**Gwadar: the Nucleus of CPEC**

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The largest development project spearheaded by China in Pakistan ever since 2015 is known as the game changer, China Pakistan Economic Corridor. Quite fortunately, it started from Gwadar Seaport, the deepest sea area in the world located on the Arabian Sea in the South of Gwadar District of Baluchistan. People of Pakistan, especially from the undeveloped province of Baluchistan, had attached a lot of hope to it, rightfully so, because Chinese companies had begun the development work on Gwadar city and seaport as early as November 2016.

The development of Gwadar and Baluchistan, however, kickstarted serious problems for India and its lobbies in America and Iran. For this reason alone, their intelligence agencies planned to sabotage the CPEC project. In this regard, various plans were set up to thwart the development projects. Some circles believe that the Gwadar Haq Du movement is also being used by the organizations/agencies of these countries against the CPEC.

There have been 12 attacks on officers and other personnel working on Chinese projects so far, in which many Chinese have been killed and injured. Among these attacks, the most notable were the bombing of the Quetta Sarina Hotel that targetted the ambassador of China; the attack on the Dasu Dam in which more than six Chinese residents were killed, and the suicide bomb attack of a Baloch woman on the Chinese teachers of the Karachi University Confucius Center. Therein, the attacker was a Baloch woman that belonged to BLA. In this blast, three Chinese teachers were killed.

Moreover, a Chinese officer’s car was fired upon in Gwadar and all these incidents were claimed and accepted by BLA’s Majeed Brigade. BLA’s social media accounts propagating against China’s projects are further proof that Baloch nationalists and separatists are being used against CPEC. Our think tanks and state agencies also believe that India is using Baloch nationalists against CPEC. The US is also troubled by the Chinese project, and this has been expressed many a time by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the United States.

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The most important issue in Gwadar is the electricity supply. So far, the electricity is supplied through the Iran Turbat transmission line, which is 17 megawatts. However, the 100-MW power project from Iran will be completed this year. 50.2 billion rupees have been spent on this project and 3600 solar panels have been distributed to remote areas. 10000 more panels will be distributed. The 300-MW power plant coal project is to be completed by 2025. All this development work is being done by a Chinese company through CPEC projects. Under the same CPEC project, up to 500 KVA transmission line (Basilsa Jiwani) will also be completed by the end of 2023.

The limited nature of water resources is another overwhelming issue in the area. A Chinese company has started building the Shezik Dam project to supply water to Gwadar, which will cost 11 billion rupees. This will solve the water problem of Gwadar. Similarly, three million gallons of clean water will be supplied to Gwadar city through GDM Reverse O Samos Dip Plant, installed by a Chinese company at Gwadar Airport.

Apart from this, a supply of eight lakh gallons of water has been arranged through a desalination plant. The water problem of Gwadar city will be solved for five years with this project.

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Poor telecom connectivity is also an issue, for which VBox is already working and optical fibre will be completed soon.

The main issues of Gwadar should be resolved as soon as possible, for which a friendly atmosphere should be established with the help of the local politicians.

100 per cent of funds have been allocated to the provincial government for border markets in Gabad, Mand and Chirhi. They will be connected to the M-8 Coastal Highway. It is the responsibility of the government of Baluchistan to build the border markets as soon as possible for which they have received the required amount of funds.

In the health sector, Pakistan China Friendship Hospital (PCFH) Gwadar, a 70-bed hospital, is functioning here in Gwadar. However, in phase 2, this hospital will be handed over to Indus Hospital and another 100 beds will be provided.

M-8 Section (Awaran)will connect Gwadar Port with the North through the Eastern, Central and Western alignments of CPEC. Gwadar will be connected to the North through the East, Central and West alignments of CPEC routes. After this, Gwadar’s distance to Ratodero will only be 23 km.

2000 boat engines have been distributed to fishermen of Gwadar in December 2022. On the other hand, the illegal trawling of Sindh fishermen in Gwadar is a major controversy. However, after the 18th Amendment, this has become a provincial issue, so PMSA/Pakistan Navy has no jurisdiction. Sindh does not have any action to restrict fishermen in Karachi.

The great news for the youth of Gwadar is that 500 acres of land have been acquired for the establishment of the University of Gwadar, the ground-breaking ceremony of which is expected in February 2023. Gwadar University will be affiliated with Shanghai Maritime University and a Maritime Center of Excellence will also be built in it. Moreover, a lot of money is being allocated to the CPEC project for the development of Gwadar. However, everyone knows how development projects do not come within weeks or a month. People are also aware of the bureaucracy and how the contracting system works in our country.

The Gwadar Haq Du movement was raised 29 months ago to raise the voice of the local fishermen. It claimed that some fishermen from Karachi and Sindh were destroying the jobs of local fishermen by catching large-scale fish in the marine area of Gwadar with the help of trawlers. Protests and sit-ins began to solve other local problems. This movement was led by the provincial general secretary of Jamaat-e-Islami, Maulana Hidayat-ur-Rehman, and this protest took a public colour. In the meantime, the nationalist lobby of Baluchistan, which is accused of having links with the institutions of India and the US, included dozens of its people in the Gwadar Haq Du movement and added demands that had nothing to do with the people of Gwadar and the fishermen. These included criticism and objections against the army’s check posts; demanding illegal trade on the border of Iran, illegal import on the Afghan border, and opposition against the CPEC project. By including these demands in the protest of the Gwadar Haq Du movement, it can be inferred that these are the demands that are voiced by Baloch nationalists and the Baloch Liberation Army.

Maulana Hidayat, the leader of Gwadar Haq Du Tehreek, who restarted the sit-in in November and December 2022, took the path of violence instead of remaining peaceful. He tried to disrupt the work on the CPEC project; threatened the Chinese residents and addressed the rally with a gun; encouraging the youth to pick up weapons. The government of Baluchistan also held talks with Maulana, but they were not successful. It is clear that Pakistan’s government wants to keep Gwadar a peaceful and safe area.

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