

Exports to increase 20 percent in two months: Miftah

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Finance Minister Dr Miftah Ismail Wednesday claimed that exports of the country would grow up to 20 percent in two months (May and June). Winding up the debate on cut motions pertaining to his ministry in the National Assembly, the minister said, "The pressure on exports has been ended. Exports grew up 24 percent in March and 18 percent in April while the imports reduced by 2 percent during this current fiscal year. We expect that the export of the country will increase 20 percent in two months."

He said that exports are witnessing a growth as a result of government's necessary interventions, including the package announced for the industries. He said that the number of tax filers will also increase as a result of tax reforms package recently announced by the government. He said that the government has given Rs 110 billion unprecedented tax relief to salaried class and low-income segments of the country, while strategy has been made to increase the number of tax filers.

The minister said that Pakistan is becoming the 8th fastest export growing country due to the efforts of the government. He said that Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has completed many projects which the previous government had filed to complete. He said that Neelum-Jhelum Hydropower Project was initiated during Pervez Musharraf's government and was left for Pakistan Peoples Party government, which also could not complete it, and it was ultimately completed by the incumbent government. He said that Lowari Tunnel project was initiated by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and no government could complete it, and the credit goes to the PML-N government for its completion.

While responding to various points raised by the opposition members, Foreign Minister Khurram Dastgir said the foreign policy of the country is successfully moving forward. He said that the foreign policy framework will further strengthen Pakistan's relations with regional countries.

He said that close economic relationship with China is big achievement of the foreign policy. He said that the economy of Pakistan would improve in future due to China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

The minister said that the relations of Pakistan with countries of Central Asia have been improved. He said that projects like CASA-1000 and TAPI would connect Pakistan with these countries.

He said that relations with Russia have been improved and Pakistan has defense agreement with it. He said that Pakistan is consistently engaged with Afghanistan to improve the bilateral relations. He said that negotiations are ongoing with Afghanistan under Pak-Afghan Action Plan for peace.

The minister said that Pakistan has strengthened relations with the European Union during the last five years and GSP Plus status for the country is a big achievement of the PML-N government.

He said that Pakistan has good relations with Muslim countries including Iran and Saudi Arabia. He said permanent membership of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is also a big achievement of Pakistan. About Kashmir dispute, the foreign minister said Pakistan had strongly advocated the longstanding dispute at all international forums.

Winding up debate on the cut motions, Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Shaikh Aftab Ahmed pointed out that several power plants were commissioned during the tenure of present government which added 10,000 megawatts electricity to the national grid.

He said that there are plans to add 5000MW of electricity to the system by 2025.

The minister said sufficient gas is available in the country after the import of LNG. He claimed that no CNG station or any other factory is closed today due to gas shortage.

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