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NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 23RD TO JANUARY 29TH 2017

GROWING INEQUALITY THREATENS TO PULL SOCIETIES APART

The Express Tribune, January 23rd, 2017.

Tehreem Husain

Consider the following fact: Since 2015, the richest 1% has owned more wealth than the rest of the planet.

A recent report “An economy for the 99 per cent” by Oxfam has put the gap between the rich and the poor to be far greater than what was feared before. It has claimed that just 8 men own the same wealth as 3.6 billion who make up the poorest half of the world.

The report details how big businesses and the super-rich are fuelling inequality by evading taxes, driving down wages and using their power to influence politics.

Winnie Byanyima, Executive Director of Oxfam International, has said that “it is obscene for so much wealth to be held in the hands of so few when 1 in 10 people survive on less than \$2 a day. Inequality is trapping hundreds of millions in poverty; it is fracturing our societies and undermining democracy.”

The report has laid emphasis on inequality as a major issue that is afflicting the world and has put forward some startling facts to prove how stark it is.

Incomes of the poorest 10% of people increased by less than \$3 a year between 1998 and 2011, while the incomes of the richest 1% increased 182 times.

Growing inequality threatens to pull societies apart. It leads to increase in crime and insecurity and undermines the fight to end poverty.

Multilateral organisations such as the World Bank have kept the twin goals of fighting poverty and working towards shared prosperity as their foremost agendas.

Former US president Obama in his departing speech to the UN General Assembly also emphasised on global inequality as a crucial agenda when he stated that “a world in which 1% of humanity controls as much as 99% will never be stable”.

Interestingly, the report also claims that inequality is fuelled by the fact that big businesses and the super-rich use their connections to make sure that government policy works for them.

They use a network of tax havens to avoid paying their fair share of tax. Contrary to popular belief, most super-rich are not ‘self-made’.

Analysis from Oxfam has shown that over half of the world’s billionaires either inherited their wealth or accumulated it through industries that are prone to corruption and cronyism.

The report has also interviewed ordinary people in some of the poorest countries and provides a good indicator of how inequality affects people.

Seven out of ten people live in a country that has seen a rise in inequality in the last 30 years. Women are hugely disadvantaged amongst this group as they work in poorly paid sectors and take a disproportionate amount of unpaid care work.

The report indicates that based on current trends, it will take women a whopping 170 years to be paid the same as men.

Stark inequality has also resulted in public anger and has been manifested in recent global events such as the election of Donald Trump in the US, Brexit in the UK and the election of President Duterte in the Philippines.

The report has made some suggestions for achieving a more 'human' economy. This includes efforts by governments to increase taxes on high incomes and wealth to ensure a more level playing field and to generate funds for investment in health, education and job creation.

Governments must ensure that economies work for women. They must make efforts to remove obstacles to women's access to education and ensure a level playing field.

A concerted effort by governments and the private sector is needed to fight inequality across the world.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1303767/growing-inequality-threatens-pull-societies-apart/>

CONTROLLING STUNTING: WORLD BANK PROMISES \$63M TO IMPROVE NUTRITION IN SINDH

The Express Tribune, January 29th, 2017.

KARACHI: A World Bank team has pledged \$63 million to finance the Sindh Nutrition Programme in order to control stunting and malnutrition among children.

The promise came on Saturday after the World Bank delegation, led by its CEO Kristalina Georgieva, met Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah.

Giving an overview to the team, planning and development department's additional chief secretary Mohammad Waseem said that the Sindh government and Unicef conducted a Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey, which made some startling disclosures on stunting.

Due to the shortage of necessary nutrients among girls before their marriage, the growth of children is stunted, leading to stunt rates of 48% in Sindh. The shortage of nutrition also affects the children's height, said Waseem, adding that the wasting (thinness) rate was also measured at 15%.

The Sindh government has worked out a nutrition plan to provide micro nutrients to the mothers and their children right from their birth up to the age of five, said the chief minister. These supplements will also be given to girls who reach puberty, he said.

Shah shared that this plan will bring stunting and wasting rates down by 5% within the first five years, and another 5% in successive five-year programmes.

The World Bank also agreed to finance \$100 million into the restoration of Karachi's old city areas, from Pakistan Chowk to Empress Market, said Shah. Under this project, the roads, water supply, drainage line, buildings and parks will be rehabilitated, along with the construction of some roads in Korangi and Malir.

The World Bank team said this project will be approved in March 2017 but it is a retroactive financing project so the Sindh government can start working on it right now. Shah directed Waseem to finalise the schemes so work can begin soon.

Shah also brought up Sukkur Barrage, which he described as a lifeline of the agro-economy of the province that has been serving the people of Sindh for the last 83 years but has now completed its logical age.

“We have an option to rehabilitate it or to reconstruct a new barrage,” he said, adding that Sindh needs a new barrage even if Sukkur Barrage is rehabilitated. The entire canal system needs an overhaul, he said.

World Bank CEO Georgieva said she went through the case files that the Sindh government filed with the institution. The World Bank supports Sindh but it has yet to be decided whether the rehabilitation or the reconstruction project may be taken up, she said.

We need some more documents and study of the barrage before the final decision, said World Bank country director for Pakistan Patchamuthu Illangovan. Shah told Waseem to provide the World Bank’s Islamabad office with the necessary files.

The Sindh government has also envisaged an ‘Ease of Doing Business Programme’, under which a one-window facility for businessmen and investors will be developed at the Board of Investment, shared Waseem.

Presently, an investor has to make multiple trips to 12 departments to get no-objection certificates for investment or to expand business activities, explained Shah. The one-window operation will help the investors and businessmen to get the required formalities completed without moving from one table to other.

The World Bank team promised to prepare a web portal for this programme.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1309889/controlling-stunting-world-bank-promises-63m-improve-nutrition-sindh/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 16TH TO JANUARY 22 ND 2017

EIGHT MEN OWN AS MUCH WEALTH AS HALF HUMANITY: OXFAM

Dawn January 17th, 2017

DAVOS: Just eight individuals, all men, own as much wealth as the poorest half of the world’s population, Oxfam said on Monday in a report calling for action to curtail rewards for those at the top.

As decision makers and many of the super-rich gather for this week’s World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting in Davos, the charity’s report suggests the wealth gap is wider than ever, with new data for China and India indicating that the poorest half of the world owns less than previously estimated.

Oxfam, which described the gap as “obscene”, said if the new data had been available before, it would have shown that in 2016 nine people owned the same as the 3.6 billion who make up the poorest half of humanity, rather than 62 estimated at the time.

In 2010, by comparison, it took the combined assets of the 43 richest people to equal the wealth of the poorest 50 per cent, according to the latest calculations.

Inequality has moved up the agenda in recent years, with the head of the International Monetary Fund and the Pope among those warning of its corrosive effects, while resentment towards elites has helped fuel an upsurge in populist politics.

Concern about the issue was highlighted again in the WEF's own global risks report last week.

“We see a lot of hand-wringing — and clearly Trump's victory and Brexit gives that new impetus this year — but there is a lack of concrete alternatives to business as usual,” said Max Lawson, Oxfam's head of policy

“There are different ways of running capitalism that could be much, much more beneficial to the majority of people.”

Oxfam called in its report for a crackdown on tax dodging and a shift away from “super-charged” shareholder capitalism that pays out disproportionately to the rich.

While many workers struggle with stagnating incomes, the wealth of the super-rich has increased by an average of 11pc a year since 2009.

Bill Gates, the world's richest man who is a regular at Davos, has seen his fortune rise by 50pc or \$25 billion since announcing plans to leave Microsoft in 2006, despite his efforts to give much of it away.

While Mr Gates exemplifies how outsized wealth can be recycled to help the poor, Oxfam believes such “big philanthropy” does not address the fundamental problem.

“If billionaires choose to give their money away then that is a good thing. But inequality matters and you cannot have a system where billionaires are systematically paying lower rates of tax than their secretary or cleaner,” Mr Lawson said.

Oxfam bases its calculations on data from Swiss bank Credit Suisse and Forbes. The eight individuals named in the report are Mr Gates, Inditex founder Amancio Ortega, veteran investor Warren Buffett, Mexico's Carlos Slim Helu, Amazon boss Jeff Bezos, Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg, Oracle's Larry Ellison and former New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1308854>

BISP BENEFICIARIES INCREASED FROM 1.7M TO 5.4M: REPORT

Dawn, January 18th, 2017

ISLAMABAD: The Benazir Income Support Programme, being one of the largest in South Asia and serving 5.29 million beneficiaries, has been able to reduce poverty rate in the country by seven percentage points based on Food Energy Intake (FEI), says the ‘BISP Impact Evaluation Report’ released here on Tuesday.

However, this would have only a ‘weak impact’ on the poverty gap while using the Cost of Basic Needs (CBN) poverty line as a reference. BISP is associated with a reduction in the poverty gap by three percentage points, but does not have a statistically significant impact on the poverty rate, the quantitative and qualitative research conducted for the third round of the impact of BISP by the Oxford Policy Management explains.

According to the third party evaluation report, the proportion of beneficiary households who were multi-dimensional poor in 2013 categorised as severely multi-dimensional poverty index (MPI) poor was 31, whereas in 2016 this has reduced to 23 per cent.

President Mamnoon Hussain launched the evaluation report at a ceremony, urging BISP to reach out to the segment of the poor who have not yet been reached and take new measures to make self-dependent those who are already benefiting from the social safety net.

BISP chairperson Marvi Memon, while speaking on the occasion, stated that since 2013 the PML-N government had increased budgets for BISP from Rs40 billion to Rs115bn. She said the number of beneficiaries had increased from 1.7 to 5.4m and the quarterly stipend increased from Rs3,000 to Rs4,834.

The report lauded the good targeting mechanism of BISP as 91pc of its beneficiaries were either ultra poor, poor or vulnerable to being poor in 2016 as defined by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics with low literacy rate of only 9pc.

The report states that BISP has induced a net increase of Rs187 in per adult monthly consumption expenditure whereas the per adult equivalent monthly food consumption increased by Rs69 driven by high quality protein. In terms of child nutrition, the report indicates a reduction in proportion of wasted girls and decrease in malnutrition among girls.

‘Waseela-i-Taleem’ initiative under BISP has a positive and significant impact on primary school enrolment. School attendance deprivation on multi-dimensional poverty index (MPI) indicator has reduced from 56pc in 2013 to 49pc in 2016 due to BISP. The initiative, a conditional cash transfer of Rs750 per quarter for a child enrolled in school with at least 70pc attendance has enrolled 1.3m primary school children till date.

As per the evaluation report, women empowerment indicators have highly improved because of BISP. The evaluation report indicates a positive impact of BISP on status of women and their mobility as more women were allowed to travel freely to various localities alone.

Proportion of beneficiary women who can visit market alone has gone up from 25pc in 2011 to 37pc in 2016. Due to collection of cash transfer this mobility has increased and is also having an effect on independence of women other than the beneficiaries. The constitution of 55,000 beneficiary committees has contributed much towards women empowerment through BISP.

BISP brought 5.4m women voters on electoral list by providing them CNICs. In 2011 just 40pc of women in beneficiary households reported that they were likely to vote whilst in 2016 this number has risen to 70pc, showing massive change in implementation of democratic rights.

The report indicates that BISP has resulted in a decrease in the deprivations against indicators of living standards in terms of quality of flooring and cooking fuel used in their households. A positive impact has been recorded on asset retention and accumulation.

There has been an increase in proportion of beneficiary households that own small livestock. This is significant because livestock is a productive investment and also valuable for those families with low financial access.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1309189/bisp-beneficiaries-increased-from-17m-to-54m-report>

IMPACT EVALUATION: BISP REPORT SHOWS 7% DECLINE IN POVERTY

The Express Tribune, January 18th, 2017.

ISLAMABAD: There has been a 7% drop in poverty, 3% decline in poverty gap and 10% rise in school enrollment in Pakistan during the past few years. This improvement is higher than the international average, says the Benazir Income Support Programme’s (BISP) third impact evaluation report.

The report, based on a study by the Oxford Policy Management (OPM), was launched on Tuesday by President Mamnoon Husain at a ceremony in the federal capital.

According to the report, the BISP has reduced poverty rate by 7% points in terms of Food Energy Intake (FEI) poverty line and the poverty gap by 3% points in terms of Cost of Basic Needs (CBN) poverty line.

The report also indicates a reduction in the proportion of beneficiary households that were Multi-Dimensional Poor in 2013. Proportion of households that were categorised as severely Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) poor also reduced from 31% to 23% in 2016.

Disclosing main findings of the report, the OPM Country Representative Sean O'Leary said that BISP has induced a net increase of Rs187 in per adult monthly consumption expenditure whereas the per adult equivalent monthly food consumption increased by Rs69 driven by high quality protein.

The report says school attendance deprivation on the MPI indicator has reduced from 56% in 2013 to 49% in 2016 due to BISP Waseela-e-Taleem, a conditional cash transfer of Rs750 per quarter for a child enrolled in school with at least 70% attendance.

Around 1.3 million primary school children have been enrolled in the programme to date.

Addressing participants at the report's launching ceremony, the BISP Patron-In-Chief – President Mamnoon Hussain – said the BISP has a key role in reforming social protection system in Pakistan.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1298874/impact-evaluation-bisp-report-shows-7-decline-poverty/http://tribune.com.pk/story/1298874/impact-evaluation-bisp-report-shows-7-decline-poverty/>

SLUGGISH GROWTH DERAILING UN PLAN TO END POVERTY

Business Recorder, 18 January 2017

UNITED NATIONS: The world economy has not yet emerged from a period of slow growth, a trend that threatens to derail an ambitious UN plan to end extreme poverty by 2030, a UN report said Tuesday.

The world economy expanded by just 2.2 percent in 2016 – the slowest rate of growth since the 2009 recession — and is projected to grow by 2.7 percent in 2017 and 2.9 percent in 2018, according to the World Economic Situation and Prospects report.

The UN's 48 designated least developed countries, most of which are in Africa, are expected to grow by 5.2 percent in 2017 and 5.5 percent in 2018, well below the target of seven percent needed to make a dent in poverty.

Nearly 35 percent of the population in the least developed countries may remain in extreme poverty unless there is a surge in growth rates, said the report.

To reduce poverty in the least developed countries, investment has to expand by at least 11 percent annually through 2030, it added.

The United Nations has set 17 global goals for sustainable development that provide for eradicating extreme poverty by 2030, along with ensuring healthier lives, promoting education and combating climate change. Lenni Montiel, the UN assistant secretary-general for economic development, said the global economy needs to be stronger “to create an international economic environment that is conducive to sustainable development.”

Developing countries continue to be the main drivers of growth, accounting for about 60 percent of the world's gross product increases in 2016-2018, the report said.

East and South Asia remain the world's most dynamic regions, propelled by robust domestic demand and supportive macroeconomic policies.

Uncertainties over the policies of US President-elect Donald Trump and Britain's decision to leave the European Union have "the potential to undermine any projected recovery in business investment, impede international trade growth and even derail the already weak global growth," the report warned.—AFP

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/01/18/11-page/840592-news.html>

EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH BISP

The Express Tribune, January 19th, 2017.

Marvi Memon

Achieving gender equality and empowering women to be able to actively participate in economic life is not only their basic entitlement but also the prime responsibility of the state. Women empowerment needs to be seen as both the objective and part of the solution to the broader challenges faced today. Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) — the largest social safety net in the South Asian region — is unique in the sense that it not only targets womenfolk by disbursing cash grants to strengthen them economically but also ensures the much-needed support system for their social uplift.

It specifically aims to empower women, providing them with dignity and a meaning to their lives. The BISP Impact Evaluation Report 2016 presents the findings from the quantitative and qualitative research conducted for the third round of the impact evaluation of the BISP. The value of the BISP transfer has steadily increased over the life cycle of the programme.

Beneficiaries are expected to receive quarterly payments. Furthermore, it is useful to consider that the direct beneficiary of the BISP cash transfer are female family heads rather than at the household as a whole. Ten per cent of the BISP beneficiary households had more than one BISP beneficiary, with an average of 1.11 beneficiaries living per household.

One of the preconditions to becoming a BISP beneficiary is that a woman must be in possession of a valid Computerised National Identity Card, to ensure political participation of women. The BISP Impact Evaluation Survey 2016 demonstrates that the literacy level among beneficiary women is extremely low, being just 9% at the national level, whilst just 8% have completed primary school.

The women voting impact estimates surveyed under the BISP impact evaluation survey of 2016 clearly illustrate that BISP has had a positive and statistically significant impact on the proportion of women reporting that they would always vote, whether in a local or national election. In 2011 just 40% of women in beneficiary households reported that they were always likely to vote in a local or national election. By the last round of the evaluation in 2016, this proportion had increased to 70%, with just 11% saying that they will not vote.

Also, BISP has recently created 55,000 Beneficiary Committees in 32 districts to provide a forum for discussing issues such as nutrition, child health, education, family planning and adult literacy, as well as providing a platform for mobilising beneficiary women. The feedback of women of BISP Beneficiary Committees (BBCs) help design projects, which can address their issues related to education, health and finances etc. The BISP transfer has had an impact on the nutrition outcomes of girls with a preference for girls' nutrition when a transfer is targeted at a female beneficiary in the household.

Reports confirm that a vast majority of women beneficiaries across Pakistan retain the control on how to use BISP cash, with 76% of female beneficiaries saying that they are the ones who decide how the transfer is spent. The qualitative research noted that BISP has over time brought a change in the status of women and their decision-making powers in the household. Gradually BISP is perceived by husbands and sons as support which is received through women, and should therefore be controlled by the beneficiary.

In 38 out of 48 in-depth interviews, both male and female respondents said that it should be the beneficiary herself that should control cash received from BISP and decide how it would be used, indicating that female beneficiaries now play a more active role in decision-making within the household including money management.

This finding was most pronounced in K-P, followed by Punjab. The qualitative research suggests that the involvement in decision-making has been accompanied by an increase in the status of women both in the household, but also in the community.

Overall 96% of beneficiaries reported that they were very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with their experience in how they collected the cash transfer. The findings are consistent across the provinces with beneficiaries reporting high levels of satisfaction across each of the four provinces with dissatisfaction ratio to be reported as only 7% in Punjab, 4% in Sindh, 1% in KP, 1% in Balochistan, thus overall only 4% in Pakistan.

The qualitative research indicates that this was perceived as a major benefit of the BISP Debit Card mechanism, with the majority of women in both IDIs and FGDs saying that they preferred ATMs more because anyone could collect the money as was convenient at the time.

The same survey suggests that BISP has had a positive and statistically significant effect on the ability of women to travel alone to various locales in the community. Although the level of financial savings amongst beneficiary households remains overall low, however, this has increased over the period 2011-2016, with just 9% of beneficiary households having any form of savings in 2011 to 13% in 2016.

As a result of the programme, the proportion of women that are engaged in unpaid family labour has fallen, the qualitative research suggests that some women may be engaging in some forms of self-employment like purchase of sewing machines from the cash grant.

BISP Impact Evaluation Report (2016) confirms that BISP has had a statistically significant contribution on decreasing the rate of dependence on casual labour as main income source, falling over the period from 51% of beneficiary households in 2011 to 45% of beneficiary households in 2016.

There is strong evidence that the BISP cash transfer has increased the welfare of beneficiary households at least in terms of increasing their consumption expenditure possibilities, enhancing the quality of their lifestyles.

The Impact Evaluation Report of 2016 confirms that the contribution of BISP towards women beneficiaries is beyond financial assistance, empowering them to exercise their political, social and financial rights. In particular, the 2016 evaluation report notes for the first time that BISP has supported an increase in savings and improvements in material welfare.

The report tells a consistent story of the slowly building impact which is triggering a change in the livelihood strategies of the beneficiary households and how the interventions of BISP enable the womenfolk to support their families on equal footings.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1299765/empowering-women-bisp/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 9TH TO JANUARY 15TH 2017

QUESTION MARK ON BISP

Business Recorder, 9 January 2017

Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) is the most important pro-poor programme in the history of the country. Although, the programme is appreciated and well-recognised both within the country and abroad, there is no shortage

of Doubting Thomases who see it differently. In a recent report in a UK newspaper, Daily Mail, it was stated that the BISP which was designed to provide cash to some of Pakistan's poorest people is not only costly for the UK taxpayers but also subject to corruption.

“Just when you thought it could not get any worse... your cash is doled out in envelopes and on ATM cards loaded with money,” the report blamed. Saying that “around 235,000 families pocket cash every three months to boost incomes”, the newspaper carried a picture of Pakistanis queuing up outside an ATM, withdrawing money, a part of which was provided by the UK government. Other newspapers have picked up the same story, questioning the amount of money provided by the UK which encourages corruption.

According to the report, the UK's Department of International Development was donating £200 million a year to the BISP, contributing about 7 percent of the BISP's total costs. Conservative Member of Parliament, Nigel Evans, who is a member of the influential International Development Select Committee, also agreed that cash transfers were “clearly open to fraud with money siphoned away when it ought to be directed to those most in need”.

Defending the BISP, the UK officials, however, commended the programme for introducing a biometric system with fingerprint checks which means that the British taxpayers could be sure that the help they provide does go to the less fortunate as intended. The BISP helps 5.2 million of the poorest families gain access to food, health, clothing and schools.

Although BISP is a flagship programme of the country to protect the poorest in the country and largely acknowledged as such by all and sundry, the weaknesses of the programme as highlighted by the UK newspapers should not be taken lightly. The programme is, in fact, so popular that it was launched in 2008 by the PPP government and continued by the present PML (N) government for its highly desirable traits of enhancing financial capacity of the very poor and eradicate extreme and chronic poverty.

The cash transfers to eligible families have been increased from Rs 1,000 per family in 2008 to Rs 1200 in 2013, Rs 1500 in 2014 and Rs 1567 w.e.f. 1st July, 2016. BISP has also expanded rapidly over the years. The number of beneficiaries has risen from 1.7 million in 2009 to 5.3 million at the close of March, 2016 and are expected to increase to 5.6 million by the end of June, 2017.

The size of the BISP has also progressively increased from Rs 16 billion in 2009 to Rs 102 billion by June, 2016 and is estimated to rise to Rs 115 billion by the end of current fiscal. In its initial stages, BISP delivered cash transfers through Pakistan Post due to its greater outreach but later started using the innovative payments mechanism in the form of Benazir Smart Card and Mobile Phone Banking. At present, around 94 percent beneficiaries are receiving payments through technology enabled innovative payment mechanisms.

However, whatever the merits of the programme, its deficiencies cannot be whisked away or ignored altogether. The criticism of the UK press and its parliamentarians should be especially noted because Britain is providing financial support to the programme and its critical observations could also prompt other countries and agencies to re-evaluate the scheme and withdraw their support.

This is so because the donor countries need to be given assurance that the money of their taxpayers is meant only for the pockets of the poor to buy vital food, clean water, clothing and healthcare and is not misutilised in any way.

The right way to do this, in our view, is to minimise the influence of parliamentarians in the selection of beneficiaries and give a greater role to neutral officials who are not likely to discriminate between people on some caste, creed or ethnic grounds.

Besides, a higher level of resources could be allocated for projects which could enhance employment opportunities so that the beneficiaries could be facilitated to shift from outright grants of BISP and take up paying jobs over a period of time.

If such a provision was not included, the queue of BISP beneficiaries would continue to grow, burdening the national exchequer more and more. And finally, donor countries and agencies may preferably be associated with the policymaking process in the BISP so that they don't have the reason to criticise the programme openly with a view to stopping its funding. All we wish is the continuation of the scheme to fulfil its noble objectives without much mud thrown at its doors by the outsiders.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/01/09/16-page/838053-news.html>

UNDER SCRUTINY: NUTRITION PROGRAMME AWAITING GOVT'S APPROVAL

The Express Tribune, January 10th, 2017.

Sehrish Wasif

Islamabad: The federal government has not yet approved the Pakistan Nutrition Programme for the years 2016-18.

According to documents available with The Express Tribune, PC-I of Pakistan Nutrition Programme was approved by the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulation and Coordination (NHSRC) in June 2016 and was submitted to the Planning Commission for its approval last year.

The programme aims to improve the nutritional status of the population, especially targeting adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and children under the age of 5. It will concentrate on regions including Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Federal Administrated Tribal Areas (FATA), Gilgit-Baltistan and Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) through well informed, coordinated and effective government leadership.

Despite NHSRC's reminder to the Planning Commission sent on November 30, 2016, requesting it to place the PC-I Central Development Working Party forum for consideration and approval, the latter has taken no such step.

An NHSRC official requesting anonymity told The Express Tribune an NHSRC that the delay was one of the many projects waiting the government's approval.

"The nutrition crisis in Pakistan needs to be dealt with on an emergency basis but still no significant step has been taken in this regard as it is not the government's priority," said the official.

He said Pakistan solely relied on international funding for the programme which was not feasible on a long-term basis as the programme will have to shut down in case international funding stops.

When contacted Dr Baseer Achakzai, head of nutrition wing at the NHSRC Ministry said that the PC-I was submitted last year by the ministry of federal health and an approval is still awaited.

He said a small investment by the government will help Pakistan to improve its nutrition indicators which currently are very disappointing and there has been no significant improvement since last few years.

"We are hopeful that the planning commission will make all out efforts to approve and allocate the required amount for the project," he said.

When contacted, officials at the Planning Commission of Pakistan said that PC-I was resubmitted in November last year and was being scrutinised.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1289603/scrutiny-nutrition-programme-awaiting-govts-approval/>

THREE CHILDREN DIE IN THAR

Dawn, January 15th, 2017

MITHI: Three more children died from complications caused by malnutrition at the Mithi Civil Hospital on Saturday, raising the death toll to 11 so far this month, according to district health office.

DHO Dr Chandar Lal said that most of the children who were dying were newborns and underweight who were already susceptible to diseases.

According to official figures, 479 children lost their lives in 2016 for the same reasons.

Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf leader Haleem Adil Shaikh condemned attitude of the Sindh government and its failure to provide healthcare facilities in the desert region. Over 2,200 children had died over the past three years but no serious steps had been taken to save lives, he claimed.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1308419>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 2ND TO JANUARY 8TH 2017

UK REJECTS CRITICISM OF SCHEME PROVIDING FUNDS TO BISP

Dawn January 4th, 2017

Owen Bennett-Jones

London: The British government has hit back at criticism that one of its foreign aid programmes, designed to provide cash to some of Pakistan's poorest people, is not only costly for UK taxpayers but also subject to corruption. A report on the aid scheme in the UK newspaper the Daily Mail ran under the headline: "Just when you thought it couldn't get any worse... YOUR cash is doled out in envelopes and on ATM cards loaded with money."

Reporting that: "Around 235,000 families pocket cash every three months to boost incomes," the Mail carried a picture of Pakistanis in Peshawar queuing at an ATM. Some of them, the paper said, were withdrawing money provided by the UK government.

Other newspapers in the UK have picked up the story, questioning why the UK is making so many cash transfers and raising the issue of whether the system encourages corruption.

The transfers are made under Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP). The reports say that the UK's Department for International Development is contributing over £200 million a year to the BISP. The British contribution amounts to seven per cent of the scheme's total costs but in the past UK taxpayers have contributed as much as 20pc. Defending the aid, the UK government says that the BISP programme helps 5.2 million of the poorest families gain access to food, health, clothing and school.

Pakistan is one of the UK's highest priorities for foreign aid. Much of the British money is spent on education initiatives in Punjab, but there is also direct support for the country's poorest people.

Speaking to the Daily Mail, Conservative Member of Parliament, Nigel Evans, who is a member of the influential International Development Select Committee, said the cash transfers were "clearly open to fraud".

While some of the BISP's beneficiaries collect their money at post offices, others are given cash cards that enable them to withdraw cash from ATMs. The Daily Mail quoted Saifullah Khan from Peshawar's Khyber Bazaar as saying he got hold of his card after bribing one of his councillors who then registered him on the scheme. 'I paid the money and my card was prepared,' he told the paper.

But British government officials working on foreign aid insist they have a "zero-tolerance" approach to fraud. They argue that, far from encouraging corruption, cash transfers reduce the risk of money going astray.

Conservative MP Nigel Evans says that cash transfers should only be used as a short-term measure in emergency situations: "Anything that involves money needs to be properly scrutinised and is clearly open to fraud with money siphoned away when it ought to be directed to those most in need," he said.

UK officials have praised Pakistan for introducing a biometric payment system with finger print checks which, they say, means British taxpayers can be sure that the help they provide does go to the less fortunate, as intended. They say that around the world UK aid supported cash transfers have helped 8.9 million of the poorest people over the last four years to buy vital food, clean water, clothing and health care.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1306333/uk-rejects-criticism-of-scheme-providing-funds-to-bisp>

PRESIDENT WANTS BISP TO FOCUS ON BIGGER DISTRICTS

Dawn January 5th, 2017

ISLAMABAD: President Mamnoon Hussain has advised the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) to focus on far-flung areas in bigger districts and provide assistance to the people in need there to eliminate poverty.

He said this in a meeting with BISP Chairperson Marvi Memon at the presidency on Wednesday.

The president said that the BISP was playing an important role in eradicating poverty and was also acknowledged internationally.

Mr Hussain lauded the BISP for adopting a biometric system to ensure transparent delivery of payments.

He expressed satisfaction over the government's decision to increase the BISP budget to Rs115 billion for the 2016-17 financial year to help reduce poverty in the country in the long run.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1306537/president-wants-bisp-to-focus-on-bigger-districts>

BISP TO SHOW SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENTS IN OPERATIONS: MARVI

Business Recorder, January 8, 2017

PESHAWAR: The Minister of State and Chairperson BISP MNA Marvi Memon has said that BISP has made significant improvements in its operations for last several years, besides it was ensuring timely release of full payments to beneficiaries.

This, she stated, while visit to various payment points at Dera Ismail Khan on Saturday. The purpose of the visit was to inspect the timely release of full payments to beneficiaries by the banks as Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) believes in effective service delivery and customer care. BISP has recently released its quarterly payments worth Rs.25 billion in last week of December.

The payments in DI Khan made through Debit Cards therefore the Chairperson visited different ATMs and point of sale (POS). The Chairperson inspected the disbursement of the stipend and interacted with beneficiaries for their feedback. She told them to contact BISP Hotline 080026477 in case of any difficulty.

While speaking to beneficiaries the Chairperson stated that BISP is shifting its payment mechanism to Biometric Verification System (BVS) for payments. This will further ease payment mechanism and eliminate middle man culture. At present, 83.9% of beneficiaries are drawing their stipends through debit cards, 13% through biometric mechanism and 3% are receiving funds through Pakistan Post.

Later, the Chairperson held a meeting with PML-N members at Circuit House. She stated that PML-N will win the 2018 elections on the basis of its performance. The economic and security situation of the country has improved significantly under the current government. CPEC is a game changer and all the credit goes to the far-sighted leadership of Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif.

She further added that BISP is recognized internationally for its service to the poor. BISP is committed to bring dignity, empowerment and meaning to life of its beneficiaries. The pilot phase of survey for National Socio Economic Registry (NSER) update is under process in four districts where desks are setup to register people. Door to door survey will be launched in twelve pilot districts soon followed by the national roll out.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/01/08/2-page/837511-news.html>

February 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 13TH TO FEBRUARY 19TH 2017

INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE: GOVT TO CARRY OUT SURVEY ON NUTRITION, FOOD SECURITY

The Express Tribune, February 14th, 2017.

Sehrish Wasif

ISLAMABAD: The government will carry out a countrywide survey this year to determine nutrition, socio-economic conditions and food security status, as well as the water and sanitation situation at the district level, an official told The Express Tribune on Monday.

The survey, he said, will be carried out in collaboration with the UK-based Department for International Development (DFID) and the United Nations International Children's Fund (Unicef).

Currently, the nutritional level of children under the age of five is already extremely poor, but health experts are optimistic about some improvement in the nutritional status of such children in Punjab and Sindh.

They, however, expect alarming results from Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan and Federally-Administered Tribal Areas (Fata). It is because various multi donor interventions have been implemented in Sindh and Punjab but the rest of the provinces and Fata remained deprived of them.

An official in the federal government, who wished not to be named, said that the survey, titled, 'National Nutrition Survey for Children and Women', was supposed to be carried out last year, but was deferred because of financial constraints.

The official said that the ministry of national health services, regulation and coordination had called for funds from the federal government last year, but their request was denied.

Later, the federal health ministry had approached international donors to finance this survey, said the official.

Meanwhile, director of health ministry's nutrition wing Dr Baseer Khan Achakzai said that the survey was highly likely to be launched in May this year, adding that results would be finalised by next year.

DFID, he said, provided \$10 million to the health ministry to carry out the survey while Unicef would provide technical support.

The last survey, he said, had been carried out in 2011, adding that this survey would be carried out after a gap of seven years.

“Previously, this survey was carried out at provincial level, but this survey will be carried out at district level,” he said.

In 2011, around 30,000 households were targeted, adding that 500 teams would visit 130,000 households this year, he said.

“This survey will primarily focus on water and sanitation, socio-economic conditions of the targeted population besides gathering nutrition-related data,” he said.

According to him, respondents would be asked to fill out a questionnaire followed by measurement of mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC), a blood test to determine iron, folic acid and vitamin levels in addition to a urine test to determine the iodine level in children under the age of five years and in women of child bearing age, he said.

He said that results of the 2011 survey were disturbing but no major steps were taken to address them.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1326058/international-assistance-govt-carry-survey-nutrition-food-security/>

HUNGER AMIDST PLENTY

Dawn, February 18th, 2017

ONE of the signature achievements of the modern era has been the near elimination of famines. In pre-modern times, the majority of humanity lived just above the hunger line, meaning more people experienced hunger on a daily basis than they do now. The vast increases in agricultural productivity were partially responsible for the improved situation since they made larger food surpluses available around the world.

But in equal measure, the increasing capacity of the state to target vulnerable populations, and the growing embrace of a value system that made it the rulers' core responsibility to ensure that they fed their poor populace, played a crucial role. The technology for increases in agricultural yields were coupled with massive amounts of money spent on food subsidies and public procurement programmes for food, as well as targeted feeding programmes in the decades following the Second World War and the rolling back of colonial empires.

Then in the early 1980s, it all began to come apart. Famine reared its ugly head in the Horn of Africa, sparking a massive reaction around the world as conscience-driven people mobilised to raise funds and arrange assistance. By the turn of the century, hunger levels around the world were increasing once again, even as the gains from globalisation lifted millions out of poverty.

Today, in the opening decades of the 21st century, the clock is racing backwards at an alarming speed. Most recently, the World Food Programme has announced that more than 20m people are at risk of dying from starvation in four different parts of the world within the next six months. The programme's chief economist says that in his 15 years of experience, this is the first time he has seen such a state of affairs. In three of those regions — Yemen, South Sudan and Nigeria's Borno state — the deaths have already begun.

Pakistan has not seen any famines since gaining independence, and has been a food self-sufficient country since 1970. But even here, hunger has crept into the picture over the past decade. In most cases, famine follows crippling conflict that shuts down markets and all access to the population in the affected area. But hunger can appear in peacetime and amidst plenty as well. Sindh suffers from chronic hunger, and emergency appeals had to go out following the floods of 2011. In 2016, the Global Hunger Index showed Pakistan faced a “serious” situation with 22pc of its population malnourished.

Unicef has said Pakistan’s children are at risk from malnutrition, while the World Food Programme says Pakistan ranks 77 out of a list of 109 on the Global Food Security Index with six out of 10 Pakistanis being food-insecure. This is not yet starvation level, but it is a serious rollback from where we were headed in the years following 1970. Amongst all the regressive trends to deplore in today’s world, the re-emergence of hunger and famine, amidst plenty, must figure among the top items on the list.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1315380>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 6TH TO FEBRUARY 12TH 2017
MALNUTRITION IN SINDH: OVER 57% CHILDREN UNDER-5 STUNTED
The Express Tribune, February 12th, 2017.

Sehrish Wasif

ISLAMABAD: At least 57 per cent of children under five are stunted in Sindh alone, child rights advocacy group Sparc said in a report.

The Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child cited data compiled by the Pakistan Emergency Food Security Alliance (PESFA) in its report titled ‘Children on the Move’.

Thirty-five per cent of children below the age of five are severely stunted. “This is alarming and worrisome,” it said in the report, a copy of which was obtained by The Express Tribune.

Statistics also clearly demonstrated the provincial government’s obliviousness to addressing child and mother health issues.

Citing statistics compiled by the World Health Organisation (WHO), the report showed that the incidence of stunting in children in Tharparkar was recorded at 45.9 per cent. The findings were corroborated by a nutrition and mortality survey that Unicef conducted in Tharparkar, Sanghar and Kamber-Shahdadkot districts of Sindh.

According to the survey, the incidence of Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) in Tharkarpar was 22.7 per cent followed by Sanghar at 16 per cent and Kamber-Shadadkot at 13.8 per cent.

According to the Nutrition and Mortality Survey conducted by HANDS with PDMA support, at least 269 children (aged 0-5 years) were found to be underweight out of 627 children surveyed in Tharparkar district.

Of the total, 149 boys and 120 girls were categorised as underweight.

Dr Baseer Khan Achakzai, the director of the nutrition wing at the federal ministry of health services, said: “Among all other provinces, Sindh is spending the highest amount of money for addressing the malnutrition issues, but no significant improvement has so far been witnessed.”

He said a three-year \$20 million plan for addressing malnutrition was implemented in March last year in Sindh with technical assistance of the federal health ministry in partnership with international donor agencies.

Another Rs4 billion project – ‘Nutrition Support Programme’ – was also implemented by the World Bank in collaboration with the Sindh government in nine districts of the province, he said.

He said that internationally a nutrition emergency was declared whenever acute malnutrition rate in any region declined by up to 15 per cent.

“In Sindh, the acute malnutrition rate has touched 23 percent, but no serious action has yet been taken,” said Dr Achakzai.

Dr Suhail Shaikh, who is the Deputy Programme Manager of the Sindh Nutrition Support Programme, said that the provincial government was aware of the alarming situation.

He said that an ‘Accelerated Action Plan for Stunting Reduction in Sindh’ would be implemented in 29 districts this year to address the malnutrition issue, adding that the plan would be implemented in collaboration with agriculture, education and social protection departments.

“The plan will cover the entire Sindh and will be implemented in a phase-wise manner,” he said.

After Tharparkar, the incidence of malnutrition is most acute in Badin, Umerkot, Sanghar and Jaccobabad, he said.

Citing another survey conducted by Sindh’s health department in collaboration with UNICEF in 2014-15, he said that the stunting rate in the province was 48 per cent.

Head of Sparc’s Sindh chapter Kashif Bajeer said: “In most rural areas (of the province) neither fresh fruits and vegetables nor meat is available.”

“There are several villages where people eat mutton once or twice a year,” he said.

He also said that people across the province were also deprived of clean drinking water.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1324233/malnutrition-sindh-57-children-5-stunted/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 30TH TO FEBRUARY 5TH 2017

SHAHBAZ SHARIF’S CHILD NUTRITION, STUNTING REDUCTION PROGRAMME LAUNCHED

Business Recorder, 31 January 2017

RECORDER REPORT

LAHORE: The ‘Khadim-e-Punjab Child Nutrition and Stunting Reduction Program’ has been approved at the maiden meeting of the provincial steering committee on Monday with Chief Minister Punjab Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in the chair.

In the first phase, the program would be launched in 11 districts of the South Punjab and later the program would be expanded to other districts.

It may be noted that the Punjab MICS 2014 survey shows that every third child in Punjab suffers from chronic malnutrition (stunting). While stunting has shown a downward province-wide trend since 2007, this masks serious problems in some districts. In Dera Ghazi Khan, the worst effected district, however, the rate of stunting is as high as 50.9 percent.

Addressing the meeting, Shehbaz Sharif said the program was very vital for the mother and child health and an effective mechanism had been evolved for the implementation of the program. He said all-out resources would be ensured for the mother and child health.

He said immediate steps would be taken to resolve the issue of stunting reduction and conventional thinking and attitudes would have to be changed in this regard. He said all departments should act in close coordination and effective awareness campaign should be launched.

The member health and planning, P&D gave briefing on the program. Provincial minister Malik Nadeem Kamran, Begum Zakia Shah Nawaz, Khawaja Salman Rafique, Syed Haroon Sultan Bokhari, Khwaja Imran Nazeer, the chairman Planning and Development, and secretaries of the concerning departments were also present on the occasion.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/01/31/13-page/845775-news.html>

BISP SURVEYING 'STATUS OF BENEFICIARIES' TO IMPROVE COVERAGE

Dawn, February 1st, 2017

Amin Ahmed

Islamabad: The Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) is close to achieving another milestone, as it has geared up to update the 'National Socio- Economic Registry' (NSER) which will provide a more dynamic update of beneficiaries across the country.

The new NSER would maintain a relevant and credible registry, and enable BISP to improve the coverage of its core programme and reduce exclusion errors by allowing families who met eligibility criteria but do not currently benefit from income support to update their information and enrol in the programme.

BISP chairperson Marvi Memon while explaining the reasons that necessitated updating the NSER told newsmen on Tuesday that the recent changes in the country's economic indicators of poverty and unemployment might have significantly altered the household composition and demographic information.

She said that the new NSER data would be a national asset covering the entire country. Ms Memon has planned a parallel operational review team which will travel during the door-to-door survey. "It will be my policing team which will check data of survey teams, and also use the local government offices and citizen forums," she said.

Similarly, there was a possibility that a household having entered the BISP programme at a certain level of welfare might no longer need assistance following a significant positive change in its welfare condition, she said.

It was also an internationally-accepted phenomenon that household demographics changed to a considerable degree in five years of time. Any error at design, implementation level or due to time, might lead to inclusion or exclusion errors causing wastage of public resources, Ms Memon said.

The updating of NSER is in place through a pilot phase which includes door-to-door survey in 15 districts across the country and one agency in Fata. During the pilot phase, the BISP tested self-registration as a data collection methodology in four districts — Haripur, Bahawalpur, Sukkur and Nasirabad.

The World Bank has observed that the BISP is associated with poverty and it is painful for the people to publicly declare their poverty. Pakistan with its culture of 'safaidposhi' (garb of nobility) prevents deserving people from registering under the BISP through this survey method. The "BISP needs to carefully examine the success of this method before choosing which NSER survey method to adopt," World Bank advises.

The International Development Association (IDA) is processing a \$100 million credit for the BISP using a 'Programme for Results' (PforR) lending instrument, and would be implemented over a period of four years (2017-2021). The disbursement of funds under the PforR modality will be linked to disbursement linked indicators (DLIs) tied to two result areas: institutional and systems development and income support for human development and access to complementary services.

As part of the exercise to upgrade the national socio-economic registry, the BISP is holding an international conference on Wednesday.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1311964/bisp-surveying-status-of-beneficiaries-to-improve-coverage>

BISP BEING REMODELLED TO MEET CHALLENGES

Dawn, February 2nd, 2017

Bakhtawar Mian

ISLAMABAD: National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq has called for diverting funds to the needy irrespective of their political, religious and other affiliations.

Speaking at the inauguration of an international conference on the National Socio-Economic Registry (NSER), he praised the methodology and role of the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) in improving the lives of the underprivileged class.

The speaker praised the BISP for serving the destitute while keeping in view the transient nature of poverty.

Adviser on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz said the BISP budget reflected the government's commitment to social protection. Congratulating the BISP chairperson for updating the NSER, he said that it would not only provide accurate and transparent information but also link multiple programmes for the beneficiaries.

BISP chairperson MNA Marvi Memon said the NSER, being bigger than the programme, was being shared with the public and private sector organisations for poverty reduction and development programmes. The BISP currently stood at number five in the world but had the vision of becoming number one, she added.

World Bank Country Director Illango Machapattu stated that the BISP was an internationally recognised social safety net programme and countries like Ghana, Nigeria and Afghanistan had learned from it. The World Bank, he said, looked forward to expansion of the pro-poor and financial inclusion agenda of the BISP.

The United Kingdom Department for International Development's Country Director Joanna Reed said the UK government supported the BISP because it dispensed the aid to real needy.

She mentioned that the UK watchdog Independent Commission for Aid Impact in its recent report had appreciated the BISP and added that the shifting of payments to the biometric verification system and NSER update would make it the world leader.

Social worker and former PPP member Shahnaz Wazir Ali said the BISP had excelled to becoming a model social safety net and she hoped the programme would go a long way to empowering women.

The conference was attended by parliamentarians, diplomats, development partners, academicians, research scholars, national and international experts.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1312234/bisp-being-remodelled-to-meet-challenges>

RS160M SPENT ON MARRIAGES OF POOR GIRLS, PA TOLD

Dawn February 2nd, 2017

Hasan Mansoor

KARACHI: The Sindh Assembly was informed on Wednesday that the provincial Zakat and Ushr department had spent around Rs160 million on marriages of poor girls in five years ending 2013.

The house was informed that Rs10,000 was spent on the marriage of each of 15,993 destitute girls by the department during that period.

“We have now doubled that amount to Rs20,000 on the marriage of a poor girl,” said Parliamentary Affairs Minister Nisar Khuhro, while responding to questions of members on behalf of the chief minister, who looks after the Zakat and Ushr portfolio, during the Question Hour in the Sindh Assembly.

“An amount of Rs159.93m out of Zakat fund was spent on the marriage of 15,993 poor girls during 2008-9 to 2012-13 under the head of marriage assistance to unmarried women at Rs10,000 per deserving girl,” said the minister in reply to a question asked by Abdul Haseeb of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement.

The house was informed that Rs27.71m was spent on the marriage of 2,771 girls in 2008-09; Rs46.47m on 4,647 girls in 2009-10; Rs49.66m on 4,966 girls in 2010-11; Rs16.86m on 1,686 girls in 2011-12; and Rs19.23m on 1,923 girls in 2012-13.

Replying to another question asked by Heer Soho of the MQM, the house was informed that there was no specific programme or scheme prepared by the Zakat and Ushr department to help the disabled. Those disabled persons, however, who were categorised as deserving (Mustehqeen-i-Zakat) were being assisted from Zakat funds as per procedure.

The minister said an amount of Rs4.419m had been provided to 1,277 disabled persons in the province during 2012-13 in 17 districts: Hyderabad, Matiari, Tando Mohammed Khan, Tando Allahyar, Badin, Dadu, Jamshoro, Mirpurkhas, Thar, Umerkot, Sanghar, Larkana, Jacobabad, Sukkur, Khairpur, Benazirabad, and Naushehro Feroze.

Replying to the question of Naila Munir, another MQM lawmaker, about procedure of distributing Zakat fund to deserving persons, Mr Khuhro said the department provided Guzara Allowance in which it paid Rs500 per month to a deserving person. The department paid an accumulative amount of Rs3,000 for six months through the National Database and Registration Authority. From January 2014, the allowance had been increased to Rs1,000 per month per beneficiary.

The department paid stipends to students, which included Rs300 per month to students of primary to middle level; Rs500 per month to high school students; Rs650 per month to intermediate and graduation students; and Rs3,000 per month to postgraduates or students of engineering or medical colleges.

Similarly, Rs150 per month per student was paid to madressah students for Hifzo Nazra, and Rs375 and Rs750 per month for higher levels.

The house was informed that the department provided for treatment to deserving patients out of Zakat fund in which Rs5,000 was provided to ‘indoor’ patients and Rs3,000 for ‘outdoor’ patients.

The department, said the minister, also assisted certain social welfare institutions, including orphanages, Darul Aman, and similar institutions. For orphanages, the department provided Rs500 per child, while Rs700 per month per woman was provided to Darul Aman facilities.

Answering a question of Nusrat Saheer Abbasi of the Pakistan Muslim League-Functional, the house was informed that 66 employees had been appointed in 2013 as field officers of the department through departmental selection committee. The advertisements for the jobs were published in May 2012 and January 2013.

Replying to another question asked by Khurram Sherzaman of the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf, the minister said Rs31.141m Eid grant was distributed to widows, orphans, labourers and senior citizens in Karachi and Hyderabad during 2010-13. Rs27.594m was distributed in Karachi and Rs3.547m in Hyderabad, he added.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1312113/rs160m-spent-on-marriages-of-poor-girls-pa-told>

HOMELESS CHILDREN TO BE INCLUDED IN CENSUS

Dawn February 4th, 2017

ISLAMABAD: The government intends to include orphans and homeless children in the national census scheduled from next month, the National Assembly was informed on Friday.

MNA Begum Tahira Bukhari, while raising several questions regarding the census and its preparation, said the exercise was being held on the basis of the National Database Registration Authority's data and only the adults holding computerised national identity cards (CNIC) and children registered with Nadra would be counted.

"Whereas, those who have not been registered with Nadra will not be included in the census," she said.

"Hundreds of children living in orphanages and SOS villages in the country will not be considered Pakistani nationals as they have not been registered with Nadra," she added.

It had also been observed that many people did not get their children registered with Nadra for a long time, she said, adding that it had been learnt that hundreds of thousands of orphans and other children had not been registered with Nadra and they would not be the part of the national census which was being held after a long gap of 19 years.

Parliamentary Secretary on Finance Rana Afzal told the house that Ms Bukhari had raised a valid question about orphans and the government would make arrangements to include such children in the census. He did not elaborate as to how these children would be included in the population count.

Ms Bukhari asked in a written question whether the census would begin on March 15 and whether all the preparations had been completed.

Finance Minister Ishaq Dar said the population and housing census would begin on the date as the Council of Common Interests (CCI) had decided on Dec 16 that it would be held from March 15 and completed within two months.

He said the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (an attached department of the statistics division) had begun preparatory activities and held meetings with the federal and provincial governments, including the finance, interior and defence ministries, the military operations directorate of the General Headquarters and Nadra.

"Meetings were also held with the provincial chief secretaries to brief them about assistance required from their governments to complete the task," he said.

The house was informed that the provincial census commissioners had been appointed and an allocation of Rs14.5 billion had been made for the operation.

The finance minister said a series of meetings had been held with the armed forces for ensuring availability of army personnel for deployment at a man-to-man level. “Now they have assured us of the availability of the requisite number of troops,” he said.

An activity calendar had been chalked out and was being pursued vigorously, he said, adding that the appointments of divisional and district census coordinators and district census and delimitation officers had been notified.

Mr Dar said the deployment of the census staff had been completed and field material supplied to the provincial, regional and field offices.

“Preparations are almost complete and the provinces are being pursued regularly to solicit their support for the completion of this task successfully,” he said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1312659/homeless-children-to-be-included-in-census>

STRUCTURAL CHANGES FOR ENDING MALNUTRITION

The Express Tribune, February 4th, 2017.

Asgar Soomro

The government of Sindh is in the process of rolling out a multi-sectoral programme involving health, agriculture, livestock and fisheries, planning and development, population, welfare, education and other departments to tackle stunting and malnutrition problem, which has reached an alarming level.

Approximately 48 per cent of the children under the age of five years are suffering from stunting in the province whereas national percentage is 44 — a shocking state of affairs. Eventually the government has woken up to the situation; an Accelerated Action Plan for Reduction of Stunting and Malnutrition (AAP) has been approved along with constitution of a high level provincial task force for a strategic guidance and policy direction.

The project aims to reducing stunting from 48 per cent to 30 per cent by 2021, which appears to be an uphill task given the capacity and operating environment challenges. At the moment the Planning and Development Department, Government of Sindh, is a focal point of contact but this arrangement may change once coordinator to the Chief Minister is appointed.

Let’s see who the coordinator becomes but since the major component of the project relates to health it would be prudent arrangement if Secretary Health Dr Fazalullah Pechuho is entrusted with a lead role for timely and better implementation of the project. He has an excellent track record of managing large-scale projects in collaboration with donor agencies and strong ability to get things done.

Coming to the issue of stunting and the backdrop in which it exists. Is this a new phenomenon? — Not really. Overall trend in Pakistan has been very much worrisome, 48 per cent stunting was noted in 1965 which has continued to date with minor variances in-between period except 1994 when percentage shrunk to 36.3 — a pleasant surprise though. Specifically it may be pointed out what factors caused that significant reduction as it would be great insight into formulating right policies and programs.

Pakistan has still a large population of children (9.6 million) who are suffering from chronic malnutrition. One wonders what opportunities CPEC would offer to Sindh whose half of children’s population is physically and

mentally weak. Considering the gravity of the problem, lack of urgency on the part of our leaders completely baffles us.

Given the history of biased and prejudiced approach of the central government, apprehensions are that they would further deprive people from smaller provinces of jobs and participation in economic activities by dubbing the entire population unfit/incompetent under one or another pretext. Dividends of mega economic activity hardly trickle down to children of 'lesser god'. Oil and gas exploration activities have failed to create employment opportunities for local population or bring about positive changes in their lives.

Those districts which are making a big contribution to national exchequers have the worst human development indicators. The highest incidence of stunting (67 per cent) prevails in Badin which has been one of the top districts producing oil and gas in Pakistan. Prevalence of abject poverty together with poor social-economic indicators in these areas literally debunks the myth of the whole development.

Who are these people suffering from such kind of problems? Mainly workers, labourers and farmers having no social, economic and political power. Boasting about GDP growth or prospects of prosperity becomes meaningless when 58.1 per cent of households are said to be food insecure nationally. Isn't this enough indication of the fact that resources are being hogged in a few hands? Furthermore, vulnerabilities of the poor have increased manifold due to continuous deterioration of service delivery of public institutions.

Therefore, it is more important to understand structural as well as governance problems in the first place perpetuating a vicious circle of poverty. Projects can be catalyst in introducing short-term changes provided that they are rightly guided and implemented but long-term ones require changing the mindset of rulers as well as holding them accountable.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1316323/structural-changes-ending-malnutrition/>

BISP LAUNCHES SURVEY IN THATTA AND SUJAWAL

Dawn, February 5th, 2017

ISLAMABAD: In order to update the National Socio Economic Registry (NSER), the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) launched a door-to-door survey in Thatta and Sujawal on Saturday.

Speaking at the launch ceremony of the survey, BISP chairperson Marvi Memon said the assessment was tech-equipped to ensure transparency and efficiency, adding that the project fulfilled promise made to the people of Thatta by the prime minister in 2013.

Over 250 staff, she said, would be employed to cover the estimated caseload of over 300,000 households from Thatta and Sujawal. Training of the staff was under way and household listing would begin from Feb 14, followed by the five-month-long door-to-door survey, she added.

Ms Memon said the survey teams would visit every single household in the districts, adding that 34 union councils and four tehsils of Thatta and 29 union councils of Sujawal would be covered.

The BISP chairperson urged the local government and people to facilitate the survey teams for better research.

Ms Memon said the pilot phase of the survey for NSER update was under process and would be completed by August this year, adding that desk registration was carried out in Haripur, Sukkur, Naseerabad and Bahawalpur whereas the door-to-door survey was being conducted in remaining 12 districts of the pilot phase.

National roll-out would start in September and would be completed by 2018, she said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1312834/bisp-launches-survey-in-thatta-and-sujawal>

March 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 20TH TO MARCH 26TH 2017

'VULNERABLE SEGMENTS AT THE MERCY OF PRIVILEGED CLASS'

Dawn, March 23rd, 2017

KARACHI: Economist Dr Kaiser Bengali said on Wednesday Pakistan has become a rudderless state that cares least about its poor citizens.

Speaking at a panel discussion on business confidence in Sindh, Dr Bengali said provincial and federal governments have done away with long-term development strategy, leaving the vulnerable segments of society at the mercy of the privileged class.

Elaborating on the purpose of taxation, the former adviser to Sindh and Balochistan governments said taxes are levied to ensure the regulation of the economy, redistribution of wealth in society and smooth operation of government.

“The only purpose of taxation in Pakistan seems to be housekeeping as the state has given up on the objectives of wealth distribution and regulation of the economy,” he said.

Regulating the economy through taxation means changing tax rates on an industry to encourage or discourage investment. As an example, he referred to the existing high duties on paper imports in the absence of a tariff on book imports. This is against the time-tested logic of importing raw materials without duties while restricting the imports of value-added products in order to promote local production, he said.

“The result is that we now import Urdu books from Malaysia,” he said.

As for the redistribution of wealth in society by means of taxation, Dr Bengali said the state has long abdicated its responsibility towards the poor. “There has not been a single public housing scheme for the poor since 1977. Compare it with regular newspaper ads promising mansions with swimming pools developed exclusively for the rich,” he said.

Speaking on the occasion, business journalist Afshan Subohi said the business community does not trust the Pakistan Peoples Party government because of its deep-seated bias against the party that nationalised private businesses in the 1970s. The poor quality of governance does not bridge the trust gap. “Lahore feels like another country. For mobilising investment, the Sindh government needs to improve its performance,” she said.

Replying to Ms Subohi’s assertion, Sindh Board of Investment Chairperson Naheed Memon blamed the “lack of homogeneity” in Sindh for the current state of affairs. “The PML-N does not face the kind of political complexity in Punjab that the PPP faces in Sindh,” she said.

Sindh Governor Muhammad Zubair, former provincial finance minister Asad Ali Shah and Overseas Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry Secretary General Abdul Aleem also participated in the panel discussion, which was jointly organised by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute and Centre for International Private Enterprise.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1322209>

BISP IS WOMEN EMPOWERMENT FORUM IN PAKISTAN: MARVI

Business Recordr Mar 22nd, 2017

Karachi: Minister of State and Chairperson of BISP MNA Marvi Memon said BISP is the prime platform of empowerment and financial inclusion for the downtrodden women of Pakistan.

It is providing financial assistance to 5.4 million deserving families and adopting state of the art technology and best international practices.

BISP has emerged as a leading social safety net in the world within a short span of time.

This was stated by Chairperson of BISP Marvi Memon while speaking as a Chief Guest at the International Women's Day Conference organized by Employers' Federation of Pakistan (EFP) in collaboration with International Labour Organization (ILO), a statement said Wednesday.

The event was also attended by Finance Minister Punjab Ayesha Ghous, US Counsel General Grace Shelton, President EFP Majyd Aziz, Energy Consultant, Nida Fareed and CEO Tech Biz Mehnaz.

On the occasion, Marvi said the basic mandate of BISP is to provide financial assistance to its beneficiaries. Beside this, BISP is working with different organizations, expanding its own role and assisting these organizations in the pursuit of their empowerment goals in various fields.

She further said the BISP is the custodian of National Socio-Economic Registry (NSER) and more than 50 organizations are benefitting from the multi-dimensional data of BISP.

She invited all the relevant stakeholders and the organizations, working in the social sector and women empowerment initiatives, to come forward and get advantage of the rich data and vast experiences of BISP.

Explaining the role of BISP in empowering women, Chairperson BISP stated the millions of women got identity cards due to BISP, leading them to exercise their political and voting rights.

BISP, treating women as the head of their families, increased their role in family decision making and 76% women retain control over BISP stipend.

The control over BISP stipend and the use of ATMs for withdrawing money has resulted into the financial inclusion of the women belonging to the poorest of the poor segments of the society.

It is the responsibility of empowered ones to support the weak and vulnerable. So, BISP beneficiaries deserve attention of the empowered circles.

US Counsel General Grace Shelton stated the employers need to be women friendly so as to improve productivity. The business environment needs to include all those tools like day care centers and equal pay packages for better output of employees.

Punjab Finance Minister Ayesha Ghous stated no society can make any transformation by leaving half of the population. Investing in women is good economic sense. Women empowerment packages of each province will break nexus between illiteracy and poverty as does the package in Punjab.

President EFP Majyd Aziz said the women are key to progress of Pakistan.

He praised Pakistani women as change makers in the society. He introduced two young lady entrepreneurs as speakers. One was leading women exporter of textile and the other was an aeronautical engineer and they spoke about their challenges in life.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1322209>

AMIN AHMED

ISLAMABAD: The situation in Tharparkar, Umerkot and Sanghar districts is vulnerable and may slip to a 'humanitarian emergency', a joint United Nations observation mission says.

The UN report made available on Monday observed that the situation might deteriorate if no or little rains were received in the coming monsoon season. The main vulnerabilities pertain to water scarcity, healthcare and remoteness.

In contrast, Sindh government officials informed the UN mission that the situation in all the three districts was not precarious as of now, and it was much better as compared to 2014-15.

The officials said the desert areas in Umerkot and Tharparkar practised mono-cropping, but no cultivation was reported by the communities in Sanghar during last year's Kharif season.

The situation in Umerkot appears poorer compared to the other two districts because of low rainfall during 2016 resulting in less production of millet and guar in the desert areas.

However, since a large part of Umerkot was irrigated, people hailing from desert areas found alternative opportunities to make their living within the district, the officials claimed.

The officials at the same time admitted that during the past six months, no food assistance had been provided by the government in any of the three districts where malnutrition had been a major problem among women and children. Most of the women were anaemic and newborn underweight.

The Provincial Disaster Management Authority and the Sindh government had requested the UN to send a quick joint observation mission to assess the impacts of the long dry spell on agriculture, food security, health and nutrition, and livelihood strategies of the population and their cropping capacity in the districts previously affected by drought.

The report revealed that the areas had received limited assistance during the past six months and apparently no action had been taken on the recommendations of the studies carried out on the situation.

The situation had not much changed in the area since the Sindh Drought Needs Assessment (SDNA) was conducted. Vulnerabilities still existed in these communities which were not new. The SDNA had thoroughly assessed all the vulnerabilities and had listed short- and long-term recommendations to deal with the situation.

The report recommended that the needs pointed out in the SDNA and also identified during the mission should be addressed simultaneously, by short- and long-term interventions, humanitarian assistance and development projects that respected and responded to the community needs.

The receipt of food assistance along with nutrition support would be very helpful for the targeted households. Just nutrition support might not be very helpful when overall food deprivation was prevalent, it said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1320337>

WB APPROVES \$450 M TO HELP POOREST AND NEEDY PEOPLE

Business Recorder, 17 March, 2017

ISLAMABAD: The World Bank has approved a package of measures worth \$450 million to help the poorest and needy people in Pakistan.

The initiatives include expanding banking services and financial access, strengthening the social safety net to improve the quality of coverage to those who need it most, as well as promoting tourism for growth in Punjab through encouraging private-sector development to provide more opportunities.

The Finance for Growth Development Policy (FGDP) is a policy credit of \$300 million to support the Government of Pakistan's efforts in promoting a more inclusive and transparent financial sector.

The program aims to raise financial access throughout Pakistan to 50 percent of adults, including 25 percent women by 2020. Similarly, in the next three years, it aims to boost private sector credit access to small and medium enterprises to 15 percent from 7 percent in 2015.

"Pakistan has made significant progress in the implementation of economic reforms", said Illango Patchamuthu, World Bank Country Director for Pakistan. "However, despite the substantial progress in the initial reform programs and recent developments in the financial sector; there remains an important unfinished reforms agenda, as financial access and inclusion remain particularly low.

About 100 million adults in Pakistan don't have access to formal and regulated financial services. This number represents about 5 percent of the world's unbanked population. This needs to change for Pakistani women and men to realize their aspirations".

The US\$100 million National Social Protection Program for Results will assist the government to strengthen the national social safety net systems for the poor to enhance their human capital and promote beneficiary families' access to complementary social and productive services. It will support the Benazir Income Support Program to update the National Socio Economic Registry-the national platform to objectively identify the poor for cash transfers and other social programs, and incentive improvements in the service delivery systems.

Besides protecting the poorest against falling into destitution and invest in their children's education, it will facilitate in finding pathways towards their enhanced welfare and economic self-sufficiency.

Additionally, the Punjab Tourism for Growth Project will provide \$50 million to strengthen institutions, increase private sector participation, and improve infrastructure to support the tourism sector in Punjab province.

It will enable the private sector to lead the development of the tourism market and ensures that public institutions help facilitate these processes while fulfilling their respective mandates.

The project will also help improve service quality, provide better skills development opportunities, foster stronger governance, and give residents a more prominent say in local development plans with a special focus on providing more jobs for women.

The credit is financed from the International Development Association (IDA), the World Bank Group's grant and low-interest arm.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/03/17/9-page/858209-news.html>

UN PUSHES 'SMART CROPS' AS RICE ALTERNATIVE TO TACKLE HUNGER IN ASIA
Business Recorder, 19, March 2017

JAKARTA: Asia needs to make extra efforts to defeat hunger after progress has slowed in the last five years, including promoting so-called "smart crops" as an alternative to rice, the head of the UN food agency in the region said.

Kundhavi Kadiresan, representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Asia, said the region needs to focus on reaching the most marginalised people, such as the very poor or those living in mountainous areas.

The Asia-Pacific region halved the number of hungry people from 1990 to 2015 but the rate of progress slowed in many countries – such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India and Cambodia – in the last five years, according to a December FAO report.

“The last mile is always difficult.. so extra efforts, extra resources and more targeted interventions are needed,” she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation on the sidelines of a business forum on food security in Jakarta on Tuesday.

She said government and businesses needed to develop policies to help make food more affordable, while changing Asians’ diets that rely heavily on rice.

“We have focused so much on rice that we haven’t really looked at some of those crops like millets, sorghum and beans,” she said.

A campaign is underway to promote these alternatives as “smart crops” to make them more attractive, Kadiresan said.

“We are calling them smart crops to get people not to think about them as poor people’s food but smart people’s food,” she said, adding that they are not only nutritious but also more adaptable to climate change.

Soaring rice prices, slowing economic expansion and poorer growth in agricultural productivity have been blamed for the slowdown in efforts to tackle hunger.

More than 60 percent of the world’s hungry are in Asia- Pacific, while nearly one out of three children in the region suffers from stunting, according to the FAO.

Achieving zero hunger by 2030 is one of the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals adopted by member states in 2015.—

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/03/19/15-page/858740-news.html>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 6TH TO MARCH 12 TH 2017

GROWTH AND INEQUALITY

Business Recorder, 7 March 2017

Dr Hafiz A Pasha

The Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) has released recently the findings from the Household Integrated Economic Survey (HIES) of 2015-16. There is need to appreciate the efforts of PBS in undertaking this survey frequently and analyzing the data so rapidly. Over the last fifteen years, eight annual HIES have been undertaken.

The principal benefit of these surveys is that they indicate what is happening to the economy down to the household level. This effectively amounts to quantification of the ‘trickle down’ effects of macroeconomic developments related to GDP growth, inflation, employment, etc.

In the context of the latest survey, the basic question is whether the apparent upsurge of the GDP growth rate to above 4% since 2012-13 has been reflected fully in higher household incomes and improvement in the quality of life of the people living in different parts of the country.

The principal findings from the HIES of 2015-16 are given below, based on the comparison of the data from the surveys in 2011-12 and 2013-14 respectively. This includes the three years of the PML (N) government.

Household incomes have shown less increase than the GDP

According to the survey findings the cumulative increase in per capita real household income, mostly labour income, between 2011-12 and 2015-16 is 12%. The per capita income estimates based on the GDP numbers reveal somewhat higher growth of almost 14%. This tends to indicate that capital income and other non-labour incomes may have grown faster.

The real income per worker in the agricultural and manufacturing sectors is actually lower in 2015-16, than the level four years ago. This may be expected in the case of agriculture, given the large cotton crop failure in 2015-16. But it is indeed surprising to find negative growth also in manufacturing, where, according to the GDP estimates, value added at constant prices has gone up cumulatively by 21%. This tends to indicate that the growth rate of the manufacturing sector, especially the small-scale component, is probably overstated in the national income accounts.

The rate of job creation has slowed down

According to the HIES, the annual growth rate of employment is only 1.8% between 2011-12 and 2015-16. On the average, less than one million jobs have been added annually during this period. As opposed to this, growth rate of employment was 2.8% and annually 1.4 million jobs were created from 2007-08 to 2011-12. This is one indicator of less inclusive growth in recent years.

Labour productivity in services has apparently shown extraordinary growth

The HIES indicates that the employment in services like wholesale and retail trade, transport and communications, public administration and community and personal services has shown little increase over four year period. According to the GDP estimates, the cumulative increase in value added in these sectors is 21%. This implies that labour productivity has gone up substantially. It is more likely that the growth rate of services sector in the national economy has also been significantly overstated. As such, the overall GDP growth rate estimate for 2015-16 has a significant upward bias.

Similarly, the HIES reveals that the increase in employment since 2011-12 is 10% in the construction sector, while the GDP estimates show that this sector has experienced fast growth of 29% over the last four years. Here again, there is the likelihood that the growth rate of the sector has also been overstated by the PBS, especially for 2015-16 of over 12%.

The rate of formation of new housing units has also slowed down

The annual increase in housing units is lower at 670,000 annually during the last two years as derived from the HIES, compared to over 750,000 units annually between 2007-08 and 2013-14. This also raises doubts about the recent double-digit growth rate of the construction sector.

Wide divergence in growth of household income among Provinces

The fastest growth in per capita real household income is observed in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa of over 7% per annum. The corresponding growth rates for Punjab and Sindh respectively are below 3%. Balochistan has actually seen a fall in income per capita.

One of the fundamental reasons for the greater buoyancy of the economy of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa is the inflow of remittances, both foreign and domestic. Almost one third of the increase in average household income in the Province

is due to the receipt of higher remittances. With 13% of the population, the share of the Province in home remittances from abroad is more than double, at 28%.

Regional disparities remain high. The average per capita income in urban Punjab has risen above urban Sindh, while it is 33% below Punjab in Balochistan. Similarly, rural per capita income is the highest in Punjab, followed by Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. At the national level, urban household per capita income is 61% above rural per capita income.

A positive finding is the decline in income inequality among households

Per capita real household income in the lowest quintile has increased by over 4% per annum between 2011-12 and 2015-16. The corresponding increase in the top quintile is just over 2% per annum. Part of the reason for the fall in inequality is the expansion in social protection programs, including the BISP. However, unearned capital incomes are underreported in the HIES, most of which accrue to households in the top quintile. Also, these households are more likely to avoid full reporting of incomes.

The ratio of income share of the top quintile to that of the lowest quintile stands nationally at just over five in 2015-16. The highest inequality is observed in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, due probably again to the differential impact of remittances.

Household savings show a declining trend

Savings are measured from the HIES as the difference between household income and consumption expenditure. A worrying finding is the fall in the household saving rate. Almost two third of the national household savings are by the families in the top quintile. Given the smaller increase in incomes in this group, the average savings rate of the richest households has fallen from 21% in 2011-12 to 12% in 2015-16. Consequently, the overall savings rate has dropped from 13% to 9%. However, it is reassuring to note that the rate of saving in the lowest quintile has gone up from 1% to over 6%.

For the typical household, the share of expenditure on food in total expenditure has declined from 51% in 2011-12 to 44% in 2015-16. Per capita food expenditure has consequently fallen in real terms by almost 16%. This has exacerbated the problem of under nutrition in the lower quintiles. The major diversion of expenditure is to housing rent and the cost of utilities and basic services.

Overall, the HIES of 2015-16 highlights one of two possibilities. Either the GDP growth rate of recent years is overstated as it is not reflected fully in the increase in household incomes, savings and employment. Alternatively, the 'trickle-down' effect has been limited by a disproportionate increase in capital incomes, arising from higher profitability and the presence of more and stronger monopolies and cartels.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/03/07/28-page/855949-news.html>

TEVTA TO TRAIN 32,000 UNEMPLOYED YOUTH IN PUNJAB

Business Recorder, 10 March 2017

LAHORE: Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA) will train 32,000 unemployed youth free of cost across the province of the Punjab. Classes of 2nd phase of six months duration 44 employable trades will be started from next month at selected TEVTA Institutes.

Thirty thousand youth has already been trained in first phase of the said free of cost program.

TEVTA has already embarked on a crash program to train more than two lac youth during the year 2016-17.

Chairperson TEVTA Irfan Qaiser Sheikh was addressing a meeting of senior officers to review the progress in this regard at

TEVTA Secretariat here on Thursday.

Irfan Qaiser Sheikh said that unemployed youth has been given training in 44 Industry Demand Driven (IDD) short courses which included 28 courses for boys, six for girls while 10 for both genders.

All these efforts are being made on the directions of Chief Minister Punjab Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif to train jobless youth of the Punjab so that they could contribute to the economic growth of the country.

Chairperson TEVTA further said that all district managers of TEVTA have been instructed to identify new skills with the consultation of concerned local industry so that the said courses could also be introduced immediately.

Skilful training and provision of job opportunities to unemployed youth of the Punjab province is the priority of TEVTA.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/03/10/5-page/856504-news.html>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 27TH TO MARCH 5TH 2017

LARKANA HAS THE LOWEST IMMUNISATION COVERAGE IN SINDH

The Express Tribune, March 2, 2017

Ishrat Ansari

Karachi: Balochistan and Sindh have the lowest routine immunisation (RI) rate for children in Pakistan and in Sindh Larkana has the lowest coverage rate.

“There is a dire need to accelerate and improve RI coverage through advocacy,” said Dow University of Health Sciences associate professor and Pakistan Paediatric Association (PPA) general secretary Dr Khaild Shafi.

He was delivering a presentation on ‘Reaching Every Child: Coverage in Sindh’ at a workshop titled ‘Advocacy with Media on Vaccine Uptake’ on Wednesday. The event was organised at Avari Towers by the International Vaccine Access Centre (IVAC) of Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

The aim of the workshop was to enlighten journalists with the latest information on challenges related to low immunisation coverage in the country, with a special focus on Sindh. “Every child is born to live; not to die. Our aim is for every child to live a healthy life,” said Dr Shafi.

Sharing the Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey (PDHS) 2012-13, he said out of 10,000 children, around 104 die before reaching the age of five in Sindh.

He added 46.1% of children are underweight in Larkana and only 21% children are fortunate enough to be fed breast milk. “Most children die because they are not immunised and deprived of breast milk,” he said.

Sindh’s Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI) project director Dr Agha Ashfaq, giving an overview of the programme, said coverage of routine immunisation has increased to 45% now, while the PDHS 2012-13 quoted the rate at 35%.

Dr Ashfaq said routine immunisation coverage was quite low in Karachi as well, therefore authorities devised a programme for urban slums in Karachi and Hyderabad.

These include areas in Karachi such as Bin Qasim, Malir, Landhi, Baldia Town and others. Talking about the RI programme, he said the government has given EPI Rs6.2 billion for five years.

Pakistan is strengthening routine immunisation with the support of the Global Alliance for Vaccination and Immunisation (Gavi). “Pakistan is the largest recipient of Gavi but our uptake is very low,” said Huma Khawar, communications consultant at Gavi. She added that advocacy is the need of the hour.

Dr Asad Ali, who is an associate professor of paediatric infectious diseases, discussed ‘Childhood Immunisation: Challenges and Opportunities’.

“When you immunise your babies, you are protecting them from illnesses and serious conditions such as meningitis, pneumonia, paralysis, deafness, seizures, brain damage or even death.”

Dr Ali said that one of the common myths about vaccines is that they are considered ineffective and weaken the immune system. Similarly, another myth is that vaccines cause illnesses and disorders, such as autism, sudden infant death syndrome, immune dysfunction, diabetes, neurological disorders, allergic rhinitis, eczema and asthma.

He said increased RI coverage can be extremely beneficial for the whole country. Dr Ali added that vaccines are the greatest invention and protect people from infectious diseases.

He pointed out if 100 children die in the world in a day, 99 are residents of the developing world. “We have to save our children,” he stressed.

Keeping the increased deaths from diarrhoea in view, Dr Ashfaq said rotavirus will be included in the RI in Sindh from next month.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1343034/larkana-lowest-immunisation-coverage-sindh/>

MORE THAN 100 MILLION AT RISK OF STARVATION GLOBALLY: UN OFFICIAL

Business Recorder, 5 March 2017

ROME: The number of people facing severe hunger worldwide has surpassed 100 million and will grow if humanitarian aid is not paired with more support for farmers, a senior United Nations official said.

Dominique Burgeon, director of the emergency division at the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) said latest studies showed 102 million people faced acute malnutrition – meaning they were on the brink of starvation – in 2016, up almost 30 percent from 80 million in 2015.

The hike was mainly driven by deepening crises in Yemen, South Sudan, Nigeria and Somalia, where conflict and drought have crippled food production, he said.

“Humanitarian assistance has kept many people alive so far but their food security situation has continued to deteriorate,” Burgeon told the Thomson Reuters Foundation in an interview.

More investment is needed to help people feed themselves by farming crops and livestock, he added.

“We come with airplanes, we provide food assistance and we manage to keep them alive but we do not invest enough in the livelihood of these people,” he said.

“We avoid them falling into famine but we are not good at taking them off the cliff, away from food insecurity.”

The UN World Food Programme said last month more than 20 million people – greater than the population of Romania or Florida – risk dying from starvation within six months in four separate famines.

Wars in Yemen, northeastern Nigeria and South Sudan have devastated households and driven up prices, while a drought in east Africa has ruined the agricultural economy.

Famine was formally declared in February in parts of South Sudan, which has been mired in civil war since 2013.

In northeastern Nigeria, once a breadbasket for the country, a seven-year insurgency by Boko Haram militants has uprooted some 1.8 million people, forcing many to abandon their farms.

The government says it has clawed back most of the territory it lost to the jihadist group and tens of thousands of refugees are hoping to return to their crops, although security remains a concern.

Burgeon said the FAO had raised less than a third of the \$20 million it needs within the next two weeks to support almost 2 million people in the upcoming planting season in Nigeria – an investment he said would save money in the future.

“If you don’t support those who want to return to their area to crop then you have to agree that you will have to provide massive aid assistance at least until the harvest in 2018, which is unbearable,” he said.

Lack of funding was also hampering the agency’s response in Syria, where food production dropped to an all-time low in 2016, Burgeon said.

“A lot is going to food assistance and barely anything is going to help farmers who have decided to stay on their land,” he said.

The soaring cost of seeds, fertilisers and tractor fuel was pushing many farmers to leave, making it more difficult to restart the economy once peace or stability returned, he added.

“What we need to do is to help them stay and crop their land and be there for the future,” Burgeon said. “To survive is not enough.”-Reuters

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1343034/larkana-lowest-immunisation-coverage-sindh/http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/03/05/13-page/855295-news.html>

April 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 24TH TO APRIL 30TH 2017

A HOUSE OF ONE’S OWN

Dawn, April 24th, 2017

Tasneem Siddiqui

FEW would disagree that under the present dispensation, the poor have little hope for a brighter future. Our planners, economists and policymakers admit the existence of a huge backlog in low-cost housing, the demand for which grows incrementally by approximately 400,000 units every year. Notwithstanding the usual rhetoric and political sloganeering, serious and concerted efforts to address the issue are non-existent.

Is it not surprising that in a country of 200 million, there is no long-term housing programme? During the last two decades, not a single major government housing scheme has been launched in any major city of this country. Taking Karachi as an example, after the Malir Housing Scheme (which itself remains undeveloped and unoccupied) no

scheme has been launched. At the government level, social housing and accessibility to affordable land for the urban poor are topics that are treated with apathy instead of enthusiasm.

From this, one may conclude that despite the pressing needs of the rapidly increasing urban population, housing for the poor is not a priority for the government. Rather than shortage of money or resources, the problem is a lack of political will. After all, when huge amounts of money are being spent on infrastructure development, eg motorways, flyovers, underpasses, electricity generation, gas exploration, and new industrial zones, it defies reason that resources are insufficient for provision of shelter to the poor.

Unfortunately, the indifference of the policymakers is exacerbated by the absence of cohesive demand for housing from the low-income and shelter-less segment of the population, which stems perhaps from their lack of organisation and under-representation in elected bodies which remain dominated by feudals, industrialists, traders and big businessmen.

Pakistan is indeed a land of contrasts, where persistent poverty exists simultaneously alongside affluence and prosperity, resulting in increasing disparity between the haves and the have-nots. On the one hand, we talk of shortage of housing, but on the other, our print and electronic media create the perception of a housing glut.

Almost all big cities in the country have Defence societies, followed by Bahria Town, and now Fazaia schemes. But all of them have one thing in common: they are meant for the rich and affluent middle classes. In these housing schemes, a small, two-bedroom flat will cost between five to six million rupees, a 500 square yard plot will be available for Rs10 to 15 million. Another phenomenon is urban sprawl taken to its limit: Bahria Town Karachi is 40 kilometres from the city centre while DHA City is 45km.

There is hardly any doubt that neither the state nor the private sector is interested in solving the housing problem of the urban poor and low-income people. This means the 'informal sector' will continue to be the main provider of plots to them (albeit illegally), and the state will continue to 'regularise' the katchi abadis that keep proliferating.

In Karachi alone, around 55 per cent of the population lives in these abadis, over 500 of which have been regularised. If you look at the numbers, the informal sector has supplied more plots than Karachi Development Authority, Malir Development Authority and Lyari Development Authority put together.

But the crucial questions remain: firstly, is this the solution to the problem, and secondly, what would be the living conditions in katchi abadis (even low-income planned areas) when densities increase further and the already inadequate infrastructure crumbles?

To understand the problem of density, compare a phase in a Defence Housing Authority (DHA) with a block in Liaquatabad where all plots measure 80 sq yards and initially had two-room dwellings. In the early '50s, these were meant to house a family of six, but now three generations live together. In DHA, most plots measure at least 500 sq yards and are occupied by a small family of three to four people.

There is a similar disparity where infrastructure is concerned. While poor and low-income families have to bear the fallout of crumbling physical and social infrastructure, the rich enjoy modern-day sanitation, water supply, waste disposal, and health and education facilities. As a matter of fact, these are two nations living in two separate worlds.

So far we have discussed three income groups: the rich, high-middle income, and the poor. But what about the lower-middle classes who are neither rich nor chronically poor? They are the largest segment (about 40pc of the urban population). Their average monthly income ranges between Rs35,000-40,000. They are distinct from katchi abadi dwellers in that most of them rent small-sized housing units (if they don't own one themselves) for between Rs8,000-10,000 a month.

They cannot enter the formal housing market because of the exorbitantly high prices and harsh terms of payment, but they have the willingness and capacity to pay (for land, infrastructure and cost of construction) if the cost is recovered in easy instalments over a period of 20 years.

The silver lining in the present situation is that some social entrepreneurs and the House Building Finance Company Ltd (HBFCL) have come together, and after considerable experimentation, developed a 'business model' where a two-room house will cost around Rs1,300,000. This will suit those who can make a down payment of Rs300,000 and take a 20-year loan from HBFCL. Monthly repayment will be around Rs8,000 (the amount they are already paying for rented accommodation).

Work on five such schemes has already been started at Kala Shah Kaku, Faisalabad, Peshawar, Multan and Lahore, and the response is excellent. A recently held expo in Islamabad also offered evidence of the lower-middle classes' eagerness to book houses in such schemes.

Can we hope that the private sector will take up this challenge in right earnest and, instead of concentrating its attention on the rich, try to reach the 'bottom of the pyramid' where a big market awaits them?

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1328882>

'REGIONAL COOPERATION VITAL TO FIGHT POVERTY'

Dawn, April 25th, 2017

ISLAMABAD: A United Nations meeting in Bangkok on Friday concluded that fostering regional economic cooperation and integration (RECI) in Asia-Pacific holds great potential to further reduce poverty, and advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The dialogue brought together senior officials and experts from the region to identify challenges and propose recommendations for enhancing and fostering RECI in Asia-Pacific to further reduce poverty, and advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Mohammad Younus Dagha, Federal Secretary Commerce, attended the high level dialogue on Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration for Enhancing Sustainable Development in Asia from 20-21 April, 2017 on behalf of government of Pakistan.

Mr Dagha emphasised the untapped benefits and opportunities of regional connectivity and noted that great potential exists in trade and investment in the region.

He said, "Countries in the region have identified energy as the key driver for economic growth and for the reduction of poverty, but its full potential can only be unlocked by regional cooperation and integration in all fields."

Mr Dagha also underlined that climate change can be mitigated effectively only when countries that are potential producers of renewable energy are connected to countries with high energy demand which is currently satisfied mainly by fossil fuels.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1328989>

SEVEN MORE THAR CHILDREN DIE IN THREE DAYS

Dawn, April 27th, 2017

MITHI: At least seven more youngsters died during the past three days in the government hospitals of Tharparkar, raising the toll to 113 this year.

According to an official statement obtained by Dawn from sources in the health department of Tharparkar, the toll rose to 113 since Jan 1 this year. The official document sent by the DHO to his high-ups said 31 kids below five years of the age lost their lives in six health facilities of the desert district in April.

The report added that only three kids died of severe malnutrition so far in Thar while others died of birth asphyxia, severe pneumonia, neonatal sepsis, respiratory syndrome and other diseases.

According to reports, Thar DHO Dr Mohammad Akhlaq Khan on the directions of high-ups of the Sindh government has asked his subordinates not to share details of deaths with local media after the chief justice of Pakistan took suo motu notice of the deaths of five children in the civil hospital on March 15. Dr Khan is of the opinion that media were misreporting the deaths of infants in the desert region.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1329460>

EXTREME STEP: MAN POISONS FIVE CHILDREN, COMMITS SUICIDE IN LAYYAH

The Express Tribune, April 28th, 2017.

MULTAN: A man killed his five children by poisoning them before committing suicide in the same manner in a village in Layyah District on Thursday morning, according to local police.

The father has been identified as Tariq Ismail, 30, a resident of Layyah.

The children were identified as a boy named Tayyab, 11, and four girls named Tayyabbah, 12, Tanzeela, nine, Shanzeh, eight, and Saba, six.

All of the children were found dead on the spot while Ismail was shifted to Nishtar Hospital Multan, where he died later in the day.

Ismail's brother, Hassan, who lived next door, was the first to notice something was wrong. Hassan found his brother and the children in an unconscious state and took them to the hospital.

The initial investigation suggests that Ismail's wife divorced him last year to marry another man, leaving Ismail to care for the children.

Tariq said that his brother used to work as a cook in Lahore but moved back after the divorce to raise his children. He had been working as a labourer since moving back.

He added that Ismail was under intense stress due to poverty and that his stress level had been compounded by his wife leaving him and the added responsibility of raising the children.

The local police told The Express Tribune that a Punjab forensic agency team had reached the scene of the crime from Dera Ghazi Khan to assist the investigation.

Punjab Chief Minister Shehbaz Sharif has expressed sorrow and grief over the incident and has condemned the brutal behavior of the father.

He has given directives to the district administration to provide him with a report on the incident.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1395530/extreme-step-man-poisons-five-children-commits-suicide-layyah/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 17TH TO APRIL 23RD 2017

CJP TAKES NOTICE AS MALNUTRITION CLAIMS LIVES OF FIVE INFANTS IN SINDH'S MITHI

Hasnaat Malik

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice Mian Saqib Nisar has taken notice of deaths of five infants at Mithi's Civil Hospital due to malnutrition and lack of facilities and told chief secretary to submit a report within 36 hours.

The development came after a report said the deaths had taken the toll this year to 64. It added that 11,000 ailing children were brought to six different health facilities in the Sindh district since the beginning of this year.

The report termed water crisis, lack of healthcare in the remote areas and hospitals as the main reason behind the deaths.

In February, a child rights advocacy group Sparc said 57 per cent of children under five in Sindh had stunted growth due to malnutrition, terming it alarming and worrisome.

Statistics clearly demonstrated the provincial government's obliviousness to addressing the child and mother health issues.

According to Dr Baseer Khan Achakzai, the director of the nutrition wing at the federal ministry of health services, "Among all other provinces, Sindh is spending the highest amount of money for addressing the malnutrition issues, but no significant improvement has so far been witnessed.

"In the province, the acute malnutrition rate has touched 23 percent, but no serious action has yet been taken," he added.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1385171/cjp-takes-notice-malnutrition-claims-lives-five-infants-sindhs-mithi/>

THAR OFFICIALS STOP SHARING DATA OF CHILDREN'S DEATHS WITH MEDIA

Dawn, April 19th, 2017

MITHI: Two days after the Supreme Court took suo motu notice of unabated deaths of children in Tharparkar district due to malnutrition and unavailability of proper and adequate health facilities over the past couple of years, relevant officials have stopped sharing details of such cases with the media.

After failing to get the data of fresh cases reported at various health facilities of different towns, this correspondent contacted Thar district health officer (DHO) Dr Mohammad Akhlaq Khan, who said that he was strictly forbidden to share such details with the media. "My high-ups have told me to report all such cases only to them and no one else," he said.

The health department and its officials in the district believe that the media reporting over the past few years regarding the drought-like situation and position of medical facilities at hospitals and other healthcare centres etc has been 'irresponsible' and the number of deaths exaggerated. They also disagree that the cause of mortality among the children, as well as expectant mothers, who died at government hospitals and health centres happened to be malnutrition, unavailability of proper medical support or official negligence.

DHO Khan preferred to say "no comment" when he was asked whether he received the directive in the context of the apex court's suo motu notice.

Only recently, Dr Khan, sharing official data with Dawn, had put children's reported death toll in the district up to April 16 this year at 99.

"A total of 31,744 ailing children were brought to six health facilities of the district and 145 of them were referred to various hospitals in Karachi and Hyderabad during the period," he said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1327833>

PAKISTAN'S ROAD TO GOOD NUTRITION

Francesco Branca / Gerda Verburg

The world is facing a nutrition crisis. Despite significant progress in reducing hunger over the past two decades, 795 million people around the world still go to bed hungry every night, and more than 2 billion wake up deficient in crucial vitamins and minerals. In 2015, 156 million children under the age of five years were stunted (too short for their age — a sign of chronic malnutrition) and 50 million were wasted (much too thin for their height — a sign of acute malnutrition). Globally, 1 in 3 people are affected by one form of malnutrition.

In addition, food systems are rapidly changing leading to unprecedented changes in people's diets. As a result, 42 million children are overweight before even reaching their fifth birthday and a staggering 1.9 billion adults are overweight. Unhealthy diet is now the leading risk factor for the global burden of disease among both men and women. Every country is affected by this nutrition crisis, including Pakistan.

Pakistan's 2011 National Nutrition Survey (NNS) reveals high levels of stunting (43.7%) and wasting (10.5%) in children under 5 years of age; in addition, also almost 5% of children under five are overweight. Half of women of reproductive age are anaemic and the population suffers from a significant lack of vitamins and minerals. The developmental, social and health impacts of this burden are serious and often long lasting. Malnutrition increases Pakistan's healthcare costs, reduces productivity and slows economic growth. It perpetuates the cycle of disease and poverty in the country.

Nutrition actors, including government, development agencies, implementing partners, nutrition working groups and research institutions are coming together to address the underlying causes of malnutrition. They are mobilising mass media to generate awareness in the community and are working together to realise the substantial impact of coherent nutrition-related policies, plans and interventions.

Building on the success of the 2014 Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) and in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, world leaders at the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition from 2016 to 2025. Unprecedented in nature, the Nutrition Decade marks a new vision, momentum and direction in global action to address nutrition challenges. The Decade represents a unique, collective opportunity for achieving better nutrition for all people, at all times of their lives, through access to affordable, diversified, safe, sustainable and healthy diets.

As a member of the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement since 2013 and with the support of the World Health Organisation, stakeholders are accelerating efforts to address all forms and causes of malnutrition, and effectively translate the ICN2 commitments and Sustainable Development Goals into concrete, nationally-determined policies and programmes, ensuring coherence between national, regional and international policies across multiple sectors.

WHO and the UN agency family, as well as the SUN Movement stand ready to accompany Pakistan on its road to good nutrition.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1387451/pakistans-road-good-nutrition/>

GOVT'S PERFORMANCE ON ACHIEVING MDGS TARGETS REMAINS UNSATISFACTORY
Business Recorder, 20 April. 2017

Abdul Rasheed Azad

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's performance on achieving the targets of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) over the past 17 years has remained unsatisfactory as the country achieved only 4 targets out of 24 indicators.

According to the briefing of Poverty Alleviation and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) wing of Ministry of Planning, Development and Reform to the Senate Special Committee on Marginalised Segment of Society, Pakistan adopted 16 targets and 41 indicators against which progress towards achieving the 8 goals of MDGs is measured. Poverty Alleviation and SDGs Planning Commission chief briefing the panel said that Pakistan during the ongoing financial year spent Rs 473.1 billion on Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of which Rs 51.7 billion by federal government, Rs 207.9 billion by Punjab government, Sindh, Rs 107.5 billion, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Rs 77.2 billion, and Balochistan spent Rs 28.8 billion.

The committee met here with Senator Nisar Muhammad in the chair where the Ministry of Planning, Development and Reform and Finance Division gave briefing on policy as well as funding for the marginalised segments of society. The committee was also briefed on Vision 2020-25 of the government relating to the marginalised segments of society.

The officials of Planning Commission said that as per new set standard of below the poverty people, an estimated 38 per cent of the national population is living below the poverty line while poverty in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata) stands at 74 per cent. The committee members said that the government should include a column in national census forms to identify the economic status of the people with an objective to find the people under poverty line.

The committee members expressed no confidence in Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Bait-ul-Mal, etc, while saying that people having 50 acres of land are the beneficiary of BISP while others finding it difficult to get two-time meal. They further said that influential people are being entertained in the Bait-ul-Mal.

The ministry officials informed the committee that social protection related literature has been reviewed and draft Social Protection Policy Framework was developed which will be released within next six months. However, social protection has become a major responsibility of provinces after the 18th constitutional amendment and in this regard social protection authorities established in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have evolved a policy in this regard, however, no work has been done in Balochistan on this matter.

However, the officials said there are some challenges in this regard including identification and exit strategy issues, response, fragmentation of SP initiatives, inefficient and ineffective financial and accounting arrangements, duplication of services/ beneficiaries, governance issues like weak institutional mechanism, lack of political will, lack of reporting mechanisms, roles and responsibilities after devolution.

The ministry officials further said that vulnerable segments will be protected and encouraged by revamping and expanding the social protection system and social safety nets. They said Article 38 of Constitution of Pakistan would be implemented in letter and spirit.

They said effective implementation of plans of action for children, promotion of an inclusive education system for special children, enforcement of special quota in education and employment for non-Muslims and persons with special needs, encouraging sports activities for persons with disabilities, judicious utilisation of Pakistan Bait-ul-Maal and Zakat funds, eradication of beggary and special schemes for senior citizens to ensure their rights and make them socially and economically productive.

The establishment of a national social protection framework will harmonise federal, provincial and district level policies and programmes to remove regional disparities as well as clarify the roles and responsibilities of respective governments. It will develop a range of strategies including prevention, mitigation and coping mechanisms for managing risk and vulnerability.

The agreed framework will take a multidimensional approach to social protection, the official added. However, the committee expressed annoyance over the absence of ministry's senior officials from the meeting including minister and secretary as well as on the incomplete presentation.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/04/20/21-page/868596-news.html>

SINDH BANK TO PROVIDE INTEREST-FREE LOANS TO WOMEN

The Express Tribune, April 21st, 2017.

KARACHI: Special Assistant to Chief Minister Sindh on Women Development Iram Khalid visited Sindh Bank on April 19, 2017 and met with Sindh Bank President and CEO Tariq Ahsan to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on “Interest Free Loan for Women Entrepreneur/Artisan in the Province of Sindh”. Sindh Bank will facilitate the disbursement of interest-free loans to women entrepreneur/artisan in the province for an amount of Rs50,000 to each woman entrepreneur for a maximum period of 3 years including 3 months grace period recoverable in easy monthly instalments.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1389510/sindh-bank-provide-interest-free-loans-women/>

MULTILINGUAL BOOK LAUNCHED BY BISP

Dawn, April 21st, 2017

ISLAMABAD: President Mamnoon Hussain on Thursday launched Pakistan’s first multilingual book on ‘Stories of BISP’, a book published by the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP).

The book is about real stories of BISP beneficiaries in 18 languages — Urdu, Balochi, Pashtu, Punjabi, Sindhi, Kashmiri, Balti, Shina, Broshuski, Seraiki, Hindko, Gojri, Brahvi, Khetrani, Khawar, Potohari, Ghitrani and English.

Addressing the launching ceremony, President Hussain said that success of the BISP was recognised globally. He said the book about the lives of the BISP’s beneficiaries would reinforce the recognition as the stories of women from 146 districts of Pakistan highlight that the social safety net had brought about women empowerment by providing livelihood to them.

The book has an audio version as well to encapsulate the basis of the BISP’s campaign ‘Ehsaas’ (empathy).

The president, who is also BISP’s patron-in-chief, commended the management for its efforts, adding that the biographic stories were a source of encouragement and inspiration for women and should be communicated through other means like theatre.

In her opening remarks, BISP chairperson Marvi Memon said the programme commissioned a great work of art to collect stories of BISP beneficiaries, one from each district through local writers in their mother-tongue for better understanding of the impact of BISP on the lives of the underprivileged.

The book would contribute towards the promotion of regional languages and inter-provincial harmony as for the first time in the history of Pakistan, a book was published in eighteen different languages, she added.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1328325>

PUNJAB GOVT’S ‘ORANGE CAB’ SCHEME TO PROVIDE 100,000 CARS TO UNEMPLOYED YOUTH

The Government of Punjab is set to launch an “Orange Cab” scheme seeking to provide 100,000 cars to unemployed youth in the province.

“The Orange Cab scheme will be launched this year,” the Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif was quoted as saying by the provincial government in a tweet.

Sharif expressed his desire to see the framework of the scheme developed electronically in order to restrict any possibility of mismanagement or corruption.

“The scheme will provide 100,000 people with a source of income,” he said, adding, “Previously, as part of the ‘Apna Rozgar’ scheme, the Punjab government has disbursed 50,000 cars to Punjab’s young people.”

CM Shahbaz Sharif stressed the importance of mobility as essential in helping young people secure a respectable source of income.

The Punjab government is known for its focus on expanding road infrastructure across Punjab’s major cities.

With the Orange Cab scheme in the pipeline, the province may see a surge in the number of cars on its streets.

According to a survey conducted by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, the total unemployment rate in Pakistan stood at 5.9 per cent, in 2014-15.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1328352>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 10TH TO APRIL 16TH 2017

PPP HAS BEST PLANS TO RID POOR OF POVERTY: BILAWAL

Dawn, April 10th, 2017

LAHORE: PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has claimed that his party has the best plans for the poor.

Speaking to south Punjab activists of the party at Bilawal House here on Sunday, he said that the PPP had prepared “the best plans” to rid the poor of poverty. He said the days of deprivation of the people of south Punjab were gone and they should now prepare to welcome a day of progress and equal opportunities to gain prosperity.

Bilawal said he was disturbed to learn that literacy rate in south Punjab was just 12 per cent. He also predicted that the people of south Punjab would get “freedom from Takht-i-Raiwind” in the next elections.

He regretted that killers of the PPP worker in Haroonabad had not been arrested though the incident took place around a month ago. He alleged that the PML-N government was in fact not ready to round up the killers, who were roaming freely.

Referring to an announcement of the government regarding a transparent investigation into the incident, he alleged that the government which promised a fair probe was itself involved in the offence.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1326051>

STATISTICS INDICATE ALARMING HIGH RATES OF STUNTING IN G-B

The Express Tribune, April 10th, 2017.

Shabbir Mir

GILGIT: Chronic malnutrition causes debilitating effects, diminishing human intellectual capacity, physical growth and economic drainage, say nutrition experts.

This was explained at a workshop organised by Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Department of Planning and Development’s Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) unit on Sunday at a local hotel.

The workshop was to provide information and data to provincial line departments including health, population welfare, agriculture, food, livestock, fisheries, education, social protection, women, civil society alliance, and

academia of Karakoram International University about economic consequences of malnutrition in Pakistan as per the statistical indicators of National Nutrition Survey 2011.

During the session, SUN Program Consultant Dr Nadir Shah told the participants that malnutrition caused 3% annual GDP loss to the national economy which was less than the 2% from energy crisis.

He stressed on the need to accelerate the currently cost effective process of intervention by flour fortification. An investment of one dollar earns eight dollars in return, while successful holistic interventions in global practices have shown that a dollar invested earns 16 dollars in return, he said, explaining how nutrition improvement was the most suitable investment to sustain national economy and human capital.

The workshop participants gave updates about the work being done in their respective and also made suggestions.

There was consensus among the participants on the need to revert to organic farming and minimising the use of harmful pesticides which contaminated food. The need for a healthy life style in addition to a balanced diet was also stressed.

Earlier in a message Planning and Development Secretary Babar Aman Babar and UNICEF Chief Consultant for GB Dr Samia Hashim assured their sectorial support in the execution of an integrated nutrition strategy for GB.

Social Sector Deputy Chief Mohammad Baqir emphasised the need for inter-sectorial collaboration to achieve the targets and objectives SUN had set for GB.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1379323/statistics-indicate-alarming-high-rates-stunting-g-b/>

EXPERTS ADVISE BIRTH CONTROL TO SAVE LIVES AS NINE MORE CHILDREN DIE IN THAR

Dawn, April 13th, 2017

Hanif Samoon

MITHI: Health experts urged the government to create awareness among Thari men and women about birth control to help reduce infant mortality rate as nine more children died on Wednesday in government hospitals from complications caused by severe malnutrition.

The deaths took place over the past four days, raising the toll to 96 since January this year. Three-year-old Parwati, Arshad, six months; a month-old Asia, and newborns of Saho Meghwar and Paro Meghwar died at Mithi Civil Hospital while Farzana and Shanti died at Islamkot rural health centre. Two more infants died of gastroenteritis in a remote village in Nagarparkar as mercury rose to 45 degree centigrade.

The officials at the district health office said that with the latest deaths of kids the toll rose to 96. About 140 kids were referred to teaching hospitals of Hyderabad and Karachi, they said.

Parents of the ailing children complained that they were being forced by doctors in to take their kids to Hyderabad.

According to independent sources including local NGOs, journalists and members of civil society, more than 3,000 children have died of hunger and various other diseases in Thar and more than 400,000 children under five years of age were brought to six healthcare facilities for various complaints, mostly caused by malnutrition.

Dr Shaikh Tanweer Ahmed, a health expert, stressed the need for revamping infrastructure of health department and family planning and said that until and unless pregnant women were focused and given healthcare facilities during pregnancy Thari kids would continue to die.

He urged the Sindh government to take measures in the light of the recent UN report on Thar and warned the situation might assume alarming proportions over the next few months with rise in temperature and delayed or erratic rainfall.

He said the government must create awareness among men and women about birth control since the region faced unusually high rate of infant and maternal deaths.

He said that generally, a Thari woman gave birth to 10 to 15 children since there was no concept of contraception. It would be very difficult to meet targets like Sustainable Development Goals if real and basic issues were not addressed, he said.

Ghulam Rasool Memon, district officer of population welfare department, said that most Tharis were reluctant to go for birth control and shun early marriages.

He urged prayer leaders to motivate people to adopt birth control and use contraceptives in a bid to reduce infant mortality rate.

He said that 40 centres of his department faced shortage of staff while most women were not willing to work in Tharparkar district.

He, however, declined to disclose the number of workers not performing their duties and the centres which had to be closed due to lack of staff. Mr Memon said that he was directed by high-ups not to share such details with media.

Partab Shivani, a social activist, said the government should step up efforts to save infants and expecting mothers.

There was an urgent need to educate Thari mothers as literacy rate among females was alarmingly low at just seven per cent due to various reasons.

He called for setting up training centres in remote and inaccessible areas to train local midwives in safe delivery at home and complained that most Thar areas remained unattended by health workers.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1326588>

PPP GAVE NOTHING TO SINDH APART FROM POVERTY, SAYS SHARIF

Dawn, April 15th, 2017

SUKKUR: Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has said the provincial government of the Pakistan Peoples Party has given nothing to the people of Sindh except poverty, hunger and unemployment.

Speaking at a rally organised by the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz in Jacobabad, he said that most roads and streets in Sindh were in bad shape and that in the next general elections people would vote on the basis of performance of parties and not on their rhetoric.

“I want to ask the Sindh government as to what they have given to the people of their province,” said Mr Sharif.

He said that everyone could see piles, even mounds, of waste material in Karachi. The thoroughfares in the city were fast turning into dirt roads but the provincial government was doing nothing to bring about improvements.

Mr Sharif said the metropolis was in the grip of terrorism and chaos when he came to power after the 2013 elections. Peace was restored to the city only after the Rangers launched an operation there.

The prime minister said the country's economy and that of the province began to improve once stability was restored in the provincial capital. It was the governments' responsibility to bring about even more improvements.

Factories, he said, would be established in Sindh that would be run on coal. And to address the sense of alienation and frustration among the people of Sindh, high-quality educational institutions and medical centres would be set up in the province

Clean drinking water, he said, was not being supplied to people but they hardly held protests over the problem because they were more worried about making their ends meet.

The rate of unemployment and the number of people falling below the poverty line were increasing in the province. This needed to be changed.

The kind of development taking place in Islamabad, Lahore and even Peshawar should also take place in Jacobabad, he said. It is now the 21st century "but Jacobabad looks as it looked some 100 years ago".

On the occasion, Mr Sharif announced a development package of Rs1 billion for Jacobabad. The money would be spent on providing clean drinking water to its people and building healthcare centres and roads.

The projects would be carried out by chairman of the district council, in consultation with PML-N leader Muhammad Aslam Abro.

Mr Sharif announced that a modern vocational training centre would be set up for women in the city, 100 transformers would be installed and old water and gas pipelines would be replaced with new ones. He also announced the launch of the health card scheme for the people of the city.

Speaking at the rally, Railways Minister Khawaja Saad Rafiq said the PPP had been winning the elections by using the names of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Benazir Bhutto and misusing the Sindh card, but had proceeded to rob the people instead of serving them.

He said he respected Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah but added that the CM was trying to appease PPP chairman Asif Ali Zardari by getting gas supply for a power plant in Nooriabad whose 51 per cent shares were owned by the former president.

Prominent among the other leaders who attended the PML-N rally were Ellahi Bux Soomro, Nihal Hashmi, Senator Raheela Gul Magsi, Marvi Memon, Saleem Zia, Mir Asghar Panhwar and Sardar Sajjad Buledi.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1327100/ppp-gave-nothing-to-sindh-apart-from-poverty-says-sharif>

SMEDA FACILITATES OVER 7,000 SMES IN 2015-16

Business Recorder, 15 April, 2017

PESHAWAR: Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) facilitated over 7000 SMEs during the year 2015-16 through provision of direct services and private investment of Rs.1.25 billion was mobilized in various sectors, said annual report of the authority.

During the period, the SMEDA also played important role in highlighting business opportunities emanating from the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) for SMEs.

Based on its hitherto identified thirteen high growth SME sector, project proposals were shared with multiple stakeholders to facilitate businesses to capitalize on the opportunity at hand.

The first National SME Conference was organized by SMEDA, in collaboration with the University of Management Technology, Lahore. The endeavor was a first step towards building a research culture to support evidence based policy making and to bridge the industry-academia gap for SME development.

The conference was attended by representatives from academia, businesses, public sector, international development partners, researchers and other stakeholders.

During the year, the authority completed infrastructure projects, sports' industries Development Centre Sialkot is one of them. This state-of-art facility provides services to the sports' goods manufacturing sector and is demonstrating new technology adoption in sports' goods manufacturing. The centre is operational and SMEs in the region are benefiting from its services.

In order to facilitate SMEs, sector-theme specific Help Desk were also organized and 12 sector specific help desks were organized which were participated by 210 SMEs. These help desk were organized in Lahore, Gujranwala, Sialkot, Rawalpindi, Rahimyar Khan and Sahiwal.

Similarly, during the year 2015-16, thirteen (13) new pre-feasibility studies were developed and thirty three (33) existing pre-feasibility studies were updated.

SMEDA also undertook research activities on a regular basis to identify opportunities for SMEs. The objective of developing Cluster Profiles is to identify issues, as well as highlight investment opportunities within an economic region and in the year 2015-16 five (5) new Cluster Profiles were developed and six (6) were updated.

Training programs, seminars, workshops and conferences of short duration are organized by SMEDA in all major cities across the country for raising awareness and building the capacity of SMEs. A training calendar for the year is prepared through vigorous Training Need Assessment (TNA) technique in which all stakeholders participated.

These programs aim at improving knowledge, skills and competences in the technical, marketing, financial, policy, regulation, legal, commercial and other important functions. The programs help improve major performance indicators of businesses, such as productivity, quality, competitiveness and sustainability of SMEs. During the period one hundred and eighty three (183) training programs/workshops were conducted throughout the country with 6,727 participants during FY 2015-16.

Last year, the SMEDA Web Portal was visited by 454,617 persons with average visitors per day of 1,262, content updated of over 145 documents. Information consisting various modules on pre-feasibility studies, regional profiles, common facility centres and business guides developed and launched.

The information provided by SMEDA has proved to be useful for financial institutions and loan beneficiaries alike for the applicants of PM Youth Business Loan Scheme (PMYBL), which facilitated 2,248 prospective loan applicants and 2.025 million download were recorded during the year.

Since initiation of PMYBL, 16.65 million pre-feasibility studies and other tools and resources have been downloaded from SMEDA Web Portal and over 24,697 individuals have been facilitated through SMEDA helpdesks across Pakistan.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/04/15/8-page/867281-news.html>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 3 RD TO APRIL 9 TH 2017

‘MALNUTRITION INFLECTS 3PC LOSS ON GDP’

Dawn, April 4th, 2017

FAISALABAD: Pakistan is losing three per cent of gross domestic product to malnutrition as compared to energy crisis which is inflicting 2pc loss on GDP.

This was revealed at a conference titled “Food and Nutrition” arranged by Institute of Home Science, University of Agriculture Faisalabad, on Monday.

Gemma Emily Walton, a food expert of University of Reading, United Kingdom, chaired the inaugural session.

Ms Walton, Dr Nancy J. Allen from University of California USA, Faculty of Food Sciences Dean Dr Masood Sadiq Butt, Dr Binish Israr, Dr Farah Riaz, Dr Nighat Bhatti and Dr Binish Asad were the speakers.

The experts also revealed that malnutrition was one of the major causes of death in children under five years of age.

They stressed the need for food fortification as an effective tool to combat the situation. They also recommended that people should diversify their food as they only depend on wheat and rice as staple food.

The experts demanded that the government include nutrition education as part of curriculum at school and college level. It would help address the issue and lead towards a healthy population, they added.

They said it was shocking that 50pc of women and children were malnourished in Pakistan. The maternal and child malnutrition was the major issue for the country.

Talking about the iron and vitamin deficiencies, they said in Pakistan iron (anaemia) and vitamin A deficiencies were widespread; however, iodine deficiency rate reduced during the last decade.

They said vitamin D deficiency stood at 60pc, vitamin A at 45pc, maternal anaemia (49pc) and child stunting level (43pc).

The speakers attributed the malnutrition to illiteracy, price issue, junk food and lack of awareness about nutrient values of intake.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1324745/malnutrition-inflicts-3pc-loss-on-gdp>

May 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 29TH TO JUNE 4TH 2017

FIGHTING CHILD STUNTING

Dawn, May 30, 2017

ALTHOUGH over 44pc of children under the age of five suffer from malnutrition in the country, the government has persistently failed to address poverty and food insecurity. With the global sustainable development agenda having endorsed malnutrition and stunting as the new health threat, the onus is now on international donor agencies to take humanitarian action in poor communities. This weekend, the World Bank pledged assistance to the tune of \$61m to fight stunting in Sindh where the growth of 48pc of children under five is compromised.

Supporting nutrition projects in 23 districts with stunting rates of more than 40pc, the objective is to reduce the rate by one percentage point annually — from 48pc in 2017 to 43pc in 2021. That thousands of children are stunted and many hundreds die of hunger in a province where a quarter of the country's population resides is the shameful consequence of government neglect. It demonstrates political unwillingness to adopt nutrition as a political priority.

Because malnutrition is associated with the socioeconomic determinants of maternal health, education, child marriage and gender empowerment, government-driven strategies are required to mitigate the impact of inequality and poverty. Focusing on hygiene, healthcare and household food insecurity, as well as inadequate feeding practices for women and children, is imperative for healthcare units. Furthermore, health and education plans must incorporate social protection programmes aimed at women.

Providing pregnant women with cash transfers, educating them to mentally stimulate their young children and improving access to sanitation in areas where there is open defecation are some remedial measures. Only sustained reform of and investment in the health sector will bridge the gap between urban and rural areas, so that the most marginalised can access improved maternal nutrition and antenatal care. To this end, the Lady Health Workers programme is an asset. It is only when our policymakers recognise that improved child health is critical for economic development that stunting rates will decrease.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1336243>

TACKLING POVERTY IN RURAL SINDH

The Express Tribune, June 3rd, 2017.

Ten people were killed last month when unidentified motorcyclists opened fire on labourers working on a road meant to connect remote towns with the port city of Gwadar. All ten labourers belonged to Goth Haji Siddiq Lakho in the Kandiaro taluka of Naushehro Feroze district in Sindh. Though the deceased labourers came from an area rich in agriculture, the workers themselves were landless and poverty had forced them to opt for work in Gwadar.

The rural parts of Sindh are in a state of abject poverty. One of the major reasons is that most of the population there do not own or control assets like good quality land — the prime asset in rural settings. There is a highly uneven distribution of land ownership in Sindh. Land reforms have never been on the agenda of any government.

Access to land, which is the basic factor of production, is crucial to reduce poverty in rural areas. According to the Agricultural Census of Pakistan, cultivated land is unequally distributed in Pakistan. About 47 per cent of the farms are smaller than two hectares, accounting for only 12 per cent of the total cultivated area. In Sindh, where the rural society is dominated by a feudal elite, the proportion of small farms is just above a third.

In fact, the landholdings of the feudal families in Sindh have multiplied instead of having decreased. Although economic vulnerability has not been comprehensively measured for Sindh, there are indications that vulnerability differs significantly across agro-climatic zones and over two-thirds of the households in rural Sindh may be classified as economically vulnerable.

Poverty has become a major issue in rural Sindh, where 50 per cent of the population lives below the poverty line and suffer from low calorie intake, low per capita income, unemployment, inadequate access to education, sanitation, health facilities and an unhygienic environment. More importantly, these people are the most vulnerable to shocks.

The province is rich in natural resources, having huge reserves of oil, gas and coal. It has two seaports one of which is in Karachi — the financial hub and business nerve centre of Pakistan. Some of its districts have industrial zones but these have been hit by lawlessness.

Sindh accounts for almost 72 per cent of the total oil and gas production of the country, but its hinterland is still one of the backward regions with soaring poverty, high rate of unemployment and widening inequalities between rural and urban Sindh. When oil and gas was exploited, it was believed that poverty would become history and Sindh would be affluent like the Gulf emirate of Dubai. But this hope has remained a mere pipedream.

Since the economy of Sindh is largely agrarian the economic development of the province depends largely on the development of its agriculture sector. Rural Sindh has been hit hard by disasters including droughts and floods and the majority of rural population have been pushed below the poverty level.

The irony is that both sources of livelihood and employment opportunities for rural inhabitants in Sindh are shrinking. As a result, the unemployed youth move to cities for jobs but the urban employment market is already oversaturated.

Sindh has fertile soil and is rich in fuel and mineral deposits but has a rural poverty graph that continues to rise. In the absence of proper land-use regulation, unscrupulous land developers have been allowed to convert agricultural land near urban centres into housing schemes. These agricultural lands were traditionally used for growing vegetables and other cash crops.

Urban Sindh, which consists mainly of Karachi, Hyderabad, Sukkur, Nawabshah, Shikarpur and Larkana, comprises 48 per cent of the provincial population. It is also showing a decline in economic growth. In addition, the urban areas of Sindh continue to receive an influx of population leading to stress in the infrastructure and a further increase in the level of unemployment.

Employment opportunities in Karachi, Hyderabad, Sukkur and other urban areas of Sindh started declining in the 1990s as a result of a flight of capital and industry from the urban areas due to a serious law and order situation.

Sindh needs rapid development in agriculture coupled with genuine land reforms, agro-based industries, small and medium industries and the development of the information technology sector at the provincial and district levels. There is strong potential to create jobs and self-employment at both the provincial and district levels.

This potential to create jobs and self-employment needs to be explored further. Growth must be accompanied by measures that ensure social development, which takes into account economic, political and social dimensions. The rural population must be provided the opportunity to fully harness and participate in the growth process and develop their capacity to take benefits from it while giving special attention to rural Sindh and bringing it into the mainstream.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1425879/tackling-poverty-rural-sindh/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 22ND TO MAY 28TH 2017

POVERTY AND THALASSAEMIC CHILDREN

Dawn, May 22, 2017

Bahawalnagar: A labourer belonging to Chak Mominabad seeks the government help for treatment of his two minor sons who are suffering from thalassaemia.

Muhammad Fiaz, 35, got married with his cousin about 10 years ago and had four children from the marriage. Two of his children five-year-old Hassan and two-and-a-half-years-old Hussain are suffering from thalassaemia. Fiaz says all his life savings and even the jewellery of his wife have been spent on his sons' treatment. He has now run out of money and is unable to carry on his sons' treatment. He and his wife are losing hope.

'We often think of committing suicide to get rid of the worst financial circumstances we ever suffered from,' he told Dawn.

Fiaz seeks the government help for his children and pleads to the chief minister to arrange for their treatment.

http://epaper.dawn.com/DetailImage.php?StoryImage=22_05_2017_002_008

POVERTY CHALLENGE AMIDST DATA DEFICIT

Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, May 22nd, 2017

Jawaid Bokhari

The budget strategy unveiled for the next fiscal year is stated to have been designed with a view to achieving higher, sustainable and inclusive economic growth in order to provide employment and reduce poverty.

On the face of it, an integrated approach should help the three elements of the growth strategy to reinforce each other. With the conventional model of the welfare state losing its relevance and the Chinese and Russian brands of socialism having lost their way, new ways have to be found to take an egalitarian course.

But, as they say, the taste of a pudding lies in its eating. The outcome will depend on how strong the policy commitment is and the government's ability to implement the three stated aspects of growth in a balanced way.

There is no doubt that CPEC- related debt financing and investment of infrastructural development will largely serve as a catalyst for higher and sustainable growth for a while.

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Long-term sustainable growth is only possible if Pakistan is able to access regional markets, particularly China, to boost export earnings required to service debts and afford rising repatriation of profits on Chinese investments. From a short-term point of view, the target of higher growth of 6pc for the next fiscal year may not sound too ambitious.

The real challenge for policymakers is how to steer the course of economic growth to make it inclusive — without which higher growth will be unsustainable. The problem is aggravated by the policymakers' effort to paint a rosy picture rather than make serious efforts to resolve the problem of poverty which, it may be conceded, is an uphill task in the current economic environment and the state of governance.

According to a research report completed this month by the Social Policy and Development Centre, the old and flawed methodology used to measure poverty was difficult to sell even to different government wings. So the Planning Commission of Pakistan had to set up a technical committee in 2012, to review the official methodology and remove limitations, to estimate consumption data through Household Integrated Economic Surveys.

The report prepared by SPDC consultant Haroon Jamal points out that even in the revised methodology formulated in light of the technical committee's recommendations, the "choice of reference group casts doubts over the whole exercise of poverty estimations and it seems that the methodology is adjusted to obtain the required number by trial and errors."

Some shortcomings in the revised methodology pinpointed by the SPDC are: the unique calorie threshold for both urban and rural areas seems inappropriate, ignoring the difference in consumption pattern between the two segments of the population.

Another worrying factor is the non-adjustment of regional and provincial differences in the cost of living (food and non food expenditure). And despite criticism, CPI formulated with limited geographical coverage has been used for updating headcounts.

Haroon Jamal concludes: according to the official estimates, the poverty reduction phenomenon does not have any link to the performance of the economy. For instance poverty is continuously decreasing — seven to eight per cent points — since 2001-02 irrespective of trends in GDP growth and macroeconomic indicators.

The methodology adopted in the SPDC study takes care of the flaws highlighted by the Technical Committee which were underlined in old official methodology. Its estimates show that 38pc of the population was poor in 2015-16. In terms of absolute numbers, 74 million persons were estimated poor in that fiscal year, up from 61m in 2010-11.

As traditional poverty measures often neglect several important dimensions, the research note attempts to assess the extent of household vulnerability to poverty in Pakistan. Vulnerability estimates show that close to 51pc of the population was vulnerable to poverty during 2015-16, with probability being more pronounced for rural dwellers.

Any serious planning and strategy for inclusive growth, which is now a global concern, has to be based on realistic estimates and authentic data. It is time to go beyond rhetoric and window dressing, given the big picture.

The various conventional methodologies used for research are being questioned and described as old and outdated. Some methodologies are also suspected to have been designed to obtain the desired results. For this state of affairs, some blame a segment of consultancy operating in the field of specialised knowledge in a complex and changing world.

As though that was not enough, critics have often described economics as a dismal science. Lately some eminent scholars have accused free market advocates of turning economics from a social science to a religious faith. And there is also a view that much of the economics science has lost its validity in a sea of change and owing to the absence of real creativity to update it.

Apparently in this context the issue of unemployment, poverty and inclusive growth is lost in the wilderness.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1334580>

WORLD BANK APPROVES \$61M TO FIGHT STUNTING IN SINDH CHILDREN

Dawn, May 28th, 2017

ISLAMABAD: The World Bank on Friday approved a credit of \$61.6 million to reduce stunting among children of five years or less in Pakistan, particularly in some districts in Sindh where children are shorter than the average heights.

The Sindh Enhancing Response to Reduce Stunting project will support measures aimed at improving the nutrition status of mothers and children in 23 districts of the province where stunting rates are more than 40 per cent.

The project will contribute to the reduction of the stunting rate by one percentage point a year, or from 48pc to 43pc by 2021.

Sindh, with an estimated population of 51m comprises about a quarter of the country's population; it is the second most populous province of the country and is nearly 50pc urban. The most recent data shows that 48pc of children under five suffered from stunting and 15pc from wasting.

Stunting, or short height for age, and wasting, or low weight for height, are said to be important public health indicators.

The situation differs across the province, with highest rates of stunting for the districts of Tharparkar and Umerkot with 63pc and 66pc, respectively, and as low as 33pc to 36pc for the urban districts of Karachi.

The project's two components will increase the coverage of a multi-sectoral package of services to deliver results related to maternal and child nutrition, hygiene and sanitation practices and quality and diversification of dietary practices; and strengthen key cross-cutting interventions for better management, communication, results monitoring and piloting of a conditional cash transfer programme.

“Stunting is a serious problem in Pakistan and remains unchanged for 50 years. It severely impacts the learning of children,” said Illango Patchamuthu, World Bank Country Director for Pakistan. “The project is part of the Sindh government's plans to reduce stunting in the province by providing a package of services.”

The project will target the nutritionally most vulnerable populations: pregnant and lactating women to improve their nutritional status and to reduce the risk of low-birth weight babies; children aged 0 to 59 months, especially the first 1,000 days of life, when stunting and its associated pathologies are most preventable, and the following period when programmes can influence healthier future eating habits.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1335879>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 15 TH TO MAY 21ST 2017
MARVI MEMON REVIEWS ONGOING SURVEY OF BISP FOR NSER
Business Recordr, May 16, 2017

HYDERABAD: Minister of State and Chairperson BISP MNA Marvi Memon held an interactive meeting with survey teams of AASA Consulting, in Thatta Monday, where she was briefed on the progress of the ongoing survey of BISP for National Socio Economic Registry (NSER) update.

AASA Consulting is BISP's partner firm that is conducting survey in pilot districts of Thatta-Sajawal, Jacobabad, Sukkur, Kech, Naseerabad and Killa Saifullah. MNA Ayaz Shah Shirazi, Riaz Shah Shirazi and D.G. BISP Sindh Naeem Anwar were also present.

Speaking on the occasion, Chairperson BISP said that the survey being conducted for NSER update is top-notch and exemplary as the data is being collected through technology enabled tablets. The performance and coverage quality is ensured through a Visual Monitoring Coverage Assurance (VMCA) system developed by BISP MIS (Management Information System) system that monitors universal coverage and performance of the survey teams. By completing this high-tech survey on apolitical basis, the present government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, will not only render valuable service for the poorest of the country but will provide a model to the world to follow.

Chairperson expressed contentment over the completion of the 52 percent of the work in Thatta and Sajawal and directed the survey teams to ensure 100 percent coverage of the district. She added that the data collected through this survey is vital for the development planning, so no compromise will be made on quality of data. Data collection is a sacred responsibility bestowed on enumerators and supervisors and they should fulfill it with full commitment.

Out of 274 enumerators collecting data in Thatta and Sajawal, Chairperson BISP awarded certificates to 25 enumerators for their excellent performance and quality output. While appreciating the high performers, she said that currently Pakistan ranks at number 5 globally but the commitment and hard work of staff coupled with modern technology will take Pakistan to the top of the list.

Director AASA Riaz Hussain apprised Chairperson of the progress of ongoing survey. He stated that 141,163 households have been covered against the expected target caseload of 270,000 households, hence covering 52 percent of the expected caseload.

During the meeting, the Chairperson was also apprised of the problems faced by enumerators. She directed the concerned officials to resolve all the problems of enumerators so that they may fully concentrate on their duty of data collection.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/05/16/8-page/875375-news.html>

ECC APPROVES SUBSIDY FOR RAMAZAN

Dawn, May 17th, 2017

Khaleeq Kiani

ISLAMABAD: The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet on Tuesday approved Rs1.6 billion Ramazan subsidy and export of 600,000 tonnes of urea, besides imposing taxes on cotton imports.

Presided over by Finance Minister Ishaq Dar, a meeting of the ECC scaled down the amount of subsidy allocated in the budget for Ramazan relief by about Rs400m. The subsidy was already cut to Rs2bn in the 2016-17 budget from Rs3bn spent last year on provision of cheaper essential items to the poor.

The ECC decided to restrict the Ramazan Relief Package-2017 at Rs1.602bn to provide subsidies on 19 commodities, aimed at providing relief to people during the month of fasting.

The Ramazan Package was proposed by the Ministry of Industries and Production. The commodities to be provided to people on subsidised rates include flour, sugar, ghee, oil, pulses (channa, masoor, moong and mash), white grams, baisen, dates, rice, squashes, tea, milk and spices.

The commodities will be sold at subsidised rates across the country through outlets of the Utility Stores Corporation (USC). In addition to the relief provided by the Ramazan Package, USC will also reduce prices of over 2,400 other items from five per cent to 10pc by obtaining special discount from vendors/suppliers and reducing its own profit margins.

An official said the reduced rates would become effective a week before the beginning of Ramazan.

The ECC meeting also decided to increase the quantity of urea approved for exports from the existing 300,000 tonnes to 600,000 tonnes. The ECC is also reported to have extended the deadline for urea export from April 28 to Oct 31.

These decisions were made by the ECC after considering the proposal of the commerce ministry, based on the recommendations of the Fertiliser Review Committee. The ECC was told that sufficient production and inventory of urea for domestic consumption was anticipated during Kharif-2017.

On a proposal from the finance division, the ECC approved restoration of import duty and sales tax on cotton import with effect from July 15.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1333608>

GOVT TO GET \$137M FOR FINANCIAL INCLUSION PROJECT

Dawn, May 18th, 2017

Amin Ahmed

ISLAMABAD: The International Development Association (IDA) will finance the Pakistan Financial Inclusion and Infrastructure project with a loan of \$137 million, which will contribute to increasing access and usage of digital payments and other financial services for households and businesses in the country.

The government has requested the project, which will support a holistic National Financial Inclusion Strategy (NFIS) approach. It will focus on the development of market infrastructure and the ecosystem that will facilitate access and usage of digital payments and financial services. Access to credit for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) will be supported by a line of credit that will catalyse private sector financing and focused interventions including technical assistance in line with the NFIS.

The project is to be approved by the bank next month and help improve infrastructure and institutional capacity, supporting the uptake and usage of digital payments and financial access and usage of financial services by women and support women-owned MSMEs.

There is a significant untapped market for microfinance, which is suffering from funding constraints. The microfinance sector serves only 3.1 million borrowers, just 11.5 per cent of the estimated potential market.

In order to fund future growth and reach 10 million active borrowers by 2020, the industry needs additional funding of Rs300 billion. Despite constituting about 25 per cent of the labour force, only 4.8pc of women are included in the formal financial sector, compared to the South Asian average of 37.4pc. Loans to women account for less than 3pc of total bank loan volume.

Similarly, even though SMEs constitute 90pc of enterprises in Pakistan, as of June 2015, banks were lending to just 4.7pc of the estimated total SMEs in the country (3.2 million). Banks have limited appetite to serve the SME sector due to perceived risks, and have favoured alternative investment options, notably government securities. As a result, SMEs use their own sources for 89pc of working capital and 75pc of investment needs.

The World Bank says financial markets in Pakistan are shallow and narrow. In 2015, financial sector assets stood at about 68.5pc of GDP, below that of other relevant emerging markets; private sector credit to GDP, which declined significantly.

Pakistan has taken measures to improve financial inclusion for over a decade, and has led the way in South Asia in digital payments and branchless banking. State Bank and widespread computerised national identity cards have contributed to significant growth in digital transaction accounts.

The government has digitised some of its own payments, including its main social safety net programme, Benazir Income Support Programme.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1333800>

1,340 CHILDREN HAVE DIED IN THAR SINCE 2014, COURT TOLD

KARACHI: The provincial health authorities admitted before the Sindh High Court (SHC) on Thursday that 1,340 children have died in drought-hit areas of Tharparkar since 2014.

Therefore, a two-judge bench directed the provincial chief secretary, health secretary and others to submit a detailed report on implementation of the court-appointed commission's recommendations to mitigate the situation in the desert region. They will submit the report within two weeks.

Earlier, reports were filed by the secretaries of the provincial health and food departments. The food secretary informed the judges that free wheat had been distributed among the people in the drought-hit areas in 10 phases so far. He said a summary for the procurement of 270,000 wheat bags had been sent to the chief minister for approval.

The health secretary informed the court that there was an acute shortage of expert doctors and paramedical staff in Tharparkar district.

He said that 332 out of the total 517 posts of specialist doctors, surgeons and other experts were lying vacant in the district. The secretary said four posts of surgeons were vacant.

The secretary informed the judges that there were 10 posts of gynaecologists of which six were vacant. He added there were 10 posts of child specialist doctors but only two doctors were performing their jobs. He further explained that 168 out of 658 posts of lab technicians were also vacant.

The court was informed that 462,000 children had been brought to the out-patient department at the Mithi District Headquarters Hospital since 2014. The judges were also told that 1,340 children had died since 2014. These included 341 underweight children below five years of age. The report stated that 36 children died from respiratory diseases, 36 from malnutrition and 14 from diarrhoea.

The secretary maintained that the provincial government had re-doubled the annual budgetary allocations of government hospitals in Thar.

He added that the government was working on several long-term schemes aimed at poverty alleviation, women education, provision of clean drinking water, better sanitation and improving living standards and means of communication in the district.

The bench directed the provincial chief secretary, the health and food secretaries and others to submit a detailed report on implementation of the recommendations of the court-appointed commission to mitigate the situation in Thar. They will submit the report in two weeks.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1413231/1340-children-died-thar-since-2014-court-told/>

SIX THARI INFANTS DIE IN FOUR DAYS

Dawn, May 20th, 2017

MITHI: Six more children died of complications caused by malnutrition and other diseases in government hospitals across Thar over the past four days, raising the death toll since January this year to 154.

Yasmin Nohrio, four months, died on her way to Lia Kharo village after she was forcibly discharged from the Mithi Civil Hospital, her parents claimed, while newborns identified as Bhoobal Singh, Soomar, Achar Bheel and Mashooque Ahmed died at the civil hospital.

Despite repeated attempts, neither the DHO of Thar nor the civil surgeon attended calls to give their view on the deaths of infants.

According to Tharparkar Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Zaman Narejo, 1,340 infants had died in six government hospitals in the district since 2014 and 2,010 were referred to teaching hospitals in Hyderabad and Karachi for further treatment.

The official said in a report submitted to the Sindh High Court that over 426,000 children below five years of age were brought to the healthcare facilities.

The report, however, was silent on whether the referred children died on their way to hospitals or survived the harsh and hostile weather. “341 infants lost their lives due to birth complications (underweight), only 36 died of malnutrition, 36 breathed their last due to respiratory diseases and 14 died of diarrhoea.

The rest died of various other complications,” said the report.

Despite tall claims by government functionaries, hospitals, dispensaries and rural health centres still face a shortage of at least 332 doctors as only 22 doctors are working in 240 dispensaries in Thar.

But instead of filling vacant posts, the Sindh government on March 28 sacked 25 doctors, including five lady doctors, who were given the jobs on contract basis during the period when Thar was facing severe drought two years ago. Parents of the ailing kids repeated their complaint that they were not provided medicines and other facilities at government hospitals.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1334200/six-thari-infants-die-in-four-days>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 8TH TO MAY 14TH 2017

PROTESTERS EXPRESS SOLIDARITY WITH PALESTINIAN HUNGER STRIKERS

Dawn, May 11th, 2017

KARACHI: The Palestine Foundation on Wednesday organised a token hunger strike camp outside the Karachi Press Club to express solidarity with Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails who had been on hunger strike for the past one month against unfair and inhumane treatment meted out to them.

Addressing the protest camp, the leaders of the Palestinian Foundation said the governments of Islamic countries should take notice of the Israeli aggression and raise their voice against the ‘American-Israeli nexus’.

They urged people to register their protest against the aggressors and appealed to them to attend the protest camp.

Allama Qazi Ahmed Noorani, Azhar Hamdani, Mehfooz Yar Khan, Sabir Karbalai and other leaders addressed the protesters.

Leaders of different parties, including the Jamaat-i-Islami, the Jamiat Ulema-i-Pakistan, the Muttahida Qaumi Movement, the Pakistan Peoples Party and Sindh Transport Minister Syed Nasir Hussain Shah visited the camp and supported the cause of the Palestine Foundation.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1332329>

THE MAGIC CROP

Dawn, May 12th, 2017

Zubeida Mustafa

THE existential threat that Pakistan faces today is the insidious devastation of our human resources. It is a silent crisis, yet to be recognised, as an entire generation of children faces a slow death by malnutrition.

Denied basic nutrients — especially protein — essential for their physical and cognitive growth in the critical first 1,000 days of life, the majority of children never enjoy the same health and mental growth as that of a normal well-fed child. Paediatricians tell us that the damage done during this window of life — from conception till the second birthday — cannot be reversed. We have been warned, but nothing stirs us out of our complacency.

According to the Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey 2013-14, 45 per cent of children under five in Pakistan are stunted while 30pc are underweight. That means many of our children are denied the capacity to realise fully their learning and growth potential. Malnutrition also affects their mothers who give birth to them.

This is the real food insecurity that Pakistan faces. Its grim implications are not reported by the media because we do not have too many deaths by famine. But, silently, the minds of our children are dying. It is an irony that we cannot feed the little ones when nature has blessed Pakistan with an abundance of wheat. Poverty and the unaffordable price of wheat mean that children are being starved of nutrition. The decline in official subsidies over the years and the rising cost of inputs has put food beyond the reach of the common man.

It is time to think of new solutions, especially in terms of providing nourishment to children. The Food and Agriculture Organisation has the answer in quinoa, which has been dubbed as the miracle grain, the magic food and, above all, the complete protein possessing all the nine essential amino acids needed to build the body and brain of a growing child.

Another major advantage it offers is its low cost of production and its natural adaptability to diverse climatic conditions. FAO, a vocal advocate, declared 2013 as the International Year of the Quinoa.

The grain, it is claimed, has many nutritional properties and is also cheap to grow. Dr Shahzad Basra, professor of agronomy at the Faisalabad Agriculture University, is an ardent supporter of the quinoa and has been doing research on the seed since 2009 when he imported some germplasm from the US Department of Agriculture to test it in Pakistani conditions.

According to him quinoa is gluten-free, rich in protein (15-19 pc), has many minerals such as zinc, magnesium, manganese, etc and a low glycemic index. Wheat, our staple grain, has only 13pc protein. Dr Basra also points out that quinoa is a resilient crop that is not affected by unfavourable weather, thrives in saline soil — clayey or sandy — and is drought resistant. The yield per acre is 800 kilograms. This is much lower than that of wheat. But I presume the yield of quinoa will grow with more research and cultivation.

What I find strange is that given these advantages, why is quinoa not being promoted in a big way in Pakistan? According to Dr Basra's information, quinoa is cultivated on 800 acres (a little over 300 hectares) or so which means a production of 640,000kg a year, most of which is exported. It is true that a culinary taste for quinoa has yet to be developed. That calls for a public campaign in a land of wheat eaters.

This is worth it as quinoa has done well as the staple food of the Andean region in South America where the indigenous populations have preserved the crop carefully with their traditional knowledge and practices.

From what I understand, the government has not tried to promote quinoa at all. Those who have, including some researchers and cultivators, have focused on its rich potential as an export item. As prices have risen in the world market, local production has increased somewhat in the last three years. As a result, the price of quinoa, Dr Shahzad tells me, has declined in Pakistan from Rs3,500 to Rs400-600 per kilo.

It is time we thought of our children. The government needs to draw up child-centred nutrition programmes focused on quinoa. This is possible if a policy is adopted to indigenise the grain and devise ideal agricultural practices to maximise its production. It need not displace wheat. Given its easy-to-grow properties, tillers could grow it on land that is not fit for wheat cultivation. Why not distribute the 'barren' land among small farmers and show them how to grow the magic crop?

Sensible pricing and export policies could ensure affordable prices with export being allowed only above specified ceilings after local nutritional needs have been met. Small entrepreneurs should step forward to produce cereal and baby food.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1332540>

SHC NOT SATISFIED WITH REPORT ON THAR CHILDREN'S DEATHS

Dawn, May 12th, 2017

Ishaq Tanoli

KARACHI: The Sindh High Court on Thursday expressed dissatisfaction over a report on causes of children's deaths in drought-hit Tharparkar and sought comprehensive reports from health and food secretaries by May 18.

During the hearing of a petition highlighting death of children in Tharparkar, a two-judge SHC bench headed by Chief Justice Ahmed Ali M. Shaikh also sought details from the provincial authorities about appointments of medical officers in the district.

The chief justice came down hard on officials who turned up and also expressed resentment over the absence of the deputy commissioner of Tharparkar.

Additional Advocate General barrister Ghulam Mustafa Mahesar placed the report, prepared by the deputy commissioner, before the bench and assured it that the DC would appear at the next hearing. He pointed out that the Supreme Court was also seized with the issue of children's deaths in Tharparkar.

The report was prepared in compliance with the SHC's April 25 order in which the court had expressed displeasure over the state of affairs in Thar with regard to dying children, unfair distribution of wheat and non-availability of water, health and education facilities.

According to the report, about 80 children have died so far this year in Thar because of the absence of reliable transport, early marriages and malnutrition. It said the shortage of doctors in the district was one of the major factors because the provincial government could not fill the posts as the Sindh Public Service Commission had remained dysfunctional after a directive of the apex court.

"Now the commission is in place and it will not take long for the Sindh government to fill these vacancies," the report said, adding that there was also shortage of ambulances in the district.

IG removal case

Another bench of the SHC extended for five more days its interim order restraining the removal of Sindh police chief A.D. Khowaja.

A division bench, headed by Justice Munib Akhtar, put off the matter to May 16 after the petitioners' counsel, Faisal Siddiqui, completed his arguments asking the court to allow Mr Khowaja to continue as inspector general of police.

The counsel argued that 13 police chiefs had been posted and subsequently transferred in Sindh within a short span of time by the Pakistan Peoples Party-led provincial government and demanded that this practice be investigated through a commission.

Responding to the comments filed by the provincial government through the advocate general, Mr Siddiqui said the respondent had cited upholding of seniority during the appointment of the police chief, but it had never maintained the same previously.

He argued that the provincial government had tried to replace Mr Khowaja with a grade-21 officer, Sardar Abdul Majeed Dasti, and said that technically Mr Dasti was junior to another similar scale officer, Ghulam Qadir Thebo, who was currently serving as chairman of the Anti-Corruption Establishment.

The counsel maintained that mostly the IGs were posted in the province on the basis of own-pay-scale and not on the basis of their seniority.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1332537>

‘LACK OF AWARENESS, POVERTY MAIN REASONS BEHIND OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN’

Dawn, May 13th, 2017

Lack of awareness among parents and poverty are major reasons for the alarming number of out-of-school children in Pakistan.

Policymakers and the government will have to prioritise these two significant challenges if they are serious about bringing all 22 million OSC into schools, volunteers told Dawn at the sidelines of the 2017 Ilm-Possible Summit on Friday.

These volunteers are involved in efforts to bring out-of-school children into schools in their respective districts, and were speaking at a summit organised by the British Council. The Ilm-Possible programme, conducted by the British Council alongside local partners, has enrolled 225,000 children in schools in three years.

In order to celebrate and further deliberate over the matter, the British Council organised a two day summit that was attended by volunteers and NGO representatives working in the education sector on the opening day.

Higher Education Commission Chairman Dr Mukhtar Ahmed was invited to the opening session as the chief guest. British Council country director Rosemary Hilhorst, the British deputy high commissioner Richard Crowder, president of the School of Leadership Foundation Umair Jaliawala, Furwa Baig and others also spoke at the opening session.

An exhibition, opened by Mr Crowder and Dr Ahmed, was also held. It showcased various enrolment, retention and social action projects conducted across the country.

Speaking to Dawn, volunteers said that they have confronted two major issues during their field work. One of these was the lack of awareness about the importance of education among parents, who were reluctant to send their children to school – in many cases, they said, the child in question was the sole earner in the family.

Volunteer Nasra Malik also said poverty is a major reason for children staying out of school. “I myself noted that children were involved in child labour to help their families,” she said.

“These two issues should be resolved by the government on priority to bring all out-of-school children to schools, otherwise there will be no serious outcome,” another volunteer, Sabir Masih, said.

Speaking earlier at the ceremony, HEC Chairman Dr Ahmed commended the British Council’s contribution to Pakistan’s education sector.

He said no country could progress without significant investment in education. “There are several countries that lack natural resources but have become prosperous by focusing on their human development,” he said.

He said it was unfortunate that Pakistan has 22 million out-of-school children, and that very few students continue their education after completing their intermediate schooling.

“We all have to play our role. It is our common responsibility to educate all children. Girls education, in particular, needs focus,” he said. He added that the government was taking measures to improve the education sector, and the sector has seen significant improvement over the last several years, but more efforts are required.

Shamim Akhtar, an educationist from Sindh, also gave a motivational speech, in which she discussed how she surpassed social barriers, received an education and got a job.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1332748>

75PC PM YOUTH LOANS GO TO PUNJAB

Dawn, May 13th, 2017

Shahid Iqbal

KARACHI: Three quarters of loan disbursements under the Prime Minister’s Youth Business Loan (PMYBL) scheme were in Punjab, according to the State Bank of Pakistan’s (SBP) quarterly report issued on Friday.

Loans under the PMYBL registered quarterly growth of 107 per cent in Oct-Dec 2016, it showed.

A region-wise break-up of the received applications until December 31, 2016 shows that 55,838 applications, or 75pc of total, came from Punjab alone.

Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had a share of 9pc each in total applications received under the scheme. “Almost a similar trend prevails as far as the disbursement of loans under the scheme is concerned. Punjab has the share of around 75pc in total loans disbursed under the PMYBL followed by KP and Sindh with a share of 9pc and 8pc, respectively,” said the report.

The scheme was launched by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif with Rs100bn. His daughter Maryam Nawaz was the head of the scheme, but she resigned after the Lahore High Court asked the federal government to replace her.

In a visit to Karachi a few months back, the prime minister showed dismay at the low disbursement of loans under the scheme. National Bank of Pakistan (NBP) also came under fire as it is the largest loan provider under the scheme. NBP provided Rs20.35bn out of total Rs21.13bn sanctioned through the PMYBL.

As many as Rs9.14bn was disbursed in Oct-Dec 2016, registering growth of 107pc over the preceding three-month period, with major contribution coming from NBP, the report said.

The SBP governor had to resign before completing his term when the PML-N assumed power in 2013. The president of NBP was also changed, giving rise to speculations that the PMYBL scheme was a political venture.

The fact that 75pc loans were disbursed in Punjab supports the earlier speculation about the political use of the scheme.

“Punjab has the largest share with respect to the number of applications received, sanctioned and disbursed under the scheme, followed by KP and Sindh,” said the report.

Islamabad, Gilgit-Baltistan, AJK and Balochistan had a share of 2pc each in total disbursements as of Dec 31.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1332763>

Mohammad Hussain Khan

SINDH has experienced the highest average urban unemployment growth of 1.8pc during the period between 2001-02 and 2013-14, says the annual review of social development done by Social Policy and Development Centre (SPDC) in 2014-15. The total labour force of Sindh was calculated at 6.3 million and employed labour force was 5.9m against 400,000 unemployed. In view of these statistics, the rate of unemployment stood at around 6.3pc in urban Sindh in 2013-14. Numbers beyond that point are not available which tells its own tale.

The picture looks gloomy in Sindh — the second most populous province — where the Agriculture sector is struggling amidst pathetically low commodity prices coupled with lower per-acre yields in cash crops like cotton, and the Industrial sector is faced with a host issues.

According to Mahmood Nawaz Shah, a farming community leader, the sector has shown -2.5pc growth from 2006-07 onwards. This used to be 4.5pc. “Farm sector has the capacity to grow. We can increase our yields easily and there is need to link the sector with CPEC to cash in on Chinese, Russian, Central Asian markets through road link,” he insisted.

Economic expert Dr Kaiser Bengali pointed the finger at what he called population explosion. “Government jobs are not the answer and even otherwise the government lacks the political will to handle it the way it needs to be handled,” he observes. Industries are facing closure, he says, and the industrialists are keen to invest in commodity trading, real estate and the stock market. “Simply, you are not to be worried of so many hiccups if you are playing in these sectors,” he remarked.

“It is the high-skill sector that offers some jobs, but again it is not a labour-intensive sector,” he said, adding that increasing dependence on government jobs among the youth was bound to increase non-development expenditure and budget deficit.

As for the industrial sector, budding entrepreneur Asif Memon moaned about moratorium on gas supply. It is a serious issue, he said pointing out that the government is offering re-gasified liquefied natural gas (RLNG) which is quite expensive. That’s the reason why industrialists tend to think to move towards trading and real estate, he said.

Coming to jobs in the public sector, Sindh has put a moratorium on government jobs, but with next year’s general elections in sight, it is safe assumption in political circles that the ban would soon be lifted and jobs would be handed out ahead of polls.

Labour leader Karamat Ali was of the opinion that things would become unmanageable if corrective measures were not taken right away. He regretted that even the concept of minimum wages was not respected for the unskilled labour in the industrial sector whereas the agriculture sector was witnessing unemployment because peasantry largely remained landless.

Hyderabad, the second largest urban centre in Sindh, doesn’t have any scope for jobs as qualified youths and professionals always opt for Karachi to seek jobs that adds to unplanned urbanisation. According to Awais Ghangra, a young Hyderabad-based industrialist, he struggles to find qualified youth for professional jobs in the city.

“We have to groom them. And, when groomed, they are always keen to explore the job market in Karachi where they end up getting a much better salary package,” he concluded.

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 1ST TO MAY 7TH 2017
CALL FOR NUTRITION EMERGENCY IN BALOCHISTAN
Dawn, May 1st, 2017

Saleem Shahid

QUETTA: Balochistan Health Minister Mir Rehmat Saleh Baloch has announced moving a resolution in the next session of the provincial assembly for imposing a nutrition emergency in the province as nutrition situation of mother and child is very serious in the province.

Speaking at a meeting of the Provincial Fortification Alliance here on Sunday, he said in view of the alarming malnutrition situation of mother and child, a special briefing would be arranged for members of the Balochistan Assembly.

Director General Health Masood Ahmed Noshervani, Director of the Provincial Mother and Child Nutrition Programme Dr Nasir Bugti and Dr Khawaja Masood also spoke on the occasion.

MPAs Dr Shama Ishaq, Yasmeen Lehri, Arifa Siddiq, Masooma Hayat, Samina Shakeel, William Barkat, Shazia Ahmed Langove, Farzana Raisani and Sabara Aslam attended the meeting.

Rehmat Saleh Baloch said that according to a survey, 16.2 per cent of children were victim of malnutrition, 52pc suffering from stunting and 40pc were under weight.

“There is no remedy for stunting,” he said, adding that the nutrition programme was badly affected in the province due to negligence and ignorance of previous governments.

The health minister said the programme was also affected as donors stopped funding. However, he said, the present government had taken serious notice of the situation and managed funds for the programme by approaching donor agencies.

He said the present government was working on the programme with complete political commitment and determination.

He assured the meeting that the provincial health department would extend all help and cooperation for the success of the programme.

Referring to hepatitis-B and C in the province, the minister said that earlier provision of medicine was very difficult, but now the health department was providing 100pc medicine to Hepatitis patients.

“Donors, who were reluctant to come to Balochistan in the past, are now approaching the government for funding different health-related programmes,” the minister said.

Director General Health Masood Noshervani said no programme could succeed without political will and urged the lawmakers to extend all help and cooperation for the success of the nutrition programme.

Director of the Provincial Mother and Child Nutrition Programme Dr Nasir Bugti briefed the meeting on the programme and urged the lawmakers to monitor the programme and put compliant boxes in the district headquarters hospitals.

PAKISTAN'S MIDDLE CLASS CONTINUES TO GROW AT RAPID PACE

The Express Tribune, May 2nd, 2017.

KARACHI: The country's middle class is experiencing a rapid growth, which is evident from the rising demand for consumer durables, education and health, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The central bank, in its latest report on the state of economy, said that the growth in the consumption pattern in the country is indicative of a budding economy.

"Several indicators show rising consumer demand in the country. These include a rise in consumer financing, an increase in the sale of consumer durables (automobiles and electronic goods) and a sharp growth in fuel consumption," said the SBP.

"Furthermore, the IBA-SBP Consumer Confidence Index recorded its highest-ever level of 174.9 points in January 2017, showing an increase of 17 points from July 2016."

While there are different parameters to count the number of people and households in the middle class or the middle-income group of an economy, consumer spending is one prominent barometer which provides a rough assessment.

According to prominent political economist S Akbar Zaidi, Pakistan's middle class has grown rapidly in the last 15 to 20 years on the back of rising remittances sent home by expats and increase in foreign investment.

"The foreign investment, which came into the country after 2002, has had a trickledown effect on thousands of lives," he said, adding that increased access to education and rising representation of people in political parties also reflected the growth in the middle class.

Zaidi said that Pakistan's middle class is often referred to in the context of the number of consumer goods it purchases, ranging from washing machines to motorcycles.

Additionally, attempts to quantify the country's middle class, largely based on income and the purchase of consumption goods, exhibit that 42% of the population belong to the upper and middle classes, with 38% counted as the middle class.

"If these numbers are correct, or even indicative in any broad sense, then 84 million Pakistanis belong to the middle and upper classes, a population size which is larger than that of Germany," said Zaidi.

Meanwhile, Standard Chartered Middle East-North Africa and Pakistan Senior Economist Bilal Khan said that domestic consumption and consumer confidence are strong in the country.

"Monetary easing and lower energy prices can boost household discretionary incomes and, in this context, a strong and stable currency can also be expected to increase demand for imported consumer goods, both durables and non-durables," he said.

On the other hand, in the central bank's report, it was mentioned that electronic goods showed a sharp turnaround during first half (January-December) of current fiscal year, recording a growth of 14.5%, against a contraction of 8.2% during the same period of last year.

"Consumer durables like refrigerators (up 25%) and deep-freezers (up 54.4%) mainly contributed to this improved performance," the report said.

“Furthermore, rise in energy supply in coming months, increase in consumer financing in a low interest rate environment, better market access for rural population, expansionary plans of leading players and foreign investment, all indicates a sustainable trajectory for the industry’s growth going forward,” it added.

Separately, consumer financing posted an increase of Rs37.6 billion during first half of the current fiscal year. Auto finance continued to be the dominated segment, while personal loans showed a pickup as well.

“The net credit off-take of Rs13.7 billion of personal loans witnessed in first half of the fiscal year is the highest half-year figure in about a decade,” the report stated.

The SBP also highlighted a notable growth in the foods segment and a strong growth in the sub-segment of soft beverage.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1398602/pakistans-middle-class-continues-grow-rapid-pace/>

PAKISTAN TO WORK WITH KABUL, DELHI ON WATER MANAGEMENT

Khaleeq Kiani

ISLAMABAD: The government is seeking a joint mechanism with India and Afghanistan for joint watershed management and trans-boundary aquifer sharing to minimise the negative impact of development projects of neighbours.

Watershed management relates to the land and water management practices that can help protect and improve the water quality, while aquifer refers to the underground layer of rock or minerals that holds water.

This is part of the National Water Policy, which also seeks to ensure 100pc metering of urban water uses, including drinking and sanitation. The policy finalised by the Centre and the provinces was on the agenda of the Council of Common Interests on Tuesday, but could not be taken up due to the prime minister’s political engagements.

A copy of the policy, seen by Dawn, concedes that the Indus Waters Treaty provided a mechanism for water-sharing with India, but its provisions on hydropower development across the line of control had the potential of threatening Pakistan’s water availability during low-flow periods.

The treaty also does not provide for minimum environmental flows downstream of the international boundary for the Eastern Rivers — whose waters lie with India — exposing the population living downstream to serious hazards.

It said that regional mechanisms involving more than two neighbours shall be explored for a viable solution to Pakistan’s growing vulnerability to hydro-meteorological disasters, owing to trans-border winter releases and stoppages at critical times of monsoon and during rabi and kharif planting seasons.

A mechanism shall also be worked out for sharing of trans-boundary aquifers and joint watershed management, including sharing of real-time water flow information.

A study would also be conducted to analyse the impact of challenges arising out of developments on the western rivers and examine measures to minimise the impact within the framework of the Indus Waters Treaty and international water laws.

The new policy acknowledged that water was a ‘highly under-priced commodity’ and its prevailing cost recovery through cess (known as ‘abiana’) was hardly able to meet a fraction of the operating and maintenance cost of the irrigation infrastructure.

The policy said that full financial sustainability shall be ensured to provide progressively safe drinking water and sanitation facilities. “This shall be facilitated by effective reduction in wastage, theft and reduction of non-revenue water and 100pc metering” while providing safety nets for impoverished communities.

A mechanism would be put in place by all the federal and provincial governments to charge all types of water use in order to ensure the recovery of the cost of repair and maintenance of water infrastructure.

For the first time, policy-makers seem to have recognised that freshwater is a finite resource, which cannot meet the unlimited demand of numerous users and that increasing population is a key factor for the increase in water demand. The concept of “More Crop Per Drop” will be pursued to ensure food security through a national plan to improve irrigation methods and practices and introduce new varieties of crops of high yields and lower water consumption, resistant to heat stress, drought tolerant, and less prone to insects and pests.

Ground water tables will be managed to ensure that crop growth is not impeded and prevent land salinity or underground saltwater intrusion. It has been feared that continuous ground water extraction through tubewells could soon lead to the extraction of saltwater.

Rural water supply and sanitation services will be charged at affordable rates and it will be mandatory for the relevant agencies to keep the quality of drinking water, urban or rural, above specified standards.

A plan for flood zoning will be implemented to prevent losses to people living along river banks. For this, respective governments to restrict or prohibit permanent settlements in high and medium flood risk areas on the basis of zoning and mapping of the River Indus and its tributaries — Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Sutlej, Kabul and Swat.

The sources of surface and underground water will be diligently protected from contamination and maintained in a healthy state. Development of hydroelectric power will also be treated as a high priority objective.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1330768>

INCREASING INFANT MORTALITY — TRUMP PROPOSED BUDGET

The Express Tribune, May 6th, 2017.

In 1976, Senator Hubert Humphrey hired me to study what has since become the most important federal programme designed to lower the infant mortality rate. Today, 55 per cent of US babies are participants of the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) programme. If President Trump’s budget cuts are successful, WIC’s \$6.4 billion annual funding will be cut by \$200 million. Our deplorable infant mortality rate will get worse. Babies who do not need to die will. That is not to say WIC is as good as it needs to be. WIC is administered by Secretary of Agriculture, Sonny Perdue, a veterinarian who has no expertise in reducing infant mortality. Ideally, the health of pregnant women and their children, in the formative period before their first birthday, would be in the bailiwick of the Department of Health and Human Service’s public health service.

Yes, WIC performs good deeds. It provides nutritious food to low-income pregnant women at nutritional risk. It also provides food to children under age five in recognition of studies demonstrating irreversible brain damage for nutritionally deprived infants and children.

First let’s discuss why the infant mortality rate is so high in the US. The current rate is 6.1. For every 1,000 babies born alive, six die before they reach their first birthday. More babies die in the US than in any developed country. In Spain, the infant mortality rate is 3.1. The primary cause of infant deaths is low birthweight. The primary reason for it is that their mothers are severely anaemic. If the US were serious about reducing the infant mortality rate, all pregnant women would receive prenatal care and anaemia would be treated with appropriate medicine.

Pakistan's infant mortality rate is 66 deaths for every 1,000 live births. I believe the US has an obligation to help the developing world avert this tragedy. In the process, we must improve at home. Sadly, when tens of millions are dying from famine, most especially in Africa, President Trump's budget proposal released earlier this year would end all international food relief assistance. Consequently, it is unlikely that in other areas, such as infant mortality, USDA or the US Public Health Service will be of necessary assistance in helping Pakistan or other developing countries.

The WIC programme does not provide prenatal care. For anaemia, funding is not available for iron pills or medication. It is hoped that foods high in iron, including iron-fortified cereal, will serve. Certainly, the \$45 a month of nutritious food pregnant women receive helps reduce the rate from being worse. Public policymakers of good will are here faced with a conundrum.

Much of the good WIC does is not related to its target missions which also includes reducing the risk of permanent brain damage in young children. WIC also doubles as an income support programme. The vast majority of children and other family members who benefit from mothers sharing food with their family need it. Yes there are more efficient ways of providing income support. However, programmes that do good are subject to attack when they do not slavishly meet their objectives.

Case in point, following my work for Senator Humphrey, I published an article in The New Republic entitled, "Strictly from Hunger, Teaching Pregnant Women Not to Share Food with their Families." The year was 1977. WIC had grown from a \$20 million programme to \$250 million.

There was a Democratic President. My critique was influenced by the fact that I lost a sister Nitnah who died shortly after childbirth. My criticism was an attempt to convert personal tragedy into public policy. Barbara Bode, president of the Children's Foundation and my friend, called saying, "You have sold your soul for 30 pieces of silver." She never talked to me again. Several texts cite my article as evidence I am a horrible human being. Since then, the programme has grown from \$250 million to \$6.4 billion.

On Thursday March 23rd, I spoke to Rep Glenn Thompson (R-PA), Chairman of the House Agriculture Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programme (SNAP) Subcommittee. SNAP's work is critical to the passage next year of the farm bill because without urban support agricultural legislation will not pass.

Representative Thompson's first child was born the same year as my first child. Only he was earning \$8,000 a year. His wife Penny received WIC vouchers. Thompson said he was embarrassed at presenting the vouchers at grocery stores, but did so realising his future son Parker's health was at stake.

Keeping WIC at USDA, rather than moving it to HHS, means our country's infant mortality rate will continue to be an embarrassment. Criticising it runs the risk of allowing the presumably budget conscious to allow more infants to die at birth. Thompson, a Trump supporter, said Trump's budget proposal should not be regarded seriously. What should be regarded seriously are legislators committed to anti-abortion and right-to-life policies, who will continue to allow infants to die.

Have I found on the Republican right a member of Congress who takes infant mortality seriously and is equipped to do something about it?

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1402317/increasing-infant-mortality-trump-proposed-budget/>

June 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUNE 26TH TO JULY 1 ST 2017

OFID TO LOAN \$50M FOR FATA'S DEVELOPMENT

Dawn: June 29, 2017

The OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID) has signed a \$50 million loan agreement with Pakistan to support the wide-ranging Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata) Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Programme.

The programme aims at lifting socio-economic constraints in a region of some 4.6 million people that has witnessed years of regional instability resulting in high numbers of internally displaced people (IDPs) who have lost their livelihood and homes.

The agreement was signed by OFID Director-General Suleiman J Al Herbish and Ayesha Riyaz, Ambassador of Pakistan to Austria. At the signature ceremony, Al Herbish spoke of OFID's longstanding cooperation with Pakistan and briefed the ambassador about the organisation's public sector lending, with approvals totaling over \$450 million.

The figure supports Pakistan's agriculture, energy, education, health, transportation, industry and water supply and sanitation sectors. Al Herbish also outlined OFID's private sector and trade finance operations, as well as grant-based assistance.

With poverty levels reaching nearly 60 per cent, the Pakistan government has formulated a return and rehabilitation strategy identifying Fata's development needs. The strategy takes a holistic approach that focuses not only on the rehabilitation and reconstruction of damaged infrastructure, but also prioritises the restoration of livelihoods.

It also makes interventions in the fields of education, health and housing, and makes a commitment to introduce complementary institutional, legal and administrative reforms.

Against the backdrop of this strategy, OFID's loan will co-finance the rehabilitation and reconstruction component of the programme. The component targets basic infrastructure, ranging from schools, healthcare facilities, water supply and sanitation systems and roads, to energy generation and transmission lines, and irrigation schemes. Also planned are community-based disaster risk reduction initiatives.

Al Herbish assured Ambassador Riyaz of OFID's continued commitment to the government of Pakistan and hoped their 'excellent ties' would continue to "yield even greater cooperation".

Ambassador Riyaz thanked the director-general for OFID's 'excellent cooperation' and praised the institution for its commitment to improving lives and helping reduce poverty.

She said the newly-signed agreement built on the strong relationship between OFID and Pakistan and represented yet another opportunity to make a positive impact on the beneficiary communities.

Other activities to be carried out under the program include: early recovery packages for around 200,000 temporarily displaced families via cash grants; housing subsidies; capacity building, stakeholder consultation, social mobilisation and awareness campaigns; and strategic communication and monitoring measures.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1446442/ofid-loan-50m-fatas-development/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUNE 5TH TO JUNE 11 TH 2017

11 MORE KIDS DIE IN THAR HOSPITALS

Dawn, June 8th, 2017

MITHI: Eleven more children died in Thar's hospitals, including the Civil Hospital of Mithi and Islamkot Rural Health Centre, during the past four days due to an outbreak of waterborne diseases and malnutrition.

According to credible sources in the health department, over 172 infants have lost their lives since Jan 1 this year in Tharparkar district.

Dozens of ailing kids were brought to six health facilities of the district on Wednesday. The parents of ailing children and patients complained of a lack of facilities in the hospitals and unavailability of healthcare units in their remote villages.

They alleged that most of the dispensaries and basic health units were lying closed in their respective villages. Despite repeated attempts, no health official could be contacted for their version.

Health officials have stopped sharing details of the deaths of infants with media after Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Saqib Nisar took suo motu notice of the deaths of infants in the Civil Hospital of Mithi.

Health and nutrition experts and activists working in the desert area have observed that there was a need to provide nutrition and safe drinking water in the region to prevent further deaths.

They stated that the situation in the rain-dependent region assumed alarming proportions due to increasing temperatures and delayed monsoon rainfall.

They urged the government to take precautionary measures in case of delayed or erratic rains this season, in light of a recent report by the UN on Thar and other districts.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1338046/11-more-kids-die-in-thar-hospitals>

UFONE PARTNERS WITH RIZQ TO FIGHT H UNGER, REDUCE FOOD WASTAGE

Business Recorder, June 9, 2016

LAHORE: Continuing on its tradition of supporting estimable people and institutions, which in turn help the less fortunate in Pakistan, Ufone is partnering with Rizq, a social entrepreneur project, this Ramazan.

Rizq was started in April 2015 by a group of friends who met at LUMS while studying for their economics degree after Huzaifa Ahmad shared his desire to channelize excess food to the underprivileged who cannot afford daily meals. Huzaifa's friends and partners, Musa Amir and Qasim Javed, were instantly on board and the three entrepreneurs came together to build a bridge between surplus food at restaurants, weddings, and households (usually thrown away) and families living in slums of Lahore.

Ufone is supporting this worthy cause and will purchase media space on television channels and digital media throughout Ramazan, to be used to promote Rizq, free of cost. This will help secure more support for their endeavours by spreading the message of their cause across Pakistan. Ufone highlighted the partnership at an event held here the other day.

Rizq has two primary objectives, to decrease food wastage that is rampant in our society and to feed under nourished people particularly children. As step one, the Rizq team identifies an area within Lahore, usually slums and villages, and maps the community. Next, food drives are advertised on Rizq's official Facebook page and website encouraging people to contact them if they have any extra or leftover food items from parties or otherwise to donate. When created, Rizq's Facebook page generated 5,000 likes overnight.

As step two, food is collected from partner restaurants, bakeries, caterers and households. The food usually comes in large containers, which are then taken to a store where it is checked for quality, and sorted into small packages for easy distribution. Lastly, food packages are distributed to mapped communities.

On average, Rizq serves 200 to 250 meals every day, and the team aims to bring this up to 2000 meals per day. During Ramazan, Rizq targets arranging 2-3 Iftar Dastarkhwans on different locations each day to make food available for deserving people.

In order to expand their operations, Rizq needs Rs 1.5 million to buy a cold storage van and a cold storage facility to manage larger quantities of food. The team has been managing with fridges till now, which restricts them to sell/distribute food immediately.

This is the first time in Pakistan a food bank has been established to channelize excess food and the project has the potential to reduce poverty and transform people's lives. Ensuring meal availability means the families can now utilize their money for other facilities like sending children to school, or buying medicines for ill family members.

Ufone hopes to create greater awareness of the remarkable work being done by Rizq and hopes this will kindle a spirit of sharing and generosity in others.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/06/09/5-page/880971-news.html>

KHUZDAR WOMEN PROTEST AGAINST PHONE FIRM

Dawn, June 10th, 2017

KHUZDAR: A large number of women receiving a monthly stipend from the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) staged a sit-in at the National Highway on Friday against deduction of Rs900 by a mobile phone company which disbursed the amount to the relief recipients.

Carrying placards and banners inscribed with their demands and shouting slogans, they gathered at the main highway.

The representative of the protesting women, Zahida Mengal, told journalists that earlier the women in Khuzdar were receiving their stipend of BISP from the post office which deducted an amount of Rs200 as a delivery charge.

She said that in the current month, the arrangement of distribution of amount to the deserving women was handed over to a mobile company which was deducting Rs900 from each woman.

They demanded that the delivery of BISP stipend be handed back to post offices.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1338609>

July 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 24TH TO JULY 31ST 2017

QAT WORKERS HOLD DEMONSTRATION FOR RIGHTS OF THARIS

Dawn, July 26th, 2017

MITHI: A large number of Qaumi Awami Tehreek (QAT) workers took out a rally and staged demonstration at Kashmir Chowk on Tuesday for two hours to register their protest against various issues facing Thar and other parts of the province.

Addressing the workers and later talking to local reporters, advocate Shahnawaz Hingorjo, Danish Parmar, Kanwar Raja, Subhan Bajeer and other leaders lashed out at the Sindh government for doing nothing to mitigate miseries of people due to worst governance.

They said projects like Gorano water reservoir would only cause environmental degradation in the arable lands. "The so-called public hearings are mostly organised by officials of the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) and the mining firms engaged in the extraction of coal from Thar coalfield without inviting experts, media persons, members of civil society and political workers," they claimed and warned that QAT workers would peacefully protest against events if the related people were not invited by Sepa and mining firms.

The QAT leaders came down hard on health officials for their reluctance to share data of the unabated deaths of infants in Thar due to malnutrition and various other diseases. They said that many departments like family planning, forests and wildlife had ceased to exist while the health and education departments were in a shambles.

They deplored that after the ongoing spell of monsoon rains, revenue officials, despite bloody feuds among local people, were not ready to stop influential people from bringing the grazing and government lands under crop cultivation.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1347605/qat-workers-hold-demonstration-for-rights-of-tharis>

SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM: CHINESE FIRMS KEEN TO INVEST IN PUNJAB

Business Recorder July 26th, 2017

Around 200 heads and representatives of Chinese companies participated in a road-show held here on Tuesday and showed their keen interest in investment opportunities offered by Punjab government in solid waste management program in urban and rural areas. The road-show jointly organised by the Punjab government and Pakistan Embassy in Beijing was attended by Punjab Minister for Local Government, Khawaja Manshaullah Butt, technical experts and senior officials of the Punjab government.

The technical team briefed the participants about investment opportunities in solid waste collection and transportation, landfill constructions and operation management, waste to energy projects and hospital waste management projects. Speaking on the occasion, the minister invited the Chinese entrepreneurs to come forward and take advantage of investment friendly policies and peaceful environment in Punjab province.

Punjab Chief Minister, Shahbaz Sharif is committed to ensure transparency and merit in all the projects being completed in the province, he added. He said under the cleaner city policy, the municipal solid waste management system will be improved and expanded in the urban and rural areas in the province. The minister said the long term cooperation between Pakistan and the Chinese companies will provide an opportunity to learn new expertise and experience for better management of solid waste.

The Punjab government will provide full support and facilitation to the companies that would invest in the proposed projects, he added. In his welcome address, Pakistan Ambassador to China, Masood Khalid briefed the Chinese businessmen about the investment opportunities in different sectors and asked them to take part in development drive launched by the Punjab government for the mutual benefit of people of the two countries. He said the participation of such a large number of companies in the road-show is manifestation of market potential in Pakistan and the long-standing Pak-China deep rooted friendship.

Terming the launch of urban and rural waste management plan a right step towards ensuring a green and friendly environment, he said the Punjab province has abundant natural and human resources and the Chinese businessmen should take benefit of these opportunities. The Ambassador said more than 19,000 Chinese are already working in different projects under safe and friendly environment. The participants were informed the provincial government has allocated Rs 15 billion in the budget for the current financial year to extend solid waste management program to five big cities, 25 smaller cities in Lahore division and 194 cities across the Punjab province.

Under the cleaner city plan, the institutions concerned have been reformed and waste management companies have been formulated in major cities of the Punjab. The department responsible for solid waste management in Lahore district has recently expanded its scope to the adjoining districts of Kasur, Sheikhpura and Nankana Sahib.

The investors have been invited in collection and transportation of municipal solid waste from designated collection points to disposal sites in the three news districts. The Chinese companies have also been asked to help in setting up a commercial scale bio gas plant with a capacity to use more than 300 tons of cattle waste per day. The produced bio-gas will be supplied to SNGPL for distribution to the local community. The investment opportunities have also been offered in hospital waste management. Four autoclave facilities will be established to consume 20 ton per day of infectious waste.

HOW NEW POLICY AIMS TO ACHIEVE FOOD SECURITY

Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, July 31st, 2017

Mohiuddin Aazim

ACHIEVING food security is impossible without boosting the per-hectare yields of food crops on a sustainable basis, containing pre- and post-harvest losses and improving the food storage system.

Implementing the recently finalised national food security policy may help in meeting these objectives, according to officials privy to the policy documents.

The plan involves managing big data, dependable forecasting and simulation, acquiring computer and internet-based technologies and greater coordination among federal and provincial agencies and the private sector.

Per-hectare yields of wheat and rice are much lower than what they could and should be

The Ministry of National Food Security and Research will oversee the implementation with a powerful committee, which is headed by its secretary and comprises relevant officials at federal and provincial levels and private sector representatives. The committee will report directly to the prime minister.

Investment in research programmes on food security has to be increased manifold. That is precisely where the private sector will have to play a greater role. In return, the government will make laws to give due protection to technological breakthroughs and innovations of private sector companies and institutions.

Besides, foreign companies helping us in achieving food security will be encouraged to get actively involved in marketing of their expertise and technologies,” according to a senior official.

Senior officials of the food ministry say the policy seeks to allocate resources — both at federal and provincial levels — for bridging yield gaps of major food crops. Our per-hectare yields of wheat and rice are already much lower than what they could and should be. And the yield of sugarcane and maize, despite being on the rise for some years, can and must still be increased to ensure food security.

Climate change as a consequence of global warming is affecting the yields of wheat and rice crops more in Pakistan than our peers, experts say.

Keeping in view these and other factors, such as a high population growth rate, the policy suggests ways to increase per-hectare output of key food crops. Implementing the policy recommendations for developing hybrid seeds, providing incentives for farmers, processors and others in value-addition chain, promoting public-private partnership arrangements in these areas and encouraging farm mechanisation and processing technologies should also collectively help in boosting the crops’ yields.

After the 2010 devolution plan, agriculture is now a provincial subject. However, the federal government, through the food ministry and federal agencies, also has many roles to play — from setting crop output targets and making policies on external food trade to coordinating with provinces where necessary to getting agriculture research done to ensuring food security.

Implementing the national food security policy, therefore, is a job that requires upholding of its spirit by both federal and provincial governments as well as the institutions and agencies that report to them, federal and provincial officials reckon.

“Provincial agriculture departments keep direct contact with growers and provincial policies on support prices, maintaining balance in crops cultivation which may have a direct impact on food crops output,” says a senior official of the Sindh agriculture department. “The food security policy, once approved by the federal cabinet, will make it binding on both federal and provincial governments to redesign their own policies to make them people-centric to achieve food security.”

He added: “On both federal and provincial levels, agriculture budgeting will be made keeping this point in view. For example, up to 10 per cent of the annual development budget will have to be devoted to agriculture, in which research and innovation and productivity enhancement will have to be prioritised.”

For promoting research and innovation, the policy suggests creation of agriculture research board in Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan with technical assistance from federal institutions. One such board is already operational in Punjab.

Sources privy to the national food security policy say that it envisages measures not only to boost per-hectare yield of major food crops, i.e. wheat, rice, sugarcane and maize, but it also recommends ways to increase production of other crops including potatoes, sorghum and barley that can be used as an alternate to a staple in case of occasional shortage of a key food crop.

If we look at the key elements of food availability, i.e. production of food crops, stocks and net trade, two things catch our attention: production is by and large satisfactory but reserves maintenance suffers from structural weaknesses and distribution across regions and population segments is uneven. And while the net trade of basic food items is all right, that of value-added food products is increasingly making us a net importer.

The national food security policy seeks to address these and similar issues by setting key guidelines for federal and provincial authorities on how to refocus their strategies and how to redirect resources from one area to another.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1348713/how-new-policy-aims-to-achieve-food-security>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 17TH TO JULY 23RD 2017

‘DESIRED ENROLMENT IMPOSSIBLE DUE TO POVERTY’

The Express Tribune, July 18th, 2017.

LAHORE: Schoolteachers of the province have showed their concern over the government’s target to achieve 100% enrolment and 95% attendance in schools, saying that the targets are impossible to achieve without eliminating poverty and other social ills.

Punjab Teachers’ Union (PTU) Central President Chaudhry Muhammad Sarfaraz, Syed Sajjad Akbar Kazmi, Secretary General Rana Liaquat Ali, Jam Sadiq and others in a joint statement said that achieving 100% enrolment in schools of Punjab was impossible without eliminating poverty and addressing the problems being faced by the teachers’ community.

“Increasing inflation and cost of living with the rise in poverty has forced parents to pull their children out of schools and children have to work to earn a living as a consequence. In such a situation, achieving the 100% enrolment target set by the government has become impossible. Similarly, ensuring 95% attendance is also not doable.”

On March 30, Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif inaugurated the school enrolment campaign for the year. The CM said, “We will complete the target of enrolling every child in Punjab into a school before the election to ensure that no child is denied the right of an education.”

The teachers' collectively said that on the other hand, problems being faced by the teachers' community were also not being solved by the government. They said, "The delays in fulfilling the promises made to the schoolteachers' community, has created unrest among teachers. This behaviour of the government is tantamount to being anti-education."

The teachers claimed that the 'unwise' policies and decision made in the last nine years had both economically and socially exploited the teachers' community in the province. They alleged that every policy enforced by the government had failed. They demanded that the government review its policies and take all stakeholders on board before making new policies.

They said, "We demand that the chief minister, school education minister and the Punjab school education department secretary devise policies in consultation with teachers. Furthermore, we demand that the notification of upgradation of teachers should be issued as soon as possible and end the social and economic exploitation of the teachers' community. In addition to this, the government should stop handing over public schools through Punjab Education Foundation (PEF)."

Earlier, the PTU had announced that it was forced to take to the streets to get their demands accepted. They announced that if the government did not upgrade teachers till August 15, as per the promises made to them by government functionaries, the community would stage protests on August 24 outside press clubs in every district of the province and on September 16, a sit-in would be staged in front of the Punjab Assembly in Lahore.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1460214/desired-enrolment-impossible-due-poverty/>

FOOD SECURITY AND RESEARCH MINISTRY: SENATE BODY DISCUSSES VARIOUS ISSUES

The Express Tribune, July 19th, 2017.

The Senate Standing Committee on National Food Security and Research on Tuesday expressed displeasure over the non-compliance of its instruction and recommendations related to food security and research.

The committee, chaired by Senator Syed Muzaffar Hussain Shah, directed the officials concerned to ensure strict adherence to directions in the future. Various matters related to Ministry of National Food Security and Research and its allied departments were discussed.

The committee directed the Pakistan Agriculture Research Council (PARC) chairman to submit details of the participants of the wheat traveling seminar held during last year. It also directed PARC to compile a comprehensive directory of progressive wheat growers across the country and ensure their participation in such seminars in order to enhance their interaction with scientists to promote the innovative culture in agri-sector.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1461141/food-security-research-ministry-senate-body-discusses-various-issues/>

PAKISTAN NEEDS LATEST FARM-TECH TO ACHIEVE FOOD SECURITY

Dawn, July 21, 2017

LAHORE: The government should encourage and facilitate the farming community to adopt modern technologies to avoid post-harvest losses and increase agriculture production, Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Abdul Basit said on Thursday.

In a statement, the LCCI president said the agriculture sector was suffering due to multiple reasons.

He stressed the need for increasing the cropped area because the country is already running well short of per capita food availability.

The country's almost 43 per cent labour force is dependent on agriculture, the yield gap in the four major crops is three times from the best producers in the world such as China and Egypt, he said, adding that low yield has contributed to the poverty in rural areas besides forcing the country to import agriculture produces to feed its population.

He said the fact should be an eye-opener that China produces two times more cotton and wheat per hectare and Egypt produces around three times more rice and sugarcane per hectare as compared to Pakistan.

Factors that are recommended to improve the yield are through large-scale introduction of hybrid seeds and mechanised farming, high efficiently irrigation systems such as drip irrigation and reduction in wastage of crop through introduction of privately owned storage facilities and cold storage facilities.

"The 21st century belongs to biotechnology and Pakistan has tremendous potential to emerge as biotechnology leader but to achieve the goal private sector, scientists, researchers and government will have to work hand-in-hand," he added.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1346547>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 10TH TO JULY 16TH 2017 POVERTY IN KP HAS DECLINED BY HALF DURING PTI RULE, CLAIMS FARMAN

Dawn, 10 July, 2017

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pal(htunkhwa information minister Shah Farman claimed on Sunday that no one in the province would be living below poverty line by end of the current financial year.

Quoting a recent Pakistan Bureau of Statistics` Household Integrated Economic Survey (HIES) , he told a press conference that the number of those living below poverty line had declined by half under the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf government in the province.

`A recent PBS survey shows that the number of those living below poverty line has gone down by nearly half to 12.27 per cent,` he said, adding that a similar survey in 2013 had put the number of those living below poverty line at 23.86 per cent in KP, the highest in the country then.

He said that a huge number of people had ceased to live in poverty.

`I am sure that no one in KP would be living below poverty line by end of the current financial year,` he claimed. He said that according to HIES, ratio of poor in Punjab had gone up from 14.5 per cent to 19.6 per cent and the same figure in Sindh had jumped from 18.35 per cent to 23.4 per cent.

He said that the number of average earners per household in KP had also gone up from 2.04 to 2.18. Mr Farman said that the number of average earners had dropped in Sindh and Punjab.

He said that the PTI led government was the most efficient in the country. He claimed that the federal government wanted to stop them from playing their role as real opposition.

The provincial information minister lambasted the federal government ministers for criticising the JIT investigating the Panama leaks case.

‘Those questioning the state institutions should know that the JIT is the extension of the apex court as it was set up under the Supreme Court orders,’ Mr Farman said. He said that by attacking the JIT, the PML-N leaders had just repeated their own history of attacking the Supreme Court.

‘The people will not let them attack the state institutions,’ he said, adding that PTI stood with the institutions. Mr Farman also challenged the PML-N KP president Amir Muqam for a public debate. ‘If Mr Muqam proved me wrong then I will quit politics,’ he said.

He also criticised the federal government for not giving the province its due share of electricity. He said that if the federal government provided Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with 2,000 megawatts of electricity, which was 200MW less than its due share, there would be no power outages in the province.

He said that if the federal government paid Khyber Pakhtunkhwa its net hydel profit under the AGN Kazi formula it would be able to undertake power projects thrice the capacity of the Dasu hydropower project.

http://epaper.dawn.com/DetailImage.php?StoryImage=10_07_2017_007_007

FOOD SECURITY POLICY NEARS FINALISATION

Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, July 10th, 2017

Amin Ahmed

A national-level meeting will be held in Islamabad on Wednesday to finalise, at last, the much-awaited policy on national food security.

The draft of the policy sets out a vision to achieve agriculture and food security and help provinces to devise their own strategies.

The government says achieving food security and nutrition for the people of Pakistan is one of its top priorities. The steps it has taken in this regard include concept development of National Zero Hunger Programme, food security assessment survey, its recent commitment for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly the goal number 1 (ending poverty in all its forms everywhere) and 2 (ending hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture).

To document all these initiatives and future strategies in light of the SDGs, the Ministry of National Food Security and Research worked out a comprehensive National Food Security Policy, according to Food Minister Sikandar Hayat Khan Bosan.

The policy also aims to support small farmers and promote small-scale innovative technologies, value-addition and value chain development in the country.

The ministry, with the help of provincial governments, international research organisations and development partners, will launch initiatives to promote these activities, Mr Bosan said.

The policy, which took more than five years to be finalised, will be presented to the federal cabinet for approval. The previous government led by the PPP issued the draft of the national food security policy in 2013 when its tenure was about to complete.

The PML-N government, which came to power in 2013, then decided to redraft the policy after it found several elements of the policy were not aligned with a changing agriculture environment.

Moreover, dynamics of agriculture in the country have been changed after the devolution of powers to provinces under the 18th Amendment to the Constitution. It took years for the provincial agricultural departments to absorb the change when the Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture, Cooperatives and Livestock was abolished.

The Ministry of National Food Security and Research was then formed to deal with policy matters, relations with international organisations and implementing agreements at international level.

However, from 2013 to 2017, the ministry took four years to revise the policy amid declining growth of the agricultural sector.

The old draft policy was finally scrapped and a new policy was released only a couple of weeks ago. The previous policy, according to an official of the food ministry, was not even suitable for the country's agriculture sector.

The revised policy has now been circulated among all stakeholders, and their inputs will be incorporated at the July 12 meeting of all provincial governments, agricultural research institutions at federal and provincial levels, the private sector and international organisations.

The policy seeks to redefine the role of federal and provincial governments after the devolution, and proposes that setting national priority, trade policies, national and trans-boundary pest and disease surveillance, the certification of agricultural products meeting international standards and strategic and basic research on topics of national importance remain areas that the federal government needs to take care of in consultation with the provinces.

Key architect of the policy Dr Muhammad Azeem Khan, who is the director-general of the National Agricultural Research Centre, said the policy will be presented to the federal cabinet for approval after fine-tuning.

Secretary for National Food Security and Research Muhammad Abid Javed hoped implementing the policy will help promote value-added food production while creating a new class of agricultural entrepreneurs. As a result, the availability of diversified food products will increase that will help poor people living in remote areas to access food more easily.

At the same time, Pakistan needs to make its agriculture sector more resilient to climate change risks. It is projected that there will be greater variability in weather with more frequent extreme events such as floods and droughts. Much of the impact of these changes will be on the agriculture sector, which needs mechanisms to cope and adapt.

It is also feared that there will be immense pressure on limited surface as well as ground water resources. These challenges could be managed through adopting soil and water conservation technologies, enhanced use of high efficiency irrigation systems, developing drought-resistant varieties and introducing climate smart agriculture.

The food policy identifies the following issues facing the agriculture sector: climate change, food stability, quality production and trade, safety of food and environment, food utilisation, market support, national zero hunger programme, food accessibility, food losses and wastage, poultry, fisheries, livestock, agricultural mechanisation, land and water resources management, improving credit market, pesticide, fertilisers, seeds, food availability, and diversification for income and nutrition.

The policy also includes the agricultural development zones coming under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

The measures that are likely to be taken include preparing feasibility reports of tradable commodities for each sub zone, pilot-testing of rural businesses for the identified commodities, introducing innovations for quality production, post-harvest handling and processing, developing investment portfolios for public-private partnerships to promote rural businesses, modernising production and market infrastructure development for grains and fruit crops, fisheries, livestock and livestock products, and developing business models to promote value-added agriculture all along the CPEC route.

August 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 14TH TO AUGUST 20 Th 2017

35pc BISP beneficiaries using BVS

Business Recorder, August 17, 2017

AAMIR SAEED

ISLAMABAD: Only 35 percent beneficiaries of Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) have been using Biometric Verification System (BVS) to withdraw their monthly cash grant despite repeated reservations expressed by donors about the mode of cash disbursement.

An official of the BISP told Business Recorder that out of 5.4 million total beneficiaries of the BISP, only 1.9 million are getting their cash grants through the BVS.

According to the data obtained from the BISP, 5 percent of the beneficiaries are still getting their cash grant through postal service while another 60 percent withdraw their grants through the Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) by using Benazir Debit Card.

The official said the BISP has completed the BVS for its beneficiaries in 43 districts of the country and is planning to complete the exercise for all its beneficiaries in the next one and half years.

According to Mott MacDonald firm that has carried out spot checks across Pakistan on behalf of the Department for International Development (DFID), around a fifth of the BISP beneficiaries pay fees to agents for withdrawing their money.

The government allocated Rs 121 billion for the BISP in the budget for 2017-18 and the beneficiaries get Rs4,834 every three months (Rs19,338 per annum).

A handout from the BISP on Wednesday clarified that, “Britain is providing a small contribution to a much bigger programme run by Government of Pakistan, where there are already proven results. There are robust systems in place to protect Britain’s aid investment so that cash transfer goes into the hands of most deserving.”

The official, however, acknowledged that they have been receiving complaints about involvement of agents in the rural areas, especially in Sindh for withdrawal of the beneficiaries’ cash grant and that is why they have started the Biometric Verification System.

The biometric system makes the beneficiary turn up at a bank or money transfer system in person to withdraw the cash grant, he said, adding that this would help stop role of the agents in withdrawal of the cash grant.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/08/17/13-page/899558-news.html>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 1ST TO AUGUST 6TH 2017

FOOD SECURITY SITUATION IMPROVED IN FATA: REPORT

Amin Ahmed

Dawn, August 01, 2017

ISLAMABAD: The food security situation of temporary displaced persons (TDPs) who have returned to their homes in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata) has improved significantly since 2014, according to a United Nations (UN) report released on Monday.

The report titled 'Food Security and Livelihoods Assessment of Returned Households Residing in Fata' was launched by the World Food Programme (WFP) under the leadership of the Fata secretariat.

It indicated a consistent and significant drop in the total food insecurity rate in the region between 2014 and 2017.

The follow-up report to the 2014 "Returning Home" assessment provided updated evidence regarding food security, livelihoods and the market situation in all seven Fata agencies — Bajaur, Khyber, Kurram, Mohmand, Orakzai and North and South Waziristan.

It said that while 44 per cent of the population was defined as food insecure in 2014, only 24pc was found to be in the same situation in 2017 where they did not have access to or could not afford enough food for their daily dietary and nutritional needs.

At the same time, while 5pc of the people were considered severely food insecure in 2014 — having an inadequate diet in terms of quality and quantity — now only 1pc were in such a serious situation.

The percentage of people who were moderately food insecure dropped from 39pc to 23pc over the three-year period, said the WFP.

The improvement was particularly dramatic among female-headed households, with those defined as severely food insecure decreasing from 19pc to zero per cent, and moderately food insecure households decreasing from 55pc to 15pc.

Explaining the reasons for improvement [in food security], the report said families faced fewer shocks ranging from natural disasters to illness among people and livestock and they had access to better housing, improved water and sanitation and increased security over the years.

Launching the report, WFP country director Finbarr Curran said the findings were an evidence of the positive impact of the humanitarian and recovery support extended to displaced and returning families in the region, which was provided under the leadership and vision of the Fata secretariat.

Speaking on the occasion, Fata's additional chief secretary Dr Fida Mohammad Wazir said, "I thank the WFP and other collaborating organisations for the commission and support to this significant study".

Since 2014, he said, there was a positive improvement in security and with the government's continued efforts, some 250,000 displaced families returned, while some 50,000 families were still living away from their original homes. Such a large-scale return affects markets, the provision of basic services, livelihoods and food security, he added.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1348830>

BALUCHISTAN AND SINDH SHOW POOR NUTRITION INDICATORS

Dawn, August 2nd, 2017

KARACHI: Speakers at an awareness session on Tuesday identified Balochistan and Sindh as having the highest ratio of households below the nutritious diet threshold in the country.

These results were shared at a session on smart policymaking on eliminating hidden hunger, organised by Mishal Pakistan, the Country Partner Institute of the Global Competitiveness and Benchmarking Network of the World Economic Forum with support from the Australian High Commission, for journalists working on public health policy.

Data shared showed that the total number of households below the nutritious diet thresholds in Balochistan was 83.4 per cent, and 70.8pc in Sindh; followed by 67.4pc in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and 65.5pc in Punjab.

Experts said an estimated two billion people — over 30pc of the world’s population — suffer from deficiencies in essential vitamins and minerals. Hidden hunger is how health experts often refer to micronutrient deficiencies because most people affected do not show the visible physical symptoms and hence may not be aware of their condition.

Hidden hunger’s effects can be devastating, leading to mental impairment, poor health, low productivity, and even death. Its adverse effects on child health and survival are particularly acute, especially within the first 1,000 days of a child’s life, from conception to the age of two, resulting in serious physical and cognitive consequences.

Dr Shabbir Hussain of the International Islamic University, Islamabad, at the session said almost 24pc of the population in Pakistan was suffering on account of hidden hunger, while stunting and malnutrition were immediate challenges faced by society.

Experts present said the media needed to become part of the development agenda in Pakistan, to ensure transparency and accountability for quality service delivery to the citizens.

The smart policymaking initiative, they said, was to ensure the accountability of policymakers through media. They said awareness of nutrient deficiency levels of iron and iodine in Pakistan remained highest especially in the urban community with up to 42pc and 61.6pc respectively. Women and children remain the ultimate victims of these deficiencies resulting in high mortality rates.

Nida Karim said the initiative would help parliamentarians improve service delivery to citizens as well as improving Pakistan’s competitiveness on global footing, while creating accountability through the media.

She said that although the costs for nutrition per capita of Rs2,061 per month was lowest in Punjab as compared to Sindh’s Rs2,306, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa’s Rs2,152 and Balochistan’s at Rs2,415, the amount was still out of reach of average citizens’ buying power.

She said the organisation and the Australian High Commission were engaging policymakers and journalists across Pakistan to understand the dynamics of malnutrition in the country.

Journalist Nadeem Raza said the initiative could revive public’s trust in institutions however, what is necessary is professionalism and dedication to report on facts. “Journalists will lead this change by ensuring accountability of the relevant policymakers to ensure Pakistan’s commitment to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal 2 to eliminate hunger.”

Organisers said earlier sessions had been held with journalists from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan and Punjab on smart policymaking. Similarly, the parliamentarians from Sindh, Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had been briefed on the smart policymaking process.

The initiative Eliminating Hidden Hunger is aimed to improve the narrative building on nutrition by engaging various stakeholders including press clubs, journalist associations, policymaking institutes and academia across Pakistan.

The UN Sustainable Development Goals aim to end all forms of hunger and malnutrition by 2030, making sure all people — especially children and the more vulnerable — have access to sufficient and nutritious food all year round. Zero Hunger is one of 17 Global Goals that make up the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1348999>

‘CITY TO GET MORE WATER AFTER HUB CANAL CLEARED OF WEEDS’

KARACHI: The city will soon begin to get additional water after the entire Hub Canal is cleared of weeds, said Karachi Water and Sewerage Board chief Hashim Zaidi on Tuesday.

Briefing the media at his office after taking a tour of the Hub Dam, Hub Canal and Hub filter plant, he said the clean-up operation of the 30-kilometre-long Hub Canal was started a few days back and till now the first phase of the operation had been completed.

He said the canal which before the start of the operation was bringing in around 18 million gallons of water daily from the dam to the Hub pumping station was now bringing in around 50MGD to the station and after the entire canal was cleared of the weeds, algae, stones, etc during the next phase of the operation clean-up in the next few days, water would flow smoothly and the carrying capacity of the canal would further improve and additional water could also be made available to the metropolis.

He also directed KWSB officials to complete the second phase of the operation quickly so that water supply to the city could improve and residents of the water-scarce areas of the metropolis could be supplied water according to their needs.

Earlier, Mr Zaidi, accompanied by KWSB officials Asad Khan, Illahi Bux Bhutto, Rehman Sheikh, Owais Malik, Asif Qadri and others, visited the dam, the filter plant as well as the canal to monitor the ongoing work.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1348998>

44PC CHILDREN FACE STUNTED GROWTH IN PAKISTAN: UNICEF

Business Recorder, 4 August 2017

ISLAMABAD: Country Representative of the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) Angela Kearny has said that 44 percent children in Pakistan face stunted growth due to the use of powdered milk.

"This is becoming a burden on the social and health care system of the country," she said while talking to Radio Pakistan.

She said, "The International Marketing Court prohibits the advertising of powdered milk for children below two years of age. They are taking actions against the multi-national companies advertising the breast milk substitute in Pakistan."

She underscored the need for encouraging women to breast feed their children as it is 100 percent safe and cost effective having all necessary nutritious contents.

She said, "The UNICEF is supporting Pakistan's efforts to promote breastfeeding to children up to early six months of their age."

She said, "The Government, social welfare and media organizations and other relevant stakeholders are making significant efforts in this connection."

However, she pointed out that, "Due to a rising trend of using powdered milk substitute of mother's milk recommended by some doctors, nurses or midwives, women tend to give bottled milk to infants."

The Country Director highlighted the major health issues faced by children in later years of their age who are not breastfed. She said, "These children have fifteen times higher risks to die of pneumonia and eleven times higher risks of death by diarrhea."

Angela Kearney underscored the need for collective efforts on the part of all stakeholders. She said, “The religious scholars can play a very important role in convincing the people on the issue.”-NNI

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/08/07/5-page/895899-news.html>

September 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEPTEMBER 25 TH TO SEPTEMBER 30 Th 2017

POVERTY, PARENTS' DISINTEREST KEEPING CHILDREN OUT OF SCHOOL

Dawn, September 25th, 2017

Mohammad Ashfaq

PESHAWAR: Poverty and parents' lack of interest to enrol their children in schools are the main factors that are leading children to the workplace instead of schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, according to officials.

Both factors are cited to be the reasons for 0.75 million children not attending schools. “It is 50 per cent of the total 1.5 million out-of-school children in the province,” said officials of the Elementary and Secondary Education Department while quoting a recently-conducted survey by the education department.

They said that of the total out-of-school children 26 per cent were due to lack of interest by parents and 24 per cent due to poverty.

Asked why the parents and their children would have no interest in education, an educationist told this correspondent that most of the parents sent their children to the educational institutions so they could get a reasonable job after completing education.

“Now, if the parents think that their children cannot secure a job even after having degrees, they send their children to the workplace instead of schools,” said the educationist who works on an important position in the education department.

He said that the parents didn't think that the education was not for getting the government job only, but it also has a good impact on the society.

A large number of the jobless educated youth roaming in the streets are also one of the reasons for people's disinterest in education, he said.

A child labourer brings Rs200 to Rs300 from the workplace for the parents at the end of the day, he said, adding the parents having three or four children at the workplace could collectively bring a reasonable amount.

“If an educated youth has no government job than he is of no use in our society because our education system doesn't produce market-oriented educated people,” he said.

Similarly, 160,085 (11 per cent) school age children are out-of-school due to unavailability of the transport and location of schools far away from their residences, the officials said while referring to the survey. Also, 106,881 children (7 per cent) are not going to school because of unavailability of the school in the required distance.

Disability, no benefits of education, health issues, lack of school facilities, closed schools and teachers' unavailability contribute one per cent each to the mix that had been keeping children away from schools.

Likewise, 331,174 children or 22 per cent of the total out-of-school children are not going to school due to social constraints, harsh behaviour of teachers, unfavorable environment in the school, etc.

Of the total out-of-school children, one million are girls and 0.5 million boys aged between five and 16.

An official said that social constraints, taboos and marriage were the main reasons for the high number of out-of-school girls compared to the boys.

When contacted, E&SE Department director Rafiq Khattak said that 0.6 million children between five and 10 years of age and 0.9 million between 11 and 16 years were not going to school.

He said that children under 10 years would be enrolled in the schools while non-formal education system would be introduced for the children above 10 years of age.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1359895/poverty-parents-disinterest-keeping-children-out-of-school>

ENDING POVERTY REQUIRES MORE THAN JUST COMMITMENT

Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, September 25th, 2017

Amin Ahmed

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A more innovative and comprehensive approach is needed, with increased focus on reducing the economic, social and environmental risks confronting the poor, according to the United Nations.

Mina Dowlatchahi, Food and Agriculture Organisation's (FAO) representative in Pakistan, says the National Zero Hunger Special Programme — being formulated by the Ministry of National Food Security and Research in collaboration with the FAO and World Food Programme — foresees social protection, school feeding and nutrition education actions, combined with longer term interventions on 'farmer field schools', sustainable agriculture intensification and diversification approaches, and the development of linkages to markets for smallholders.

Measures to achieve zero hunger are an integral part of the final draft of the national food security policy.

"We cannot end hunger and all forms of malnutrition by 2030 unless we address all the factors that undermine food security and nutrition, including socio-economic stability," Ms Dowlatchahi says.

"Securing peaceful and inclusive societies (SDG 16) is a necessary condition to that end," she says.

In Asia-Pacific, Pakistan is among the few countries which have contained the hunger to some extent. The percentage of hunger during the 2014-16 period declined from 25.1 per cent to 22pc. Within the region, the proportion of people affected by hunger in 2014-16 increased from the level that existed in 1990-1992.

According to the latest edition of the annual United Nations report on the food security and nutrition, the challenge is that there is more than enough food produced in the world to feed everyone, yet 815 million people (or 11pc of the global population) faced hunger last year.

The highest number of undernourished people was in Asia because of its large population.

According to FAO, around 520m people in Asia, 243m in Africa, and 42m in Latin America and the Caribbean did not have access to sufficient food energy.

Poverty eradication will be challenging with the occurrence of climate-related events because the region is particularly exposed to the impacts of climate change, with nine Asia-Pacific countries on the list of the 15 countries that are the most exposed and vulnerable to natural hazards.

The first SDG goal is to eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day. It

aims to reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions by 2030.

“While the region is making progress towards achieving the SDGs on poverty, education, economic growth, industry and infrastructure, and life below water, we are seeing slow progress towards ending hunger, achieving food security, delivering agricultural sustainability, ensuring good health and well-being for all, and achieving gender equality,” said Dr Shamshad Akhtar, executive secretary of UN’s Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (Escap).

Pakistan is the first country to endorse and adopt SDGs in parliament as part of its national agenda and now these goals are known as national development goals (NDGs). A parliamentary task force and an SDG secretariat have also been set up.

“The SDGs are not just a part of a top-down international agenda, but are also essential for Pakistan’s prosperity, development and the well-being of its people,” according to Interior and Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal.

On the other hand, in the Asia-Pacific SDGs Outlook report, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) examined each of the 17 broad goals and describes the outlook for achieving each one in the region. It singles out “bright spots” and “hot spots”, provides insights about each goal and points to emerging issues and reveals many of the common challenges that governments will confront as they work to develop appropriate responses to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The ADB says that achieving zero hunger will be challenging due to the convergence of expanding populations, climate change, fertiliser overuse, competing use of land for food, energy and industries, changing consumption patterns, the ageing population of working farmers and the degradation of agricultural land.

The bank believes that regional countries need to pay more attention to growth in their agricultural sector and to supporting diverse food systems. Evidence consistently shows that growth originating in agriculture has a stronger impact on poverty and hunger reduction than growth originating in other sectors.

The deadline of SDGs ensures sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production; help maintain ecosystems; strengthen capacity for adapting to climate change; extreme weather; drought; flooding and other disasters, and that progressively improve land and soil quality.

The region is the world’s largest producer of cereals, vegetables, fruits, meat and fish, with strong growth in all areas. Agricultural production has been increasing steadily since 1990. Measured in terms of constant prices, the value of food produced in the region increased from \$736 billion in 1990 to \$1.351bn in 2013.

Agricultural productivity in the region, as measured by the value added per worker, has generally been rising. However, it has been a slow rise in South Asia where, with the exception of a few countries, it remains a fraction of what has been achieved in industrialised countries.

The target sets to increase investment, including through enhanced international cooperation, in rural infrastructure, agricultural research and extension services, technology development and plant and livestock gene banks in order to enhance agricultural productive capacity in developing countries, in particular least developed countries.

Climate change threatens all dimensions of food security. Projections show that increasing temperatures will result in decreased yields, especially in South and Southeast Asia, and increased incidence of pest and disease outbreaks.

The widespread melting of glaciers and snow cover in the major mountain ranges of Asia will affect the volume and timing of water flows and ultimately reduce the availability of irrigation water downstream. The effects of climate change on agricultural production and livelihoods are expected to intensify over time.

Agricultural productivity of high-income countries in the region is 67 times higher than that of least-developed countries.

The rate of growth of government spending on agriculture in the region has slowed down since the food price crisis, according to Escap.

The availability of water is also a challenging issue, with agriculture being a major user. The proportion of water withdrawn for agriculture is more than 90pc for 13 countries in the region, particularly in Central Asia.

Nearly all countries in the region are experiencing increasing pressure on water resources due to their growing populations and economic development.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1359725/ending-poverty-requires-more-than-just-commitment>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEPTEMBER 25 TH TO SEPTEMBER 30 Th 2017

POVERTY, PARENTS' DISINTEREST KEEPING CHILDREN OUT OF SCHOOL

Dawn, September 25th, 2017

Mohammad Ashfaq

PESHAWAR: Poverty and parents' lack of interest to enrol their children in schools are the main factors that are leading children to the workplace instead of schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, according to officials.

Both factors are cited to be the reasons for 0.75 million children not attending schools. "It is 50 per cent of the total 1.5 million out-of-school children in the province," said officials of the Elementary and Secondary Education Department while quoting a recently-conducted survey by the education department.

They said that of the total out-of-school children 26 per cent were due to lack of interest by parents and 24 per cent due to poverty.

Asked why the parents and their children would have no interest in education, an educationist told this correspondent that most of the parents sent their children to the educational institutions so they could get a reasonable job after completing education.

"Now, if the parents think that their children cannot secure a job even after having degrees, they send their children to the workplace instead of schools," said the educationist who works on an important position in the education department.

He said that the parents didn't think that the education was not for getting the government job only, but it also has a good impact on the society.

A large number of the jobless educated youth roaming in the streets are also one of the reasons for people's disinterest in education, he said.

A child labourer brings Rs200 to Rs300 from the workplace for the parents at the end of the day, he said, adding the parents having three or four children at the workplace could collectively bring a reasonable amount.

“If an educated youth has no government job than he is of no use in our society because our education system doesn't produce market-oriented educated people,” he said.

Similarly, 160,085 (11 per cent) school age children are out-of-school due to unavailability of the transport and location of schools far away from their residences, the officials said while referring to the survey. Also, 106,881 children (7 per cent) are not going to school because of unavailability of the school in the required distance.

Disability, no benefits of education, health issues, lack of school facilities, closed schools and teachers' unavailability contribute one per cent each to the mix that had been keeping children away from schools.

Likewise, 331,174 children or 22 per cent of the total out-of-school children are not going to school due to social constraints, harsh behaviour of teachers, unfavorable environment in the school, etc.

Of the total out-of-school children, one million are girls and 0.5 million boys aged between five and 16.

An official said that social constraints, taboos and marriage were the main reasons for the high number of out-of-school girls compared to the boys.

When contacted, E&SE Department director Rafiq Khattak said that 0.6 million children between five and 10 years of age and 0.9 million between 11 and 16 years were not going to school.

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NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEPTEMBER 11 TH TO SEPTEMBER 17 Th 2017

PPAF IMPLEMENTING HRE PROJECTS WITH HELP OF KFW

Business Recorder, 14 September, 2017

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) is implementing Hydropower & Renewable Energy (HRE) projects in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with the financial support of the government of Germany through the German Development Bank (KfW).

According to an announcement of the PPAF here on Wednesday, the hilly village of SarKalayin union council Pandair falling in Chagharzi/Buner is home to about 60 households, the village's total population is 895. Thanks to PPAF and KfW, the village has now electricity from 36 kW hydro power project completed under PPAF HRE Project.

The whole project comprises two phases with total financial outlay of Euro 22.5 million. Phase-I was initiated in 2013 and is planned to be completed in 2018. Phase-II spanning over three years will follow Phase-I.

The KfW delegation along with PPAF senior officials inaugurated hydro power project in district Buner on Sep.10, 2017 and solar mini-grid projects in district Lakki Marwat on September 11,2017.

While inaugurating the Micro-Hydel Power Project and Solar Mini-Grid Projects in district Buner and Lakki Marwat, Michael Gruber, Division Head of Peace and Governance Program-KfW Frankfurt, appreciated the efforts of PPAF in implementing renewable projects in off-grid and remote areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He said, "These projects will improve socio-economic situation of the people and development of the area". He emphasized on proper operation and maintenance of the projects to ensure long term benefits of the project.

Ms MajaBott, Project Manager HRE Project, KfW Frankfurt on the occasion said, "These projects are located in very challenging and difficult terrain. The high quality of equipment and civil structures will help in ensuring long life of these projects". She also urged the beneficiary communities in proper operation and maintenance of these projects.

Amir Naeem, Senior Group Head, Financial Management and Corporate Affairs/Company Secretary PPAF, acknowledged support of KfW and thanked KfW and the local community for their support, saying that "PPAF is delighted to work on this project with KfW that will improve lives of people living in the areas and help achieve ultimate goal of poverty alleviation."

Ms Simi Kamal, Senior Group Head, Grants Operations Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund appreciated the cooperation of KfW in implementation of these Renewable Energy projects in the province. She added, "PPAF will ensure inclusion of women in all its activities, because it is mandate of PPAF to engage women and ensure their active participation in economic development activities."

The project is being implemented in 6 districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province covering 8 union councils of these districts. The project districts include Swabi, Karak, Lakki Marwat, Buner, Upper Dir and Chitral. The HRE Phase-I is expected to benefit over 20,000 people.

Five mini/ micro hydropower plants with total capacity of 803 kW (ranging from 36 kW to 306 kW) are planned to be implemented in Chitral, Upper Dir and Buner Districts.

The produced electricity will not only be used for lighting purposes but small and mini enterprises will also be established. This will increase the household income, adding value to local products and transforming lives of marginalized communities.

As many as 96 Solar Mini-Grid Systems with total installed capacity of 500 kW are planned to be implemented in remote and off-grid locations of Karak, Swabi and Lakki Marwat Districts. These community-managed solar lighting systems will not only meet basic lighting requirements but will also be available for village level businesses and local enterprises.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/09/14/21-page/670816-news.html>

October 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 23rd TO OCTOBER 29th 2017

12 CHILDREN UNDER FIVE DIE IN THARPARKAR IN TWO DAYS

HYDERABAD: Child mortality seems to have revisited the desert region of Tharparkar as 12 deaths of children were reported from Civil Hospital, Mithi during Saturday and Sunday. The deceased children were up to five years old and their deaths were caused by various health issues.

In reaction to the news, the provincial government has reportedly removed the hospital's civil surgeon, Dr Iqbal Ahmed Bhurgari.

In the meantime, Tharparkar District and Sessions Judge Jamshed Aiwan directed two civil judges to conduct an inquiry and submit its report. The judges, Abdul Qadir Khoso and Sajjad Chandio, visited the hospital and met the parents of the deceased children.

Sources at the hospital identified some of the deceased children. They included five-year-old Zahidan, three-year-old Hakim, three-year-old Javed, nine-month-old Shahidan, four-month-old Sapna Kailash and three-month-old Samad Ali. Six other infants also died at the hospital.

Talking to the local media, a man, Abdul Ghani, who lost his 11-day-old daughter, complained of lack of facilities at the hospital.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1538560/1-12-children-five-die-tharparkar-two-days/>

BENAZIR INCOME SUPPORT PROGRAMME: 'I WAIT FOR HOURS FOR MY STIPEND IN THE SCORCHING HEAT'

The Express Tribune, October 24, 2017
Hafeez Tunio

Every week Hawa Bibi visits the regional office of the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) in Larkana to inquire about her monthly stipend, which has now become an uphill task for female beneficiaries.

For the last 13 months, she regularly visits the office but has yet to hear any good news. "In this scorching heat, I wait for hours for my stipend. It's like I come here and sit for hours just to listen to a no," she lamented.

Hawa Bibi is among those beneficiaries who witnessed a stampede in which an elderly woman lost her life while struggling to get her stipend.

"Azmat Khatoon lived near my village. We used to visit her. On a Monday morning, a large number of women were lined up seeking information of their stipend when suddenly, a woman cried and some started running. Azmat was weak. She was suffering from fever. She fell down and died on the spot," Hawa Bibi said, adding that no one took notice of the incident and the family members took Azmat's body to their village.

"They owe me around Rs16,000. I am fed up with the fake promises of officials. This is my last visit and I will never come here again," she said, adding that initially, she would get Rs1,500 per month, but later the officials released a quarterly amount, which has not been stopped.

A middle-aged man, Muhammad Moosa, complained that his mother has been a beneficiary of this programme since its inception, but her stipend has been stopped for the last eight months. "I don't have any idea why it was stopped. They know the reason behind it," he said, adding that some agents have asked him for commission to release the funds.

Apart from Larkana, the same situation persists in other districts where women can be seen lined up waiting for hours for their stipends. Some women protested in front of the Karachi Press Club recently and demanded the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP)-led government to take notice of it.

“This programme is initiated in the name of Benazir, so Bilawal Bhutto must take notice of it,” said Hajra Akram, a beneficiary who lives in Lyari.

The BISP was launched under the PPP government in 2008 and is the largest social safety net programme of Pakistan. According to officials, around Rs90 billion was distributed to 5.4 million women last year. There are a total of 1.6 million female beneficiaries in Sindh alone.

Speaking to The Express Tribune, Adviser to the Chief Minister on Social Welfare Shamim Mumtaz said that the federal government had stopped the funds and the provincial government has nothing to do with it.

According to PPP Senator Aajiz Dhamrah, he had raised the issue in the Senate, but no one responded to it.

“Whenever people from Sindh lodge complaints, the programme head, Marvi Memon, refers them to the chief minister, asking them to get the money from the PPP government, which is unjustified,” he said.

Despite many attempts, Memon could not be reached for her comments. However, the spokesperson for BISP said the programme was running successfully and all its beneficiaries get their stipends on time. “There are a few technical issues, which is why the stipend payment has been delayed in some parts of Pakistan,” he said.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1538521/1-benazir-income-support-programme-wait-hours-stipend-scorching-heat/>

THARPARKAR WILL BECOME A PROSPEROUS REGION OF SINDH: ZUBAIR

Business Recorder, 10 October 2017

HYDERABAD: Tharparkar will be known as a flourishing, prosperous region of Sindh because Thar Coal project is Pakistan’s introduction to a bright, energy-affluent future. The project work being done in Thar Block II is of international standards. No other instance of such quality in a project of such magnitude.

This was said by Governor Sindh, Muhammad Zubair while talking to media and inaugurating the Thar Foundation-established TCF School Engro Campus at Islamkot. He was quite clear in asserting that the Thar Coal project is all set to change Pakistan’s future in terms of energy.

TCF’s Engro Campus at Islamkot for 1000 students has been established by the Thar Foundation with the financial and technical support from Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company (SECMC) and Engro Powergen Thar Limited (EPTL). “The electricity produced will be provided to the national grid and, thereby, will light up the country’s households and energize the industries. Thar should have its share of the electricity produced from the coal underlying its soil,” he added.

He said that, the work being undertaken in the health, education, livelihood and agriculture, and women empowerment are herald to a point of time in near future when Tharparkar will be known as a flourishing, prosperous region of Sindh.

Governor took a comprehensive tour of Pakistan’s first open pit coal mine at Block II and adjoining power plant, model house, and green park as well. While inside the pit, the Governor also marked the 100 meter depth by unveiling a ceremonial plaque.

He said that the Thar Foundation’s work in the sectors of health, education, livelihood, and agriculture is unprecedented in the social development sector, and that it should be widened to embrace the entire Islamkot tehsil and not just Block II.

He also met the first Thari woman engineer of the project, Kiran Sadhwani. Throughout his visit, he was accompanied by Chairman Dawood Group Hussain Dawood, President Engro Corporation Ghias Khan, Chief Executive Officer Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company (SECMC) Shamsuddin Ahmad Shaikh, Commissioner Mirpurkhas Shafiq Ahmed Mahesar, DIG Mirpurkhas Mazhar Nawaz Shaikh, DC Tharparkar and officials of the SECMC, EPTL, and Thar Foundation.

Earlier, the Governor was briefed on the progress of the power plant under construction to produce 660MW power and 100 meters achievement of the coal mine. Briefing the Governor about the project progress, SECMC CEO, Shaikh said that their aim is to turn project affectees into project beneficiaries.

He said that with the efforts of Government of Sindh has divested its shares to the beneficiaries of Thar Coal Block II project, which was an unprecedented move in the development history of Pakistan.

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/10/29/3-page/678991-news.html>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 16 Th TO OCTOBER 22nd 2017

HUNGER THAT STALKS

Dawn, October 16th, 2017

HUMANITY today lives in a world of remarkable technological advancement and rapid development. Lest there be any sense of false comfort, though, there is the other side of the coin; the wars and conflicts raging across large swathes of the globe, inequality, wide-scale displacement etc. Today, as the UN marks World Food Day that commemorates the founding of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN in 1945, and tomorrow that is the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, bring further significant reasons for sobriety and policy rethinks.

The International Food Policy Research Institute, based in Washington, D.C., recently released the 2017 Global Hunger Index which identifies those places across the world where interventions to address the issue are most urgently needed. The 119 countries are given 'hunger scores' based on indicators such as the percentage of the population that is undernourished, or of young children suffering from wasting or stunting. A score of 9.9 denotes low hunger.

But countries including the Central African Republic, Chad and Sierra Leone have alarmingly high ratings ranging from 50.9 to 38.5 (some countries, including Syria and Libya, could not be given GHI scores because of insufficient data). Though the world has overall made some progress in addressing hunger, the situation still ranges from 'serious' to 'extremely alarming' in 52 of the 119 countries rated. And, not surprisingly, South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa have the highest levels of hunger, scoring 30.9 and 29.4 respectively.

Depressingly for a country that has an agricultural economy and produces enough to be food secure, Pakistan has performed poorly; in all of Asia, it has done better than only Afghanistan. We have been given a GHI score of 32.6, and have made negligible gains in reducing the levels of hunger in recent years. Worse, the number of children under five who are too short for their age, or stunted, has increased to 45pc.

The reasons range from lack of access to food due to poverty, to external factors such as floods and climate change. But malnutrition has even been detected in a significant number of food-secure households, indicating that education, awareness and the dissemination of facts are key to successful intervention. From the scourge of child marriage to inter-generational nutritional deficiencies, the serpent is hydra-headed. These, rather than securing elections, are what policymakers need to focus on.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1364056>

SMALL SLICE FOR POOR IN PAKISTAN'S GROWING ECONOMIC PIE

Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, October 16th, 2017

Sajid Amin Javed

INEQUITABLE access to assets, market and human development not only persists in Pakistan, but is also reinforced every day by a confluence of unequal relations in roles, functions, decisions, rights and opportunities.

Welfare policy, or whatever is left of it, has failed to bring significant improvement for the marginalised. Along with a rise in gross domestic product, a parallel increase in inequality has also been observed and the growth gains have been limited to certain groups with elite access to resources and market participation.

Despite decades of social policy, access to resources and opportunities continues to be determined by race, place and class. Socio-economic status is a decisive factor in access to public services including education, health and labour market opportunities.

A study by the writer demonstrates that out of the 100 sons of people working as dishwasher, 72 will be dishwasher too. The same is true in education: only nine children out of 100 will complete graduation if their father was uneducated, but the ratio is 60 per cent for sons of graduate fathers.

Most alarmingly, only six sons will move from bottom poorest 20pc to top richest 20pc in their lives while 44 out of 100 will remain as poor as their fathers were.

This is because public policy in the country has failed to deal with structural inequalities. Not only that the poor face lack of resources, rights, goods and services, but also our social structure reinforces inability to participate in the normal relationships and activities in economic, social, cultural or political arenas.

Social exclusion is on the rise too. Alarmingly, 57pc Pakistanis feel unsafe in community, while 68pc believe that they are less safe in communities now as compared to the past.

With depleted economic, social, cultural and political resources of the poor, the question of access to public services becomes crucial. Access to material resources required for well-being and access to social networks and state institutions for the purpose of integration and well-being is central to public policy in this regard.

Access to material resources, mediated through different socio-cultural institutions in Pakistan, is creating fundamental inequalities of wealth and income. Focusing on poverty reduction is bound to fail if policy does not deal with these structural sources of poverty.

By the same token, better social relations are also a resource for gaining access to economic resources. Belonging to a particular group and position within that group not only defines status, but also the future economic returns.

In Pakistan, where status substitutes social contract, relational networks and individual positioning inside these networks largely determine the access to material resources in turn.

The relationship between citizen and state becomes crucial in this context. With structural inequalities so deeply rooted, leaving things for self-correction through increasing role of market in the distribution of income creates new problematic conditions, including poverty, ghettoisation, unemployment, isolation. It also shapes social, economic and political processes for future generation where poor are marginalised further.

Public policy therefore needs to focus on dampening structural inequalities by producing an environment conducive for economic and social mobility. Education attainment is noted as one of the primary sources of economic and social mobility.

Students belonging to lower social status mostly failed to complete their education, especially women, because of the sense of exclusion and discrimination they face with respect to the availability of schools in their localities and hostility at school.

Pakistan's social structure, with lower economic development and high distributional inequality, is aggregating power, wealth and status in the hands of dominant groups further.

In a society where organising principle of politics and social action is pinned on status while economy staggers in between agriculture and industry, social cleavages become much more apparent and results in political and economic domination of certain groups.

Therefore, economic growth without development creates more economic and social inequality.

Pakistan needs new thinking about dealing with structural inequalities. The state needs to offer a well thought out welfare policy, which is contrary to the current models of social protection and redistribution policies dealing with poverty and inequality through ad hocism.

The new policy should deal with the redistribution of inequalities as well as with the production. It should tackle the foundation of structural inequalities.

Rules need to be rewritten for Pakistan. Policies to expand access to assets, increase investment in human capital, enhance market participation of the marginalised along with pro-poor monetary and fiscal policy need to be put in place.

Economic growth must be made inclusive through a mix of policies working together simultaneously and equal opportunities must be ensured.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1364087/small-slice-for-poor-in-growing-economic-pie>

'GOVT COMMITTED TO ENSURE FOOD SECURITY'

The Express Tribune, October 16th, 2017.

Shehbaz said the purpose of observing this day was to accelerate the efforts to solve problems arising from food scarcity and the Punjab government was taking all necessary steps to solve the issue.

He said the government has provided various privileges in the agriculture sector in order to ensure food security and it is the prime priority of government to ensure availability of food to every person by maintaining balance between demand and supply of food.

While talking about development projects during a video-link meeting, Shehbaz said the extension project of road from Thokar Naiz Baig to Hadyara Drain would help maintain the smooth flow of traffic coming from Multan and other cities to Lahore.

The CM directed the authorities to take special measures and ensure quality and timely completion of projects. The chief minister also directed the authorities to form a steering committee under the supervision of provincial minister for planning and development and chief secretary. National Highway Authority chairman briefed the meeting about the project.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1532296/govt-committed-ensure-food-security/>

LARKANA/KARACHI:

Every week Hawa Bibi visits the regional office of the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) in Larkana to inquire about her monthly stipend, which has now become an uphill task for female beneficiaries.

For the last 13 months, she regularly visits the office but has yet to hear any good news. "In this scorching heat, I wait for hours for my stipend. It's like I come here and sit for hours just to listen to a no," she lamented.

Hawa Bibi is among those beneficiaries who witnessed a stampede in which an elderly woman lost her life while struggling to get her stipend.

“Azmat Khatoon lived near my village. We used to visit her. On a Monday morning, a large number of women were lined up seeking information of their stipend when suddenly, a woman cried and some started running. Azmat was weak. She was suffering from fever. She fell down and died on the spot,” Hawa Bibi said, adding that no one took notice of the incident and the family members took Azmat’s body to their village.

“They owe me around Rs16,000. I am fed up with the fake promises of officials. This is my last visit and I will never come here again,” she said, adding that initially, she would get Rs1,500 per month, but later the officials released a quarterly amount, which has not been stopped.

A middle-aged man, Muhammad Moosa, complained that his mother has been a beneficiary of this programme since its inception, but her stipend has been stopped for the last eight months. “I don’t have any idea why it was stopped. They know the reason behind it,” he said, adding that some agents have asked him for commission to release the funds.

Vocational students frustrated by stipend delays

Apart from Larkana, the same situation persists in other districts where women can be seen lined up waiting for hours for their stipends. Some women protested in front of the Karachi Press Club recently and demanded the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP)-led government to take notice of it.

“This programme is initiated in the name of Benazir, so Bilawal Bhutto must take notice of it,” said Hajra Akram, a beneficiary who lives in Lyari.

The BISP was launched under the PPP government in 2008 and is the largest social safety net programme of Pakistan. According to officials, around Rs90 billion was distributed to 5.4 million women last year. There are a total of 1.6 million female beneficiaries in Sindh alone.

Timely disbursement: Door-to-door survey in 12 districts soon

Speaking to The Express Tribune, Adviser to the Chief Minister on Social Welfare Shamim Mumtaz said that the federal government had stopped the funds and the provincial government has nothing to do with it.

Giving a briefing about the procedure, Mumtaz said that the local zakat council recommends names of deserving people and the funds are released from Islamabad. “Initially, women used to get money in cash, but now ATM cards have been issued to them,” she said, adding that the provincial government is looking for an option through which women will not have to face hassles in getting their stipends.

According to PPP Senator Aajiz Dhamrah, he had raised the issue in the Senate, but no one responded to it.

“Whenever people from Sindh lodge complaints, the programme head, Marvi Memon, refers them to the chief minister, asking them to get the money from the PPP government, which is unjustified,” he said.

Despite many attempts, Memon could not be reached for her comments. However, the spokesperson for BISP said the programme was running successfully and all its beneficiaries get their stipends on time. “There are a few technical issues, which is why the stipend payment has been delayed in some parts of Pakistan,” he said.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1538521/1-benazir-income-support-programme-wait-hours-stipend-scorching-heat/>

OFFICIALS SNUB GOVT’S HR BODY SEEKING DATA OF DEATHS IN THAR

Dawn, October 22nd, 2017

Hanif Samoon

MITHI: District health officer and civil surgeon of Mithi Civil Hospital, who have apparently made it a policy to not disclose information on deaths of infants and pregnant women in Thar hospitals to media, have gone a step ahead and refused to share such details even with the government-mandated Sindh Human Rights Commission (SHRC).

SHRC chairperson retired Justice Majida Rizvi had directed the health officials during her visit to the civil hospital on Friday to share with the commission detailed information on the deaths of children, pregnant women, the number of ailing infants referred to other hospitals etc so that the issue could be taken up at proper forums, said Kirshan Sharma, local representative of the commission on Saturday.

Mr Sharma regretted that on the one hand healthcare facilities across Thar were in a shambles and nearly 200 health units in the district had been without medicines for the past many years, while on the other the health officials were not ready to share details even with a government-mandated body.

He said he was trying to contact higher authorities concerned to register his protest on behalf of the commission against irresponsible attitude of Thar health officials and urged Sindh chief minister to take notice of lack of facilities at hospitals and ongoing drug shortage crisis in hospitals and dispensaries across Thar.

Thar health officials had stopped sharing details of deaths of infants and pregnant women with media after Chief Justice of Pakistan took a suo motu notice of deaths of five infants at Mithi Civil Hospital in April this year.

Sources at the hospital disclosed that at least nine more infants had died over the past two days on Friday and Saturday in six Thar hospitals, raising the death toll this year so far to 317.

Parents of the ailing infants complained to local journalists that doctors did not pay any heed to their fervent appeals to provide quality healthcare facilities to their children.

No health official was available for comments on reports of deaths of infants and expecting mothers in Thar.

Dr Tanveer Ahmed Shaikh, whose organisation is working in Thar on health and nutrition issues, said the government needed to focus its attention on providing much-needed medicines to the health centres which had been facing an acute shortage of drugs due to funds' stoppage for the past many years.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1365308>

FORTIFYING PAKISTAN'S FUTURE

The Express Tribune, October 22nd, 2017.

Malnutrition is a tragedy wherever it occurs. It is, however, a tragedy that we can fix. Around the world, one in three people are affected by malnutrition. Women and children suffer the most. Malnutrition hurts the development of individuals, their productivity and their health, but it also holds back the economic and social development of their community, their country and the world.

This is a global problem that needs global cooperation, but Pakistan has a specific challenge. It is home to 6% of the world's chronically malnourished children, and has the third-highest level of chronic malnutrition in the world.

One of the biggest challenges for people who are malnourished is the lack of certain vitamins and nutrients. This has a wider impact on a person's health. The lack of iron and vitamins A and D, for example, limits the ability to fight disease. This means that too many newborn babies and children are dying of minor illnesses. According to Unicef, every year over 200,000 children die in Pakistan of factors relating to malnutrition before reaching their fifth birthday.

Malnutrition also inhibits the brain growth of babies and children. Malnourished children enrol in school later have reduced learning ability and have lower productivity when they reach adulthood. The damage from chronic

malnutrition in the first two years of life is irreversible. It leads to and keeps people in poverty. The UN estimates that malnutrition costs Pakistan 2% to 3% of its GDP a year.

The number of people affected in Pakistan is significant. According to the most recent survey by the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, published in 2011, 44% of children under five years old were stunted, 32% underweight, 62% with anaemia and 54% with vitamin A deficiency. Some 51% of pregnant women in Pakistan had anaemia and 69% vitamin D deficiency.

Pakistan and the UK working together on this can make a difference.

Global experience shows food fortification to be one of the most cost effective solutions to address chronic micronutrient deficiencies. Given that wheat flour, edible oils and ghee are consumed daily by most people in Pakistan, fortification of these staple foods can enhance micronutrients in food without requiring changes in eating habits.

Combating malnutrition is at the heart of the UK's work in Pakistan. Working with the government and provinces of Pakistan, UK Aid is investing more than six billion rupees over the next five years to improve the nutritional status of people in Pakistan, particularly women of child-bearing age and young children, through food fortification. The programme will achieve this by improving access to and consumption of wheat flour which is fortified with iron and folic acid, and edible oils and ghee fortified with vitamins A and D.

This week, we launched our food fortification initiative in Punjab. Working alongside the province and local producers, we have started fitting micro-feeder equipment in flour mills — the machines that the flour producers will use to add vitamins and nutrients, while providing quality assurance equipment to both the mills and public laboratories for the testing of fortification standards by Pakistan in Pakistan.

Improving nutrition isn't as easy as just fitting equipment to flour mills. More provinces need to introduce legislation mandating fortification in wheat flour, and enforcement of legislation needs to be stepped up. Food manufacturers need support to increase technical capacity, and consumers need to understand the benefit of choosing fortified food for their families. The Food Fortification Programme will not be able to do this on its own. We are therefore working with different levels of government, as well as producers and manufacturers.

We are excited about what we will be able to achieve together. In the next three years, the Food Fortification Programme aims to ensure that around half of the population of Pakistan is consuming fortified wheat flour and over two-thirds are using fortified edible oil and ghee. This will mean Pakistan has a population that is healthier, more productive and better able to meet its enormous potential.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1538049/6-fortifying-pakistans-future/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 9TH TO OCTOBER 15 Th 2017

MACROECONOMIC RISKS IN PAKISTAN INCREASING: WORLD BANK

Amin Ahmed

Dawn, October 09, 2017

ISLAMABAD: The World Bank has warned that macroeconomic risks in Pakistan have increased substantially during the fiscal year 2017, as the external balance is particularly vulnerable given the persistent current account deficit, affecting the country's reserve position.

Pakistan's weaker macroeconomic discipline has led to vulnerabilities in the balance of payments. Since the IMF programme came to an end, external indicators of the economy have deteriorated, says 'The South Asia Economic Focus Fall 2017' released on Sunday ahead of the World Bank and IMF annual meetings.

One year ago, Pakistan was in a comfortable position, as international reserves were large enough to cover the current account deficit, the service of external debt and even the total volume of portfolio investments in the country. By now international reserves still cover the first two items, but not the third one. Addressing the sources of this increased vulnerability should be a priority, suggests the report.

In Pakistan, macroeconomic discipline arguably weakened after the IMF programme came to an end. In recent years, there had been clear progress in restoring macroeconomic stability and laying some of the foundations for higher growth.

Pakistan also regained emerging market status in the MSCI index and made progress on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC); two developments that reinforced general optimism. However, macroeconomic discipline has deteriorated in recent months.

The report says that improving the external balance hinges upon a revival in exports, a slowdown in imports, and stable remittance flows. In the absence of any of these factors, the persistent current account deficit will put further pressure on already dwindling reserves.

The fiscal position is also expected to deteriorate during the election cycle, which would affect debt trends and maintain debt at the current high level, cautions the report titled "Growth out of the Blue".

The report says that the ouster of former prime minister Nawaz Sharif has enhanced political risks and created some policy uncertainty. The upcoming national election in 2018 may affect the reform momentum and macroeconomic policy. Slower progress in much-needed structural reforms would weaken growth prospects and discourage private investment.

The outlook until fiscal year 2019 is for moderately higher growth, and this outlook is contingent upon continued macro-economic and political stability, as well as steady progress in implementing the main pillars of the government's medium-term reform programme, which tackles key constraints to growth. The outlook assumes that oil prices will increase moderately but remain low.

On the supply side, impetus to growth is projected to come from the services and the industrial sectors, while on the demand side, acceleration would be driven by public and private consumption, aided by a moderate increase in investment.

The pressure on the current account is expected to persist as the trade deficit will remain elevated during 2018 and 2019. This situation can potentially become unsustainable in absence of corrective policy measures. However, exports are expected to recover during fiscal years 2018 and 2019 due to an easing of supply side factors.

Imports, after strong growth of 17.7 per cent in fiscal year 2017, are expected to grow at a slower pace in fiscal years 2018 and 2019. Remittances will continue to partly finance the current account deficit.

It is also expected that FDI flows will strengthen due to accelerated implementation of CPEC projects. However, capital and financial flows during fiscal years 2018 and 2019 will only partly finance the current account deficit, which will result in a drawdown of reserves during these two years.

The report says that fiscal slippages are expected to continue through the election cycle, which will result in a widening of the fiscal deficit during fiscal year 2018. This increase in the fiscal deficit is primarily driven by a slower increase in tax revenues, both federal and provincial, and a sharper increase in expenditures.

An adjustment in the fiscal position in fiscal year 2019 after the election will help in curtailing the fiscal deficit. Inflation, after remaining moderate during fiscal year 2017, is expected to rise in 2018 and 2019. Inflation is expected to rise due to higher domestic demand pressures and a slight increase in international oil prices.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1362612/macroeconomic-risks-in-pakistan-increasing-world-bank>

SUSTAINABLE FARMING NEEDED FOR FOOD SECURITY: FAO

Dawn, October 10th, 2017

ISLAMABAD: More productive and sustainable farming systems need to be developed to meet growing food demand, United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) report said on Monday.

The report titled 'State of the Food and Agriculture 2017' said agricultural transformations in the late twentieth century relied on large-scale intensification using high levels of inputs.

In many countries that approach has resulted in severe environmental impacts, including massive deforestation, depletion of soil and water and high levels of greenhouse gas emissions, it said.

The future transformation faces unprecedented environmental constraints, requiring action to both mitigate and adapt to climate change and natural resource scarcities. Farmers will need to reduce resource use in agriculture without compromising yields and optimally manage livestock residues, a major source of greenhouse gases.

The report makes the case that needed transformations in rural economies can be sparked by leveraging growing demand for food in urban areas to diversify food systems and generate new economic opportunities in off-farm, agriculture-related activities.

This includes enterprises that process or refine, package or transport and store, market or sell food. In addition, it includes businesses that supply production inputs, such as seeds, tools, equipment and fertilisers or provide irrigation, tilling or other services.

Already, growing demand coming from urban food markets currently consumes up to 70 per cent of national food supplies even in countries with large rural populations, the report notes.

It called for overcoming hurdles posed by excessive fragmentation of landholdings, stating that some 85pc of the world's farms are smaller than two hectares (or about five acres). In most low-income and lower-middle income countries, small farms are becoming smaller, to the point where many are no longer economically viable.

In the long term, the consolidation of farmland by investors may occur alongside the continuing fragmentation of land operated by traditional farming communities. Declining farm size may not necessarily hinder productivity.

Although the labour productivity of small farms is low, they have the highest land productivity, the report notes.

However, smallholders must have either the necessary scale to access markets and adopt new technologies or access to technologies that are specifically adapted to small-scale operations, it said.

The overarching conclusion of the report is that fulfilling the “2030 Agenda” depends crucially on progress in rural areas, which is where most of the poor and hungry live. It presents evidence to show that, since the 1990s, rural transformations in many countries have led to an increase of more than 750 million in the number of rural people living above the poverty line.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1362744>

FEEDING PAKISTAN’S FUTURE

Genevieve Hussain

The Express Tribune, October 10, 2017

Many people find it hard to understand why Pakistan is a country that experiences food insecurity for such a large proportion of its people. The 2011 National Nutrition Survey, although conducted some years ago now, found 58 per cent of households in Pakistan to be food insecure. A more recent gauge is the IFPRI Global Hunger Index, which scored Pakistan at 33.4, a level considered alarming, and on a par with Ethiopia.

Even more intriguing to some that so many in Pakistan are malnourished. Stunting, wasting, being underweight or overweight, or even obese, are all serious issues, well documented in the press. Hidden hunger for essential micronutrients, including iron, vitamin A and zinc, is rife in Pakistan.

The 2017 State of Food Insecurity and Nutrition in the World report, a just released UN publication, says that 19.9 per cent of the total population in Pakistan was undernourished during 2014-2016. The same report reveals that the global figure for stunting (low height for age) in young children has now reduced to one in four. But in Pakistan the figure is closer to one in two.

With the marking of World Food Day on 16 October, it is worth reflecting why the country is in this predicament, and what it means for our future.

On the surface, we have a surplus of staple grains produced and even exported. There is plentiful rice and wheat, in spite of the rapidly growing population, now over 207 million. But food sovereignty is not the whole story. Humans cannot live on simply bread, or even on just rice. And increasingly, Pakistan is not producing its important crops at an internationally-competitive price, making the goal of food self-sufficiency one of doubtful value. Further, the public stockholdings held by the government for supplying food in emergencies cannot arrest the structural causes of hunger and malnutrition.

As any doctor will tell you, we require an ongoing, balanced diet for optimum health, growth and nutrition. So the availability of other foods, whether imported or domestically produced, is a significant factor. Aside from availability, high food prices in Pakistan, especially of high-nutrient items like vegetables, fruits, milk, meat, fish, pulses and eggs, continue to make it hard for the poor, who spend the majority of their incomes on food.

Even the basics, like flour and oil, are expensive when we take into account the income of the common person, for whom the minimum wage has been set at Rs15,000 a month. While nutritious foods like fruit or fresh milk are often cheaper in rural areas than urban, the opposite is true for many of the processed food items people use, like cooking oil, powdered milk, sugar and tea. The Ministry of Planning, Development and Reform’s published figures for the minimum cost of diet per month in Pakistan say it varies from Rs2,061 per head in Punjab to Rs2,415 in Balochistan. So inaccessibility of food, due to its price, is a key factor in Pakistan’s food insecurity.

Pakistan is, fortunately, now a middle income country, ever since the 2000s. But the uneven distribution of capital and opportunity in Pakistan continue to mean the benefits do not reach everyone. The Government of Pakistan reported in its 2015-16 Economic Survey that 38.8 per cent of Pakistanis, or nearly two-fifths, were living in multi-dimensional poverty. Multi-dimensional poverty is a measure which reflects not only income and assets, but the deprivations people experience in health, education and living standards. This is important because such deprivation is showing up as playing a major role in both food insecurity and nutrition insecurity.

What this means is that even if a farmer were surrounded by a bountiful field of fruit trees, vegetables, wheat, goats, chickens and the like, her nutritional well-being and that of her family cannot be taken for granted. If she lacks access to toilets and clean drinking water, or a functional kitchen allowing good hygiene, then illnesses like diarrhoea are more likely, and with them, malnutrition. If there is no primary medical care nearby, or any skilled birthing attendants, then the chances go up of sick and malnourished babies and children. If there is no secondary school for her daughters and sons, or the primary school does not have any resources, then we can foresee reduced literacy and knowledge. Knowledge of how to obtain a balanced diet, how to maintain hygiene and food safety, how to diversify one's income and employment opportunities, and even how to farm more productively and efficiently.

The sad thing is that a stunted child in Pakistan has a bleak future. Stunting is considered irreversible by the age of two. Knock-on effects can include early mortality, cognitive impairment and ongoing health issues. To have half the workforce in this situation, and the mothers of future Pakistani children undernourished in this way, simply eats away at Pakistan's future. Malnutrition is estimated to cost three per cent of Pakistan's GDP every year.

Urgent work is still needed on modernising the agriculture sector, training its workforce in the efficient production of nutritious food, and bringing down the cost of the minimum diet. Climate-smart agricultural methods and the use of a technologically-savvy agricultural extension system can lead the way. But without attention to further improvement of Pakistan's multi-dimensional poverty problems, we will not see the full potential of these changes realised.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1526862/1feeding-pakistans-future/>

PUNJAB, CENTRE AT LOGGERHEADS OVER REGULATION OF FOOD INDUSTRY

The Express Tribune, October 10th, 2017.

Despite being known for its 'Punjab speed', the government of Chief Minister Shehbaz Sharif and the centre have failed to resolve the issue of abundance of food standards during the past four years and the delay has erected trade barriers for the multibillion dollar food industry.

After the federal and provincial governments – both led by the PML-N – could not end their differences over who will regulate the food industry, both have now started publically challenging each other's authority.

In the latest episode, both have given public advertisements warning the food processing and packaged industries that they should not get registered with the other authority.

Pakistan Standard and Quality Control Authority (PSCQA) – a federal entity – and Punjab Food Authority (PFA) have given advertisements against each other. The victim is the food industry that has now been forced to follow two different sets of laws and standards for a single product.

Both authorities are also fighting their cases in courts, which speaks volumes about the claims of good governance and efficiency.

The issue of multiplicity of food laws has become a nuisance for food companies, some of which are multinational firms. They have to keep both the federal and the provincial authorities happy, and that too, at the same time.

The issue of multiplicity of food laws and standards roots in the 18th Constitutional Amendment, which gave sweeping constitutional powers to the provincial authorities in regulating the food industry. Subsequently, in 2011 the provincial government enacted the Punjab Food Authority Act and framed rules and asked the food companies to follow these standards.

Now the food companies are following multiple regimes for food regulations. There is PSQCA, Punjab Food Authority, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan and Sindh food authorities. But the major tug of war is between the federal and the Punjab governments. Punjab is not allowing any product to be marketed in its territory if it is not registered with the provincial authority.

“It is not possible for the food sector industry in Pakistan to cater to multiple regimes and different standards of food laws of the federation and the provinces, leading to confusion on which standards prevail and are to be followed,” wrote the Overseas Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OICCI) in a joint letter addressed to CM Punjab and federal minister of state for science and technology.

It was the second letter to Punjab chief minister in the last three months.

The OICCI said that the foreign investors have invested in Pakistan and “not in any particular province”, therefore there should neither be any confusion for foreign investors nor any overlapping in laws”. The body of multinational companies has questioned the rationale of implementing dual standards through two different regulatory authorities.

It requested the Punjab chief minister and federal minister of state to agree on one standard for food products by following international practices.

Last year, FrieslandCampina’s global chief executive officer Roelof Joosten had also taken up the issue of disharmony in food laws with then prime minister Nawaz Sharif and his cabinet members. FrieslandCampina invested \$450 million in Pakistan’s Engro Foods. He had urged all the stakeholders to work for harmonisation of food standards and introduce legislation in this regard. He mentioned pasteurisation of milk as one area where there should be legislation. The Pakistan Business Council – another body of manufacturers and leading enterprises – has also put its weight behind the food companies, urging the federal secretary Ministry of Science and Technology to resolve the dispute. “There is a need to follow proper procedures and benchmarks for setting the “food standards,” stated the PBC.

The industry has proposed to set up a National Standard Council to harmonise the fragmented laws. It is also seeking a role of Council of Common Interest so that the matter is resolved at the highest level.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1526979/punjab-centre-loggerheads-regulation-food-industry/>

RISING WORLD HUNGER REQUIRES RURAL RETHINK: UN

ROME: A sudden rise in hunger across the globe will require a new emphasis on developing rural economies, the United Nations said on Monday.

After steadily declining for a decade, 2016 saw an increase in hunger, with 815 million people, or 11 percent of the world’s population, chronically undernourished.

That represents an increase of 38 million on the previous year, the UN said, due in part to climate change aggravating severe weather and conflicts. But a report by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) said stimulating growth in rural areas could be key to fighting the trend and reaching the goal set by the international community of eliminating hunger and poverty by 2030.

“There could be no clearer wake-up call,” the FAO said in the annual State of Food and Agriculture report.

“With the majority of the world’s poor and hungry living in these areas, achieving the 2030 development agenda will hinge on unlocking that oft-neglected potential,” the report said.

The affected countries are mainly in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, where small-scale farmers who produce 80 percent of the food supply are in danger of being “left behind”, the report said. “Investments to improve their productivity are urgently needed,” the report said, emphasising that farming needs to be connected with small- and medium-sized cities.—AFP

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/10/10/1-page/675321-news.html>

PAKISTAN HAS ‘SERIOUS’ HUNGER LEVEL: SURVEY

Dawn, October 12, 2016

ROME: Pakistan has been ranked as a country with “serious” hunger level with 22 per cent of its population undernourished on the 2016 Global Hunger Index released Tuesday.

Placed 107 in a ranking of 118 developing countries, Pakistan performed worse than most of its South Asian neighbours in eliminating hunger.

On a 0-100 point scale (with 100 being the worst in hunger levels), Pakistan has a score of 33.4, improving only slightly from its score of 35.1 in 2008.

At the current rate of decline, more than 45 countries — including India, Pakistan, Haiti, Yemen, and Afghanistan — will have “moderate” to “alarming” hunger scores in the year 2030, the authors of the index said.

Hunger levels in developing countries have fallen 29pc since 2000, but efforts to curb hunger must be accelerated in order to meet an international target to eradicate it by 2030, according to the index.

Hunger levels are “alarming” in seven countries, with Central African Republic (CAR), Chad and Zambia experiencing the worst levels.

Nearly half the population in CAR and Zambia, and one in three people in Chad, are undernourished, it showed.

Another 43 countries, including India, Nigeria and Indonesia, have “serious” hunger levels.

“Countries must accelerate the pace at which they are reducing hunger” if they are to meet the 2030 target, Shenggen Fan, director general of the Washington-based International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), said in a statement.

“Ending global hunger is certainly possible, but it’s up to all of us ... (to) set the priorities right to ensure that governments, the private sector and civil society devote the time and resources necessary,” Fan added.

World leaders agreed a 2030 deadline for ending global hunger last year as part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – an ambitious plan for tackling poverty, hunger and inequality.

IFPRI produces the annual index along with aid agencies Concern Worldwide and Welthungerhilfe. Overall, some 795 million people go to bed hungry every night.

“We have the technology, knowledge and resources to achieve (zero hunger). What is missing is both the urgency and the political will to turn commitments into action,” said Dominic MacSorley, CEO of Concern Worldwide.

The hunger index ranks countries based on undernourishment, child mortality, child wasting (low weight for height) and child stunting (low height for age).

Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest hunger levels, followed closely by South Asia, it showed.

“Too many people are hungry today. There is a need for urgent, thoughtful and innovative action to ensure that no one ever goes hungry again,” said David Nabarro, special adviser to the UN secretary-general on the SDGs.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1289693>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 1ST TO OCTOBER 8 Th 2017

‘FOOD INSECURITY IN ASIA’: PAKISTAN FACING CHRONIC FOOD INSECURITY, SAYS ADB REPORT
Business Recorder ,October 1st, 2017

FAISALABAD: Pakistan facing chronic food insecurity due to insufficient agriculture production & political instability, corruption affects food security directly or indirectly. In a study Report on “Food Insecurity in Asia”, released by Asian Development Bank, it was pointed out that Pakistan has been able to increase its food production since the 1970s and now exports staple food such as rice. Yet, the country’s food security level is still low. This shows that a country’s ability to produce food is not a critical reason for a country’s food security or insecurity, ADB report added.

In Pakistan, ADB study report mentioned that the lack of purchasing power and access rights to an adequate food supply by many of its poor people is the key reason for the country’s low level of food security. To improve its level of food security, achieving stable economic growth and equitable income distribution should be Pakistan’s foremost priority; central to this is the need to improve governance and eliminate corruption.

Investment in agricultural infrastructure and R&D also needs to be carried out urgently to improve productivity in agriculture and to better cope with natural disasters. Efforts are needed to reduce and avoid environmental pollution and use resources sustainably. Population control should also be on the agenda of the government and society. In the foreseeable future, Pakistan is most likely to continue to be subject to socio-political, economic, and environmental volatility.

Deep reforms and improvements in governance must be carried out soon to unleash the country’s growth potential. Without substantial improvements in governance and a reduction in corruption, decent economic growth is hard to anticipate, and hunger and malnutrition will continue to prevail because of the maldistribution of resources and the lack of purchasing power among the poor.

To improve its food security, ADB report mentioned that Pakistan is facing formidable challenges, in particular, in the area of poor governance, the lack of economic growth, and instability in the country and its borders. Pakistan has to overcome these challenges to achieve durable societal development outcomes, which are fundamental to stable economic growth and future food security.

Environmental pollution and degradation present additional challenges for Pakistan to improve its future food security. Major environment issues include water pollution from raw sewage, industrial waste, and agricultural runoff; rising deforestation; soil erosion; and desertification.

The pressure resulting from population increase has also worsened the environmental and resource problems. Between the 1970s and the 1980s, Pakistan experienced very high population growth (over 3.0 percent per annum). In the early 1990s, the growth rate dropped below 3.0% but was still above 2.5 percent.

Since the early 2000s, despite its further decline, it was still above 1.8 percent. How to coordinate the population growth to match the country’s economic and environmental capacity requires attention from the government and the public.

In addition, there has been a shortfall of investment in agriculture infrastructure and research and development (R&D), leading to limited innovation in the agricultural sector. Antiquated farming methods and the inefficient use of resources have contributed to poor productivity.

The slow, or absence of, improvements in agricultural productivity is detrimental to the rural population, especially the rural poor. Two-thirds of the country's population and 80% of the poor live in rural areas. The lack of development in agricultural infrastructure and advancement in farming methods has made agricultural production difficult and inefficient, aggravating poverty in rural areas.

In the mountainous areas, many rural residents still do not have adequate access to food and other essential services, ADB report added. According to ADB study a number of factors are responsible for the low level of food security in Pakistan. Some of the major ones include the high level of poverty incidence, the high level of corruption, and political instability.

Commenting over the poverty incidence, it was mentioned that at the national level, the supply of dietary energy is more than adequate, with the average dietary energy supply adequacy (ADESA) being over 100 percent since the early 1990s. Fat supply is also largely satisfactory. Protein supply is low, although there has been an improvement not far from the required level. This comfortable food supply situation at the national level would imply that there is enough food for people to maintain an active and healthy life.

The fact that there are high levels of wasting, stunted, and underweight children under 5 years of age and that there exists a high prevalence of under-nourishment suggest that some people do not have sufficient economic access to the required amount of food.

The level of poverty is high in Pakistan. In 1998, the poverty headcount ratio at national poverty lines (% of population) was 30.6 percent. It then climbed to 34.5 percent in 2001 (World Bank 2015), dropping to 22.3 percent in 2005. These percentages of the population living below the poverty line were based on income per adult in Pakistan being \$1.25 per day.

Commenting over the political instability, the FAO index of "political stability and absence of violence" measures perceptions of the likelihood that a government will be destabilized or overthrown by unconstitutional or violent means, including politically motivated violence and terrorism. It provides a measure of political shocks that might have implications for national food security. According to this index, Pakistan is unstable politically, with the index steadily increasing (in absolute value).

Other factors also affect the level of Pakistan's food security to a varying extent, e.g., conflicts in the border areas, militant activities and natural disasters. These are, however, unlikely the determining forces. Other countries with very high levels of food security, such as Israel and the Republic of Korea, have always been subject to similar conditions.

<http://fp.brecorder.com/2017/10/20171001222816/>

TRACKING THE SDGS

Dawn, October 3rd, 2017

EVEN with the best of intentions, it is unlikely many countries will achieve the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals given the confluence of multiple challenges facing world leaders — more poverty and disease, more inequality and injustice, and the growing impact of climate change. A comprehensive report in Dawn recently tracked the performance of Pakistan's crucial socioeconomic indicators, reminding the government that it has until end 2018 to get its act together before submitting its first progress report to the UN.

Admittedly, there is a lot of work to be done to implement even certain critical goals. And because these are ambitious targets, they require mandated institutions and commitment — including national resources — if we are to achieve

them by 2030 as stipulated. These are prerequisites for sustainable development that successive governments have not prioritised. National and provincial policies developed in silos do not help, especially when they are not supported by resources, timelines or political will.

Consider just these statistics: 44 per cent of children in Pakistan are stunted and 60pc of the country is food insecure. Given this sorry state of affairs, trying to achieve the 169 targets that comprise the SDGs seems a pipe dream when even in the best of times it has been impossible to eliminate extreme poverty and inequality and effectively address climate change.

If the champions of reform who have aligned the SDGs with Pakistan Vision 2025 are seriously committed to people's betterment, they must adopt a realistic approach by selecting certain pressing issues — fighting poverty and improving health and literacy indicators — and deliver on their promises. Effective implementation that translates blueprints into reality is a challenge, but not an insurmountable one. It is globally accepted that a locally driven approach is critical for improving human development indicators.

This becomes impossible when politics of greed, the kind witnessed at the provincial government level, cuts out grass-roots leadership as an effective partner. When infant mortality is the bellwether for broader progress on poverty and health initiatives, for example, local government infrastructure can prevent these deaths through poverty alleviation policies and medical care. Even before the promise of the SDGs — and its predecessor, the MDGs — past governments came up with snazzy policies and road maps. Political disinterest led to all of them eventually disappearing into the ether. A renewed chance at working in tandem with a global development agenda should motivate the government into meaningful action.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1361352/tracking-the-sdgs>

November 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 20 Th TO NOVEMBER 26 Th 2017

ROTI BANK: TAKING FROM THE RICH AND GIVING TO THE POOR

The Express Tribune, November 20, 2017

KARACHI: Not all banks deal solely in monetary transactions. In Karachi, there is a bank that accepts deposits and passes them on to people free of charge. The Roti Bank provides two free meals a day to the city's underprivileged.

The small red shop, which appears to sell prepared food items, is situated on the road leading to Guru Mandir from Numaish and is an initiative of Roti Bank. It offers free food to those low income and needy people who cannot make ends meet.

Inside the red shop workers are busy packing food items which the bank gets from their kitchen or as donations while another worker hands out food to the hungry.

Muhammad Asif works as a security guard at a private security company and earns Rs12,000 per month. He pays monthly house rent of Rs5,000. According to him, the remainder of his salary is not enough to run his house. "My wife and I used to eat a single meal a day, very rarely could we have two meals a day before we found out about this facility," he said.

These days, he gets meal free of charge. Sometimes he takes food home for his wife and the workers at the bank have never hesitated in providing him food on an almost daily basis for the past 20 days.

Azra, a mother of seven, was also present at the bank to get her evening food along with her seven-year-old son. She submitted her documents, including her national identity card and her husband's along with the birth certificates of all her children, for which she will be issued a Saylani free food card for the entire month.

“Sometimes, when my husband brings home enough money at the end of the day I don’t come to take food in the evening so that other needy people can benefit from the Roti Bank,” explained Azra, adding that in times of sky rocketing prices, it is difficult to have two meals a day and the Roti Bank is helping people like them eat.

A single mother of four children who visited the bank said at least Rs300 is required to prepare food for five persons a day, which she cannot afford. Getting food from Roti Bank gives people hope that they will not starve if they cannot make ends meet, she said.

Muhammad Ikram, a worker who packs food to be given to the people who visit the bank, said that sometimes a white collar worker feels guilty about taking the free food but they try to convince them to take it. “We tell them that their families won’t be able to recognise [that it has been donated] since there are no marks on the plastic bags to protect their self-respect.”

People from as far as Surjani Town, Orangi Town, New Karachi and Korangi come to get food from the Roti Bank, said Ikram, adding that the bank’s popularity is due to word of mouth. “They spent Rs50 on bus fare and get free food worth hundreds for their families,” he said.

According to the worker, the menu at the bank keeps changing – from biryani, chicken and mutton qorma to keema, vegetables and daal packed in boxes along with naans.

Arif Lakhani, a trustee of the Saylani Welfare Trust and one of the organisers behind the Roti Bank, is happy they were able to come up with an idea that has allowed hundreds of residents of Karachi to be fed.

According to Lakhani, they play the role of a bank as they keep food provided to them by affluent people and give it back to those in need. It was opened on August 14 this year and the team hopes to open five to six more Roti Banks in different part of Karachi by the middle of 2018 as everyday more people turn up at the bank.

“On a daily basis 700 to 900 meals are provided to people. Around 100 to 150 families have registered and will be issued cards in the coming days through which they can get food for the entire month,” he told The Express Tribune. Lakhani added that the initiative is also helping those who do not want to disclose their identities but still need free food.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1562843/1-taking-rich-giving-poor/>

GOVT UNAWARE OF EXACT NUMBER OF KATCHI ABADIS IN SINDH, PA TOLD
Dawn, November 22nd, 2017

Bhagwandas

KARACHI: The Sindh Assembly was informed on Tuesday that no recent survey had been conducted in the province to ascertain the exact number of katchi abadis and that the data the provincial government had was 20 years old.

Murtaza Baloch, the special assistant to the chief minister, said this during the assembly’s Question Hour that pertained to the katchi abadi department in the absence of CM Murad Ali Shah, who holds the portfolio.

Responding to a question by Leader of the Opposition Khwaja Izharul Hasan regarding number of katchi abadis in 2008 and the current number, Mr Baloch said that there were 1,409 katchi abadis in 1985 and in the next survey conducted in 1997 the number increased to 2,000.

“No survey has been conducted after that [1997] so no updated data is available,” he added.

Responding to a query by Muttahida Qaumi Movement's Sumeta Syed regarding regularisation of Machhar Colony, he said that the colony was spread over 65 acres on the land of the Karachi Port Trust.

The katchi abadi department had asked the KPT to give a no-objection certificate so that the land could be surveyed, notified and subsequently regularised. Unless the NOC was issued the regularisation process could not be started, he said.

To another question by Pakistan Muslim League-Functional legislator Nand Kumar that illegal aliens — Bengalis, Biharis and Burmese — and “terrorists” resided in Machhar Colony and what action was taken against them, Mr Baloch said that a lot of people living in that area possessed computerised national identity cards, passports and other citizenship documents.

Besides, he said, if the legislator had any specific information regarding aliens and terrorists he should share it with the government and law enforcement agencies so that appropriate legal action could be initiated.

Responding to a question by MQM legislator Dilawar Qureshi as to why a very old katchi abadi in SITE Hyderabad had not yet been regularised and if an NOC was required, the special assistant said that no NOC was required since the katchi abadi was on the land of the Sindh government.

A joint demarcation was to be conducted after which other formalities would be completed and eventually the settlement would be regularised, he added.

Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf legislator Khurram Sher Zaman said that residents of the Railway Colony, a katchi abadi located in his constituency, had been living there for the past many decades and had water, gas, electricity connections. However, they were being threatened by Railways authorities to vacate the land or their homes would be demolished. He asked what the katchi abadi department was doing to protect them.

Mr Baloch said that he was not aware of the status of this particular issue, but if the legislator provided information it could be looked into and the government would ensure that no illegal action would be taken against residents.

MQM's Waqar Shah questioned as to how multistorey high-rise buildings were being constructed in katchi abadis. The special assistant replied that his department could not take action against any illegal building constructed in a non-notified katchi abadi. However, if the legislator provided specific information the issue could be taken up with the Sindh Building Control Authority or any other relevant department, he said.

PML-F's Nand Kumar pointed out that in many cases land grabbers encroached upon plots in katchi abadis, got these plots regularised and leased and sold them. Mr Baloch said that there could be such cases but if specific information was provided legal action could be initiated against such people.

Responding to a question by MQM legislator Qamar Rizvi as to how water, gas and electricity connections and other civic facilities were provided in non-regularised katchi abadis, he said normally the civic agencies and utilities demanded lease and other documents before installing any connection, but it was a fact that such facilities were available in many such settlements.

Responding to a question by PTI's Sher Zaman regarding number of katchi abadis, Mr Baloch quoted some 32-year-old data which said that there were 1,409 katchi abadis in the province. Of them, 1,013 had been notified and a comprehensive survey of 341 had been conducted, he added.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1371980/govt-unaware-of-exact-number-of-katchi-abadis-in-sindh-pa-told>

Part of the population is malnourished while a fraction is obese; leaving a very few healthy within an agrarian economy. This column has written extensively on the income inequality, but nothing much has been said on the food and nutrition disparity.

Food is available in abundance; but not for all and that causes the problem of food security for marginalized. Affordability becomes a bigger issue ever since the wheat support price mechanism was introduced in 2008 and since then the food index has more than doubled, leaving the marginalized to eat less. To add to the ado, the lack of micro nutrients owing to host of reasons is making the future generations vulnerable.

This information is known to many, and has been debated at many forums; but one problem which is not dealt with care is the food safety for those who can afford. Every now and then, there is some ad hoc action is taken on the quality of the food available by one or the other authority.

For example, which packaged milk is better or which is not? Whether to consume loose milk or packaged? Is there a problem in eating broiler chicken? Are the vegetables, grown by using contaminated water or soaked in pesticides to enhance life, qualified to be eatable? Is the hydrogenation process in vanaspati making it unfit for cooking? Can vanaspati be manufactured without hydrogenation? And the list goes on. Yesterday, Nestle Pakistan and Pakistan Council of Scientific

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/11/23/2-page/683701-news.html>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 13Th TO NOVEMBER 19Th 2017 IFAD TO PROVIDE \$82M FOR BOOSTING HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Amin Ahmed

Dawn, November 16, 2017

ISLAMABAD: The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) will make an investment of \$82 million in Pakistan to improve livelihoods, living conditions and income-generating capacity for 320,000 poor rural households in the country.

IFAD will initiate the 'National Poverty Graduation Programme' covering 17 districts, with a focus on the 'ultra-poor' segment of the population residing in rural areas.

The programme will aim to provide a combination of safety nets and sustainable livelihood opportunities. The project's financial agreement for graduation programme was signed in Rome, on Tuesday, by IFAD Vice-President, Michel Mordasini and Pakistan's Ambassador to Italy, Nadeem Riyaz.

Beneficiaries will receive support through skills development, business literacy training and access to credit. The programme will also help to promote economic empowerment by offering men and women equal access to participating in profitable economic activities.

The government is struggling to have an effective poverty graduation strategy that would lessen the current load of 5.4m BISP beneficiaries with over \$1.2bn expenditure a year — so far with no real success. The theory of change in the new programme is that with the right kind of responsive and flexible support a number of ultra poor families can be graduated to the next level of wellbeing where they have opportunities to link up with other sources of assistance including microfinance.

The total cost of the programme is \$149.8m, of which, IFAD is providing \$82.6m. The programme is aligned with Pakistan's policies on poverty reduction and social protection, notably with the Government's Vision 2025 — committing to halve poverty by 2025.

The graduation programme is designed to catalyse change at the grassroots to pull people out of poverty, building largely upon BISP beneficiaries and leveraging Prime Minister Interest Free Loan scheme to build a smooth 'seamless service' where the poorest can move from consumption support to asset transfers to interest free loans to microcredit.

PPAF works on multi-dimensional aspects of poverty, addressing economic, social and institutional aspects which are reflected in the poverty graduation programme design and in the composition of the Poverty Score Card.

“The programme includes social mobilisation, livelihood development and financial inclusion components. It combines support for immediate needs with a long-term plan, shifting households out of extreme poverty by providing access to a package of assets that include social services, vocational training and interest-free loans,” said IFAD Country Programme Manager, Hubert Boirard.

Based on the government's national poverty scorecard, 30pc of the total population (59m people) have been defined as poor and 61pc of the population lives in rural areas where income levels are low and employment opportunities are limited.

IFAD has financed 27 rural development programmes and projects in Pakistan since 1978, with a total IFAD investment of \$730m or \$2.51bn when co-funding from the Pakistan government and others are included.

These projects have directly benefitted more than 2.4m rural households — approximately 17m people.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1370769>

UNEMPLOYED YOUTH FROM PUNJAB EASY PREY FOR TRAFFICKERS

Dawn, November 17th, 2017

Waseem Ashraf Butt

GUJRAT: Khurram Shahzad, 30, was found killed on Wednesday along with 14 other labourers travelling in the Turbat area of Balochistan with plans to cross the border into Iran on their way to Europe.

He had paid a human trafficker Rs300,000 to smuggle him into Europe, but in order to afford the steep price, he had borrowed Rs85,000 from a brick kiln owner. The debt will have to be paid off by the deceased's brother.

The family, hailing from Charranwala village in the Pahrianwali police precincts of Phalia tehsil in Mandi Bahauddin district, had been on the breadline for a long time. Hoping to make some money working abroad, Shahzad had left his home nearly six days ago with some other residents of Mandi Bahauddin.

Residents of the area said the Rs85,000 borrowed to send Shahzad away would now be paid off by his brother, who would continue as a bonded labourer till he repaid every penny.

The deceased has left behind three children and his wife from a second marriage, as his first marriage had ended in a divorce, said one of Shahzad's neighbours, adding that crossing the border illegally into Europe to seek greener pastures appeared to be a sensible option for many young people living in abject poverty in rural areas.

He said it was true that many of the young people looking to enter Europe illegally ended up drowning or getting killed by border security guards.

Azhar Waqas from Parhana Lok, near Malakwal city in Mandi Bahauddin district, was told by a local human trafficking agent that he would help him get settled in Europe, where he would have a better chance of getting gainful employment. But he was killed instead, mourned Nasir, Waqas's brother.

Waqas's uncle Khan Mohammad said that if the government provided young people opportunities and avenues for employment, they would never think of running off to other countries illegally and put their lives through extreme danger.

He demanded that the government take strict measures to end illegal human trafficking.

Waqas had four brothers and a widowed mother.

The human traffickers use trains, buses, vans and trucks to transport their clients to various posts, as well as travel several miles by foot.

Their clients first have to sneak into neighbouring Iran, then Turkey from where they enter Greece and then onward to further European destinations.

The Gujranwala region, especially Gujrat, Mandi Bahauddin, Sialkot, Wazirabad and Hafizabad areas, have been a hub of the human trafficking business for a long time, apparently because they can find a willing clientele easily.

A large number of Pakistani expatriates in Europe hail from Gujrat, Mandi Bahauddin and Jhelum districts. Many of them live financially stable lives and 'tales' of their 'prosperity' encourage others to attempt moving there as well.

Zulfiqar Ali of Malakwal city was among the 15 victims. He had gotten married five years ago and had an 18-month-old daughter.

Saifullah of Dhab village near the Tanda area of Gujrat was also among the victims. The bodies of these four victims were driven to their homes late on Thursday in Rescue 1122 ambulances.

High-ranking government officials and law enforcement personnel offered funeral prayers in Turbat. The coffins were wrapped in national flag.

After the bodies were brought to Punjab from Balochistan on a C-130 plane, they were taken from the Lahore airport to the respective hometowns of the deceased in Rescue-1122 vehicles.

Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif has announced a sum of Rs1m for the heirs of each of the deceased.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1371045>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 6 Th TO NOVEMBER 12 Th 2017

BISP LAUNCHES WOMEN EMPOWERMENT DRIVE IN DIAMER

Dawn, November 11, 2017

GILGIT: Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) Marvi Memon has started a campaign aimed at women empowerment through social mobilisation in Diamer district of Gilgit-Baltistan.

It merits a mention here that the number of BISP beneficiary committees (BBCs) in Diamer is less compared to other districts of the country. So far only nine BBCs have been formed in the district out of targeted 232 as women are reluctant to enroll themselves in the bodies because of social taboos and traditions.

Ms Memon announced that a new survey of the BISP beneficiaries would be conducted in 16 districts of the country, including Gilgit, as a pilot project to provide economic assistance to more deserving and poor women.

She said BISP was spending Rs221 billion for empowerment of poor women and alleviate poverty in the country.

The BISP chairperson visited Diامر the other day to convince local elders to allow women to participate in the BBCs. Addressing a women gathering at girls high school, Chilas, she said the BBCs targeted poverty alleviation, conducted school enrolment drives and educated women on their rights, including nutrition and anti-stunting awareness programmes.

She added that women committees were necessary as a means towards discussion of women issues and their resolution, including education campaigns.

“Through the platform of BBC, the BISP beneficiaries are being provided extra stipend for child education, which is conditional to the beneficiary herself enrolling in the committee and implementing its objectives,” she said.

Ms Memon said Pakistan was the most affected country for malnutrition and stunting and the BISP beneficiary committee programme aimed to provide platform to woman in rural areas to discuss such issues.

She also held meetings with local notables and BISP beneficiaries in Chilas to discuss the strengthening and enhancing the number of BISP beneficiary committees.

The BISP chairperson was briefed about the ‘concerns’ of the local elders and religious clerics about participation of women in the BBCs in the district.

She said that elders should play their part in empowering the womenfolk. She appreciated the need for respecting the local traditions whilst forming such committees but insisted they were necessary for the goals of BISP.

The BBCs comprising a group of 25-30 women meet regularly to discuss their issues and the guidance is provided to them on nutrition, health, basic counting, women rights and entrepreneurial skills.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1369714/bisp-launches-women-empowerment-drive-in-diامر>

\$52 MILLION PROJECT LAUNCHED TO REDUCE POVERTY IN BALOCHISTAN

Dawn, November 12th, 2017

QUETTA: The \$52.4 million Balochistan Rural Development and Community Empowerment Programme (BRDCEP) was launched on Saturday.

The five-year programme of the Local Government and Rural Development Department (LG&RDD) has been funded by the European Union. The provincial government, Balochistan Rural Support Programme (BRSP), National Rural Support Programme (NRSP) and Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN) will help the LG&RDD in completion of the programme.

The main focus of the programme is to support the Balochistan government in reducing the negative impact of economic deprivation, poverty and social inequality and empower resilient communities to actively participate in identifying and implementing socio-economic development activities on sustainable basis in partnership with local authorities.

The programme, benefiting 1.9 million people, will be implemented in eight districts of the province: Jhal Magsi, Kech, Khuzdar, Qilla Abdullah, Loralai, Pishin, Washuk and Zhob.

Federal Minister for Postal Service Maulana Ameer Zaman, Provincial Minister for Planning and Development Dr Hamid Achakzai, Minister for LG&RDD Sardar Mustafa Tareen, Senator Nawabzada Saifullah Magsi, former chief minister of Balochistan Dr Abdul Malik Baloch, Adviser to Chief Minister on Forest, Wildlife and Livestock Obaidullah Babat, MPA Mir Jan Muhammad Khan Jamali, Mr Sanaullah Baloch, former federal minister for social

welfare, special education and women development Zubaida Jalal and P&D Secretary Asfandyar Kakar spoke on the occasion and shared their views on the programme.

All speakers lauded the EU's support and Rural Support Programmes Network's work in the province.

They appreciated efforts of BRSP, NRSP and RSPN for their contribution in reducing poverty in the province.

Speaking at the launching ceremony of the programme, EU Ambassador Jean-François Cautain said that core components of the BRDCEP included bottom-up approach and formulation of development policy framework which the Balochistan government and other stakeholders would use to contribute to reducing poverty in the province.

He further said that the ownership of the programme by the Balochistan government and politicians of the province was extremely encouraging.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1369986/52-million-project-launched-to-reduce-poverty-in-balochistan>

RURAL SINDH APPEARS POOREST AMONG ALL: SBP

Dawn, November 12, 2017

Shahid Iqbal

KARACHI: The recent banking data released by the State Bank identifies rural population of Sindh as the poorest among all provinces except Balochistan.

The Statistical Bulletin-November 2017 issued by the State Bank provides urban and rural personal deposits of all provinces including Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), etc, till June 30. The province and region-wise personal banking deposits showed that the rural population of Sindh failed to compete with rural Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and AJK.

Balochistan is not considered a competitor since the population is much less than Sindh. Banking penetration is also less than other provinces in Balochistan.

However, rural Punjab emerged as the richest among all as personal deposits of rural population were over 54 per cent of the entire personal deposits of the country's rural population. Total rural deposits of Pakistan were Rs823.68 billion, with the share of Punjab at Rs448.75bn.

Rural personal deposits in banks of KP were Rs138.6bn, second highest deposits shown in the Bulletin despite having less population than Sindh.

Sindh, being the second largest province of the country (population wise) and having a much better record for its urban population, provides a disappointing and discouraging picture of its rural population.

The personal banking deposits of rural population of Sindh were just Rs82.3bn till end June 2017 – in fact these dropped in the previous 6 months. The same deposits of rural Sindh were Rs89.8bn in December 2016. Either the deposits were consumed or shifted to urban Sindh.

Since those who rule Sindh mostly belong to rural Sindh, it is disappointing that they have failed to improve the economy of the rural population. Sindh government has been the target of critics over rural poverty and poor education and health facilities for the province.

Even rural AJK has a better picture than Sindh. The personal rural deposits of AJK till June 17 were Rs108.3bn.

Only Balochistan — which has very small population compared to Sindh and a victim of prolonged law and order situation — had lower rural personal deposits of Rs15.5bn.

Rural Sindh is rich in terms of agriculture as it produces cotton, wheat, rice, sugarcane, and livestock. It also produced 70pc natural gas in the country; and also has a large contribution in oil production. However, the benefits of these resources are not used for uplifting the lives of the rural population.

The province generates over 60pc revenue for the country and has a large share in the divisible pool of federal revenue but the revenue is apparently not managed skillfully for the benefits of the poor..

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1369926>

December 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 25th TO DECEMBER 31st 2017

BISP TO COVER TWO MORE AJK DISTRICTS ALONG LOC

Dawn, December 26, 2017

Tariq Naqash

MUZAFFARABAD: The federal government of Pakistan the PML-N would ensure that no deserving woman at the Line of Control (LoC) in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) remains deprived of financial assistance from Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP).

This was stated by Minister of State and chairperson BISP MNA Marvi Memon during her visit to Neelum valley, a BISP official told Dawn.

While interacting with different people in Kundal Shahi and Athmuqam, she asserted that BISP was committed to providing dignity, empowerment and meaning to the lives of its beneficiaries.

“The BISP will provide a real list of poor [people] to the government for effective service delivery,” she said.

Ms Memon told them that national roll out of resurvey would commence in February 2018 and ensure 100pc coverage of the population living near the LoC, as these people were not only terror struck but the poverty indicators are also high in this area.

“Rest assured, the BISP will make extra efforts for their coverage and make it sure that no deserving is left out,” she said.

Ms Memon announced on the occasion expansion of BISP Waseela-e-Taleem (WeT) to two more districts of AJK – Neelum and Haveli.

As many as 10,374 children in Neelum district and 16,442 in Haveli district were likely to be enrolled during the expansion process which would begin in March 2018, she said.

At the moment, 40,220 children were enrolled in three AJK districts under WeT. They included 13,339 children in Bagh, 19,140 in Kotli and 7,741 in Mirpur.

The BISP chairperson also visited the house of Nargis Bibi, a BISP beneficiary, and inquired from her about the transparent delivery of money order by Pakistan Post.

In response, Ms Bibi said she was receiving the BISP stipend on regular basis.

While talking to local PML-N leaders and workers, Ms Memon also reaffirmed Pakistan's support for the innocent Kashmiris braving unrelenting atrocities in the India held territory.

“Pakistan will continue to extend political, diplomatic and moral support to the Kashmiri brethren struggling for their internationally acknowledged right to self-determination,” she said.

Condemning unprovoked ceasefire violations by Indian army along the LoC, she called upon international peace agencies to take stock of the situation so that human lives could be safeguarded.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1378835>

MALNUTRITION: WHEN WILL WE ACT?

Business Recorder ,Dec 26th, 2017

It's a national emergency, but it's not a priority. Increasing hunger levels is plain shameful and the latest Global Nutrition Report is just a cruel reminder of how the country has completely ignored health and nutrition from its agenda.

Unfortunately, all three forms of malnutrition – childhood stunting, anaemia in women of reproductive age and overweightness and obesity– are prevailing in Pakistan. Inequality and poverty form the core of the issue. The study shows that – around 40 per cent of food in Pakistan is wasted and around 70 per cent of people in the country cannot afford a balanced diet.

So while the number of children under five who are stunted and wasted has fallen in many countries, the prevalence of stunting has increased in a few countries that include Pakistan; it was 43 percent in 1992 and has increased to 45 percent by 2012. And for breastfeeding of infants aged up to five months, the rate has marginally increased but the progress is very slow. Surprisingly, other epidemics like obesity are also on the rise in Pakistan, highlighting the instances of food inequality.

And third, anaemia especially among women is another indicator of malnourishment in the country. The study shows that globally, 614 million women aged 15–49 years are affected by anaemia where India has the largest number of women impacted, followed by China, Pakistan, Nigeria and Indonesia. It further goes onto show that more than half of all women of reproductive age have anaemia in Pakistan and India.

<https://www.brecorder.com/2017/12/26/389109/malnutrition-when-will-we-act/>

3,280 ANIMALS DISTRIBUTED AMONG WIDOWS

Business Recorder, 31 December 2017

FAISALABAD: As many as 3,280 animals are distributing among the deserving widows of the rural areas in the Faisalabad division in next phase through balloting for enabling them to earn their livelihood.

In this connection, the distribution programme has been started in Faisalabad district and a ceremony was held at Hockey Ground Tandlianwala for distributing 248 buffaloes and cows among the deserving widows of Tehsil Tandlianwala and Samundri.

Deputy Commissioner Salman Ghani was chief guests on the occasion while Parliamentarians Jaffar Ali Hocha, Arif Mehmood Gill, Director General Livestock Dr. Ghulam Muhammad Gill, AC Tandilianwala Abdul Razzaq Dogar,

Director Livestock Dr Muhammad Nawaz Malik, Chairman Municipal Committee Tandlianwala Chaudhry Saeed, Additional Director Livestock Dr Saleha Gull, Assistant Director Dr Abdul Majid, Dr Atta Subhani, Dr Mudassar Zaidi, Dr Atiq, Dr Fareeha and others officers of Livestock department were also present.

Addressing the ceremony Deputy Commissioner said that this programme will go a long way in alleviation of poverty and will pave the way for promotion the livestock sector. He said that the programme has become a great success due to which poor women would now lead a better life in rural areas.

He said that this is unique uplift programme for the welfare of the poor women and development of the livestock sector.

He congratulated the women those got animals and ask them to take special care of them. He also appreciated the arrangements of livestock department for holding successful ceremony.

Parliamentarians said that under the dynamic leadership of CM Shahbaz Sharif, Present Punjab government believed in practical steps instead of doing the politics of slogans, saying that the government was fulfilling all its promises made to people during election campaign.

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/12/31/5-page/690990-news.html>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 18th TO DECEMBER 24th 2017

FIGHTING MALNUTRITION

Dawn, December 20, 2017

EARLIER this year, a UN study showed how the number of hungry people in the world had increased for the first time since the turn of the century, fuelling concern that climate change and conflict could set back years of progress in fighting malnutrition. In Pakistan, 44pc of all children under five years are reported to be stunted.

On Monday, the Global Nutrition Report 2017 couldn't have been launched at a more opportune time as its authors issued yet another important call for governments to make critical nutrition investments ensuring that our children thrive. Pakistan's nutrition challenge is exacerbated by poverty and inequality.

The country spends only 3.7pc of its GDP on nutrition — the lowest in Asia — it has failed to combat malnutrition. Further, it noted that a significant number of Pakistani children were obese due to unhealthy eating habits. The report also found that 88pc of all countries face varied forms of malnutrition — besides childhood stunting, there are many anaemic women of childbearing age.

Improving nutrition as a national priority means greater investment and judicious allocations to ensure that budgets are spent in areas such as health, food, social protection and sanitation. Nutrition-specific interventions utilising the expertise of LHWs in preventive healthcare and family planning are imperative. Another tested method to curb malnourishment is to add specific nutritious foods to existing health interventions in the primary healthcare system.

Because so many children die annually from lack of food or suffer from stunting, the fight against malnutrition must be a priority for all governments. This means adopting a comprehensive national strategy to combat hunger and poverty — perhaps emulating the successes of Peru that scaled up national and nutrition-specific policies and interventions across food, health and social protection systems to reduce malnutrition rates. In Pakistan, the best plan would involve overcoming obstacles to implementation barriers and achieving high coverage rates in food programmes.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1377654/fighting-malnutrition>

Dawn, December 20, 2017

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Tuesday expressed annoyance over the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board for “misguiding” successive governments about the actual requirement of water in the metropolis and said that the problem lay with the decades-old distribution network which had completed its age and needed replacement.

Chairing a follow-up meeting in compliance with the Supreme Court’s directives regarding provision of safe drinking water to every citizen, the CM said that Karachi’s population was 16 million as per the provisional results of the population census and in view of this the water requirement of the metropolis should not exceed 800 million gallons daily.

Sources said the CM’s strong response came when KWSB Managing Director Hashim Raza Zaidi tried to explain the water utility’s efforts to bridge the demand and supply gap in the city.

CM Shah told the meeting that the KWSB itself said that per person water requirement was 50 gallons daily by their estimate and keeping in mind the census results, the water requirement for 16m people stood at 800 MGD.

He said currently the KWSB was getting 650 MGD, which by the end of 2018 would increase by 260 MGD from K-IV and 65 MGD from another small scheme. “Thus 975 MGD water would be available in the city which would be enough for another three to four years,” he pointed out.

He said the bureaucracy of KWSB and the Sindh local government department had been misguiding politicians for the past many years by presenting figures based on miscalculations of water requirement.

“I am a professional engineer, you cannot misguide me,” he snubbed the KWSB officials. “The actual problem is rusted, defective, old and contaminated distribution network.” He directed Local Government Minister Jam Khan Shoro to prepare a plan to replace the old water supply lines in phases.

He said the government would provide funds regardless of the project’s cost as pipelines were not only contaminating water but also wasting it through seepage.

New pipelines to cost Rs200bn

The LG minister said that there was 1,200-km-long water supply network in the city and its replacement would cost around Rs200 billion.

The chief minister said: “I would suggest you collect area-wise data of the water supply lines laid there and then start replacing the oldest one in the first phase,” he said.

He added there were old areas where water distribution pipelines were laid about 60 to 70 years ago and some were said to be around 100 years old.

The meeting was told that the municipal, hospital and industrial waste water was being released into Lyari and Malir rivers.

The CM was told that there was a plan to install a 94 MGD waste water treatment plant.

The LG minister informed the CM about the Hyderabad Electric Supply Company's demand from the KWSB for Rs 6bn so that it could supply 50 megawatts to the K-IV pumping stations at the Keenjhar Lake.

Mr Shah asked the KWSB as to why it was not going to install its own LNG-based or wind power plant of 50MW instead of paying a hefty sum of Rs6bn.

“Funds are available for K-IV. I would suggest you install your personal power plant of 50MW and pump Rs2bn equity, and a private party and the government would become their partners for construction of power plant and transmission line for water board,” he said.

The chief minister asked Energy Secretary Agha Wasif Abbas to work out a plan, sit together with the LG minister and KWSB MD and start a survey for the 50MW power plant.

Mr Shah also asked the divisional commissioners to plan water supply schemes from the Indus River for cities located on or along the embankment.

He also asked them to take necessary measures to dispose of municipal water into drains instead of letting it flow into rivers and other water bodies until water treatment plants were installed in every district and taluka headquarters.

Rs162.9bn water supply schemes by PHE dept

The chief minister was also briefed on Rs162.9bn water supply schemes of the Sindh public health engineering (PHE) department.

PHE Minister Fayaz Butt informed the meeting that 3,896 schemes, including 1,671 ongoing and 2,225 new, were in progress in 22 districts.

The chief minister directed PHE secretary Tamizuddin Khero to work out a detailed plan for construction of a drainage system for major villages in the 22 districts.

“The drainage system may be designed as per population figures given in the new census,” he said.

The chief minister said that he would hold a third meeting on Dec 28 to review the progress further.

Provincial ministers Manzoor Wassan, Dr Sikandar Mandhro, Chief Secretary Rizwan Memon, Advocate General Zamir Ghumro, Planning and Development chairman Mohammad Waseem, principal secretary to CM Sohail Rajput, World Bank representatives, KWSB officials and others attended the meeting.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1377648/murad-lashes-out-at-kwsb-for-misleading-govts-on-karachis-water-issue>

EU AID DECREASED MALNUTRITION IN SINDH, MOOT TOLD

Dawn, December 20th, 2017

KARACHI: Speakers at a seminar on a European Union-sponsored project to end hunger in Sindh were informed that the €200 million euro aid had “immensely decreased” malnutrition in Sindh.

“We are happy that this project has succeeded in achieving its objectives and we are launching another similar project in Sindh next year for which 60m euro will be spent by the EU,” said a representative from the EU in Pakistan while speaking at the seminar organised by Action Against Hunger and Save the Children at a hotel on Monday.

Representatives from different departments of the provincial government participated in the seminar on evaluating results and key learning and the closing ceremony of the programme titled ‘Women and children/infant improved nutrition in Sindh’.

The programme had been launched four years ago in which, organisers said, multisectoral approach was adopted to end hunger through better nutrition for mothers and children keeping in view that around half of the children in the province — though an agriculture powerhouse itself — were stunted and malnourished.

Officials from the ministries of health, agriculture, social welfare, livestock and fisheries, and public health engineering; Provincial Nutrition Cell, Sindh; and representatives from the district administrations of Dadu, Sujawal, Thatta and Shikarpur, as well as different NGOs attended the programme.

The results of the project shared with the audience said women empowerment could not be achieved through livelihood intervention alone and additional approaches needed to be considered.

They included, they said, empowerment of women by engaging them in economic activities. They highlighted how kitchen gardening and other tools were used throughout the extensive intervention.

Besides, said the results, food vouchers handed to women in the targeted districts had increased women’s involvement in decision-making for at least programme-related resources, compared to general household budgeting and expenditures.

They said providing a dedicated corps of child health workers (CHWs) with good training and supervision should be prioritised as a viable way to expand opportunities for treatment of children in Pakistan.

“The policymakers should consider integration of such a strategy into the national plan for health and nutrition in Pakistan,” according to the results shared at the seminar.

The segment of the project in which mothers were provided with cash vouchers to take care of the health of their children was also discussed.

To evaluate the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of cash transfer programmes on child nutrition, the results concluded that a higher amount of cash — Rs3,000 — would be more effective than a lower amount of cash — Rs1,500 — as was being offered by the government’s Benazir Income Support Programme.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1377641>

NUTRITION REPORT

The Express Tribune, December 21st, 2017.

The Global Nutrition Report 2017 was recently launched outlining a host of problems Pakistan carries the burden of when it comes to both, overweight and obesity as well as malnutrition. While the rate of stunted growth increased despite being a known problem for many years, other epidemics are on the rise, namely obesity and overweight. The indicators listed in the report must be paid heed to, understanding that when the well-being of citizens is looked after, it affects other areas. For example, productivity and economic output and simultaneously, health expenditure.

Foodstuffs consumed by a person comprises their health profile; learning about one’s diet can predict what sort of ailments the person or child may run into later in life. Hence, factors such as obesity can easily be targeted by implementing preventative measures.

Meat and sugar taxes have been established by several cities and countries and it would be prudent to contemplate implementing something similar in Pakistan, considering that both meat and sugar consumption are high and that these two foodstuffs are the source of many ailments such as cancer, diabetes, and heart disease.

Congruously, an awareness campaign highlighting the ill effects of low-value nutritional products would also begin making an impact on the national health expenditure.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, malnutrition and stunted growth have been prevalent for decades here and it is a shame that the incidence of the latter has increased from 43 per cent to 45 per cent. When the nutrition report highlights that 40 per cent of food in the country is wasted and that the 70 per cent of people in the country cannot afford a balanced diet, there is deep systematic change required.

Awareness campaigns must target two goals: first, to reduce consumption of unhealthy foods and two, to provide food to communities that are under-nourished. However, the latter especially needs to be done in a government-controlled and organised way; arbitrary handouts to starving beggars will not suffice.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1588930/6-nutrition-report/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 4th TO DECEMBER 10th 2017

EIGHT INFANTS DIE IN THAR OVER TWO DAYS

Dawn, December 4th, 2017

MITHI: Eight more infants died from complications caused by malnutrition at Mithi Civil Hospital over the past two days.

The ill-fated children were brought from remote villages of the district to the civil hospital where they died during treatment.

The parents of ailing children complained of a serious lack of facilities and medicines at the hospital and absence of staff at health units in their villages.

Officials at the health department, who wished not to be named, said that more than 370 infants had lost their lives this year only at Mithi Civil Hospital.

Dr Tanweer Shaikh of the Health and Nutrition Development Society and other social activists deplored that the desert region continued to confront multiple problems which needed to be addressed at the earliest.

The Sindh government should focus Thar issues if it was sincere to mitigate unending miseries of Tharis, he said. He said that malnutrition among infants and child marriages were the major factors behind unabated deaths of newborns and children below five years of age and urged the government to pay attention to Thar during ongoing harsh winter season to avoid more deaths in the desert region.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1374382>

WEALTH INEQUALITY A THREAT TO EAST ASIA, PACIFIC: WORLD BANK

Business Recorder, DEC 4TH, 2017

IMADUDDIN

A rapidly growing gap between rich and poor in many developing East Asian nations is threatening the foundation for the region's economic success, the World Bank said Monday.

“The whole basis for East Asia’s success was this sense that everything was fair — you worked hard, you got ahead — but that is beginning to unravel a little bit,” said Sudhir Shetty, the bank’s chief economist for East Asia and the Pacific.

Booming economic growth has lifted millions in the region out of extreme poverty since the 1980s, but the wave of prosperity has not guaranteed upward mobility and economic security for large swathes of the population, the World Bank said in a new report.

Developing East Asian and Pacific countries must strengthen social security nets and help poor citizens climb the economic ladder if they want to dodge the negative effects of inequality, it added.

The international lender said rapidly ageing populations, urbanisation and the disappearance of labour-intensive factory jobs threatened to push millions back below the poverty line — defined as living on between \$3.10 to \$5.50 a day.

“In this changed environment, particularly given some of the external forces coming along, the region needs to start thinking differently about inclusive growth,” Shetty told AFP at the launch of the report.

The number of poor citizens across the region — including about a dozen countries and the Pacific Islands, but excluding developed countries such as Japan and South Korea — has dropped significantly in recent decades.

About two-thirds of its population were either economically secure or middle class by 2015, up from 20 percent in 2002, the bank said.

But income inequality is already high or rising rapidly, with the problem most acute in Indonesia and China, according to the report.

Between 1988 and 2012, the wealthiest five percent of the region’s population increased their personal consumption by almost \$400 a year, compared with less than \$30 for the bottom 20 percent.

The region has also seen the emergence of a new class of super-rich, with billionaire wealth now equivalent to almost nine percent of regional gross domestic product.

That has created an accompanying increase in the perception of wealth inequality, Shetty said.

Governments should strengthen their personal income tax collection by closing loopholes and broadening the tax base, as well as tackling corruption and improving job access, the report recommended.

Careful urban planning was also needed to tackle congestion, slum growth and resilience against natural disasters, it added.

“Cutting across everything is this need for institutional reform in particular, we frame it as a new social contract,” Shetty said.

“You are not going to be able to meet these needs without raising more revenue.”

<https://www.brecorder.com/2017/12/04/384516/wealth-inequality-a-threat-to-east-asia-pacific-world-bank/>

CALL TO MAKE JOINT EFFORTS TO ADDRESS MALNUTRITION

Dawn, December 05th, 2017

ISLAMABAD: Only Sindh has passed Universal Salt Iodisation (USI) law making use and sale of iodised salt mandatory, and other provinces should also follow suit because the salt is very important for human health.

This was stated by Senator Sehar Kamran while speaking to participants of a seminar titled “Universal Salt Iodisation in Pakistan”.

The event was organised by Ministry of National Health Services and National Food Fortification Alliance (NFA) and Scaling Up Nutrition Civil Society Alliance Pakistan (SUNCSA,Pak) at a local hotel. She said the Sindh govt had introduced a programme to address malnutrition among people especially children.

“All of us should work together to address malnutrition and raise awareness aimed at maximising use of iodised salt. We need to focus through multi-sectoral approach to improve the nutritional status of women and children in Pakistan,” Ms Kamran said.

The PPP leader and former deputy speaker Faisal Kareem Kundi agreed that the use of iodised salt should be made universal in Pakistan.

He vowed to make nutrition part of PPP manifesto and assured his full support to enforcement of the iodised salt law.

While opening the seminar, Chief Nutrition, Planning Commission of Pakistan, Mr Aslam Shaheen, said Universal Salt Iodisation should be made part of all provincial nutrition strategies as this issue can be addressed with multi-sectoral efforts.

“I would encourage all stakeholders including parliamentarians, media, religious scholars, private sector, donors, UN, academicians and civil society to work together for ensuring 100pc USI coverage in Pakistan,” he said.

Country Director Nutrition International Dr Naseer Mohammad Nizamani said according to National Nutrition Survey 2011, only 62.4pc of the mothers had knowledge of iodised salt, while the utilization of iodised salt at household level is 69pc across Pakistan.

Coordinator of National Food Fortification Alliance Dr Khawaja Masood Ahmed said iodine deficiency was the world’s single major cause of mental retardation. “It affects brain development during the early stages of pregnancy and in early childhood. Severe iodine deficiency disorders (IDD) include cretinism, stillbirth and miscarriage and increase infant mortality.

Head of Cooperation EU delegation of Pakistan Mr Bernard Francois said the European Commission was committed to supporting partner countries tackle under-nutrition through evidence based interventions.

National Programme Manager SUNCSA,Pak Irshad Danish while talking to Dawn said that though Sindh government had done legislation in 2013, regarding iodised salt, its implementation was also very important.

“Though currently 69pc households are using iodised salt in Pakistan, its use should be extended to 100pc. Iodised salt is the only success story in Pakistan in health sector. All stakeholders should sit together to achieve the target,” he said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1374587>

FOOD SECURITY

Dawn, December 09, 2017

PAKISTAN is an arid and water-stressed country and, at the time of its birth, had hardly enough arable land and surface water resources to achieve food security. As a net importer of food, the spectre of famine hung over the country for almost a quarter century following independence. Cropping cycles were doubled only after tube wells were installed through multiple salinity control and reclamation programmes, the Mangla Dam and other associated water infrastructure were constructed, and a massive land-clearing and reclamation effort was undertaken.

The area under cultivation saw an increase as did the yields through large-scale utilisation of modern inputs like urea fertiliser to lift the agrarian potential of the country and achieve food security by the early 1970s. That was no mean feat, and was quite possibly the single-largest accomplishment the young country had ever seen. The work put in during those days has stood the country in good stead every since, insulating us from commodity price shocks, and banishing the spectre of large-scale famine that would frequently afflict the region.

But all that is now changing, and faster than anyone can see. First we began to see widespread incidence of malnutrition, which had until now largely impacted the youngest children. Now the Food and Agriculture Organisation is telling us that the area under cultivation has stagnated at just around 25pc of the total land area of the country, and food output is not going to be able to keep pace with the rapid population increases we are registering. This means a return to the growing reliance on imports to meet domestic food needs, thereby rolling back the hard-fought gains of the quarter century following independence.

Moreover, with dwindling water resources, further expansion is not possible. To top it off, as soil fertility is worsening, increasing yields is also becoming a growing challenge. This broad-based stagnation combined with growing pressure on land in peri-urban areas as agricultural land is cleared to meet the housing needs of expanding cities is aggravating the problem.

The pressure to grow more nutritious food per unit of land is growing at an accelerating rate, putting unprecedented stress on future food security. Careful curation of our soil fertility, along with preservation and the ultimate expansion of our agricultural land, will require what the FAO calls a 'comprehensive approach'. Given the urgency of the stakes involved, the time to start work on this is now.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1375406>

PM DIRECTS DESIGNING BISP GRADUATION PROGRAMME

Business Recorder, Dec 9th, 2017

Zaheer Abbasi

Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi has directed the management of Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) to design a comprehensive graduation programme to enable the beneficiaries of earning their own livelihoods. A meeting chaired by the Prime Minister, after a briefing on current beneficiaries of cash transfer under BISP and Waseela-e-Taleem beneficiaries as well as pilot programme of National Socio-Economic Registry (NSER) survey in 14 districts, approved a proposal for setting up of an endowment fund. The fund for BISP would ensure fiscal continuity and act as a catalyst in generating income for supporting various development schemes.

The Prime Minister was informed by Chairperson Marvi Memon and other senior officials of BISP that 5.6 million families have so far benefited from cash transfer and 1.8 million children through Waseela-e-Taleem program. The meeting also informed that after successful completion of pilot phase in four districts and door-to-door survey in ten districts, National Socio-Economic Registry (NSER) survey would be rolled out in the remaining districts of the country in February 2018 and would be completed by May 2018.

Sources said that current use of NSER proposal was presented to the BISP Board on July 15, 2017 and board advised to constitute advisory committee for consultation as well as establish value for money for door-to-door and self-registration approach in pilot phase. They added that consultation committee included poverty experts, provincial representatives and experts from development sector to carry out NSRE. The main objective of door-to-door drive is to cover 100 percent of the households.

Sources further stated that current use of NSER is unconditional cash transfer and other initiatives of BISP. Additionally, NSER data is being used for other federal and provincial government programs including Prime

Minister's Health Insurance Program, Prime Minister's interest free loans, Punjab Khidmat Card as well as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Insaf Card, Balochistan food department for food subsidies and Sindh finance department, Sindh Education Foundation, and Gilgit-Baltistan Secretariat.

The NSER data is also a prerequisite for effective policymaking and every program, including government, semi-government and non-government, will benefit from NSER data to avoid duplication of benefits, introduce efficiency in all social protection programs across the country and convert from un-targeted to targeted subsidies as well as to ascertain exact number of population affected by disasters, including floods, earthquakes, etc, for direct and effective interventions.

A statement said the Prime Minister was informed that international community, donors and developmental partners including Asian Development Bank, World Bank and Department for International Development (DFID) have reposed confidence in the transparency and effectiveness of the program in reaching out to the poorest of the poor and helping them break shackles of poverty. The meeting was attended by chairperson BISP Marvi Memon, Secretary to Prime Minister Fawad Hasan Fawad, secretary BISP and senior officers of BISP.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2017/12/20171209325542/>

SINCERE EFFORTS UNDER WAY TO TACKLE UNEMPLOYMENT: KHATTAK

Business Recorder, 10 December, 2017

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhawa, Pervez Khattak has said that the provincial government is working sincerely for the eradication of unemployment, saying when they assume power industrial activities were halted due to lawlessness.

Addressing a public meeting at Akbarpura, district Nowshera on Saturday, he further said that investors were on run from the province before, but now situation has become cordial and investors from across the world are showing interest in making investment in the province.

Besides, MNA Dr Imran Khattak, MPA Mian Khaliqur Rehman, other elected public representatives and politicians were also present on the occasion.

The chief minister said that a large number of industrial units will be set up in Rashakai, Jalozei, Hattar and other industrial estates of the province. He said that due to China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the province is on fast track to become a trade and industry hub. He said that though he does not claim 100 percent success in bringing change in the system. However, they have laid foundation of fair and transparent system in each and every department and sector of the provincial government and if someone compares our system with past, they will found the difference.

Khattak said that the provincial government had framed various laws for the abolition of corruption, supremacy of merit and ensuring transparency. He said that a fool proof system has been given for provision of quality services.

He said that e-tendering has already been introduced in the province while e-bidding will also be started soon.

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/12/10/2-page/686795-news.html>