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<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1189912/corridor-delay-pakistan-allays-chinas-concern-capec-security-plan/>**Pakistan allays China's concern over CPEC security plan**

**“China might use the military establishment to protect its trade via sea,” said Dr Talat Wizarat, an expert on international relations. China, otherwise, does not want military activities outside its country, she added.**

**She was speaking at the two-day conference on “The State of Pakistan’s Economy: Issues and Challenges in the 21st Century” organised by the Institute of Business Management (IoBM).**

ISLAMABAD: The 6th meeting of the China-Pakistan joint cooperation committee on the CPEC would be held by the end of November after Islamabad assured Beijing of addressing issues responsible for delaying the deployment of the Special Security Division and slow progress on energy-related projects.

This was decided during a meeting between Minister of Planning, Development & Reforms Ahsan Iqbal and Chinese Vice-Chairman of the National Development and Reform Commission Wang Xiaotao held in Beijing, according to a handout issued by the Ministry of Planning, Development & Reforms on Tuesday.

The JCC was set up to facilitate the formation of working groups of experts. The body is co-chaired by Iqbal and Xiaotao who overlook joint working groups for planning, energy, transport infrastructure and Gwadar. On average, the JCC meets twice a year. However, lack of consensus over lingering issues caused the delay this time, sources in the Planning Ministry said.

In a related development, China’s Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli is also expected to visit Pakistan by the end of the year. He is the focal person of China on the CPEC. The vice premier is expected to perform ground-breaking ceremonies of Gwadar projects, the sources said.

One of the main Chinese concerns was the delay in the deployment of the Special Security Division for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Plans for operationalising the division have been held up by civil-military wrangling. It is feared that the issue, if not resolved at the earliest, could potentially affect the CPEC timelines, the sources said. The other issue was lack of progress on the energy-related projects.

Before leaving for China, Iqbal told *The Express Tribune* that delays in convening the working group meetings was due to non-availability of the officials concerned. On the transport front, Pakistan wants work on the Eastbay Expressway and Gwadar International Airport to be started at the earliest. It also sought implementation of Gwadar CPEC projects.

Iqbal “stressed fast implementation of the Gwadar CPEC projects” during his meeting with the Chinese vice chairman, the ministry handout said. The two countries also discussed financing for ML-1 railways up-gradation project connecting Peshawar to Karachi, which is an important part of the CPEC’s development. ML1 is a key priority project on the working agenda and the NDRC takes a holistic view of the project.

Meanwhile, speakers at a conference said that China might use the naval base located near the Gwadar seaport to protect its sea trade, as the Pakistani establishment has guaranteed the safe passage of goods on land.

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