

CPEC and Emerging Challenges at LAC

Source: ET

Why in News?

Following their co-chairing of the **fifth Pakistan-China Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue**, the two leaders expressed their commitment to continue supporting each other on matters of core interest including the **China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)**.

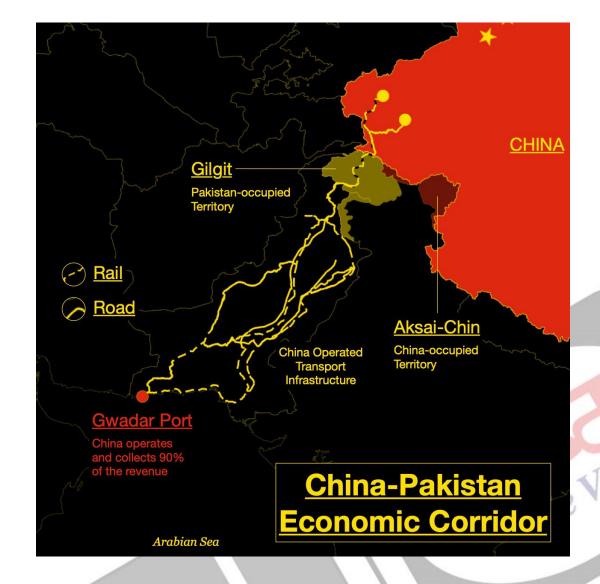
In a separate event, China has deployed advanced J-20 stealth fighters at a <u>Tibetan airfield</u> near the <u>Line of Actual Control (LAC)</u>, as part of its strategy to bolster its military presence amid ongoing tensions.

What is the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)?

- About:
 - The CPEC is a major infrastructure and development project.
 - With a USD 50 billion investment in Pakistan, CPEC forms a crucial part of China's Belt and Road Initiative, aiming to establish a 3,000 km infrastructure link between Gwadar and Karachi ports in Pakistan and China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region.

Vision

- China-Pakistan plans to accelerate various projects under CPEC, including the Gwadar Port development, and the Karakorum Highway.
- Opposition to CPCE:
 - India opposes the CPEC as it passes through <u>Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir</u> (<u>PoK</u>) which is an integral part of India.
 - Civilians in <u>Pakistan's Balochistan province</u> have also opposed the CPEC project, <u>citing</u> systematic abuses and suppression of basic freedoms.



Deployment of J-20 Stealth Fighters near LAC by China

- Satellite imagery have shown six J-20 fighters at the airfield along with ground crew and support equipment.
 - China has also upgraded several airfields in the region, including Hotan, Kashgar, and Gargunsa, among others, by extending runways, building shelters, and storage facilities.
 - China's deployment of J-20s is seen as an attempt to offset India's air combat advantage in the region, given India's possession of <u>Rafale jets</u> and other advanced aircraft.
- The **Shigatse dual-use airport**, located merely 155 km from the LAC and close to **Doklam**, holds strategic importance for China in the eastern sector facing India.
- India, in response, has <u>Sukhoi-30MKI fighters</u> deployed in the eastern sector, along with a squadron of <u>Rafale jets stationed at the Hasimara air base in West Bengal</u>.





UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims:

Q. 'Belt and Road Initiative' is sometimes mentioned in the news in the context of the affairs of (2016)

- (a) African Union
- (b) Brazil
- (c) European Union
- (d) China

Ans: (d)

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