



Ministry of Planning
Development &
Special Initiatives
Government of Pakistan

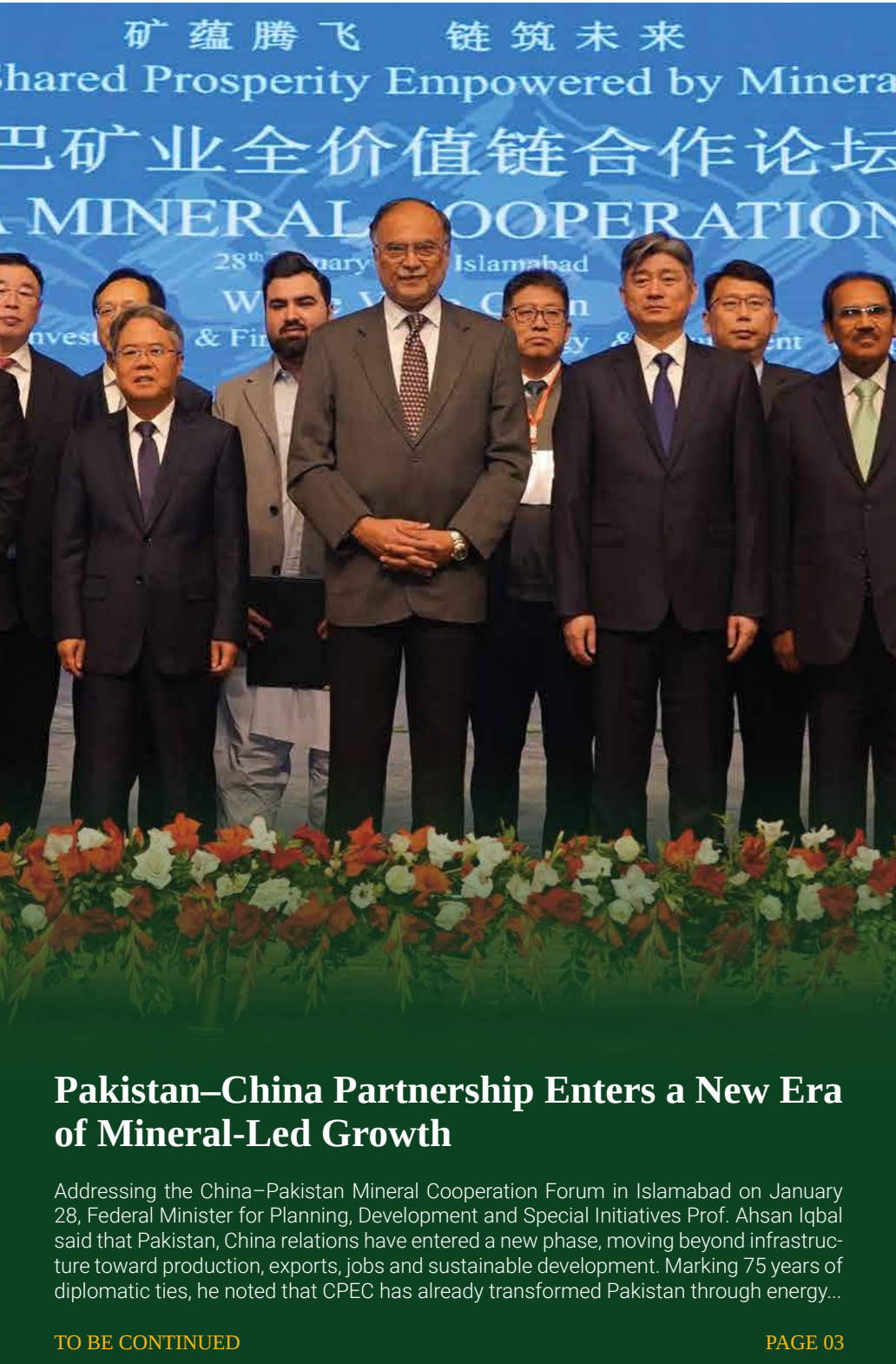


URAAN
PAKISTAN
توشائیں ہے پرواز ہے کام تیرا

NEWSLETTER

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Pakistan-China Partnership Enters a New Era of Mineral-Led Growth

Addressing the China-Pakistan Mineral Cooperation Forum in Islamabad on January 28, Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Prof. Ahsan Iqbal said that Pakistan, China relations have entered a new phase, moving beyond infrastructure toward production, exports, jobs and sustainable development. Marking 75 years of diplomatic ties, he noted that CPEC has already transformed Pakistan through energy...

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SPOTLIGHT STORY

Pakistan Champions
Value-Added Exports at
Gulfood 2026



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Preface: December 2025 Recap

December 2025 was a month of strategic consolidation and forward momentum for the Ministry as URAAN Pakistan advanced from planning to delivery across multiple fronts. Key highlights included Pakistan's geo-economic emphasis at the Tianshan Forum in Urumqi, where the Minister spotlighted regional connectivity and enhanced trade corridors. Domestically, the country mapped its future readiness with the AI Rise Expo 2025, unveiling a national roadmap for AI, quantum computing, advanced manufacturing and other frontier technologies under the E-Pakistan pillar. Economic stabilization was evident with GDP growth of 3.71 % in Q1 FY2025-26, while infrastructure reviews prioritized rail, motorway, hydropower and water projects. Climate resilience took center stage with DEWTE 2025, alongside sustained human development engagements such as Quaid-e-Azam's 150th anniversary launch, KEMUCON 2025, and strengthened global health partnerships including reaffirmed commitment to polio eradication with international stakeholders.



FEATURED STORY

From Madrid to Pakistan: A Global Call to Invest in Childhood



At the first-ever Global Caregiver Forum in Madrid, co-hosted by UNICEF, WHO and the Government of Spain, Federal Minister for Planning, Development & Special Initiatives Prof. Ahsan Iqbal represented Pakistan and was widely acknowledged for the country's leadership in advancing the global caregiver agenda under the vision of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. Addressing global policymakers and advocates, the Minister emphasized that investment in early childhood care and parenting is both a human rights obligation and a long-term economic imperative, often overlooked due to short political cycles despite its transformative impact on societies.

Highlighting Pakistan's context as a climate-vulnerable country with a large youth population, the Minister shared how Pakistan has chosen to protect its youngest citizens despite floods, fiscal pressures and humanitarian challenges. He outlined Pakistan's Early Childhood Development Policy Framework, aligned with URAAN Pakistan, which ensures integrated health, nutrition, early learning and caregiver support, especially in the most vulnerable districts. The forum applauded Pakistan's evidence-based, equity-focused approach, including innovative initiatives like Project Play and youth-led community mobilization, reinforcing Pakistan's growing role as a global voice for children, caregivers and inclusive development.

SPOTLIGHT STORY

Pakistan Champions Value-Added Exports at Gulfood 2026



Federal Minister for Planning, Development & Special Initiatives Prof. Ahsan Iqbal led Pakistan's participation at Gulfood 2026 in Dubai with a clear message: value addition and export growth are central to economic self-reliance under the URAAN Pakistan initiative.

Pakistan has agriculture as the backbone of its economy, and we have a range of agricultural products that are world class, and particularly Pakistani rice and basmati is known for its aroma world over."

During his engagement at the Pakistan Pavilion, the Minister toured national stalls showcasing food and agro-based products, interacting with exporters and industry leaders. He emphasized the government's commitment to promoting productivity, quality and innovation so that "Made in Pakistan" becomes a recognised global brand. He encouraged exporters to elevate product standards and focus on value-added exports to compete effectively in international markets, reinforcing export-led development as a strategic priority. Prof. Iqbal's leadership at Gulfood highlighted how export growth, underpinned by innovation and quality enhancement, forms a core pillar of URAAN Pakistan's mission to build a resilient, inclusive and globally competitive economy.

"Our goal is to move up on the value chain. We want to move from commodity supplier in agriculture to value added supplier in agriculture and food industry."

Transforming Education Through Digital Governance

Education remained high on the national agenda in January. On 5 January, Prof. Ahsan Iqbal delivered an online address at the launch of the Higher Education Commission's "Maktab" initiative, underscoring digital transformation in higher education. He noted that Pakistan's universities are transitioning from traditional processes to data-enabled, performance-driven systems, with transparent governance and merit as foundations for globally competitive institutions.

Linking the initiative to URAAN Pakistan, he said knowledge, technology, and innovation are central to economic competitiveness. The initiative aligns education with economic development, integrating innovation ecosystems with learning institutions. Under URAAN Pakistan's five pillars, reforms such as a Seven-Point University Quality Framework, performance-linked funding, and innovation hubs aim to solidify human capital as a driver of national progress.



Under the programme, universities, research, and the economy are being integrated to translate academic research into tangible economic outcomes. The government will prepare Pakistan's top 10 premium universities for global competitiveness, while public funding for universities will increasingly be tied to performance and outcomes under a new quality framework. The Minister also highlighted the establishment of manufacturing and innovation centres, including Quantum Valley Pakistan, to strengthen linkages between research and industry.

Implemented initially in 25 universities, Maktab integrates ERP, Student Lifecycle Management, and Learning Management Systems, providing real-time data, enhanced transparency, and evidence-based policymaking at both institutional and national levels.

Planning Minister Introduces Quarterly Reviews to Accelerate Annual Plan Delivery



Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Prof. Ahsan Iqbal chaired the Mid-Year Review of the Annual Plan 2025–26, announcing a shift to quarterly performance reviews to strengthen planning discipline, monitoring, and delivery. Addressing senior federal and provincial officials, the Minister said the Annual Development Plan would now be reviewed more frequently to ensure timely achievement of national targets and faster resolution of implementation bottlenecks. He emphasized that effective governance depends on strong institutions, policy continuity, and performance-based accountability.

Linking the review to URAAN Pakistan, Prof. Iqbal reiterated the government's long-term goal of transforming Pakistan into a one trillion-dollar economy by 2035. He highlighted the importance of close federal-provincial coordination, particularly in key growth drivers such as agriculture, services, IT, and the social sector.

The meeting also reviewed economic trends, development challenges, and recovery efforts following recent floods, alongside measures to strengthen macroeconomic stability and improve utilisation of the Public Sector Development Programme.

Concluding the session, the Planning Minister reaffirmed the government's commitment to disciplined planning, coordinated implementation, and sustained reforms to deliver inclusive and resilient economic growth.

Economic Stabilisation Gains Momentum

Addressing the launch of his Monthly Development Report, Federal Minister for Planning, Development & Special Initiatives Prof. Ahsan Iqbal noted that December 2025 marked a visible turnaround in Pakistan's economic indicators, driven by stabilisation-focused policies. Despite devastating floods, the economy recorded 3.7 percent GDP growth in the first quarter of FY2026, with a strong 9.4 percent rise in industrial output, compared to 1.6 percent growth in the same period last year. Inflation eased significantly to 5.2 percent during July–December, supported by improved availability of essential commodities, while large-scale manufacturing rebounded with 5 percent growth after two years of decline. He stressed that the government remains firmly committed to sustainable, not artificial, growth under URAAN Pakistan.

The Minister highlighted progress in exports, remittances, and development spending, with remittances rising 10.5 percent to \$19.7 billion and tax revenues reaching Rs 6.2 trillion in the first half of the fiscal year. Development utilisation under PSDP improved markedly, alongside savings through better project management. He underlined the urgency of an export emergency, reforms in the energy sector, and investments in human capital, IT, and education, including AI scholarships with China. Reaffirming commitments on polio eradication, agricultural self-reliance, and institutional reforms, he said 2026 has been declared the year of reforms, laying the foundation for long-term economic resilience and inclusive growth.



Strengthening Healthcare as a Pillar of URAAN Pakistan

January marked a significant step forward in Pakistan's journey toward people-centred development as Federal Minister for Planning, Development & Special Initiatives Prof. Ahsan Iqbal steered major health sector decisions under the URAAN Pakistan vision.

Chairing the Central Development Working Party (CDWP), the Planning Minister approved and advanced five critical health initiatives, reinforcing the government's resolve to expand access to quality healthcare, reduce financial hardship for families, and strengthen public health systems. The decisions reflect a clear shift from fragmented interventions to a more integrated social protection framework where health is treated as a national investment.

At the heart of the deliberations was the Sehat Sahulat Program, redesigned to refocus public resources on those who need them most. Under the revised framework, universal inpatient health coverage will be delivered in Islamabad, Azad Jammu & Kashmir, and Gilgit-Baltistan, with the aim of reducing catastrophic out-of-pocket health expenses and ensuring dignity in access to care. Prof. Ahsan Iqbal underscored that URAAN Pakistan places citizens at the centre of policy, and that healthcare must remain accessible, affordable, and equitable.

The Minister also guided decisions to strengthen healthcare infrastructure, including the expansion and modernisation of Jinnah Hospital (Polyclinic-II), Islamabad, alongside investments in disease surveillance, border health services, and specialised cardiac care. Emphasis was placed on realistic planning, sustainability, and ensuring that facilities become fully operational without delay.

Together, these initiatives reflect a broader national commitment under URAAN Pakistan to build resilient health systems, protect vulnerable communities, and translate public investment into tangible improvements in everyday lives.



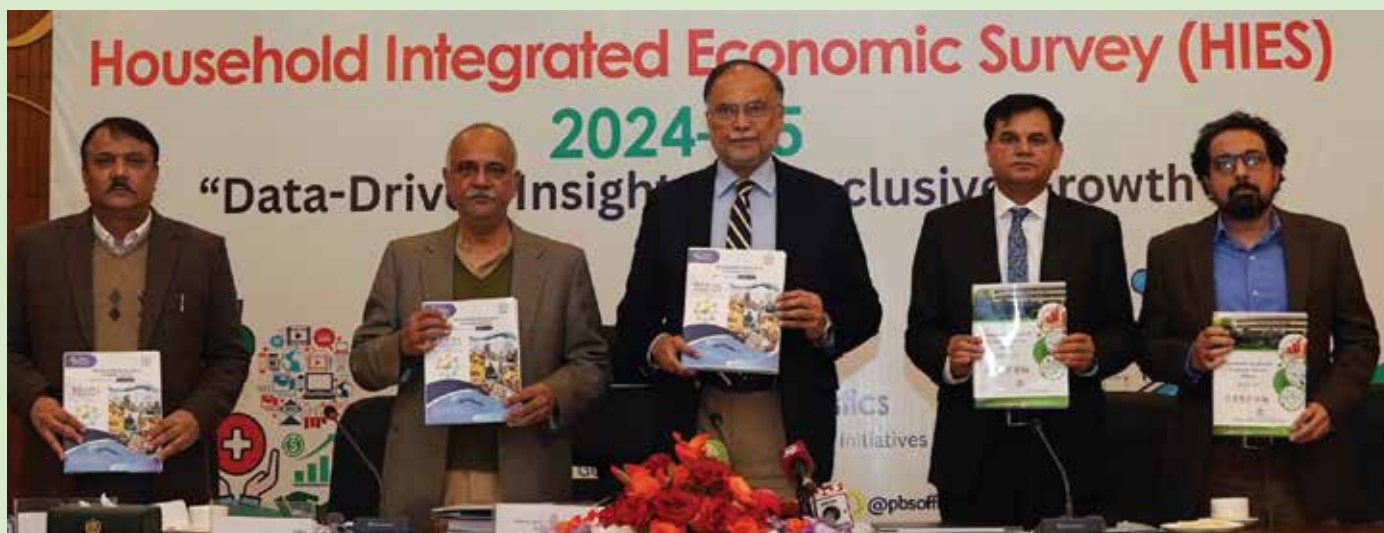
Government and Industry Partnership Under URAAN Pakistan

The government strengthened its partnership with the business community in January as Federal Minister for Planning, Development & Special Initiatives Prof. Ahsan Iqbal signed a MoU with the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) to advance economic goals under URAAN Pakistan.

The agreement underscores a shared commitment to export-led growth, industrial revival, and public-private collaboration, recognising industry as a key driver of sustainable economic development. Prof. Ahsan Iqbal said URAAN Pakistan reflects the government's resolve to stabilise the economy, expand exports, and place Pakistan on a long-term growth path through close coordination with the private sector.



Data Driving Development: Pakistan's First Digital HIES Launched



January opened with a major step toward evidence-based governance as Federal Minister for Planning, Development & Special Initiatives Prof. Ahsan Iqbal officially launched Pakistan's first-ever digital Household Integrated Economic Survey (HIES) 2024-25, conducted by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics.

The survey marks a milestone in Pakistan's evolving data ecosystem and reflects the transformation of the Planning Ministry and PBS into modern, analytics-driven institutions. Addressing the launch, Prof. Ahsan Iqbal underscored that reliable data is essential for effective policymaking, productivity, and long-term development, noting that HIES will support researchers, businesses, and planners alike.

The findings reveal encouraging social and economic progress. National literacy improved from 60% to 63%, while out-of-school children declined from 30% to 28%. Household internet access more than doubled from 34% to 70%, and individual internet usage rose sharply from 17% to 57%, highlighting rapid digital inclusion. Health and living standards also showed gains, with full immunisation coverage increasing from 68% to 73%, and the use of clean cooking fuels rising from 35% to 38%.

Reflecting on recent economic shocks, the Minister noted that Pakistan has emerged from a prolonged period of crisis and is now firmly on a recovery path, with expectations of around 4% GDP growth this fiscal year. He stressed that sustainable growth depends on education, skills, and institutional strength, calling for urgent action to address the education emergency and expand participation nationwide.

Linking the survey to URAAN Pakistan's 5Es Framework, Prof. Ahsan Iqbal described HIES as both a mirror and a mandate, guiding Pakistan's "Marka-e-Taraqqi" toward a resilient, inclusive, and trillion-dollar economy by 2035.

Blue Economy Emerges as a New Growth Frontier



Federal Minister for Planning, Development & Special Initiatives Prof. Ahsan Iqbal highlighted the blue economy as a key yet underutilised driver of Pakistan's economic growth, noting that despite a coastline of over a thousand kilometres, its contribution to GDP remains around one percent. He emphasised that countries which invested strategically in their maritime resources have transformed the blue economy into a pillar of sustainable development.

The Minister said Gwadar and Karachi ports are being developed as long-term economic platforms to strengthen regional trade, particularly with Central Asia. Stressing the need to move beyond fishing alone, he called for value addition in fisheries and aquaculture, alongside opportunities in coastal tourism. Under URAAN Pakistan, he said, the blue economy is being positioned as a strategic national pillar through an integrated and solution-oriented development approach.

Building Climate Resilience into National Planning

Speaking at a consultative workshop on climate and environmental assessment, Federal Minister for Planning, Development & Special Initiatives Prof. Ahsan Iqbal highlighted that Pakistan is among the world's ten most climate-vulnerable countries, despite contributing less than one percent to global greenhouse gas emissions. He noted that recurring climate disasters continue to divert precious development resources towards recovery, recalling that the 2022 floods alone caused nearly \$30 billion in losses, while fresh flooding in 2025 impacted several districts of Punjab, deepening poverty and food insecurity in already vulnerable communities.

The Minister stressed that extreme heat and climate volatility have become Pakistan's new normal, underscoring the urgency of climate-smart planning. To safeguard investments, the Ministry is developing new project guidelines and strengthening economic and technical appraisal under the PSDP, while embedding climate resilience into the planning system. Calling for reforms in the global financial architecture, he urged developed countries to fulfil their responsibilities by providing meaningful financial and technical support to developing nations. He described the workshop as a critical step from policy to implementation, reaffirming that environment and climate action remain a core pillar of URAAN Pakistan's 5Es framework.



Sweet Relief: Sugar Prices Melt as Wheat Sowing Hits the Mark

As Ramadan approaches, the National Price Monitoring Committee reviewed food inflation, availability and price stability under the chairmanship of Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Prof Ahsan Iqbal. The meeting noted mixed inflation trends, with headline inflation rising to 5.6 percent in December 2025, driven largely by gas charges and select food items, while prices of key kitchen staples such as potatoes, onions, tomatoes, pulses and electricity showed a downward trend. Encouragingly, wheat sowing targets have been met and are expected to be fully achieved by February, strengthening domestic food security. Prices of sugar and chicken, which had spiked earlier, have also declined significantly, easing pressure on household budgets ahead of Ramadan.



To address structural issues, Prof Iqbal directed focused action on food quality, supply chains and long-term resilience. He called for a detailed study on cold chain infrastructure to reduce post-harvest losses, improve price stability and absorb market shocks, alongside policy papers to promote value addition and exports in the poultry, dairy and juice sectors. Stressing public health, he ordered strict enforcement of food quality standards, particularly in ghee production. The Minister also sought reports on agricultural import substitution and national self-sufficiency, while instructing provinces to tighten monitoring of Ramadan supplies, curb hoarding and ensure smooth availability of essential commodities through coordinated, data-driven oversight.

Steering Pakistan Toward Water Security

Pakistan's growing water challenges took center stage as Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Prof. Ahsan Iqbal, chaired the first meeting of the Task Force on National Water Security on January 13, 2026, with Federal Minister for Water Resources Mian Muhammad Moeen Wattoo in attendance. The meeting reviewed alarming evidence of climate change impacts, including accelerated glacier melt across the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region, where ice loss has surged sharply in recent decades. With 23 percent of glacier ice already lost since 1960 and river flows becoming increasingly uncertain, the discussion underscored the urgency of a national response to avert a long-term water crisis that threatens food security, economic stability and national sovereignty.



Setting a decisive course, Prof. Iqbal directed the creation of a dedicated Working Group under the Ministry of Water Resources to develop practical, time-bound recommendations within fifteen days, alongside an immediate technical workshop to convert policy into implementable projects. He stressed stronger federal-provincial coordination under the National Water Policy, warned against external water pressures and wastage of freshwater resources, and called water conservation the backbone of national survival. Emphasizing the government's Five Es framework, he highlighted the critical role of new storage infrastructure, noting Diamer-Bhasha and Mohmand Dams as future milestones, while urging universities, experts and key institutions to contribute evidence-based solutions to secure Pakistan's water future.

Pakistan–China Partnership Enters a New Era of Mineral-Led Growth



Addressing the China–Pakistan Mineral Cooperation Forum in Islamabad on January 28, Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Prof. Ahsan Iqbal said that Pakistan, China relations have entered a new phase, moving beyond infrastructure toward production, exports, jobs and sustainable development. Marking 75 years of diplomatic ties, he noted that CPEC has already transformed Pakistan through energy projects, roads, Gwadar Port and national connectivity, and that CPEC 2.0 is now aligned with the Uraan Pakistan framework, which charts a roadmap to a one-trillion-dollar economy by 2035. During a recent high-level visit to China, a landmark MoU was signed to align Uraan Pakistan’s Five Es with President Xi Jinping’s Five Growth Corridors, ensuring closer coordination in planning, investment and implementation.

Highlighting minerals as a strategic pillar of export transformation, Prof. Iqbal said Pakistan’s mineral wealth, estimated at \$6–7 trillion, remains underutilized, with exports currently around \$2 billion annually. He stressed shifting cooperation with China from raw extraction to value addition, processing, smelting and refining, citing projects such as Saindak, Thar Coal and lead-zinc initiatives as proof of growing trust. Emphasizing inclusive and environmentally responsible development, he said mineral-rich regions like Balochistan and KP must see real gains in jobs, skills, health and education. Reaffirming the government’s commitment to investor security through SIFC, he invited Chinese firms to invest in copper, gold, rare earths and other critical minerals, turning shared resources into industrial strength, export competitiveness and joint prosperity.

Global Classroom Meets Pakistan’s Reform Vision

A delegation of MBA students from Yale University visited Pakistan and met with Federal Minister for Planning, Development & Special Initiatives, Prof. Ahsan Iqbal, for an interactive exchange on Pakistan’s economic transformation and development priorities. The discussion offered students a first-hand perspective on the country’s reform trajectory and emerging opportunities.

During the interaction, Prof. Ahsan Iqbal outlined the government’s long-term reform agenda under URAAN Pakistan, underscoring exports, digital transformation, climate resilience, clean energy, and social inclusion as the core pillars of sustainable growth. He also highlighted the central role of youth and the Pakistani diaspora in driving innovation and global connectivity. The engagement reflected growing international academic interest in Pakistan’s reform journey and reinforced the value of knowledge exchanges in shaping informed global partnerships.



NEWS IN PICTURES



Federal Minister, Prof. Ahsan Iqbal led Pakistan's participation at Gulfood 2026



Prof. Ahsan Iqbal in a meeting with Country Representative UNICEF



"Monthly Development Update" was formally launched at the Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives by Minister Ahsan Iqbal with collaboration of senior officers from the ministry.



The Ministry of Planning organized a memorial ceremony on the occasion of the second death anniversary of Mr. Sartaj Aziz, in which Sartaj Aziz's family members also participated. The ceremony paid tribute to his services as a visionary economist and distinguished politician.



MoPD&SI organized the "Employee of the Month" ceremony to recognize and reward outstanding performance and dedication



Federal Minister Ahsan Iqbal chaired the meeting of the Poverty Estimation Committee to review key indicators and policy measures.



Federal Minister Professor Ahsan Iqbal
Addressing the IPakistan Policy Dialogue Conference held in Islamabad



Call on Pakistan's Ambassador to China



Federal Minister Professor Ahsan Iqbal with the participants of National Workshop KP



Minister visited senior journalist Mr. Shahbaz Rana to inquire after his health



Federal Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal addressing the participants during NIPA Visit



Federal Minister for Planning and Development Prof. Ahsan Iqbal met with the Ambassador of China at the Launching ceremony of the E-mining platform



Federal Minister for Planning, Development & Special Initiatives, Professor Ahsan Iqbal, meets UAE Deputy Minister of Cabinet Affairs





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