

Important decisions on CPEC, trade expected during PM's visit to China

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan arrived in Beijing on Thursday on a four-day official visit to China.

Mr Khan is visiting China on the invitation of President Xi Jinping to attend the second Belt and Road Forum, which is commencing in the Chinese capital on Friday. Earlier, the prime minister visited China in November last year.

Upon arrival at Beijing airport, the prime minister was received by Li Lifeng, Deputy Secretary-General, Beijing Municipal Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, China's Ambassador to Pakistan Yao Jing and Ambassador of Pakistan to China Masood Khalid.

Minister for Railways Sheikh Rashid Ahmed, Minister for Water Resources Faisal Vawda, Adviser on Finance Dr Abdul Hafeez Shaikh, Adviser on Commerce Abdul Razak Dawood and Chairman of the Task Force on Science & Technology Dr Atta-ur-Rehman are accompanying the prime minister.

The prime minister's visit is meant to further cement the friendship between the two countries. Important decisions are likely to be taken on strategic ties, trade and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) during the visit.

Imran lands in Beijing, will attend Belt and Road Forum

The visit is likely to expedite the pace of projects being executed or to be commissioned under the CEPC in Pakistan.

"The four-day official visit of the prime minister to China will take the all-weather strategic cooperative partnership of the two countries to new heights," says an official statement issued by the Foreign Office.

"I am strongly committed to further strengthening Pakistan-China relationship. I am confident that my visit will be instrumental in further expanding the scope and depth of our bilateral ties," Mr Khan said in a statement shortly before leaving for the neighbouring country.

The prime minister said that China was Pakistan's closest friend and he looked forward to meeting his good friends President Xi and Premier Li for an in-depth exchange of views on all issues of mutual interest.

He was of the view that Pak-China ties did not merely arise out of a convergence of interests but were rooted in shared experiences and a high level of mutual trust and understanding.

The prime minister said that Pak-China friendship was ingrained in the hearts and minds of people of the two countries and it would remain intact even after any regional and international developments.

Talking about the Belt and Road Initiative, the prime minister said: “I strongly endorse China’s vision of a peaceful world based on win-win cooperation and community of shared destiny and a new model of development envisioned in President Xi’s Belt and Road Initiative.”

Mr Khan expressed gratitude to China for its strong and unequivocal support for Pakistan’s independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity and reiterated that Pakistan too would continue to stand by China on all issues of its core interest.

About the second phase of CPEC, the prime minister said the two countries were jointly focusing on socio-economic development, job creation, as well as livelihood, agriculture and industrial projects, including special economic zones under the corridor project.

PM’s schedule

During his visit from April 25-28, the prime minister will attend the second Belt and Road Forum (BRF) in Beijing and deliver a keynote speech at the opening ceremony of the forum on April 26.

According to the Foreign Office, the prime minister will also attend the world leaders’ meeting representing around 38 countries. He will speak in the first session of the leaders’ meeting. He will also hold meetings with several heads of states/governments and corporate and business leaders on the sidelines of the BRF.

In addition to participating in the Belt and Road Forum, Mr Khan will hold bilateral meetings with President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang. Pakistan and China will also sign several memorandums of understanding and agreements to enhance bilateral cooperation in diverse areas.

After the forum, the prime minister will address a Pakistan business and investment forum on April 28. Prominent Pakistani and Chinese businessmen will attend the event.

The prime minister will also participate in the Beijing International Horticultural Exhibition along with President Xi and other world leaders.

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