Ministry of Planning Development & Special Initiatives
Government of Pakistan

URAAN PAKISTAN
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NEWSLETTER

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CPEC 2.0: Chinese Investment in Manufacturing, Technology and Export-Oriented Industry

Federal Ministers Prof. Ahsan Iqbal meeting a business delegation from Xinjiang led by Senior Advisor to the Xinjiang Government H.E. Yuan Jianmin on October 14, 2026.....

TO BE CONTINUED PAGE 07

FEATURED STORY

Mission $100 Billion: Building the Value Chains Pakistan Needs to Earn Its Prosperity



TO BE CONTINUED PAGE 02

SPOTLIGHT STORY

ML-1 Modernisation: A Strategic Rail Corridor for Trade, Freight and Regional Connectivity



TO BE CONTINUED PAGE 03

DEVELOPMENT RECAP | AUGUST 2026

September saw the Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives continue to advance the URAAN Pakistan agenda, focusing on translating economic stabilisation into export-led growth, stronger institutions, improved connectivity and wider opportunities for citizens. The economic scorecard featured in the September newsletter indicated improving activity across manufacturing, exports, remittances and investment, while also highlighting continuing inflationary pressures. Pakistan's economic indicators showed signs of recovery during the opening months of FY2026-27. Large-scale manufacturing grew by 3% year-on-year in July, while exports of goods and services rose by 9.2% to US$7.3 billion during July-August. Remittances reached US$7.3 billion in the first two months of the fiscal year, compared with US$6.4 billion a year earlier, while net foreign direct investment increased by 24% to US$494 million over the same period. Average inflation stood at 10.2% during July-August, rising to 11.1% in August, highlighting the continuing pressure on household purchasing power.

Development planning and regional connectivity also remained important priorities. On 11 September, the Central Development Working Party considered seven projects worth approximately Rs115.9 billion. Five projects worth Rs21.59 billion were approved, while two projects worth Rs94.301 billion were recommended to ECNEC for further consideration. At the regional level, Pakistan presented the proposed modernisation of the 1,726-kilometre Main Line-1 at the CAREC Ministerial Conference in Ulaanbaatar, highlighting its potential to improve passenger and freight movement and strengthen trade links with Central Asian markets. These developments represent project decisions and proposals rather than completed infrastructure outcomes.

Alongside economic and infrastructure priorities, September brought progress in human development, innovation and public welfare. Pakistan's polio campaign ran from 21 to 27 September, targeting 31 million children under five across 115 districts. Two new hostels at Government College Women University Faisalabad opened with accommodation for 350 female students, while the Youth Ideation Lab encouraged young people to develop practical solutions to community challenges. Quantum Valley Pakistan and semiconductor-design training initiatives sought to connect research, technical skills, startups and industry, while longer-term efforts continued in water security and digital transformation.

Together, these initiatives reflect the Ministry's continued emphasis on productivity, institutional capacity and inclusive opportunity under URAAN Pakistan. The priority ahead is to translate improving indicators, policy initiatives and development approvals into timely implementation and measurable outcomes for citizens.









FEATURED STORY

Mission $100 Billion: Building the Value Chains Pakistan Needs to Earn Its Prosperity



Pakistan's export ambition calls for a shift from isolated production to connected clusters that link businesses, skills, research, finance and logistics with global buyers. At the 39th Annual Conference of the Pakistan Society of Development Economists, Planning Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal set out a roadmap to make export growth a foundation of economic sovereignty.

Pakistan's ability to finance development increasingly depends on competitive production. Opening the 39th Annual Conference of the Pakistan Society of Development Economists on October 14, 2026, Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Prof. Ahsan Iqbal framed export growth as a national economic mission. "How do we build a Pakistan that earns its prosperity, finances its development and commands its economic destiny? Our answer is Mission $100 Billion," he said.

The challenge is visible in the gap with comparable exporting economies. Pakistan's merchandise exports in calendar year 2024 stood at approximately $32.3 billion, compared with Bangladesh's $47.2 billion, Malaysia's $330.4 billion and Vietnam's $404.8 billion; these figures exclude services. The Minister said expanding productive capacity and competitiveness was essential to easing external-account pressures while safeguarding macroeconomic stability.



The proposed response centres on cluster-based development. Export clusters would connect producers with suppliers, skilled workers, universities, testing laboratories, finance and logistics. The aim is to build complete value chains that meet market requirements, improve quality and retain more value in Pakistan. "Build the cluster. Strengthen the value chain. Connect it to the world," the Minister said.



The approach covers eight URAAN Pakistan domains: agriculture; industry and manufacturing; services; information technology; mining; manpower and skills; the blue economy; and creative industries. Prof. Iqbal said strategies should begin with buyers' requirements, then align investment, training, infrastructure and standards with market opportunities so production and skills development respond to real demand.

Participation in global supply chains, he said, must develop domestic suppliers, increase local value addition and create better employment. Opportunities under the next phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) could connect infrastructure and special economic zones with export-oriented production. Policy continuity is essential. "The future of a Pakistani export order should not depend on the future of a political administration," he said.

The Minister invited PIDE and conference participants to prepare practical cluster and value-chain roadmaps identifying priority products, target markets, capability gaps, responsible institutions, costs and timelines. He welcomed independent research that challenges government assumptions and improves policy. Ultimately, the mission will be judged not only by export receipts, but by whether productivity and competitiveness improve livelihoods.

SPOTLIGHT STORY

ML-1 Modernisation: A Strategic Rail Corridor for Trade, Freight and Regional Connectivity



Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal has called for implementation of the Karachi-Rohri upgrade while financing is developed for the remaining Karachi-Peshawar corridor, positioning rail modernisation as a national economic priority.

During his official visit to Mongolia for the CAREC International Conference on September 28, 2026, Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal highlighted the importance of modernising Pakistan Railways' Main Line-1 (ML-1). Stretching 1,726 kilometres from Karachi to Peshawar, the corridor carries 76 percent of passenger traffic and 98 percent of freight traffic despite significant infrastructure constraints. The Minister said its modernisation was not simply a railway project, but a priority directly connected to trade, economic growth and regional connectivity.

The proposed upgrade would increase capacity from 34 to 120 train pairs, raise passenger speeds to up to 160 km/h and freight speeds from 30 to 80 km/h, and reduce Karachi-Rohri travel time from eight hours to approximately four and a half hours. The corridor would also be positioned to accommodate freight demand projected to reach around 21 million tonnes annually by 2035.

The approximately US$2.5 billion Karachi-Rohri section is the most advanced component of the programme. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is leading the financing effort, with AIIB, the World Bank, IsDB and EIB engaged as co-financing partners. Project-readiness financing has been secured, engineering work undertaken, and procurement and financing processes are advancing.

Ahsan Iqbal stressed that Karachi-Rohri must be treated as the first step towards complete modernisation of the Karachi-Peshawar corridor, not as a standalone project. Pakistan is working in parallel on a financing pathway for the remaining Rohri-Peshawar sections. "The priority now is to convert the progress already made on Karachi-Rohri into implementation while securing financing for the remaining corridor in parallel," he said. The objective is an integrated, higher-capacity rail network that can support growing passenger and freight demand and strengthen Pakistan's links with regional markets.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Pakistan and Uzbekistan Seek Bankable Projects and a Clear Railway Roadmap



During the CAREC meetings in Ulaanbaatar on September 28, 2026, Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal met an Uzbek delegation led by Deputy Minister of Investment, Industry and Trade Ilzat Kasimov. Discussions focused on regional connectivity, investment and international financing, particularly the Uzbekistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan (UAP) Railway, which could connect Central Asian markets with Pakistan's ports.

The Minister called for expediting the feasibility study, identifying multilateral and bilateral financing, and preparing a clear implementation roadmap. He proposed a Pakistan-Uzbekistan Joint Financing Coordination Mechanism to engage international financial institutions and development partners. He also urged an integrated corridor linking railways, highways, logistics, ports and industrial centres, alongside joint ventures in textiles, pharmaceuticals, agriculture, minerals, engineering and IT. Both sides agreed to translate existing agreements into projects with clear timelines and financing arrangements.

Pakistan and Uzbekistan Seek Bankable Projects and a Clear Railway Roadmap



At the 25th Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Ministerial Conference in Ulaanbaatar on September 29, 2026, Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal called for transport routes to evolve into economic corridors integrating infrastructure, logistics, digital connectivity, energy cooperation and climate resilience. Pakistan expects to assume the CAREC Chairmanship in 2027 and host the 26th Ministerial Conference.

He identified CAREC Corridors 5 and 6 as opportunities to connect Central Asia with the Arabian Sea, supported by upgraded roads, modern border facilities at Torkham and Chaman, the proposed ML-1 upgrade, and links to dry and seaports. He called for logistics and production hubs, digital pre-clearance, coordinated border procedures and climate-resilient infrastructure. He also urged common standards and coordinated investment schedules, with impact measured through border delays, delivery times, local employment, SME participation and opportunities for women and youth. On the conference sidelines, he witnessed an MoU between the CAREC Capital Markets Development Forum and ASEAN Capital Markets Forum to strengthen knowledge sharing, regulatory cooperation and regional financial integration.

ADB Backs ML-1 as Flagship Project; Minister Proposes Climate and Export Financing Initiatives



Meeting ADB President Masato Kanda on September 30, 2026, in Ulaanbaatar, Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal called for a dedicated climate-adaptation and resilience financing window for highly vulnerable countries, beyond existing country allocations. Drawing on Pakistan's experience of devastating floods, he argued that countries with minimal contributions to global emissions often face serious financing gaps after disasters. He proposed using artificial intelligence and modern data systems to identify vulnerabilities and direct financing more effectively.

The Minister also proposed a competitive regional financing window for CAREC members and a CAREC Critical Minerals Investment and Value-Chain Platform covering opportunities in copper, antimony, chromite and rare earths. He invited CAREC businesses to the Pakistan Minerals Investment Forum in Islamabad on November 12-13, 2026. Ahsan Iqbal urged fast-tracking ML-1 formalities so groundbreaking could begin; President Kanda confirmed ADB's full commitment to the project as a flagship. Both sides agreed to explore studies on an export accelerator supporting Pakistan's ambition of $100 billion in exports by 2035 and on better floodwater storage and utilisation. ADB also highlighted infrastructure and human capital, while stressing stability, policy continuity and sustained reforms.

CAREC Institute Proposed as Regional Knowledge Hub for Practical Policy Solutions



Addressing the CAREC Institute Governing Council in Ulaanbaatar on September 30, 2026, Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal proposed developing the Institute into a trusted regional knowledge clearing house. After 25 years of investment in roads, railways, energy links and trade corridors, he said the next phase of cooperation should also share expertise and practical solutions across borders.

His proposals included a living knowledge platform and expert directory bringing together regional data, policy tools, project evaluations and proven practices, as well as a peer-exchange facility connecting officials working on trade facilitation, digital customs, logistics, renewable energy, disaster response, agriculture and skills development. The Minister said the Institute's work should be demand-driven and judged by its practical impact. As Pakistan prepares to chair CAREC in 2027, it will promote knowledge exchange on economic corridors, digital connectivity, trade facilitation and climate resilience. Pakistan's Single Window was offered as an early case for regional exchange, with universities and research institutions encouraged to join the network.

Istanbul University Visit Highlights Academic Links and Knowledge Partnerships with Türkiye



Returning from Mongolia, Planning Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal visited Istanbul University and met Vice Rector and Acting Dean of the Faculty of Business Administration Prof. Dr Mehmet Adak. The engagement focused on how Pakistan-Türkiye relations, described by the Minister as woven with "golden threads", could extend beyond defence, diplomacy and trade into stronger academic collaboration.

Discussions explored faculty exchanges, joint research, student scholarships and cooperation in emerging technologies. Reflecting on the university building's former role as an Ottoman military headquarters, Prof. Iqbal said universities today must address the challenges of their age through the knowledge they produce. He also called for reviving the spirit of inquiry associated with Muslim civilisation, urging students and researchers to turn curiosity into research, research into practical solutions, and learning into contributions that improve people's lives.

Istanbul University Visit Highlights Academic Links and Knowledge Partnerships with Türkiye



Addressing students at Istanbul University during his transit from Mongolia, Planning Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal called for reciprocal semester-long student exchanges with recognised degree credits, faculty teaching exchanges and visits by university leaders. He said the longstanding affection between Pakistan and Türkiye should create meaningful opportunities for the next generation to study and work together.

He proposed collaboration in artificial intelligence, technology, higher education and scientific research, alongside updated curricula, practical skills and stronger capacity to govern emerging technologies. He warned that qualifications alone could not make young people future-ready and called for responsible responses to AI-enabled misinformation, polarisation and criminal misuse. The Minister encouraged students to protect their time from excessive social media use and invited them to the Planning Ministry's six-week programme, in which around 40 participants selected from thousands of applicants explore public policy, economic development and technology. He also highlighted the one-year Young Development Fellows Programme.

National Branding Initiative Targets Higher-Value Exports and a Stronger Made in Pakistan Identity



The National Center for Brand Development (NCBD), a flagship initiative of the Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, convened a high-level stakeholder roundtable in Islamabad on October 6, 2026, on national branding, Pakistan's rising soft power and brand-led exports. Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal said economic sovereignty required a shift from low-value commodity exports towards differentiated, higher-value products supported by strong national and commercial brands.

He contrasted Pakistan's exports, which have remained around $40 billion since 1990, with Vietnam's approximately $475 billion. Pakistan produces high-quality textiles, surgical instruments, sports goods and FIFA World Cup footballs, he said, but often loses value when products are sold under foreign brands. The NCBD will help local industries move towards direct global exports and build a unified "Made in Pakistan" identity. The proposed Nation Brand Lens spans Culture, Exports, Governance, Diplomacy and Defence, Entertainment, Tourism and Sports. Participants discussed the country-brand framework, measurement, policy, a global slogan and ways to build trust in Pakistani products, aligned with URAAN Pakistan's Exports and Equity pillars.

Government Calls for Bankable Investment to Finance Development and Human Capital



Addressing the SDGs Investment Fair 2026 in Karachi on October 6-7, organised jointly by UNDP, the Government of Pakistan and provincial governments, Planning Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal urged investors to partner in Pakistan's long-term growth. He cited a global SDG financing gap exceeding US$4.3 trillion, shrinking aid and constrained domestic resources as reasons to mobilise capital beyond the state's balance sheet.

The Minister said public development spending had fallen from nearly 5% of GDP in 2017 to below 1%, while federal ministries sought Rs4 trillion in PSDP funding against a Rs1 trillion ceiling. He called for bankable transactions with clear revenue models, stable regulation and fair risk allocation, supported by blended finance, credit enhancements and targeted guarantees. Planning and Finance ministries, the Board of Investment, provincial planning departments and PPP authorities are aligning a national investment pipeline with UNDP and SIFC. The approach supports URAAN Pakistan's ambition of a US$1 trillion economy by 2035, with emphasis on its 11 missions and five pillars. With over 60% of the population below 30, the Minister stressed digital and technical skills and investment that creates productive businesses and dignified jobs.

Housing Reform Framework Targets 300,000-400,000 Homes a Year and Digital Land Systems by FY2029





At the Eighth National Economic Mission on housing, construction and real estate in Islamabad on October 7, 2026, chaired by Planning Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal, participants were told that Pakistan's annual housing demand stands at 700,000 units against supply of 250,000, a shortfall of approximately 450,000 homes each year. Construction supports 72 related industries and accounts for approximately 9.5% of national employment.

With the urban population rising from approximately 76 million in 2017 to 94 million in 2023, the Minister called for vertical development and protection of agricultural land. Between 2005 and 2022, built-up areas increased by 104% in Islamabad, 59% in Lahore, 43% in Karachi, 44% in Peshawar and 72% in Quetta. The proposed framework targets 300,000-400,000 housing units annually under the "House Ownership Plan for Everyone", mortgage finance rising from less than 0.5% of GDP to 5% by 2035, and digitised land records, permits, valuation and transfers by FY2029. It also proposes one-window construction approvals, incentives tied to verified work stages and secure escrow payments. The Minister urged technology-led construction and stronger international competitiveness for Pakistani firms.

Student Leaders at Beaconhouse Urged to Put Integrity and Service Before Titles

Addressing the investiture ceremony of the newly elected Student Council at Beaconhouse College Programme's Karakoram Campus in Islamabad, Planning Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal congratulated the Head Boy, Head Girl and council members. He urged young people to look beyond examinations and grades and consider how their talents could help address Pakistan's challenges.



The Minister described leadership as a trust-carrying responsibility, requiring character, integrity and service. In an era shaped by artificial intelligence and technology, he said, talented young people would be central to national progress and to URAAN Pakistan's ambition of a US$1 trillion economy. True leaders, he added, bring others along and support those at risk of being left behind. Referring to Iqbal's Shaheen, he reminded students that the real test of integrity comes when no one is watching.

Universities Asked to Turn Green-Economy Research into Practical Development Solutions



Addressing an international conference at AlGhazali University, Karachi, on "Sustainable Economic Transformation and the Green Economy: Pakistan's Vision for the Future," Planning Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal said the ambition to become a trillion-dollar economy by 2035 depended on productivity, skilled employment, innovation and responsible resource management. URAAN Pakistan's Five Es, Exports, E-Pakistan, Environment and Climate Change, Energy and Infrastructure, and Equity, Ethics and Empowerment, provide an integrated framework.

He urged universities, industry and government to collaborate on clean energy, digital transformation, water conservation and export development, with outcomes assessed through solutions adopted, enterprises created, people trained and lives improved. Campuses should demonstrate energy efficiency, water conservation and waste management. The 2022 floods caused more than US$30 billion in damage and economic losses, underscoring the need for resilience in public investment. Other priorities included water security, agricultural modernisation, green industry, sustainable cities and skills. The Minister called for public and private investment, international cooperation and wider opportunities for women, young people and smaller enterprises, urging universities to renew a spirit of rigorous inquiry.

Price Monitoring Committee Orders Action on Essential Commodities and Wholesale-Retail Gaps



Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal chaired the National Price Monitoring Committee on October 8, 2026, to review monthly and weekly inflation, essential commodity prices and implementation of earlier decisions. He expressed concern over rising prices, particularly wheat flour, and directed provincial and district administrations to monitor supplies, market arrivals, hoarding, profiteering and unjustified increases.

The meeting was informed that CPI inflation was 10.3% year-on-year in September 2026, down from 11.1% in August; average inflation during July-September FY2026-27 was 10.2%. WPI inflation reached 13.3% year-on-year, while weekly SPI for the week ended October 1 rose 11.53% year-on-year. Major annual increases included onions, LPG, electricity, diesel, petrol and wheat flour. The Minister ordered checks on transport fares after fuel increases, a review of high domestic DAP prices despite lower international prices, and an inspection and quality assessment report on ghee, edible oil and milk products within one week. He directed enforcement against unjustified wholesale-retail gaps, monitoring of supply-chain costs and action by OGRA to narrow the gap between notified and prevailing LPG cylinder prices.

National Anemia Plan Sets 50% Reduction Target for Women and Adolescent Girls by 2030



At the launch of the National Anemia Reduction Plan for Women, Adolescent Girls and Children (2025-2030) on October 13, 2026, Planning Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal called for dedicated task forces in every province to address anemia and child stunting. He said the test of governance was whether known development challenges were met with coordinated action and measurable improvements in people's lives.

The plan targets a 50 percent reduction in anemia among women and adolescent girls by 2030. The Minister called for stronger maternal nutrition, iron and folic acid supplementation, screening and treatment, reliable supplies and robust data and accountability systems. UNICEF Deputy Country Representative Jennifer Melton said anemia affected approximately two in five women of reproductive age and more than half of adolescent girls and young children, undermining health, education and productivity. WHO Country Representative Dr. Ellen Thom highlighted anemia's contribution to postpartum hemorrhage, a significant cause of maternal deaths in Pakistan. Speakers stressed multisectoral action across health, nutrition, education, social protection, food systems, and water, sanitation and hygiene, supported by provincial ownership, predictable financing and stronger frontline services.

Poverty Reduction Agenda Links Financial Support with Skills, Nutrition and Sustainable Livelihoods



Representing Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif at the international conference on inclusive and resilient economic empowerment and growth, "From Poverty to Prosperity," in Islamabad, Planning Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal said poverty reduction and human capital development must remain central to Pakistan's economic agenda. Poverty, he noted, includes children missing school, families without healthcare or adequate nutrition, and young people unable to access decent employment.

Citing approximately 25 million out-of-school children and a child stunting rate of around 40%, the Minister called for investment in early childhood development, education, healthcare and nutrition. He urged programmes to connect financial assistance and productive assets with skills, business capital, market access and reliable livelihoods, while widening economic participation for women and young people. Progress should be measured through stable incomes, savings, nutrition and household wellbeing. He also highlighted regional inequalities, noting that 11 of Pakistan's 20 poorest districts are in Balochistan, and urged prosperous districts to share resources, experience and opportunities with underserved areas.

CPEC 2.0: Chinese Investment in Manufacturing, Technology and Export-Oriented Industry



Meeting a business delegation from Xinjiang led by Senior Advisor to the Xinjiang Government H.E. Yuan Jianmin on October 14, 2026, Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal called for stronger Pakistan–China business-to-business cooperation. He said CPEC 2.0 would focus on industrial development, export growth, technology transfer and greater private-sector investment, building on longstanding links including the shared border and Karakoram Highway.

The Minister recalled that an agreement signed in July 2013 had led to more than $25 billion in investment within five years. Chinese power-sector investment added around 8,000 megawatts of capacity and helped Pakistan overcome severe energy shortages. Under CPEC 2.0, priorities include industrial cooperation, mining and minerals, IT, advanced technologies and educational exchanges. He said an additional $7 billion in exports over the next three years could support employment and reduce reliance on external financial assistance. Yuan Jianmin identified opportunities around Khunjerab Pass, a China-Pakistan border trade market and investment in manufacturing, new energy, artificial intelligence and advanced technologies.

Proposed ‘Prosperous Pakistan’ Framework Places Civic Responsibility and Professional Ethics at Its Core



At a roundtable in Islamabad on October 16, 2026, Planning Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal said sustainable development requires integrity, mutual trust and collective responsibility alongside economic growth and infrastructure. He described infrastructure as the “hardware” of development and ethical values as its “software”, arguing that public institutions and service delivery depend on honesty, professional ethics and responsible conduct.

Participants were briefed on the proposed “Prosperous Pakistan” framework, built around civic responsibility and professional ethics. Drawing on the Constitution of Pakistan, the National Curriculum of Pakistan and Paigham-e-Pakistan, the initiative envisages phased implementation, beginning with pilots in Islamabad Capital Territory or selected provincial districts before wider integration into educational and professional settings. The Minister called for collaboration among federal and provincial governments, families, educational institutions and religious centres, and directed that a permanent working group be established. He also urged stronger protection of public resources and action against corruption, bribery and adulteration.

PHF-Vital Group Partnership Aims to Rebuild Hockey Through Youth and Private-Sector Support



At a signing ceremony marking a partnership between the Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) and Vital Group on October 15, 2026, Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal called for coordinated efforts to restore Pakistan’s standing in international hockey. He described the sport as part of the country’s national identity and stressed that young players need institutional backing and stronger private-sector patronage.

The Minister said financial security allows athletes to focus on performance rather than personal expenses, while modern excellence also requires sports science, technology and data-driven analysis, alongside fitness, mental resilience, discipline and sustained concentration. He highlighted the National Sports City in Narowal, designed to provide international-standard facilities for 14 sports at one location, and offered it to the national hockey team as a permanent training centre. The partnership, he said, could expand youth participation and help the next generation carry forward Pakistan’s hockey legacy.

National Youth Solution Sprint Invites Students to Develop Practical Responses to Local Challenges



Addressing Round Two of the National Youth Solution Sprint 2026 under the Banu Shaheen initiative on October 16, Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal urged young people to move beyond criticism and become solution providers. He said effective interventions begin with understanding root causes and translating ideas into practical action suited to Pakistan’s circumstances and available resources.

Student teams examined drug abuse, population growth, access to clean drinking water and sanitation, out-of-school children and malnutrition. Team leads presented challenges and proposed community-level activities intended to create sustainable impact. The Minister stressed communication, leadership and other life skills alongside technical knowledge, and said students should contribute constructively to national development rather than be used for political agendas. The initiative will offer ongoing engagement through monthly innovation sprints, TED-style talks, policy labs and “Dragons’ Den”-style pitches, giving participants opportunities to test ideas, consult experts and present proposals.

Pakistan and Lebanon Explore Trade Exhibitions, University Exchanges and Sports Cooperation



Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal met Lebanon's Ambassador to Pakistan, H.E. Abdulaziz Issa, on October 16, 2026, to discuss stronger bilateral cooperation in trade, education, tourism, sports and people-to-people exchanges. The Minister identified export potential in pharmaceuticals, textiles, rice, cement, construction materials and light engineering products.

He proposed Pakistani trade exhibitions in Lebanon and reciprocal business delegations to explore commercial and investment opportunities. In education, he offered to facilitate semester-long student exchanges with mutual credit recognition and engagement with the Higher Education Commission to promote university partnerships. He also suggested football, basketball and volleyball team exchanges to provide athletes with international exposure. The Ambassador briefed the Minister on conditions in Lebanon and appreciated Pakistan's role in promoting peace in the Middle East; both sides expressed commitment to practical initiatives that deepen engagement.

Quaid-e-Azam's 150th Birth Anniversary Marked with Call for Unity and a $1 Trillion Economy by 2035



At the unveiling of the official logo for celebrations marking Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah's 150th birth anniversary on October 16, 2026, Planning Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal called for renewed commitment to the principles of faith, unity and discipline. He said the occasion should be a year of practical commitment rather than ceremonial commemoration.

The Minister recalled that Pakistan's founding generation achieved an independent homeland within seven years despite limited resources, and asked why the country could not similarly achieve development today. He expressed confidence in the ambition to build a trillion-dollar economy by 2035 and urged citizens to rise above ethnic, linguistic and regional divisions. Young people, engineers, doctors, teachers and workers, he said, all have a role in building a prosperous, self-reliant and economically sovereign Pakistan.

University of Narowal Tops Islamabad Science Festival; First Space Museum Planned for Pakistan



At World Space Week 2026 celebrations in Narowal on October 18, Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal said Pakistan's first astronaut was scheduled to embark on a space mission from China's space centre on November 25, while Pakistan aims for a lunar landing by 2035. The event, held for the first time in Narowal in collaboration with SUPARCO, sought to build young people's awareness of space science, research and modern technology.

The Minister highlighted space technology's applications in agriculture, communications, climate monitoring, education and national security. He congratulated the University of Narowal for securing first position at the Islamabad Science Festival and announced plans for Pakistan's first Space Museum at the university. The celebrations at Narowal Public School included student science models and projects, intended to encourage curiosity and future careers in science, engineering and emerging technologies. The Minister also referred to five satellites launched by Pakistan over the preceding two years and called for renewed national commitment to scientific research and discovery.





IGATEX Exhibition Highlights Industrial Momentum and the $100 Billion Export Target



Visiting the IGATEX exhibition at Expo Centre Lahore, Planning Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal Chaudhary said participation from 30 countries and the enthusiasm of industrialists reflected renewed activity in Pakistan's industrial sector. He noted that economic indicators were improving after four challenging years and that Pakistan's progress had received international recognition.

The Minister said the next priority was to translate stability into sustained industrial growth, stronger export capacity and greater value addition. Pakistani products must meet international quality standards and build globally recognised brands, he said. The budget had introduced measures to facilitate exporters, with further support expected as economic stability strengthened. He reaffirmed the government's commitment to the $100 billion export target, describing export growth as essential to economic sovereignty and reducing reliance on the IMF.

NUST Graduates Urged to Turn Research and Technology into Economic Opportunity



Federal Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal Chaudhary attended the Master's Convocation at the National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST) as Chief Guest, congratulating graduates, teachers and parents. He recalled approving NUST's Islamabad campus during his tenure as Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission in the 1990s, saying he had believed Pakistan needed a world-class university.

The Minister reflected on Pakistan's technological journey from the shortages at independence and the absence of bicycle manufacturing capacity to becoming the world's seventh nuclear power and producing the JF-17 Thunder. He said national strength increasingly depends on innovation emerging from university laboratories. NUST and other universities should strengthen partnerships with industry so "Made in Pakistan" becomes a global mark of quality. He said graduates could help lay the foundations for a $3 trillion economy by 2047 by turning knowledge into technologies, practical solutions and economic opportunities.

Intermodal Connectivity Mission Targets Faster, More Reliable and Lower-Cost Export Logistics



Under URAAN Pakistan, the 10th National Economic Mission on Intermodal Connectivity and Logistics is advancing reforms to lower trade costs, improve delivery reliability and strengthen export competitiveness. Planning Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal Chaudhary directed relevant ministries to work against clear targets and measurable performance indicators in support of the ambition to raise exports to $100 billion over the next decade.

Member Infrastructure Dr. Waqas Anwar presented a reform framework connecting production centres, industrial clusters and mineral belts with ports, airports and regional trade corridors. The mission focuses on coordinating roads, railways, ports and air cargo so goods move faster, more reliably and at lower cost. Delays can raise costs, tie up business capital and put future orders at risk; improved logistics can help secure more export orders, increase production and create jobs while strengthening foreign-exchange earnings and reducing reliance on external borrowing.

Policy Roundtable Links Regional Peace with Export-Led Growth and Economic Resilience

Chairing a roundtable on regional peace and Pakistan's economic prospects following the US-Iran conflict, Planning Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal Chaudhary called for development policy that responds to changing geopolitical and economic conditions. Former Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee General (Retd) Zubair Mahmood Hayat and other experts participated in discussions aimed at producing actionable recommendations.



The Minister highlighted efforts by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar and Field Marshal Asim Munir to advance regional peace, stressing that stability is essential for investment, trade and development. He argued that a strong economy underpins a strong defence and that diplomatic achievements must be translated into lasting economic progress. URAAN Pakistan's target of $100 billion in exports by 2035 was central to the discussion, alongside higher productivity, competitive products, economic diplomacy, disrupted supply chains and regional cooperation.

CEO Summit 2026 Calls on Business to Convert National Resilience into Export-Led Prosperity

Addressing business leaders, diplomats and investors at CEO Summit Islamabad 2026, organised by CEO Club Pakistan and World CEO Forum under the theme "Growth in Testing Times: Reshaping the Future," Planning Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal Chaudhary outlined a roadmap connecting stability with globally competitive businesses. The summit also featured the launch of "100 CEOs & Diplomats of Pakistan" and the CEO Award Ceremony.



The Minister credited difficult decisions under Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif with steering Pakistan away from default risk towards stability, and highlighted the armed forces' response during the 2025 conflict under Field Marshal Asim Munir and Pakistan's diplomatic role in bringing the US and Iran to the negotiating table. The next task, he said, is to convert these achievements into investment, trade and prosperity. URAAN Pakistan targets $100 billion in exports by 2035 and a $3 trillion economy by 2047. He urged businesses to improve productivity, quality and innovation, complete value chains, invest in research and partner with universities across agriculture, industry, services, tourism, IT, minerals, blue and creative economies, and skilled-workforce exports. Political stability, policy continuity and reforms remain essential.

Pakistan Calls for Integration of Satellite Intelligence into National Development and Disaster Preparedness

Addressing the opening of an international conference in Islamabad, organised in collaboration with the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA), Planning Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal Chaudhary called for integrating satellite intelligence and geospatial technologies into government decision-making. Emphasising that Pakistan's growing space capabilities must translate into public protection and economic resilience, he highlighted the importance of using space technology for disaster preparedness, agricultural management, urban planning and infrastructure development.



Referring to the devastating floods of 2022 and 2025 and Pakistan's disproportionate exposure to climate risks despite contributing less than 1% of global greenhouse gas emissions, the Minister stressed the need for stronger early warning systems, climate-informed infrastructure planning, inter-institutional data sharing and regional cooperation. Highlighting five successful satellite launches over the past 18 months and preparations to send Pakistan's first astronaut into space, he urged greater investment in space science education, research and training, particularly for women and young people. He also called for equitable access to climate finance, stressing that disaster recovery must not deepen debt or compromise essential investments in health and education. He emphasised that satellite intelligence must translate into timely decisions, saving lives, protecting livelihoods and strengthening the resilience of national development investments.

Planning Ministry Engages Oxford University Initiative to Strengthen Multidimensional Poverty Measurement



Federal Minister for Planning, Development & Special Initiatives Prof. Ahsan Iqbal Chaudhary held a meeting with a delegation from the Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative (OPHI), University of Oxford, led by its Director, Professor Sabina Alkire. The meeting focused on strengthening multidimensional poverty measurement to support evidence-based policymaking, better-targeted social investments and more effective development interventions, particularly in underserved districts.

Discussions covered the effective use of census and household survey data, emerging challenges including climate vulnerability and digital access, and capacity building in poverty analysis. The engagement emphasised the importance of robust data and multidimensional indicators in identifying vulnerable populations, addressing regional disparities and directing public resources towards communities most in need.

Pakistan Partners with Oxford University to Advance National Multidimensional Poverty Index 2027



Federal Minister for Planning, Development & Special Initiatives Prof. Ahsan Iqbal Chaudhary signed a partnership with Professor Sabina Alkire, Director of the Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative (OPHI), University of Oxford, in collaboration with the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics and development partners, to advance the National Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) 2027. Addressing an event organised by the Ministry of Planning in Islamabad, the Minister emphasised the importance of reliable poverty measurement for evidence-based policymaking, targeted development investment and improved service delivery. The new MPI will assess overlapping deprivations in education, health and living standards, while incorporating emerging challenges such as climate vulnerability, gender inequality, digital exclusion, youth deprivation, nutrition, stunting and early childhood development, drawing on the PSLM Survey 2026–27.

Building on Pakistan's first MPI launched in 2016, the partnership will strengthen poverty analysis at national, provincial and constituency levels using Census 2023 data, enabling better identification of local development gaps and more needs-based resource allocation. The Minister highlighted that monetary poverty increased from 21.9% in 2018–19 to 28.9% in 2024–25, underscoring the impact of economic crises, policy discontinuity, COVID-19 and climate-related disasters. He called for completing devolution under the 18th Amendment, strengthening local governments and ensuring transparent provincial and local resource distribution. Urging the Planning Commission, PBS, BISP, PIDE, provincial planning departments and development partners to embed poverty evidence in development planning, social protection and results monitoring, he stressed that under URAAN Pakistan, economic stability must go hand in hand with sustained investment in human development, equal opportunities and lasting pathways out of poverty.

Planning Minister Calls for Export-Led Growth, District-Level Export Strategies and Stronger Economic Sovereignty



Addressing the Monthly Development Update for October 2026, Federal Minister for Planning, Development & Special Initiatives Prof. Ahsan Iqbal Chaudhary highlighted Pakistan's economic performance during the first quarter of FY2026–27 despite regional challenges. Goods exports increased by 7.7% to $8.5 billion, combined exports of goods and services rose by 11%, IT exports reached $1.2 billion, remittances grew by 14% to $10.9 billion and FBR revenue increased by 7%. Emphasising that economic sovereignty depends on export competitiveness, the Minister announced plans to prepare district-level Export Development Plans to connect local products and enterprises with international markets, alongside the establishment of provincial Boards of Exports. He stressed that sustained economic growth of 5–6% is essential for generating employment and achieving long-term prosperity.

The Minister highlighted that rigorous scrutiny of development projects generated savings of Rs14.5 billion during the first quarter, while PSDP expenditure reached Rs61.3 billion. Reaffirming the government's commitment to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's merged districts, he noted Rs118 billion in allocations under the Accelerated Implementation Programme over four years, Rs15 billion for police infrastructure and an upcoming solarisation initiative for 50,000 households. He also called for empowered district governments, constitutional protection for local governments, lower industrial electricity costs and stronger action against power theft and system losses. Highlighting initiatives such as Quantum Valley Pakistan, he emphasised the need to build a competitive, technology-driven economy. Under URAAN Pakistan, the priority remains translating economic stability into productive capacity, sustainable employment and improved living standards for citizens.

NEWS IN PICTURES







Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal meeting a business delegation from Xinjiang led by Senior Advisor to the Xinjiang Government H.E. Yuan Jianmin on October 14, 2026



Federal Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal visited the residence of Advocate General Punjab Barrister Zafarullah to offer his heartfelt condolences on the passing of his beloved mother.



The Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives held a prayer gathering in memory of Shahid Iqbal, Chief, International Trade and Finance Wing.



Prof. Ahsan Iqbal attended the ceremony marking the 35th anniversary of Tajikistan's independence and conveyed Pakistan's congratulations to President Emomali Rahmon and the people of Tajikistan.



The Ministry of Planning, Development & Special Initiatives partnered with HUAWEI Pakistan for "The Intelligence Shift: AgenticAI and Governance Training,"

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The Honourable Minister inaugurated two newly constructed hostels with a combined accommodation capacity of 350 students



Federal Minister Prof Ahsan Iqbal with students at Istanbul University during his transit from Mongolia



Federal Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal at the Business leaders, diplomats and investors at CEO Summit Islamabad 2026



Federal Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal at the high-level stakeholder roundtable "The National Center for Brand Development (NCBD)" convened in Islamabad on October 6, 2026,





Federal Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal at the dinner with the Chinese Business Delegation visiting Pakistan.

Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives

P Block, Pak Secretariat, Islamabad, Pakistan

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