadar Ko Haqooq Do Tehreek.

People were being denied their rights to live respectfully and reasonably with shrinking resources of livelihood, mostly linked to the fish-catching profession at the hands of the trawler mafia. They witnessed the high-handedness of black sheep in the government domain that paralyzed their business and trade activities at the Iran border. They were in dire straits due to being deprived of clean drinking water, electricity and gas with barricaded roads and frequent security checks as growing nuisances. Gwadar Spring was the last hope, and it appeared that it was the sole remedy of their traumatic life.

Let me tell you bluntly that situation was grave and common people had been languishing in excessiveness. However, in the age of helplessness and hopelessness, there are some green shoots. They are Gwadar Port operated by COPHC led by its Chairman Zhang Baozhong and GPA chairman Naseer Ahmed Kashani.

Indeed, the fruits of CPEC-led development works have not reached people in their entirety, but it is an unglorified fact that China’s initiatives in collaboration with the Pakistan government inside Gwadar Port and outside have started creating positive ripples.

Gwadar Port Free Zone (Phase-1) is functional. Goat Farm, Kitchen Farm, Women Development Center, Forestry Garden, Container Yards, warehouses, Model Harbor are employing local people. As many as six factories are fully functional. The construction of eight factories is underway. 46 companies, Chinese and Pakistanis, have been registered. Custom clearance on window operation is up and running.

Cargo Trade has accelerated; becoming a boon for transporters, drivers and allied workers. Technical and Vocational Training Institute has been constructed where local people will train local youth by equipping them with advanced hands-on knowledge that will enhance their job-recruitment scope. Earlier water scarcity was as usual. Now, water is available, but the issue is with rusty and broken pipelines. Government is all set to replace water supply lines. New Gwadar International Airport is likely to be functional in 2023. Gwadar Free Zone Phase II has been inaugurated. The entire spectrum of development is supposed to generate a $ 50 billion contribution to the national economy.

Local fishermen complained of obstruction of their access to sea due to the construction of Eastbay Expressway, an exclusive road that connects Gwadar Port to M-8. To address the grievance, GPA built an overhead bridge that allowed fishermen to take their boats beneath the bridge to reach the sea and continue to earn their livelihood. Pak-China hospital is going to be completed. Many schools are operational for local children. Gwadar University is established.

That is why when Gwadar ko Haqooq Do Tehreek leader Maulana Hadaya ur Rehman was asked he said loud and clear that protest and sit-in are not against China and CPEC. “Demonstrations and rallies are for seeking their lost rights,” he added.

In the presence of CPEC-led development projects, especially Gwadar Port being run by Chinese company China Overseas Port Holding Company (COPHC), local people are getting the dividends, but these benefits are not incommensurate with the plethora of problems.

From my perspective, the reason is that when various projects were launched and even still being rolled out, a staggering hype is unleashed, trying to establish the impression that in a few months, employment floodgates will be opened; trade and business activities will go on a rampage, revamping financial situation. Luxury will be within the budgetary limits of people. And Gwadar will outpace advanced cities in civic amenities, commerce and infrastructure.

Such sort of publicity blitz indeed made the people believe that utopia is real, but it is not. It is high time that a realistic picture is displayed, offering true insight into the time frame and its impacts.

Frankly speaking, it is fair enough to say that because the size of the problem is gigantic, it will take time for every local man to feel the bonanza of CPEC and China-led development works in Gwadar.

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