



CPEC won't lead to a debt trap, says China

Posted at: 10/09/2018

Highlights

- China has rejected accusations that its financial backing for the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was a “debt trap” that could compromise Islamabad’s sovereignty.
- China has billed the Gwadar to Kashgar corridor as the flagship of China-led Belt and Road Initiative .
- Mounting a robust defence of its ‘no-strings-attached’ backing for CPEC, China’s visiting Foreign Minister Wang Yi asserted during an Islamabad press conference that among the 22 projects within the framework of CPEC, 18 involved investment and aid and only four of them used concessional loan.
- He stressed that nine of these projects have already been completed and 13 are under construction.

70,000 new jobs

- He also clarified that only \$19 billion had been invested in the CPEC, which had generated 70,000 new jobs.
- During the first phase, the CPEC’s focus has been on energy and infrastructure projects.
- It was now up to the Pakistani side to drive the trajectory of the “next phase” of the undertaking, Mr. Wang said.
- During his talks in Islamabad, Mr. Wang apparently got solid support for CPEC from the Pakistan’s military.

Army assures support

- Gen. Qamar Javed Bajwa, Pakistan Army chief, assured Mr. Wang that the military will “guarantee” the smooth development of CPEC, the state-run Xinhua agency reported.
- Gen. Bajwa also reassured Mr. Wang that Pakistan was committed to firmly fight the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) as part of its counterterrorism effort.
- The ETIM was founded by Uighur separatists whose stated goal is to establish East Turkistan as a separate state in Xinjiang.

Aid for Afghanistan

- In talks on Afghanistan, Mr. Wang spotlighted the undiminished relevance of the trilateral China-Pakistan-Afghanistan dialogue as a platform to align perceptions between Islamabad and Kabul.
- Last year, at the inaugural meeting of the trilateral mechanism in Beijing, China had offered Afghanistan participation in CPEC.

- China has also apparently agreed to train an Afghan mountain brigade without putting any boots on the ground in Afghanistan.

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