

Belt and Road Provides New Energy to Pakistan Development

by William Jones, *EIR* Washington Bureau Chief

Feb. 17—The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is one of the most ambitious elements of the Belt and Road Initiative. In addition to the major transportation corridor— stretching from Kashgar in the most westerly part of China's Xinjiang region through the mountains of northeast Pakistan, all the way south to the Indian Ocean port at Gwadar— China is also providing new sources of energy to the Pakistan economy. One of these is a major hydropower project near the capital of Islamabad, the Karot Hydropower Station.

The project is presently employing 18,000 Pakistani workers in the construction this massive plant with the help of the masters in the field, the China Three Gorges Corporation, or rather its subsidiary, the China Three Gorges South Asia Investment. It cut its teeth on the massive Three Gorges Dam in China in the 1990s. The project also employs 460 Chinese workers, whose primary task has been to train the Pakistani workers. Before the construction is finished, it will probably have as many as 3,500 workers employed, of which 85% will be from Pakistan. The first power unit will be connected to the grid in 2021.

When it is completed, the 720-megawatt power plant is projected to produce 3.2 billion kilowatts of electricity per hour. This is the energy equivalent of burning 1.5 million tons of coal in one year. Pakistan has long suffered from power outages. Even in Islamabad, the capital, power outages are quite common. During the Summer, the duration of blackouts can last up to 12 hours a day. The Karot plant is the first such plant to be financed by the Silk Road Fund, which was announced by President Xi in December 2014, to help finance projects along the Belt and Road.

The dam will be located near the villages of Karot in



CPEC

Suki Kanari hydropower station under construction, another project of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor in Pakistan.

Punjab and Hollar in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, which is roughly 55 km south-east of Islamabad. The dam is expected to be 95.5 meters high and 460 meters wide, across the Jhelum River. The hydropower project will have a reservoir storage capacity of 164.5 million cubic meters at full supply level, and is expected to cost approximately \$2 billion. The reservoir is expected to stretch approximately 27 km upstream of the dam at 461 meters above sea level. The surface powerhouse, consisting of four turbines, will be situated approximately 650 meters downstream of the dam crest, and 300 meters upstream of the Karot Bridge.

The project will also include four 316-meter headrace tunnels, a spillway, three 447-meter diversion tunnels, and coffer dams upstream and downstream of the main dam. The plant will be interconnected to the national grid by means of a 5 km, 500 kV transmission line. Power generation will operate for six months a year.

The Karot Power Company, of which Three Gorges is the majority shareholder, will operate the dam for 30 years, after which it will be turned over to the Pakistan government.