

Dr. Arif Alvi
President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan
Address to the
“Joint Sitting of the Majlis-e-Shoora (Parliament)”

(Islamabad: September 17, 2018)

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“Bismillah-ir-Rahman-ir-Raheem”

- **Honorable, Chairman Senate,**
- **Honorable, Speaker National Assembly,**
- **Respected Members of Parliament...and,**
- **My Dear Countrymen.**

Assalam-o-Alaikum!

Today marks the beginning of the new parliamentary year, May Allah Almighty bless us all in the days to come.

Honorable Members of the Parliament!

My association with this august house and its members is years old. During all this period, I have made all possible efforts with sincerity to fulfill the responsibilities assigned to me. I am thankful to Allah Almighty and grateful to the members of the parliament and provincial assemblies that

they have elected me to the highest constitutional office of the country. I assure you that I will perform my constitutional responsibilities to the best of my abilities. May Allah Almighty grant me the courage, strength and vigor to perform these duties diligently. I am hopeful that all the members of this parliament will cooperate with me in this regard for the betterment of our country.

Honorable Members of the Parliament!

Our political system has remained unstable for various reasons but it is heartening to note that the last three assemblies completed their full tenures during the last 15 years. As a political worker and a responsible citizen I have always pondered upon these issues and reached the conclusion that parochial interests and rampant corruption are the biggest reasons behind our current challenges. The recent general elections have also proved that people want a corruption free Pakistan. In order to control corruption, there is a need to strengthen institutions of accountability in addition to a transparent system so that they could perform their duties honestly and without any discrimination. I believe that a Government can only succeed if it respects the wishes of the people.

The new Government has resolved to make a 'New Pakistan' and have formed the Government on the same slogan after winning the general election. In my view, the concept of the 'New Pakistan' lies in promoting simplicity, discontinuation of unnecessary protocols and a corruption free system. We should keep in mind that we are a nation which is under the burden of debt. According to the established principles of economics and Pakistani law the debt to GDP ratio should not be more than 60 percent. We have been violating our laws for many years. Our external and internal debt have crossed the critical levels and this requires our immediate attention. We will have to adopt simplicity in our lives, avoid extravagance and limit our needs. We can work in right direction by following these principles.

We have the model of the State of Madina under the leadership of the Holy Prophet (PBUH). The Holy Prophet (PBUH) directed in his last sermon that no one has superiority over others on the basis of color, creed and religion but only 'Taqwa' (Piety). The foundations of Islamic society have also been laid on the basis of equality, justice and brotherhood. Dr. Allama Muhamamd Iqbal highlighted the same in his philosophy. Father of the Nation Quaid-i-Azam also envisioned a State where rule of law prevailed, basic needs are provided to the people and the state ensures their rights which are guaranteed by the Constitution of Pakistan.

And I Quote:

Article 38(b) provide for all citizens, within the available resources of the country, facilities for work and adequate livelihood

Article 38(d) provide basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, housing, education and medical relief, for all such citizens, irrespective of sex, caste, creed or race....

Unquote

The present Government has embarked upon a programme to ensure maximum employment and housing facilities for the masses. If we succeed in this endeavor, it will be the change we all are clamoring for. The 'New Pakistan' in which we will all be able to walk with our heads held high and our children will inherit a Pakistan with the full confidence of a new, beautiful and peaceful society.

Honorable Members of the Parliament!

Nations do face challenges and sometimes these become so complicated that it even becomes difficult to determine priorities. Pakistan is also grappled with such a situation. However, resilient and valiant nations do not get scared of challenges but cope with the issues bravely and courageously. I am gratified that as a nation we have the awareness of our situation and challenges confronting us. Be it our farmers, our Judiciary, Army Personnel, Civil Servants, Writers, residents of far-flung areas or the overseas Pakistani, everyone is ready to share this responsibility. I urge the Government and leaders of the all political parties to guide the nation in the right direction in accordance with the sentiments of the people. I am confident that the Government will chart out a clear road map in all sectors and at the same time ensure transparency in governance.

Honorable Members of the Parliament!

Pakistan is one of the countries facing a severe water crisis. Due to scarcity of, and reckless use of water, the underground resources have also decreased to a dangerous level. Several areas of Balochistan and Sindh are facing drought. In addition, climate change is also having a hazardous impact on our country, with temperatures rising and glaciers melting rapidly due to global warming. The atmosphere in cities is deteriorating due to air and industrial pollution. In this regard, we will have to pay special attention on tree plantation and construction of new dams.

The construction of new water reservoirs is among the top priorities of the Government. I earnestly believe that both residents and overseas Pakistanis will respond positively to the

donations appeal of the Chief Justice and Prime Minister of Pakistan. This will not only raise capital for construction of new dams but will also help enhance our foreign exchange reserves.

We have to control the wastage of water. For this two measures are inevitable. First, we have to make our irrigation system more efficient. We have to adopt a comprehensive strategy to control seepage of water in our canals and water courses. Drip irrigation needs to be adopted rather than relying solely on flood irrigation. Besides, we need to adjust our lifestyles so that unnecessary usage of water can be stopped. Our Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) has advised us to adopt moderation in life and avoid wasteful use of the scarce water, even for ablution.

Honourable Members of Parliament!

In addition to tackling water related issues, it is also imperative that we also focus on Power, Energy and Electricity related issues. The Power transmission system needs to be made more efficient, line losses reduced and theft of electricity be eliminated. By the grace of the Almighty, the Northern Areas, Kashmir and other parts of our country are blessed with vast water resources. The climate and environment of these regions is naturally conducive for power generation. Therefore, the relevant Ministries and Departments need to work for promotion of “Run of the River” projects alongwith strengthening the transmission infrastructure so that the generated power can be fed into the national grid and the transmission system across the country made more robust.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

Agriculture is the backbone of our economy. More than half of our population is employed in this sector. Development of this sector is also dependent on construction of new water reservoirs. The new Government has promised the development of this sector in its manifesto. An effective and comprehensive strategy needs to be adopted to provide pesticides, fertilizers and other agricultural instruments to farmers and associated people in this sector. In this regard mechanism for consultation with experts and farmers should be evolved.

The general populace is concerned with the improvement in the education and health sectors. In this regard, encouraging and good examples have been set in KPK and other parts of the country. However, pressure of population growth is huge and resources are limited. We have to develop a balance between population growth and the available resources. In addition to enhancing the number of educational institutions, we also have to improve the quality of

education. I will urge Parliamentarians and media to promote awareness regarding mother and child health and benefits of small family. For women development, policies be devised for their education and employment for all segment of society. No country can progress without women empowerment. Our women are very hard working and their contribution is significant in all walks of life. It is the need of hour that women should be provided more opportunities and are mainstreamed in national affairs. It should be ensured that women can play their due role in our economy and society without any fear. Our religion and founding father Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah have also stressed on this requirement.

Respected Ladies & Gentlemen!

Our 60% of our population is comprised of youth and we have to create employment opportunities for them on the basis of merit, qualification and capacity, so that they can earn their livelihoods. They need to be equipped with vocational training so that they can find suitable jobs. Provision of small loans to start new businesses have to be made easy. Imagine if we export skilled Labour instead of the unskilled to other countries, it will not only provide them honourable livelihood but will present a better image of Pakistan.

Along-with all this, we have to promote sports and Arts for the physical and mental growth of our youth. We have to obtain input of our scholars in the planning of this process.

The physical and mental growth of many of our children is much below international standards. These children are weak, physically and mentally, due to stunted growth as mothers and children are not getting adequate nutrition. Most of our problems are related to social inequality and poverty. We have to eliminate regional, economic and social inequality and disparity. In particular, development of Balochistan and other far flung areas needs our focus and attention. The Constitution of Pakistan is a good social contract but it is not been fully put into practice. I am confident that the new government will fully implement the social contract so that “The new Pakistan” can be translated into reality.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

We have to invest in our human capital so that every citizen can contribute their due share in the progress of the country. It is only possible through a uniform curriculum and educational system and related facilities. I want that educational system should be revamped Pakistan and particularly in the backward areas. In the educational sector, there is no harm in

replicating the KPK model because public sector institutions can provide qualitative education to all.

It is estimated that more than 3 million students are currently studying in religious seminaries. In order to bring them into the mainstream, the curriculum in these seminaries needs to be made compatible with the modern day requirement. This will enable these students to play their positive and proactive role in different walks of life. In this regard, the government needs to devise a strategy in consultation with religious scholars.

After FATA's merger with the KPK, we will have to devise relevant policies and take prompt decisions, keeping in view the hopes, expectations and aspirations of the people of this region.

Honorable Parliamentarians!

Pakistan is facing gigantic challenges, both at the domestic and international fronts, the biggest of which is the debilitated economy. The menace of corruption has badly affected the country's economy; industrial sector is dysfunctional; unemployment is high; and the country is facing huge debt. It is a disturbing to note that we are spending a major share of our resources on repayment of the national debt. The balance of trade is also unfavourable. There is a huge gap in the quantum of our imports and exports. The circular debt has reached Rs.1100 billion in the past few years and the value of Rupee has depreciated sharply in recent months. Inflation has increased, due to which the masses in general and the salaried class in particular have suffered. It is vital for us to strive to get out of this vicious circle of poverty. I think that rectifying the direction of our economy and promoting investments is a priority on the government's agenda. I am confident that the government will be able to reduce fiscal deficit, redresses the issues of State Owned Enterprises (SOEs), formulate investment friendly policies, and simplify the investment processes. For that purpose, we have to reduce the role of government departments and put a restraint on their discretionary powers. Our banks and investors will have to be proactive in this regard. Further, the overseas Pakistanis also need to be attracted and invited to invest in the country in order for the country to achieve self-reliance, and for jobs creation. All chambers of commerce and industry should play their positive role in this context and need to tender their proposals to proceed further.

Honorable Parliamentarians!

By the grace of Allah, the resilience of our nation and the endeavors and sacrifices of our law-enforcement agencies, terrorism and extremism in the country has been overcome. The credit for this goes to our Armed Forces which have become the most successful and experienced military in countering terrorism in the world. The world can learn from us. On behalf of the entire nation, I would like to pay tribute to all the martyrs in this struggle. They have put in the greatest sacrifices for the motherland. May Allah exalt their stature in the Hereafter and give fortitude to their families. Ameen! There is also the need for provision of swift justice so that people do not get mired in court cases for generations.

Respected Audience!

Good relations with all countries, particularly with neighbors constitute the basis for a country's foreign policy. The establishment of new government is a watershed moment in our foreign relations. Bilateral relations have improved with the recent visits of the Foreign Ministers of China, USA, Iran and Turkey, and Saudi Arabia's Information Minister to Pakistan, and our Foreign Minister's visit to Afghanistan. Our foreign policy and relations will vastly improve Insha Allah. As a nation, it is our priority to have good relations with all countries in general and with the Muslim world in particular.

Our friendship with China is exemplary and is based on mutual trust. It has stood the test of time as the two countries have stood with each other through thick and thin. Our bilateral relations have strengthened with every passing day. The government fully supports the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, which is boosting economic activity in the region. I hope that the government completes CPEC projects expeditiously, which will help in further strengthening our relations. It will mark beginning of a new era in the region. Similarly, I am confident that the energy and trade relations with Central Asian States will also be strengthened as they will help us achieve our economic growth targets.

Pakistan accords utmost importance to our relations with Russia. I am confident that bilateral cooperation in the fields of economy, defence and culture will be further enhanced. We enjoy a very special relationship with Turkey, and our close relations are an important factor in the stability and progress of the entire region.

Peace and stability in Afghanistan is vital for the prosperity and progress in Pakistan. Lasting peace in Afghanistan will open new trade corridors for us and for the region as well. We shall continue our endeavors in this regard with full sincerity.

Pakistan desires good relations with all its neighbors. We want a peaceful and good neighborly relationship with India, based on mutual co-existence and we shall welcome every positive step in this direction.

Resolution of the Kashmir dispute is essential to have an enduring relationship between the two countries. Blame game brings no solution to any dispute.

Respected Ladies & Gentlemen!

The Government will continue its moral, political and diplomatic support to the Kashmiri people. Pakistan will keep on endeavoring at every level to resolve this dispute in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution. The people of Kashmir have given historic sacrifices in the quest for their right of self-determination. Denying the Kashmiris their right of self-determination is condemnable. The recent report by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has clearly highlighted the gross human rights violation of the Kashmiri people. The International community as well as other human rights organizations should also play their role to bring an end to the grave human rights violations in Indian-occupied Kashmir.

Respected Parliamentarians!

In the end, I congratulate all of you on becoming members of this August House and pray that may Allah enable you to work for the welfare and progress of the people of Pakistan. Pakistan will keep on playing its role with grace and responsibility amongst the nations of the world.

May Allah protect us all, Amen!

Pakistan Paindabad
