



**Press Release
National Conference**

Balochistan: Enhancing the Pace of Development and Prosperity

October 30, 2014

DEVELOPMENT AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION MUST GO HAND IN HAND

Scholars at a conference on “Balochistan: Enhancing the Pace of Development and Prosperity” emphasized that development activities and political participation must go hand in hand if economic progress has to have any meaning for the people of the province. They said the main obstacle to development has been flawed state policy that has pursued programmes and plans without peoples involvement. Had genuine political leadership been involved in the reconciliation process the problems would have been solved long ago.

The conference was organised by the Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) today (Thursday). Inaugurating the conference Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed, chairman Senate Committee on Defence and Defence Production, explained the efforts that have been made since the work of his parliamentary committee, the Aghaz-e-Haqooq-e-Balochistan package culminating in the 7th NFC Award and the 18th constitutional amendment. Mr Babar Yaqoob Fateh Muhammad, Secretary, Ministry of Communications and former Chief Secretary Balochistan presented an overview of development work in the province and said that throughout its history Balochistan has remained a peripheral existence, it was no wonder that today it has the lowest social indices. Strapped for earmarked funds that have seldom reached it in full, its development has lagged behind other provinces. Only this year for the first time allocated moneys have been disbursed upto 90 per cent. He said that the big projects like Gwador and Kachho Canal have faced inordinate delays. Of the 1500 mw needed only 200 were at present available while the cost of development in Balochistan was indeed greater than other provinces. He said there was lack of political coordination among the local communities.

Professor Dr Tahir Amin, director National Institute of Pakistan Studies, Quaide Azam University discussing obstacles to development held state policy responsible for failing to involve people in development efforts. Lack of coherence among stake holders was another big hurdle and the idea that development alone could work the miracle was faulty. He said that only a genuine leadership that emerges from the people can bring about the reconciliation. He debunked the impression that the trouble was province wide. It was only in pockets, namely Khuzdar, Panjgur and another one or two

places. The disgruntled elements could be made to join the mainstream if genuine political leadership approached them.

Dr Iqrar Ahmad Khan, Vice Chancellor Agriculture University, Faisalabad said that Balochistan had 33 million acres cultivable land which was about the same as in Punjab; only the problem of water scarcity has been neglected otherwise Balochistan could have been a source of food security for the country as a whole.

Prof. Dr Masoom Yasinzai pleaded for people oriented approach to socio-economic development and emphasized the central role of education in this respect. Mr FazlurRahman executive director, Pakistan Council on China, Islamabad gave a presentation on Impact of Pakistan China Economic corridor on the development of Balochistan.