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China to extend CPEC to Afghanistan



Extension of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor to help facilitate fresh produce trade through war-ravaged country

Pakistan imports 90 per cent of Afghanistan's fresh fruit and vegetable production, according to official estimates, and to help improve trading conditions China is extending the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) to Afghanistan – who falls under the Belt and Road Initiative.

The proposed development will include installation of drinking water facilities, reception centres, and cold storage facilities for fresh produce at main entry points between the Pakistan-Afghanistan border.

"Small businessmen are

entering Torkham and Chaman every day so if there are some cold storage facilities they could use those facilities to store their fruits. If there is a proper reception centre and a drinking water scheme, those kinds of facilities may serve the people in a better way," said deputy chief of mission at the Chinese embassy in Islamabad, Zhao Lijian.

The Nation reported, following a recent waiver of tariffs on fresh fruit imports from Afghanistan by Islamabad, there had been an estimated 30 per cent increase in Afghan exports to Pakistan in 2018.

Lijian said the decision to extend CPEC to Afghanistan was the result of recent high-level talks between foreign ministers from the three countries held in Kabul.

"We are trying to promote these projects so that it can help with the improvement of the relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan and also finally it would be helpful with peace and development in Afghanistan," Lijian noted.