

MEDIA COVERAGE



High-Level National Leadership Dialogue

December 18, 2025

Express Tribune

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2582793/our-higher-education-participation-rate-is-only-13-ahsan-iqbal>

The News International

<https://www.thenews.pk/print/1387598-excessive-focus-on-publications-increased-research-output-ahsan>

Business Recorder

<https://www.brecorder.com/news/40398244/pide-conference-university-industry-linkages-remain-fragmented-despite-investment-vc>

Islamabad Post

<https://islamabadpost.com.pk/pide-convenes-national-leadership-dialogue-to-reimagine-pakistans-innovation-ecosystem/>

APP Pakistan

<https://www.app.com.pk/national/pide-spotlights-higher-educations-potential-to-fuel-innovation-competitiveness/>

Urdu Point

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/pide-spotlights-higher-educations-potential-2105599.html>

Lead Pakistan

<https://leadpakistan.com.pk/news/ahsan-urges-universities-to-power-pakistans-development/>

Minute Mirror

<https://minutemirror.com.pk/minister-urges-urgent-reforms-in-higher-education-476387/>

Excessive focus on publications increased research output: Ahsan

Rasheed Khalid

Islamabad

Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal has said that excessive focus on academic publications, increased research output but delivered limited real-world impact leaving pressing national challenges in agriculture, industry, exports and technology largely unaddressed.

Mr Ahsan said this in opening remarks at a dialogue on "From knowledge to impact: a national leadership dialogue" organised by Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) here Thursday.

Mr Ahsan described the dialogue as a critical inflec-

tion point in Pakistan's development journey. He highlighted major investments in higher education including the expansion of universities, revival of HEC funding, establishment of national centres in emerging technologies and large-scale PhD training programmes. However, he candidly acknowledged that these investments had yet to produce a robust innovation ecosystem.

In his keynote address, Prof Kamal Munir, Senior Pro-Vice-Chancellor, University of Cambridge, UK, explained that innovation flourishes where universities, industry, and government operate through porous boundaries rather than rigid silos. He underscored the impor-

tance of world-class basic research, entrepreneurial culture, institutional support for knowledge transfer, dense local networks of talent and capital and light-touch intellectual property regimes that encourage collaboration and spin-offs.

Two leadership dialogue sessions focused on universities as engines of innovation and on designing Pakistan's national innovation ecosystem. Discussions examined how university impact should be assessed beyond rankings and publications, how linkages with industry and government can be institutionalised and how incentive and promotion structures can be reformed to reward relevance, engagement and problem-solving.

Ahsan urges universities to power Pakistan's development

■ DNA
ISLAMABAD

Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Thursday stressed the urgent need to transform Pakistan's higher education system into a driver of national development, innovation and economic growth, asking that universities must move beyond paper-based research to produce solutions with real-world impact.

In his opening remarks at the National Leadership Dialogue - From Knowledge to Impact, organized by the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE),

the minister said Pakistan's development visions, including Vision 2010, Vision 2025 and now Uraan Pakistan, reflected a consistent resolve to build human capital, despite repeated disruptions. "We tried to move forward through Vision 2025, but it was disrupted.

Now we are once again trying to move in that direction through Uraan Pakistan," he said, adding that earlier initiatives had nevertheless laid the foundations of today's higher education system.

Recalling his tenure during Vision 2010, Ahsan Iqbal said Pakistan faced an acute shortage of qualified faculty. "At that time, there were only around 350 PhDs

in science and technology, and nearly 65 to 70 percent were close to retirement," he noted.

To address this, he said, the government approved two major initiatives including the overseas scholarship scheme for 5,000 PhDs and the indigenous PhD scholarship programme for another 5,000 scholars. "These 10,000 PhDs today form the backbone of our human resource base on which the system stands," he said, adding that continuity of policy was critical for long-term gains.

The minister said higher education funding was also significantly enhanced during Vision

2025. "When we took charge, the Higher Education Commission was practically shut down and its development budget was around Rs10 to 11 billion. We raised it to Rs45 billion and introduced major reforms to make higher education inclusive and competitive," he said. Explaining the reform agenda, he said a two-tier university system was envisaged: one focused on broad-based access and success, and another "premier league" of universities competing globally in advanced research and academic excellence.

He added that national centres in emerging fields such as artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, big

data, cloud computing, quantum computing and nanotechnology were also initiated. Highlighting international collaboration, Ahsan Iqbal said programmes like the US-Pakistan Knowledge Corridor and the UK-Pakistan Knowledge Gateway were launched to bridge Pakistan's human resource gap.

"Our higher education participation rate is only 13 percent, compared to 25 percent in Bangladesh and 60 percent in China. This gap is holding back our expansion," he said. The minister expressed concern that much of Pakistan's research remained confined to academic journals. "We suffer from what I call academic inflation.

Ahsan urges varsities to power country uplift

DNA

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search remained confined to academic journals. "We suffer from what I call academic inflation. Papers are published, but ideas that can contribute to national development are missing," he said, calling for a shift towards innovation, commercialization and industry linkages. He stressed that universities must become "innovation engines, start-up launchpads and policy think tanks," capable of addressing national challenges in agriculture, industry and technology, while also producing ethically grounded and socially responsible citizens. Ahsan Iqbal said the government was developing a seven-pillar performance audit framework for universities, covering academic excellence, research and innovation, industry linkages, community contribution, technology enablement, governance and quality of graduates. "Our universities must transition into institutions of national development, and this transition has to be made in emergency mode," he said.

December 19, 2025

اسلام آباد (لین لین آئی) وفاقی وزیر برائے منصوبہ بندی، ترقی و خصوصی اقدامات پروفیسر احسن اقبال نے کہا ہے کہ دنیا میں ٹیکنالوجی ایک نیا انقلاب برپا کر چکی ہے جس کے تناظر میں پاکستان کی یونیورسٹیوں کو نئی معیشت کے تقاضوں کے مطابق خود کو ڈھالنا ہوگا۔ نیشنل لیڈرشپ ڈائریکٹوریٹ کی تقریب سے خطاب کرتے ہوئے انہوں نے کہا کہ ازان پاکستان کا بنیادی مقصد یونیورسٹیوں کو محض تعلیمی اداروں کے بجائے ٹیلنٹ اور جدت (انوویشن) کی فیکٹریوں میں تبدیل کرنا ہے، یونیورسٹیوں کو کتابی اور روایتی تحقیق سے آگے بڑھ کر قومی ترقی کے لیے کارآمد اور مسئلہ حل کرنے والی ریسرچ کرنا ہوگی۔ انہوں نے کہا کہ وژن 2010 اور وژن 2025 کے تحت اربوں روپے کی سرمایہ کاری سے ہزاروں پی ایچ ڈی تیار کی گئیں اور ملک بھر میں جامعات کا ایک وسیع نیٹ ورک قائم کیا گیا، تاہم اب اعلیٰ تعلیم کے نظام کو براہ راست معیشت سے جوڑنا ترجیح ہے۔ انہوں نے بتایا کہ اعلیٰ تعلیم میں انوویشن اور اسٹارٹ اپ ایکوسٹم کے فروغ کے لیے یونیورسٹی آف کیمبرج کے ساتھ معاہدہ کیا گیا۔ انہوں نے کہا کہ پاکستان کو بھی اپنی مصنوعات میں ویلیو ایڈیشن اور برانڈنگ کے ذریعے برآمدات بڑھانا ہوں گی۔ یونیورسٹیوں کو ٹیلنٹ کی تیاری کا اعلیٰ مرکز بنایا جائے گا تاکہ نوجوان عالمی معیشت میں مؤثر کردار ادا کر سکیں۔