

## Message from the Health Minister, Azad Jammu & Kashmir

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It is a privilege to extend my warmest greetings to the participants of the 5th Annual Bring Brilliant Minds of Transfusion (BBMT)-Pakistan Conference. This conference, focusing on Safe Blood Transfusion and Thalassaemia, comes at a crucial time as we continue to address critical healthcare challenges not only in Pakistan but also across the region, including Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

The blood transfusion services are an integral component of AJK's Health policy. Blood transfusion services form the backbone of healthcare systems, especially in regions like ours, where access to safe and reliable blood is essential for treating various medical conditions. The services are provided by public sector hospitals and an ever-increasing number of NGO sector blood banks mostly catering to the needs of the thalassaemia patients.

In Azad Jammu and Kashmir, we recognize the growing burden of Thalassaemia and the need for well-regulated, accessible, and safe blood transfusion services. This conference provides an invaluable opportunity for professionals to collaborate, exchange knowledge, and explore innovative solutions to improve blood transfusion practices, particularly for those suffering from inherited blood disorders like Thalassaemia. One of the key issues in the blood transfusion services of AJK is weak regulation and governance of the system. The Government of AJK passed an Act in 2003 to regulate the blood system, and an Authority was established to inspect

blood banks. I am happy to note that a dedicated session on 'Regulation of Blood Transfusion Services' is being organized in the 5th Annual BBMT-Pakistan Conference with both international and national speakers. I hope that the discussions will lead to meaningful progress in improving blood safety and transfusion practices.

It is heartening to see Prof. Zahida Qasim and Dr. Akhlaaq Wazeer representing the AJK's Mirpur Regional Blood Centre at this conference and presenting the use of nucleic acid testing in blood banks. Their participation is a source of pride, and I extend my best wishes for their presentation and participation. Mirpur is indeed a region abundant with medical talent and expertise. The recent launch of the first-ever medical journal from AJK, the *Mirpur Journal of Medical Sciences*, by our medical college is a testament to this wealth of knowledge. Recognition from the Higher Education Commission further underscores its significance. Prof. Zahida Qasim and Dr. Akhlaaq Wazeer played a key role in this journal's recognition.

I appreciate BBMT-Pakistan for bringing together national and international experts to share their expertise on these vital issues. The participation of experts from AJK is appreciated. Their efforts in enhancing the quality of care, strengthening regulatory frameworks, and raising awareness will make a tangible difference in healthcare in AJK.

I wish all participants a fruitful and impactful experience.

Thank you,  
**Dr. Nisar Ansar Abdali**  
Minister of Health  
Government of Azad Jammu & Kashmir