

**SPEECH OF CHAIRMAN ASPIRE ON LAUNCH CEREMONY-10 AUGUST
2024 AT IM SCIENCES HAYATABAD**

**Mushahid Hussain Syed Sahab,
Usman Ghani Sahab, Director IM Sciences,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and gentlemen!**

Assalamu Alaikum!

I extend a warm welcome to each one of you on this momentous occasion, the launch ceremony of ASPIRE-KP, a non-partisan and not-for-profit forum dedicated to public service and policy formulation. Your presence here today is a testament to your commitment to the betterment of our province and country.

I would like to extend a special welcome to Mr. Mushahid Hussain Syed, and thank him from the core of my heart, who has traveled from Islamabad to be with us today. Sir, your presence is a source of inspiration, and your contributions to public service and policy formulation are a beacon of hope for our nation. We are thrilled to have you share your insights and guidance with us as we embark on this journey.

As we gather here today, I am reminded of the immense potential that lies within our province and country. I am confident that together, we can harness this potential and create a brighter future

for all. Thank you once again for your presence, and let us work together to make a positive impact.

Distinguished Audience!

In a while, you will receive a comprehensive overview of ASPIRE-KP. For now, let me highlight some key aspects to provide context. Our mission is to harness the power of collaboration, bringing together diverse expertise from intellectual, administrative, and judicial realms to enrich our decision-making processes with comprehensive insights and informed perspectives. We will achieve this by conducting extensive research, facilitating knowledge exchange, and promoting education on critical issues impacting the wider community.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

Our goals are to share expert knowledge, help shape good policies, and make a positive impact on public decisions. We will have in-depth discussions on important issues, do practical research, and give evidence-based solutions to key players. To achieve this, we will work with relevant stakeholders, national and international development agencies, and host various events like conferences, symposia, seminars, and roundtable discussions. We will also create informative policy briefs, reports and papers, and promote democratic values, human rights, and the rule of law.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

Forty years ago, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was a shining example of good governance. The Planning Department excelled in its duties, and finances were prudently managed. Donors hailed it as a model for other provinces, citing its exemplary project execution. The province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has undergone significant changes since then and is now struggling with various issues. What went wrong? What are the systemic problems that persist, and how can we work together to find solutions and drive positive change?

Distinguished Audience!

The citizens of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have endured an unprecedented series of external shocks, eroding their living standards. The Afghan conflict, militancy in Ex-FATA, the 2005 earthquake, protracted reign of terrorism in major cities seriously disrupting civic life, liberties, internal displacement in Swat and Ex-FATA, and the 2010 floods; have all taken a devastating toll. These challenges, compounded by financial indiscretions, have strained the province's finances, which are now under immense pressure.

The alarming rise in salary and pension expenses is unsustainable. In just over a decade, salary costs have ballooned from 76 billion to 680 billion, with pensions increasing from 11 billion to 183 billion. When we look at the status of creation of posts for a ten-year period from 2014-15 to 2022-23, a total of 229837 posts were created in the

public sector institutions at an average of 22298 persons per year. The Government has to make a deliberate effort to arrest this trend by avoiding creating additional structures requiring more Human Resource. We will stress the importance of a collective effort to arrest this trend. This will require careful planning, discipline, and a commitment to fiscal responsibility. Only then can we hope to avoid the impending crisis and ensure a better future for its citizens.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

The province's financial crisis is further compounded by a staggering debt of 1.58 trillion, with far reaching and disturbing consequences that warrant prompt attention. The debt obligations have severe implications that require focused engagement from all stakeholders. Due to time limitations today, ASPIRE will organize a Roundtable discussion in September, gathering stakeholders from all sectors to build consensus on loan management and utilization for sustainable development. ASPIRE is dedicated to working closely with the Government to tackle this pressing issue with utmost urgency and resolve.

Distinguished Audience!

I draw inspiration from the fact that my colleagues and fellow ASPIRE members have not only excelled in their careers and fields of expertise but also demonstrated a deep commitment and a sense of

gratitude and purpose during the tenure of their service. They are now dedicated to reciprocating and giving back the support and opportunities they have received from this province and country. With a strong sense of social responsibility, they are committed to using their expertise and experience to make a meaningful difference in the lives of others.

You will shortly be briefed in detail about our plans to empower the women of our community. I want to reiterate our Forum's commitment to women's empowerment, not only because they constitute 50% of our population, but also because of their immense significance and importance in shaping our society. Their contributions, perspectives, and well-being are vital to our collective progress. Therefore, I emphasize our dedication to improving their lives and fostering a more equitable and inclusive environment.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

While our journey and march would continue with the cooperation and feedback of all of you and many other well-wishers, we have resolved to focus on some of the immediate issues that ASPIRE-KP intends to tackle on priority basis.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is endowed with an abundance of natural resources, including oil and gas, hydel power, captivating tourism, and vast forests, complemented by a dynamic and vibrant youth population. However, to harness this immense potential, peace and

security are paramount. Sustainable development in the province is inextricably linked to the maintenance of peace and the rule of law. Therefore, our initiative with ASPIRE will prioritize the critical and pressing issue of:

- 1. Peace and Security in the Face of Resurgent Terrorism:
followed by.....**
- 2. Debt Obligations and Fiscal Sustainability; Exploring Solutions
for the Province's Financial Future**
- 3. A Critical Analysis of the FATA Merger's Shortcomings**
- 4. Arresting the Decline and Reforming Higher Education in KP**
- 5. Impact of Climate Change on KP**
- 6. KP Youth and Digital Age**
- 7. Diagnostic Review of Governance and Institutional Challenges**
- 8. Diagnostic Review of Local Governments**
- 9. Striking a Balance between Economic Development and
Human Dignity**

Ladies and Gentlemen!

As I conclude, I urge you to join me in a collective commitment to empowering ASPIRE Forum to drive transformative change. Let us unite in our pursuit of a brighter future, where every individual can thrive. Together, we can shatter the status quo, challenge the norms, and create a ripple effect of positivity that resonates across our

province and nation. The time for change is now. Let us seize this moment, pool our strengths, and forge a path that future generations will proudly inherit.

Before I part, I would like to share a profound insight from Todd Henry's book, "Die Empty", which resonates deeply with me.

He writes and I quote, "Do not go to your grave and carry inside you the best that you have."

Always choose to die empty.

The TRUE meaning of this expression, is to die empty of all the goodness that is within you. Deliver it to the world, before you leave.

Thank you.