

## Pakistan approves rail links to China, Afghanistan

Islamabad - President Pervez Musharraf has approved a railway link to cover an 80-km route from Havelian to Kashgar in China and another to link Chaman with Spin Boldak in Afghanistan.

While feasibility studies of the two are to be undertaken shortly, ahead of them would be a project laying a 940-km rail track to link Quetta, capital of the troubled Balochistan, with Gwadar, where a military base and a port have been readied with Chinese help.

'The president approved the project of laying of 940-km long 'standard gauge' railway track between Gwadar and Quetta that would cost Rs 75 billion,' (about \$1300,000,000), said a spokesman for federal Minister for Railways Sheikh Rashid Ahmed while talking to The News.

Developed countries are mostly using standard gauge tracks having width of four feet and six inches whereas the Pakistan Railways is presently using mostly 'broad gauge' railway tracks - with width of five feet and six inches, the most commonly found in India and Pakistan.

The spokesman added the Havelian to Kashgar link would later be connected to the Central Asian Republics.

'German and Chinese experts will jointly conduct the pre-feasibility report on the project,' he said, adding the president spoke of his vision of joining Pakistan with China and Central Asia through rail link.

APP news agency quoted Sheikh Rashid as saying that Pakistan was also studying prospects of acquiring technology from Germany, USA and other countries to improve its rail infrastructure.

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