



Mr. Mamnoon Hussain

President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

Address to the

“Joint Sitting of the Majlis-e-Shoora (Parliament)”

**June 01, 2016
Islamabad**

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“Bismillah-ir-Rahman-ir-Raheem”

- *Mian Raza Rabbani, Chairman Senate,*
- *Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, Speaker National Assembly,*
- *Members of Parliament....and*
- *My Dear Countrymen!*

Assalam-o-Alaikum!

I congratulate you on the successful completion of the third and beginning of the fourth parliamentary year. The political progression during the last three years is testimony that the political system has gained the potential to face crises successfully. It signifies that the nation is now convinced that the objective of sustainable development and stability is not possible without democracy. This is a great leap forward towards political maturity for which the parliament, political parties and Pakistani nation deserve commendation. I once again congratulate you on this important achievement.

During the past three years our democratic march has been progressing successfully despite ups and downs. It is now the responsibility of each individual, class and institution to earnestly contribute towards reinforcing this positive trend.

تیز ترک گامزن، منزل ما دور نیست

“Accelerate your pace; our destination is not far away”

It is through sustaining and nurturing democracy that we can serve the nation, raise its standard of living and further strengthen the system. The governments that ensure rule of law, economic development and provision of basic needs to the people easily overcome challenges, succeed in stabilising democracy and reinforce the relationship between an individual and the state. I am glad to note that both the Government and the Opposition are cognizant of this and are formulating policies in the light of this philosophy thereby strengthening democracy. I would advise that the

government, be it of any political party, should formulate policies in accordance with this tested principle so that democracy can take roots and the people may live a happy and prosperous life.

Honourable Members of Parliament!

The progress and prosperity of a nation is measured by its economic performance. As a veteran political worker and a student of economics, I have always kept an eye on these matters. The country has been facing many problems as a result of instability in the region, decades long conflict, terrorism and failure of the past regimes in maintaining financial discipline that alarmingly affected national income and production. The situation required that along with increasing forex reserves and the GDP, inflation and budget deficit should have been reduced. In this context, when we evaluate recent surveys and reports of international institutions, the current situation appears encouraging. According to these reports, our tax system and tax collection has improved, foreign exchange reserves increased, GDP has steadily expanded and this year its growth has been 4.7%, budget deficit reduced, inflation controlled and the rupee stabilized. These positive indicators will encourage foreign investors and accelerate our economic progress, which will be further boosted by CPEC. Such a welcome progress on the economic front is possible only through consistent and realistic policies. I would like continuity in policies in line with ground realities to further stabilise the economy and more steps should be taken to pass on the benefits of improved economic situation to the common man. That is how a good government should be like. The Quaid-i-Azam had said that if we want to see Pakistan as a prosperous country, we would have to ensure welfare of our people, particularly the poor. I have no hesitation in saying that the pivot of Pakistan's economic policy should be according to the saying of the Quaid-e-Azam.

In the past few years several welfare steps have been taken which include business opportunities and technical training for the youth, comprehensive programme for people living below the poverty line, subsidy on essential consumer goods, special package for farmers, educational facilities and stipends for the children belonging to underdeveloped areas, provision of laptops to talented and higher education students and health insurance schemes. I would like that such useful programmes be continued to help the poor and weaker sections of the society to alleviate their difficulties. However criticism on economic policies by the opposition should be welcome and Government should further improve policies in the light of criticism to make them more efficacious.

While being critical, it is also the responsibility of the opposition to always be mindful of Quaid's advice that neither the opposition nor any other group has the right to unlawfully impose its will on the elected government. The wisdom behind Quaid's guiding principle is that obstinacy and personal differences should not override national interests so as not to create social chaos. We have had this unpleasant experience many times in our parliamentary, democratic and political history which we cannot afford to repeat. That is why I insist that at this juncture of our history, the need for national consensus and solidarity is more than ever before and its significance is even greater in the context of CPEC.

There is no weight in the reservations expressed by certain quarters regarding CPEC as I am aware of the formulation stages of this mega project, Pak-China agreements and details of planning of different routes. The development work on this most important project for the revival of national economy is going on according to schedule. I am satisfied that concerted efforts have been made to arrive at a national consensus on this matter, which has helped in removing doubts. However, if there still are any apprehensions in minds of even a few, these should also be removed through dialogue so that there is no room for mischief by ill-wishers.

It goes without saying that CPEC is vital for revival of our national economy and I would like to tell you that our neighbours, particularly the Central Asian countries, have already started preparing themselves to benefit from this Corridor. Many prominent leaders from various countries have personally apprised me that the Corridor will prove to be a golden opportunity for the growth of their economies. This Corridor is the underlying reason behind agreements for the construction of roads for connectivity between Tajikistan and Pakistan. Therefore, I will ask my countrymen:

اٹھ کہ اب بزمِ جہاں کا اور ہی انداز ہے
مشرق و مغرب میں تیرے دور کا آغاز ہے

*But now come! For ways are changing in assembly of the earth,
And in Orient and in Occident your own age comes to birth!*

It is therefore an utmost necessity to convert the economic corridor dream into a reality through hardwork. In this respect, a special Security Division has been created for safety and security of Chinese experts and workers and the construction of roads is going on in full swing. I hope that major

work on the Western and other routes will be completed by the end of current year, while the whole project will take a little longer.

The schedule of the CPEC clearly shows that this project is not of benefit to any particular government, political party or group of politicians but is purely a national project which will span over many elections and governments till its completion. Therefore it is responsibility of the nation to remove every internal and external obstacle in the way of this project, irrespective of any reservation in order to achieve economic self-reliance. Remember; nations that deprive themselves of economic stability due to their internal differences are always dependent on others while those which strengthen their economies by overcoming their differences stand tall in the comity of nations. They are thus free to shape their destiny and decide their fate and we also need to do the same. For this purpose we need to take more difficult decisions.

At the same time, it is responsibility of the affluent and business community to fulfill their obligations by paying their due taxes so that they can pay back for what the country has given them. Vibrant nations fulfill this obligation as their national and social duty. It is also responsibility of the government to find ways to expand the tax base and devise a pragmatic policy for tax collection. We already have precedents for better tax collection and can therefore develop better solutions with the help of business community.

Honourable Members of Parliament!

Governments and rulers come and go but the state lasts and this reality is the foundation of the whole system. Despite having political differences, we should not allow the economy to be adversely affected as only a strong economy can ensure a strong Pakistan. Therefore I suggest that the nation should unite on the agenda of economic stability for continuity in economic policies in all situations. I am confident that our political parties and other stakeholders will soon agree upon this national agenda.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

Economic stability and self-reliance should be the goal of every government. Bold economic decisions and construction of economic corridor are the first steps towards this objective, which when completed will not only enhance regional connectivity but will also help in developing infrastructure. The objective of economic stability will remain

a pipe dream until we are self-sufficient in energy production. That is why electricity generation projects have been incorporated in the Economic Corridor, which are now producing positive results. Electricity generation has increased and improvement in distribution system has provided relief to the people. I hope that by 2018 we will be able to overcome the energy crisis after completion of all electricity projects.

The depletion of natural gas reserves was one of the main reasons behind the energy crisis. The LNG import from Qatar has helped to overcome the declining industrial production, which has saved public and private investment from sinking besides providing employment to a large number of people. However, we should continue to find alternative sources of energy including hydel, solar, wind and coal etc to fulfill our energy needs. In this respect, I propose that we should focus on producing electricity from the water channels in Gilgit Baltistan, Azad Kashmir and other Upper areas because these sources can provide us cheap and abundant electricity. I emphasise that along with construction of Diamir Basha and Dasu dams, we should also pay attention to smaller hydel projects. In this process, mid-level investors may be induced to participate in such cheap electricity projects and Gilgit Baltistan should be linked to the national grid.

In addition to increase in electricity production, there is also a need for investment and improvement in the distribution system. If investors are allowed to distribute electricity in their investment area, it will not only attract further investment but will also lead to substantial improvement in the production and distribution of electricity.

Honourable Members of Parliament!

The dream of national development will materialise only when there is peace and conducive business environment in the country so that investors are able to invest without any fear. I am happy to state that efforts for restoring law and order in different areas of the country, particularly in Waziristan, Baluchistan and Karachi, have produced satisfactory results and rate of economic development has improved. I am confident that we will be able to achieve the objectives of Zarb-e-Azb by the end of this year and attain internal peace and security. It is important for us to concentrate on consolidating the gains made in these operations and the civil administration should take upon the responsibilities in these areas to re-establish its writ.

While avoiding repeating bitter mistakes of the past, special plans should be chalked out for the entire country, particularly for the affected areas. The affected traders and investors should be adequately compensated to enable them to recover their losses and start their businesses afresh in order to restore normalcy in these areas.

For this purpose, it is necessary to give a message of hope and optimism to the youth so that they come out of their despondency and bitter past and are ready to shoulder future responsibilities. There is a need to devise sound policies to promote sports at the school, college and national levels to encourage healthy activities to win laurels abroad.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

Pakistan is blessed with a large young population and it is our responsibility to utilise this asset positively to stop them from falling prey to negative activities and their individual aspirations should be in-sync with the national agenda. This is a delicate job which needs to be accomplished deftly and responsibly. The Government and the Opposition need to work in tandem to utilise potential of the youth to transform them into a national force for overcoming many problems, including extremism.

We should make effort at intellectual level to prevent extremism for which a working group of impartial and non-political ulema and social scientists be constituted to analyse the causes of extremism and suggest a counter-narrative to the Government to eradicate this menace. Our religion, moral values and laws of the land have no room for bloodshed, desecration of holy places and injustice with minorities. We need to address the misguided people in a language and tone that they understand to bring about improvement in the situation and prevent recurrence of such incidents in the future.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

The nation has demonstrated exemplary courage and resoluteness in the war against terror and values the sacrifices rendered by all men, women, elders and children. I suggest that a national monument should be built in memory of all those who have sacrificed their lives in the war against terror and their names should be engraved on it. There are numerous examples in the world where nations have built symbols to pay tribute to their heroes and such monuments inspire people to defend their homeland. The nation is grateful to those civilian and military officers and personnel who have rendered sacrifices in defence of the country and made the

nation proud. No force on earth can defeat a nation having soldiers imbued with the spirit of sacrifice and valour. The nation needs to fully stand by all law enforcing agencies to completely eliminate terrorism and lawlessness.

We also appreciate the great sacrifices rendered by the displaced persons of the tribal areas during the war against terror. After restoration of law and order, the process of return of our tribal brothers and sisters to their homes is continuing and it is necessary to accelerate and facilitate their rehabilitation in a smooth and transparent manner. We also need to pay tribute and not forget the sacrifices of those polio workers, police personnel and volunteers who have laid down their lives in the polio eradication campaign. We pay homage to these national heroes for sacrificing their lives in service of the country.

Mr. Chairman and Speaker National Assembly!

I want to convey the sentiments and feelings of the Pakistani nation to the international community through the auspices of this forum. We want the world to understand that our foreign policy is based on the principle of "peace for development and peaceful neighbourhood". This policy has been formulated in the light of teachings of the founder of Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, who said:

"Our foreign policy will be based on friendship and goodwill with all nations of the world. We do not cherish aggressive designs against any country or nation. We believe in the principle of honesty and fair-play in national and international dealings. Pakistan will never be found lacking in extending its material and moral support to the oppressed peoples of the world and in upholding the principles of United Nations."

In the light of these principles, our foreign policy has been developed on the following three tenets:-

- I. Constructive diplomacy
- II. Non-interference
- III. Trade promotion and economic cooperation

We aspire for world peace and harmony and are desirous of friendly relations and peaceful coexistence with the world, particularly our neighbours. We believe that the main cause of tension in the region is the Kashmir issue, which is an unfinished agenda of the partition of sub-continent. As long as this issue is not resolved in accordance with wishes

of the people of Jammu and Kashmir and the UN resolutions, the problems of this region will remain unresolved. This was also raised last year at the UN General Assembly that we want an uninterrupted, sustained and meaningful dialogue with our neighbours. I regret that our warm and sincere offer has not been reciprocated in the same spirit. Unfortunately, some unpleasant incidents took place in the recent past, which have led to further straining of relations. Despite Pakistan's continued stress on dialogue, condemnation of the Pathankot incident and offer of joint investigation, the Foreign Secretary level negotiations are held in abeyance, which is a matter of serious concern for us. The situation can only be improved by reciprocating Pakistan's sincere overtures in the same spirit.

Pakistan is of the view that peace and stability in Afghanistan is imperative for peace in the region. This objective can be achieved through reconciliation amongst the stakeholders and there is no military solution to this problem. After formation of the new government in Afghanistan, Pakistan made sincere efforts with the new leadership to remove past misgivings and pave the way for durable peace. In this regard, at the initiative of Pakistan, the Four-nation Quadrilateral Coordination Group is facilitating talks between the Afghan government and Taliban of which a number of meetings have already been held. Although some recent incidents in Afghanistan have hindered this process, we are still confident that these efforts will succeed. The 14-Country Heart of Asia Conference is also a part of these efforts in which Pakistan is also playing an important role.

Friendly relations with the Islamic fraternity are the foundation of Pakistan's foreign policy and we enjoy very close and fraternal relations with all the Muslim countries. Millions of Pakistani expatriates working in these countries have also greatly contributed in strengthening these relations. Negotiations are continuing with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) for cooperation in the manpower, defence and energy sectors, including free trade agreement, which will prove beneficial for mutual trade.

Pakistan has played a positive role for ending tension in the Middle East in which Turkey has also assisted us and our efforts have produced positive results. In this backdrop, visit by Iranian President Dr. Hassan Rouhani was very important which has given fresh impetus to building warm relations between the two brotherly countries.

After lifting of sanctions on Iran, a new era of bilateral relations between the two countries has begun and the volume of bilateral trade is proposed to be \$5 billion under the Five-Year Strategic Plan. Additional entry points have also been agreed upon to expand trade and economic relations and Pak-Iran Gas Pipeline will help meet our energy requirements.

Honourable Members of Parliament!

Trade with neighbouring countries can only flourish when our joint borders are safe, a record of cross border movement is maintained and any illegal activity at the borders is made impossible. A system of effective high-tech surveillance is therefore essential for this purpose. I would like the government to include it in its priorities.

Our joining the 35-Country Military Coalition under the Saudi leadership is an important development, which reflects our determination to end terrorism and extremism for which this unity is highly important.

A new era of warm and close relations with Central Asian and other neighbouring states has begun, which will encompass not only political, economic, social but also cultural aspects in the coming years. Our relations with these brotherly countries will usher in a new glorious era of development and cooperation. With the help of these sincere friends, Pakistan was able to be admitted to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) that has provided a new dimension to our relations with the Russian Federation. A Defence Cooperation Agreement has been recently concluded between Pakistan and Russia and under another cooperation agreement Russia is likely to invest \$2 billion for laying Karachi to Lahore Gas Pipeline which is reflective of growing relations between the two countries.

Last year, historic agreements were signed during the visits to Pakistan of the Presidents of brotherly Islamic countries Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. Lately, CASA-1000 project has been launched, while the inauguration of TAPI Gas pipeline project is also another important development in this respect. These projects, besides meeting our energy needs, will also help promote regional connectivity, peace, stability and prosperity. I believe that this new era of relations with Central Asian countries will prove to be an important milestone.

Similarly, our relations with Belarus, another important country from this region, are also growing. The President and Prime Minister of Belarus have successively visited Pakistan. I am happy that these visits were

reciprocated with similar warmth and the bilateral relations between the two countries have produced useful results. Prior to this, I had visited Azerbaijan, which brought the two countries even closer and resulted in many cooperation agreements.

During the past few years, our relations with the European Union and its member countries have grown further in scope. Pakistan has been granted GSP+ status in the European Union which has boosted our exports. The addition of more topics in the strategic dialogue with the United Kingdom is indicative of growing relations between the two countries.

We have longstanding and historic relations with USA, which are being further deepened through strategic dialogue. The economic, energy, education, security and science & technology sectors have also been included in the agenda for negotiations. Talks between the two countries are continuing to end misgivings and explore possibilities of further expanding bilateral cooperation.

Honourable Members of Parliament!

Pakistan strongly believes in nuclear security and is making serious efforts to convince the international community in this matter. Pakistan has made state of the art arrangements for safety of its nuclear installations and there is no risk of any untoward incident. The high standard of these arrangements was also acknowledged in the recently held Nuclear Summit in Washington, which is a matter of great pride for us.

Pakistan has played a proactive and dynamic role for peace and progress in the world and promoting regional cooperation. In this respect, Pakistan is playing an active role in Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC), D-8 Organization and the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD). This clearly reflects that Pakistan is always ready to partake in the efforts aimed at progress and prosperity of the people of the region.

It is satisfying to note that the next SAARC Summit will be held in Pakistan in November this year. We hope that this Summit of SAARC leaders will further promote harmony and cooperation in the region.

Honourable Members of Parliament!

The foundation of a successful foreign policy is laid on national unity, solidarity, way of life, grooming and upbringing of the future generations. Our prestige will rise in the comity of nations if we could improve upon certain affairs by taking cognizance of these important aspects of life.

Allama Iqbal has said that:-

فرد قائم ربط ملت سے ہے، تنہا کچھ نہیں
موج ہے دریا میں اور بیرون دریا کچھ نہیں

*The individual is firm by nation's coherence, otherwise nothing
The wave is only in the ocean, and outside it is nothing*

I feel that in our national life we are becoming careless in matters of unity and discipline. In this regard we sometimes witness painful examples in our individual lives and important and sensitive national affairs which is an undesirable tendency.

The tradition of respecting women is an undisputed and recognized virtue in Muslim societies but unfortunately we have recently observed some very disturbing incidents. This unpleasant situation should be arrested forthwith and it needs to be treated more as a moral issue rather than political. Therefore, we have to deal with it in the context of values irrespective of any political consideration.

Women are an invaluable part of society and it is not possible to achieve durable progress without bringing them into the mainstream of national life which is why the state has taken effective steps to empower them through legislation. I believe that women should be made part of the workforce to accelerate the pace of development and primary education should be completely handed over to them.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

Quaid-i-Azam was desirous of instituting an educational system through which our children can harmonize our history and culture with the modern world and bring glory to Pakistan in the comity of nations. Even though education has been devolved to the provinces after the 18th amendment,

yet there is need to harmonize the provincial and regional education systems for the promotion of collective national and religious objectives and values. I have brought this matter into notice of the Prime Minister and Ministry of Education and Professional Training is now working on this. I hope that these efforts will produce significant results which will nourish educational and cultural values and strengthen the tradition of mutual respect and rule of law.

It is a historic reality that no nation can make any positive impression on the international community unless each and every individual believes in the rule of law. Quality education and training inculcates this virtue in the character of a nation, while the exemplary conduct of the responsible and influential persons provides it further impetus. Nations that respect the law and adhere to discipline pave the way to progress and eminence.

History tells us that when a nation lacks respect for law, it loses self-respect and sense of ownership of the country, while the nations that inculcate respect for law and discipline in their lives excel in the world. By the grace of Allah almighty, the Pakistani nation has made great achievements in its short history which are acknowledged by the world. But I have observed that we are careless in the matter of respect for law. I hope that not only the government, opposition and political parties but all segments of society will play their role in this regard as a national duty. This will elevate our status and respect in the international community so that we could quickly tread the path of development and stability.

Agriculture plays an important role in national development and our hardworking farmers help meet food requirements of the country but global climate change has adversely affected farming. I urge our agriculture and climate scientists to guide farmers in the light of their research and international trends so that our agriculture sector is least affected by climate change. In view of the importance of this sector, the government should continue to take appropriate steps towards solving the difficulties faced by farmers and growers.

Effective population planning is essential to accelerate the pace of development and meet economic targets so that progress could be attained in different fields of life. Ineffective population planning and inaccurate population statistics lead to further complications. I want the concerned departments to focus on this important issue so that there is no impediment in our march towards progress.

I believe that we had a magnificent beginning and the world was expecting that Pakistan would emerge as a shining star. Unfortunately due to certain reasons, we unluckily drifted away from our goal. In those testing times, respect for law dwindled and corruption seeped into the society, which stunted national growth. I am happy that there has been a realisation against this abhorrent social and national crime and every member of society wants to put an end to this bane. I am confident that we will be triumphant in this resolve and by eliminating corruption, Pakistan will continue its journey towards development and excellence.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

In Surah Baqarah, Allah says:-

"اللہ جسے چاہتا ہے، اپنی رحمت کے لئے جن لیتا ہے اور وہ بڑا فضل فرمانے والا ہے"

"And Allah chooses for His Mercy, whomsoever He pleases, and Allah is of Exceeding Bounty."

I am closely following the developments in Pakistan, the region and the world and I see the dawn of progress, peace and stability on the horizon of Pakistan. God has been kind to us and new possibilities for progress and prosperity of the homeland are being created in which CPEC project stands out the most. Therefore I would advise my countrymen not to be despondent and fulfill their responsibilities for the country's development with new passion and vigor. Do not allow any divisions in your ranks and work hard in unison. We will soon regain our rightful status in the comity of nations. God Willing.

تیز ترک گامزن، منزل ما دور نیست

"Quicken your pace just a little; journey's end is not far off"

May Allah protect us all! Ameen!
Pakistan Paindabad!

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