



Press Release

ISHRAT's BOOK GIVES ALL EMPIRICAL DATA-THEORETICAL BASIS LEADING TO IMPLEMENT REFORMS-Dr. Umar Saif

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Dr Ishrat Husain's book "Governing the Ungovernable" gives all the empirical data and theoretical basis to lead and implement reforms in Pakistan. This was stated by Dr Umar Saif, Vice Chancellor, Information Technology University (ITU) during a panel discussion on the former Governor State Bank of Pakistan, held under the auspices of ITU's Centre for Governance and Policy here today.

He said that from his experience of 'working in the trenches' on issues of reform, the reform was not about money as 'PITB only uses 0.03% of the budget of Pakistan, but its impact on almost every sector speaks volumes.' 'All the possible planning has been done in Pakistan and it was needed to implement it,' he added.

The author Dr Ishrat Hussain underlined the critical importance of the youth in this debate. 'You are the real drivers of change in Pakistan,' Dr Ishrat said. If the youth of the country take their civic responsibility seriously then Pakistan can be transformed. 'You have the vote; use it wisely and Pakistan will progressively change for the better,' he said, noting that the high rate of attrition in urban constituencies during elections shows that the urban youth are beginning to understand the electoral process. 'The educated urban middle class youth is key to change in Pakistan,' he argued.

Talking about the long term nature of the conversation, Dr Ishrat said that 'Reform is not an overnight agenda, and takes decades to accomplish, but we need to start somewhere.' He gave the examples of how Pakistan got industrialized in the 1960s, the development of the agriculture sector, and even PIA, which was a beacon for other airlines in its hay day, to underscore that it is not that Pakistan was never a model of development but that in the last twenty-five years' things have dramatically derailed.

'All institutions, especially the civil service, have been systematically undermined from the 1970's and we are suffering from its effects now,' he opined. However, he said that while the book does not make for a cheerful read, it does show the strength of Pakistan and there is need to harness those positives. Pointing to Dr Saif, Dr Ishrat Husain said: 'Look at Umar Saif: he is a great example of self-less public service and I wish we could clone him for the federal, KPK, Sindh and Balochistan governments as then Pakistan would get much ahead.' 'Let us hope that in the upcoming elections, Pakistanis vote in large numbers and take control of their own destiny,' he concluded.

Mr Fahd Husain a senior journalist expressed that first we must ask the question: 'Is there even an appetite for reform?' He underscored that while a lot of people talk about reform very few actually want to take the bitter pill of enacting it. 'Reform and policies aren't sexy enough for the television, but here is where the real issues are,' Fahd Husain commented.

Mr Tariq Khosa, former Director General FIA and former IG Police said that there was a need for radical reform in the law and order sector in Pakistan. He delineated certain points which Dr Ishrat had pointed out as critical in his book, including depoliticizing the police and security of tenure. Mr Khosa emphasized that the police needed to change its nature to improve law and order. 'We need to move away from the constabulary model of policing to the community model,' added Tariq Khosa. He also stressed the need to stop patronizing all kinds of militant organizations. 'There are no pro or anti state organizations. All militant organizations are bad for the country.'

Mr Ashraf Hayat, former Finance Secretary and Executive Director of the Institute for Policy Reforms focused on the economic aspects of reform and said that 'Pakistan needs to escape from being an elitist economy by empowering the people, so real development can take place. 'Look at the East and South East Asian models,' he exclaimed. 'The people are sovereign and all power comes from them, but where does it go then?' he asked. Mr Hayat then outlined several ways through which real and inclusive development can transform Pakistan.

Earlier, introducing the discussion, Dr Yaqoob Khan Bangash, Director of the Centre, said that the book sets the stage for a comprehensive reform agenda in Pakistan. 'This book is now the basic text for deep and lasting institutional and societal reform in Pakistan,' he remarked.