**Outcome Of China Visit**

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Brazilian lyricist, an eminent literary figure and winner of several international awards, Paulo Coelho de Souza, described friendship as, “Friendship is not about whom you know the longest. It is about who came and never left.”

What he said is quintessential of the friendship between Pakistan and China, which is far beyond and above the realm of normal diplomatic relations between any two states. The epithet of “iron brothers” proudly claimed by the two countries reflects the impregnable nature of relations between the two countries which have withstood the vicissitudes of times.

Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif’s two-day visit to China is reflective of the warmth, strength and depth of relations between the two iron brothers in terms of its productive outcomes. President Xi assured China’s continued support for sustainable economic and strategic projects, including the ML-1 rail track. He also announced an additional assistance package of Rs 15.2 billion for flood relief operations in Pakistan.

Both leaders also acknowledged the need for a mass-transit project in Karachi and agreed to finalize all formalities for the early launch of the Karachi Circular Railway. In his interaction with Chinese companies working on building infrastructure at Gawadar international airport, Prime Minister was given the assurance of its completion by early 2023. The Prime Minister, in his meeting with the leading Chinese companies, was able to convince them to invest in the Pakistan government’s solar power project, aimed at generating 10,000 MW of electricity, besides encouraging them to invest in alternative energy resources, including wind turbine power plants.

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Both countries signed and concluded several agreements/MoUs, covering bilateral cooperation in areas of e-commerce, digital economy, export of agricultural products, financial cooperation, protection of cultural property, infrastructure, flood relief, post-disaster reconstruction, GDI, animal disease control, livelihood, cultural cooperation, space, geosciences as well as law enforcement and security.

The other hallmark of the parleys between the two sides was unanimity of views on regional and global issues including UN reforms, the need for peace in Afghanistan and continued international support to the Afghan regime to deal with a humanitarian crisis. Pakistan expressed its commitment to the one-China policy and support on issues of Taiwan, the South China Sea, Hong Kong, Xinjiang and Tibet. China reaffirmed its support for Pakistan’s sovereignty, territorial integrity, and security and in promoting its socio-economic development and prosperity. It also endorsed Pakistan’s stance on Kashmir saying that the issue needed to be resolved through dialogue in accordance with the relevant UN resolution and bilateral agreements between the two countries. Pakistan is greatly indebted to China for her continued unflinching support on Kashmir. It was with the Chinese support that the issue of Kashmir came up for discussion in the meeting of the UNSC after fifty years in the backdrop of the unilateral action by the Modi government to end the special status of IOK.

China has played a significant role in the economic progress of Pakistan. The construction of the KKH Highway, the Heavy Mechanical Complex at Taxila, Pakistan Aeronautical Complex (PAC) and Chashma Nuclear Plants are the monuments of the ever-spiking relationship. In the backdrop of the US-India deal for the transfer of civilian nuclear technology which Pakistan regarded as a discriminatory act, China exhibited the strength of the friendship between the two countries by agreeing to help Pakistan in building Chashma IV and V. It has also been extending support to Pakistan regarding its stance for criteria based admittance of new members to the prestigious Nuclear Suppliers Group. It also helped in saving Pakistan from being pushed to the blacklist by FATF. It is worth recalling that China had also extended $2 billion in financial support to tide over the financial crisis confronting the country.

Pakistan and China also have very strong defence ties. In early March 2017, the Chinese-built Low to Medium Altitude Air Defence System was inducted into the air defence system of the Pakistan Army that would considerably enhance its response capability to current and emerging threats as the Chinese Mobile Air Defence system is capable of tracking and destroying a variety of aerial targets at longer ranges flying at low and medium altitudes. The co-production of the JF-17 Thunder aircraft at PAC is yet another milestone in defence relations between the two countries.

China fully understands the challenges being faced by Pakistan, its geo-political relevance, and its contributions towards regional peace and stability and has repeatedly assured full-spectrum support for Pakistan in grappling with those challenges. It has always appreciated Pakistan’s efforts to deal with the phenomenon of terrorism; urging the world to acknowledge those achievements.

CPEC, a flagship project of BRI, has undoubtedly added eternity to the infallible relations between the two states and their people. By becoming part of the CPEC, Pakistan is poised not only to make up for the lost opportunities but also to become an economic powerhouse within the next two decades. Apart from radically changing the dynamics of regional connectivity and trade, it is going to act as a catalyst in the process of Pakistan’s transition from an agricultural economy to an industrial economy.

CPEC is a mix of infrastructure projects, energy-producing units and industrial zones along the corridor routes. The development of infrastructure under the CPEC will lay a firm foundation for the industrialization of Pakistan. The CPEC has been acknowledged as a perfect recipe for lifting the economic profile of the countries which are part of the initiative worldwide. Even the UN has recognized its economic potential and the collateral outcome of promoting peace through economic interdependence. CPEC is a win-win initiative for China, Pakistan and the entire region.

China has also shown remarkable flexibility by expanding the scope of CPEC to the social sectors earlier, particularly alleviation of poverty and made commitments to rectify the trade imbalance between the two countries by taking steps to enhance Pakistani exports to China, proving her credentials as a time-tested friend of Pakistan.

Pakistan’s economic and security interests are inextricably linked to the region it belongs to. Therefore its focus on recalibrating relations with the countries of the region and taking its relations with China to a higher trajectory is the right thing to do without getting involved in dynamics of the global politics.

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