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

3

Wednesday, 4 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.

$348 billion
estimated climate finance gap Pakistan faces by 2030
RANA IHSAAN AFZAL KHAN

13,000+
glacial lakes in Pakistan's northern areas
DR MUHAMMAD USMAN, NDMA

25
IMF programmes entered by Pakistan over 79 years
KHAQAN NAJEEB

13 million
units: estimated housing deficit, with approximately 700,000 new houses required annually
SHAFIQ AKBAR, IMARAT GROUP

7,000 MW
of solar capacity added over the past five years
LT-GEN (RETD) MUHAMMAD ZAFAR IQBAL

76
countries had adopted national hydrogen strategies or policies by early 2026
ENGR UBAID UR REHMAN ZIA, SDPI

DAY 3 IN NUMBERS

Figures from the Third Day

1	2	3	4	5
2.56 million	**90 per cent**	**$5 billion**	**1,200+**	**70 per cent+**
loans worth Rs253 billion disbursed by NBFCs to SMEs in July–June 2026	of 204 surveyed exporters supported continuation of tariff reductions	minimum recovery needs estimated after Nepal's floods, against around $20 million pledged by the Loss and Damage Fund	Chinese overseas renewable energy projects in a new dataset	waste collection coverage reached under the Suthra Punjab programme
SAJJAD ALI, SECP	SESSION B-8	DR PARAS KHAREL, SAWTEE	DR SHEN WEI, IIGF	MIHO HAYASHI, IGES

THE THREE ES OF DEVELOPMENT · DAY 3 SESSIONS BY THEME

Economy, Environment and Equity

Day 3 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.

- **B-1** Pakistan's Reform Agenda for Integrated Economic Governance
- **B-6** Sustainability Governance of China's Overseas Infrastructure Investments
- **B-8** Making Tariff Reform Work for Industry and Exports
- **B-9** The Political Economy of Real Estate Policy and Taxation in Pakistan
- **B-10** Shifting Geopolitics: Risks, Resilience and Prosperity
- **B-11** Digital Lending in Priority Sector Financing
- **B-12** Pakistan's Hydrogen Economy: Strategic Priorities Amid Regional Instability

Environment

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

- **B-2** From Primary Production to Secondary Value: Scaling an Integrated Circular Textile Economy
- **B-3** Living with Disasters: Understanding Risks, Anticipatory Planning and Financing for Preparedness
- **B-4** Towards Operationalising Country Platforms for Climate Finance in Pakistan
- **B-5** From Coal to Clean: Towards a Phased and Just Energy Transition
- **B-7** Environmental Diplomacy for Shared Air and Cryosphere Risks in South Asia
- **B-13** Reducing Fossil Fuel Reliance: Driving Climate Action and Business Continuity
- **B-15** Utility-scale Renewable Energy: Federal Policy, Provincial Priorities and Implementation Gaps

DAY 3
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Equity

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

- **B-14** Media and AI in the Age of Influence: Journalism, Public Discourse and Countering Violent Extremism
- **B-16** Book Launch: British/American Secret Documents (1952–1958) and Tareekhi Sang-e-Meel

Plenaries & Expo

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

- **FC-5** Beyond Bans: Advancing Circular Packaging through Innovation, Investment & Smart Regulation
- **FC-6** #InWithForPakistan Localisation
- **FC-7** Pakistan's Next Growth Story: Competitive, Low-Carbon Industry
- **P-3.1** Circular Economy Transition Beyond 2030: From Policy Ambition to Inclusive Action in South Asia
- **P-3.2** Reforms for Growth in Pakistan – From Priorities to Delivery

DAY 3 AT A GLANCE · WEDNESDAY, 4 NOVEMBER 2026

Eight Messages from Day 3

What ministers, experts and practitioners told the 29th Sustainable Development Conference, in the words published in SDPI's session reports. Follow the loop from 1 to 8.

01

Ticking time bombs

"Most of these lakes are potential ticking time bombs, and we must have advanced early warning systems to alert communities before an outburst occurs."

DR MUHAMMAD USMAN, NDMA
SESSION B-7

02

Recycling is part of our fabric

"I do not consider it secondary because recycling is part of our national fabric."

MUDASSAR RAZA, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE
SESSION B-2

06

Two stories of Pakistan

"These are two stories of Pakistan: one is of energy crisis, and one is of renewable energy success."

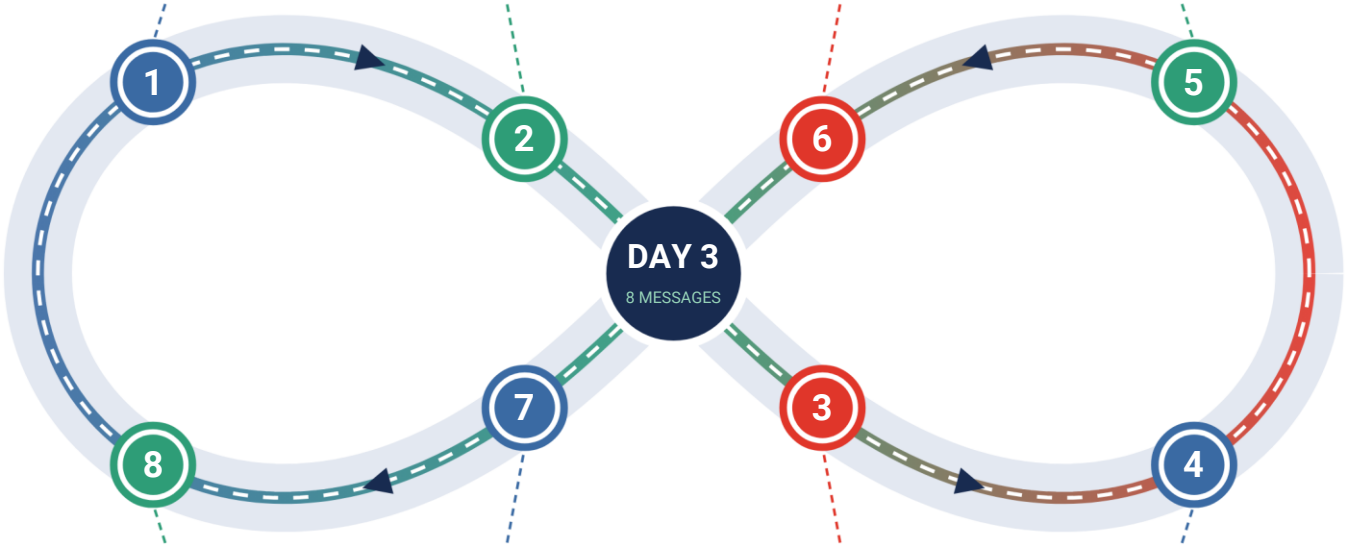
DR NAFISA SHAH
SESSION B-15

05

Build the nest first

"To attract a phoenix, you have to build the nest first."

DR HASSAN DAUD BUTT, ENERGY CHINA
SESSION B-6



08

Pick a few winners

"Pakistan needs to pick a few winners. We cannot do everything."

HAROON SHARIF, PREF
SESSION B-10

07

Chokepoints at sea

"Today it is the Strait of Hormuz; tomorrow it could be the Bab el-Mandeb, followed by the Suez or even the Panama Canal."

KHURRAM DASTGIR KHAN
SESSION B-10

03

A problem of delivery

"Our energy crisis does not mean that we have a shortage of energy; it means we are unable to get power from the plants to which we are paying for power generation."

REHAN BANDUKDA
SESSION B-15

04

Survive or finish

"The regulations coming our way will decide if this industry survives or is finished."

MUSTAFA SATTAR, RETEX GLOBAL
SESSION B-2

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

How Day 3 Advances the Sustainable Development Goals

Each line follows one time slot of Day 3, showing the Sustainable Development Goals its sessions advance.

10:00 – 11:30 AM 5 SESSIONS



SDGs advanced in this slot: 12 of 17 goals

B-1 **Roundtable | Pakistan's Reform Agenda for Integrated Economic Governance**
Hall 104 • FES



B-2 **Roundtable | From Primary Production to Secondary Value: Scaling an Integrated Circular Textile Economy**
Hall 107 • Masood Textiles



B-3 **Roundtable | Living with Disasters: Understanding Risks, Anticipatory Planning and Financing for Preparedness**
Hall 108 • WFP & ICIMOD



B-4 **Towards Operationalising Country Platforms for Climate Finance in Pakistan: Readiness & Gaps**
Hall 109 • NCET



B-5 **Policy Dialogue | From Coal to Clean: Towards a Phased and Just Energy Transition**
Theatre Room • ClimateWorks / Green CPEC Alliance



11:30 AM – 12:30 PM FIRESIDE CHAT



SDGs advanced in this slot: 3 of 17 goals

FC-5 **SI Expo Fireside Chat 5 | Beyond Bans: Advancing Circular Packaging through Innovation, Investment & Smart Regulation**
Hall 203 • PepsiCo Pakistan



12:30 – 2:00 PM 5 SESSIONS



SDGs advanced in this slot: 9 of 17 goals

B-6 **Podium Discussion | Sustainability Governance of China's Overseas Infrastructure Investments: Insights from Pakistan**
Hall 109 • PCI / SGAIN, University of Bath



B-7 **Environmental Diplomacy for Shared Air and Cryosphere Risks in South Asia**
Theatre Room • GIZ Pakistan



B-8 **Roundtable | Making Tariff Reform Work for Industry and Exports**
Hall 107 • FCDO / SEED Project



B-9 **The Political Economy of Real Estate Policy and Taxation in Pakistan**
Hall 108 • GIZ



B-10 **Podium Discussion | Shifting Geopolitics: Risks, Resilience and Prosperity**
Hall 104



CONFERENCE PROGRAMME (CONTINUED)

2:00 – 3:00 PM FIRESIDE CHAT



SDGs advanced in this slot: 2 of 17 goals

FC-6 **SI Expo Fireside Chat 6 | #InWithForPakistan Localisation**
Hall 203



3:00 – 4:30 PM 5 SESSIONS



SDGs advanced in this slot: 10 of 17 goals

B-11 **Policy Dialogue | Digital Lending in Priority Sector Financing: Expanding Access, Strengthening Inclusion and Unlocking Productive Growth in Pakistan**
Hall 109 • BoP



B-12 **Policy Dialogue | Pakistan's Hydrogen Economy: Strategic Priorities Amid Regional Instability**
Hall 107 • NCET



B-13 **Reducing Fossil Fuel Reliance: Driving Climate Action and Business Continuity**
Zaki Auditorium • PepsiCo Pakistan



B-14 **Media and AI in the Age of Influence: Journalism, Public Discourse and Countering Violent Extremism**
Hall 104



B-15 **Roundtable | Utility-scale Renewable Energy: Federal Policy, Provincial Priorities and Implementation Gaps**
Hall 108 • PRIED



4:30 – 5:30 PM BOOK LAUNCH & FIRESIDE CHAT



SDGs advanced in this slot: 6 of 17 goals

B-16 **Book Launch | British/American Secret Documents: Diplomatic Communications Relating to Pakistan (1952–1958) and Tareekhi Sang-e-Meel (Historical Milestones)**
Theatre Room



FC-7 **SI Expo Fireside Chat 7 | Pakistan's Next Growth Story: Competitive, Low-Carbon Industry**
Hall 203 • PepsiCo Pakistan



5:30 – 7:00 PM PLENARY



SDGs advanced in this slot: 5 of 17 goals

P-3.1 **Plenary 3.1 | Circular Economy Transition Beyond 2030: From Policy Ambition to Inclusive Action in South Asia**
Zaki Auditorium • IGES



Evening HIGH-LEVEL DINNER PLENARY



SDGs advanced in this slot: 3 of 17 goals

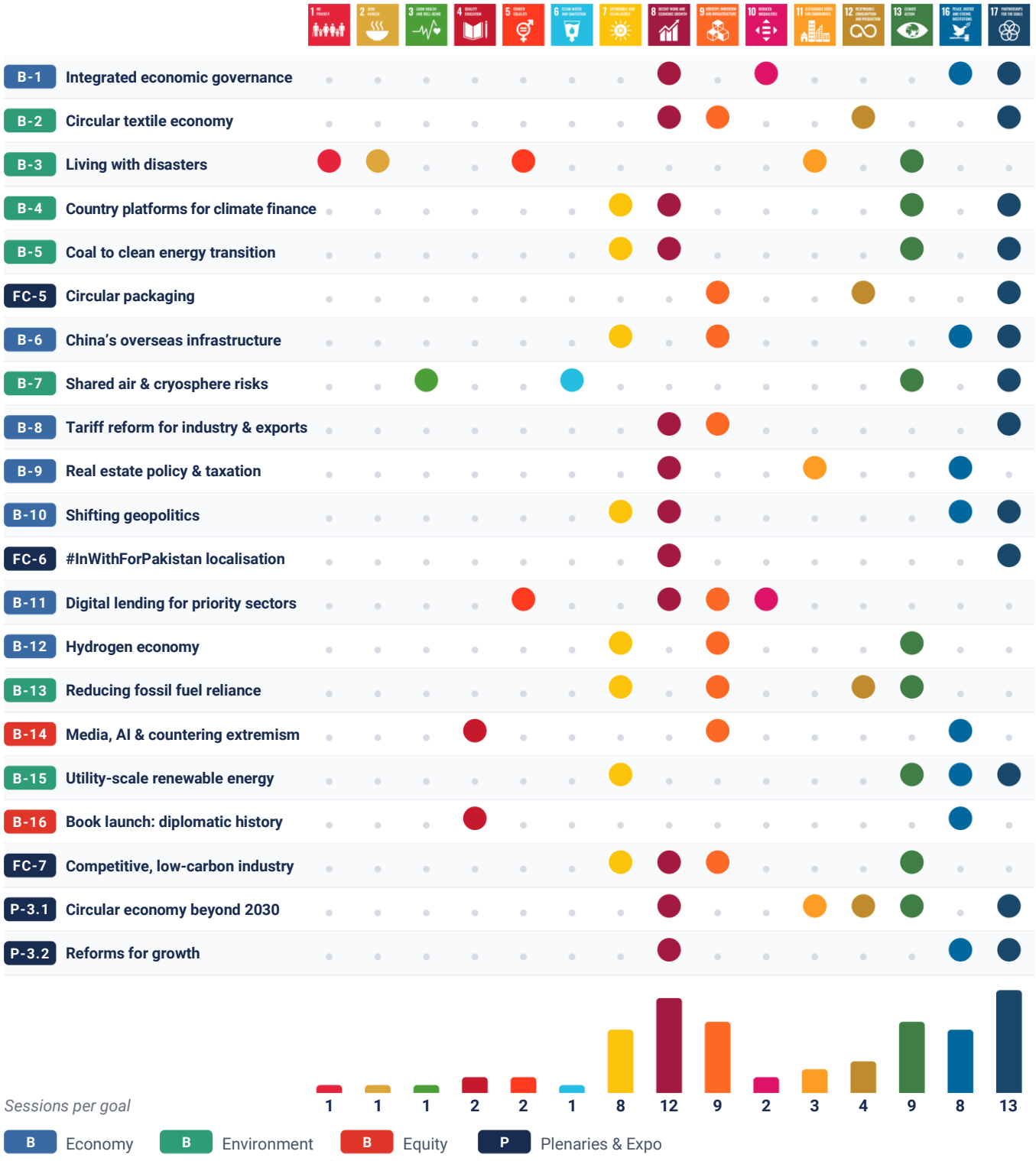
P-3.2 **Plenary 3.2 | Reforms for Growth in Pakistan – From Priorities to Delivery**
FCDO / SEED Project • Moderator: Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri



LINKS ACROSS SDGS

Day 3 SDG Linkage Matrix

Every Day 3 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, SDG 9 and SDG 13 were the most widely addressed.



SDG mapping reflects the themes of each session as listed in the Day 3 agenda

SESSION B-1 · ROUNDTABLE · ECONOMY 10:00 AM • Hall 104 • FES

Experts call for shift from crisis management to sustainable, export-led economic growth





ISLAMABAD (04 November 2026): Pakistan needs to move beyond crisis-driven economic management and adopt a sustainable, export-led growth model through integrated economic governance, policy consistency, institutional reforms and greater private-sector investment, said Rana Ehsan Afzal Khan, Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Commerce and Industry, and other economic experts said at a roundtable discussion.

The discussion, titled: "Pakistan's Reform Agenda for Integrated Economic Governance", was organized in collaboration with Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES). Participants highlighted the need for coordinated reforms to translate macroeconomic stability into industrial growth, employment generation, export expansion and improved living standards.

Rana Ehsan said Pakistan had achieved significant macroeconomic stability, with inflation declining to single digits, foreign exchange reserves improving, the country's credit rating strengthening and the exchange rate stabilizing under a market-based mechanism.

He said the economy recorded 3.7 per cent growth last year without a current account deficit, although remittances continued to play an important role in supporting external stability.

However, he identified geopolitical tensions and restricted regional connectivity as major obstacles to economic development. Regional trade accounts for less than five per cent of Pakistan's total trade, compared with 60 to 70 per cent in the European Union, highlighting the considerable untapped potential of regional economic cooperation.

He described the National Tariff Policy, covering approximately 7,500 tariff lines, as an important structural reform aimed at reducing the cost of raw materials, encouraging value addition and improving industrial competitiveness.

On SME financing, he said around 320,000 small and medium enterprises currently had access to bank loans, and the government aimed to double this number by 2028. The government was also restructuring the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) to strengthen its role in policy advice, feasibility studies, industrial cluster development and facilitating access to finance.

Acknowledging taxation and documentation as major business challenges, he said the government had taken measures to reduce the tax burden, including adjustments to the super tax and taxes on exporters.

Mirza Ikhtiar Baig, Member of National Assembly Standing Committee on Finance, Commerce and Economic Affairs, said Pakistan had achieved fiscal consolidation and moved away from the immediate risk of default but had failed to translate economic stability into employment generation, export growth and relief for ordinary citizens.

He criticized restrictions on letters of credit (LCs) for essential imported raw materials, including dyes, chemicals and polyester fibre, saying such disruptions undermined export-oriented industries and affected their ability to meet international orders.

Baig said exports remained stagnant at around $31 billion to $32 billion and stressed that Pakistan needed consistent policies to support industrial production rather than slowing economic activity whenever growth accelerated.

He also emphasized that foreign exchange reserves should be strengthened through exports and foreign direct investment (FDI), rather than excessive borrowing, arguing that sustainable foreign inflows were essential for long-term economic stability.

Dr Muhammad Ali Talpur, Chief Economist at the Planning Commission, said political stability, policy consistency and effective implementation were essential for sustainable economic growth. He said the government had developed a long-term economic strategy under a five-year plan, supported by annual plans and a mid-term review to assess sectoral performance and introduce necessary policy adjustments.



He said the government needed to create an enabling environment to attract private investment and FDI, acknowledging that inadequate investment remained a major constraint on implementing economic reforms.

Khaqan Najeeb, a senior economist, identified a serious competence crisis in both the public and private sectors. He attributed weaknesses in private businesses partly to family-run ownership structures that often restricted professional management, institutional development and business expansion. He said public-sector performance was constrained by the existing civil service system and called for reforms in government appointments, particularly at the secretary and joint secretary levels.

Criticizing Pakistan's repeated reliance on the International Monetary Fund (IMF), he said the country had entered 25 IMF programmes over 79 years but had remained dependent on external assistance for decades. He stressed the need to address structural weaknesses instead of repeatedly relying on external financial support.

Omar Malik of UNDP Pakistan said the country's growth model needed to focus on underserved segments of society to ensure inclusive and sustainable economic development.

He said a large section of the population remained excluded from economic growth, with its benefits concentrated among certain groups. He identified small and medium enterprises, small and medium-scale farmers and vulnerable households as groups requiring greater policy attention.

Noreen Khalid of Oxfam highlighted the economic costs of environmental challenges, saying the 2022 floods caused losses equivalent to 2.2 per cent of GDP, while air pollution cost Pakistan around 6.5 per cent of GDP annually. She also warned that 40 per cent of children faced long-term developmental challenges.

Sharing findings from a recent assessment of Pakistan's climate finance datasets, she called for improvements in data availability, credibility and integration to strengthen policymaking and financial planning. She stressed that climate considerations should be incorporated into economic planning rather than treated as a separate development concern.

Shahbaz Rana of The Express Tribune said Pakistan's economic governance suffered from the absence of a consistent governance model, political patronage and the selective use of corruption allegations.

He called for an independent judiciary in line with the original 1973 Constitution, merit-based appointments across government institutions and genuine media freedom, arguing that institutional independence and accountability were essential for effective economic governance.

Press Coverage Details → click

SESSION B-2 · ROUNDTABLE · ENVIRONMENT 10:00 AM • Hall 107 • Masood Textiles

Experts say it's time to capitalize on the recycling provisions



ISLAMABAD (04 November 2026): Experts at a session highlighted Pakistan's potential to transform its vertically integrated textile sector into a globally competitive, circular and sustainable industry, saying it's time to capitalize on the recycling provisions.

The session, titled: "From Primary Production to Secondary Value: Scaling an Integrated Circular Textile Economy" , was organized on the third day of 29th Sustainable Development Conference, by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), here on Wednesday.

Ms Yulia Bazhenova, Head of Project (AV) at GIZ Pakistan, said that scaling this transition requires bridging critical information gaps faced by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), strengthening industry-wide data collection across the value chain from collection, sorting and recycling to re-exporting, and bringing textile associations and chambers into conversation.

She called for targeted technical assistance to enhance productivity, improve resource efficiency and reduce carbon emissions, alongside innovative financing mechanisms to unlock private-sector investment. With 15 companies already having invested over €400,000, she noted that mobilizing finance for SMEs, often overlooked by private banks due to perceived risks, will be critical to turning Pakistan's circular textile ambitions into measurable economic and environmental gains.

I do not consider it secondary because recycling is part of our national fabric.

MUDASSAR RAZA, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE

Adding an international perspective to the discussion, Ms Beatriz Fernandez of UNEP, Switzerland, who joined the discussion online to share insights from a joint Pakistan-European Union initiative aimed at measuring textile waste across its entire lifecycle, from reuse and recycling to upcycling and final disposal. She also spoke on the growing economic potential of textile waste recovery, with the global textile recycling market projected to reach $6.8 billion by 2034.

Jennifer Wang, CEO of Full Cycle Resource Limited (FCR), shed light on the recycling industry's potential to drive affordability, create employment and promote economic mobility, particularly for women. However, she said that affordability must be assessed from the receiving country's perspective and called for a clear, harmonized definition of used clothing, warning that discrepancies between exporting and receiving countries could disrupt the entire recycling value chain.

Mustafa Sattar, Retex Global (Private) Limited CEO, spoke on the detriments of the Basel Convention that is trying to classify used clothing as an environmental hazard. He pointed out that if the convention is adopted, it will backfire on the very goals it is trying to achieve, which has less waste and less fast fashion consumerism. "The regulations coming our way will decide if this industry survives or is finished," he said, adding that Pakistan is unique in the sense that it imports, uses, and re-exports used textiles, so while other countries might have a difficult time adopting Europe's new regulations, Pakistan has a golden opportunity to capitalize on the recycling provisions.

Alan Wheeler, CEO of the Textile Recycling Association, recognized Pakistan's expertise in textile sorting, repairing, recycling and re-exporting while echoing concerns over the potential implications of the Basel Convention. He stressed that policies and regulations must be grounded in reliable, measurable evidence, citing the GIZ report on Ghana and a study on Tanzania, which

found that only one-third of materials were waste. He also highlighted a finding of SDPI's report that the actual number of waste in Pakistan's textiles is lower than popularly quoted statistics.

Ms Marriam Kaiwan, an educationist, called for a fundamental shift in textile and fashion education, urging institutions to move beyond the traditional design-and-produce model towards a circular approach encompassing design, use, repair, re-use and material recovery. She said that students should also be introduced to Pakistan's local second-hand clothing market and equipped to create durable, repairable designs with at least three life cycles.



She added that circularity must be linked to viable business opportunities rather than treated solely as a moral obligation towards sustainability. Highlighting the contribution of women in the informal sector, she called for the formalization of used-textile collection and sorting activities to improve their livelihoods while strengthening the wider circular textile industry.

Prof. Dr Muhammad Naveed, an expert of Biotechnology (Genomics and Bioinformatics), stressed the need for design thinking and connecting research, policy, agriculture and consumer angles in one place to formulate industry policies for circular economy. He also spoke on the need for integrating sustainable financing, including concessional loans and tax breaks, while also ensuring that testing centers for textiles also be brought on board.

Dr Udaya Namalgama, from Sri Lanka's Consumer Affairs Authority said that South Asian countries can work together to harmonize textile and used clothing classifications as well as custom's conditions.

Dr Jaweria Shakeel, Director Sustainability at Assure International said that the new regulations being implemented by the European Union are stringent and Pakistan's textile industry needs to rapidly align with evolving global standards. She also spoke on the importance of addressing water consumption and scarcity, alongside the energy-intensive processes across the value chain, particularly spinning.

Mr. Manzoor Fareed Hashmi, Reverse Resources Country Director, noted that Pakistan's circular textile industry faces challenges similar to those encountered across the region. He said that addressing these common hurdles through coordinated action could position Pakistan as a global hub for textile recycling, "and if we don't, other countries in the region will."

Mudassar Raza, Director-General at the Ministry of Commerce, concluded that while used textiles is called the secondary economy, "I do not consider it secondary because recycling is part of our national fabric," so it is as significant as the primary economy. He also discussed the measures taken by the government, such as financing accessibility for Textile SMEs through the Digital Portal, and continuous consultations with the industry stakeholders while formulating industry and export policies. He also noted that Pakistan is already in talks with the European Union to address potential implications and risks arising from the Basel Convention.

Press Coverage Details → click

SESSION B-3 · ROUNDTABLE · ENVIRONMENT 10:00 AM • Hall 108 • WFP & ICIMOD

Regional cooperation, sustainable financing vital for disaster management, say experts





ISLAMABAD (04 November 2026): Experts at a roundtable have called for stronger risk-informed planning, sustainable financing, effective early warning systems and community-based preparedness to reduce the growing impact of natural disasters in Pakistan and other South Asian countries.

They roundtable, titled: "Living with Disasters: Understanding Risks, Anticipatory Planning and Financing for Preparedness", was organized on the third day of 29th Sustainable Development Conference by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) in collaboration with the World Food Programme (WFP) and the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), here on Wednesday.

The expert emphasized that disaster preparedness should be integrated into national and provincial development policies, infrastructure planning and government budgets rather than treated as the sole responsibility of disaster management authorities.

Dr Paras Kharel, a representative of South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE), Nepal, said the devastating floods in his country on August 26 had exposed gaps in disaster monitoring, early warning and preparedness. He said stronger regional cooperation, particularly in satellite-based monitoring and early warning, was needed to anticipate disasters. He estimated recovery needs at least $5 billion, while the Loss and Damage Fund had pledged around $20 million, pointing to a substantial financing gap.

Ms Anum Malik Mengal, an official of Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA), Balochistan, said the protection needs of women and vulnerable groups, particularly the risk of gender-based violence, were often overlooked during emergencies. She said overcrowded shelters, inadequate lighting, poorly secured toilets and limited access to water and sanitation could expose women and girls to additional risks. Pregnant women and mothers also needed dignity kits and appropriate maternal and child health services. She said PDMA Balochistan had established a gender-based violence cell with support from UNFPA and other partners.

Amir Khan Goraya of the National Disaster Risk Management Fund (NDRMF) called for a shift from response-based approaches towards risk-informed development. He said effective governance and utilisation of resources were as important as financing.

Ms Shreeya Manandhar of ICIMOD, Nepal, said migration should be recognised as a potential adaptation strategy. She said financial and social remittances from migrant communities could help households respond to disasters and invest in climate-resilient livelihoods.

Mr Naeem Gul of WFP said Pakistan had made progress in institutionalising anticipatory action through national dialogues and pilot initiatives. He said the National Anticipatory Action Strategy had been approved and was expected to be linked with the national disaster risk reduction policy.

Aftab Alam, Chief Executive of IRADA Foundation for Research and Advocacy, said resilience should include not only the ability to withstand disasters but also the capacity to protect livelihoods, build assets and improve family well-being. He said women-headed and marginalized households faced additional risks because of poverty, food insecurity, limited mobility and unequal access to education. Recovery programmes, he said, should help affected families rebuild their lives with dignity.



Mr Babar Ali of Welthungerhilfe (WHH) said his organisation had been working on anticipatory action in Pakistan since 2018-19 with WFP, FAO, OCHA and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. He said district-level preparedness was being strengthened through emergency operations centres in Sindh and Balochistan.

Arif Jabbar Khan of Mercy Corps Pakistan said anticipatory action should be integrated into governance and the planning of all government departments, including those responsible for schools, health facilities and infrastructure.

Dr Amina Maharjan of ICIMOD, Nepal, speaking online, said early warning systems should account for mobile populations, including tourists, workers and people travelling through vulnerable areas. She said warnings needed to be clear, accessible and specific about the action people should take.

Saleem Jalbani of the Planning and Development Board, Government of Sindh, said disaster financing should be integrated into development planning and government policies. He called for provincial departments to allocate resources for anticipatory measures and stressed that implementation remained a major challenge.

Naveed Ahmed Sheikh of PDMA Balochistan said understanding climate change and its local impacts was essential for effective preparedness. He said the authority was working with government departments, development organisations and academic institutions to strengthen district-level disaster risk management.

He said the province had improved its capacity through equipment, district teams, hazard mapping and coordination with relevant departments. It was also sharing advisories and daily situation reports with communities through social media and local networks.

In his closing remarks, Ambassador Shafqat Kakakhel, Chairperson of the SDPI Board of Governors, said the number, severity and impact of disasters had increased due to population growth, climate change and other pressures. He said the growing number of institutions involved in relief and recovery has made coordination essential.

Press Coverage Details → click

SESSION B-4 · ENVIRONMENT 10:00 AM • Hall 109 • NCET

Pakistan faces $348bn climate finance gap by 2030: PM's Coordinator





ISLAMABAD (04 November 2026): Pakistan faces an estimated climate finance gap of $348 billion by 2030, requiring concessional financing, private investment and equitable access to global carbon markets to support its transition towards a climate-resilient economy, said Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Commerce and Industries Rana Ihsaan Afzal Khan.

He was speaking at a session, titled: 'Operationalizing country platforms for climate finance in Pakistan: Readiness and Gap', organized at the 29th Sustainable Development conference by Sustainable Development Policy Institute here on Wednesday.

The coordinator said climate justice meant financing the transition rather than merely demanding it, urging the international community to move beyond commercial debt and fulfil its historical responsibilities through loss and damage funds and multilateral concessional financing.

He said Pakistan was moving from policy formulation to implementation through its Climate Prosperity Plan, Pakistan Green Taxonomy and a multi-sectoral country platform aimed at aligning international climate finance with national priorities.

Highlighting the renewable energy transition, Rana Ihsaan said Pakistan imported more solar capacity than any other country in 2024, while distributed solar supplied over a quarter of national electricity in 2025. The country also imported around 4.5 gigawatts of battery storage equipment during the last six months, he said, adding that the government was preparing a policy to encourage local battery manufacturing and establish Pakistan as a regional manufacturing hub.

The recently approved Auto Policy 2026-31 and Electric Vehicle Policy aim to achieve 30 percent EV penetration by 2030, with projected economic savings exceeding $15 billion. He said the Pakistan Accelerated Vehicle Electrification (PAVE) programme was providing subsidies for electric two-wheelers and three-wheelers, while Pakistan had secured 15th position globally in the 2026 Climate Change Performance Index and submitted its NDC 3.0.

He said Pakistan targeted sustainable, export-driven GDP growth of 6 per cent, with renewable energy and green agriculture contributing towards the ambition of expanding the economy to $1 trillion by 2035. Rana Ihsaan stressed that implementation required coordination among federal ministries, provincial governments and specialized agencies.

He said Sindh has finalized 13 carbon market projects with the potential to reduce emissions by over 330 million tons, alongside a pipeline of climate projects worth nearly $62 million. He further said international climate funds and institutional investors had capital but lacked bankable projects, underscoring the need for project preparation facilities to convert national priorities into commercially viable investment opportunities.

Rana Ihsan added that the Ministry of Commerce was working to establish a national compliance entity to help exporters meet emerging international environmental requirements, including the European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM).

Hamza Ali Haroon, Regional Director for South and West Asia at CVF-V20, said Pakistan's Climate Prosperity Plan had been expanded from 69 projects worth $4.5 billion to 100 projects costing $8.5 billion. He said the revised second version of the plan had been submitted to the Ministry of Finance, while the broader initiative envisaged mobilizing $1.6 trillion by 2050. He said the plan, launched in April 2026 in collaboration with the Finance Ministry, was now moving towards operationalization through a nationally owned, outcome-driven country platform.



Six operational models were developed after consultations with ministries and stakeholders. He said institutional structure and membership arrangements could be negotiated, but national ownership, implementation capacity and investment expertise were non-negotiable.

Adviser to the Finance Minister Adnan Pasha said the Finance Division was committed to leading the institutional architecture for climate finance mobilization, stressing that the initiative must move beyond dialogue towards a concrete implementation plan. Describing climate change and population growth as existential risks, he said the Finance Division would facilitate projects undertaken by federal ministries and provincial governments.

Under the proposed mechanism, provincial projects would be developed and routed through respective Planning and Development Departments before prioritisation by the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination. The Finance Division would design the financial architecture, while the Economic Affairs Division and External Finance Wing would facilitate engagement with development partners and structure financing transactions. He said nationally owned priorities and provincial differences in climate adaptation requirements must guide project selection and financing.

Dr Muhammad Rafiq of the Pakistan Climate Change Authority (PCCA) said the Authority was working to establish a country platform to integrate scattered federal and provincial climate initiatives and improve coordination, governance and climate finance planning.

He said the PCCA, operationalized under the Pakistan Climate Change Act 2017, had a nationwide mandate, with six provincial and five federal members possessing expertise in adaptation, mitigation and climate finance. He said climate-related initiatives were currently being implemented by different ministries and provincial institutions in silos, resulting in gaps in data, governance, planning and budgeting.

The proposed platform would integrate existing frameworks, including the Finance Ministry's Sustainable Finance Framework, the Planning Ministry's Blended Finance Framework and the Climate Change Ministry's National Climate Finance Strategy.

Dr Rafiq clarified that the PCCA would not replace federal ministries or provincial governments but would work with them to integrate climate action. He said the proposal had been submitted to the Green Climate Fund (GCF), with a decision expected next week.

Press Coverage Details → click

PRESS COVERAGE OF THIS SESSION

Country faces USD348bn climate finance gap: Rana Ihsaan
Source: Business Recorder | *Islamabad, November 5, 2026*

Pakistan Needs $348bn In Climate Finance By 2030, PM's Coordinator Says
Source: UrduPoint | *Islamabad, November 4, 2026*

Pakistan faces $348bn climate finance gap by 2030: Rana Ehsan Afzal Khan
Source: Sabah News | *Islamabad, November 4, 2026*

Pakistan faces $348bn climate finance gap by 2030: PM's Coordinator
Source: Customs Today | *Islamabad, November 4, 2026*

Pakistan estimates $348 billion shortfall in climate finance by 2030: PM's coordinator
Source: Nazrana Times | *Islamabad, November 4, 2026*

Pakistan faces $348 billion climate finance gap by 2030, says PM's coordinator
Source: Nazrana Times | *Islamabad, November 4, 2026*

موسمیاتی تبدیلیوں سے نمٹنے کیلئے 348 ارب ڈالر کے خلا کا سامنا ہوگا: کوارڈینیٹر وزیراعظم
Source: Daily Nawa-e-Waqt | *Rawalpindi/Islamabad, November 5, 2026*

SESSION B-5 · POLICY DIALOGUE · ENVIRONMENT 10:00 AM • Theatre Room • ClimateWorks / Green CPEC Alliance

Pakistan urged to accelerate coal-to-clean energy transition through financial reforms





ISLAMABAD (04 November 2026): Energy experts, policymakers and development practitioners have called for a phased, financially viable transition from coal-fired electricity to renewable energy in Pakistan, warning that rising capacity payments, declining coal plant utilization and rapid solar adoption are exposing structural weaknesses in the country's power sector.

They were speaking at a policy dialogue, titled: "From Coal to Clean: Towards a Phased, Just Energy Transition", organized on the third day of the four-day Sustainable Development Conference, held by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) at the Allama Iqbal Open University here on Wednesday.

Former federal minister for climate change Malik Amin Aslam said Pakistan had access to international financing mechanisms for retiring coal-fired power plants but lacked the political will to implement reforms.

He cited the Asian Development Bank's Energy Transition Mechanism (ETM) and South Africa's $8.5 billion Just Energy Transition Partnership as examples of financing opportunities. Aslam criticised capacity payment obligations and questioned electricity demand projections underpinning earlier independent power producer (IPP) policies. He alleged that inflated projections and excessive financial incentives had created enduring liabilities for consumers.

He said Pakistan's rapid solar expansion demonstrated that households and businesses were already pursuing cleaner electricity, while government policies had failed to keep pace.

Michael Williamson from the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) said Pakistan faced a complex challenge because most coal-fired power plants were commissioned after 2015 and retained substantial financial obligations.

He identified three priorities: fair compensation for early retirement, replacement through clean energy and energy efficiency, and protection of workers and coal-dependent communities. Williamson said ESCAP and SDPI had collaborated on a study exploring repurposing coal plants for solar and wind generation, battery storage, synchronous condensers and potentially data centres.

Member of the National Assembly Riaz Fatyana called for reducing electricity tariffs, rationalizing renewable energy taxes and encouraging competition in alternative energy markets. He proposed developing small hydropower projects along Punjab's canal network to provide affordable, clean electricity to surrounding villages.

Dr Christoph Nedopil Wang, an international energy transition expert, stressed that coal retirement financing must reflect realistic asset valuations based on future electricity demand rather than contractual expectations.

Drawing lessons from Indonesia and Germany, he recommended plant-specific financial restructuring, renegotiation of power purchase agreements and innovative mechanisms, including concessional financing and reverse auctions.



Muhammad Basit Ghauri of Renewables First warned that imported coal plants were already becoming underutilized assets. Citing research on accelerated retirement, he said restructuring selected plants could potentially avoid substantial future capacity payments. He identified political commitment, investor negotiations and consistent government policies as essential conditions for implementation.

However, Ali Nawaz Leghari of the Private Power and Infrastructure Board defended the historical development of coal plants, explaining that they were established to address severe electricity shortages. He said converting imported coal plants to indigenous Thar coal could reduce fuel imports and strengthen energy security. Reliable generation, he maintained, remained necessary alongside renewable energy expansion and battery storage.

PRIED Chief Executive Officer Badr Alam challenged Pakistan's electricity demand forecasting and questioned further dependence on Thar coal. He warned that rooftop solar adoption was reducing grid electricity sales while fixed generation obligations continued burdening remaining consumers.

Yingjie Chen from Greenovation Hub, China emphasized that Pakistan-China cooperation on coal transition required commercially viable proposals, predictable regulations and effective investor risk management. She recommended pilot projects combining renewable energy, storage, industrial electrification and financing arrangements capable of attracting Chinese and international investment.

Tom Xiaojun Wang, PACS Philippines, an international coal transition expert joining virtually from China's Shanxi province, said the transition must prioritize workers and communities dependent on coal industries. Referring to a survey of approximately 9,000 Chinese coal-sector workers, he highlighted concerns over job security, limited retraining opportunities and alternative employment, particularly among middle-aged workers.

Citing examples of coal companies diversifying into tourism and retraining employees, he stressed that Pakistan should incorporate skills development and community engagement into its transition strategy.

Participants stressed that Pakistan must move beyond policy discussions towards financially credible projects that reduce electricity costs, protect affected communities and support sustainable development through coordinated government action, international financing and Pakistan-China cooperation.

SDPI's Noorul Ain highlighted mounting financial pressures within the electricity sector, citing transmission and distribution losses, circular debt and declining grid demand. The official said seven Chinese-financed coal plants under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) presented significant transition challenges.He suggested financial restructuring, regulatory reforms and greater engagement with multilateral development banks to support a national coal transition roadmap.

Press Coverage Details → click

PRESS COVERAGE OF THIS SESSION

Costly coal-fired power agreements: Pakistan risks remaining trapped
Source: Business Recorder | *Islamabad, November 5, 2026*

SESSION B-6 · PODIUM DISCUSSION · ECONOMY 12:30 PM • Hall 109 • PCI / SGAIN, University of Bath

Experts urge stronger governance, trust and community benefits for CPEC 2.0



ISLAMABAD (04 November 2026): Researchers and policymakers said that making China-backed infrastructure sustainable in Pakistan will need stronger governance, community benefit-sharing and long-term planning, not just more projects.

They were speaking at a policy roundtable, titled: 'Sustainability Governance of China's Overseas Infrastructure Investments: Insights from Pakistan ", organized on the third day of 4-day Sustainable Development Conference held by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute in knowledge partnership with PCI and in collaboration with SGAIN, University of Bath. The conference theme is "Rethinking Development in an Age of Disruption."

Dr Shen Wei of the International Institute of Green Finance (IIGF) presented a new dataset of Chinese overseas renewable energy projects. It covers more than 1,200 projects and is updated quarterly. He said about 75 percent of the projects involve technology supply or construction contracts rather than direct investment. "Chinese are very good builders for other people's assets," he said, noting that Chinese firms are wary of unbankable state utilities as sole power buyers, weak demand in low-income markets, and land and social-licence disputes.

He said South Asia is a partial exception. Direct investment there is about 15 percent, higher than the rest of Asia and Africa. In Pakistan, he said the dataset documents about 17 renewable projects over five years. Five are solar and most are hydropower, which he said totals over 15 gigawatts. He added that Chinese firms are not systematically embedded in national grid planning.

> *To attract a phoenix, you have to build the nest first.*
>
> DR HASSAN DAUD BUTT, ENERGY CHINA

Mr Jiuyang Liu, doctoral researcher at the University of Bath, presented a study based on 36 interviews held in Islamabad in July. He argued that green norms under CPEC are co-produced rather than imposed. China opens the channel, he said, while Pakistan presses its own demands on environmental concerns, energy security and fiscal pressure. One option under discussion is converting coal plants to battery storage and solar, but no co-signed text exists yet.

Dr Hassan Daud Butt, Senior Advisor to Energy China, said Chinese interest in Pakistan remains strong. He pointed to more than 120 Chinese enterprises registered with the Chinese chamber of enterprises in Pakistan. He said CPEC 2.0 should focus on making existing assets productive, building skills and industrial capacity, and shifting from front-loaded to back-loaded incentives. He also argued for incentives tailored by region rather than one-size-fits-all.

"To attract a phoenix, you have to build the nest first," he said, adding that the nest is good governance built on trust.



Dr Sauleha Kamal of the Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives said Pakistan's governance problems do not stem from a lack of formal safeguards, which are already part of the PC-1 project lifecycle. The real gaps, she said, are trust, policy continuity and unclear responsibility, with agencies duplicating or diffusing accountability. She said devolution after the 18th Amendment remains incomplete until it reaches union councils and local governments.

Dr Syed Hasanat Shah of the CPEC Centre of Excellence (CoE-CPEC) said Pakistan should favour pilot projects over mega projects and avoid "shock therapies," drawing on China's gradual approach. He stressed infrastructure, institutions and connectivity, and called for CPEC to deliver more for the youth.

Dr Hina Aslam of the Australian National University said China's 2021 overseas investment guidelines encourage higher standards where host-country rules are weaker. She called for community benefit agreements in CPEC project contracts, with local employment, transparent compensation and independent enforcement. She also urged clearer federal, provincial and local roles.

Dr Yixian Sun of the University of Bath, who introduced the project and joined online, said speakers broadly agreed that stronger governance is needed for bilateral cooperation and the sustainability transition. He said that while CPEC 2.0 has moved from government-to-government to business-to-business cooperation, it should also bring all stakeholders to the table. He said the dialogue will continue at a series of events with SDPI at COP31 next week.

Ms Ayesha Naeem, researcher at SDPI, presented findings from four Chinese-financed wind plants in Sindh that generate around 200 MW. Residents reported lost access to farmland and grazing areas, restricted fishing access, and weak consultation. They also reported that CSR funds are not reaching communities and that job benefits are uneven. Women reported reduced mobility and fear of insecurity.

Press Coverage Details → click

SESSION B-7 · ENVIRONMENT 12:30 PM • Theatre Room • GIZ Pakistan

Pakistan asked to shift from climate policy to data-driven, bankable climate projects



ISLAMABAD (04 November 2026): The Chairperson of Pakistan Climate Change Authority (PCCA) Hamza Farrukh has said the country must move beyond highlighting its vulnerability to climate change and focus on developing data-driven, financially viable projects that enable it to shape its own climate future.

He was speaking at a session, titled: 'Environmental Diplomacy for shared Air on environmental diplomacy for Shared Air and Cryosphere Risks in South Asia' organized at 29th Sustainable Development Conference by Sustainable Development Policy Institute here on Wednesday.

He said Pakistan's engagement at global forums, including the upcoming COP31 should go beyond presenting grievances and highlighting the country's climate-related challenges.

He said those representing Pakistan at international conferences had a dual responsibility: effectively communicating the country's climate realities and ensuring that discussions translated into practical solutions rather than remaining confined to complaints.

It is a case for re-engineering and re-architecting the climate ecosystem, where we are not merely followers of foreign strategies but the makers and architects of our own future.

HAMZA FARRUKH, PCCA

"This is not just a case for emergency response. It is a case for re-engineering and re-architecting the climate ecosystem, where we are not merely followers of foreign strategies but the makers and architects of our own future," he said.

Highlighting the transboundary nature of climate change, Mr Farrukh observed that glaciers, black carbon and air pollution did not recognize national borders or political boundaries, making regional and international cooperation indispensable. He said Pakistan had made considerable progress in climate policymaking over the past decade, translating international commitments into domestic policy frameworks. The National Adaptation Plan, Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and guidelines for carbon markets, despite their shortcomings, provided an important foundation for further action, he added.

Aisha Khan, Executive Director, Civil Society Coalition for Climate Change (CSCCC), and Chief Executive Officer, Mountain and Glacier Protection Organization (MGPO), said Pakistan must build regional alliances and push for dedicated international funding to protect the cryosphere, as melting glaciers and changing precipitation patterns threaten water and food security across the Hindu Kush-Karakoram-Himalaya (HKH) region.

She said Pakistan's dependence on the transboundary Indus River system made it particularly vulnerable as a lower riparian country. "Around 60 per cent of the country's water reliance was linked to the Indus, while nearly 90 per cent of river flows supported agriculture."

She said water and food security were among Pakistan's foremost challenges, with mountain communities facing an even greater threat because their livelihoods depended heavily on the timing and volume of water from glaciers and precipitation.

Ms Khan called for a declaration on the cryosphere, arguing that the North Pole, South Pole and the so-called Third Pole — the HKH region — deserved greater recognition in international climate financing.

Dr Ranga Pullawala, EU SWITCH-Asia Programme, Thailand, said a circular economy approach must be integrated into climate policies to reduce emissions, protect biodiversity and strengthen resilience, particularly in vulnerable mountain ecosystems.

He stressed that while cross-border climate challenges required multilateral cooperation, countries also needed to strengthen domestic action and improve access to climate finance.

Highlighting the link between climate change and the circular economy, he said resource efficiency was central to achieving climate ambitions, including mitigation, adaptation and addressing loss and damage.

"Circular economy is not just about recycling; it is about the entire value chain of resources, from product design and consumption to extending their lifespan and managing materials at the end of their life cycle," he said.



Dr Pullawala warned that inefficient resource use also accelerated pollution, waste generation and biodiversity loss. Moreover, adaptation and resilience-building projects could inadvertently increase emissions if they relied on resource-intensive materials and practices.

The expert also highlighted the implications for the cryosphere, particularly the role of black carbon generated through activities such as burning agricultural residues.

Dr Sher Muhammad, Promote Sensing Specialist (Cryosphere Monitoring Lead) International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), Kathmandu, Nepal, called for stronger regional cooperation, standardized monitoring protocols and data sharing to improve disaster risk reduction, warning that traditional early warning systems may not be sufficient to detect emerging hazards.

He said Pakistan needed to expand its risk assessment beyond geographical boundaries, as disasters originating in neighbouring countries could also threaten its communities.

He stressed that disaster preparedness should go beyond conventional early warning mechanisms and incorporate continuous monitoring and data-driven systems capable of detecting unusual signals, including seismic activity, that could indicate potential hazards.

"After such incidents, we need to move beyond traditional early warning systems and explore other forms of early detection based on regular monitoring and data," the speaker said.

Dr Muhammad Usman, Manager Research, National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM), National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), warned that thousands of glacial lakes in Pakistan's northern areas pose a growing threat to mountain communities, calling for stronger early warning systems, local capacity building and improved scientific research to reduce disaster risks.

He identified four major risks, including glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs), accelerating glacial melt, heavy snowfall and compound disasters.

He said Pakistan's northern areas had more than 13,000 glacial lakes, many of which could become potential sources of catastrophic flooding if monitoring and preparedness mechanisms remained inadequate.

"Most of these lakes are potential ticking time bombs, and we must have advanced early warning systems to alert communities before an outburst occurs," he said.

Press Coverage Details → click

SESSION B-8 · ROUNDTABLE · ECONOMY 12:30 PM • Hall 107 • FCDO / SEED Project

Experts seek coordinated reforms to make tariff policy boost industrial growth, exports



ISLAMABAD (04 November 2026): Experts at a roundtable have called for coordinated industrial, trade and taxation reforms, saying tariff rationalization alone cannot transform Pakistan's economy without improvements in productivity, infrastructure, energy costs, access to technology and a predictable business environment.

The roundtable, titled: "Making Tariff Reforms Work for Industry and Exports," was organized on the third day of 29th Sustainable Development Conference by Sustainable Development Policy Institute here on Wednesday.

The experts also called for time-bound protection for industries, with clear sunset clauses instead of indefinite subsidies. Government support, they said, should focus on export certification, research and development, technology transfer and strengthening firms' productive capabilities.

Louie Dane, Senior Economic Advisor at British High Commission, Islamabad said Pakistan remained among the countries with the most restrictive trade regimes, according to research conducted in 2022. Drawing a comparison with the English Premier League, he said international participation by foreign players and coaches had improved standards and productivity. Similarly, greater exposure to international competition could help Pakistani industries acquire technology, expertise and competitiveness.

Dr Kaiser Bengali, a renowned economist, argued that Pakistan's industrial problems went beyond tariff structures, saying the country lacked a coherent industrial transformation policy. Its narrow export base and dependence on imported inputs had restricted industrial development, while prevailing incentives encouraged investment in real estate, shopping malls and other activities offering higher returns than manufacturing. He called for policies that rewarded productive investment, local processing and job creation rather than speculation and vested interests.

Mr Suleman Ghani, former federal secretary for Industries and Commerce, who also chaired the session, questioned the need for a separate Ministry of Industries, suggesting that its functions could be incorporated into the Ministry of Commerce, while specialized institutions such as the Engineering Development Board could perform technical functions. He said industrial development primarily required skilled labour, realistic exchange rates and rational tariffs to attract investment and technology.

Dr Manzoor, international trade and customs facilitation expert, argued that Pakistan did not need an existing exportable surplus before opening its economy to international trade. Citing Vietnam, he said, investment, openness and access to imported inputs could create new industries and export capacity.

He recalled that Pakistan's earlier liberalization efforts had helped exports increase from around $9 billion to $20 billion. However, regulatory duties introduced following the 2008 global financial and fuel crises, followed by additional customs duties, complicated the tariff structure and undermined the progress. He warned that trade-weighted average tariffs could give a misleading picture because high duties on certain products were not adequately reflected when their import volumes remained low.

Hassan Masood Kunwar, a representative of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Board of Investment and Trade. highlighted the province's structural disadvantages, including its distance from seaports, high freight charges and prolonged closure of trade routes with Afghanistan and Central Asia. He said disruptions had severely affected businesses and forced some industries to close.



He urged the government to rationalize transportation costs and promote value addition in the mineral sector, particularly copper. Exporting minerals without adequate processing deprived Pakistan of opportunities to develop local industries, establish complete value chains and generate greater economic benefits.

Syed Wajid I. Bukhari, a representative of steel sector, said the steel industry was already facing a crisis when tariff reforms began in 2024, with companies closing, workers being laid off and manufacturers restructuring their businesses. Although the initial assessment suggested that the first two years of the policy would not adversely affect the sector, he warned that rising electricity prices, interest rates and taxes could create serious difficulties in subsequent years.

He also proposed reducing the time required to decide anti-dumping cases to around three months so that affected industries could receive timely relief. Consistent policies, merit-based appointments and an efficient regulatory environment were equally important, he added.

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Dr Anil Salman, Chair, Economic Security, Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI), criticized the government's tendency to formulate economic policies in isolation, saying the NTP needed to be aligned with industrial and taxation policies. He called for continuous monitoring instead of waiting for fixed three- or five-year reviews. Performance should be measured through new industries and exporters, productivity improvements and actual export growth.

Rubina Akhtar, former chairperson of National Tariff Commission, said the establishment of a dedicated Tariff Policy Board was an important institutional step towards ensuring continuity, transparency and effective monitoring. She clarified that the policy specifically covered customs duties and did not extend to sales tax or other import-stage levies.

Sharing findings of a perception survey of 204 exporters in Karachi, Lahore, Faisalabad, Sialkot and other cities, she said around 90 per cent supported continuation of tariff reductions. However, nearly 80 per cent identified electricity and utility costs as major constraints, followed by customs administration and freight-related difficulties.

Press Coverage Details → click

SESSION B-9 · ECONOMY 12:30 PM • Hall 108 • GIZ

Speakers say real estate needs regulatory reforms, rational taxation to unlock investment potential



ISLAMABAD (04 November 2026): Speakers at a panel discussion called for better urban planning, predictable taxation and stronger regulation to unlock investment and address the country's growing housing shortage.

The panel discussion, titled: "The Political Economy of Real Estate Policy and Taxation in Pakistan" was organized on the third day of 29th Sustainable Development Conference by Sustainable Development Policy Institute in collaboration with GIZ, here on Wednesday.

Shafiq Akbar, Chairman of IMARAT Group, said real estate, particularly housing, could serve as a major catalyst for economic revival and sustainable growth.

He said global real estate wealth was estimated at around $400 trillion, while Pakistan's market was valued at nearly $2 trillion, with considerable potential for growth because of its population and housing needs.

Citing figures attributed to the Ministry of Housing, he said Pakistan faced a housing deficit of around 13 million units and required approximately 700,000 new houses annually, while construction was estimated at about 300,000 units. The resulting annual shortfall of nearly 400,000 units was adding to the accumulated deficit.

Akbar said meeting the annual requirement could create assets worth more than $700 billion over 10 to 12 years. Properly planned housing, he added, could generate two to three dollars in wider economic activity for every dollar invested.

He said housing could generate more than 7.5 million jobs and stimulate construction-related industries, but required long-term planning.

Weak regulation and inadequate feasibility studies had contributed to investment losses, while estimates suggested that more than $100 billion was trapped in the property market, he said.

Akbar called for a dedicated think tank to study real estate and urban development, comprehensive demographic and demand assessments, a transparent property verification system and an effective regulatory framework. He said professional expertise, updated laws and a rational taxation policy were also needed.

Noor Ahmed, a senior Advisor of SDPI, said cities had become major engines of growth across Asia, where integrated planning of housing, infrastructure, business districts and retail activity generated economic output.

Pakistan lacked a consistent development framework, and frequent policy reversals have weakened the investors' confidence, he said, adding that investment should not be taxed in a way that discouraged productive activity. He suggested that governments should increase tax income, rentals and returns, making tax policy support economic activity rather than focus narrowly on revenue collection.

Muhammad Ejaz, Chief Executive Officer of Arif Habib Dolmen REIT Management Limited, said the real estate sector had extensive links with construction, engineering, design, employment, financial services, taxation and urban development, but had not received adequate institutional support.

He said more than 90 per cent of real estate activity was reportedly conducted through sole proprietorships and associations of persons, leaving much of the market outside the regulatory oversight applicable to listed companies. This informality, he said, contributed to illegal schemes and unplanned development.



Explaining Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs), he said the model pooled capital for large projects under a regulated structure. Pakistan launched its first REIT in 2015, with the Securities and Exchange Commission and Central Depository Company helping establish oversight standards.

Around 35 to 40 institutions had joined the sector and 18 to 19 REIT funds had been established, with assets and projects worth more than Rs1.5 trillion, he said.

Ali Khizar Aslam of Business Recorder said high taxes introduced after the property market boom of 2021-22 had also discouraged genuine transactions. He questioned the rationale for imposing taxes on buyers when sellers could be liable for capital gains tax, and said a decline in property transactions affected construction, cement, steel and other allied industries.

Weak oversight exposed small investors to losses when projects failed. He called for due diligence and disclosure of sponsors, land ownership, approvals and financial arrangements. Aslam said real estate supported nearly 40 allied industries and its slowdown had constrained economic activity. He urged reforms to formalise the market and direct investment towards genuine needs.

Dr Tanvir Hussain Bhatti of the Federal Board of Revenue clarified that withholding taxes collected under Sections 236C and 236K on property sales and purchases were adjustable against taxpayers' actual liabilities and were not final taxes. Tax deducted from sellers could be adjusted against capital gains tax, while buyers could claim the amount in their income tax returns.

The provisions also helped document investment and establish the source of funds, particularly in transactions by non-filers. Rental income was taxable under Section 15 and withholding tax on rent under Section 155, he added.

Bhatti said Section 7E had been omitted following court proceedings, while Federal Excise Duty previously imposed on property transactions in 2025 had also been withdrawn. Withholding tax rates on sales and purchases had been reduced by half in the current financial year, he said, adding that the FBR would need alternative means of revenue collection.

Citing FBR figures, he said Sections 236C and 236K generated around Rs278 billion during the previous financial year, while the contribution from the salaried class was approximately Rs630 billion.

Bhatti said the FBR was enforcing laws against benami transactions and money laundering, which could lead to confiscation of properties or assets linked to proceeds of crime. He said these safeguards were intended to prevent real estate from being used to conceal illegal wealth while supporting a more documented and transparent property market.

Press Coverage Details → click

SESSION B-10 · PODIUM DISCUSSION · ECONOMY 12:30 PM • Hall 104

Pakistan needs to navigate uncertainty amid global power dynamics shift: speakers



ISLAMABAD (04 November 2026): As geopolitical fault lines shift and global power dynamics are redrawn, Pakistan needs to find itself navigating an increasingly complex landscape of uncertainty, risk and opportunity, says experts at a session, while examining the changing contours of the global world order and what they mean for Pakistan's strategic and economic future.

The session, titled: "Shifting Geopolitics: Risks, Resilience and Prosperity" was organized on the third day of 29th Sustainable Development Conference, by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), here on Wednesday.

Opening the discussion, SDPI Executive Director Dr. Abid Qaiyum Suleri unpacked the evolving geopolitical landscape in the wake of the US-Israel-Iran war, accentuating Pakistan's precarious position amid the conflict and the urgent need to navigate emerging challenges with strategic foresight and resilience.

Former Federal Minister Khurram Dastgir Khan identified the United States' withdrawal from its traditional global role as one of the most significant shifts in the international order. He warned that the longstanding assurance of freedom of navigation, vital to global maritime trade, was increasingly under threat. "Today it is the Strait of Hormuz; tomorrow it could be the Bab el-Mandeb, followed by the Suez or even the Panama Canal," he said.

> *Pakistan's foreign standing has improved faster than Pakistan's internal strength.*
> KHURRAM DASTGIR KHAN

"Pakistan's foreign standing has improved faster than Pakistan's internal strength," he said, adding that a change in US leadership could bring a shift in Washington's approach towards Islamabad, particularly given the American establishment's longstanding preference for closer ties with India. "We do not know how long this will last," he added.

He echoed the need for Pakistan to prioritize energy diversification and strengthen its engagement along its western borders. Cautioning against the risks of becoming entangled in regional rivalries, he noted that tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran could place Pakistan in a difficult position if forced to choose sides. "An escalation of the US-Iran war into an Arab-Iran conflict would be Pakistan's nightmare, and this is where our leadership deserves credit for ensuring that such a scenario does not materialize," he said.

Stressing the need for careful scrutiny of Pakistan's external commitments, including its engagements with the IMF, he said that strong institutional credibility and consistency in economic policymaking are essential for long-term economic prosperity, rather than allowing the country's economic direction to be dictated by external pressures or the IMF's changing priorities.

Mr. Haroon Sharif, Chairman of the Pakistan Regional Economic Forum (PREF), identified two major changes. He

said that first and foremost, the ability of one country to use violence to control other nations has changed. Secondly, the persistent global economic uncertainty, compounded by escalating macroeconomic risks have changed the investment climate all over the world. He noted that these developments have also significantly constrained investors' ability to navigate markets and make decisions, with Pakistan facing similar challenges.

He said that if there was a major intervention in the ongoing US-Iran conflict, it would lead to even higher risk premiums for trade, and in particular for exports for Pakistan. He said that Pakistan is "debt-steered" meaning it's dependent on the US and the EU and therefore currently in a very precarious situation.



On the way forward, Mr. Sharif called for a multidimensional strategy to strengthen Pakistan's economic resilience, including diversifying trade and investment partnerships, particularly with China and emerging Asian economies, and leveraging opportunities arising from its geopolitical position. On energy, he urged Pakistan to look beyond supply-side interventions and give greater attention to demand-side management. "The rest of the world has moved towards managing energy demand, while we remain focused on the supply side. We have made progress on that front, but it is time to broaden our approach," he said.

He noted three global priorities that Pakistan must also focus on: alternative energy, food security and a technology-light economy. He identified China as a potential strategic partner in advancing these areas. "Pakistan needs to pick a few winners. We cannot do everything," he said.

Mr Sharif suggested that Pakistan could position itself as an alternative market to the Gulf, but stressed that this would require sub-regional multilateral initiatives centered on climate, food security and the economy.

Riffat Masood, former Ambassador to Iran, said that the region has endured conflicts for generations and has developed its own capacity to navigate them, with Iran being a case in point. Turning to Pakistan's regional outlook, she said that the country had neglected its borders, particularly along its western frontiers with Iran and Afghanistan. "We have missed several opportunities to build a stronger relationship with Iran without compromising our ties with the Gulf," she said.

She said that there are four conflicts happening right now, Arab-Israel, US-Israel-Iran, Arab-Arab, and Arab-Iran. "The moment you pick a side, you're in trouble," she said, adding that Pakistan needs to focus on two things: not picking sides and securing its borders.

Maj-Gen. (Retd) Dr Ehsan Mehmood Khan said that the global order has always been in transition. He said that war generates war economy, which has long been a foundation for the politics and political economy of major powers around the world.

He noted that Pakistan's strategic geographical location offers an opportunity to emerge as a hub for human, economic and security integration. Reflecting on the changing global order, he identified three major shifts: a redistribution of global power, which is now increasingly dispersed and contested; the growing influence of artificial intelligence (AI); and the realignment of traditional alliances.

Press Coverage Details → click

PRESS COVERAGE OF THIS SESSION

Pakistan must prioritise energy diversification, says Khurram Dastgir
Source: Dawn | *Islamabad, November 5, 2026*

Freedom of navigation under threat: US withdrawal from global role a significant shift in int'l order: Dastgir
Source: Business Recorder | *Islamabad, November 5, 2026*

Pakistan must prioritize energy diversification and strengthen its engagement along its western borders: Khurram Dastgir
Source: Associated Press of Pakistan | *Islamabad, November 4, 2026*

Khurram Dastgir Warns Global Maritime Trade Faces Risks, Urges Pakistan To Diversify Energy
Source: UrduPoint | *Islamabad, November 4, 2026*

Pakistan must diversify energy sources, strengthen western border engagement: Khurram Dastgir
Source: Minute Mirror | *Islamabad, November 4, 2026*

Pakistan must prioritize energy diversification, strengthen engagement along its western borders: says Khurram Dastgir
Source: Newsman | *Islamabad, November 4, 2026*

Dastgir Urges Energy Diversification and Western-Border Engagement
Source: Global News Pakistan | *Islamabad, November 5, 2026*

SESSION B-11 · POLICY DIALOGUE · ECONOMY 3:00 PM • Hall 109 • BoP

Digital lending gains ground as Pakistan seeks to bridge SME financing gap





ISLAMABAD (04 November 2026): Pakistan's digital lending landscape is expanding, with regulators, banks and financial institutions calling for stronger data governance, automated credit assessment and innovative financing models to extend credit to underserved segments, particularly small businesses, farmers and overseas job seekers.

This was the crux of a policy dialogue, titled: 'Digital Lending in Priority Sector Financing: Expanding Access, Strengthening Inclusion and Unlocking Productive Growth in Pakistan', organized on the third day of the 29th Sustainable Development Conference by Sustainable Development Policy Institute in collaboration with Bank of Punjab here on Wednesday.

Sajjad Ali, Head of Lending & PF Department, Specialized Companies Division, Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan, said Non-Bank Financial Companies (NBFCs) disbursed 2.56 million loans worth Rs253 billion to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) during the July-June 2026 period, reflecting their growing role in extending credit to underserved borrowers.

He said the regulatory approach was increasingly focused on facilitating innovation while ensuring consumer protection, with regulators seeking to streamline oversight rather than micromanage lending practices.

NBFCs were helping bridge the financing gap by reaching borrowers with limited credit histories through alternative credit-scoring mechanisms, he said.

Emerging digital lending models, including nano-lending, Buy Now Pay Later (BNPL) and Earned Wage Access (EWA), were also gaining regulatory attention. The SECP was adopting a circular-based approach to test new models, with successful practices eventually incorporated into formal regulations.

A key priority was the proposed whitelisting of digital lending applications subject to compliance with the prescribed regulatory framework. NBFCs would also be required to integrate Anti-Money Laundering (AML) systems and ensure their applications could capture essential customer information, including identification photographs and bank statements, for verification and compliance.

Ammar Habib of National Credit Guarantee Company Limited (NCGCL) said the absence of a unified data governance and middleware layer was hindering credit scoring and risk assessment, particularly for small businesses.

He noted that despite phenomenal growth in digital payments through Raast, the lack of distinction between personal and merchant accounts remained a major challenge. Many small businesses continued to conduct commercial transactions through personal accounts, making it difficult for financial institutions to identify merchants and assess their creditworthiness.

He called for consent-based data-sharing infrastructure to integrate information from mobile phone usage, consumption patterns, electricity records and credit histories, enabling more informed lending decisions.

Azka Munir, Head of Programme Design, Punjab Skills Development Fund (PSDF), and Programme Lead, CM

Punjab Parwaaz Card, said the Punjab government's Parwaaz Card initiative aimed to facilitate overseas employment through interest-free loans for job seekers unable to meet the upfront costs of securing jobs abroad.

She said aspiring migrant workers faced substantial expenses, including medical examinations, protection fees, visa processing, biometric verification, air tickets and Overseas Employment Promoter (OEP) charges. With many applicants lacking formal credit histories, traditional banks were reluctant to extend financing, forcing some to sell essential assets such as jewellery and livestock.

The loans covered medical, protection, biometric and OEP expenses, as well as skills training and GCC skills verification costs. The Bank of Punjab disbursed the loans, which borrowers were generally required to repay within ten months.

Nofel Daud, Chief Digital Officer, Bank of Punjab, said the bank had expanded its digital financing strategy since 2020 to target agriculture, SMEs, low-cost housing and women's inclusion, backed by investments in technology, human resources and risk management.



He cited Asaan Karobar Finance, designed to address small entrepreneurs' financing needs, alongside experiments with psychometric testing for alternative credit assessment and the use of NADRA's Pak ID for single sign-on services.

He stressed that digital transformation required not only technological investment but also institutional commitment and a shift in boardroom thinking.

Dr Waqas Javed, Head of Data Analytics & AI, Bank of Punjab, called for end-to-end digital lending to expand financial inclusion, noting that only 2.5 per cent of the population had access to formal commercial bank lending, while 85 per cent of adults relied on informal sources of credit.

He said traditional lending practices based on physical documentation, collateral and manual assessments restricted access to finance, adding that fully automated processes were essential to achieve scale.

Citing the Kisan Card, Dr Javed said farmers with limited internet access could apply by sending their CNIC numbers through SMS from registered mobile numbers. The bank's backend system used application programming interfaces (APIs) to access NADRA identity records, credit bureau information and satellite imagery linked to the Patwari registry to verify applicants and agricultural land.

For SMEs without conventional collateral, BOP had also introduced a gamified, Urdu-language psychometric assessment tool developed with an international partner to evaluate borrowers' creditworthiness.

Taimoor Ali, Group Head, Digital Financial Services (DFS), Karandaaz Pakistan, identified the lack of a reliable merchant registry and inconsistencies in financial data as major obstacles to expanding digital lending through bank-FinTech partnerships.

He said successful partnerships between lending institutions and technology platforms required an effective policy and regulatory framework supported by functional digital infrastructure.

A merchant registry capable of uniquely identifying businesses and their digital transaction footprints was essential for more accurate credit assessment, he added.

Mr Ali also pointed to discrepancies between supply-side data reported by the State Bank of Pakistan and demand-side estimates drawn from World Bank surveys, making it difficult to establish the actual number of active businesses and market participants.

Press Coverage Details → click

SESSION B-12 · POLICY DIALOGUE · ECONOMY 3:00 PM • Hall 107 • NCET

Pakistan eyes green hydrogen to cut fossil fuel dependence amid global energy risks



ISLAMABAD (04 November 2026): Experts at a session have said that Pakistan is considering green hydrogen as a strategic alternative to imported fossil fuels to strengthen energy security, reduce industrial production costs and improve export competitiveness amid growing geopolitical tensions and disruptions in global energy supply chains, particularly around the Strait of Hormuz.

The session, titled: 'Pakistan's Hydrogen Economy: Strategic Priorities amid Regional Instability', was organized on the third day of 29th Sustainable Development Conference by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute here on Wednesday.

The experts said the country is also working on its first Integrated Energy Plan (IEP), scheduled for completion by June 2027, which will incorporate emerging energy technologies, including hydrogen, into the national energy mix as they become economically competitive with conventional fuels.

Engr Ubaid ur Rehman Zia of the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) said recent disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz had reinforced the need to develop indigenous alternative energy sources and reduce reliance on expensive imported fuels.

He said green hydrogen was emerging as a critical instrument for decarbonising hard-to-abate industries, which account for nearly 47 percent of global emissions. Declining costs of electrolyzer, improving economics and rising international investment were creating opportunities for countries seeking to develop hydrogen-based industries.

Zia said electrolyzer costs had declined from around $2,000-$2,800 per kilowatt in 2024 to approximately $1,400, while 76 countries had adopted national hydrogen strategies or policies by early 2026, including 41 emerging and developing economies.

Highlighting the vulnerability of global energy supply chains, he said the Middle East accounted for nearly one-sixth of global hydrogen production, 17 percent of methanol, 13 percent of urea and 11 percent of ammonia.

Recent disruptions have doubled urea prices and increased methanol prices by around 60 percent, demonstrating the economic consequences of regional instability.

He said Pakistan could utilize its substantial wind energy potential to produce green hydrogen by converting surplus renewable electricity, which otherwise went to waste through curtailment. Such an approach could improve energy security, promote industrial localisation and generate green employment.

Mohammad Irfan Siddiqui, member of the Board of Directors of Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL), said Pakistan needed to diversify its energy mix and accelerate the adoption of renewable and alternative fuels, including hydrogen, to contain rising energy costs and reduce dependence on imported oil, LNG and diesel.

He disclosed that Pakistan's hydrogen strategy had been developed through consultations involving relevant ministries, academia and industry stakeholders and submitted to the Prime Minister's Office for approval and launch. He warned that rising international prices of oil, LNG and diesel were increasing the country's import bill and weakening the competitiveness of export-oriented industries.

Kamil Maqsood of the Power Division said the Cabinet Committee on Energy had approved the high-level design

of the Integrated Energy Plan in August, which was subsequently ratified by the federal cabinet in September.



He said the Power Division, through the Integrated Planning Secretariat housed in the PPMC, was jointly leading the exercise with the Petroleum Division. The plan would assess geopolitical risks, energy supply vulnerabilities and mitigation measures through quantitative and qualitative analysis.

Meanwhile, Muhammad Muneeb of the National Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (NEECA) said the authority had proposed a certification framework for green hydrogen production and consumption facilities to support the development of the domestic market.

He said a 2023-24 pre-feasibility study had examined 13 hydrogen value chains and shortlisted three, including options linked to solar power, hydropower from the Ghazi-Barotha project and electricity generation. However, none was economically viable at the time.

He said hydrogen could gradually replace grey hydrogen currently used in fertiliser and refinery industries and serve as an energy carrier where direct electricity transmission was difficult.

Former NEECA Managing Director Muhazzam Mustafa said Pakistan should view green hydrogen primarily as an opportunity to improve industrial competitiveness, which could subsequently strengthen energy security.

He disclosed that an investment group from the Middle East and Australia had expressed interest in investing around $4 billion in Pakistan's green hydrogen sector without sovereign guarantees or take-or-pay obligations.

Munawar Iqbal of the Private Power and Infrastructure Board (PPIB) stressed the need for clear institutional responsibilities, arguing that the Petroleum Division should lead hydrogen policymaking as it falls within the domain of fuel production and management, while the Power Division should provide electricity for hydrogen production.

He also called for identifying dedicated green hydrogen investment corridors based on solar and wind potential, water availability and proximity to seaports to facilitate exports, saying international investors, particularly Chinese companies, required clarity on suitable investment locations.

Participants stressed that a clear policy framework, commercially viable projects, institutional coordination and investor confidence would be critical to translating Pakistan's hydrogen ambitions into concrete investments.

Press Coverage Details → click

SESSION B-13 · ENVIRONMENT 3:00 PM • Zaki Auditorium • PepsiCo Pakistan

Pakistan urged to accelerate clean energy transition to ensure economic growth, environmental sustainability and social equity: SDPI dialogue





ISLAMABAD (04 November 2026): Pakistan must accelerate its transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy through affordable financing, consistent policies and climate-resilient infrastructure to strengthen industrial competitiveness, protect the environment and ensure equitable access to energy, experts and policymakers said at a dialogue.

The dialogue, titled: "Reducing Fossil Fuel Reliance: Driving Climate Action and Business Continuity," was organized on the third day of 29th Sustainable Development Conference by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute hee on Wednesday.

Highlighting the economic opportunities offered by solar energy, biomass and energy-efficient technologies, they underscored the importance of protecting vulnerable communities and ensuring that businesses remain resilient to climate shocks.

Lt-Gen (retd) Muhammad Zafar Iqbal, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Energy, said Pakistan was undergoing a significant shift towards cleaner energy, driven partly by rapid consumer adoption of solar power.

He said approximately 7,000 megawatts of solar capacity had been added over the past five years, while the government planned to develop another 11,000 megawatts of hydropower over the coming decade.

He said no new coal, re-gasified liquefied natural gas or furnace-oil power plants would be added, reflecting the government's commitment to cleaner electricity generation. He also highlighted plans to promote electric vehicles, targeting 30 percent of new vehicle sales by 2030.

Haseeb Malik, Senior Director Supply Chain at PepsiCo Pakistan, said Pakistan's abundant sunlight and agricultural resources offered significant opportunities to reduce industrial dependence on conventional fuels.

He emphasized that renewable energy adoption must deliver economic benefits, reliable supplies and long-term business continuity. Malik identified unorganised biomass supply chains as a major challenge, saying better market structures were needed to ensure fair returns for farmers while providing industries with affordable agricultural residues.

He said future industrial energy systems would increasingly combine solar power, biomass, battery storage and grid electricity. Improved energy conservation and artificial intelligence-enabled energy management could further reduce operational costs and wastage.

Fahad Adeel, Sustainability Lead at PepsiCo Pakistan, presented the company's clean-energy initiatives, reporting a 40 percent reduction in fossil fuel dependence through biomass-based thermal energy solutions.

He said 50 per cent of manufacturing lines were operating on green fuel, while solar and other green electricity accounted for 14.7 percent of total electricity consumption. He also highlighted initiatives involving solar-powered agricultural equipment, biogas and

improved farming practices aimed at reducing emissions across supply chains.

Arif Goheer, Executive Director of the Global Change Impact Studies Centre (GCISC), warned that climate change threatened both energy infrastructure and industrial productivity. He said extreme temperatures, flooding and other climate hazards could disrupt power generation, manufacturing and agricultural operations, making climate-risk assessments essential for future investments.

Goheer urged industries to develop facility-level greenhouse gas inventories and integrate climate, energy and carbon risks into business planning. He offered GCISC's scientific expertise to support businesses in emissions assessments and climate-resilient development.



Saadullah Ayaz, Member Mitigation at the Pakistan Climate Change Authority (PCCA), said Pakistan's principal challenge was not the absence of climate policies but weak coherence and inconsistent implementation. He stressed the importance of stronger federal-provincial coordination, inclusive policymaking and meaningful private-sector participation to improve governance and investor confidence.

Ayaz also highlighted the potential of carbon markets and private investment to support climate mitigation, provided regulatory frameworks encouraged commercially viable projects.

Mozaharul Alam, Regional Coordinator for Climate Action at the United Nations Environment Programme's Asia-Pacific office, said businesses must integrate climate adaptation into renewable energy investments and supply-chain strategies. He noted that companies increasingly adopted clean energy to protect production against electricity disruptions, but warned that shifting sourcing locations alone would not adequately address growing climate risks. Instead, he called for strengthening the resilience of existing suppliers and production systems, alongside corporate initiatives supporting climate-vulnerable communities.

Ateeque Rehman, Consultant Energy at MPDS, identified high upfront investment costs, limited access to finance and regulatory uncertainty as major barriers to industrial decarbonization.

He recommended public-private partnership arrangements, including Build-Operate-Transfer and other project financing models, and urged commercial banks and development partners to make green financing affordable.

He suggested linking loan repayments to energy savings generated through renewable energy and efficiency investments, while stressing that stable policies were essential for long-term investor confidence.

Tobias Klaus, Senior Researcher at the Deggendorf Institute of Technology, emphasised that energy justice required community participation in rural electrification projects.

He said mini-grids must be designed around local needs, traditional knowledge and reliable maintenance systems to remain operational. Klaus also advocated grid expansion and exploration of pumped-storage hydropower as a long-term solution for storing surplus solar electricity.

Moderating the discussion, Zainab Naeem of SDPI called for stronger cooperation between scientific institutions, businesses and policymakers. She urged companies to utilise domestic technical expertise for emissions assessments rather than relying excessively on foreign consultants, while emphasizing the importance of consistent regulations, transparent emissions reporting and equitable access to clean-energy.

Press Coverage Details → click

SESSION B-14 · EQUITY 3:00 PM • Hall 104

Speakers call for stronger editorial controls and anticipatory fact-checking as AI reshapes Pakistan's information space



ISLAMABAD (04 November 2026): Journalists and academics at a policy roundtable said that artificial intelligence is making verification harder for newsrooms, since editorial gatekeeping, early fact-checking and trust in public institutions are central to limiting the spread of disinformation and online hatred, including content that feeds violent extremism.

The policy roundtable, titled: "Media and AI in the Age of Influence: Journalism, Public Discourse and Countering Violent Extremism ", was organized on the third day of 29th Sustainable Development Conference by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute here on Wednesday.

Engr. Khurram Dastgir Khan, former federal minister, said online manipulation had grown since the 2016 Cambridge Analytica episode and that AI would worsen it. He said bans offer only a temporary response and that regulation lags well behind technology.

He described the link between poverty and extremism as weak and said the threat has to be countered on media, security and social fronts.

Ms Zebunnisa Burki of The News International, who presented the opening paper, said AI affects journalism in several ways: it speeds up transcription and translation, but it also enables misinformation and deepfakes. She described a "liar's dividend," in which genuine material can be dismissed as AI-generated.

She said online disinformation and hate content often run on a business model of engagement and income rather than ideology. She cited a May 2026 investigation into Islamophobic AI-generated videos traced to a Pakistani Facebook page.

Ms Burki said blocking and banning websites or accounts would not solve the problem. She noted that major platforms are privately owned and said moderation often misses abuse written in Urdu, Punjabi and other regional languages. She said editorial control in mainstream media is not the same as censorship, and urged newsrooms to do basic reporting and verification before publication rather than relying on fact-checking afterwards. She also said factchecking should be "anticipatory," ahead of predictable events such as floods, elections and court verdicts.



Adil Shahzeb, Head of Pakistan TV, said the task of journalists has shifted from finding stories to verifying them. He said Pakistan TV set up a copy-editing and gatekeeping desk after he took over a year ago, and that

he considered the lack of such desks across much of the media a concern.

Ms Asma Shirazi, Senior Pakistani Journalist, proposed adding a question before the traditional five Ws: whether a claim is true or false. She called for stronger editors' desks in newsrooms, wider use of fact-checking tools and community notes, and reliance on reporters on the ground. She said some fact-checking efforts, including by state actors, could themselves distort facts, and that journalists face coordinated online campaigns and AI-generated material.

Prof. Dr Zafar Iqbal, Vice-Chancellor of Gomal University, said discussion of AI in Pakistan was dominated by fear. He said it should also address opportunities such as new job markets and entrepreneurship, and proposed a collective fact-checking resource centre for media.

On extremism, he said television debate formats that reward conflict can intensify polarization and radicalization. He proposed moving from television rating points (TRP) to an "impact rating point," and a conflict index that advertisers could use to guide spending. He also called for regulating cross-media ownership.

Dr Syed Kaleem Imam, former Inspector General of Police and Federal Secretary, former UN Police Commissioner and a governance, security and rule of law expert, said the shift from physical to digital radicalisation had been rapid. He said counternarratives need trust, good governance and truthfulness, and that credibility determines relevance. He said public grievances over costs of living and governance feed anger that extremist and hate narratives can exploit, and he urged policymakers to address them.

Press Coverage Details → click

SESSION B-15 · ROUNDTABLE · ENVIRONMENT 3:00 PM • Hall 108 • PRIED

Parliamentarians call for coordinated push towards renewable energy



ISLAMABAD (04 November 2026): Parliamentarians, policymakers and development practitioners have called upon the federal and provincial governments to accelerate the transition towards utility-scale renewable energy by strengthening inter-governmental coordination, addressing policy inconsistencies and closing implementation gaps in the power sector.

The demand was made at a plenary, titled: “Utility-Scale Renewable Energy: Federal Policy, Provincial Priorities and Implementation Gaps”, organized on the third day of 29th Sustainable Development Conference by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute

Dr Nafisa Shah, the chair of the Special Committee on Gender Mainstreaming, said the disconnect between federal policymakers, provincial governments and elected representatives was among the major reasons behind the country's energy problems.

Identifying two contrasting developments in Pakistan's energy sector, she said the country was facing a severe energy crisis while simultaneously witnessing a citizen-led renewable energy revolution. "These are two stories of Pakistan: one is of energy crisis, and one is of renewable energy success," she said, adding that expensive power purchase agreements, take-or-pay contracts and dollar indexation had contributed to the crisis. "These are huge policy failures at the federal level. No province was involved … no province was consulted," she said. She warned that new federal energy initiatives could create additional stranded costs for consumers and stressed the need for energy federalism, equity and democracy.

> *These are two stories of Pakistan: one is of energy crisis, and one is of renewable energy success.*
>
> DR NAFISA SHAH

"Until and unless the policy is equitable, it is not democratic and devolved, and doesn't engage all the stakeholders, I don't think, our issues will be resolved," she said, urging provinces to raise these concerns in their respective assemblies.

Riaz Fatyana, Member of National Assembly, said Pakistan had an installed electricity generation capacity of around 50,000 megawatts, with renewable energy accounting for approximately 20 per cent. He said the country could increase this share to 30 per cent by 2030 if the existing 2019 renewable energy policy remained in place. He called for restoration of the solar net-metering system, saying its discontinuation had created unrest among consumers who had invested in solar installations.

Requesting the government to restore solar net-metering system, which he said has caused unrest among people," he suggested an alternative for remote communities without electricity, particularly in Balochistan and Sindh (interior). He said small groups of 25 to 30 households could jointly establish and manage solar power systems with the help of soft loans. "Do not provide them with equipment. If the government provides equipment, the price will be high due to kickbacks. Give them soft loans," he said.

Barrister Danyal Chaudhry, Member of National Assembly, emphasized that Pakistan’s energy transition is an

"economic necessity, a strategic imperative, and an opportunity to redefine our national future." He highlighted that citizens have embraced rooftop solar out of resilience, pushing net metering capacity significantly higher. However, he said that individual rooftop solutions are insufficient.

He urged policymakers to prioritize utility-scale solar projects and reform legislative frameworks, adding that "we cannot build this energy future of 250 million people without having a policy and without working on it."

Syed Hafeezuddin, chairman of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Industries and Production, said the Constitution provided a framework for federal and provincial cooperation in the power sector. Referring to Articles 142, 154 and 157 and the 18th Amendment, he said provincial governments had sufficient constitutional space to play a greater role in energy policymaking and implementation.



He said the Council of Common Interests could provide an appropriate platform for resolving federal-provincial issues. Electricity and water shortages are among the major reasons behind the closure of industries in Karachi, he said, adding that regulatory and legislative shortcomings need to be addressed. Mr Hafeezuddin called for amendments to the Pakistan Renewable and Alternate Energy Act and comprehensive changes to the existing CPPA Act to address gaps in the regulatory framework.

Rehan Bandukda, Member of National Assembly, highlighted critical gaps in Pakistan's energy sector, emphasizing that the country's crisis is rooted in delivery constraints rather than a shortage of generation.

Highlighting the heavy reliance on imported fuels and capacity payments, he said: "Our energy crisis does not mean that we have a shortage of energy; it means we are unable to get power from the plants to which we are paying for power generation." He also criticized centralized planning and infrastructure bottlenecks, urging policymakers to leverage renewable potential, streamline transmission, and seize growth opportunities like data center investments.

Ahmad Iqbal, Member of Provincial Assembly, criticizing over-centralization and tracing back Ayub Khan's era, argued that electricity should be managed locally. Highlighting consumer vulnerability after a fatal electrocution in Zafarwal, he noted that "90% of the phone calls that I get as an MPA are not issues of the police station or courts, they are about electricity issues." He condemned pervasive overbilling and called for modernizing outdated statutes.

Hafiz Mohammad Tahir, Member of Provincial Assembly, said around 0.3 million people in his constituency had benefited from solar-powered water supply connections since he began installing such systems in 2009. He said he had also installed 75 water filtration plants in three years, highlighting the gap between government resources and delivery.

Referring to Taunsa's district hospital, he said a Rs120 million solar power system installed during the tenure of former chief minister, Usman Buzdar, is non-functional due to delays in installing a green meter by Wapda; so people are unable to get benefit from the project.

Badar Alam of the Policy Research Institute for Equitable Development, who began by acknowledging the constitutional and legal foundations of provincial powers in the energy sector, also participated in the discussion.

Press Coverage Details → click

SESSION B-16 · BOOK LAUNCH · EQUITY 4:30 PM • Theatre Room

Barrister Bajwa hopes to see Pakistan on the path of development again



ISLAMABAD (04 November 2026): A book, titled: British/American Secret Documents: Diplomatic Communications Relating to Pakistan (1952–1958)", edited and compiled by Barrister Naseem Ahmed Bajwa, a UK-based lawyer and author, were launched here on Wednesday at the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) as part of its 29th Sustainable Development Conference. The conference was held under the theme: "Rethinking Development in an Age of Disruption".

Another Urdu book under the title: "Tareekhi Sang-e-Meel (Historical Milestones)", which he authored, compiled and translated, was also launched on the occasion.

Moderating the session, Farhana Musarat from SDPI introduced the author, saying Barrister Bajwa is a lawyer, writer and political commentator. “He is the President of British-Pakistani Lawyers Forum and Director of Pakistan Academy of International Law and Politics, she said.

SDPI’s Executive Director, Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri, thanked Barrister Bajwa for coming to Islamabad to attend the SDPI’s conference from the United Kingdom each year. He said the author works through historical archives and brings out a new book after every two years.

Dr Suleri said there are three versions of history: one taught in Pakistan, one taught in neighbouring countries, and a third lies in archives and is rarely discussed. He said the new volume draws on declassified British and American diplomatic correspondence from that third category. In his view, the records show that decision-making in the 1950s rested largely with bilateral partners, whereas today, it rests with multilateral institutions.

Mr Muzaffar Mehmood Qureshi, a civil servant, economist and development expert, said the book is arranged year by year from 1952 to 1958. It covers diplomacy, defence, economic assistance, internal management and electoral process, he said, adding that the cables record the thinking behind decisions that left a lasting legacy. He noted that Ayub Khan appears throughout the volumes, first as commander-in-chief and later as president.

Mr Qureshi said the documents include a recorded statement attributed to Governor-General Ghulam Muhammad, who said he would travel to Delhi to speak to Prime Minister Nehru about concerns over defence assistance. He also referred to American intelligence assessments written after the 1958 martial law, which described Pakistan's economy, society and political situation. One of them, he said, forecast that the army would play a decisive role and named leading generals of the time. He added that the observation proved relevant when events unfolded in 1969.

Javed Hafeez, a former ambassador and career diplomat of the Foreign Service of Pakistan, said the book shows that an invitation to Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan from Moscow preceded the one from Washington. He said the cables name Sir Zafrullah Khan, Ghulam Muhammad and Foreign Secretary Ikramullah as having opposed the Moscow visit, and he added Iskander Mirza as a fourth figure often described as pro-West.



Mr Hafeez also discussed the documents' references to water disputes, Pakistan's membership of SEATO and CENTO, and a 1958 cable assessing Ayub Khan. He said the main weakness of Pakistan's foreign policy then and now was economic.

Dr Farooq Adil, a journalist, columnist and author, said Barrister Bajwa, though a resident of Britain, continued to write about Pakistan and its region. Referring to the preface of "Tareekhi Sang-e-Meel", which includes points on Afghanistan and Iran, he said the work reads like an encyclopedia compiled by a team of scholars, and that it was notable for having been produced by one person.

Dr Khurshid Ahmed Nadeem, a columnist, scholar and author, said the translation of the Oxford Encyclopaedia into Urdu was a service to the language, noting that it requires command of the source language, the target language and the subject. He said the author works with a defined concept of history and links events in sequence rather than treating them in isolation.

Dr Nadeem also pointed out some inconsistencies in dates and in the numbers of sons and daughters in the early pages of the book. He said such errors matter in historical works and should be corrected in future editions.

Barrister Bajwa said he began writing and compiling books around five years ago, at the age of 85, and now publishes an Urdu book in Lahore and an English book in London each year. He said he took part in the Pakistan Movement and has seen the country develop and decline. He expressed the hope that he would see Pakistan on the path of development again.

Press Coverage Details → click

PLENARY 3.1 · HIGH-LEVEL PLENARY 5:30 PM • Zaki Auditorium • IGES

Speakers call for mandatory EPR, source segregation & inclusion of informal workers in circular economy shift



ISLAMABAD (04 November 2026): Government officials, industry representatives and development practitioners have said that Pakistan's move towards a circular economy will depend on source segregation, binding extended producer responsibility (EPR), reliable waste data and the inclusion of informal waste workers, stressing that policies must be implementable on the ground.

The consensus was made at a high-level plenary, titled: "Circular Economy Transition Beyond 2030: From Policy Ambition to Inclusive Action in South Asia", organized on the third day of 29th Sustainable Development Conference by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute in collaboration with Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES), Japan here on Wednesday. The overarching theme of this year's conference is "Rethinking Development in an Age of Disruption".

Speaking on the occasion, SDPI Executive Director Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri said development can be measured either in a linear way, where products are made, used and discarded, or by looking at a product's full lifecycle. He said circularity begins at the design stage, with manufacturers considering whether a product can be reused, repaired or turned into something else, and whether it can be safely disposed of at the end of its life. He said the issue is linked to Sustainable Development Goal 12, on responsible consumption and production, and called for the private sector to share its experience at the forum.

Ms Nazia Zeb, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Climate Change & Environmental Coordination, said she handles waste, chemicals and related international conventions for the ministry. Plans, strategies and policies serve little purpose unless they can be implemented on the ground, she said, adding that individual and household action also matters.

Miho Hayashi, Programme Manager at IGES, presented the solid waste management strategy developed for Sahiwal, Punjab. The project began in 2025 with support from the Urban Unit, which also supports the Punjab government. The Akhtar Hameed Khan Foundation worked on integrating the informal sector.

She said the strategy builds on the Suthra Punjab programme, launched in December 2024, which introduced door-to-door collection through mechanized transport outsourced to private contractors. She said it expanded collection coverage to more than 70 per cent and improved hygiene. She also described a real-time digital dashboard, accessible to waste management companies and local governments, that tracks collection vehicles, waste sent to landfills and transfer stations, bins, and the workers involved in collection and transport.

Sheikh Waqar Ahmad, Head of Corporate Affairs & Sustainability at Nestlé Pakistan & Afghanistan and Chief Executive Officer of CoRe Alliance, said segregation at source is critical to any workable model, since mixed waste complicates recovery. He proposed an extended producer responsibility organization working within a government-set framework but led by the private sector, with financial incentives for participants. He said a mechanism to measure waste is also needed, since the country lacks reliable figures on how much plastic and other waste is generated and recycled.



Sohaib Tariq, Operation Manager, Suthra Punjab, Sahiwal Waste Management Company, said the Suthra Punjab programme began in 2025 with a focus on waste collection across the province. He said one continuing challenge has been that some private and informal collectors were reluctant to join the agency, fearing it would reduce their earnings.

Silwat Saeed, Secretary, Environment Protection and Climate Change Department, Government of Punjab, said collection alone only moves waste to the same dumping sites, and that relief comes when less waste is produced. She said the Punjab is working on plastic regulations and a standard EPR framework, and that existing laws need clearer mandates for all stakeholders.

Imran Javaid of Akhter Hameed Khan Foundation, speaking for the organization, said informal workers were integrated into the Sahiwal strategy based on field evidence. He described three groups: formal government-employed workers, independent informal collectors, and street-level pickers and small dealers. He said the Foundation organize informal workers into cooperatives and train them in occupational health and safety. He called for recognizing their long-standing role and so that they might accessmarkets.

Uchita De Zoysa, the Chairman of Global Sustainability Solutions (GLOSS), Sri Lanka, said EPR cannot remain a voluntary mechanism and should be linked to the polluter-pays principle. He called for policy coherence and for reorganizing systems rather than repeating existing approaches, drawing on his work on a 2024 national road map in Sri Lanka that included natural capital valuation.

The session also marked the launch of the *Circular Economy Policy Report*. Ms Zainab Naeem said the policy draft has been submitted to the Ministry of Climate Change for review, and that it is for the ministry to decide how to proceed further.

PICTORIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Day 3 in Pictures











COMPILED FOR E-NEWSLETTER

Day 3 Press Coverage – 4 November 2026

1. English Press Coverage (Day 3 Event Reports)

DAWN

Pakistan must prioritise energy diversification, says Khurram Dastgir
Source: Dawn | *Islamabad, November 5, 2026*

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

'Ethanol use can reduce fuel imports, improve air quality'
Source: The News International | *Islamabad, November 5, 2026*

BUSINESS RECORDER

Freedom of navigation under threat: US withdrawal from global role a significant shift in int'l order: Dastgir
Source: Business Recorder | *Islamabad, November 5, 2026*

BUSINESS RECORDER

SDPI's conference: pace of solar adoption brings questions into sharper focus
Source: Business Recorder | *Islamabad, November 5, 2026*

BUSINESS RECORDER

Costly coal-fired power agreements: Pakistan risks remaining trapped
Source: Business Recorder | *Islamabad, November 5, 2026*

BUSINESS RECORDER

Country faces USD348bn climate finance gap: Rana Ihsaan
Source: Business Recorder | *Islamabad, November 5, 2026*

ASSOCIATED PRESS OF PAKISTAN

Pakistan must prioritize energy diversification and strengthen its engagement along its western borders: Khurram Dastgir
Source: Associated Press of Pakistan | *Islamabad, November 4, 2026*

URDUPOINT

Khurram Dastgir Warns Global Maritime Trade Faces Risks, Urges Pakistan To Diversify Energy
Source: Urdu Point | *Islamabad, November 4, 2026*

URDUPOINT

Pakistan Needs $348bn In Climate Finance By 2030, PM's Coordinator Says
Source: Urdu Point | *Islamabad, November 4, 2026*

SABAH NEWS

Pakistan faces $348bn climate finance gap by 2030: Rana Ehsan Afzal Khan
Source: Sabah News | *Islamabad, November 4, 2026*

MINUTE MIRROR

Pakistan must diversify energy sources, strengthen western border engagement: Khurram Dastgir
Source: Minute Mirror | *Islamabad, November 4, 2026*

NEWSMAN

Pakistan must prioritize energy diversification, strengthen engagement along its western borders: says Khurram Dastgir
Source: Newsman | *Islamabad, November 4, 2026*

THE EXPRESS TRIBUNE

(Print edition)
Source: The Express Tribune | *Islamabad, November 5, 2026*

GLOBAL NEWS PAKISTAN

Dastgir Urges Energy Diversification and Western-Border Engagement
Source: Global News Pakistan | *Islamabad, November 5, 2026*

CUSTOMS TODAY

Pakistan faces $348bn climate finance gap by 2030: PM's Coordinator
Source: Customs Today | *Islamabad, November 4, 2026*

CUSTOMS TODAY

Rethinking Tobacco Control in Pakistan: Advancing fiscal policy, environmental & regulation of emerging nicotine products, experts seek regular increase in cigarette taxes, public awareness
Source: Customs Today | *Islamabad, November 4, 2026*

NAZRANA TIMES

Pakistan estimates $348 billion shortfall in climate finance by 2030: PM's coordinator
Source: Nazrana Times | *Islamabad, November 4, 2026*

NAZRANA TIMES

Pakistan faces $348 billion climate finance gap by 2030, says PM's coordinator
Source: Nazrana Times | *Islamabad, November 4, 2026*

2. Urdu Press Coverage (Day 3 Event Reports)

DAILY NAWA-E-WAQT

موسمیاتی تبدیلیوں سے نمٹنے کیلئے 348 ارب ڈالر کے خلا کا سامنا ہوگا: کوارڈینیٹر وزیراعظم
Source: Daily Nawa-e-Waqt | *Rawalpindi/Islamabad, November 5, 2026*

SABAH NEWS

ماہرین کا توانائی، صنعت اور موسمیاتی تبدیلی کے شعبوں میں مربوط اصلاحات پر زور
Source: Sabah News | *Islamabad, November 4, 2026*

DAILY EXPRESS

(Print edition – two reports)
Source: Daily Express | *Islamabad, November 5, 2026*

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