
INDIA TO AGAIN BOYCOTT CHINA'S BELT AND ROAD FORUM IN BEIJING

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There is no change in our stand that Chinas Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) violates Indias sovereignty and territorial integrity, a source here said.

India had boycotted the first such summit hosted by Beijing in May 2017 on the ground that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the flagship project of BRI, runs through the Indian territory in Jammu and Kashmir illegally occupied by Pakistan.

The source said no country could participate in an initiative which ignored its core concern on sovereignty.

The source said India, per se, was not opposed to connectivity initiatives. In fact, connectivity was integral to Indias diplomatic and economic initiatives in the region and in Africa. In this connection, the source drew attention to the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC), an initiative of India and Japan to undertake infrastructure projects in Asia and Africa.

But India, the source said, was quite clear that financing practices and sovereignty issues must be transparent while pursuing such initiatives.

Asked if China had asked India to participate in the forum to be held this month, the source did not give a straight reply but stated that Beijing had been requesting New Delhi to reconsider its decision.

Chinas top diplomat and President Xi Jinpings key aide Yang Jiechi, who is overseeing the preparations for the forum, was recently in India for a Track II dialogue when he again appealed to New Delhi to attend the forum to be held this month.

However, China has so far turned a blind eye to Indias legitimate concerns over the ambitious CPEC project, which, many believe, would make Pakistan a permanent client state of China.

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan and leaders of nearly 40 other countries are expected to attend the forum. Others expected to attend it include Russian President Vladimir Putin, Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte and Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen. There are reports that Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte might also attend the forum which could further split the European Union (EU) on its commercial ties with China.

The US has also made it clear that it would not send high-level officials to the forum, expressing concerns over opaque financing practices, poor governance and disregard for internationally

accepted norms and standards by China.

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