Kashmir – The link between Southern and Central Asia

Why in news?

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On January 2017, the chief minister of J&K had proposed **the opening of a new trade route that would negate regional conflict.**

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What are the advantages?

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- With Kashmir as its central point, the route would connect diverse communities who are suffering under India-Pakistan conflicts.
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- Also the route will supposedly deliver “regional cooperation, energy transformation, trade and transit.”
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- It would connect the two Kashmirs divided between Pakistan and India (Suchetgarh-Sialkot, Kargil-Skardu, Bandipora-Gurez-Gilgit and Nowshera-Mirpur) with roads available for free movement of people and goods.
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- Such an arrangement will also supplement the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).
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- The CM’s idea was derived from the history of old routes people took to supply goods across civilisations.Then the **Partition cut off trade routes to Central Asia** as it blocked road connections between India and Pakistan carrying goods westwards.
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- Kashmir was the most affected by this.
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What is the disadvantage?

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- The roads that once linked India with Central Asia are now corridors of conflict.
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- Pakistan is fighting a domestic war in the Chaman and Khyber Pass posts. Trade that passes through is mostly heroin from Afghanistan.
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- Pakistan sees India’s hand in its trouble with Afghanistan. India sees threats from the trade corridor China is building in Pakistan.
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- India exited the Iranian gas pipeline because it **couldn’t trust Pakistan as the transit state.**
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- Thus trade is used a tool of war instead of spreading peace. Therefore this plan could backfire.
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Source: The Hindu

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