

## PM Shehbaz, President Zardari reaffirm commitment to minority rights

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On the occasion of National Minorities' Day, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and President Asif Ali Zardari reiterated their dedication to protecting the rights of minority communities and acknowledged their vital contributions to the nation's development. As the country celebrates its diversity, top officials emphasised the importance of unity, tolerance, and religious freedom for all citizens. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif pays tribute to minority contributions Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif commended the excellent role of minorities in Pakistan's national progress and prosperity. In his message on National Minorities' Day, the Prime Minister expressed the government's resolve to protect the rights of minority communities and ensure their welfare. He emphasised that the government is taking practical steps to promote the well-being of minorities, including the allocation of special seats and employment opportunities on merit,

reflecting the provision of equal opportunities for all citizens. The Prime Minister highlighted that the observance of National Minorities' Day at the official level serves to express solidarity with minorities and to acknowledge their invaluable contributions to the State of Pakistan. He recalled the significant role played by minority communities in the Pakistan Movement and their continued contributions since the country's inception. Referring to Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah's historic speech on 11 August 1947, PM Shehbaz reaffirmed the government's commitment to ensuring complete religious freedom for minorities. He noted that under Quaid's vision, August 11 is observed as a day to recognise the contributions and identity of minority communities in Pakistan. The premier underscored that the Constitution guarantees complete and equal rights to minorities, and the government is committed to upholding these rights. "The Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus, Christians, Parsis, and other religious communities living in Pakistan are independent citizens of the country, enjoying equal rights and freedom to lead their lives according to their faiths," he stated. He also acknowledged the significant contributions of minorities in various sectors, including their vital role in the country's defence, where many have laid down their lives for the protection of the motherland. The prime minister urged minority communities to continue playing their role in national progress without discrimination and in unity. Furthermore, Shehbaz Sharif emphasised that under Islamic teachings, the rights of

minorities are strongly protected, with a focus on tolerance, mutual respect, and the protection of human rights without discrimination. He noted that the government has taken solid steps to ensure the protection of minorities' rights, their lives, and their properties, as well as the maintenance and enhancement of their sacred religious sites. He also called on religious scholars (Ulema) and the public to promote forbearance, tolerance, peace, and interfaith harmony among the people, and to work alongside all institutions in this regard. President Asif Ali Zardari reiterated Pakistan's commitment to ensuring the protection of religious, social, political, and economic rights for its minorities. In his message on National Minorities' Day, the President highlighted that Pakistan observes this day annually to acknowledge the contributions of minorities to the nation's socio-economic development. "Pakistan celebrates Minorities' Day on 11 August every year to acknowledge the contributions of our minorities towards Pakistan's socio-economic development," President Zardari stated. "On this day, we reaffirm our commitment to the promise made by Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, on 11 August 1947, to the country's minorities to protect their rights and religious freedoms," he added. He emphasised that minorities in Pakistan enjoy all political, economic, and social rights as guaranteed by the Constitution. "Our religion Islam also fully recognises and advocates the protection of the rights of minorities. I am glad to say that Pakistan has taken a number of steps for the political, social, and

economic empowerment of minorities,” he said. Zardari also detailed several initiatives, saying, “In this regard, we have allocated a five per cent quota for minorities in government jobs and separate seats in both houses of the parliament to encourage them to play an effective role in the political and national development of the country.” He further elaborated on additional measures: “Steps are being taken to provide financial assistance to poor and deserving individuals, marriage grants, scholarships to students from minority communities for their education, besides the provision of funds for the repair/maintenance of their worship places.”

President Zardari affirmed that every Pakistani has the right to live according to their faith, irrespective of religion, caste, colour, or creed. He urged all segments of society, including religious scholars, minority representatives, and the media, to educate the public about their rights and to work toward promoting interfaith harmony, love, tolerance, brotherhood, and unity to strengthen Pakistan. He assured all minorities that Pakistan would continue to make every effort to safeguard their rights and provide equal opportunities for their advancement. “I am confident that the minorities of Pakistan will continue to play their positive role towards the country’s development. I congratulate them on the special day and I wish them all the best in their future endeavours,” the president concluded. Meanwhile, the Armed Forces of Pakistan recognised the indispensable contributions of minority communities to the nation’s progress and

culture. In a statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the Armed Forces extended warm felicitations to minority communities on National Minorities' Day. "The Armed Forces of Pakistan, the Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, and the Services Chiefs extend warm felicitations to the minority communities of Pakistan on their dedicated day, acknowledging their indispensable contributions to the nation's progress, prosperity, and rich cultural heritage," the statement read. "This occasion serves as a poignant reminder of the diversity, inclusivity, and harmonious coexistence that are the hallmarks of our great nation," it said, adding that minority communities are an "integral and vital part of our social fabric, and their rights and freedoms are sacrosanct, as enshrined in the Constitution and Islam." The Armed Forces of Pakistan honour the unwavering commitment, dedication, and sacrifices of the minority communities, recognizing their unshakeable loyalty to the nation and their invaluable role in fostering a cohesive and pluralistic society, the statement said. "We celebrate their spirit and reiterate our commitment to protecting and promoting their rights, freedoms, and welfare," the statement concluded.