



PRESS RELEASE

STZA Rejects Disinformation Campaign

ISLAMABAD - May 25, 2022:

The Special Technology Zones Authority (STZA) is a statutory authority set up in October 2021, under the Special Technology Zones Authority Act, 2021 (STZA Act) which was enacted by the Parliament after unanimous approval from the Senate and National Assembly. The STZA Act was finalized after conducting comprehensive consultation with stakeholders in the government, academia, and industry through the triple-helix model of innovation. STZA's strategic objectives include high-quality job creation for the youth, enablement of local and foreign investments in technology, human capital development, knowledge creation through research and development, and streamlining regulatory bottlenecks. Pakistan's technology infrastructure and supportive regulatory framework are equally important to unlock Pakistan's true technology potential. STZA's vision is to build a government authority that attracts the best talent in the country and works towards establishing a model government authority for the country that functions with a robust, efficient, and transparent regulatory framework, built-in line with best international and local practices.

STZA has achieved considerable progress in institutional development: we have an investment pipeline of US\$ 500 Million, we are creating and optimizing our regulatory framework, and we are actively pursuing stakeholder mobilization and technology ecosystem linkages, all in record time! To this end, STZA's One-Window Facility contract award will be announced this month during the launch of Freelance Fest 2022. STZA's One-Window Facility is a major step by the Federal Government, Provincial Governments, and relevant government agencies in digitally transforming the regulatory journey of technology companies in Pakistan.

STZA operates as an autonomous statutory body and its licensing framework enables tax-free technology zones with 10 years of exemption on income tax, customs duties, sales tax etc. along with provision for opening special foreign currency accounts to enable relevant sectors cross-cutting with technology. These sectors include Agri-tech, Fintech, IT & ITes, high-tech manufacturing, computing infrastructure, digital data storage, BPOs, Electric Vehicles, Biotech, Maritime technologies, Robotics, IoT etc.

A detailed list of various categories can be found in STZA Act 2021 and STZA (Qualification and Approval) Rules 2021. STZA is expected to announce 15-20 technology zones across all provinces, subject to completion of respective documentation as per the law, by end of FY 22-23 with diverse cross-sectoral investments. STZA's awareness efforts are in full swing to cascade a positive narrative about Pakistan's technology business case locally and globally; most importantly, based on strategic planning and regulatory frameworks. STZA has represented Pakistan on various global platforms in the UK, Russia, China, UAE, Spain, US, etc.



Moreover, STZA has received significant interest from local and international organizations, as a result around 70 applications have been received and are currently under review. This influx of businesses is expected to bring over \$500 Million in investment in Pakistan as of present and STZA expects this figure to double in the next financial year.

Since its inception, STZA has ensured that it facilitates all applicants for Zone Developer Licenses and Zone Enterprises Licenses under a transparent legal framework at all levels of its licensing operations. Tragically, a transformative initiative launched under the national policymaking landscape, to transform the technology sector in Pakistan is being subjected to misinformation, blackmail, and slander, with malicious intent to unduly influence the process of law under its licensing framework. In this case, a media group related with a license applicant has launched a coordinated disinformation campaign against STZA through its media channels and social media, after it failed to satisfy the applicable legal requirements.

STZA has obtained a restraining order from the Honorable Sindh High Court against the media group for its defamatory campaign through gross abuse of media power; however, the media group has not restrained from publishing and broadcasting defamatory content, which is in clear violation of the stay order of Sindh High Court. These legal violations are being observed by STZA which are also being reported to the concerned government authorities. STZA also reserves the right to pursue criminal action against the media group for its continued malicious and defamatory campaign. STZA will not compromise on the integrity of its laws, policies, and frameworks. Any blackmail, harassment, or mala fide campaigns against STZA and its officials to unduly influence the process of law will not pressurize STZA into awarding a license to any entity and may result in blacklisting of the subject legal entity and its directors. STZA also reserves the right to take strict legal action against such entities and individuals.