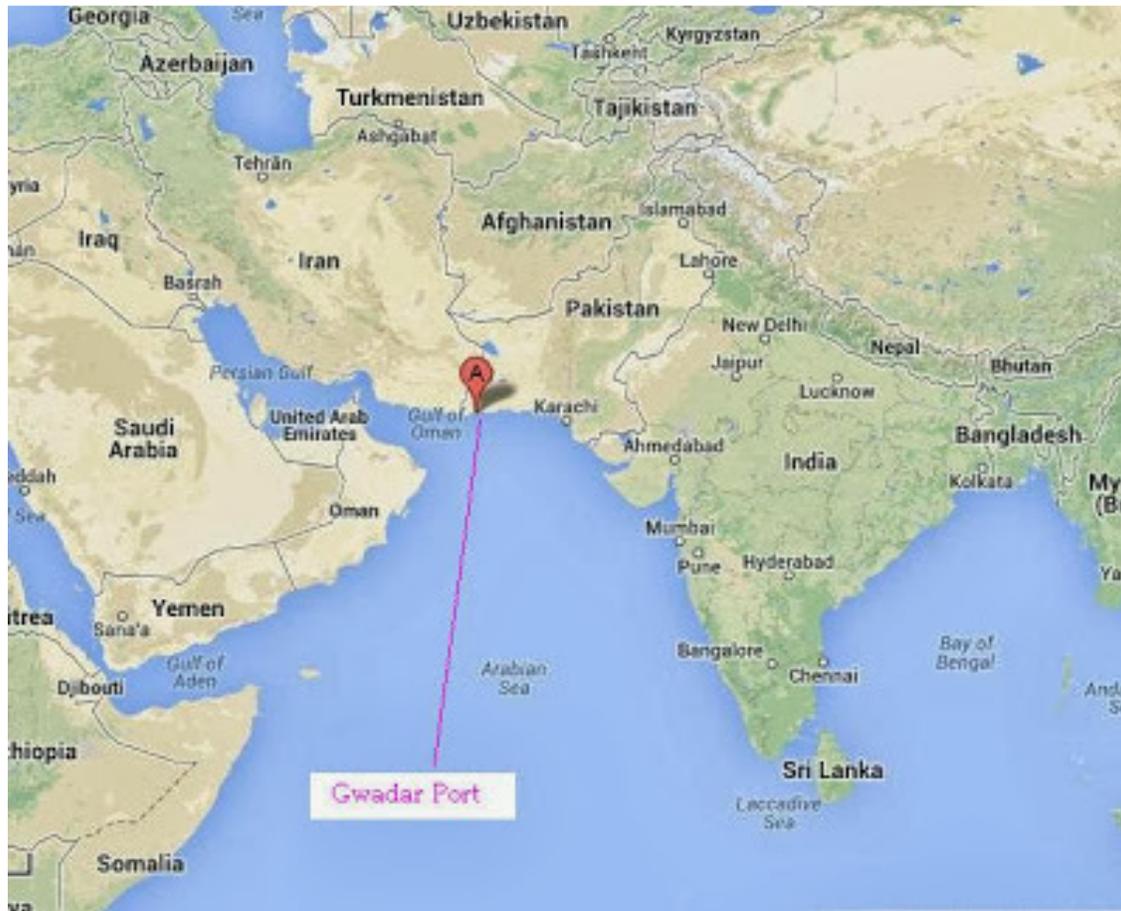


## Earthquake and World's newest real estate island - Gwadar Port

The recent earthquake in Pakistan gave me some gyan.. read of a Port located on the shores of the Arabian Sea; 533 km from Karachi and 120 km closer to the Iranian border. It is the port of Gwadar located at the mouth of the Persian Gulf, just outside the Straits of Hormuz in the Gulf of Oman.



India has hostile neighbours who often stir trouble and there are border disputes. There is the Tin Bigha Corridor, a strip of land belonging to India on the West Bengal–Bangladesh border, which in September, 2011, was leased to Bangladesh so that it can access its Dahagram–Angarpota enclaves. We all know so well of Katchatheevu or Kachchativu mired by controversies... it is sort of uninhabited island now administered by Sri Lanka. In 1974, India forcibly recognized the Sri Lankan ownership to the island on a conditional agreement. Aksai Chin is a disputed by China. It is administered by China as part of Hotan County in the Hotan Prefecture of Xinjiang Autonomous Region, but is part of Indian Ladakh district. The 1962 war was fought over this and there have been incursions by the Chinese over the Line of Control.

**So what makes Gwadar unique.....** It is a planned free trade port city on the southwestern warm water Arabian Sea coastline – situate in the Balochistan province of Pakistan. It is the district headquarters of Gwadar District and, in 2011, was designated the winter capital of Balochistan province. Gwadar Port is a strategic warm-water deep-sea port developed jointly by the Government of Pakistan and the Government of China at a cost of USD \$248 million and officially opened by the President of Pakistan on 20 March 2007. It is in fact one of the few planned cities in Pakistan (others being Faisalabad, Jauharabad, and Islamabad), which have been developed from scratch under an urban master plan. Before its development as a port city, the town was a fishing village.

In 2013, Gwadar Port operations were officially handed over to China under a contract. China has strategic interest here as this will enable them to import oil which otherwise would have to go to Shanghai more than 16000 km away – besides the time involvement – it saves them of piracy, bad weather and many other risks. In February 2013, Iran announced it would set up a \$4 billion oil refinery in Gwadar with an estimated capacity of about 400,000 barrels per day. According to the plan, Tehran will also construct an oil pipeline between its territory and Gwadar to transport crude oil for processing.

Gwadar has a long history and they claim their links to the ancient bronze age. It is believed to have been conquered by the founder of the Persian Empire, Cyrus the Great. After the collapse of Alexander’s empire the area was ruled by Seleucus Nicator, one of Alexander’s generals. For centuries it was under the control of sultans of Muscat.



On 8 September 1958, Prince Karim Aga Khan purchased the Gwadar enclave from Oman for \$3 million, and gave it to Pakistan and it officially became part of Pakistan. At the time, Gwadar was

a small and underdeveloped fishing village with a population of a few thousand. It got integrated to Balochistan province in 1977. In the recent decade, Gwadar has undergone major development with Pak National Highway and the development of the port. A modern airport too was built here. China has paid US\$ 360 million to Pakistan for expansion and up gradation to all weather trafficability of Karakoram Highway linking Pakistan with China, as they are heavily dependent upon the oil from the gulf.

Gwadar is in news after the recent earthquake - and because it became the world's freshest real estate - the massive Pakistani earthquake heaved a brand new 18 meter high island above the waves. Daily mail reported that the mountain-like island appeared 600m off Pakistan's Gwadar coast. It has become inhabited as crowds of bewildered people gathered on Pakistan's southern coast to witness the emergence of a new island. The powerful earthquake caused the seabed to rise and create a small, mountain-like island. Scientists call this phenomenon as 'mud volcano'. They occur where there is a reservoir of loosely compacted sediments buried beneath harder, denser rock and a path is made to the surface. The seismic waves caused a movement of gases locked in the earth under the sea, pushing mud and earth up to the surface along with gas. It is stated that these sudden islands are usually only spotted after strong earthquakes, at least 7- or 8-magnitude events.

With regards - S. Sampathkumar.

26<sup>th</sup> Sept. 2013.