

PESHAWAR: China is to provide all kinds of financial and technical support in the construction of a regional railway hub for Pakistan. According to a report published in The Hindu last year, a portion of the railway track from Kashgar to Hotan in southern Xinjiang began in June last year, whereas work has not yet started beyond that. The line is planned to run from Kashgar, the Old Silk Road town, to Xinjiang region, the report said.

The active promotion of construction of the railway project will connect Pakistan with Xinjiang region in China and enhance the capacity of transportation between the two countries, said Pakistan Study Centre Sichuan University Chengdu China Director Dr Chen Jidong, while speaking at the one-day seminar on prospects of Pak-China Relations at the University of Peshawar on Friday.

The seminar was arranged by Department of International Relations (IR), University of Peshawar, in collaboration with Institute of Policy Studies Islamabad.

Jidong claimed the project is in the greatest advantage of Pakistan, and will build trade and transport corridors by connecting South Asia, West Asia, Central Asia and Western China.

Chinese strategic analyst Professor Zhong Rong said, the taking over of Gwadar port by a Chinese company along with this new project can transform Pakistan into an economic giant of the 21st century.

Let me tell Pakistanis that Gwadar Port is first for the development of Pakistan and then for any other country. The American withdrawal by the end of 2014 (from Afghanistan) would start the beginning of a golden period for Balochistan, he said.

Gwadar port will always belong to Pakistan. The Pakistani government has handed it over to a Chinese company because the Singaporean Company who was in charge of port operations in 2007 could not deliver the desired results, added Rong.

When a student inquired about the role of China post-2014, Jidong said China prefers participation of the Afghan people in the peace process.

We have no favours or opinion to offer on talks of the Afghan government with the Afghan Taliban, but China does want to play a moderate and neutral role in Afghanistan, he said.

Department of International Relations Chairman Professor Dr Adnan Sarwar said the old slogan "deeper than sea and higher than sky" for the relations must be transformed by boosting economic ties.

Courtesy: Tribune