

# PAK. INVITES SAUDI ARABIA TO BE THIRD PARTNER IN CPEC

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developing countries on India's interests

New ties: Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan, left, with Saudi King Salman in Jeddah on Wednesday. AP

Saudi Arabia will be the third “strategic partner” of the \$50 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a senior Pakistani Minister announced on Thursday, soon after Prime Minister Imran Khan returned from his first foreign trip to the cash-rich kingdom. The CPEC is the flagship project of the multi-billion dollar Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a pet project of Chinese President Xi Jinping, aimed at enhancing Beijing’s influence around the world through China-funded infrastructure projects.

Addressing a press conference here on Mr. Khan’s two-day visit to Saudi Arabia and the UAE, Minister of Information Fawad Chaudhry said Pakistan’s main interest lies in cooperation with Saudi Arabia on matters of trade and security.

Pakistan has invited Riyadh to join the CPEC as the third “strategic partner”, *The News* quoted him as saying.

Saudi Arabia’s Finance and Energy Ministers will visit Pakistan in the first week of October, Mr. Chaudhry said.

He said the projects that Saudi Arabia would be investing in the CPEC will be smoothed out during the Saudi delegation’s visit.

China has rejected accusations that its financial backing for the CPEC was a “debt trap” that could compromise cash-strapped Pakistan’s sovereignty.

The CPEC is the fastest-moving and flagship project of President Xi’s global Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

The CPEC aims to construct and upgrade the transportation network, energy projects, a deep-water port at Gwadar and special economic zones to eventually support Pakistan’s industrial development as a manufacturing hub by 2030.

Mr. Chaudhry said Prime Minister Khan has assured Riyadh that Pakistan will stand with Saudi Arabia.

## Promise of security

“We have also assured the Saudi leadership that we will continue to provide security to their country and provide strategic support wherever needed,” he said on the close defence partnership between the close allies.

He also said a high-level coordination committee has been constituted [to look into matters of trade and commerce] and it has the complete backing of Saudi King Salman bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud and Mr. Khan.

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