SDC DISPATCH

Your Daily Conference Update

29th Sustainable Development Conference

Rethinking Development in an Age of Disruption

2 – 5 November 2026 Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad, Pakistan

DAY

2



Tuesday, 3 November 2026

COMPILED BY: Ramsha Mehboob Khan



ECONOMY | ENVIRONMENT | EQUITY

Rethinking Development in an Age of Disruption

The 29th SDC on "Rethinking Development in an Age of Disruption" is being convened at a moment of profound global uncertainty. The convergence of geopolitical conflict, climate shocks, economic fragmentation, technological transformation, and erosion of multilateral cooperation is driving a fundamental reconfiguration of the development landscape that extends beyond implementation challenges to fundamental questions of purpose, governance, collective action and policy autonomy.

In this context, development can no longer be understood as a linear progression towards predefined targets. Instead, it must be reimagined as a process of securing resilience, managing risk, and sustaining human well-being in an increasingly volatile world.

This rethinking of development requires renewed attention to the **three Es of Development: Economy, Environment and Equity.**

The Conference will, therefore, move beyond a **retrospective assessment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** and instead focus on what comes next. It will explore how development frameworks must evolve to strengthen economic security, environmental sustainability, and social well-being in an increasingly uncertain and rapidly changing world.

Alongside the 29th SDC, SDPI's 4th Sustainability Investment Expo (SIE) will also be organised showcasing stalls, Capacity Building Hubs, Fireside Chats, and Sustainability Awards.

1 million houses completed and handed over under the SPHF programme, out of a target of approximately 2.1 million KHALID MAHMOOD SHAIKH, SPHF	**170 million** new jobs globally by 2030, while 92 million would be displaced (WEF projections) DR MUSTANSAR ALI GHAZANFAR	**41 to 23** proposed reduction in federal ministries under Dr Ishrat Husain's reform commission NARGIS SETHI
88 per cent of the SDGs Asia and the Pacific is on track to miss DANISH TARIQ	**5,200 to 800** cubic metres: decline in Pakistan's per capita water availability AMB. SHAFQAT KAKAKHEL	**1.6 per cent** of GDP: estimated economic cost of tobacco consumption SESSION A-14

DAY 2 IN NUMBERS

Figures from the Second Day

As reported by the press, 3–4 November 2026

1	2	3	4	5
28 departments and 36 regulatory requirements faced by Sialkot's surgical instruments industry SESSION A-8	**2.3 million** young people entering the workforce to be absorbed into productive employment by 2030 ARSALAN AHMED RAJA	**Rs8.9 million** mobilised by a Village Savings and Loan Association for women SESSION A-10	**€100 million** EIB loan agreement signed with SPHF JEROEN WILLEMS, EU	**26 entities** transferred to the Privatization Commission MUHAMMAD AURANGZEB

THE THREE ES OF DEVELOPMENT · DAY 2 SESSIONS BY THEME

Economy, Environment and Equity

Day 2 of the 29th SDC carried the three Es of Development across 16 thematic sessions, three Sustainability Investment Expo fireside chats and two plenaries.

Economy

Economic systems are being reshaped by fragmentation, debt pressures, technological asymmetry, and changing patterns of trade and investment.

- **A-3** AI Readiness in Pakistan's Higher Education Sector
- **A-8** One Firm, Many Regulators: The Case for Regulatory Harmonisation
- **A-11** Financing the Future: Private Capital for Pakistan's Social Sector
- **A-12** Rethinking Supply Chains in an Age of Disruption: Sustainability, AI and Resilience
- **A-14** Rethinking Tobacco Control in Pakistan

Environment

Environmental challenges, particularly climate change and ecosystem degradation, are intensifying risks and exposing vulnerabilities across societies.

- **A-5** Strengthening Power Systems for Energy Transition in South Asia
- **A-6** From Climate Risk to Resilience: The Private Sector's Role on the Road to COP31
- **A-7** Launch of Provincial Adaptation Plans
- **A-13** Water Security, Hydro-diplomacy and Regional Peace

DAY 2
3 Nov 2026

Equity

At the same time, social sectors face mounting pressures from inequality, demographic shifts, displacement, and uneven access to essential services.

- **A-1** From Skills to Economic Independence: Expanding Opportunities for Women
- **A-2** SPHF – The World's Largest Post-Disaster Housing Reconstruction Programme
- **A-4** Rethinking Development through the Three Es
- **A-9** Labour Rights and Care Economy in Pakistan's Just Energy Transition
- **A-10** Digital Skill Development of Women Entrepreneurs
- **A-15** Leaving No Youth Behind in the Age of Disruption
- **A-16** An Early Warning on a Post-2030 Agenda

Plenaries & Expo

Plenaries and Sustainability Investment Expo fireside chats bringing together policymakers, business and youth.

- **FC-2** Youth as Changemakers: Driving Inclusive and Sustainable Development
- **FC-3** Advancing Health and Wellness through Informed Choices
- **FC-4** Preparing for Industry 5.0: Universities, Telecom and the Future of Pakistan's Digital Economy
- **P-2.1** SDPI's Lifetime Achievement Award 2026 in Honour of Dr Ishrat Husain, NI, HI
- **P-2.2** A Shared Vision for Development – Welcoming National and International Delegates to the 29th SDC

DAY 2 AT A GLANCE · TUESDAY, 3 NOVEMBER 2026

Eight Messages from Day 2

What ministers, experts and practitioners told the 29th Sustainable Development Conference, in the words reported by the press. Follow the loop from 1 to 8.

01
Dignity and safety at work

"A woman's right to employment must also be accompanied by her right to dignity and safety."

DR NAJMA AFZAL KHAN
SESSION A-1

02
Change the system, not the women

"The question is not what more women need to do, but what we need to change."

DR VAN NGUYEN, UNDP
SESSION A-1

06
Listen to the youth

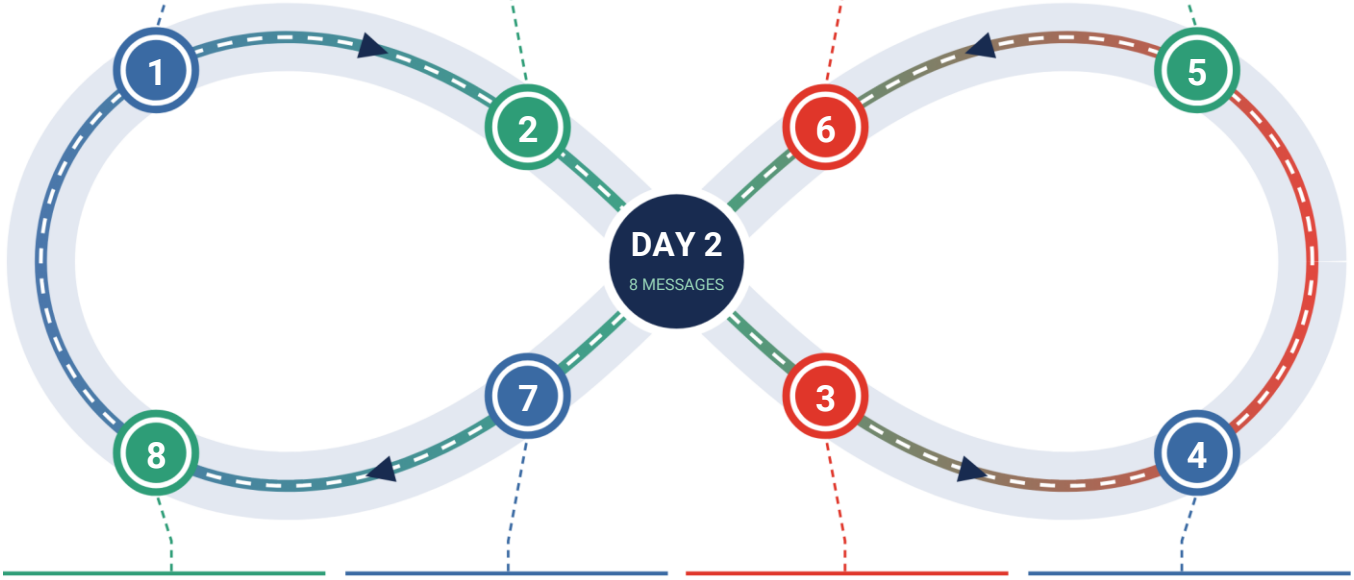
"We need to move on from asking what young people can do for development and ask if the development organizations and the government are ready to listen to the youth and offer meaningful representation."

DANISH TARIQ
SESSION A-15

05
Let the water flow

"Let's choose to talk, let the conversation flow and let the water flow."

NABEEL GOHEER
SESSION A-13



08
Make the triangle work

"So let's add the insurance sector and the microfinance sector to this debate and make sure the triangle works well."

DR ABID QAIYUM SULERI, SDPI
SESSION A-1

07
Women in the workforce

"By 2030 we also want to make sure that women represent at least 30 % of the workforce."

ARSALAN AHMED RAJA, PMYP
SESSION A-15

03
A housing model for the world

"I don't know any other country who built one million houses in a few years."

BOLORMAA AMGAABAZAR, WORLD BANK
SESSION A-2

04
Plans that gather dust

"This is the basic tragedy of Pakistan; that you make agreements, you make plans, you make strategies, and they collect dust. Dust in the offices."

AMBASSADOR SHAFQAT KAKAKHEL
SESSION A-13

Quotes and phrases are reproduced as published in the Day 2 coverage (3–4 November 2026). Full links appear in the Day 2 Press Coverage section.

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

How Day 2 Advances the Sustainable Development Goals

Each line follows one time slot of Day 2, showing the Sustainable Development Goals its sessions advance.

10:00 – 11:30 AM 5 SESSIONS



SDGs advanced in this slot: 11 of 17 goals

A-1 **From Skills to Economic Independence: Expanding Opportunities for Women**
Zaki Auditorium • L'Oréal Pakistan

A-2 **SPHF – The World's Largest Post-Disaster Housing Reconstruction Programme**
Hall 107 • SPHF

A-3 **VCs Roundtable | AI Readiness in Pakistan's Higher Education Sector**
Hall 104 • AIOU

A-4 **Rethinking Development through the Three Es**
Hall 109

A-5 **Strengthening Power Systems for Energy Transition in South Asia**
Hall 108 • UNESCAP

11:30 AM – 12:30 PM FIRESIDE CHAT



SDGs advanced in this slot: 3 of 17 goals

FC-2 **SI Expo Fireside Chat 2 | Youth as Changemakers: Driving Inclusive and Sustainable Development**
Hall 203 • PepsiCo Pakistan

12:30 – 2:00 PM 5 SESSIONS



SDGs advanced in this slot: 9 of 17 goals

A-6 **From Climate Risk to Resilience: The Private Sector's Role on the Road to COP31**
Hall 109 • OICCI

A-7 **Launch of Provincial Adaptation Plans | Pakistan's Adaptation Agenda: From National Framework to Subnational Implementation and Lessons from Global Practices**
Zaki Auditorium • UNEP, MoCC&EC, P&D KP & P&D Balochistan

A-8 **Roundtable | One Firm, Many Regulators: The Case for Regulatory Harmonisation**
Hall 104

A-9 **Policy Roundtable | Rethinking Climate Adaptation: Labour Rights and Care Economy in Pakistan's Just Energy Transition**
Hall 107 • FES

A-10 **Digital Skill Development of Women Entrepreneurs on Enhancing Business Opportunities**
Hall 108 • UNESCAP

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME (CONTINUED)

2:00 – 3:00 PM FIRESIDE CHAT



SDGs advanced in this slot: 2 of 17 goals

FC-3 **SI Expo Fireside Chat 3 | Advancing Health and Wellness through Informed Choices**
Hall 203 • PepsiCo Pakistan



3:00 – 4:30 PM 6 SESSIONS



SDGs advanced in this slot: 12 of 17 goals

A-11 **FtF Café | Financing the Future: Private Capital for Pakistan's Social Sector**
Hall 104 • UNICEF



A-12 **Rethinking Supply Chains in an Age of Disruption: Sustainability, AI and Resilience**
Hall 108 • Packages Group



A-13 **Water Security, Hydro-diplomacy and Regional Peace**
Hall 107



A-14 **Rethinking Tobacco Control in Pakistan: Advancing Fiscal Policy, Environmental Accountability and Regulation of Emerging Nicotine Products**
Theatre Room • Vital Strategies



A-15 **Leaving No Youth Behind in the Age of Disruption: Perspectives on the Post-2030 Agenda**
Zaki Auditorium • UNESCAP



A-16 **A Transformation Dialogue | An Early Warning on a Post-2030 Agenda: Building Inclusive Narratives for Real Transformation**
Hall 109



4:30 – 5:30 PM FIRESIDE CHAT



SDGs advanced in this slot: 3 of 17 goals

FC-4 **SI Expo Fireside Chat 4 | Preparing for Industry 5.0: Universities, Telecom and the Future of Pakistan's Digital Economy**
Hall 203



5:30 – 7:00 PM PLENARY



SDGs advanced in this slot: 3 of 17 goals

P-2.1 **Plenary 2.1 | SDPI's Lifetime Achievement Award 2026 in Honour of Dr Ishrat Husain, NI, HI**
Zaki Auditorium



7:30 – 9:00 PM PLENARY



SDGs advanced in this slot: 1 of 17 goals

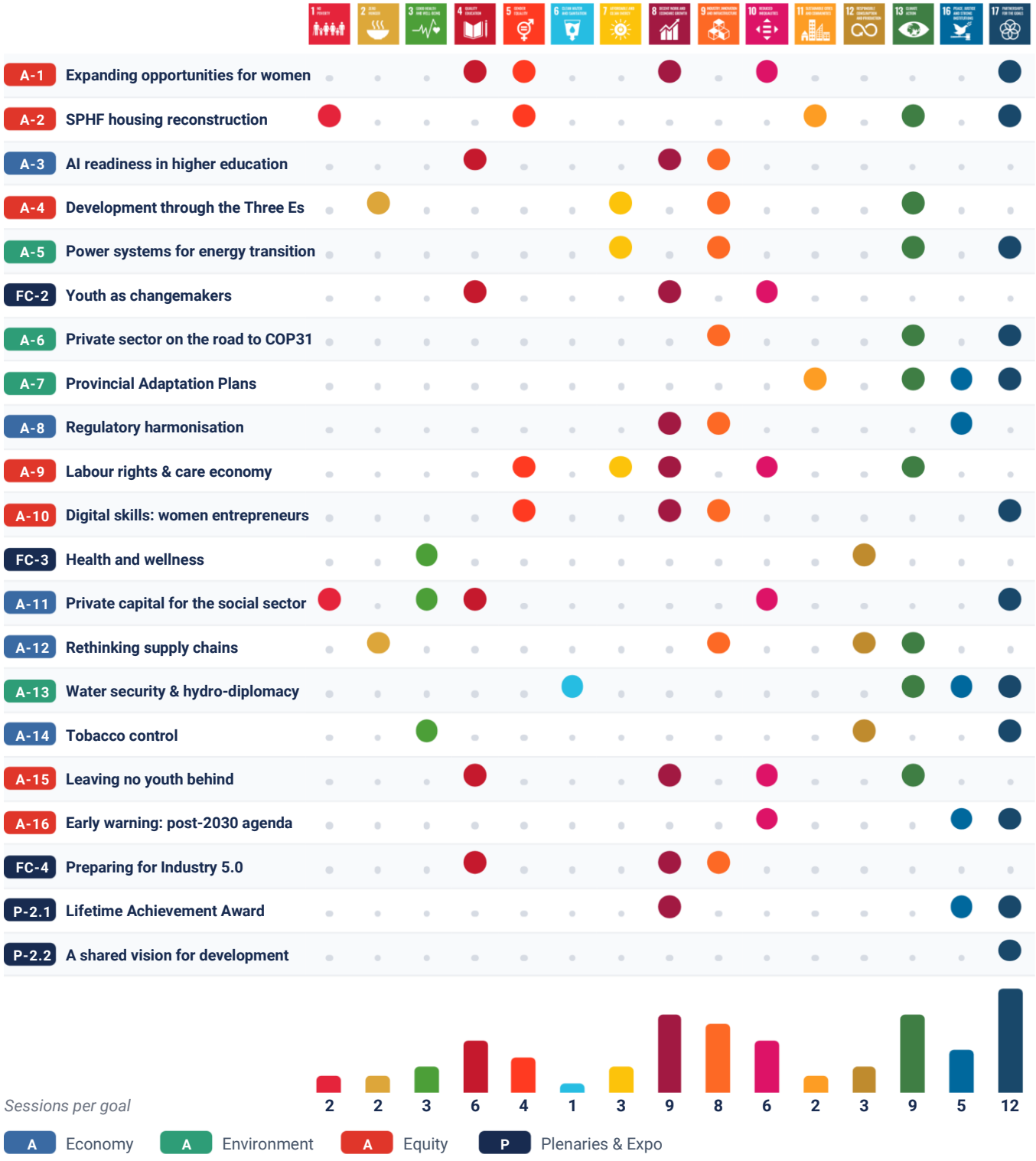
P-2.2 **Plenary 2.2 | A Shared Vision for Development – Welcoming National and International Delegates to the 29th SDC**
Chief Guest: Prof. Ahsan Iqbal



LINKS ACROSS SDGS

Day 2 SDG Linkage Matrix

Every Day 2 session mapped against the Sustainable Development Goals it advances. The bars at the foot count how many sessions touch each goal; SDG 17, SDG 8 and SDG 13 were the most widely addressed.



SDG mapping reflects the themes of each session as listed in the Day 2 agenda (updated 2 November 2026).

SESSION A-1 · EQUITY 10:00 AM • Zaki Auditorium • L'Oréal Pakistan

From Skills to Economic Independence: Expanding Opportunities for Women





ISLAMABAD (03 November 2026): Experts have explored strategies to bridge existing gaps, expand access to economic opportunities and strengthen women's participation in the workforce and broader economy.

Speaking in the session titled "From Skills to Economic Independence: Expanding Opportunities for Women," held on the second day of 29th Sustainable Development Conference organized by Sustainable Development Policy Institute in collaboration with L'Oreal Pakistan, here at Allama Iqbal University Open University on Tuesday.

Member of National Assembly Shaista Pervaiz Malik noted that while skills are the "key" and economic empowerment is the "house", five critical doors in between them require to be opened: skills, safety, capital, markets and health.

She stressed the need to examine what institutional and market-level changes are required across these five areas to remove existing barriers and create an enabling environment where women can fully participate in and benefit from economic opportunities.

A woman's right to employment must also be accompanied by her right to dignity and safety.

DR NAJMA AFZAL KHAN

SDPI Executive Director Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri highlighted the importance of what he described as a "golden triangle" of skills, finance and market access, noting that all three elements must be in place and work in tandem to translate women's skills into meaningful economic opportunities. He called for broadening the discussion to include the insurance and microfinance sectors, noting that their involvement is essential to strengthening this ecosystem and ensuring that women have the financial support and market linkages needed to turn their skills into sustainable livelihoods. As he put it, "So let's add the insurance sector and the microfinance sector to this debate and make sure the triangle works well."

Dr Van Nguyen, Deputy Resident Representative, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Pakistan, took the conversation beyond the persistent challenges and opportunities and asked the participants that "why do women have to overcome so many obstacles just to exercise their right to employment?"

Sharing a success story from a UNDP programme in Gilgit-Baltistan, she highlighted how enabling women to translate their existing skills and talents into income-generating opportunities can have an impact far beyond individual economic empowerment. She noted that when women are able to earn a livelihood through their skills, the benefits often extend to their families, creating better educational and living opportunities for their children and generating positive change across generations.

She also spoke on the challenges that remain even after trainings, for instance the transportation and mobility to markets, lack of child care at home. "Trainings should be connected, from the beginning, to markets and buyers," she noted, adding, "the question is not what more women need to do, but what we need to change."

Punjab Social Protection Authority, Vice Chairperson, Jahanara Manzoor Wattoo also spoke at the session and said that skills are "power, dignity and currency for economic empowerment" for everyone, but the social protection and focus is skewed toward women because poverty is skewed toward women.

CEO of L'Oréal Pakistan Rehan Saeed highlighted the alarmingly low participation of women in Pakistan's workforce, and spoke on the persistent barriers that continue to limit their economic participation. These include workplace harassment, street harassment and other safety concerns that restrict women's mobility, access to employment and ability to participate fully in the economy.

Public health, Gender Justice Expert, Dr Rakhshinda Perveen, noted that while there are numerous skills training programmes being carried out across the country, "skill development alone is not enough for women empowerment." She identified three interlinked categories of challenges hindering women participation: legal and institutional challenges, societal challenges, and economic challenges.

Dr Perveen posed the question that "we are encouraging women to be more visible, but are the mechanisms to keep them safe also keeping up?" She said that presence is not the same as participation and participation is not the same as empowerment.

Punjab Ombudsperson for Protection of Women in the Workplace, Dr. Najma Afzal Khan, highlighted how concerns over personal safety and workplace harassment can undermine women's ability and willingness to participate in the workforce. She noted that even qualified and capable women may find their professional potential compromised when their safety is threatened. She also noted that many women hesitate to report harassment due to the fear of retaliation or losing their jobs.

Speaking on the way forward, Dr. Khan said that the success of vocational training and skills development programmes should not be measured merely by the number of women trained, but by how many are able to translate those skills into tangible economic opportunities, and that it needs to be tracked that how many women go on to enter the workforce, secure employment, establish their own businesses and grow them into sustainable enterprises. "A woman's right to employment must also be accompanied by her right to dignity and safety," she said.

Press Coverage Details → click

SESSION A-2 · EQUITY 10:00 AM • Hall 107 • SPHF

Sindh's flood housing programme emerges as global model

EU, WB, ADB hail Pakistan's reconstruction success





ISLAMABAD (03 November 2026): World Bank Country Director for Pakistan Bolormaa Amgaabazar has said completing one million houses within a few years was an unprecedented achievement, and it is hoped that the Sindh People's Housing for Flood Affectees (SPHF)programme would meet its overall target of approximately 2.1 million homes.

She was speaking at a session, titled: SPHF - The World's Largest post -Disaster Housing Reconstruction Programme at the 29th Sustainable Development Conference organized by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) here on Tuesday.

Representatives of the European Union (EU), World Bank and Asian Development Bank (ADB) described the initiative as an example for other countries struggling with climate disasters, poverty and inadequate housing.

"I don't know any other country who built one million houses in a few years," the WB country Director remarked, describing the pace and scale of reconstruction as extraordinary. She disclosed that the World Bank planned to showcase Pakistan's experience at an international platform, potentially during one of its major meetings in the spring, so that other countries could learn from Sindh's beneficiary-driven reconstruction model.

> *I don't know any other country who built one million houses in a few years.*
>
> BOLORMAA AMGAABAZAR, WORLD BANK

Amgaabazar said the programme offered important lessons for countries increasingly exposed to climate-related disasters, particularly regarding community participation, institutional coordination and locally responsive housing solutions. Recalling reconstruction efforts following the 2004 tsunami in Indonesia's Aceh province, she said several houses built under earlier programmes remained unoccupied because they did not reflect local cultural practices and community preferences.

The World Bank official also highlighted the speed of project preparation, saying the institution had prepared the Sindh housing project in just two months, compared with its traditional preparation period of around 12 months.

European Union Delegation to Pakistan representative Jeroen Willems said the programme had also helped pave the way for the European Investment Bank's return to Pakistan after almost 10 years without signing new projects. He said Team Europe, comprising the EU and its member states, had rapidly mobilized one billion euros, mainly in grant assistance, following the 2022 floods.

Willems said the EIB had signed a 100-million-euro loan agreement with SPHF earlier this year to help complete project financing and reconstruct the remaining houses. He particularly appreciated the programme's transparent, community-based and cost-effective approach, highlighting its contribution to financial inclusion through the opening of bank accounts for poor rural women who had never previously accessed formal banking services. He said the programme had also generated valuable data on deprived areas of Sindh, helping policymakers understand the implications of decisions taken in Karachi for rural communities.

Dr Emma Xiaoqin Fan, the Country Director of Asian Development Bank for Pakistan, termed the initiative an internationally significant development success, saying its

scale, speed and inclusive approach offered valuable lessons for housing finance operations in other countries. She said conventional housing finance models generally relied on banks and financial intermediaries, which largely served bankable households, leaving extremely poor and unbankable families outside the formal financial system.

Pakistan's experience, she added, demonstrated that a sustainable and inclusive approach could extend housing support to previously underserved populations while generating wider benefits through land access, skills development, employment and financial inclusion.

Najam Ahmed Shah, the Chairman of Sindh Planning and Development Board, said the SPHF programme was supported by an International Development Association (IDA) loan carrying an interest rate of two percent. Highlighting barriers to formal banking, he questioned how many people had ever attempted to open conventional bank accounts for their domestic workers, underscoring the difficulties faced by low-income households in accessing financial services.

Additional Secretary BISP Dr Asmat Nawaz said although the 2022 floods had caused massive losses, the Sindh housing initiative had emerged as a remarkable success story that required effective marketing and international recognition.



He said opening bank accounts for women had contributed to their empowerment, while the programme had demonstrated that flood-affected families could construct their own houses with financial assistance.

According to SPHF Chief Executive Officer Khalid Mahmood Shaikh's presentation, construction has been initiated on approximately 1.6 million houses, while one million have been completed and handed over to beneficiaries.

The programme follows a beneficiary-led approach under which families manage reconstruction themselves and receive financial assistance directly through bank accounts.

The programme, launched following the devastating 2022 floods, aims to reconstruct approximately 2.1 million damaged or destroyed houses in Sindh and has attracted substantial international financing, including renewed engagement by the European Investment Bank (EIB), which remained absent from Pakistan for nearly a decade.

The programme is increasingly being viewed as more than a housing reconstruction initiative, combining climate-resilient construction with rural employment, economic recovery, women's empowerment and financial inclusion.

Press Coverage Details → click

PRESS COVERAGE OF THIS SESSION

Sindh's flood housing programme emerges as global model
Source: The Blind Side | *Islamabad, November 3, 2026*

SESSION A-3 · VCS ROUNDTABLE · ECONOMY 10:00 AM • Hall 104 • AIOU

Technology should complement rather than replace critical thinking: Moeed Yousaf

AI cannot replace human wisdom: Dr Nasir



ISLAMABAD (03 November 2026): A Vice-Chancellors' roundtable on AI readiness in Pakistan's higher education sector evaluated the readiness of higher education system to adopt and responsibly manage generative artificial intelligence and frontier technologies.

The roundtable was organized as part of the Sustainable Development Policy Institute's 29th Sustainable Development Conference here on Tuesday.

In his opening remarks, Abid Qaiyum Suleri, the Executive Director, SDPI, emphasized the need to prepare Pakistan's higher education system for the responsible use of AI, particularly generative AI tools and emerging agentic technologies. He said resisting technological change was unrealistic, comparing it to the earlier reluctance to allow calculators in classrooms, and stressed that the real challenge was ensuring AI did not undermine students' cognitive abilities, analytical skills and critical thinking.

Sharing an example from a summer internship programme, he said that applicants had been asked to disclose their use of AI tools and submit the prompts they used. Rather than focusing solely on their written responses, the selection team was encouraged to examine their questions to assess their critical thinking, ability to challenge AI-generated information and capacity to provide effective instructions.

Dr Moeed Yusuf, the Vice Chancellor of Beaconhouse National University, Lahore, cautioned universities against becoming overly obsessed with AI, arguing that technology should complement rather than replace human critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. He said AI was here to stay, making it more important to understand its implications than attempt to resist its adoption.

He highlighted a growing generational challenge, observing that individuals with strong critical thinking skills could use AI effectively as a tool, whereas students lacking those abilities risked becoming dependent on technology for answers without questioning or evaluating them.

He said higher education institutions were responsible for preparing the country's future leaders across various sectors, including agriculture, banking and other fields. Without strong critical thinking and decision-making abilities, graduates could develop false confidence based on information generated by AI rather than genuine understanding.

Dr Aneel Salman, the chairman of the Government of Pakistan's National AI Policy, stressed that artificial intelligence should be treated as an ecosystem for improving productivity, economic growth and institutional efficiency rather than a passing trend or standalone project.

Drawing on his experience in formulating Pakistan's National AI Policy, he identified major challenges facing universities, including the absence of standardized AI curricula, inadequate faculty training and irresponsible use of technology. He questioned the effectiveness of making introductory AI courses compulsory across disciplines,

arguing that social sciences students should be taught by relevant subject specialists rather than computer science faculty. He also highlighted disparities in teaching standards between well-resourced urban universities and institutions in rural areas.

Dr Nasir Mehmood, Vice-Chancellor, AIOU, said wider access to education could help build learning capabilities, but AI could not replace human wisdom. He identified teaching, developing learning materials and student assessment as three core university functions that AI could support.

Dr Fateh Muhammad Marri, Vice Chancellor of University of Sindh, Jamshoro, highlighted the potential of AI to prepare course content and short instructional videos, particularly for standard undergraduate programmes. However, he stressed that effective use of AI required users to understand their objectives and critically evaluate its outputs, warning against excessive dependence on intelligent technologies.

Recalling the disruption caused by COVID-19 in 2019, he said many universities lacked learning management systems and online teaching facilities when forced to shift to remote education. He stressed that talented students could be found across Pakistan, citing an HEC IT skills assessment involving over 34,000 students from 188 universities. He said AI could improve students' writing, communication and productivity, but universities needed to strengthen their digital foundations and ensure equitable access to technology.



Dr Mustansar Ali Ghazanfar, Associate Professor at the University of East London, called for comprehensive reforms in higher education to prepare students for an AI-driven job market, stressing the need to modernize curricula, assessment methods and faculty training.

Citing World Economic Forum projections, he said 170 million new jobs would be created globally while 92 million would be displaced by 2030, making it essential for universities to equip graduates with relevant skills. He said AI education should go beyond teaching students to use tools such as ChatGPT and focus on developing critical thinking, creativity, leadership and problem-solving abilities.

Dr Iqrar Ahmed Khan, Chairperson of Punjab Higher Education Commission, called for Pakistan to develop indigenous AI models, including large language and vision models, rather than relying solely on foreign technologies. He said universities had made progress in integrating AI-related subjects into academic programmes, but needed to go beyond introducing individual courses and reform their curricula to reflect the interconnected nature of emerging technologies.

Dr Fazal Ahmad Khalid, Rector of Ghulam Ishaq Khan Institute of Engineering Sciences of Technology, Topi, stressed that artificial intelligence should complement rather than undermine human cognitive abilities, saying technological progress represented an evolution rather than the complete replacement of existing skills. He emphasized the need for effective assessment methods to ensure that learning outcomes were not compromised.

Dr Khalid called for a comprehensive overhaul of the higher education ecosystem, arguing that introducing AI courses alone would not address the challenges posed by technological transformation.

Press Coverage Details → click

PRESS COVERAGE OF THIS SESSION

Educationists urge varsities to ensure responsible use of AI
Source: The News International | *Islamabad, November 4, 2026*

Universities must adopt modern technology, ensure responsible use of AI: Education Experts
Source: Associated Press of Pakistan | *Islamabad, November 3, 2026*

Educationists Urge Universities to Ensure Responsible Use of AI
Source: Pakistani News | *Islamabad, November 3, 2026*

SESSION A-4 · EQUITY 10:00 AM • Hall 109

Major crops face yield losses under high-emission scenarios: experts



ISLAMABAD (03 November 2026): Pakistan could face substantial declines in the yields of major crops, including cotton, maize, rice and wheat, under future high-emission scenarios, therefore, there is an urgent need for climate-resilient agriculture, stronger adaptation measures and policies to protect vulnerable communities.

This was the crux of a session, titled: "Rethinking Development through the Three Es" held on the second day of the 29th Sustainable Development Conference, and organized by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) at Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU).

Dr Muhammad Arshad Virk from University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences (UVAS), Lahore highlighted the potential of locally produced ethanol to reduce reliance on imported petroleum products, improve air quality and support economic stability.

Speaking on "From Smog Crisis to Green Opportunity: Mainstreaming Bioethanol for Sustainable Transport and Future Energy Security", he said Pakistan's transport sector consumed around 80 per cent of the country's petroleum products and was a major contributor to air pollution, particularly in urban centres such as Lahore.

He said greater use of ethanol could diversify the country's fuel supply, reduce dependence on imported petroleum, save foreign exchange and lower transport-related emissions and particulate pollution. It could also help reduce healthcare costs associated with air pollution.

He pointed out that Pakistan's existing policy framework largely treated ethanol blending as voluntary, limiting the industry's potential. He said a long-term policy commitment was needed to encourage domestic consumption, improve investment confidence and ensure benefits for sugarcane farmers, agricultural workers and rural communities.

Ahmed Hassan Awan from Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi argued that the country was moving towards ecologically informed development but had yet to achieve ecological security through effective policy implementation.

He said the environment provided the physical conditions necessary for development, the economy organised production and resource use, while equity determined how climate-related risks and benefits were distributed and whether vulnerable communities had a voice in decision-making.

He observed that climate finance, energy transition, infrastructure protection and nature-based solutions had received growing attention in national policy frameworks. However, he said environmental protection was often prioritised when its economic or human benefits could be demonstrated.

Bushra Yaqub of COMSATS University Islamabad discussed the gap between climate finance commitments and the delivery of resilient infrastructure to vulnerable communities.

Presenting her research on climate-resilient infrastructure in Pakistan, she said the country's exposure to floods, extreme rainfall, heatwaves and water shortages had highlighted weaknesses in infrastructure, public institutions, financial planning and disaster preparedness.

She stressed that economic, environmental and equity considerations should be integrated into infrastructure planning rather than treated as separate development objectives.

Fayaz Hassan of Wuhan University, China, examined Pakistan's export growth and transition risks in European Union markets covered by the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM).

He said the mechanism was not merely an environmental regulation but also had implications for export competitiveness, market access and the distribution of adjustment costs.

Using Eurostat trade data at the eight-digit product level, he said Pakistan's exports of covered products to the European Union had increased from 5.46 million euros in 2017 to 50.87 million euros in 2025. Pakistan's ranking among developing-country suppliers had also improved from 45th to 33rd.

He also stressed the need to strengthen local verification capacity and provide technical assistance to smaller exporters so that the cost of meeting new environmental requirements did not exclude them from international markets.

Muhammad Abdullah Khan of Cadet College Hasanabdal highlighted the importance of making climate information accessible and understandable for smallholder farmers.

Presenting his research on an affordable, icon-based weather and crop guide, he said Pakistan had access to weather bulletins, forecasts and impact-based advisories, but many farmers could not translate technical information into timely decisions about sowing, irrigation and crop protection.

He proposed an offline guide using visual symbols and local-language instructions to help farmers understand weather information and take practical action.

Syed Iftikhar Ali, a power sector professional, discussed Pakistan's consumer-led solar transition and its implications for electricity planning, economic sustainability and social equity.

In his presentation, “From Grid Defection to Grid Participation”, he said the country's net-metered installed capacity had increased from 2.8 gigawatts to 7.3 gigawatts, reflecting a rapid shift towards distributed solar generation.

He said higher electricity tariffs and reliability concerns had encouraged households, businesses and industries to invest in solar systems. However, declining grid consumption did not automatically reduce network and capacity costs, which continued to require financing.

He warned that recovering these costs mainly through electricity consumption-based tariffs could increase the burden on consumers who remained dependent on the national grid, particularly low-income households, tenants and residents of apartments who had limited opportunities to install solar systems.

Amna Urooj of SDPI, presenting her paper “Burning Ground, Parched: Rethinking Climate Resilience through Environment, Economy and Equity in Pakistan”, said heatwaves and droughts should not be treated as separate environmental challenges because their effects were closely linked to economic security and social inequality.

She said smallholder farmers in South Punjab and arid areas of Sindh and Balochistan were particularly vulnerable because of limited access to insurance, climate information and financial protection.

She also highlighted the risks faced by residents of informal settlements, outdoor workers and women engaged in home-based work, who often had limited access to reliable electricity, water, ventilation and cooling facilities.

The discussants, Dr Shumaila Zeb of SZABIST, Islamabad, and Dr Samreen Fahim Babar of Quaid-i-Azam University (QAU), Islamabad, also shared their insights during the session.

Press Coverage Details → click

SESSION A-5 · ENVIRONMENT 10:00 AM • Hall 108 • UNESCAP

Call to integrate grid planning, better visibility of rooftop solar, regional power trade & stronger institutional coordination for South Asia's energy transition





ISLAMABAD (03 Nov 2026): Regional and global experts have called for integrated planning of generation, transmission and distribution, better visibility and control of distributed solar, stronger coordination among power sector institutions, and deeper regional cooperation to make South Asia's grids ready for a rapid rise in renewable energy.

They were speaking at a session, titled: "Strengthening Power Systems for Energy Transition in South Asia", organized on the second day of 4-day Sustainable Development Conference held by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute in collaboration with the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP). at the Allama Iqbal Open University here on Tuesday. The overarching theme of this year's conference is 'Rethinking Development in an Age of Disruption'.

Ms Mikiko Tanaka, Director and Head of the UNESCAP Subregional Office for South and South-West Asia, said the growing share of solar and wind in Asia-Pacific had made the seasonal variability of these resources a critical issue. She said the region faced inadequate transmission infrastructure, regulatory and institutional challenges, and financial constraints on grid upgrades. Stronger grids and integrated systems, she added, could help countries electrify their economies. She said UNESCAP was proud to partner with Pakistan on the grid review study.

Speaking online, Mr Joseph George, Economic Affairs Officer at UNESCAP's Subregional Office for South and South-West Asia, said the three countries studied, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, already had significant generation capacity. The real question, he said, was whether their grids could deliver that power efficiently and economically to where they were needed.

He said solar plants connected directly to distribution networks were not fully visible to system operators, which created challenges for system stability and could lead to losses for plants. He stressed that generators, system operators, transmission utilities and distribution companies must coordinate, not only nationally but across borders. He hoped the study would help other countries that are facing similar challenges and support knowledge exchange and common standards.

Mohammad Solaiman, Deputy Secretary at the Power Division of Bangladesh's Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources, said his country's earlier focus on adding generation, with capacity payments and little competitive bidding, had become a heavy burden on the economy. He said the recent regional energy crisis had exposed Bangladesh's dependence on imported fuel.

Renewables currently supply only about 5.95 percent of Bangladesh's grid, he said, and the government has announced ambitious solar targets because the country has limited hydro and wind potential. With around 65 percent of consumers in rural areas, he said, modernizing weak distribution networks was a priority. He added that Bangladesh was also seeking more electricity from Nepal and Bhutan.

A representative from Sri Lanka said system operators there maintain minimum thermal and hydro capacity for stability, and that solar output had met a large share of demand at certain times. He said Sri Lanka could learn from the experience of other countries in the region.

Mr Abdul Rasheed Jokhio, Director of the SAARC Energy Centre, who chaired the session, said the pace of the transition would depend on whether grids could stay reliable and affordable while handling variable sources. He said investment in grid modernisation must keep pace with renewable plants, and planning must treat generation, transmission and distribution together. He said interconnected regional systems could absorb variability more efficiently than any single national system, and urged more work on capacity building for utilities, regulators and system operators.

Dr Fiaz Ahmad Chaudhry, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the National Grid Company of Pakistan (NGC), who was the guest of honour, said power sector professionals should remain neutral on technology. The goal, he said, was to produce electricity at the lowest cost with the least environmental impact.

Dr Khalid Waleed, Research Fellow at SDPI, presented the study, which assesses grid readiness against five dimensions and 64 indicators. He said Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh share similar concerns: distributed solar, the gap between usable and installed capacity, transmission and substation reliability, flexibility, and utility finances.

For Pakistan, he said, unplanned distributed solar had turned the "duck curve" into a "dragon curve". He also pointed to capacity payments for under-utilized plants and called for making distributed solar visible to system operators, preparing for flexibility, installing grid-level storage and moving ahead with market reforms.

Syed Faizan Ali Shah, Energy Advisor at the Ministry of Energy (Power Division), said inverter standards were being revised and battery energy storage systems would be placed at substations facing heavy reverse power flow. He said the global energy crisis was pushing Pakistan towards indigenisation through solar and battery systems, and that planning must be robust to avoid another crisis.

Mr Arqam Ilyas of the Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) said household solar had led to reverse power flow of about 30 megawatts at some substations. He said a shift from gas to electricity in homes over the past seven months could become a major challenge, but also an opportunity, and that the system needed to address night-time demand.

Press Coverage Details → click

PRESS COVERAGE OF THIS SESSION

SDPI Conference Tackles Water Security and Energy Transition
Source: Global News Pakistan | *Islamabad, November 4, 2026*

SESSION A-8 · ROUNDTABLE · ECONOMY 12:30 PM • Hall 104

Experts call for harmonized regulations, mutual recognition and stronger accountability to reduce business costs





ISLAMABAD (03 November 2026): Business representatives and policymakers have called for coordinated regulatory reforms, harmonized standards and stronger accountability of regulatory institutions to reduce the compliance burden on businesses operating across Pakistan's federal and provincial jurisdictions.

The discussion was held at a session, titled: One Firm, Many Regulators: The Case for Regulatory Harmonisation', organized by Sustainable Development Policy Institute's 29th Sustainable Development Conference, here on Tuesday.

Farid Ahmad Tarar, Chairman, Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP), highlighted the difference between business facilitation initiatives and broader regulatory reforms.

He said Asan Karobar initiative represents only one part of the wider reform agenda. He recalled that businesses previously had to file up to 16 tax returns in a month with different federal and provincial departments, leading to the establishment of a common forum to harmonise returns. He also cited an engagement with the Lahore Chamber of Commerce, where around 150 businesses and industrial representatives were briefed on the CCP's mandate.

Dr Ishrat Husain, former Governor of State Bank, appreciated the contributions and knowledge shared by the panellists and acknowledged the interest shown by the audience. He emphasised the importance of maintaining a balance between regulation, deregulation and over-regulation.

Dr Irfan noted that businesses expanding from one city or province to another face additional compliance requirements because of differences between federal and provincial jurisdictions. Referring to Article 151 of the Constitution, he described the multiplicity of regulations as a persistent challenge and highlighted the limited research estimating the additional costs arising from these differences. He also referred to federal and provincial Asan Karobar initiatives, including plans for a regulatory registry and business portal.

Usman Khan, Economist, said regulation should create fair, transparent and competitive markets, while unequal application of rules creates market distortions. Referring to Sialkot's surgical instruments industry, he said that despite being 100 per cent export-oriented, businesses deal with approximately 28 departments and 36 regulatory requirements. He also cited an estimate of 1,003 federal and provincial regulators and called for a centralised digital registry and risk-based regulation.

Adeel Ibrahim, representing the private sector, shared concerns about differences in environmental approvals, documentation, reporting and compliance procedures across provinces. He recommended common application formats, standardised documentation and coordinated reporting systems to enable relevant authorities to access documents submitted in other provinces.

Nadir Mumtaz, former Chairman of KPT, described the Asan Karobar Act 2025 as a positive step for recognising

hidden business costs. He highlighted the expenses involved in transporting goods from seaports to land borders across provinces. Although Pakistan Single Window provides digital services, he noted that physical intervention by clearing agents remains necessary in some cases. He added that Pakistan has 12 dry ports, many underused, while more than 95 per cent of goods are cleared at seaports.

Iqbal Sarwar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Board of Investment and Trade, shared the province's experience with the Asan Karobar Act and its single-window portal. He explained that the Act provides for a digital portal and a Regulatory Reform Committee chaired by the Chief Minister, which can retain, simplify or remove regulations. He said 37 processes had been integrated and the beta portal was ready for further integration. However, some regulators had bypassed the portal and returned to face-to-face interactions. Manual records and resistance to digitisation also remained challenges. He noted that tourism and hospitality businesses may deal with 25 to 50 regulators.

Dr Muhammad Kamran Khan, University of Haripur, highlighted the gap between regulatory reform commitments and implementation. He said a request to convene the KP Regulatory Reform Committee had been submitted in February 2026, but the meeting had not taken place by the time of the discussion. He called for delegated authority and stronger monitoring. He also highlighted barriers faced by young entrepreneurs and freelancers, overlapping taxes and licensing charges treated as revenue. He recommended reviewing the concurrent legislative framework in light of the 18th Amendment and supported harmonisation and mutual recognition.

Dr Vaqar Ahmad, Economist, said Pakistan had made considerable progress and was not starting from zero. He noted that sector-specific discussions reflected greater space for dialogue on regulatory challenges. Sharing an example, he referred to an individual from Nepal who had received Pakistan's online visa within 60 minutes, describing it as an indication of progress, although the pace of reform could be faster. He also encouraged stakeholders to read Dr Ishrat Husain's reports on regulatory institutions and noted that startups were reporting easier online business registration, alongside improvements in filing and foreign direct investment systems.

Muhammad Asghar Nasar, SMEDA, highlighted the unequal application of regulations and the multiplicity of regulatory authorities. Referring to the surgical instruments industry, he noted that businesses face requirements from approximately 28 departments and 36 regulatory requirements. He called for harmonization, mutual recognition and a centralized digital registry, and stressed that reforms should be institutionalized through legislation to ensure continuity and improve export competitiveness.

Rafay Khan discussed the World Bank's engagement in Pakistan's business regulatory reforms, which began in 2016 under the Doing Business Report initiative. He said coordination between federal and provincial departments contributed to Pakistan improving its Doing Business ranking by 39 positions between 2016 and 2019. He noted that although the report was discontinued in 2019, the need for business regulatory reforms remained important beyond the reporting framework.

Asif Kareem, highlighted Sindh's first end-to-end automated e-licensing portal, covering 150 services, developed with World Bank support. The portal enables online applications, processing, approvals and escalation. He also said Sindh's draft Asan Karobar Act was awaiting consideration by the provincial cabinet. He called for inter-provincial harmonisation, an interoperability framework for recognising licences issued by other provinces, digital information-sharing, AI-enabled regulatory guidance and performance indicators to improve transparency and accountability.

Press Coverage Details → click

SESSION A-10 · EQUITY 12:30 PM • Hall 108 • UNESCAP

Digital training must translate into business opportunities for women: Experts





ISLAMABAD (03 November 2026): Experts at a session called for a coordinated national effort to equip women entrepreneurs with digital skills, improve their access to markets and finance, and simplify business registration and export procedures, saying technology-based training could deliver meaningful results only when linked with practical business opportunities.

The session, titled: "Digital Skill Development of Women Entrepreneurs on Enhancing Business Opportunities", was organized on the second day of the 29th Sustainable Development Policy Institute by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) in collaboration with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)Tuesday.

They stressed the need for a national digital marketplace, stronger public-private partnerships, product development, accessible financial services and institutional coordination to help women-led businesses expand beyond local markets and compete internationally.

Mikiko Tanaka of the UNESCAP Subregional Office for South and South-West Asia, India, in her opening remarks, said digital technologies and artificial intelligence (AI) were creating new opportunities for women entrepreneurs to promote products, reach customers in other cities and countries, receive digital payments and explore international markets.

She said AI tools could help small businesses prepare marketing material, identify potential markets, communicate with customers and manage routine tasks. However, simply having an online presence did not guarantee business growth, as women entrepreneurs continued to face challenges in finding reliable buyers, managing delivery costs, understanding export procedures and receiving international payments. She said digital skills must therefore be connected with practical business knowledge and access to markets.

She said Pakistan had considerable potential in sectors such as textiles, handicrafts, food products and services, but women entrepreneurs needed reliable information, affordable logistics, access to finance and effective business support to connect with regional and global value chains.

Mehnaz Akber Aziz of the Centre for Governance and Public Policy (CGNP) called for establishing a national digital marketplace to connect women entrepreneurs with buyers and provide them with greater visibility in domestic and international markets.

Sharing her observations from the Lok Virsa Mela, she said women involved in handicrafts and traditional embroidery from Balochistan, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, South Punjab and other regions were running promising businesses, often without adequate government support.

She said many women had started selling products online during the COVID-19 pandemic and had developed their own customer networks. However, they continued to face difficulties in accessing exhibitions, business registration, institutional assistance and digital platforms.

Aziz said Pakistan needed a system to identify, register and connect women entrepreneurs with available support services. She also emphasised the need to improve product design, branding and marketing rather than relying solely on traditional handicraft production.

Tayaba Batool of Capacity Analytics highlighted the importance of linking digital skills training with trade procedures, market requirements and institutional support. She said her organisation, in collaboration with UNESCAP and the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP), had conducted workshops to help women entrepreneurs use digital tools to identify buyers,

understand markets, present products and meet the requirements of importing countries.

She said another area of work involved strengthening women's representation in trade organisations and chambers. Following the Trade Organisations Amendment Act, awareness sessions and consultations were held in 2025 with the Ministry of Commerce and the Directorate General of Trade Organisations to involve women and smaller chambers in discussions on changes to trade organization rules. Batool said strong women chambers were essential to ensure that business support services reached a wider number of women entrepreneurs.

She proposed establishing a working group on women in trade, bringing together the Ministry of Commerce, chambers of commerce, the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) and other relevant organisations to identify barriers and develop practical solutions.

Maryam Khan of the South Asia Women Development Forum said complicated tax and registration procedures discouraged many women from formally registering their businesses.

She said women entrepreneurs also needed greater access to product development, design and market information to make their goods competitive internationally.

Khan observed that many women were still producing traditional products without sufficient knowledge of changing consumer preferences and international market requirements. She said AI could support product innovation and design, but entrepreneurs needed to learn how to use the technology effectively by asking relevant questions and applying its results to their businesses.

She also stressed the importance of developing value chains by connecting women with different skills, such as embroidery, stitching and product design, so they could work together to produce marketable goods.

Laraib Ghaffar, Deputy Collector Customs and subject matter expert at Pakistan Single Window (PSW), briefed participants on the role of digital trade facilitation in helping women entrepreneurs enter cross-border markets.

She said PSW provided an electronic platform through which traders could submit cross-border trade declarations to Pakistan Customs and other relevant regulatory departments through a single system.

She said the platform had more than 100,000 subscribers, including women traders, and was connected with 29 authorised commercial banks and more than 32 government departments.

Ghaffar said digitalisation reduced the need for traders to visit multiple government offices, submit the same documents repeatedly or undergo separate verification procedures for each department.

She said the programme offered a dedicated 24-hour helpline for women traders and worked with relevant institutions and women chambers to identify entrepreneurs ready to export their first shipment.

Ms Rabia Riaz Corporate Communications Manager, PepsiCo Pakistan, said digital tools alone could not ensure business growth unless women entrepreneurs were trained to use them to improve productivity, reach new customers, price products appropriately, receive payments securely and manage orders.

Referring to PepsiCo's “She Feeds the World” initiative, implemented in southern Punjab in collaboration with the PepsiCo Foundation and CARE International, she said female farmers in Bahawalpur and Okara had received training in sustainable agriculture, savings and financial literacy.

She said a Village Savings and Loan Association established under the programme had mobilised Rs8.9 million, enabling women in the community to access savings and loans and start small businesses.

She stressed that government institutions, development partners, chambers of commerce and the private sector needed to work together to expand such opportunities and ensure that training translated into sustainable economic activity.

In her closing remarks, Senator Roshan Khursheed Bharucha, Member of the Judicial Commission of Pakistan and Member of the Board of Governors of SDPI, emphasised the importance of capacity-building and skills development in enabling women to participate in economic activities.

She said complicated procedures and frequent regulatory changes often discouraged women from registering businesses and entering formal markets. Referring to her experience in Balochistan, she said some women avoided registration because they feared it would expose them to additional tax liabilities.

Press Coverage Details → click

SESSION A-11 · FTF CAFÉ · ECONOMY 3:00 PM • Hall 104 • UNICEF

Pakistan needs mandatory CSR law, innovative financing to bridge social sector funding gap: experts





ISLAMABAD (03 November 2026): Pakistan needs a comprehensive legal framework to regulate corporate social responsibility (CSR) and make it mandatory for companies to allocate at least one percent of their profits to social development, while improving the efficiency of public spending and mobilizing private capital to address growing financing constraints in the social sector.

This was stated by the experts at a session, titled "Financing the Future: Private Capital for Pakistan's Social Sector" organized at 29th Sustainable Development Conference by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute here on Tuesday.

They stressed the need to move beyond conventional public financing and explore innovative funding mechanisms, stronger public-private partnerships and corporate contributions to support children, young people and vulnerable communities.

Mirza Ikhtiar Baig, Member of the National Assembly, said Pakistan lacked a proper legal framework to regulate CSR, unlike neighbouring and regional countries that had introduced mandatory corporate contributions towards social welfare.

He said India had made a two percent CSR allocation mandatory, while Sri Lanka and Nepal had set the requirement at one percent. Pakistan, however, had yet to introduce similar legislation.

Baig said the proposal to make one percent CSR spending compulsory had faced opposition from the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) and the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP). He expressed confidence that the proposed legislation would eventually be passed to ensure a regular corporate contribution towards social development.

He stressed that the corporate sector should play a more meaningful role in addressing Pakistan's development challenges rather than leaving the responsibility entirely to the government.

Sadaf Zulfiqar of UNICEF emphasised that public funds must be utilised efficiently and strategically to maximise benefits for children and the young population, particularly through improved access to essential services, education, healthcare and development opportunities. She said investment in children should not be viewed merely as a social obligation but as a strategic investment in Pakistan's future economic productivity and human capital.

She observed that Pakistan was facing severe resource constraints at a time when international development financing and foreign aid were shrinking, making it essential to explore alternative financing instruments and strengthen collaboration with development partners.

Zulfiqar said UNICEF's priorities included ensuring equitable financing for all children, improving public expenditure efficiency, enhancing value for money and directing resources towards the most marginalised children and underserved communities.

She stressed that efficient utilisation of available resources was as important as mobilising additional funding, as better spending could translate into improved outcomes for children and young people.

Adviser to the Finance Minister Adnan Pasha highlighted the importance of structural reforms and said international financial institutions, including the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and World Bank, were not merely asking Pakistan to announce reforms but also demonstrate their implementation and tangible results.

He also underscored the importance of CSR in mobilising additional resources for social sector development, suggesting that the private sector had an important role in complementing government efforts.

Representative of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) was also among the speakers at the session, which focused on mobilising private capital to support Pakistan's social sector priorities.

The discussion highlighted that Pakistan's growing development needs, limited fiscal space and declining external assistance required a shift towards more sustainable and diversified financing arrangements.

The experts emphasized that improving the quality of public expenditure, establishing an enabling regulatory environment for corporate contributions and attracting private investment could help bridge the social sector financing gap and ensure that resources deliver measurable benefits for the country's children and future generations.

Press Coverage Details → click

PRESS COVERAGE OF THIS SESSION

29th SDPI Conference: Factors to bridge widening social-sector funding gap pinpointed
Source: Business Recorder | *Islamabad, November 4, 2026*

SESSION A-12 · ECONOMY 3:00 PM • Hall 108 • Packages Group

Experts for strengthening supply chain resilience through localization, AI and infrastructure reforms





ISLAMABAD (03 November 2026): Experts at a session have called upon the government to prioritize industrial localization, artificial intelligence, strategic energy & food storage, and sustainable logistics infrastructure to protect Pakistan's economy against climate change, geopolitical tensions and global supply chain disruptions.

The recommendations emerged during a session titled "Rethinking Supply Chains in an Age of Disruption: Sustainability, AI and Resilience," organized at the 29th Sustainable Development Conference by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute in collaboration with Packages Group here on Tuesday.

Muhammad Mir, Head of Supply, Planning and Logistics at PepsiCo Pakistan, stressed that localisation must involve developing complete domestic value chains rather than merely replacing international suppliers with local vendors.

He said PepsiCo was investing in tissue culture laboratories and greenhouse facilities to localise agricultural seed production. Through its Khud Mukhtar initiative, the company had also partnered with domestic manufacturers to develop industrial spare parts and reduce import dependence.

Highlighting technological innovation, Mir said PepsiCo was using satellite-based remote sensing, drone imagery and AI to identify water stress, crop growth deficiencies, adverse weather conditions and potential infestations before harvesting.

He recommended collective industry investment in local manufacturing capabilities, supplier development and technology transfer, supported by reliable data systems and robust business continuity plans.

Ayesha Aziz, Group Manager Sustainability at Packages Group, emphasized sustainable procurement and supplier capacity-building. She said large corporations must support smaller suppliers in improving environmental practices, data collection and compliance with international sustainability requirements.

Anam Zeb, Sustainability Expert at the International Finance Corporation (IFC), urged businesses to integrate climate risks into operational and financial planning rather than treating adaptation as a corporate social responsibility activity. She recommended that the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, provincial governments and industry associations facilitate climate-risk mapping, infrastructure vulnerability assessments and financial loss evaluations.

Commodore (Retd) Muhammad Irfan Taj, Senior Advisor on Maritime and Shipping Affairs, highlighted deficiencies in Pakistan's maritime infrastructure and called for improvements in petroleum handling facilities, port connectivity, shipping services and digitalisation.

He urged the Ministry of Maritime Affairs, port authorities and private investors to develop an integrated maritime strategy incorporating offshore petroleum facilities, sustainable bunkering infrastructure, aquaculture and greater investment in the blue economy.

Nadir Mumtaz, former Chairman of the Karachi Port Trust (KPT), highlighted Pakistan's dependence on imported hydrocarbons, inadequate petroleum and grain storage facilities, inefficient customs procedures and underutilized logistics infrastructure.

He argued that insufficient strategic reserves weakened the country's bargaining position in international energy markets and increased vulnerability to supply disruptions.

He recommended that the Petroleum Division, Ministry of National Food Security and Research and provincial governments prioritise petroleum storage facilities, modern grain silos and warehouse receipt financing mechanisms.

Mumtaz also called on the Federal Board of Revenue and Pakistan Single Window authorities to simplify customs clearance, improve documentation of cross-border trade and reduce cargo dwell times.

Highlighting the environmental impact of road-based freight, he urged the Ministry of Railways and relevant authorities to expand rail cargo services, examine the feasibility of inland waterways and develop integrated storage and logistics hubs.

Omer Salman, Senior Manager at A.F. Ferguson & Co., advocated life cycle assessments to identify environmental risks throughout supply chains. He recommended integrating sustainability considerations into business decisions and adopting internationally recognised disclosure frameworks, including IFRS S1 and S2 where applicable.

During the interactive discussion, a participant highlighted gaps in Pakistan's agricultural commodity ecosystem, including inadequate grain silos, limited independent grading facilities and underdeveloped commodity futures and options markets.

The participant stressed that warehouse receipt financing initiatives needed to be integrated with certified storage facilities, quality assessment services and commodity trading mechanisms to create a more efficient and resilient agricultural supply chain.

The session recommended that the Ministry of National Food Security and Research, Ministry of Finance, Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan, provincial agriculture departments, financial institutions and commodity exchanges jointly develop a framework for certified warehouses, standardised commodity grading, electronic warehouse receipts and agricultural price-risk management.

Concluding the discussion, the moderator urged the federal ministries concerned, regulators and policymakers to engage directly with industry representatives, maritime experts, academia and other stakeholders to translate the recommendations into practical reforms.

Highlighting growing geopolitical uncertainty and disruptions to the global order, she said resilience must extend beyond climate change and environmental sustainability to encompass the economic and operational consequences of policy decisions and international developments.

Participants called for coordinated government-industry action to strengthen domestic production, modernize infrastructure, improve regulatory efficiency and develop supply chains capable of withstanding future shocks.

Press Coverage Details → click

SESSION A-13 · ENVIRONMENT 3:00 PM • Hall 107

Experts call for regional cooperation to address water security challenges, promote hydro-diplomacy, peace



ISLAMABAD (03 November 2026): Water experts have called for shared efforts to address common water security challenges in South Asia, particularly between Pakistan and India, stressing that cooperation, effective water management and respect for international agreements were essential to prevent further tensions and safeguard the region's future.

They were speaking at a session, titled: "Water Security, Hydro-Diplomacy & Regional Peace", organized at the 29th Sustainable Development conference by Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) here on Tuesday.

The experts emphasized that Pakistan needed to pursue its rights under the Indus Waters Treaty at bilateral and international forums while strengthening its domestic water governance, implementing existing policies and improving conservation practices.

Chairperson of the Board of Governors of the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Ambassador Shafqat Kakakhel, described water as an existential issue, saying it was the fundamental prerequisite for all forms of life.

> *This is the basic tragedy of Pakistan; that you make agreements, you make plans, you make strategies, and they collect dust.*
>
> AMBASSADOR SHAFQAT KAKAKHEL

He said the Indus Waters Treaty was an extraordinary agreement negotiated at a time when international water law was still underdeveloped. The treaty not only prevented a potentially devastating conflict between Pakistan and India but also established principles that were subsequently incorporated into the United Nations Watercourses Convention.

"Number one, it resolved what could have been a potentially intractable problem given the history of India and Pakistan. It would have been a deadly conflict," he said.

Explaining the treaty's distinctive arrangement, Ambassador Kakakhel said the six rivers of the Indus basin were divided between the two countries, with India obtaining complete control over the eastern rivers and Pakistan receiving the western rivers, subject to certain conditions allowing India to construct hydropower projects.

He said the treaty introduced the run-of-the-river concept to ensure that Indian hydropower projects did not result in substantial losses of water for Pakistan. The arrangement allowed limited pondage rather than large-scale storage, with 3.6 million acre-feet fixed for India's permitted uses.

Referring to the National Water Policy introduced in 2018 and the subsequent implementation strategy prepared by the Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources in 2022, he regretted that policies and plans often remained unimplemented.

"This is the basic tragedy of Pakistan; that you make agreements, you make plans, you make strategies, and they collect dust. Dust in the offices," he said, calling for an end to the practice and urging the country to conserve every drop of water.

He also pointed out that Pakistan's per capita water availability had declined from 5,200 cubic metres to 800 cubic metres, while its population had increased from 31 million at the time of Partition to around 250 million.

Former chairman of the Federal Flood Commission under the Ministry of Water Resources, Ahmed Kamal, said Pakistan could not afford to treat the Indus Waters Treaty as a matter of history, particularly when India was pursuing projects on the ground.

He urged Pakistan to pursue the treaty at all relevant forums and make efforts to revitalise the Permanent Indus Commission to restore regular meetings, engagement and data exchange between the two countries.

"If that is not done, then we should go, as we are also doing already, to international forums, including the United Nations," he said.

Mr Kamal also called for stronger engagement with the United Nations Secretary-General's representative on water-related issues to promote international efforts towards addressing transboundary water disputes.

Emphasizing the need for domestic institutional reforms, he said Pakistan had failed to give adequate attention to its National Water Council, which had held only one meeting on October 25, 2018, since the National Water Policy was approved. Five members from the private and civil sectors were still to be appointed.

He said the National Water Conservation Strategy, prepared by April 2024 and presented to the highest forum, had also failed to receive the required attention despite containing important recommendations.

"If that conservation strategy was approved at that time, whatever extra water that we got during 2025 monsoon and then in 2026 monsoon, that could have been saved locally for the benefit of the people," he said.

Dr Shaheen Akhtar from National Defence University said regional cooperation had considerable potential to strengthen water security, although the suspension of SAARC's activities and strained relations between Pakistan and India had weakened prospects for collective action. She said the Indus Waters Treaty remained the strongest water-sharing framework in the region, containing detailed provisions governing the rights of both countries and technical requirements for run-of-the-river projects.

However, she identified differences over the interpretation and implementation of technical provisions, particularly sediment management, as a major source of friction.

"These rivers carry a lot of sediments, they are flash, fast-flowing rivers. So, it's very difficult actually when you have cascading dams, you trap the sediment, so obviously it's going to affect not only the river hydrology, but also the sediment issue," she said.

Dr Akhtar said geopolitical tensions and power asymmetries had influenced the treaty since its negotiation, while climate change, population growth, energy needs and rising water demands had further complicated the situation.

Global development leader Nabeel Goheer said the water dispute was much broader than a sectoral or security issue, linking it to economic development, human welfare, climate change and relations between the two countries. He said Pakistan and India could either focus on addressing common challenges, including poverty and social exclusion, or continue creating problems for each other.

Describing the dispute as a moral issue, he questioned the implications of statements suggesting that not a single drop of water would flow to Pakistan. "What does it mean? Is it a direct right to kill the people of Pakistan with thirst and hunger?" he said.

Mr Goheer acknowledged that diplomatic and political conditions were currently unfavourable, with formal dialogue stalled and people-to-people interaction limited. He also regretted that political rhetoric and election-oriented statements were deepening divisions. However, he said there was still hope for a return to negotiations, urging both countries to rebuild trust, respect each other's concerns and avoid further confrontation. "This world could not afford another conflict between two nuclear states. It's a matter of choice at the end," he said, adding: "Let's choose to talk, let the conversation flow and let the water flow."

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PRESS COVERAGE OF THIS SESSION

Experts call for regional cooperation to address water security challenges, promote hydro-diplomacy, peace
Source: Associated Press of Pakistan | *Islamabad, November 3, 2026*

Experts call for regional cooperation to address water security challenges, promote hydro-diplomacy, peace
Source: Sabah News | *Islamabad, November 3, 2026*

SDPI Conference Tackles Water Security and Energy Transition
Source: Global News Pakistan | *Islamabad, November 4, 2026*

پاکستان سندھ طاس معاہدے کے تحت عالمی فورمز پر کردار ادا کرے: آبی ماہرین
Source: Daily Nawa-e-Waqt | *Rawalpindi/Islamabad, November 4, 2026*

ماہرین کا پانی کی سلامتی کے چیلنجوں سے نمٹنے، آبی سفارت کاری اور امن کے فروغ کے لیے علاقائی تعاون پر زور
Source: Sabah News | *Islamabad, November 3, 2026*

ایس ڈی پی آئی کی 29ویں پائیدار ترقی کانفرنس ،ماہرین کا آبی سفارتکاری اور امن کے فروغ کیلئے علاقائی تعاون پر زور
Source: Urdu Point | *Islamabad, November 3, 2026*

آبی امور کے ماہرین کا جنوبی ایشیا میں پانی کے مشترکہ مسائل سے نمٹنے کے لئے علاقائی تعاون کی ضرورت پر زور
Source: Urdu Point | *Islamabad, November 3, 2026*

SESSION A-14 · ECONOMY 3:00 PM • Theatre Room • Vital Strategies

Experts seek regular increase in cigarette taxes, public awareness



ISLAMABAD (03 November 2026): Health experts, researchers and policymakers have called for stronger tobacco control measures, including regular increases in cigarette taxes, greater public awareness and stricter enforcement, warning that tobacco consumption is claiming thousands of lives annually and imposing a heavy economic and social burden on Pakistan.

Speakers at a discussion, titled: 'Rethinking Tobacco Control in Pakistan: Advancing Fiscal Policy, Environmental Accountability and Regulation of Emerging Nicotine Products', highlighted the devastating health consequences of smoking, the growing vulnerability of young people to nicotine addiction and the need for a balanced taxation policy to discourage consumption while curbing tax evasion.

Dr Mohammad Iqbal Khan, Vice-Chancellor of Shifa Tameer-e-Millat University, Islamabad, warned that smoking causes extensive damage to the human body, affecting multiple organs and systems. He said research conducted in Sweden and Melbourne, Australia, in 2017 had identified 39 organs and body systems directly affected by harmful substances in cigarettes, including nicotine and smoke particles. He added that subsequent research in Japan had identified 48 additional forms of damage.

Prof Dr Mohammad Nasir from Institute of Business Administration (IBA) stressed the need to increase tobacco taxation and link it to inflation and income growth to discourage smoking and reduce the affordability of cigarettes.

Presenting the findings of a study conducted by the SDPI on the expansion of tobacco industry manufacturing facilities in the Eastern Mediterranean region.

He said the region comprised 22 countries, but the study focused on a purposively selected sample of seven countries. Before the research, evidence about the expansion of tobacco manufacturing facilities across the region was fragmented, with no single source providing a comprehensive picture of the industry's growth.

Dr Yasmin Albanna of King's College London, UK, highlighted the need for comprehensive research into the expansion of tobacco industry manufacturing facilities across the Eastern Mediterranean region.

She said the study, conducted by the SDPI, aimed to map tobacco manufacturing facilities and present initial findings on the industry's expansion in the region.

Dr Asif Iqbal of the Social Policy and Development Centre (SPDC) warned that a freeze on tobacco taxation could encourage more than 300,000 people to start smoking, while costing the government substantial revenue and increasing the public health burden.

He said the latest comparable international data for 2023 showed Pakistan's smoking-attributable death rate at 79.6 per 100,000 adults, higher than the corresponding rate of around 67 in the Anglo region. He said smoking-related diseases caused approximately 193,000 deaths annually in Pakistan.

Referring to another study conducted in 2019, he said the economic cost of tobacco consumption had been

estimated at 1.6 per cent of the country's GDP, highlighting the enormous financial burden on the economy.

Dr Nadia Tahir of the Prime Minister's Office called for a balanced and innovative tobacco taxation policy, saying higher tax rates alone may not be sufficient to discourage cigarette consumption and could lead to tax evasion and increased regulatory costs.

She acknowledged the research and data shared by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), saying she was using the figures presented by its researchers to assess the impact of tobacco taxation.

She said the share of cigarettes in federal excise duty (FED) revenue had declined from 40.7 per cent to 29.4 per cent, raising questions about the effectiveness of relying solely on higher tax rates as a revenue-generation measure.

She also warned that higher tax rates could encourage tax evasion, requiring stronger government interventions, including track-and-trace systems, customs monitoring and additional regulatory measures.



She called for a more comprehensive fiscal policy that considered food security, environmental protection, public health and the economic consequences of tobacco consumption rather than relying exclusively on higher cigarette taxes.

Dr Abdur Rehman Abid, an anaesthesiologist, warned that tobacco consumption is causing a serious public health crisis in Pakistan with an estimated 200,000 deaths annually, including 164,000 directly and 31,000 indirectly attributed to smoking.

He said smoking not only damaged individual health but also placed a heavy financial and emotional burden on families and society.

Drawing on his professional experience, he said doctors regularly encountered patients suffering from the consequences of smoking. He recalled the case of a close friend, who despite being seriously ill and shifted to an intensive care unit, asked for a cigarette as his last request.

Dr Abid said tobacco contained nicotine, an addictive substance also found in varying quantities in some other plants. He explained that an ordinary cigarette contained approximately two milligrams of nicotine.

Highlighting the health consequences, he said smoking contributed to heart and vascular diseases, gangrene and amputations, leaving many patients permanently disabled. He also pointed to its possible effects on fertility in both men and women and its role in behavioural problems associated with nicotine addiction.

Referring to Pakistan's tobacco control commitments, he said taxation should be strengthened, arguing that cigarette taxes had remained unchanged since 2023.

Press Coverage Details → click

SESSION A-15 · EQUITY 3:00 PM • Zaki Auditorium • UNESCAP

Digital divide can turn technological progress into inequality: UNESCAP official





ISLAMABAD (03 November 2026): The widening digital divide can turn technological progress into another faultline of inequality, making access to the jobs of tomorrow increasingly out of reach for young Pakistanis, warned Ms Mikiko Tanaka from Subregional Office for South and South-West Asia, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (SSWA-UNESCAP)

She was speaking at the session, 'Leaving No Youth Behind in the Age of Disruption: Perspectives on the Post-2030 Agenda' at the Sustainable Development Conference organized by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI).

Ms Tanaka said that while disruption and artificial intelligence hold immense potential for job creation, economic growth and more resilient societies, their benefits are far from guaranteed. Deployed effectively, emerging technologies can expand employment opportunities for young people, she said, adding that without equitable access and responsible application, they risk deepening existing disparities and entrenching exclusion. She noted that young people must not merely be the recipients of the post-2030 development agenda, but active participants in shaping it.

Taking the discussion from the challenges of technological disruption to the policy responses needed to address them, Arsalan Ahmed Raja of the Prime Minister's Youth Programme (PMYP) spoke about the government's efforts to equip young people with the skills, opportunities and institutional support needed to navigate a rapidly changing world.

> *We need to move on from asking what young people can do for development and ask if the development organizations and the government are ready to listen to the youth and offer meaningful representation.*
>
> DANISH TARIQ

Mr Raja said the government aims to ensure that, by 2030, all approximately 2.3 million young people entering the workforce are absorbed into productive employment. "By 2030 we also want to make sure that women represent at least 30 % of the workforce," he said. He also shared other policy measures, saying that the Cabinet had already approved the National Adolescent and Youth Policy and the eSports Policy.

Danish Tariq, from the Regional Caucus for South Asia, United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth, said Asia and the Pacific is on track to miss 88 per cent of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). He also pointed out the absence of consolidated data to identify which segments of society are most affected by this shortfall. "We need to move on from asking what young people can do for development and ask if the development organizations and the government are ready to listen to the youth and offer meaningful representation," he said.

CEO of Native Youth Club for Climate Change (NYCCC), Umair Mufakir, noted that Pakistan is among the countries facing the highest risks associated with climate change, and shed light on the initiatives undertaken by his organisation to promote climate action. "We focus on

holding awareness sessions for local communities in their local languages," he said, adding that the NYCCC has also proposed 'adaptation grants' to be included in government programmes to incentivize climate adaptation.

Mr Muhammad Shayan Azmat, Education and Development Expert, observed that while Pakistan had made progress on some Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), its performance on others had regressed further. Challenging the audience to reflect on the effectiveness of the country's education system, he asked how many could still recall the mathematical formulas they had been taught in school.

Dr Sadya Salar from Khawaja Sira Society and a transgender rights activist, highlighted the importance of inclusivity, tolerance and societal acceptance in creating an environment where young people can thrive and contribute meaningfully to society. She stressed that individual potential cannot be realized without a supportive social ecosystem.

"Children who have to run away from their families just to survive cannot be expected to focus on education or climate issues," Dr Salar said, adding that building an inclusive society requires language literacy and collective efforts to extend support and recognition to all members.

Ms Asifa Jamali from Welfare Association for New Generation (WANG) Balochistan, shed light on the gaps in facilities and opportunities available to the youth in different parts of the country. She identified three different types of disparities, including 'infrastructure and internet', 'language barriers', and 'skills and confidence' gaps.



Dr. Asim Rehman, Director Policy & Sustainable Development, of Environment Protection and Climate Change Department Punjab shed light on the measures taken by the Punjab government towards climate action and environmental conservation.

MPA Hafiz Muhammad Tahir discussed the interconnected challenges of climate change, employment and self-reliance. He reiterated the need for policies that address these areas together and spoke on the importance of equipping young people with the skills, resources and opportunities to become economically independent while building resilience against the growing impacts of climate change.

Delivering the concluding remarks, MPA Ahmad Iqbal Chaudhary commended SDPI for bringing youth representatives to the table and providing them a platform to articulate not only the challenges they face but also the frustration and urgency behind their demands. "We not only heard their concerns but also the anguish behind their concerns," he said.

Painting a sobering picture of Pakistan's outlook for 2030, he said that governments and larger institutions often struggle to keep pace with disruption, adapting and transforming far more slowly than the challenges demand. He urged the youth to remain vigilant, hold the government accountable and actively push for greater representation through local government structures. He noted that meaningful change would require youth to move beyond being passive recipients of policy and become active voices in governance, decision-making and the shaping of their own futures.

Press Coverage Details → click

PLENARY 2.1 · LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD 5:30 PM • Zaki Auditorium

Govt has adopted Dr Ishrat's reform recommendations as basis for institutional restructuring: FM





ISLAMABAD ((03 November 2026): Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb on Tuesday said the government had adopted former State Bank governor Dr Ishrat Hussain's institutional reform recommendations as the basis for its restructuring agenda, acknowledging his pivotal role in transforming Pakistan's banking sector and laying the groundwork for wider governance reforms.

He was addressing a plenary, titled: SDPI's Lifetime Achievement Award 2026: In Honour of Dr Ishrat Hussain (HI, NI), organized by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) on the 29th Sustainable Development Conference here on Tuesday where SDPI conferred a Lifetime Achievement Award on Dr Ishrat Hussian, the former Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan.

The finance minister said the government was building on the work of previous administrations rather than discarding existing initiatives and starting afresh. He said he had specifically approached Dr Ishrat for his institutional reforms report and adopted it as the basis of the government's restructuring agenda. The principal modification, he explained, was to implement the recommendations in phases rather than simultaneously, given the large number of ministries and attached departments involved.

He cited the closures of PASCO, Utility Stores Corporation and the Pakistan Works Department, besides the transfer of 26 entities to the Privatization Commission, as examples of the ongoing reform process. He also recalled his first interaction with Dr Ishrat in the late 1990s, when the latter assumed charge as SBP governor. "Two initiatives had particularly impressed him: the emphasis on strengthening the central bank's research function and the early recognition of technology as a transformative force in banking".

Mr Aurangzeb described the SBP as the country's best regulator and credited Dr Ishrat's reform agenda and technological vision with playing a significant role in shaping the banking industry and the central bank's regulatory framework.

The finance minister also praised his contribution to transforming the Institute of Business Administration (IBA), Karachi, after his tenure at the central bank. He said institutional transformation required improvements in people, processes, technology and content, rather than merely upgrading physical infrastructure.

State Bank Governor Jameel Ahmed, paying tributes to Dr Ishrat, described his contribution to the country's socio-economic development and financial sector as significant. Recalling his first professional interaction with Dr Ishrat in December 1999, Mr Ahmed said he had joined the central bank with a clear vision and an ambitious plan for its transformation. Although some officials initially questioned the feasibility of implementing such an extensive reform agenda, Dr Ishrat translated his vision into a strategic document that was implemented before his departure from the institution, he said. Mr Ahmed also acknowledged his role in bringing market professionals, including internationally trained PhD economists and experienced bankers, into senior leadership positions, helping develop a more professional and capable institution.

Former federal minister Abdul Razak Dawood said Dr Ishrat had made two lasting contributions, particularly the transformation of the central bank through professional management and institutional restructuring. Recounting his experience as a member of the SBP board during Dr Ishrat's governorship, he said he had witnessed firsthand how effectively the latter organised the institution and brought in professionals.

Habib Bank Limited Chairman, Sultan Ali Allana, described Dr Ishrat as an institution in himself, highlighting his unusual combination of civil service experience and international financial expertise. Recalling his first interaction with him at the State Bank, Mr Allana said he had been impressed by Dr Ishrat's experience and wisdom, which he had not previously encountered at the central bank. He said Dr Ishrat's experience as a civil servant, coupled with his senior positions at the World Bank, had made his leadership particularly valuable.

Former secretary to the prime minister Nargis Sethi recalled working closely with him during his tenure as chairman of the National Commission for Government Reform (NCGR), established by the government in 2006. She said the commission was headed by Dr Ishrat with the status of federal minister and reported directly to the president and prime minister. According to Ms Sethi, he approached the assignment as a mission to reform the entire value chain of civil servants rather than treating it as a routine bureaucratic exercise.

Ms Sethi said the commission proposed replacing the superior services system with greater equality among cadres, non-cadres and ex-cadre officers. It recommended abolishing six of the 12 occupational groups and retaining six directly linked to state functions: district management, Police Service of Pakistan, Foreign Service, audit and accounts, customs and income tax.

The report also proposed reducing the number of federal ministries from 41 to 23 and divisions from 46 to 37, while recommending equal career progression opportunities for federal, provincial, district and autonomous-body officers. Ms Sethi described Dr Ishrat as a person of integrity, humility and determination, driven by the desire to establish institutions based on equity, meritocracy and competence.

Dean Emeritus at Boston University's Pardee School of Global Studies, Dr Adil Najam, said this aspect of his legacy was often underestimated because attention largely remained focused on his achievements as a policymaker.



Speaking at the ceremony, Dr Najam described Dr Ishrat as a mentor who had been generous with advice, including honest and sometimes difficult guidance. Recalling Dr Ishrat's tenure at IBA Karachi, he said its transformation went beyond leadership changes, institutional expansion or growth of its endowment. He said he had personally sought a meeting with Dr Ishrat during that period, underscoring the importance of institutional collaboration and healthy competition in improving academic standards.

Former Punjab governor Shahid Hamid recalled his 62-year association with Dr Ishrat, dating back to November 1964, when both joined the Civil Service of Pakistan as members of the same batch.

He said several members of the 1964 batch went on to hold prominent positions, including federal ministers, federal secretaries and the presidency, while he himself served as Punjab governor and federal minister. Recalling their training in East Pakistan in 1965, Mr Hamid shared their experiences of working under renowned development expert Akhtar Hameed Khan at the Pakistan Rural Academy in Brahmanbaria, where they learned about rural development and grassroots engagement.

SDPI Executive Director Abid Suleri also recalled Dr Ishrat's exceptional punctuality and extensive knowledge, describing him as a source of guidance on subjects ranging from agriculture and trade to economics, education, environment and climate change. Mr Suleri said that at a time when internet search engines such as Google were not commonly used, Dr Ishrat had effectively served as their "Google", as they could approach him for advice and guidance on almost any subject.

Earlier, SDPI Board of Governors Chairperson Ambassador Shafqat Kakakhel highlighted Dr Ishrat Husain's distinguished career spanning civil service, international financial institutions, policymaking and academia, noting his senior leadership roles at the World Bank, tenure as State Bank governor and extensive contributions to institutional reforms, economic research and scholarly literature.

Press Coverage Details → click

PRESS COVERAGE OF THIS SESSION

SDPI confers lifetime achievement award on Dr Ishrat Hussain
Source: The News International | *Islamabad, November 4, 2026*

Institutional restructuring based on Dr Ishrat Hussain's recommendations: Aurangzeb
Source: Dawn | *Islamabad, November 4, 2026*

Institutional restructuring; Govt adopts Ishrat's reform blueprint
Source: Business Recorder | *Islamabad, November 4, 2026*

Ishrat's reforms yet to be implemented
Source: The Express Tribune | *Islamabad, November 4, 2026*

Govt adopts Dr Ishrat Hussain's reform recommendations as basis for institutional restructuring: Muhammad Aurangzeb
Source: Sabah News | *Islamabad, November 3, 2026*

Aurangzeb Says Ishrat Hussain's Reform Report Underpins Government's Right-Sizing Drive
Source: UrduPoint | *Islamabad, November 3, 2026*

" Never give up " , Dr Ishrat Hussain tells participants of SDPI SDC 2026
Source: Daily Newsman | *Islamabad, November 3, 2026*

سابق گورنر اسٹیٹ بینک عشرت حسین کو لائف اچیومنٹ ایوارڈ سے نواز دیا گیا
Source: Daily Jang | *Rawalpindi/Islamabad, November 4, 2026*

سرکاری اداروں کی تنظیم نو کی بنیاد ڈاکٹر عشرت سفارشات ہیں: وزیر خزانہ
Source: Daily Nawa-e-Waqt | *Rawalpindi/Islamabad, November 4, 2026*

Pakistan government based its institutional restructuring on Dr. Ishrat Hussain's recommendations: Aurangzeb
Source: Nazrana Times | *Islamabad, November 3, 2026*

Pakistan Adopts Ishrat Hussain's Reform Recommendations as Basis for Institutional Restructuring: Aurangzeb
Source: Nazrana Times | *Islamabad, November 3, 2026*

PICTORIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Day 2 in Pictures









COMPILED FOR E-NEWSLETTER

Day 2 Press Coverage – 3 November 2026

1. English Press Coverage (Day 2 Event Reports)

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

Educationists urge varsities to ensure responsible use of AI

Source: The News International | *Islamabad, November 4, 2026*

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

SDPI confers lifetime achievement award on Dr Ishrat Hussain

Source: The News International | *Islamabad, November 4, 2026*

DAWN

Institutional restructuring based on Dr Ishrat Hussain's recommendations: Aurangzeb

Source: Dawn | *Islamabad, November 4, 2026*

DAWN

Beverage company receives sustainability award

Source: Dawn | *Islamabad, November 4, 2026*

BUSINESS RECORDER

AI advancements could widen economic, social inequalities: Shaza

Source: Business Recorder | *Islamabad, November 4, 2026*

BUSINESS RECORDER

Coca-Cola Pakistan receives 'Sustainability Award'

Source: Business Recorder | *Islamabad, November 4, 2026*

BUSINESS RECORDER

Institutional restructuring; Govt adopts Ishrat's reform blueprint

Source: Business Recorder | *Islamabad, November 4, 2026*

BUSINESS RECORDER

29th SDPI Conference: Factors to bridge widening social-sector funding gap pinpointed

Source: Business Recorder | *Islamabad, November 4, 2026*

THE EXPRESS TRIBUNE

Ishrat's reforms yet to be implemented

Source: The Express Tribune | *Islamabad, November 4, 2026*

THE NATION

Coca-Cola Pak recognised at SDPI's 29th Sustainable Development Conference for plastic road project

Source: The Nation | *Islamabad, November 4, 2026*

ASSOCIATED PRESS OF PAKISTAN

Experts call for regional cooperation to address water security challenges, promote hydro-diplomacy, peace

Source: Associated Press of Pakistan | *Islamabad, November 3, 2026*

ASSOCIATED PRESS OF PAKISTAN

Universities must adopt modern technology, ensure responsible use of AI: Education Experts

Source: Associated Press of Pakistan | *Islamabad, November 3, 2026*

SABAH NEWS

Experts call for regional cooperation to address water security challenges, promote hydrodiplomacy, peace

Source: Sabah News | *Islamabad, November 3, 2026*

SABAH NEWS

Govt adopts Dr Ishrat Hussain's reform recommendations as basis for institutional restructuring: Muhammad Aurangzeb

Source: Sabah News | *Islamabad, November 3, 2026*

URDUPOINT

Aurangzeb Says Ishrat Hussain's Reform Report Underpins Government's Right-Sizing Drive

Source: UrduPoint | *Islamabad, November 3, 2026*

DAILY NEWSMAN

" Never give up " , Dr Ishrat Hussain tells participants of SDPI SDC 2026

Source: Daily Newsman | *Islamabad, November 3, 2026*

GLOBAL NEWS PAKISTAN

SDPI Conference Tackles Water Security and Energy Transition

Source: Global News Pakistan | *Islamabad, November 4, 2026*

PAKISTANI NEWS

Educationists Urge Universities to Ensure Responsible Use of AI

Source: Pakistani News | *Islamabad, November 3, 2026*

THE BLIND SIDE

Sindh's flood housing programme emerges as global model

Source: The Blind Side | *Islamabad, November 3, 2026*

NAZRANA TIMES

Pakistan government based its institutional restructuring on Dr. Ishrat Hussain's recommendations: Aurangzeb

Source: Nazrana Times | *Islamabad, November 3, 2026*

NAZRANA TIMES

Pakistan Adopts Ishrat Hussain's Reform Recommendations as Basis for Institutional Restructuring: Aurangzeb

Source: Nazrana Times | *Islamabad, November 3, 2026*

2. Urdu Press Coverage (Day 2 Event Reports)

DAILY JANG

سابق گورنر اسٹیٹ بینک عشرت حسین کو لائف اچیومنٹ ایوارڈ سے نواز دیا گیا

Source: Daily Jang | *Rawalpindi/Islamabad, November 4, 2026*

DAILY NAWA-E-WAQT

سرکاری اداروں کی تنظیم نو کی بنیاد ڈاکٹر عشرت سفارشات ہیں: وزیر خزانہ

Source: Daily Nawa-e-Waqt | *Rawalpindi/Islamabad, November 4, 2026*

DAILY NAWA-E-WAQT

پاکستان سندھ طاس معاہدے کے تحت عالمی فورمز پر کردار ادا کرے: آبی ماہرین

Source: Daily Nawa-e-Waqt | *Rawalpindi/Islamabad, November 4, 2026*

ROZNAMA DUNYA

علامہ اقبال اوپن یونیورسٹی ،پانچ روزہ 29ویں پائیدار ترقی کے اہداف سے متعلق کانفرنس

Source: Roznama Dunya | *Islamabad, November 4, 2026*

SABAH NEWS

ماہرین کا پانی کی سلامتی کے چیلنجوں سے نمٹنے، آبی سفارت کاری اور امن کے فروغ کے لیے علاقائی تعاون پر زور

Source: Sabah News | *Islamabad, November 3, 2026*

SABAH NEWS

موسمیاتی خطرات سے معیشت کو بچانے کے لیے نجی شعبے کو آگے آنا ہوگا، ماہرین

Source: Sabah News | *Islamabad, November 3, 2026*

URDU POINT

ایس ڈی پی آئی کی 29ویں پائیدار ترقی کانفرنس ،ماہرین کا آبی سفارتکاری اور امن کے فروغ کیلئے علاقائی تعاون پر زور

Source: Urdu Point | *Islamabad, November 3, 2026*

URDU POINT

آبی امور کے ماہرین کا جنوبی ایشیا میں پانی کے مشترکہ مسائل سے نمٹنے کے لئے علاقائی تعاون کی ضرورت پر زور

Source: Urdu Point | *Islamabad, November 3, 2026*

DAILY ASSAS

(Print edition)

Source: Daily Assas | *Rawalpindi, November 4, 2026*

3. International Coverage (Bangladesh)

THE SHUTTLE TIMES

Proposal to cooperate with Pakistan to develop Bangladesh as a global manufacturing hub

Source: The Shuttle Times | *Dhaka, November 3, 2026*

THE SHUTTLE TIMES

Pakistan offers industrial partnership to support Bangladesh's global manufacturing ambitions

Source: The Shuttle Times | *Dhaka, November 3, 2026*

THE DAILY STAR

Bangladesh aims to become global manufacturing hub: Titumir

Source: The Daily Star | *Dhaka, November 4, 2026*

THE DAILY STAR

Bangladesh aims to become global manufacturing hub, export gateway: PM's adviser

Source: The Daily Star | *Dhaka, November 3, 2026*

THE FINANCIAL EXPRESS

Bangladesh aims to become global manufacturing hub, export gateway: Titumir

Source: The Financial Express | *Dhaka, November 3, 2026*

BSS NEWS

Bangladesh aims to become global manufacturing hub, export gateway: Titumir

Source: BSS News | *Dhaka, November 4, 2026*

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