



Ministry of Planning
Development &
Special Initiatives
Government of Pakistan



URAAN
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NEWSLETTER

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Quantum Valley Pakistan Connects Innovation with Global Markets

Federal Ministers Prof. Ahsan Iqbal and Attaullah Tarar launched Quantum Valley Pakistan at the Pak-China Friendship Centre in Islamabad, establishing a platform intended to connect research, technology, enterprise and investment.....

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DEVELOPMENT RECAP | AUGUST 2026

August 2026 saw the Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives advance the URAAN Pakistan agenda through economic transformation, export development, infrastructure financing, human capital, institutional reform and international development partnerships. The month placed particular emphasis on converting macroeconomic stability into productivity-led, export-oriented and innovation-driven growth.

Economic and export transformation remained central to the month's agenda. August discussions highlighted Pakistan's ambition to expand high-value exports, with pharmaceutical exports reaching a 20-year high of US\$457 million in FY2025, a 34 percent increase, while the sector generated Rs523 billion in revenue and comprised 662 manufacturers. A roadmap was proposed to raise pharmaceutical exports to US\$2 billion, followed by US\$3 billion through PharmEx and US\$10 billion within eight years. The automotive sector was likewise urged to develop five-year export plans and move towards globally competitive production and export clusters.

CPEC 2.0 and international partnerships advanced from infrastructure-focused cooperation towards industrialisation, productivity and business-to-business engagement. The 91st CPEC review examined implementation across five corridors, Growth, Livelihood, Innovation, Green Development and Regional Connectivity, while consultations with Chinese counterparts focused on industrial cooperation, SMEs, agricultural productivity and technology. Pakistan-Japan engagement also expanded into infrastructure, human resource development, digital transformation, tourism and productivity, including proposals for a Pakistan-Japan Gandhara Tourism Corridor.

Regional development and connectivity remained a priority. The Gilgit-Baltistan agenda addressed fiscal sustainability, energy security, connectivity and institutional reform, with federal development allocations rising to Rs157.5 billion in FY2026-27. Work also progressed on regional energy solutions, while financing options for the Rohri-Multan section of ML-1, estimated at more than Rs450 billion, were examined through PSDP, foreign financing, PPPs and domestic capital markets.

Human capital and institutional development remained prominent, with initiatives spanning early childhood development, teacher education, medical research, youth mobilisation and civil-service reform. The month also saw stronger attention to food quality and consumer protection: testing of packaged edible oils, ghee and milk identified significant non-compliance, prompting directions for nationwide surveys, enforcement and quarterly monitoring.

Overall, August reinforced the transition from stabilisation to transformation: strengthening exports and industrial capacity, expanding development partnerships, improving connectivity and financing, and investing in human capital, technology and institutional capability under URAAN Pakistan.



FEATURED STORY

Pakistan's Economic Recovery Enters a New Phase as Exports, Industry and Investment Gain Momentum



Pakistan's September Economic Scorecard records stronger industrial activity, rising exports, remittances and foreign investment, alongside improved fiscal and external indicators. The Government is now focused on converting macroeconomic stability into productivity, manufacturing, technology, investment and export-led growth.

Pakistan's economic trajectory is showing signs of a broader transition from stabilisation towards productive growth, according to the September Economic Scorecard presented by Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Prof. Ahsan Iqbal at the Monthly Development Update. The Minister said Pakistan has moved away from the risk of default and is laying the foundations for productive, inclusive and sustainable growth, while geopolitical tensions and volatile global oil prices continue to create inflationary pressures.

Average inflation stood at 10.2% during July-August, rising to 11.1% in August. The National Price Monitoring Committee is addressing unjustified gaps between wholesale and retail prices. At the same time, large-scale manufacturing grew by 3% year-on-year in July and 9.5% over June, led by automobiles, transport equipment, apparel, electrical equipment and non-metallic mineral products.

External-sector indicators also recorded improvement. Goods exports reached US\$5.4 billion, while combined exports of goods and services increased by 9.2% to US\$7.3 billion during July-August. Services exports grew by 29%, with ICT exports increasing by 17.5% to US\$811 million. The current account deficit declined by 36%, from US\$853 million to US\$543 million, while remittances reached US\$7.3 billion during the first two months of the fiscal year, compared with US\$6.4 billion last year.

Investment and fiscal indicators added to the picture. Net foreign direct investment rose by 24% to US\$494 million during July-August, while tax collection increased to Rs1.722 trillion and the fiscal deficit was contained at 2.6% of GDP. Tax revenues have doubled over the past 4 years. More than 53,000 housing loans were approved under the Prime Minister's housing initiative, with Rs45 billion disbursed to support construction, employment and SMEs.

Pakistan's US\$3 billion international bond attracted demand of up to US\$6 billion, while improved sovereign ratings reflected renewed investor confidence. Resources are also being mobilised for priority infrastructure, including Mohmand Dam, Diamer-Bhasha Dam and the K-IV water project, alongside stronger PSDP monitoring.

GDP growth reached 3.7%, per-capita income rose to around US\$1,900, the exchange rate remained stable and foreign-exchange reserves increased to US\$21.4 billion. Prof. Iqbal emphasised that the next phase of growth must be driven by productivity, manufacturing, technology, value addition and exports rather than consumption and imports. He also stressed political stability, policy continuity and national unity as Pakistan seeks to convert improving international standing into investment, employment and tangible economic opportunities.



SPOTLIGHT STORY

CPEC Phase-II Moves from Infrastructure Building to Economic Transformation

The second phase of CPEC is being positioned as a platform for industrialisation, agricultural modernisation, technology, human-capital development and export expansion under the URAAN Pakistan framework.

Federal Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal Chaudhary chaired a detailed review of implementation of the CPEC Action Plan 2025-2029, assessing progress during its first year and measures required to accelerate agreed priorities. He recalled that CPEC Phase-I provided a foundation for Pakistan's economic and energy security, bringing approximately \$25 billion in Chinese investment, adding nearly 8,000 MW to electricity-generation capacity, developing Thar coal resources and establishing a nationwide fibre-optic network.

CPEC Phase-II seeks to convert this infrastructure base into sustainable economic growth through business-to-business cooperation, industrial development, agricultural modernisation, minerals and resource development, human-capital development, and technology and innovation. Its five corridors, Growth, Livelihood, Innovation, Green Economy and Openness, are closely aligned with the five pillars of URAAN Pakistan.

A central initiative is the training of 1,000 Pakistani agricultural experts in China in modern agricultural technologies and practices, supporting improved seeds, farm mechanisation, efficient water management and climate-resilient agriculture. The Minister stressed that the private sector must play a leading role in unlocking CPEC's economic potential, while government creates an enabling environment for investment and enterprise.

With exports described as a "national emergency", Pakistan is targeting \$100 billion in exports by 2035. The Government is seeking stronger government-private sector collaboration to improve competitiveness and establish "Made in Pakistan" as a globally recognised brand.



NEWS IN BRIEF

Gilgit-Baltistan Development Priorities Accelerated Across Energy, Tourism and Financing



Federal Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal chaired the second meeting of the Prime Minister's Committee on the Development Concerns of Gilgit-Baltistan, directing faster implementation across energy, tourism, financing, institutional capacity and development projects. The 100MW Distributed Solar Project is to be fast-tracked, with solar installations, transmission infrastructure and access roads executed simultaneously rather than sequentially.

Major power schemes, including the Rs10.6 billion Naltar Power Project and Rs12.9 billion Hanzel Power Project, were also reviewed, with both nearing completions. The Minister directed that transmission and road components within the GB government's scope begin immediately while third-party validation proceeds concurrently.



The meeting also focused on protecting the region's ecological balance as tourism expands. A comprehensive tourism carrying-capacity study, stronger regulation against unplanned construction and a sustainable tourism taxation framework involving FBR, Finance Division and the GB government were directed.

The Minister stressed the need for sustainable financing arrangements for Gilgit-Baltistan and AJK. All decisions, recommendations and directives from the meeting are to be consolidated into an interim report within two weeks.

PIDE Senate Strengthens Research, Talent Development and Inclusive Policymaking

Federal Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal Chaudhary chaired the 19th Senate Meeting of the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics in Islamabad, where measures were approved to strengthen economic research and evidence-based policymaking. The Minister emphasised collaboration among government, the private sector and academia to improve export competitiveness and translate research into practical economic outcomes.

The Senate approved initiatives including improvement in PIDE's RePEc ranking, a more than 50% increase in research output and the National Talent Hunt Programme to identify and nurture Pakistan's future talent. Representation of Azad Jammu & Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan in the PIDE Senate was also approved.

The Minister welcomed newly appointed Senate members and commended Vice Chancellor Dr. Nadeem Javaid, PhD, and the PIDE team for strengthening the institution's role in research and policymaking. He stressed that sustainable and export-led growth requires strong institutions, quality research and effective government-academia-private-sector collaboration.

The meeting also paid tribute to the late Dr. Shamshad Akhtar for her contributions to Pakistan's economic policy and national development.



Infrastructure and Cultural Projects Reviewed with Focus on Implementation



Federal Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal Chaudhary reviewed progress on Kachhi Canal Phase-II, the Loralai-Zhob Road, the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics land issue and the Allama Iqbal Memorial & Iqbal Library. The review emphasised timely implementation, quality assurance, institutional coordination and responsible use of public resources.

For Kachhi Canal Phase-II, the Minister directed authorities to maintain the highest construction standards and engage the Government of Balochistan in assessing available options through a transparent and coordinated process. The 35-kilometre Loralai-Zhob road project was also reviewed, with instructions to address delays and accelerate completion in line with the Prime Minister's directives.

The long-standing PIDE land issue was also taken up. Despite depositing approximately Rs. 4 billion with the Capital Development Authority between 2017 and 2020, PIDE has yet to receive the required land. The Minister directed the CDA to resolve the matter by providing suitable land or refunding the institution's funds.

The Allama Iqbal Memorial and Iqbal Library is to be developed to international standards and serve as a model for other cities. With the coming year to be observed as the Year of Allama Iqbal, the CDA was directed to move the project summary within three days.



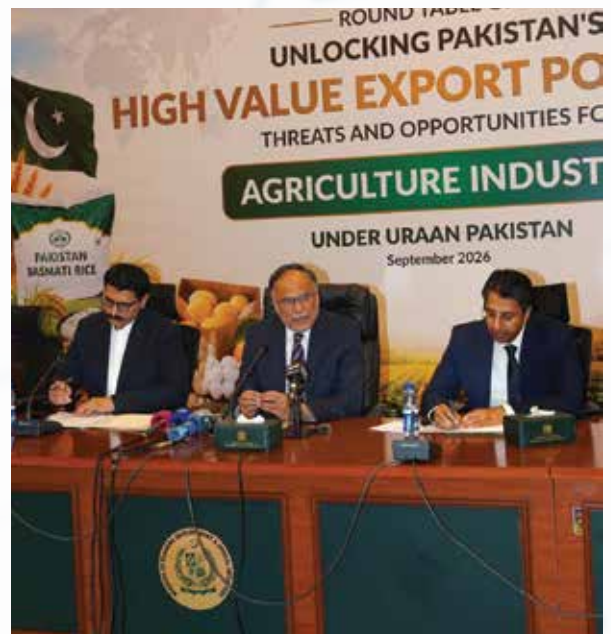
Government Expands Agricultural Expertise and Export-Focused Research

At the National Round Table Conference on Harnessing Pakistan's Agricultural Export Potential, Federal Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal announced that another 1,000 agriculture-sector experts will be sent to China for advanced training under the Prime Minister's directives. This follows the deployment of 1,000 agricultural experts to China last year.

The initiative seeks to strengthen agricultural human resources, technology and innovation while linking research more closely with practical sectoral challenges. The Government is also working with China to strengthen and reform Pakistan's agricultural research ecosystem, particularly the Pakistan Agricultural Research Council, while promoting climate-smart agriculture and climate-resilient seeds.

The Minister called for greater private-sector participation from progressive farmers, exporters, corporate agribusinesses, agri-tech innovators and academia. Priorities include high-value agriculture, horticulture and organic production, cold-chain infrastructure, storage and food processing, livestock modernisation and expansion of Pakistan's position in the global halal meat market.

The Government is also working through the banking system to improve access to agricultural credit and modern farm inputs. The broader objective is to transform agriculture from traditional production into an export-led sector capable of strengthening food security, employment and sustainable foreign exchange while contributing to the goal of a \$1 trillion economy by 2035.



ADB Partnership Supports Export Growth, Climate Resilience and Sustainable Development

Federal Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal held a high-level meeting in Islamabad with Asian Development Bank Vice President for South, Central and West Asia Mr. Yingming Yang to review ADB's ongoing support for Pakistan's development agenda under URAAN Pakistan.

Discussions focused on export-led growth and economic transformation, with the Planning Minister seeking ADB's technical expertise and international best practices for developing a strategic roadmap for export expansion and diversification. Climate resilience, water security and sustainable development were also discussed.

The meeting covered localized water-management infrastructure and a sustainable tourism framework for Gilgit-Baltistan. Prof. Ahsan Iqbal reiterated the Government's commitment to structural reforms and its vision of transforming Pakistan into a \$1 trillion economy by 2035.

The ADB Vice President reaffirmed the Bank's commitment to Pakistan's development priorities and formally invited the Minister to lead Pakistan's delegation at the 25th CAREC Ministerial Conference in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, on September 29-30, 2026.



Makkah Accord Discussion Links Strategic Cooperation with Economic Development

Addressing the international conference "The Makkah Accord and the New Geometry of Power" at The University of Lahore, Federal Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal said the long-term strength of the Makkah Accord would depend not only on deterrence but also on prosperity, technological capability and human development.

He described the Accord between Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye as a framework for collective deterrence, regional stability and strategic cooperation. Signed in Makkah on August 7, 2026, by Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, it establishes that an armed attack against one would be regarded as an attack against all.

The Minister said the partnership draws on complementary strengths: Saudi Arabia's investment, energy and financial resources; Türkiye's industrial, defence and diplomatic capabilities; and Pakistan's defence capabilities, strategic connectivity and young human capital.

He also identified opportunities for cooperation beyond defence, including artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, space technology, energy and food security, critical minerals, research, investment and regional connectivity.



Administrative Reform Debate Focuses on Devolution and Service Delivery

Federal Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal has called for Pakistan's debate on administrative restructuring and new provinces to be considered through the lens of governance, devolution and improved service delivery rather than political considerations.

The Minister said Pakistan's social and human-development indicators have remained under pressure for the past 15 years, partly because powers and resources have not been effectively devolved to the grassroots following the 18th Amendment. He noted that the existing administrative structure is increasingly overstretched by a population of around 260 million.

Two options were outlined: 160 empowered district governments receiving direct resources through Provincial Finance Commissions, or 12-15 new provinces established through national consensus. The Minister stressed that decision-making, resources and accountability must be brought closer to citizens.

He called for the administrative reform debate to be driven by Pakistan's development needs, with improved institutional responsiveness and service delivery as central considerations.



121 Medical Students Receive Relief Following Admission Deadlock

A government intervention has cleared the way for 121 students from the newly merged districts and former FATA to begin medical education after an administrative deadlock delayed their joining. The students were nominated for medical seats in March 2026 but faced coordination and registration challenges involving HEC, PMDC and relevant medical institutions.

Planning Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal brought the concerned stakeholders together, after which HEC, PMDC and the institutions agreed to facilitate the students without penalising them for delays beyond their control. A student described the placement of all 121 students as a major relief after months of uncertainty.

The Minister said securing the students' educational rights was a government responsibility and recognised the circumstances faced by young people from the newly merged districts. He urged the students to use their education to strengthen healthcare and development in their communities.

The "Provision of Higher Education Opportunities for Students of Balochistan and FATA (Phase-II)" project was initiated in 2015 at approximately Rs3 billion, while Phase-III, initiated in 2022, carries an investment of Rs8.6 billion.



Daanish Schools Authority Reviews Long-Term Education Sustainability



Federal Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal Chaudhary chaired the first meeting of the Daanish Schools Authority Steering Committee in Islamabad, reviewing organisational restructuring, human-resource requirements, financial sustainability, governance, administration and the institutional framework.

The committee considered a five to ten year roadmap for financial sustainability, teacher training and improved teaching standards. Daanish Schools provide deserving students from low-income families with quality education, residential facilities, meals and other essential amenities entirely free of cost.

The Minister directed that teachers be recruited according to an appropriate student-teacher ratio and ordered a comprehensive reassessment of staffing requirements based on the actual needs of individual schools. He said Daanish Schools are being established in underdeveloped and less-developed areas to provide opportunities for disadvantaged children.

Prof. Ahsan Iqbal also directed that the National Curriculum Framework 2026 be presented to the Prime Minister for a formal high-level review. He stressed the need for consensus among political parties, provincial assembly members and relevant stakeholders on the framework.

Bano Shaheen Mobilises Youth for Community-Level Development



Federal Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal Chaudhary engaged young students under the YPDC's Bano Shaheen Programme, which is built around the vision "From Thought to Action" and aims to mobilise one million young people across Pakistan. The programme connects campuses with communities and encourages youth to address challenges in education, health, nutrition and population welfare.

The Minister emphasised the role of education, teachers and schools in shaping young people's aspirations and character. He recalled the expansion of higher education between 2013 and 2018, including new university campuses in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, and stressed that access to quality education and digital skills can transform underserved communities.

Participants were encouraged to move beyond individual action and form organised teams within neighbourhoods and communities. Prof. Ahsan Iqbal urged each young person to engage ten others in initiatives covering education, health, environment and social well-being.

The programme seeks to develop communication, teamwork, collaboration, leadership and community-service skills, enabling young people to become active contributors to national development.

Integrated Land and Water Planning Targets Pakistan's Food and Resource Security

Federal Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal directed the Ministry of National Food Security and Research and the Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives to work with provinces and FAO on an evidence-based framework for integrated land and water use planning.

The initiative responds to rapid population growth, declining per-capita water availability, unregulated urban expansion and loss of fertile agricultural land. The Minister called for protection of productive farmland, regulation of groundwater extraction and a better balance between urban development and food requirements.

Pakistan remains a net importer of agricultural commodities worth approximately \$4-5 billion annually. The Government has already launched work to protect productive land, including a dedicated study and Planning Commission report developed in consultation with provinces, followed by guidelines for protected agricultural zones and legal safeguards.

Per-capita water availability has declined from around 5,000 cubic metres in 1950 to approximately 800-900 cubic metres today. The Government is also examining aquifer capacity, sustainable groundwater extraction limits and recharge mechanisms, while seeking coordinated federal-provincial action under the URAAN Pakistan 5Es framework.



Young Development Fellows Welcomed into National Planning

Federal Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal Chaudhary held an orientation session with newly inducted Young Development Fellows at the Planning Commission, describing young people as Pakistan's most valuable asset and architects of its future.

The Young Development Fellows Programme provides emerging professionals with practical exposure to national planning and policymaking while creating opportunities to contribute fresh thinking, creativity and innovative ideas to socioeconomic development.

The Minister urged the Fellows to make research, innovation and public service guiding principles of their work and expressed confidence that Pakistan's youth would play a defining role in building a modern, prosperous and sustainable country under URAAN Pakistan.

"A narrative of hatred does not merely poison minds, it destroys lives."

Addressing the issue of intolerance and violence, he urged young people to reject division and extremism and instead embrace reason, knowledge and critical thinking. He emphasised that nations progress through knowledge, tolerance and constructive thought.



Pakistan Presents Digital Transformation Agenda at SCO Forum

"From infrastructure to intelligence, CPEC is entering a new phase of cooperation."

Federal Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal represented Pakistan at the 2026 SCO Digital Economy Ministers' Meeting in Urumqi, China, advocating deeper regional cooperation in artificial intelligence, cloud computing, cybersecurity, digital infrastructure, research and skills.

Pakistan proposed an SCO Digital Connectivity & Compute Corridor linking the region through fibre networks, data centres, satellite connectivity and shared computing capabilities. Other proposals included trusted data cooperation, a Sovereign AI Infrastructure and Governance Framework, joint AI research and talent development, and stronger partnerships among startups, universities and technology companies.

Pakistan's digital landscape includes more than 150 million digital users and approximately 25% growth in data consumption over the past two years. Fibre connections increased from nearly 3 million to over 5 million, while the national target is to extend wired broadband to 10 million households.

The mobile-internet gender gap has reduced from 35% to just 8%, while women's mobile-internet adoption increased from 33% to 45%. IT and ICT export remittances reached a record \$4.6 billion in the last financial year. Seven AI hubs are also being established to connect research, skills, startups and industry.



Quantum Valley Pakistan Connects Innovation with Global Markets

Federal Ministers Prof. Ahsan Iqbal and Attaullah Tarar launched Quantum Valley Pakistan at the Pak-China Friendship Centre in Islamabad, establishing a platform intended to connect research, technology, enterprise and investment.

The initiative will select 60 Pakistani technology ventures through the Quantum Valley Pakistan Global Cohort Competition. Thirty ventures will join a programme linked to Plug and Play in Silicon Valley, while another 30 will enter an acceleration programme with Cambridge Innovation Center in Massachusetts.

The initiative will also establish four science parks covering mines and minerals, agri-tech, biosciences and emerging technologies, alongside nine specialised national catapults offering pilot lines, fabrication laboratories, simulation facilities and specialist training. Startups will receive support for testing, validation, certification, regulatory guidance, investment readiness and global market access.

The initiative builds on national technology centres established under Vision 2025 in artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, robotics and automation, big data and cloud computing, and GIS and satellite technology. The Government's stated objective is to connect young talent with research, industry and investment and support Pakistan's journey towards a \$1 trillion economy by 2035 and a \$3 trillion economy by 2047.



IRADA Briefs Planning Minister on Indigenous R&D and Semiconductor Capability

Federal Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal met the Indigenous Research and Development Agency team, led by Managing Director Mr. Omar Rashid, for a briefing on initiatives aimed at translating indigenous research and development into commercially viable technologies.

The briefing highlighted IRADA's translational approach to civil-military fusion and its innovation ecosystem connecting industry, academia, government, entrepreneurs and investors. Its chip-design capabilities were also presented as a pathway towards greater Pakistani participation in the global semiconductor value chain.

Prof. Ahsan Iqbal called for stronger integration between the National Centres, particularly New Manufacturing and Nanotechnology, and IRADA's translational ecosystem.

The focus is on strengthening the pathway from indigenous R&D and technology development to industry adoption and commercialisation, with the wider objective of advancing indigenous capability, technological sovereignty and national economic impact.



National Polio Campaign Targets 31 Million Children Across 115 Districts

The National Taskforce on Polio Eradication reviewed preparations for Pakistan's fourth polio campaign of 2026, launched by Federal Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal on behalf of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. The campaign ran from September 21 to 27 across 115 districts and targeted 31 million children under five.

More than 273,000 frontline workers, supported by partner organisations, were deployed for door-to-door vaccination. The Minister directed Chief Secretaries to maintain polio eradication as a national priority, personally monitor field operations and engage parents and communities to strengthen vaccine acceptance.

Pakistan has reduced polio cases by 99.8% since 1994. From approximately 20,000 cases annually in the early 1990s, the country recorded 31 cases in 2025, a 58% decline from 74 in 2024. However, four cases had been confirmed in 2026, including three in southern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Persistent transmission, security-related access challenges and environmental detections in the Karachi and Quetta blocks continue to pose risks. The taskforce stressed sustained surveillance, high-quality campaigns, routine immunisation, community participation and access to every eligible child.



Digital Design Training Builds Semiconductor Skills for Pakistan's Youth

Forty students completed four months of specialised training during the first phase of the Digital Design and Verification Training Programme 2026 at Ghulam Ishaq Khan Institute of Engineering Sciences and Technology. At the concluding ceremony, Federal Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal said the programme was helping establish the human-capital foundation for Pakistan's entry into the strategically important semiconductor industry.

The Minister highlighted the importance of semiconductor chips across artificial intelligence, robotics, automobiles, satellites, cybersecurity and advanced machinery. He stressed that Pakistan's chip-design ambitions require skilled professionals, strong design expertise and an ecosystem connecting education, research, industry and global markets.

He urged young people to move beyond employment towards creating jobs, developing exportable products and strengthening the international identity of "Made in Pakistan". GIKI was commended for producing high-quality human capital capable of critical thinking, research and practical problem-solving.

The programme forms part of a wider technology-development pathway that includes seven National Centres in areas such as artificial intelligence, big data, cybersecurity, robotics, space technology, applied mathematics and genomics, with Quantum Valley Pakistan positioned as the next stage of integrated research and enterprise development.



Youth Ideation Lab Brings Young People into National Problem-Solving

Federal Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal inaugurated the Youth Ideation Lab on September 22, 2026, calling for young people to become key stakeholders in national decision-making and development discourse. The initiative supports Bano Shaheen's wider ambition of mobilising one million young people across Pakistan.

The Lab is intended to transform young people from complainants into problem-solvers by encouraging practical and implementable solutions to social and developmental challenges. The programme will use methodologies including Soft Systems Methodology, scrum and sprint-based approaches to identify root causes and develop collaborative responses.

Through 159 Young Peace and Development Corps chapters across Pakistan, the initiative aims to form 65 teams per chapter and mobilise 100,000 university students for community-based activities. Monthly innovation sprints, TED-style talks, policy labs and "Dragons' Den" style pitches will provide continuing opportunities for ideas, testing and policy engagement.

The Minister said the Lab would work over the coming year towards developing a vision for Pakistan 2047, giving young people a direct role in imagining and shaping the country's long-term development trajectory.



National Water Security Roadmap Sets 2029 Targets for Storage and Efficiency



The Government launched the report “National Water Security under URAAN Pakistan”, presenting an integrated roadmap for water security as a foundation for economic growth, food security, climate resilience and national stability. Per-capita water availability has declined from 5000 cubic metres in 1947 to approximately 850 cubic metres today.

The report identifies reforms in flood management, water storage and conservation, equitable distribution, irrigation modernisation, WASH and water quality, and groundwater and climate resilience. Measures include strengthened flood protection and glacier monitoring, strategic storage, reservoir-sedimentation management, completion of the national telemetry system and improved irrigation efficiency.

The roadmap also proposes water treatment, wastewater recycling, smart metering and decentralised desalination in water-stressed coastal areas, alongside national aquifer mapping and stronger groundwater governance. Agricultural tubewell solarisation is to be linked with sustainable abstraction.

By 2029, the report sets a pathway to increase farm-gate water availability from 58.3 MAF to 79 MAF, storage capacity from 15.318 MAF to 23.54 MAF, and water-use efficiency from 40% to 70%.

Faisalabad Chamber Expands Government-Business Services and Export Dialogue

Federal Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal inaugurated a Passport Office at the Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry in the presence of FCCI President Farooq Yousaf Sheikh and the Chamber’s leadership. The facility is intended to make passport-related services more accessible to members of the business community.

The Minister also inaugurated a Podcast Room, providing entrepreneurs, exporters and industry representatives with a platform to share experiences and discuss business priorities and practical issues with policymakers. The initiative coincided with FCCI’s 50 years of service and its recognition of SMEs and leading exporters through Business Excellence Awards.

An SMEDA Liaison Office was also inaugurated at FCCI, providing local entrepreneurs with closer access to guidance and support. The Minister called on the business community to commit to a 20% increase in exports and said that, if the Chamber made that commitment, he would pursue progress on a Faisalabad Expo Centre next year in consultation with the Prime Minister.

He also called for greater productivity, quality, innovation and market access, stressing that Pakistan’s improved economic stability must now translate into production, investment and exports.



GCWU Faisalabad Opens Two Hostels for 350 Female Students

Federal Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal visited the New Campus of Government College Women University Faisalabad on September 24, 2026, where he inaugurated two newly constructed hostels with a combined accommodation capacity of 350 students and administered the oath to students enrolled in the Bano Shaheen Programme.

The New Campus project was approved in April 2020 at a cost of Rs. 1.26 billion. During its first three years, only Rs. 180 million were released, resulting in delays. Following renewed focus after 2022, the pace of releases accelerated, and Rs. 965 million have so far been released for completion.

The Minister said providing women with quality education and better educational facilities remains a government priority, noting that around 11,000 female students are enrolled at the university.

He described the enrolment as a positive indication of Pakistan's future.

Addressing Bano Shaheen students, Prof. Ahsan Iqbal encouraged young people to form teams of ten to identify problems in their communities and develop practical solutions. He also urged them to verify information before sharing it and to remain vigilant against fake news and negative propaganda on social media.



Pakistan Advances ML-1 Vision at CAREC Conference in Ulaanbaatar

Federal Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal represented Pakistan at the 25th Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Ministerial Conference in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, presenting the modernisation of Pakistan Railways' Main Line-1 as a strategic investment in connectivity, trade and export-led growth.

ML-1 runs 1,726 kilometres from Karachi to Peshawar and accounts for only 22% of Pakistan's railway network route length while carrying 76% of passenger traffic and 98% of rail freight. The planned modernisation would increase capacity from 34 to 120 train pairs, raise freight speeds from 30 to 80 km/h, increase passenger speeds up to 160 km/h and cut travel times in half.

Pakistan is fast-tracking the 480-kilometre Karachi-Rohri section, with an estimated investment of US\$2.5 billion and a multi-partner financing framework including the Asian Development Bank and other development partners.

The modernised corridor could also support onward connections from Peshawar to landlocked Central Asian economies, linking them with the ports of Karachi and Gwadar. At CAREC, Pakistan called for 25 years of regional cooperation to translate into measurable gains in trade, investment, connectivity and livelihoods.



CDWP Clears Seven Projects Worth Rs. 116 Billion Under URAAN Pakistan



The Central Development Working Party, chaired by Federal Minister and Deputy Chairman Planning Commission Ahsan Iqbal on September 11, 2026, considered seven development projects across food and agriculture, governance, higher education, information technology, sports and water. Five projects worth Rs. 21,590 Billion were approved by CDWP, while two major projects with a cumulative worth of Rs. 94,301 billion were recommended to ECNEC.

Among the approved projects was "Promotion of olive cultivation on commercial scale in Pakistan Phase-II", worth Rs. 5014.919 million. Originally launched in 2014 under Vision 2025, the initiative will expand olive farms in Balochistan and NMDs, with the Minister directing that the potential of the Kallar Kahar-Islamabad and wider Potohar belt be incorporated and olive plantations targeted at one million acres.

The Rs. 57,109 million "Transforming and Digitalizing Revenue Administration (TADRA) Project" was recommended to ECNEC. FBR said the investment would contribute to raising the tax-to-GDP ratio to 13.5% by 2029 and expanding the taxpayer base.

Other projects included the revised HEC "Establishment of DR. ASHFAQ AHMAD KHAN Center in Basic Sciences"; the Rs. 37,192.282 million PakSat-2 Satellite System recommended to ECNEC; and the Rs. 3,623.040 million GEOSPATIALx COMPLEX (Geo-AI Development & Innovation Hub). The Rs. 5,758.333 million Pakistan Sports Complex refurbishment project and Rs. 338.179 million WAPDA High Frequency Radios Network project were also approved.



NEWS IN PICTURES



The Minister welcomed newly appointed Senate members and commended Vice Chancellor Dr. Nadeem Javaid, PhD, and the PIDE team for strengthening the institution's role in research and policymaking



Federal Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal is exploring the Exhibition Stalls at the launching Quantum Valley Pakistan at the Pak-China Friendship Centre in Islamabad



Students capturing memorable moments with the Honourable Federal Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal during the Ghulam Ishaq Khan Institute of Engineering Sciences and Technology visit



Federal Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal Chaudhary engaged young students under the YPDC's Bano Shaheen Programme



Federal Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal inaugurated the Youth Ideation Lab and calling for young people to become key stakeholders in national decision-making and development discourse



NEWS IN PICTURES



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



The Honourable Minister participating in a tree plantation activity at the Government College Women University Faisalabad university



Federal Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal inaugurated the SMEDA Liaison Office at Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry



Federal Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal in talks with exhibitor while exploring the exhibition stalls at the launch of Quantum Valley Pakistan at the Pak-China Friendship Centre in Islamabad





Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives

P Block, Pak Secretariat, Islamabad, Pakistan



PlanComPakistan