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Pak-Iran Land Trade Routes: Makran Division, Balochistan

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Abstract

This paper attempts to chart and highlight impact of notifying [un]declared Pak-Iran land trade routes (crossing points) in the light of ‘Rights of people residing border areas under International law’. Pak-Iran border stretches 902 Kilometers via Balochistan Province of Pakistan. Not only 2/3 of this border touches five districts of Makran Division, namely: Gawadar, Kech, Panjgur, Washuk and Chaghi, rather population of these districts heavily depend upon Iran in terms of trade, energy, consumable commodities and employment. Iranian edibles and other commodities have been smoothly flowing into Makran division via [un] declared border crossing points since times immemorial. There exist dozens of crossing points including nine notified land trade routes (crossing points) between Makran Division and Iran, and a declared sea route. To evaluate impact upon livelihood of local people notification of Rimdan-Gabd land trade route connecting Gawadar District of Makran Division and the Pishin-Mand land trade route are focused in particular. A major crossing point, called Chedgi, located near the Mashkel River in Panjgur District of Makran Division, though irregular, serves as conduit to major Iranian imports, including, edibles. Chedgi generates handsome amount annually both for National exchequer, State Law enforcers, besides providing livelihood to the local residents. On December 19, 2020, Pakistan and Iran notified the Rimdan-Gabd land trade route, with Iran’s Southeastern Sistan-Balochistan Province, just 130 km away from the strategic Chahbahar Port of Iran. Subsequently on April 22, 2021, in bordering Kech District of Makran Division the Pishin-Mand land trade route was notified.

Keywords: Chedgi, Panjgur, Iranian Power supply, Imports Electricity, Bordering Districts, NLC.

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Introduction

Makran valley located in the Province of Balochistan, report historians, have been an important trade route between Mesopotamia (ancient Iraq) and the Indus Valley, since times immemorial.¹ The Makran coast had been occupied by the Sindh, Hameed Baloch, in work, 'Makran', reports, traces of pottery and ornaments found at Miri, Kalat provided new insights into ancient Makran.² Excavations at Miri Kalat, Turbat, Mehrgarh, Kachi plain, Naal, and different prehistoric mounds scattered in various parts of Makran provide evidence, of existence, in prehistoric period, of proto-inhabitants. The survey undertaken in 1994 concluded that Makran served as a bridge between ancient Indus, Mesopotamian, and Persian civilizations of South Asia and the Middle East.³ An archaeological survey in 1875, reported evidence of archaeological remains in Makran coastal areas in Makran Kech and Nihang Rivers valley, lower Dasht valley, and Gawadar areas. Earliest occupation during the Islamic period in Makran, have been identified on small, eroded sites of Mir Kahur, Djebel Damb, and Machuki. The Protohistoric settlement of Miri, Kalat shifted to the eastern part of the site, still existing underneath the late Islamic buildings.⁴

Arabs held trade links with Sindh and Makran since earlier times and usually stayed at ports such as Tez in Makran.⁵ Numerous expeditions to Makran, beginning from times of Caliph Abu Bakr, were organized. In 643-44 A.D., during the reign of Caliph Umar, Muslims came to Makran defeating the Sassanid Empire of Iran and ruled till the end of the 10th century.⁶ Muhammad bin Qasim landed at Makran in 92 AH (710/711 AD), from there he attacked and conquered Sindh. In 976/977 AD Makran came under the suzerainty of Sebüktegin, the founder of the Ghaznavids, followed by the Ghauris, in the later 12th century.⁷

Coast of Pakistan stretches 1372 kilometers, according to the Geological Survey of Pakistan comprising: 1059 km of Makran Coast and 313 km of the Sindh Coast. The Makran Coast is sandy, hills lining to the north. Historically numerous small ports have been active including Keti Bander, Tez, Gawadar, Jiwani, Pasni and Ormara.⁸ A part of the Khan of Kalat's dominion before 1947, suzerainty over the port was granted to the brother of Oman's then-ruler, Sultan Bin Ahmed, after he fell out with the Sultan and took refuge in the Khanate. Some believe this gesture was in line with well-known Baloch hospitality to offer refuge during testing times. However, the warmth was not reciprocated, after acceding the throne of Oman, the former refugee ruler refused to return Gawadar to the state of Kalat. In 1958, after a local movement and four years of

intense negotiations, that Balochistan's historic warm-water port became part of Pakistan .It was 'purchased' for a sum of \$3 million.

Gabd-Rimdan and Pishn-Mand

Movement of goods and people between, Iran and Makran division have been continuing since centuries. Gabd Rimdan-250 border crossing point between Pakistan and Iran to facilitate trade was inaugurated in April 2020. Rimdan is located in Sistan, Iran and Gabd in Gawadar, Makran division of Balochistan. Gabd, located about 120km east of Iran's Chabahar port and 70km west of Gawadar port, once a barren area with scant traces of life, has become now a flourishing trade centre, thanks to local traders who put their blood and sweat to set this up. They transformed a deserted area into a revenue spinner for the state. Earlier Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif held talks with Pakistani military and civilian leaders regarding opening of trade routes, Pakistan's ambassador to Iran, Rahim Hayat Qureshi termed opening of Gabd-Rimdan crossing point "historic" and the "first such opening after 1947.

In November, 2020, Iranian Foreign Minister, Javad Zarif had urged Pakistani authorities to declare the Pishin-Mand trade route. The bilateral trade between Iran and Pakistan has been meager via this route due to US sanctions on Iran, currently worth \$359 million.⁹ The two sides believe, setting up of Joint Border markets shall enhance bilateral trade. Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, hailing from Multan, a citrus producing area, informed that Iran had agreed to end restrictions on citrus imports from Pakistan. Sharing good news for citrus farmers, he announced, "Iran has lifted restrictions on the import of Pakistan's Kinnow".¹⁰ He met Foreign Minister, Mr. Zarif, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, and Majlis Speaker Mohammad-Baqer Qalibaf. Meanwhile, Waheed Ahmed, the chief patron of the All Pakistan Fruit & Vegetable Exporters / Importers Association, welcomed Foreign Minister Qureshi's announcement, stating, Iran is a big market of Pakistan's Kinnow: lifting of restrictions shall boost bilateral legal trade between the two countries.¹¹ Pakistan also began fencing border with Iran to enhance border security. In December 2020, the Pakistani army began to fence border to be completed by December 2021.

Muhammad Akbar Notezai, correspondent of the daily Dawn, visiting trade route reported, Zamyad vehicles transporting Iranian edibles, beside oil and diesel, from Iran. The road between Chedgi and the Panjgur town, he observed, is in such a bad shape that one prefers dirt road over main road. The 95 kilometers distance between the Panjgur town and Chedgi took more than three hours in the Deputy Commissioner's Toyota Hilux Vigo.¹² Reaching Chedgi constitutes a great challenge for traders. Traders unanimously responded that

they go to the Chedgi border to earn a livelihood as coolies. However, trade activities have come to a halt following the outbreak of Covid-19. The local Baloch population depending solely on the trade with Iran shall soon be running out of food even if they manage to survive Covid-19. The sole exception are Zamyad vehicles loaded with oil and diesel coming from the Parom tehsil of Panjgur. According to a local, Rafique Chakar, the illegal trade is still going on, albeit at a slower-than-usual pace. The performance of Provincial Government Officials, Deputy/Assistant Commissioners has confined to photo shoots, to conceal inefficiency and apathy. Alongside, Panjgur, three bordering districts, namely: Kech (Turbat), Gawadar and Washuk, also have irregular/undeclared trade routes with Iran undergoing more or less the same situation. Chaghi, at the Taftan Custom Station, has been the sole official trade route between Pakistan and Iran. The customs collect revenues of over Rs.800 million in a month on the Taftan border. It was closed owing to the Covid-19 threat. In background interviews, officials in¹³ Taftan said they appreciated Iran's gesture of kindness since they allowed export of edibles to continue through Zero Point. As a result, residents of Taftan could get such items at throwaway prices.

Balochistan-based businessmen and traders were dismayed since could not reap the benefits of the financial package during Covid-19. The package aimed to benefit the textile industry and big businesses based in Karachi and Punjab, involved in trade with neighboring and European countries. Senior Vice President, Quetta Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Mr. Badruddin Kakar believes that trade with Iran has "officially and deliberately" been discouraged.¹⁴ The trade in general declined amidst Covid-19, similarly cross-border movement of goods via barter trade (due to sanctions on Iran) adversely affected too.¹⁵ "But no one is bothered. Trade was being affected because of not only Covid-19, but also mismanagement from the top. The Provincial economy is collapsing,"¹⁶ declared Mr. Badruddin Kakar, depriving thousands of local people of jobs. A senior Judge of Balochistan High Court accused the customs chief of mismanagement for not visiting places bordering Iran where locals suffered due to apathy of his department.¹⁷ On 28th July 2021, thousands marched in the streets of Turbat, to protest frequent and prolonged power cuts in districts Kech, Gawadar and Panjgur.¹⁸ The protesters carried placards and banners and chanted slogans against the Government and officials of Quetta Electricity Supply Company (QESCO). All three districts faced 16 to 18 hours of power suspension on a daily basis amid temperatures above 50 degrees Centigrade.¹⁹ The residents of Absar area also staged rallies. The protesters' sit-in, in front of the offices of the Makran Commissioner/the Deputy Commissioner and QESCO had been

massive.²⁰ To a population of over 1.4 million in Kech, Gawadar and Panjgur districts, provision by the Quetta Electricity Supply Company of 100MW from Iran through 132KV transmission line, is just not sufficient. The electricity supply in Kech, Gawadar and Panjgur districts of Makran division has to be raised to 150MW at least.²¹ Due to unknown reasons power supply from Iran had been suspended and decreased to bare 10MW.²²

Federal Minister for energy, Hammad Azhar on 29-07-2021, reported of taking up with Iran the issue of reduced electricity supply, causing hours-long outages in Balochistan. Power shortfalls in Iran have led to load shedding in Makran division, not connected to the national grid and dependent on Iranian Power supply.²³ Pakistan imports electricity from Iran for its bordering districts, although the share of imported power in the total electricity consumed in Pakistan is miniscule. The drop in supply from Iran has been due to shortage of Hydel Power Generation in Iran, explained energy experts based in Quetta. Pakistan imported 514GW/h from Iran in 2019-20, which was less than 0.4% of the country's total electricity generation in the year, according to the power regulator; connecting areas hit by load shedding to national grid will take two years. Work is also in progress on connecting Makran Division with the national grid. This involves laying transmission lines for hundreds of kilometers. This project will be completed within two years, Mr. Azhar said.²⁴ Speaking to Dawn, independent energy consultant Najam ul Hassan Farooqi said the recurring problem can only be solved once the 300MW imported coal-based power plant currently under construction in Gawadar comes online. "It'll take at least three years to set up a 700 kilometers transmission line from Gawadar to Karachi," he added. Outages in Balochistan aren't limited to the bordering areas that receive electricity from Iran.²⁵

The national grid or build power generation plants to directly supply electricity to the residents of this border region. Even the 300x2MW coal-fired power plants planned by a Chinese Firm for Gawadar, the country's deep-sea port often referred to by politicians as the jewel of the multibillion-dollar CPEC Project, remains blocked by bureaucracy. Resultantly, people continue to depend on an erratic supply of 100MW of electricity imported from Iran. The long-term solution lies either in connecting the Makran Division with the national grid or investing in local generation projects to answer the growing demand for electricity. The state can strengthen its deteriorating link with its citizens only by responding to and resolving their problems in a timely fashion.²⁶ A high-level meeting presided over by Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Abdul Qudoos Bizenjo decided to open more border crossing points between Pakistan and Iran so that

trade between the two countries does not come to a halt as it is the only source of income for the people of Makran Division. The meeting held in Turbat on 29-11-2021 gave a final shape to the modus operandi for trading oil and edibles with Iran, being the only source of income for the local people of border areas.

The officials concerned briefed the meeting participants about the traditional and proposed model of border trade. The meeting decided to abolish the condition of possession of a token for locals to cross into Iran and bring oil back with them. Instead, it was decided the local administration shall register a driver and his helper on the basis of their national identity cards making the registration process easy, for security purposes, confining extension the trading facilities to locals.²⁷ Besides Makran, the people of Washuk, Kharan and Awaran would also benefit from the border trade facility. Corps Commander of 12 corps Lt Gen Sarfaraz Ali, Provincial Ministers Mir Zahoor Ahmed Buledi, Syed Ehsan Shah, Lala Rasheed Baloch, Akbar Askani and Mahjabeen Sheran, Chief Secretary Mathar Niaz Rana, Balochistan Inspector General of Police Mohammad Tahir Rai, the 44 Division GOC, Frontier Corps Inspector General, Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister Asfandiyar Kakar, Makran Commissioner Syed Irfan Shah Gharshien and Senior Naval Officials attended the meeting. It was decided to open more border crossing points between the two neighbouring countries. The meeting was also informed that for monitoring the trade affairs and providing facilities, an apex committee would be set up at the Provincial level. It was agreed that border trade would not be closed as it was the only source of income for the people of adjoining areas, while the traditional way of trading would continue till the establishment of border markets and provision of more facilities. Chief Minister Bizenjo, while speaking on the occasion, said the government would provide maximum facilities, jobs and protection to the locals. He said there were apprehensions that anti-state elements could take advantage of the unemployment situation, but the government would provide maximum relief and facilities to the youths of the border areas.²⁸

Joint Border Markets in Makran Division

Two pilot projects at Gabd and Mond in Makran division have to be executed, a meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet had approved an allocation of Rs300 million for establishment of three joint border markets in Makran division. The ECC meeting presided over by Finance Minister Shaukat Tarin on 23rd June, 2021 approved Commerce Ministry's summary seeking approval for transfer of Rs300 million from the Ministry of Railways' budget through a technical supplementary grant to the Commerce Division for establishment of joint border markets with Iran and Afghanistan. The Commerce

Ministry informed the meeting that the decision to establish joint border markets with Iran and Afghanistan was taken in a meeting presided over by Prime Minister Imran Khan on September 17, 2020. The meeting decided to establish eighteen border markets in total, with six border markets to be established solely in Makran during another meeting presided over by the Prime Minister of Pakistan on April 23, 2021, it was decided to add a border market at Chedgi-Kohak, District Panjgur. During foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi's visit to Iran on April 21, 2021, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed at Tehran between the foreign ministers of Pakistan and Iran to establish the pilot projects of border markets at Chedgi-Kohak, District Panjgur, Mand-Pishin, District Kech, and Gabd-Rimdari District Gawadar. Subsequently, these projects were approved by the Central Development Working Party in May 25, 2021 and the Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives requested the Railways Division to surrender an amount of Rs300.0 million in favour of the Commerce Division for these projects. The Railways Division surrendered an amount of Rs300 million from 2020-21 fiscal year allocation in favour of the Commerce Division. The ECC was requested that a technical supplementary grant of Rs300 million from the PSDP allocation of Pakistan Railway may be approved in favour of the Commerce Division for establishment of joint border markets at Mand, District Kech; Gabd, District Gawadar; and Chedgi District Panjgur of Rs100 million for each projects.²⁹

The Impact of NLC on the Local Traders in Makran Division

The army-run National Logistics Cell (NLC) has acquired 72 acres of land to construct warehouses and establish its trade centre in Gabd, traders have been cold-shouldered over this development and their concerns aren't being addressed. They fear NLC, with its mighty resources, have a monopoly over trade activities in Gabd and their businesses severely affected, or worse, shut down. There are many reservations over the arrival of NLC, the locals and traders, be jobless. NLC has not paid the locals the cost of acquiring their lands NLC established its warehouses, it affect the local market, which have dire consequences for Gawadar residents. Thanks to local traders there are facilities and economic activities in Gabd which are benefiting. But this all can come to a halt after the arrival of NLC. Locals claim the border crossing has turned into a revenue spinner and authorities want to a share in the dividends. One local trader claimed the crossing generated over Rs1.9bn in revenue in June 2023 and over Rs1.3bn in July 2023. A Gawadar-based Customs official reports that 70pc of the total revenue earned from the Makran division is generated from the border crossing. In 2022-23, Rs33,292m revenue was generated from the Gabd-Rimdan

border crossing, which was 137pc more than the annual target, Locals are concerned NLC would take the lion's share of revenue, leaving crumbs for them and decimating their decades of effort. NLC's manager at the border crossing, said the company has duly paid locals for the 72 acres of land it has purchased to construct and build terminals. Local traders have received their benefits through the trade and warehouses, locals' concerns that they will be jobless after the arrival of NLC. Instead, there will be more job opportunities. NLC had conveyed the reservations of local traders to higher authorities. Gawadar has seen widespread discontentment over what locals claim is the exploitation of their resources without benefiting them. locals claim instead of addressing the issues, the government has further compounded their miseries.³⁰

Pak-Iran Joint Border Business

Pak-Iran had signed Thirty Nine memorandae of understanding to enhance bilateral trade, improve economic relations and ensure cooperation in various fields such as transportation, tourism, fisheries, mines and minerals. The MoUs were signed at the conclusion of a two-day meeting of the joint border trade committee on 16th January, 2023. Both sides agreed to increase the number of items included in the Preferential Trade Agreement signed between Pakistan and Iran and reduce tariff. Both countries decided to increase bilateral trade to \$5 billion annually and try to achieve balance in trade. Both sides agreed to open an additional border crossing point at Kohak-Panjgur to boost bilateral trade. Both sides agreed to set up maritime clearance stations at Pasabandar in Iran and Jiwani in Pakistan for bilateral trade. To conduct international transit trade from Pakistan towards Turkiye, Azerbaijan, Russia and other regional countries via Iranian territory, both sides agreed that vehicles loaded with cargo shall be allowed without carnet/visa up to customs area at Mir Javeh Special Economic Zone on Iranian side, while on the principle of reciprocity, the same facility is being extended to Iranian cargo vehicles up to NLC terminal and railway station at Taftan. Iranian authorities agreed to provide shelters to Pakistani rice at Zahidan customs. They also proposed that LPG in cylinders may be allowed to be imported via all land border stations from Iran to Pakistan. The meeting was informed that a ferry service with Iran is being finalised and the same will be shared with the Iranian side after completion of codal formalities. The Pakistani side the number of railway wagons for freight transportation would be increased up to 500 on the completion of a bridge at considering the increased demand of the traders.³¹

Meeting in the Iranian border town of Mirjaveh on 28-09-2023, the Pak-Iran Joint Border Trade Committee deliberated on border concerns, the growth of

bilateral trade, and improvements in immigration procedures and transportation. Abdul Qadir Memon, the chief Collector Customs Makran division, headed the Pakistani delegation, while the Iranian side was led by Javed Haideri, the Director General of Transit and International Transport from the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development. During the meeting, several key topics, including the cross-border movement of people, the transportation of essential and export commodities, and the promotion of bilateral trade. Additionally, discussions encompassed tackling illegal trade, smuggling, and various border-related issues at the Iran-Pakistan border. Both sides exchanged various proposals and recommendations aimed at enhancing cooperation in railway, banking, transportation, and outlining the path forward. A senior customs official informed that both parties expressed their intention to strengthen bilateral trade with the aim of reaching a trade volume target of five billion US Dollar between Pakistan and Iran. Iranian and Pakistani officials reached a consensus on implementing stringent measures at the border to curb illegal crossings and smuggling activities. Both sides also discussed road transportation and proposed measures to streamline border operations, minimise lengthy delays, and ensure timely clearance of goods, with a focus on facilitating at least 800 daily traffic movements through the shared border. The meeting attendees included Collector Customs Appraisal Taftan Naveed Iqbal, Deputy Collector Usman Aziz, Superintendent Ahad Durrani, officials from relevant departments, representatives from the business community, border trade and transportation sectors, the banking industry, and officials from the Ministry of Immigration and Foreign Affairs.³²

Pak-Iran Skirmishes and Mending Fences

Exchange of missile strikes by Pakistan and Iran turned volatile situation into an explosive crisis. On 16th January 2024, Iran launched strikes in Panjgur hitting, allegedly terrorists affiliated with the Jaish al-Adl outfit. Pakistan responded by striking targets in the Iranian town of Saravan. To diffuse escalating conflict, the caretaker Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani met his Iranian counterpart Hossein Amir-Abdollahian in Islamabad on 29th January 2024. A probe regarding the brutal murder of nine Pakistani workers in Saravan was stressed. Mr Amir-Abdollahian said both countries were “one nation” claiming, “Third Countries” were aiding militants in the common border area”.³³ Mr Jilani informed that a “high-level mechanism” was being established to oversee bilateral cooperation, Indeed, this display of cooperation is a welcome change from the acrimonious exchanges that had threatened to scuttle bilateral ties. Both sides chose to handle the crisis calmly, opposing jingoistic nationalism. Improving border security is

key issue to be addressed collectively, by acting against religiously motivated/sectarian militants working against Iran allegedly finding sanctuary in Pakistan, or Baloch separatists fighting Pakistan, finding refuge on Iranian soil. Threats of non-state actors deter mutual cooperation; instead of unilateral action joint measures against terror shall be taken. Unfortunate killing of Pakistani workers shall be thoroughly probed, those involved in such heinous crime need to be identified and brought to justice. Tehran shall ensure security of all Pakistanis living in/ visiting Iran. Both sides shall also be wary of inimical foreign actors working to destabilise the border areas, hoping to disrupt the Pakistan-Iran relationship.³⁴ To bolster cross-border security and intelligence collaboration, on 29th January 2024, both Islamabad, Tehran agreed to turn their boundary into 'border of trade and development'. According to the Inter-Services Public Relations, the media wing of the Pakistan Army, the "COAS underscored the centrality of respecting the other state's sovereignty and territorial integrity, calling it sacrosanct, inviolable and the most important cardinal of state-to-state relationship."³⁵ The Iranian foreign minister said and hoped that deepened trade and economic ties would pave the way for enhanced cooperation. The FO said, "The two sides also decided to establish a joint coordination mechanism at the level of foreign ministers to oversee and steer progress on a common agenda for prosperity and development of the two peoples." FM Jilani also invited Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi to visit Pakistan after the February 8, 2024 General Elections in Pakistan.³⁶

Political Displeasure in Makran Division

A quiet fishing village in Makran is becoming a geopolitical asset as the flagship venture of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).. The fisher folk who dominate the seaside hamlet's population have been on the receiving end of what they call "the state's injustices": driven out of their old settlements in the port town to make way for development projects. Maulana Hidayatur Rehman, chief of Haq Do Tehreek (HDT) has found fame and support, the Kalmati family is well-versed in the art of surviving political challenges. The HDT chief has not been able to dent the traditional power base of the clan. They converge at their traditional haunt, the dhoria, a raised, open platform where they repair fishing nets, play cards and talk about everything from illegal trawling to local politics – especially during General Elections, 2024. Interestingly, the dhoria looks out on the four berths of the anchorage. The Eastbay Expressway, costing \$168 million, a part of the \$62 billion CPEC, is a mere stone's throw away. Subsequent to President Xi Jinping's announcement of the CPEC project in 2015, Gawadar's worth has increased manifold. After Chinese investment began pouring in, the

port city has been in limelight nationally and internationally. However, nationalists from across the province agree that Gawadar, in its new avatar as a development hub, is intrinsic to Baloch politics. Though locals, and nationalists in particular, are skeptical about their identity in Gawadar as the seat of business and regional connectivity; they harbour fears of being outnumbered and made minority in their homeland. Abubakar Baloch from the Kumari Ward, a town near the dhoria, a bespectacled, bearded fisherman dressed in Balochi *shalwar kameez* comments on the General Election 2024-with fellow fishermen: His ward lacks basic facilities, including water and a sewerage system. Are issues of water, sewage and illegal trawling resolved?

More fishermen echo Abubakar's aspirations, in voices tinged with despair. Mir Hammal Kalmati did resolve issues related to dams and education. Still need facilities like drainage, as the Kumari Ward is inundated with water during the monsoon season. Maulana Hidayatur Rehman and his Haq Do Tehreek (HDT) rose to prominence after a large rights movement and impacts on General Elections 2024 in the port town, observes Nasir Rahim Sohrabi, a Gawadar-based analyst. Maulana Hidayatur Rehman, the face of the Haq Do Tehreek (HDT) a movement for fisher folk's rights in Makran Division was first introduced to the Baloch populace at the dhoria.³⁷

Conclusion

Makran division, the heart of Bolochistan, bordering Iran constitutes such a periphery away from centre that its people are deprived of basic facilities and livelihood. They are not connected with National Grid and depend upon Iran not only for electricity, energy but also for edible and livelihood. Moreover, despite living on their own land for generations, the locals are fast losing their lands and fear they ll be turned into a minority in indigenou land in the wake of development project in Makran division. There exists a huge potential of Pak-Iran bilateral trade, which not only benefits both countries but also brings employment to local population of Makran. The coast comprising serene beaches, diverse features carries great potential and opportunities for the growth of local economy, particularly blue economy-can hardly be overstated. Though cooperation has increased across the entire spectrum of bilateral relations, including the political, economic, energy and cultural domains. Both countries are committed to increas[ing] economic cooperation by leveraging existing institutional mechanisms, such as [the] Joint Economic Commission (JEC), Joint-Border Trade Committee (JBTC), Joint Trade Committee (JTC) and Joint Border Commission (JBC). To circumvent sanctions against Iran, the Quetta and

Zahedan Chambers of Commerce have been declared the clearing agents for barter trade. The statutory regulatory orders (SRO) and the standard operating procedures (SOPs) for the decision have been established and the cabinet has approved them. However, notification of trade routes leading to monopolization of trade by non-locals, NLC, law enforcers etc., are big hurdles. Moreover, lack of infrastructure, transit Banking/immigration/currency exchange facilities coupled with political alienation of local political forces are compounding obstacles in the way of connectivity and enhancement of trade. Recent elections and protesting local nationalist political forces are witness to growing alienation.

Appendix-I

No electricity in 64 per cent area of Balochistan



Source: Retrieved from: <https://www.aninews.in/news/world/asia/no-electricity-in-64-per-cent-area-of-balochistan-states-report20210924193644/>, accessed on 24-09-2021

Appendix-II



Lying between Rimdan in Iran's Sistan province and Gabd in Pakistan's Gawadar district, the point was officially inaugurated in 2020.

Source: Retrieved from: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1771860/gabd-traders-view-new-border-terminal-with-suspicion>, accessed on 30-09-2023

Appendix-III



Iran-Pakistan border near the Gabd-Rimdan crossing in April 2020

Source: Retrieved from:

<https://www.arabnews.pk/node/1779716/pakistan>, Accessed on 21-10-2023



Caretaker Prime Minister of Pakistan, Anwaarul Haq Kakar shakes hands with Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian, on 29-01-2024.

Source: Retrieved from, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1809684>, accessed on 03-02-2024

Appendix-IV



A group of fishermen congregate to discuss Gawadar’s politics at the dhoria near the main port, with the Eastbay Expressway visible in the background.

Source: Retrieved from, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1809418>, accessed on 03-02-2024



Source: Retrieved from, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1809418>, accessed on 03-02-2024

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