



Protests in Balochistan

Why in News

Over the last few weeks, there have been continuous protests in **Gwadar, Balochistan** against mega development plans of the port city as part of the [China-Pakistan Economic Corridor](#).

- The protesters have sought to draw attention to **marginalisation of the local people in the development of the port**.
- Pakistan claims that India has been supporting these protests.



Key Points

- **About Balochistan:**
 - Balochistan is one of the **four provinces of Pakistan**.
 - It is least populated even though it is the **largest province** in terms of land size.
 - It is populated in **ethnic Baloch people** which can be found in modern day Iran and Afghanistan though the majority of Baloch can be found in Balochistan.
 - Balochistan is rich in **natural gas and oil** and is one of the most important regions of Pakistan.
- **Uprising in Balochistan:**
 - During the **withdrawal of the British** from the Indian subcontinent, the Kingdom of Balochistan was offered the same offer, either to join India, join Pakistan or remain independent.

- The **king of Balochistan chose to remain independent** and it did remain independent for nearly a year.
- In the year 1948, the Pakistan government, with a **combination of military and diplomacy**, took control of the region and made it into a part of Pakistan.
- Due to lack of **development and human rights violations** in the region done by the Pakistan military and terror groups, the **insurgency in Balochistan** has been active since 1948.
- Pakistan claims that India has been **supporting these rebel fighters** with arms and intelligence.

▪ **India's Stand on Balochistan:**

- India has long **maintained a political stance of not interfering** in the internal matters of Pakistan or any other country.
- Despite Pakistan repeatedly bringing up the **Kashmir issue** over the years, India had maintained silence on Balochistan.
- However, in 2016, remarks on Balochistan came in the immediate aftermath of the Independence Day celebration in Pakistan that was dedicated to the independence of Kashmir.
- India's response was quick with **India's Prime Minister referring to atrocities of Baloch people** in his Independence speech in 2016.

CPEC & India's Concerns

▪ **About CPEC:**

- The CPEC is a **bilateral project between Pakistan and China**.
- It aims to link the **Western part of China (Xinjiang province) to the Gwadar Port in Balochistan**, Pakistan via Khunjerab Pass in the Northern Parts of Pakistan.
- It is intended to promote connectivity across Pakistan with a **network of highways, railways, and pipelines** accompanied by energy, industrial, and other infrastructure development projects.
- It will pave the way for China to access the **Middle East and Africa from Gwadar Port**, enabling China to access the Indian Ocean.
- CPEC is a part of the **Belt and Road Initiative**.
 - The BRI, launched in 2013, aims to link Southeast Asia, Central Asia, the Gulf region, Africa and Europe with a network of land and sea routes.



▪ India's Concerns:

- **Sovereignty Issue:** Some of the proposed infrastructure that the Chinese have been developing for Pakistan are passing through the disputed region of **Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK)**.
 - India considers it to be a part of its own territory.
- **Dual Purpose of Gwadar Port:** India has been concerned about Gwadar, which gives **China strategic access to the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean**.
 - It is not just being developed as a trade entrepot but as a dual purpose port for use by the Chinese Navy.
 - It is part of **String of pearls theory**, under which China is building state of the art gigantic modern ports all along the Indian Ocean and to the south of it, in **Gwadar (Pakistan), Chittagong (Bangladesh, Kyauk Phru (Myanmar) and Hambantota (Sri Lanka)**.
 - The string of pearls is a strategic threat to India, as it aims to **encircle India to establish Chinese dominance** in the Indian Ocean.

Source: IE

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