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## Railway Reforms and Economic Revival Take Center Stage in Pakistan

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Pakistan's Railways Minister Hanif Abbasi has unveiled an ambitious modernization plan for the nation's rail network while touting significant economic progress under the current administration. Speaking at Lahore Press Club, Abbasi announced infrastructure upgrades, digital transformation initiatives, and strict anti-corruption measures – positioning these reforms as key to revitalizing the state-run enterprise.

The minister claimed inflation had plummeted from 38% to zero through government intervention, including shutting down inefficient Independent Power Producers (IPPs).

The railway overhaul includes tangible improvements already underway: upgraded station facilities, a new Business Train with Wi-Fi services, and a critical 105-kilometer coal transport line expected to slash power costs by 70%. Abbasi emphasized fiscal responsibility, revealing plans to digitize operations through a mobile app integrated with 16 banks and ATMs across 348 stations. “Pakistan Railways can achieve profitability relieved of pension burdens,” he stated, criticizing previous mismanagement while praising frontline workers. These measures align with Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz’s Rs. 50 billion Lahore-Rawalpindi track upgrade aimed at reducing travel time to two hours.

Security and efficiency dominate the reform agenda. The recruitment of 500 new Railway Police officers and installation of advanced scanners address longstanding safety concerns, while outsourcing cleaning services mirrors global best practices. Abbasi warned against “ticketless travel and smuggling,” threatening imprisonment for violations. His combative stance extended to geopolitics, accusing India of regional destabilization while praising China, Türkiye, and Azerbaijan for supporting Pakistan during crises. The minister notably referenced the military’s downing of “five Indian aircraft” as evidence of strengthened national defense.

While Abbasi’s announcements project confidence, implementation remains the true test. The promised July 29 launch of premium Business Train services and April completion of the coal corridor will serve as early indicators of reform efficacy. As Pakistan Railways moves toward

automation and service upgrades, success will hinge on sustained funding and bureaucratic cooperation – factors the minister acknowledged must improve. With these changes, the government aims to transform the rail network from a fiscal burden into a modern, profit-generating asset that reflects Pakistan’s economic ambitions.

