



China's New Sea-Road-Rail Link to Indian Ocean

Why in News

Recently, a new sea-road-rail link **providing Chengdu (China) with access to the Indian Ocean via Yangon (Myanmar)** was opened.

- The trade corridor is **China's first to link western China with the Indian Ocean.**



Key Points

- **About New Trade Corridor:**
 - The new trade corridor passage **connects the logistics lines of Singapore, Myanmar and China**, and is currently the most **convenient land and sea channel linking the Indian Ocean with southwest China.**
 - China also has plans to develop **another port in Kyaukphyu in the Rakhine state, Myanmar** including a proposed railway line from Yunnan (China) directly to the port, but the progress there has been stalled by [unrest in Myanmar](#).
 - China plans to develop this region in Myanmar as a **'border economic cooperation zone'** under the [Belt and Road Initiative](#).
 - It is expected to become the **lifblood of international trade for China**, while providing a source of income for Myanmar.
 - This trade corridor is **another direct Chinese outlet to the Indian ocean.**
 - The first one being at the **Gwadar port in Pakistan.**
 - This trade route is also **China's alternative to the "Malacca Dilemma"**.
 - Malacca Dilemma is **a word coined in 2003**, by the then Chinese President Hu Jintao.

- This refers to China's fear of a maritime blockade at the [Straits of Malacca](#). Since most of China's oil imports pass through the Straits of Malacca, a maritime blockade here could paralyze China's economy.

Geographic Location of Malacca Strait



▪ About Gwadar Port:

- Gwadar is being developed as part of the CPEC to the far **western Xinjiang region**.
- Gwadar has long been touted as the site for a Chinese base suitable for **People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN)** operations.
- China pursues a "**strategic strongpoint**" concept whereby **strategically sited foreign ports containing terminals and commercial zones** operated by Chinese firms can be used by its military.
- Such "strongpoints" offer the potential for China to form a network of supply, logistics and intelligence hubs along the **perimeter of the Indian Ocean**.
 - This is referred to as the **String of Pearls theory**.
- Gwadar is important to China for **three reasons**:
 - One is establishing **direct transport links to the Indian Ocean** via the CPEC.
 - The second factor is that Gwadar helps anchor or **stabilise western China, a region where China feels vulnerable to Islamic agitation**.
 - Further, Gwadar is just 400 km from the important [Hormuz Strait](#) (linking Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian sea), through which 40% of Chinese imported oil flows.



▪ **Implications for India:**

- China's economic stakes in the Bay of Bengal and this new trade corridor signifies a larger maritime presence and naval engagement in the region which in turn **reinforces the string of pearls policy by China.**
- Apart from **this trade corridor** and [China Pakistan Economic Corridor \(CPEC\)](#), China is also planning the **China-Nepal Economic Corridor (CNEC)** which will link Tibet to Nepal.
 - The endpoints of the project will touch the boundaries of the Gangetic plain.
 - Thus three corridors signify the economic as well as strategic rise of China in the Indian subcontinent.

▪ **Counter Steps Already Taken by India:**

- [Supply Chain Resilience Initiative](#)
- [Chabahar Port](#) in Iran's East.
- [Act East Policy](#)
- [Malabar Exercise](#)
- [Quad Initiative](#)
- [Developing North-Eastern India](#)
- [Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative](#)

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