



Ministry of Planning,
Development & Special
Initiatives

MISSION \$100 BILLION

THE NATIONAL RACE FOR SUSTAINABLE EXPORT-LED PROSPERITY

39TH

**AGM & INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
OF THE PAKISTAN SOCIETY OF DEVELOPMENT ECONOMISTS**

CALL FOR EXTENDED ABSTRACTS

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Pakistan stands at a critical juncture in its economic journey. After decades of stop-start growth, the country faces a historic opportunity and imperative to shift from a fragile, inward-looking economy to a dynamic, export-led engine of sustainable development. Over the past 12 years, Pakistan's economic growth has remained modest, averaging 3.25% annually, which is significantly behind its regional peers. The country's over-reliance on protectionism, import substitution, and narrow export baskets has left it vulnerable to external shocks, fiscal crises, and structural stagnation. The COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitical tensions, and climate challenges have only deepened this vulnerability. With its trade-to-GDP ratio lagging behind emerging economies and exports overly concentrated in low-value textiles and a handful of markets, Pakistan must now reimagine its global economic footprint.

The urgency to revitalize exports is no longer a policy option; it is a national mission. Building on the URAAN Pakistan vision, this conference calls for applied, reform-oriented research to support the mission of achieving \$100 billion in sustainable exports, positioning Pakistan as a competitive player in global markets.



CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

Building upon the vision set forth under the URAAN Pakistan framework, the 39th Annual General Meeting and International Conference of the Pakistan Society of Development Economists (PSDE) seeks to mobilize the country's leading economic thinkers, policy practitioners, and development partners to generate actionable, reform-oriented research. This year's thematic focus is encapsulated in the national mission of achieving \$100 billion in sustainable exports, under the banner:

MISSION \$100 BILLION: THE NATIONAL RACE FOR SUSTAINABLE EXPORT-LED PROSPERITY

The conference will serve as a podium for the exchange of innovative ideas, empirical research, and global best practices that can inform policy reforms to enhance Pakistan's competitiveness in international markets. By bringing together economists, social scientists, industry leaders, and policymakers from Pakistan and abroad, the conference aims to foster dialogue that bridges academic rigor with practical applicability.

Through a mix of special lectures, panel discussions, and technical sessions, the event will explore the multifaceted dimensions of export growth, ranging from industrial upgrading and technological transformation to market diversification and regulatory reforms. The discussions will also emphasize cross-sectoral linkages, institutional capacity, and the role of both the private and public sectors in sustaining export momentum.



CONFERENCE OBJECTIVE

The primary objective of the 39th PSDE Annual Conference is to generate high-impact, micro-focused, and solution-oriented research that addresses the structural, institutional, and sectoral impediments to Pakistan's export growth. The conference specifically seeks studies that:

- Offer granular, sector-level insights based on empirical evidence, highlighting practical pathways for immediate and scalable export gains.

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- Identify and analyze specific policy bottlenecks, regulatory hurdles, and market access constraints affecting export performance in targeted sectors.
- Provide implementable reform strategies grounded in local realities but informed by global best practices.
- Demonstrate clear potential for real-world policy influence, with measurable outcomes for productivity enhancement, value addition, and trade diversification.

CONFERENCE THEMES

The conference will host eight thematic research tracks, each aligned with the export drivers identified under the national vision for sustainable export-led growth. Submissions must clearly align with one or more of these themes, ensuring a strong link between empirical evidence, sector-specific challenges, and actionable policy recommendations.



Agriculture, Livestock & Agro-based Exports



Industrial Development, Manufacturing & SMEs



Mining, Minerals & Resource-based Exports



Technology & ICT Exports



Manpower & Skills for Export Markets



Creative & Cultural Industry



Blue Economy & Maritime Trade



Tourism as Services Export Industry

The conference is not seeking broad, generalized economic commentary; rather, it prioritizes applied research with direct relevance to policymaking, research that can support tangible reforms within a defined timeframe and contribute meaningfully to the national mission of achieving export-led prosperity.

1. Agriculture, Livestock & Agro-based Exports

Agriculture remains a cornerstone of Pakistan's economy, both as a source of livelihoods and as a driver of export potential in high-value crops, processed foods, and livestock products. However, the sector continues to face low productivity, inadequate value addition, and persistent non-compliance with international sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) standards.

Research under this theme may address:

- Removing barriers to seed innovation, biotechnology adoption, and SPS compliance to enhance international market access.
- Liberalizing agricultural inputs and reducing cost distortions to improve export competitiveness.
- Identifying export opportunities in high-value crops, livestock products, halal-certified food markets, and processed agri-goods.
- Strategies for integrating smallholder farmers into global value chains through cooperatives, contract farming, and export facilitation hubs.

2. Industrial Development, Manufacturing & SMEs

Industrial modernization and diversification are critical for achieving sustained export growth beyond

traditional sectors. Pakistan's industrial base faces high costs due to tariff distortions, regulatory inefficiencies, and inadequate technological adoption. SMEs, which form the bulk of industrial enterprises, remain largely disconnected.

Research under this theme may address:

- Reducing tariff-induced production costs and enhancing economies of scale in manufacturing.
- Streamlining trade facilitation through digitization of customs and regulatory compliance processes.
- Strategies to integrate SMEs into global supply chains, particularly in non-textile sectors.
- The role of free trade agreements (FTAs), preferential trade arrangements, and R&D tax credits in driving export diversification.
- Case studies of sector-specific upgrading in high-potential manufacturing industries.

3. Mining, Minerals & Resource-based Exports

Pakistan is endowed with significant mineral resources, including copper, chromite, and rare earth elements. Yet, the sector remains underdeveloped, with most exports limited to raw, unprocessed materials. This not only forfeits value addition but also constrains job creation and revenue generation.

Research studies may include:

- Developing one-window facilitation systems for mining licensing, operations, and exports.
- Designing mineral processing and value addition zones to capture higher export revenues.

- Policy measures to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) in refining and mineral processing industries.
- Building environmental and occupational standards to align with international certification requirements.
- Skill development programs to enhance vocational capacities in mining communities.

4. Technology & ICT Exports

The digital economy offers Pakistan a significant opportunity to leapfrog into high-growth export markets, particularly in IT services, fintech, and creative technology sectors. Despite impressive growth in recent years, the ICT export ecosystem is constrained by infrastructure gaps, regulatory bottlenecks, and limited integration into global innovation networks.

Potential research areas include:

- Incentive frameworks for IT/ITeS, fintech, and creative technology export expansion.
- Facilitating digital payment systems, cross-border remittance channels, and repatriation of export earnings.
- Expanding 5G and broadband access as a foundation for export-oriented digital infrastructure.
- Strengthening cybersecurity protocols to meet international compliance standards.
- Leveraging the Pakistan Single Window and other trade facilitation platforms for tech startup exports.

5. Manpower & Skills for Export Markets

With a large working-age population and a globally competitive wage structure, Pakistan has significant potential to position human capital as a major export asset. However, skill mismatches, inadequate training infrastructure, and weak integration with global labor demand remain barriers.

Research may focus on:

- Developing overseas migration policies that align with demand in high-value labor markets.
- Designing reintegration strategies for returnee workers to leverage their acquired skills.
- Implementing a Global Skills Passport system to certify and standardize competencies.
- GCC-focused vocational and technical training programs linked to labor market trends.
- Aligning technical and vocational education and training (TVET) systems with evolving global employment needs.

6. Creative & Cultural Industry

Creative and cultural industries, encompassing performing arts, fashion, design, digital content, and heritage-based enterprises, represent a growing segment of global trade. Pakistan's rich cultural heritage and young creative talent base position it well for export growth in this domain, provided the enabling environment is strengthened.

Research under this theme may explore:

- Branding initiatives such as "Digital Pakistan" to promote creative exports.
- Support mechanisms for participation in international cultural trade shows and expos.
- Strengthening intellectual property protection for creative industries.
- Leveraging e-commerce platforms for the export of cultural products and services.

7. Blue Economy & Maritime Trade

Pakistan's coastline and maritime resources present underexploited opportunities in trade, fisheries, tourism, and marine-based industries. Weak port efficiency, outdated vessel management, and limited environmental safeguards have restricted sectoral development.

Research topics may include:

- Enhancing port efficiency through technological upgrading and public-private partnerships.
- Fisheries reform to ensure sustainability, quality control, and market access.
- Promoting green maritime tourism and climate-resilient coastal development.
- Supporting marine-based SMEs through financing, training, and export facilitation.

8. Tourism as Services Export Industry

Tourism has the potential to become a significant foreign exchange earner for Pakistan by exporting unique experiences rather than commodities. Despite vast cultural, ecological, and religious tourism assets, the sector remains

underdeveloped due to infrastructure gaps, limited marketing, and security perception challenges.

Research studies may address:

- Positioning tourism formally as a service export in national trade policies.
- Developing strategies for religious, ecological, cultural, and adventure tourism targeting high-spending international segments.
- Strengthening connectivity, accommodation capacity, and destination branding.
- Creating integrated tourism clusters linking hospitality, local crafts, and food industries for value-added export chains.

SUBMISSION CRITERIA

The 39th Annual General Meeting and International Conference of the Pakistan Society of Development Economists (PSDE) seeks submissions that are micro-focused, empirically grounded, solution-oriented, and directly relevant to Pakistan's export-led growth agenda. The objective is to generate research outputs that can inform policy decisions with clear and measurable real-world impact.

The following criteria will guide the evaluation and selection of submissions:

1. Scope and Relevance

- Submissions must be aligned with one or more of the eight identified conference themes and address specific issues within the chosen theme.
- The research should target clearly defined sectors, subsectors, or value chains within the broader

Export framework, avoiding overly broad or generic discussions.

Proposals should focus on removing structural and institutional bottlenecks that constrain export performance, with emphasis on actionable reforms.

2. Methodological Rigor

- Preference will be given to empirical research that uses credible datasets, field surveys, case studies, or pilot interventions to substantiate findings.
- Methodology should be clearly articulated, specifying data sources, analytical frameworks, and validation mechanisms.
- Innovative mixed-methods approaches of analysis are encouraged, provided they yield policy-relevant evidence.

3. Solution Orientation and Policy-Linkage

- Research must offer specific, actionable, and contextually feasible policy recommendations that can be implemented in Pakistan's institutional framework.
- Each recommendation should be supported by empirical justification and demonstrate potential for scalability and replicability.

4. Focus on Sludge Removal and Efficiency Gains

- Studies should prioritize identifying and eliminating administrative sludge, overlapping mandates, and procedural delays that reduce economic efficiency and increase transaction costs for exporters.

Research should quantify the cost of inefficiencies where possible and propose targeted reforms to streamline processes.

5. Originality and Contribution to Knowledge

Submissions must present original research, offering new insights or applications of existing theories to Pakistan's export context.

Proposals should identify their unique value proposition within existing literature and explain how they advance policy discourse.

6. Evaluation Criteria

Submissions will be evaluated based on:



Relevance to the national export-led growth agenda.



Quality and rigor of the proposed methodology.



Clarity and specificity of policy recommendations.



Feasibility of implementation in Pakistan's institutional and market context.



Potential impact on productivity, value addition, and market diversification.

IMPORTANT DATES

Deadline for Submission of Extended Abstracts

15 October 2025

Notification of Accepted Abstract

31 October 2025

Deadline for Final Paper Submission

09 February 2026

Notification of Accepted Papers

09 March 2026

Conference Dates

7 & 8 April 2026
Tuesday & Wednesday

BEST PAPERS AWARDS



Outstanding research (technical papers) will be rewarded with prizes. These awards aim to spotlight the impactful, methodologically robust, and solution-oriented research papers.



PKR
300,000



PKR
200,000



PKR
100,000

Evaluation & Selection Process

All poster presentations and conference papers will be evaluated by a Scientific Committee of PSDE, chaired by Dr. Nadeem Javaid (SI), President PSDE/Vice Chancellor, Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE). The committee will comprise well-respected academicians, practitioners, and policy experts.

This distinguished body will undertake a rigorous, merit-based evaluation process to ensure that only the most innovative, relevant, and technically sound research is recognized. Selection by this committee represents a prestigious acknowledgment of academic excellence within Pakistan's development economics community.

PhD Symposium & Award

As part of the 39th Annual General Meeting and International Conference, a dedicated PhD Symposium will provide an opportunity for enrolled doctoral candidates from across Pakistan to engage with, and contribute to, the national discourse on achieving sustainable, export-led growth. This symposium will feature a Poster Presentation Competition designed to encourage innovative, evidence-based, and policy-relevant research contributions aligned with the conference themes.

PhD Symposium will also have an insightful session on design thinking & critical analysis & research skills.

Poster Presentation Competition

Eligibility:

- Participation is open exclusively to currently enrolled PhD scholars from HEC-recognized universities and research institutions in Pakistan & abroad.

Competition Directions

- Posters must clearly reflect one or more of the eight conference themes outlined in this year's Conference.
- Submissions should demonstrate originality, thematic relevance, and conceptual clarity, with a clear link to practical policy solutions or knowledge advancement.
- Research scope must be specific, targeted, and analytically rigorous, avoiding overly broad or generic treatment of topics.

Support for Participants

- Selected candidates will be provided a lumpsum amount of **PKR 15,000** as partial support for travel and logistics; to be disbursed at the end of the conference.
- Participants will be granted full access to all conference sessions, panel discussions, and keynote lectures, offering an unparalleled opportunity to engage directly with leading policymakers, eminent economists, industry leaders, and international development experts.
- Attendance will be formally recorded, ensuring scholars benefit fully from the intellectual exchange and networking opportunities across the two-day program.

Prize



The Winner of the Poster Presentation Competition will receive a prize of **PKR 150,000** in recognition of exceptional academic quality, thematic alignment, and policy relevance.