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Gilgit-Baltistan to Become a Pakistani Province

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Why in News

Recently, **Pakistan has decided to elevate Gilgit-Baltistan's status** to that of a full-fledged province.

Gilgit-Baltistan is one of the **disputed territories** of India.



Key Points

- **Current Status of Gilgit-Baltistan:**
 - It is an **autonomous region** now and with this elevation, it will **become the 5th province** of the country.

Currently, **Pakistan has four provinces** namely **Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, and Sindh.**
 - **Chronology:**
 - **1999:** Pakistan's Supreme Court ruled that the people of Gilgit-Baltistan are Pakistani citizens and directed the federal government to start appropriate administrative and legislative measures.
 - **2009:** The **Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self-Governance Order** was introduced, whereby the **Northern Areas were renamed as Gilgit-Baltistan** and the region was given **province-like status but without representation in Parliament.**
 - **2015:** A committee constituted by the federal government **proposed** giving Gilgit-Baltistan the status of a province.
 - **2018:** A new order was introduced which **transferred all powers of the Gilgit-Baltistan council to its assembly.**
- This elevation will **lead to adequate representation from the province on all constitutional bodies**, including the National Assembly and the Senate.
- The Government will also start working on the **Moqpondass Special Economic Zone (SEZ)** under the **China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)**.

SEZs work as an engine for economic growth supported by quality infrastructure complemented by an attractive fiscal package, both at the Centre and the State level, with the minimum possible regulations.
- **Other Developments by China in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir under CPEC:**
 - **Diamer-Bhasha Dam.**
 - **Kohala hydropower Project.**
 - **Azad Pattan Hydel Power Project.**
- **India's Stand:**
 - India has held that the **Government of Pakistan or its judiciary has no locus standi on territories illegally and forcibly occupied** by it.
 - India completely **rejects such actions** and continued attempts to bring material changes in Pakistan occupied areas of the Indian territory of Jammu and Kashmir.
 - While protesting Islamabad's efforts to bring material change in Pakistan occupied territories, India held that **Pakistan should immediately vacate all areas under its illegal occupation.**

China Pakistan Economic Corridor

- It is the flagship project of China's ambitious **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**.

- The **bilateral project between Pakistan and China** intends to promote connectivity across Pakistan with a network of highways, railways, and pipelines accompanied by energy, industrial and other infrastructure development projects. Originally valued at USD 46 billion, the projects were **worth over USD 60 billion as of 2017**.
- It links the **Western part of China (Xinjiang)** to the **Gwadar Port in Balochistan, Pakistan via Khunjerab Pass in Northern Pakistan**.
- **India has protested to China over the CPEC** as it is being laid through **Pakistan-occupied Kashmir**.



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