

MEDIA COVERAGE

5th RASTA Conference, from 26 to 27 February, 2025 Islamabad

Web Coverage

Before Conference

Islamabad Post

<https://islamabadpost.com.pk/pides-5th-two-day-rasta-conference-starts-wednesday/>

APP Pakistan

<https://www.app.com.pk/business/pides-5th-two-day-rasta-conference-starts-wednesday/>

Urdu Point

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/business/pides-5th-two-day-rasta-conference-starts-we-1931931.html>

Day 01

Pakistan Observer

<https://pakobserver.net/pide-to-hold-two-day-rasta-conference-from-today/>

Business Recorder

<https://www.brecorder.com/news/40350280/planning-minister-identifies-major-impediments-to-economic-progress>

Daily Times

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/1269724/data-evidence-based-research-policies-needed-for-national-development-ahsan/>

The Asian Telegraph

<https://theasiantelegraph.global/?p=25844>

Voice of Melange

<https://voiceofmelange.global/?p=24009>

Bol News

<https://www.bolnews.com/latest/2025/02/rasta-conference-a-convergence-of-policy-research-and-economic-transformation/>

<https://www.bolnews.com/urdu/pakistan/2025/02/432955/>

WE News

<https://wenews.pk/news/282493/>

Islamabad Post

<https://islamabadpost.com.pk/pide-launches-5th-rasta-conference-to-drive-economic-reforms/>

The Pakistan Time

<https://thepakistantimes.com.pk/tag/and-economic-transformation-islamabad/>

Radio Pakistan

<https://www.radio.gov.pk/26-02-2025/planning-minister-calls-for-strengthening-export-sector>

Daily Independent

<https://www.dailyindependent.com.pk/2025/02/26/planning-minister-challenges-researchers-to-conduct-research-on-enhancing-exports-emphasizes-scientific-planning-research-relevance-and-global-competitiveness-at-rasta-pide-conference/>

The Asian Telegraph

<https://theasiantelegraph.global/?p=25801>

Independent News Pakistan

<https://www.inp.net.pk/news-detail/pakistan/pide-highlights-policy-convergence-research-and-economic-transformation-in-5th-rasta-conference>

Voice of Melange

<https://voiceofmelange.global/?p=23964>

Day 02

APP Pakistan

<https://www.app.com.pk/business/rasta-pides-5th-conference-concludes-after-in-depth-policy-discussions/>

Islamabad Post

<https://islamabadpost.com.pk/in-depth-policy-discussions-and-groundbreaking-research-define-day-2-of-the-5th-rasta-pide-conference/>

Urdu Point

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/business/rasta-pides-5th-conference-concludes-after-i-1933914.html?utm>

Print Editions

Daily Spokesman

Islamabad - Karachi - Lahore

February 27, 2025

5th RASTA Conference: A Convergence of Policy, Research, and Economic Transformation

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) inaugurated the 5th RASTA Conference, reaffirming its commitment to evidence-based policymaking, economic innovation, and research-driven reforms. As Pakistan's largest economic and public policy research grant initiative, RASTA has grown into a dynamic platform for intellectual discourse, collaboration, and actionable policy solutions. The conference brought together renowned academics, policymakers, and development experts, fostering an open exchange of ideas on Pakistan's economic future.

Federal Minister for Planning, Development & Special Initiatives, Prof. Ahsan Iqbal Chaudhary, the chief guest, delivered a compelling keynote address, likening Pakistan's economic journey to an athlete making up for lost ground. With 22 critical

years ahead, he warned that the country must sprint forward, eliminating inefficiencies and embracing structured, data-driven policymaking.

Earlier, in his opening remarks, Dr. Muhammad Nadeem Javaid, Vice Chancellor of PIDE, emphasized that PIDE is not just a think tank—it is a bridge between research and action. He outlined a vision for strengthening Pakistan's policymaking landscape through new initiatives designed to ensure that research translates into real impact. He announced the establishment of a Policy Lab that will provide real-time, data-driven solutions for governance and economic challenges.

Dr. Faheem Jehangir, Director Policy at PIDE and Project Director RASTA, provided insights into RASTA's remarkable expansion over the past four years. The initiative has cultivated an extensive knowledge network, collaborating with 70 local universities, 12 international institutions, and over



4,300 researchers, practitioners, and academicians.

The conference also featured several technical sessions on

technology-driven economic growth, fiscal management, and

governance efficiency. The first session, "Tech for Competition

and Growth," included research presentations on Big Data Analytics in business competitiveness, the development of a Tech Index for Pakistan, the adoption of UAVs in agriculture, the impact of digital currencies, and pharmaceutical export competitiveness. This session was chaired by Bahar Majid Bhatti, CEO of the National Information Technology Board (NITB), with Zahid Asghar, Professor at Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad, as the discussant.

The second session, "Fiscal Management," featured experts including Hafeez A. Pasha discussing Pakistan's tax system, broadening the tax base, sub-national revenue collection, and the impact of the 18th Constitutional Amendment on fiscal policy. It was chaired by Ikram Ul Haq, Professor of Taxes and Managing Partner at Huzaima & Ikram, with Imtiaz Ahmad, Economic Adviser at the Ministry of Finance, serving as the discussant.

Pakistan **OBSERVER**

February 27, 2025

Data, evidence-based research, policies needed for national development: Ahsan

ISLAMABAD

Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal has underlined the need for accessible data, evidence-based research and policies to advance national development goals, specifically the objective of increasing exports from \$30 billion to \$100 billion.

"Pakistan's biggest challenge is how fast we can grow our exports. This will determine our development and how soon we can achieve the \$100 billion export target. To achieve this, we need a significant shift from an increase of 30-40 degrees to 80-90 degrees supported by data and evidence-based guidance," he said while addressing the inaugural session of the two-day RASTA-PIDE conference.

The seminar, organized by the Pakistan In-

stitute of Development Economics (PIDE) under the RASTA Competitive Grants Program, focused on transformative policy research and development strategies. During the event, 24



research papers are being presented across six technical sessions.

The conference participants covered various topics, including "Tech for Competition and Growth," "Fiscal Management," "Sludge and Development," "Human Capital and Opportunities," "Sustainable Development," and "Po-

litical Governance."

Citing the Chinese model of development, the Planning minister urged the adoption of scientific planning driven by data and evidence, advancing the progress journey in phases and taking the easier path first to achieve the required national development goals.

He stressed the importance of integrating research and development work into the decision-making process, contributing to national growth and prosperity and ensuring the optimal use of billions of rupees being spent on university laboratories.

"With the limited available resources, we need to be focused and strategic in our research agenda, producing concrete ideas and solutions to the challenges we face, while increasing our earning capacity both

domestically and internationally," he said.

Commenting on past setbacks, Ahsan Iqbal regretted that whenever the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government set the country on a consistent path of development and prosperity, the system was derailed, preventing the continuation of that agenda.

He recounted that the PML-N government eradicated terrorism, ended prolonged power load-shedding and secured around \$25 billion in investment during the first phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project. He noted that ambassadors from leading countries were seeking investment opportunities in various sectors. Unfortunately, he said, all this progress was halted in 2018 to facilitate certain interests.—APP

February 27, 2025

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"Pakistan's biggest challenge is how fast we can grow our exports. This will determine our development and how soon we can achieve the \$100 billion export target. To achieve this, we need a significant shift from an increase of 10-40 degrees to 80-90 degrees supported by data and evidence-based guidance," he said while addressing the inaugural session of the two-day RASTA-PIDE conference.

The seminar, organized by the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) under the RASTA Competitive Grants Program, focused on transformative policy research and development strategies. During the event, 24 research papers are being presented across six technical sessions.

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He also recalled the PML-N government's Vision 2010 and Vision 2025, which led world-leading rating agencies to predict that Pakistan would be among the top 20 economies by 2030.

"In business and economy, sentiment matters more than the balance sheet. Many companies grow despite having an average balance sheet, simply because sentiment is strong," he said. In 2017, Pakistan had successfully developed a positive sentiment, but

"a forced change had altered everything," he added.

The minister argued that it was on record that no nation has ever achieved the status of a developed country without a decade of political stability, citing four basic pillars: peace, political stability, policy continuity and a continuous reform agenda.

"A strong ecosystem based on these four elements is essential for national development and prosperity," he remarked.

Earlier, in his opening remarks, PIDE Vice Chancellor Dr Muhammad Nadeem Javaid, said the institute was a bridge between research and action, and not just a think tank, outlining a vision for strengthening Pakistan's policymaking landscape through new initiatives designed to ensure that research translates into real impact.

He announced the establishment of a Policy Lab that would provide real-time, data-driven solutions for governance and economic challenges.

To further enhance the quality of research and policy recommendations, PIDE is implementing a rigorous research funding mechanism that prioritizes high-impact, evidence-based studies. Additionally, a recruitment drive will bring in 90 top researchers and policymakers purely on merit.

As part of a broader initiative

to integrate academic research with policymaking, PhD students will be placed in economic ministries, where they will work on real-world policy challenges while developing their research theses.

PIDE Director Policy and Project Director RASTA Dr Faheem Jehangir provided insights into RASTA's remarkable expansion over the past four years.

The initiative has cultivated an extensive knowledge network, collaborating with 70 local universities, 12 international institutions, and over 4,300 researchers, practitioners, and academicians.

The Competitive Grant Program (CGP) has received 1,664 applications across seven rounds, but to maintain quality and impact, only 90 research projects (7.8% selection rate) were funded.

Of these, 65 have been successfully completed, while the remaining 25 are being presented at this conference.

In parallel, the Demand-Driven Research (DDR) Program, which addresses government policy needs, has funded 33 government-driven projects, with 22 completed and publicly accessible.

The conference also featured several technical sessions on technology-driven economic growth, fiscal management, and governance efficiency. **APP**

February 27, 2025

Planning minister identifies major impediments to economic progress

TAHIR AMIN

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal, terming governance instability and policy discontinuity as major barriers to economic progress, stressed the need for accessible data, evidence-based research and policies to advance national development goals, including increasing exports from the current around \$30 billion to \$100 billion.

This, he stated, while addressing at the inauguration of the 5th RASTA Conference, organised by Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE). He said that biggest challenge of the country is how fast it grows its exports, which would determine development and achieve the \$100 billion export target.

The minister said that with 22 critical years ahead, the country must sprint forward, eliminating inefficiencies and embracing structured, data-driven policymaking. China, South Korea, and Singapore as examples of nations have successfully leveraged scientific planning, phased implementation, and policy consistency to achieve economic success, while Pakistan continues to complicate simple problems. Research, he stressed, must move beyond academic papers and integrate into industry, governance, and economic policies.

Despite billions invested in

STEM education, he cautioned that without proper application, these investments risk becoming wasted opportunities. He said that between 2013 and 2018, Pakistan eliminated power shortages, secured \$25 billion through CPEC, and improved security. However, political disruptions halted this momentum, proving that economic success is impossible without stability. As a way forward, he called for rapid export expansion, resource optimisation, and structured economic planning.

Dr Hafeez Pasha, former finance minister said that the overall buoyancy coefficient of total tax revenue to GDP in recent years is low at 0.88, which needs to be augmented. He said that according to a 27 cross country analysis of the determinants of the tax-to-GDP ratio, the magnitude of this ratio should be higher in Pakistan by at least 1.4 percent of GDP.

Application of the representative tax system approach to the same 27 countries including Pakistan reveals that tax-to-GDP ratio should be higher by 3.1 percent of the GDP. Direct taxes need to be higher by 2.2 percent of the GDP and indirect taxes by 0.9 percent of the GDP. He said that the overall federal "tax gap" is estimated at 3.8 percent of GDP while the provincial tax gap is estimated at 1.6 percent of GDP. Given the findings, a feasible target for raising the tax-to-GDP ratio is by up to 3.5 percent of the GDP from

2024-25 to 2026-27. This will still leave some revenue potential to be exploited in subsequent years. Already, the estimates are that the taxation proposals in the federal budget of 2024-25 will raise the tax-to-GDP ratio by 1.2 percent of GDP. Therefore, the target of additional revenues from the tax reforms is 2.3 percent of GDP. The IMF programme target is three percent of GDP.

The objective of the conference was to reaffirm the commitment to evidence-based policymaking, economic innovation, and research-driven reforms. The conference brought together renowned academics, policymakers, and development experts, fostering an open exchange of ideas on Pakistan's economic future, Dr Pasha added.

Dr Muhammad Nadeem Javaid, vice chancellor of PIDE, emphasised that PIDE is not just a think tank; it is a bridge between research and action. He outlined a vision for strengthening Pakistan's policymaking landscape through new initiatives designed to ensure that research translates into real impact. He announced the establishment of a Policy Lab that will provide real-time, data-driven solutions for governance and economic challenges.

To further enhance the quality of research and policy recommendations, PIDE is implementing a rigorous research funding mechanism that prioritises high-impact,

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جمعرات 27 فروری 2025ء

وزیر منصوبہ بندی کا براہِ راست ملکی و علاقائی ترقی کیلئے بڑا چیلنج

پانچویں راستہ پائینڈ کانسٹریکشنز کا انعقاد، وفاقی وزیر برائے منصوبہ بندی، ترقی نے اپنے خطاب میں پاکستان کی ترقی کے لیے ایک جامع وژن پیش کیا شواہد پر مبنی پالیسی سازی، معاشی اصلاحات کو قومی ترقی کا سنگ بنیاد قرار دیا، تقریب میں نامور ماہرین تعلیم، محققین اور پالیسی سازوں نے شرکت کی

اسلام آباد (سٹاف رپورٹر) آج اسلام آباد میں پانچویں راستہ پائینڈ کانسٹریکشنز کا انعقاد ہوا، جہاں وفاقی وزیر برائے منصوبہ بندی، ترقی و خصوصی اقدامات پروفیسر احسن اقبال نے اپنے کلیدی خطاب میں پاکستان کی ترقی کے لیے ایک جامع وژن پیش کیا۔ انہوں نے سائنسی منصوبہ بندی، شواہد پر مبنی پالیسی سازی اور پائیدار معاشی اصلاحات کو قومی ترقی کا سنگ بنیاد قرار دیا۔ اس پروگرام تقریب میں نامور ماہرین تعلیم، محققین اور پالیسی سازوں نے شرکت کی، جن میں ڈاکٹر ادریس پاشا، ڈاکٹر ندیم جاوید اور ڈاکٹر حفیظ پاشا نمایاں تھے۔ پروفیسر احسن اقبال نے کہا کہ اس کانفرنس میں محققین کی جانب سے پیش کردہ تحقیقی نتائج قومی ترقیاتی حکمت عملیوں کو نئی جہت دینے کا سہری موقع فراہم کرتے ہیں۔ انہوں نے عالمی سطح پر کامیاب ممالک کا حوالہ دیتے ہوئے کہا کہ ترقی کا راز سائنسی منصوبہ بندی میں مضمر ہے اور پاکستان کو بھی اسی راہ پر گامزن ہونا ہوگا۔ انہوں نے محققین کو مخاطب کرتے ہوئے کہا کہ ہمیں اپنی صلاحیتوں کو بروئے کار لا کر ترقی کے نئے باب رقم کرنے ہیں۔ وزیر منصوبہ بندی نے براہِ راست شعبے کو قومی معیشت کا اہم ستون قرار دیا اور کہا کہ اسے عالمی مسابقت اور خود انحصاری کے لیے ناگزیر بنانا ہوگا۔ انہوں نے زور دیا کہ تحقیقی کوششوں کو بالخصوص ٹیکنالوجی، انفارمیشن ٹیکنالوجی، زراعت اور دوا سازی کے شعبوں میں صنعتی کلسٹرز قائم کر کے برآمدات کے معیار بڑھانے پر مرکوز کیا جائے۔ انہوں نے جنوبی کوریا اور سنگاپور کی مثالیں پیش کیں، جنہوں نے منظم حکمت عملیوں سے عالمی منڈیوں میں اپنا لوہا منوایا۔ ان کا کہنا تھا کہ یہ کلسٹرز نہ صرف معاشی ترقی کو تیز کریں گے بلکہ مصنوعات کے معیار کو بہتر بنائیں گے اور غیر ملکی سرمایہ کاری کو راغب کریں گے۔ انہوں نے محققین اور پالیسی سازوں سے کہا کہ وہ مل کر ایسے حل تلاش کریں جو پاکستان کے تجارتی امکانات کو عروج پر لے جائیں اور زرمبادلہ کے ذخائر میں خاطر خواہ اضافہ کریں۔



اسلام آباد:- وفاقی وزیر احسن اقبال میڈیا سے گفتگو کر رہے ہیں۔

PIDE's moot concludes after in-depth policy discussions

ISLAMABAD: A two-day conference organized by the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) under the RASTA Competitive Grants Program concluded on Thursday, following in-depth discussions on transformative policy research and development strategies. During the 5th Research for Social Transformation and Advancement (RASTA) conference, as many as 24 research papers were presented across six technical sessions. Conference participants covered various topics, including "Tech for Competition and Growth," "Fiscal Management," "Sludge and Development," "Human Capital and Opportunities," "Sustainable Development," and "Political Governance." Building on the momentum from previous sessions, the concluding day's discussions centered on some of the country's most pressing socio-economic challenges, including fiscal policy, environmental sustainability, technological innovation and labor market dynamics. In closing, the RASTA-PIDE management extended gratitude to all contributors who have been integral to the success of this initiative. They praised all presenters for their high-quality research and engaging presentations, which not only addressed critical policy gaps but also elevated academic discourse to new heights. The management noted that the methodologies and findings presented surpassed the standards often observed in PhD dissertations and university research, demonstrating the depth and impact of the work being carried out under RASTA-PIDE. Reflecting on the success of the conference, RASTA-PIDE emphasized the critical role of evidence-based policymaking in shaping Pakistan's future. "Today's discussions have reinforced the need for inclusive, forward-thinking policies that align with Pakistan's evolving socio-economic landscape. The RASTA platform continues to foster rigorous academic research that directly informs policymaking, bridging the gap between research and policy implementation." The management also said PIDE remained committed to fostering a collaborative, research-driven policy environment, ensuring that innovative ideas translate into actionable policy solutions for Pakistan's sustainable development.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: Vice Chancellor of PIDE, Dr. Nadeem Javaid, presents a commemorative souvenir to Federal Minister Prof. Ahsan Iqbal on the occasion of the 5th PIDE RASTA Conference.