

Mr. Mamnoon Hussain

President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

Address to the

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

(Islamabad: June 01, 2017)

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“Bismillah-ir-Rahman-ir-Raheem”

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

Assalam-o-Alaikum!

Democracy in Pakistan has seen many ups and downs. Although our democracy has passed through turbulent times, it has also won many battles owing to the determination of the nation. Consequently, our parliament is successfully continuing its journey towards the achievement of its true goals. The present phase of our parliamentary history is especially meaningful as despite innumerable challenges the parliament not only maintained its status, but also emerged as a symbol of national unity even in the face of severe political differences. This role of the parliament will be remembered in history, for which I congratulate all of you and the whole nation from the core of my heart.

Be it political or economic conspiracies, misgivings about the national security or other intricate issues, the root cause of all of these have been the events of the past, wrong decisions and policies adopted for achieving short term objectives. Usually, such state of affairs is blamed on political opponents to belittle them. This is the primary cause of most of our political problems. Such conduct halts the process of development of nations. It is therefore imperative that keeping in view the higher objectives of national progress and prosperity, the political process

should be above individual and parochial interests and large-heartedness needs to be exhibited. Allah Almighty says in Surah-e-Hashar:

“Those who are saved from the covetousness of their own souls, they are the ones that achieve prosperity”

I am hopeful that the Allah Almighty will bless our sincere efforts to tread the path of prosperity and progress and to break free from the issues confronting us.

During different phases of our history, some short-sighted elements discriminated between various sections of the society resulting in the weakening of the relationship between the individual and the State. When any individual or a section of the society starts feeling that they are not being treated equally by the State, then, in despair, they resort to illegitimate means to protect their interests. In such circumstances, it is the leadership which provides a sense of security to the common man through its broad vision and practical steps.

For some time in the past a strong feeling is emerging that tangible steps are required to be taken to include the marginalized classes in the development process. I think that the steps being taken to bring Balochistan and FATA in the national mainstream are part of the same process. I expect that all segments of society, rising above their vested interest, will participate in the task of national reconstruction with the same spirit.

Honorable Members of Parliament!

During the last few decades, our precious resources have been squandered due to direction-less and non-deliberative policies. I am thankful to Almighty Allah that now the nation perceives the sense of loss and has the passion of doing something about it. Trade and investment friendly policies of the State, CPEC which envisages connectivity between different continents, and the power projects to overcome the energy crisis are a manifestation and major components of this plan.

Emergence of difference of opinion on the process of development and rights on the national resources among the different segments of the society is not un-usual. I reckon that the debate and difference of opinion on such issues facilitates and leads to benevolence and prosperity paving

the way for reforms. At the same time, however it is also imperative to block the avenues of chaos emerging from difference of opinion through a well thought out strategy so that all efforts to make the process of national development controversial can be thwarted.

Honorable Ladies and Gentlemen!

I have gone through the ‘Vision 2025’ of the Government which includes several programs for the stability of the economy and the welfare of the people. It includes the resolve to be in the top 25 economies of the world by raising the national growth and per capita income. I earnestly desire that the Government, the opposition and all the political parties should declare it as a national plan through consensus so that no matter which party is in power, the welfare of the public should not be hampered at any cost. Furthermore, there is a need to focus on controlling the rising rate of population growth to ensure the optimal use of resources.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

According to the State Bank and International economic institutions, our economic indicators are healthy. The growth rate has remained at the highest level of the past ten years. Foreign exchange reserves have touched the highest ever level of 23 billion dollars and there is a remarkable decline in inflation. It is because of these economic indicators that the Moody’s has endorsed our economic indicators which were earlier negative and are now on the path of stability. Similarly the World Bank has now included Pakistan in the list of the best-performing economies of South Asia. The Pakistan Stock Exchange is continuously manifesting positive trends. Moreover, State Bank and Securities and Exchange Commission have also played an effective role in the regulation of the financial sector. These overviews are indeed satisfactory but these successes will only lead to real happiness if they contribute towards bringing respite and prosperity in the lives of the people.

The petroleum prices showed a declining trend last year, and the benefit was passed directly to the general public. Likewise, the development expenditure has been increased by three times in the upcoming budget. In my opinion, this is the right approach to solve the problems of the

people. Moreover, we will have to pay more attention to other necessities of life including education and health.

Forward looking nations invest heavily in human resource and infrastructure for sustainable development in order to train the youth effectively to meet the challenges of the future. It is our good fortune that the majority of our population consists of youth. Various scholarship programs, 'Technology Development Fund' for Higher Education and revival of the standards of Higher Educational Institutions are encouraging factors for better training. I expect that more such programs will be started to provide the young generation with effective training and maximum employment opportunities.

Over the last few years, our exports have been facing problems due to the decrease in prices in the International market. I hope that Ministry of Commerce shall look for a permanent and effective solution to this issue with the help of experts.

Defence production sector has performed noticeably better in the context of exports. Our defence products are not only of the highest quality but are also available at competitive prices. Therefore they can easily capture the attention of the prospective buyers in the market. It is the need of the hour that we should use modern tools of marketing to reap maximum benefits from this capability.

We need to undertake serious efforts at the national level for poverty alleviation. Creditable work is being done by BISP in this regard. I am pleased to note a three-fold increase in its budget. I wish that in addition to the efforts for women empowerment, a strategy should also be devised to enhance their capabilities through proper training.

The government launched a health insurance scheme last year. It is a commendable step towards providing healthcare facilities to the people. Due to a rapid increase in the population and scant available resources, the condition of the health sector is not enviable. Despite the establishment of hospitals and dispensaries in far-flung and backward areas, medical facilities are not easily available due to the negligence and incompetence of a few. Therefore it is imperative that the administration of health facilities should be improved and more hospitals

and health units should also be established to cater for the needs of the growing population.

There has been a considerable advancement in the traveling facilities due to the construction of new highways and improvement in the means of communication. Metro, the green line and train services have a special significance for improvement in the mass transit system of cities. I am delighted that these plans have also been extended to Karachi.

The Government has allocated considerable funds to bring the backward areas of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, FATA and Gilgit-Baltistan at par with other parts of the country. It is a positive development to ensure equal progress in all parts of the homeland.

Agriculture is considered as the backbone of our economy. It is, therefore, necessary to take continuous steps for the development of the agriculture sector and for the betterment of farmers. It is satisfactory to note the provision of fertilizers and other agricultural inputs on low prices. The biggest challenge to this sector comes from the climate change. I expect from the federal and provincial governments to work under a joint strategy. This issue has become a global problem and therefore, there is a need to formulate a plan to benefit from the experiences and studies conducted by different countries of the world to control this menace.

The energy crisis has severely dented our economy but no serious consideration was paid to it during the past. Recently, several electricity projects have been completed and work is in progress on some other important projects. It is expected that after the start of production from these units, this issue will be resolved permanently, InshaAllah. Increase in production and progress in these projects is a huge success but we will have to keep an eye on the management of the transmission of electricity so that a situation like the one faced currently may not arise in the future.

Last year, I recommended that Gilgit-Baltistan should be connected to the National Grid. I am pleased to note that there has been noteworthy progress in this regard and the government has allocated a significant amount for the construction of the regional grid. Besides this, I also want the work on the National Grid to be started simultaneously so that there

should be no difficulty in the transmission of electricity when its production starts after the completion of Bhasha, Dasu and Bunji dams.

Honourable Members of Parliament!

Allah Almighty has blessed Pakistan with immense natural beauty which includes beautiful landscapes, the world's oldest archaeological sites and places of religious tourism. Unfortunately no attention has been paid to this sector despite the fact that the national economy can be strengthened by promoting tourism. I hope that the government will pay prompt attention towards this as a large number of tourists from across the world are expected in the wake of improving law and order situation in the country. Therefore, it is imperative to upgrade and enhance facilities at tourist attractions of the country.

Honourable Members of Parliament!

Father of the Nation Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah had declared that the foreign policy of Pakistan will be based on friendship, peace and impartiality with all nations of the world, particularly with our neighbours. As declared by the Quaid, Pakistan will abide by the principles of moral support for the oppressed people of the world and will not harbour aggressive designs against any country. Pakistan's determination in this regard is amply reflected by its exemplary role in the peace missions of the United Nations. Since independence, Pakistan has continued to pursue this policy. For global peace, stability and progress, Pakistan invites the comity of nations, particularly our neighbours, to agree on the fundamental principle of economic cooperation which can lead to ending of regional tensions.

Ladies & Gentlemen!

In the domain of foreign relations, Pakistan and China enjoy exemplary friendship. Both countries are consistently enhancing bilateral cooperation in all walks of life. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is an excellent example in this regard. This mega project will not only enhance prosperity in Pakistan and China but will also prove to be a harbinger of economic development and progress for other

countries of the region. In this regard, our participation in the One Belt One Road (OBOR) forum has been very fruitful which will have far reaching impact.

We want to resolve all disputes with India through dialogue, but it is regrettable that our sincere efforts have not been reciprocated in the same spirit. Instead, the situation has been exacerbated by India by promoting subversive acts of espionage and disruption in the region, which is evident from the arrest and confessional statement of an Indian spy.

The basic dispute between Pakistan and India is the issue of Jammu & Kashmir which is an unfinished agenda of the partition of the subcontinent. Our Kashmiri brothers, sisters, sons and daughters are protesting for their fundamental right of freedom for which they are being subjected to the worst kind of atrocities. Due to such conduct, India has become the biggest hurdle in establishing peace and stability in the region. The only solution to the Kashmir dispute is holding of a plebiscite as prescribed under the resolutions of the United Nations. To this end, we will always continue extending political, moral and diplomatic support to our Kashmiri brethren. India is consistently indulging in acts of aggression on the Line of Control (LOC) resulting in huge loss of life and property of innocent Kashmiris. We strongly condemn this aggressive attitude of India.

I on my own behalf and on the behalf of the Government and people of Pakistan strongly condemn the [yesterday](#)'s tragic incident of terrorism in Afghanistan and express solidarity with the Afghan Government and people. Because we believe that there can be no stability in the region without peace in Afghanistan. To this end, Pakistan facilitated the 'Murree Dialogue' and warmly supported the 'Heart of Asia' initiative. We invite the Afghan leadership to improve the border management system with mutual cooperation to overcome terrorism.

We understand that our brotherly country has suffered immensely due to the civil war and instability for years. Pakistan has always stood by Afghanistan in its difficult hour. Provision of substantial assistance and educational scholarships for three thousand Afghan students during the

last few years is part of this process. Pakistan will always continue to show such cordial gestures to our Afghan brethren with the hope:-

Ap dekhain tu sahi rabt-e-mohabbat kya hai,
Apna afsana mila kar meray afsanay say

The Central Asian states are our regional neighbours and very close to our heart because of cultural and religious affinities. We have great expectations to meet our energy needs from trans-regional projects like TAPI and CASA-1000. We hope that dedicated efforts would be made to ensure timely completion of these projects and to enhance mutual cooperation among countries of the region.

Pakistan accords great importance to its relations with Russia and is keen to further enhance cooperation between the two countries in all sectors including defence, economy and culture.

Pakistan and Turkey are bound in deep-rooted relations based on mutual affinity and respect. Both countries share unanimity of views on most of the global issues which has turned our friendship into a strategic partnership. I am glad that Pak-Turk relations are getting warmer with each passing day.

Pakistan has always worked sincerely for resolution of the problems confronting the Islamic World. Being the land of the Holy places, every Pakistani has great respect for Saudi Arabia whereas our relations with all other countries of Muslim world are also embedded in love and sincerity.

Our relations with the USA are of great significance. During the last seven decades these relations have been through many ups and downs. In this backdrop, Pakistan has recently established fresh contacts with the new US administration which will pave the way for further expansion of bilateral relations.

From the perspective of political and economic cooperation, our ties with Europe are very important. In the recent past the European Union granted GSP-Plus status to Pakistan which helped enhance our exports to that region. There is a need to work continuously to further deepen relations with this region.

The countries of Southeast Asia, South America and Africa are emerging economies with which we have had historical relations. We are desirous to further cement our relations with these countries.

Pakistan achieved many important diplomatic successes in the last parliamentary year which includes holding of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Summit in Islamabad. Prior to that, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) with its anti-terrorism, checking drug trafficking and international crime agenda decided to grant permanent membership to Pakistan. These are big achievements of our foreign policy.

Pakistan is strictly committed to nuclear non-proliferation. Our nuclear assets are absolutely safe. Therefore we believe that Pakistan rightly deserves the membership of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). I am confident that there will be a positive development in this regard.

It is unfortunate that due to negative mindset of India, the SAARC summit could not be held in Islamabad last year which impeded regional cooperation for progress and prosperity.

Pakistan believes that reforms in the Security Council are imperative to make the UN a more effective and beneficial international body so that all member States, particularly the smaller countries, also get representation in it. We need to continue our efforts in this respect.

Honorable Ladies and Gentlemen!

We have rendered unparalleled sacrifices in the long battle to eliminate the scourge of terrorism. Thousands of our citizens and soldiers have sacrificed their lives during this war. We are proud of our valiant soldiers and citizens. I am confident that like the Zarb-e-Azb operation the Raddul Fasaad will also soon succeed in achieving its objectives; and the country will become a cradle of peace. Now we have reached the stage where it is imperative to present a national counter-narrative to eliminate the remnants of extremism. For this purpose, the government, parliamentarians, political parties, educational and research institutions must play a pro-active role.

The role of education is of paramount importance in the quest to eliminate extremism. We can achieve this goal by gradually reducing class differences and making higher and quality education accessible to

all. This will help our youth to play their due role in building a new world by better analyzing the contemporary situation.

I am glad that our educational and literary institutions are performing a useful role after their recent rejuvenation under the leadership of National History and Literary Heritage Division. Similarly an Endowment Fund of huge amount has been established to resolve the issues of poets, writers and artists. I expect that these activities will be further broadened and we will be successful in defeating negative trends by promoting educational values.

Our valiant workers from various departments have completed the census exercise with hard work and commitment. During the exercise some unpleasant incidents also occurred in which some workers were martyred. The nation pays rich tributes to these brave workers who rendered the national service with courage.

The media has an important role in the society and organization of nations. Our media has played an appreciable role in restoration of democracy and resolving the social issues. Recently, however, as a result of the competition between media entities, some issues have surfaced which require our urgent attention because its fall-out is affecting the country on political and cultural fronts. This trend needs to be rectified. I believe that such issues can be resolved easily through interaction of media representative bodies, regulatory authorities and vibrant segments of the society.

My Dear Brothers & Sisters!

What does the nation think? Its reflection is the parliament. What should the nation think? The parliament gives guidance in this regard. How should national issues be resolved? These are also decided in the parliament. Every person of the country considers himself a stakeholder in decisions taken in this august house; and willingly accepts their enforcement. If we create a congenial atmosphere to transform this willingness and desire into reality then national resources could be utilized on welfare of the people in a much better way. Lets come forward and join hands to make this house a medium of achieving national objectives because our goal should be to have a parliament

which was envisaged by our forefathers especially by Allama Iqbal who expounded the ideology of Pakistan.

May Allah protect us all, Amen!

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