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From dormancy to dynamism, CCP's institutional rebirth

The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) has undergone a remarkable transformation, emerging as a dynamic and credible force against anti-competitive behavior, in recent times.

The organization has implemented a string of impactful reforms that have strengthened enforcement, improved transparency, and re-established its role as a supra regulator, said a press release issued here on Monday.

One of the most significant achievements was the establishment of a Market Intelligence Unit (MIU) in October 2023.

This proactive arm is tasked with monitoring key sectors and detecting collusion, market abuse, and deceptive marketing.

Within a few months, the unit identified 136 cases, demonstrating its effectiveness. Staffed with economists, legal experts, statisticians, and data analysts, the MIU has become integral to CCP's enforcement strategy.

The Commission also made strides in penalty recoveries, securing over Rs. 100 million from violators of competition law.

Recovery efforts are ongoing in numerous additional cases.

These actions have not only restored CCP's regulatory credibility but have also sent a clear signal that anti-competitive behavior will no longer go unchecked.

In terms of legal accomplishments, CCP recorded its highest number of favorable decisions in a single year — with 11 cases won in the Supreme Court, 40 in the Competition Appellate Tribunal (CAT), and dozens more in various High Courts.

Streamlining of the internal hearing process has reduced delays, enabling most cases to be resolved in just two to three sittings.

Internally, the legal department was restructured with the hiring of experienced legal professionals, reducing dependency on costly external counsel and increasing the Commission's capacity to pursue complex litigation.

Another milestone was the transformation of the research wing into a dedicated Center of Excellence in Competition Law.

This body is now producing in-depth sectoral assessments — covering industries such as insurance, energy, LNG, and fertilizers — to identify market distortions and regulatory barriers. The resulting studies also form the basis for public awareness campaigns through policy briefs and documentaries.

To address long-standing infrastructure needs, the CCP initiated the construction of its own headquarters in Islamabad's Mauve Area, with a groundbreaking ceremony planned for March 2025. The move is expected to save Rs. 150 million annually in rental costs and energy bills and would accommodate the expanding workforce.

Public outreach has also seen renewed focus.

A multimedia advocacy campaign launched in December 2023 features short documentaries and informational videos exposing cartel behavior, deceptive marketing, and monopolistic practices in key sectors such as sugar, cement, and steel.

The campaign aims to educate businesses and the public while encouraging whistleblowing and accountability.

On the economic front, the Commission's proactive stance on mergers and acquisitions has significantly contributed to investor confidence. More than 90 Phase-1 merger orders have been issued in sectors including oil, LNG, IT, food, and banking. These transactions have facilitated foreign direct investment worth Rs. 29.65 billion since mid-2023.

Efforts to clear a backlog of legal cases has also gained momentum, with the launch of early hearing applications aimed at recovering Rs. 74 billion in penalties from over 550 pending cases. So far, 82 have been decided, with the rest under active pursuit.

Dr. Kabir Sidhu, the Chairman, is a seasoned professional with over two decades of diverse experience in tackling market abuse and regulating cartels.

He holds a PhD in Law from the University of Manchester, with a specialization in market abuse and manipulation, along with an LLM in Banking, Insurance, and International Business Law. His academic rigor is complemented by hands-on experience as a legal consultant, academic researcher, and compliance expert.

With a solid grasp of competition law and a reform-driven mindset, Dr. Sidhu has proven to be the right person for the right job — steering the CCP through a critical phase of institutional rebuilding and restoring its stature as a vigilant guardian of competitive markets in Pakistan.

Altogether, these reforms have breathed new life into the institution — revitalizing its enforcement mechanisms, improving stakeholder engagement, and reinforcing its central mission: to promote fair competition, protect consumers, and support a level playing field for all market participants.

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