

January 2019

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JAN 21st TO JAN 27th 2019

WORLD'S 26 RICHEST OWN SAME AS POOREST HALF OF HUMANITY: OXFAM

RECORDER REPORT | JAN 22ND, 2019 | DAVOS

The world's 26 richest people now own the same wealth as the poorest half of humanity, Oxfam said Monday, warning that "out of control" inequality is stoking popular anger and threatening democracies. "We are seeing rich people running away with wealth and poor people sinking in poverty," Oxfam executive director Winnie Byanyima told AFP in an interview.

A new report from the charity was published ahead of the World Economic Forum in Davos – a week-long meeting of the global elite, with three of the 26 richest people set to attend.

The report found that billionaires around the world saw their combined fortunes grow by \$2.5 billion (2.2 billion euros) each day in 2018, an annual increase of 12 percent, and urged governments to slap more taxes on the wealthy.

The world's richest man, Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos, saw his fortune increase to \$112 billion last year, Oxfam said, pointing out that just one percent of his wealth was the equivalent to the entire health budget of Ethiopia, a country of 105 million people.

"Oxfam is saying in this report with evidence that extreme inequality is out of control," Byanyima said.

The 3.8 billion people at the bottom of the scale meanwhile saw their relative wealth decline by \$500 million each day, or 11 percent last year, Oxfam said, stressing that the growing gap between rich and poor was undermining the fight against poverty, damaging economies and fuelling public anger.

"Citizens are angry and frustrated," Byanyima said.

"They are seeing themselves working really hard, but they are seeing that... the things that they expect, a good education for their children, health when they fall ill, social protection when they get older... aren't there for them."

At the same time, she said, "they are seeing a few people running away with wealth and without paying their fair share."

The numbers are stark: Between 1980 and 2016, the poorest half of humanity pocketed just 12 cents on each dollar of global income growth, compared with the 27 cents captured by the top one percent, the report found.

Oxfam warned that governments were exacerbating inequality by underfunding public services like healthcare and education at the same time as they consistently under-tax the wealthy.

Calls for hiking taxes on the wealthy have multiplied amid growing popular outrage in a number of countries over swelling inequality. In the United States, new congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez made headlines earlier this month by proposing to tax the ultra-rich up to 70 percent.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/01/20190122441317/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JAN 14th TO JAN 20th 2019

SEVEN THARI CHILDREN DIE DUE TO MALNUTRITION IN TWO DAYS

Imtiaz Hussain January 20, 2019

SUKKUR: At least seven children died due to malnutrition in the last two days in Tharparkar, said the sources of Mithi Hospital here on Saturday.

According to the sources, at least seven children who died due to malnutrition were brought to the medical facility from Thar in the last two days. The death toll of 2019 in Thar has risen up to 38 children who died due to malnutrition, whereas, as many as 46 children are being treated in different wards, the sources claimed.

Meanwhile, District and Sessions Judge Mithi Mushatq Ahmed Kaliwar on Saturday visited the Mithi Civil Hospital along with Judicial Magistrate Ghurmukdas and during his visit, the patients complained about the lack of medical facilities, especially lab test facility provided by the hospital.

The patients also claimed that doctors are sending patients to private laboratories for tests, where they have to pay thousands of rupees. They complained that there were no medicines for outdoor as well indoor patients.

While the Medical Superintendent of Mithi Civil Hospital Dr Chiman Sharma admitted before the honourable judge that there was no budget to purchase chemicals for the laboratory, so they were sending patients to private labs.

The MS said he had written so many times to the authorities for releasing the funds but nothing was received.

The District and Sessions Judge, Mithi, Mushatq Ahmed Kaliwar, took notice of the issue and ordered the MS to ensure all medical facilities, including the lab tests and medicine should also be provided to patients.

He also ordered the hospital authorities to give him in a written-statement about the funds issue.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/421121-seven-thari-children-die-due-to-malnutrition-in-two-days>

‘OVER 130 CHILDREN BEING TREATED IN THAR HEALTH FACILITIES’

The Newspaper’s Staff Reporter January 18, 2019

KARACHI: During the past two days in Tharparkar, 58 children brought in precarious condition were admitted to the district and taluka hospitals where 76 were already under treatment. As such total 134 children were being treated at the medical facilities there. Out of 192, five premature infants born with low weight could not survive.

These figures were mentioned in a daily report sent to Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah by Tharparkar Deputy Commissioner Asif Jameel.

The report also stated that since January, 1, 553 children between one to five years of age were treated in the OPDs in the district and taluka hospitals.

Besides medical facilities, the authorities were also taking care of other relief measures in the drought-stricken district.

The latest report revealed that out of 192 indoor patients, 21 children were discharged from the hospitals after their condition stabilised.

Five children born with low weight, suffering from different birth complications, were brought in gasping condition in the emergency of the Civil Hospital of Mithi from different areas of Tharparkar district on different dates, but they could not survive.

The population welfare department has set up special camps for this purpose.

The livestock department has set up veterinary camps in 10 villages of different talukas. One camp has been set up at Mithi, one each in Diplo, Dahli and Nagarparkar while four in Islamkot and two in taluka Chhachhro.

Published in Dawn, January 18th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1458161/over-130-children-being-treated-in-thar-health-facilities>

12 CHILDREN DIE IN THAR IN THREE DAYS

A Correspondent January 17, 2019

MITHI: Twelve more children died from complications caused by malnutrition and seasonal viral infections in drought-hit Thar during three days, raising the death toll to 36 within the past fortnight, according to hospital sources.

The sources told this reporter on Wednesday that 10 of the children died in Mithi Civil Hospital and two breathed their last in taluka hospitals of Nagarparkar and Chhachhro. No health department official was available for comment on the deaths of infants.

The victims' parents repeated their complaints about lack of healthcare facilities in their areas and said the highly contaminated water of wells, which they were forced to drink, was causing waterborne diseases among humans as well as livestock.

However, PPP MNA Dr Mahesh Kumar Malani said in a press statement that most of the children who died were underweight newborns and claimed that the situation was under control in the desert region despite severe drought.

He said that the Sindh government had launched a number of programmes to provide quality healthcare facilities and guide Tharis about adopting birth control methods.

Published in Dawn, January 17th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1457943/12-children-die-in-thar-in-three-days>

GOVERNMENT EXTENDS SINDH NUTRITION PROGRAMME WORTH RS 4.117 BILLION

TANVEER AHMED | JAN 15TH, 2019 | KARACHI

Federal Government has granted extension in execution of Rs.4.117 billion worth Sindh Nutrition Programme (NSP), Sindh for another one and half years on the request of provincial government. According to official documents, Government of Sindh and World Bank (WB) are sponsoring agencies for the project. The local component of financing comes to Rs.421.71 million whereas foreign exchange component (FEC) stands at Rs.3.696 billion for this project.

The basic objective of the project is to ensure that pregnant women and children under two years of age in Sindh are able to consume essential foods and nutrient supplements and to benefit from the health services that they require to enable children to grow and reach their potential in the critical "first 1000 days" from conception to the first two years of life.

More specifically the project will contribute towards achieving objectives of ensuring availability of infant and young child feeding and community based management of severe acute malnutrition (CMAM) services to the population of the nine districts in Sindh with a focus on economically and socially disadvantaged.

It will also focus on reducing the level of micronutrient malnutrition among male and female children less than five (including children with disabilities), pregnant and lactating women in the nine selected districts strengthening institutional capacity for effective implementation, research and evaluation of the nutrition interventions at all levels.

The project was prepared for nine districts of Sindh for a period of three years starting from 2013-14. The PC-I was recommended by the Central Development Working Party (CDWP) on 29th November 2013 and approved by the ECNEC on 12th February 2014.

The implementation actually started in 2015. The Planning & Development Department, Sindh submitted the project for 1.5 years extension, without changing the scope and cost of the project.

The extension was sought on the grounds that two years delay was caused in commencement of the project as it was planned to start in year 2013-14 but started in 2014-15.

Also, delayed service delivery in selected districts for un-covered areas due to stay order issued by court and major investment being already done, whereas execution of contracts still remains were the other cause of seeking extension.

The project has already been given two extensions by the P&DD,

the Government of Sindh for a period of 2016-17 and 2017-18. The project implementation period was originally for three years, however, the two extensions in its implementation extended to four years.

During this period only 66% budget was consumed with around 60% physical targets achieved as indicated by the sponsors, which requested 3rd extension.

However, no findings on the impact have been finalized so far which are in being collected, official documents indicated.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/01/20190115439673/>

POVERTY AND ECONOMIC GROWTH: THE CASE OF PAKISTAN

By Tehreem Husain Published: January 14, 2019

NORTHAMPTON: Economic growth is the most powerful instrument for reducing poverty and improving the quality of life for people in developing countries. Cross-country research and individual country case studies point to the fact that sustained economic growth can pull countries out of the cycle of poverty.

How quickly growth reduces poverty depends on the initial income distribution and how it evolves over time. Economic growth can dampen poverty only by a small degree in societies which have a more unequal distribution of income. What has been the case with Pakistan?

Before going through global statistics of poverty levels it would be useful to briefly explain the measures of poverty often used. The World Bank has defined extreme poverty as those living under \$1.90 a day. Based on this definition, the number of people living in extreme poverty has fallen to 10% in 2015 as opposed to 11% in 2013. This translates to 68 million people around the world earning more than the defined poverty line of \$1.90 a day. Despite the global reduction in extreme poverty, rates remain stubbornly high for many low-income countries, especially those affected by conflicts and political upheavals. A large proportion of the world's poorest population lives in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Another measure of poverty often used is the multidimensional poverty index. It was compiled by the UN in 2010 and measures poverty as an acute deprivation of essential aspects of life. It measures three elements: living standards,

education and healthcare. An interactive databank created by the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative shows that countries in Africa such as Niger, South Sudan, Chad and Burkina Faso are some of the nations which have high levels of multidimensional poverty. Pakistan also ranks poorly on this index.

The Pakistan multidimensional poverty report launched in 2016 showed that four out of 10 Pakistanis live in multidimensional poverty. Moreover, there are extreme disparities across provinces. 73% people in Fata and 71% in Balochistan live in multidimensional poverty compared to 31% in Punjab and 43% in Sindh. It is also extremely disconcerting to note the wide disparities in poverty present in cities. Whereas the level of multidimensional poverty is less than 10% in Karachi, it is more than 90% in districts in Balochistan such as Kila Abdullah.

Research has shown that high levels of poverty in a particular region are correlated to how the resources are distributed in the society. The World Bank Poverty and Shared Prosperity Report 2018 has noted that from 2010-2015 the growth of incomes of the bottom 40% in Pakistan has been merely 2.7% whereas the growth in incomes of the average population was recorded at 4.3%.

This is in contrast to other developing countries such as Latvia, Brazil, Peru and Egypt where the incomes of the bottom 40% are growing faster than the average population. It is imperative that in order to drag people out from the shackles of poverty, policymakers must fight to reduce income inequalities present in the society.

Economic growth must be broad based and inclusive. The European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) has pointed to some key factors that make a person more at risk of being in poverty such as unemployment, low levels of education and skills, gender, disability or ill-health, being a member of minority ethnic groups and lastly, living in a remote or disadvantaged community. Governments must ensure to formulate policies which address to remove societal inequalities in terms of economic opportunities for these particular groups. Growth which is sustainable, broad based and inclusive and which provides a chance for everyone to benefit from it can lead to reduction in poverty levels.

The writer is a doctoral candidate at The Bartlett, UCL

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1887669/2-poverty-economic-growth-case-pakistan/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JAN 7th TO JAN 13th 2018

PAKISTAN POVERTY ALLEVIATION FUND DISBURSES RS10.836 BILLION IN FOUR YEARS

Our Correspondent January 13, 2019

KARACHI: Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) has disbursed Rs10.836 billion in interest free loans to poor and vulnerable families over the last four years to help reduce poverty and promote financial inclusion in the country, a PPAF official said.

The PPAF disbursed total of 0.45 million loans to the poor households under the Prime Minister's Interest Free Loan (PMIFL) scheme, 66 percent of whom were women. These loans were disbursed in 442 union councils of 45 districts across the country.

“The average loan size for interest free loan applicants was Rs22,000-Rs27,000. The beneficiaries of PMIFL put this financing

to productive use,” Samia Liaquat Ali Khan, senior group head quality assurance and research at PPAF, said during a meeting with reporters.

“We have 98 percent recovery from borrowers on such loans.”

She said PPAF offers interest free loans and eligible individuals could actually take up to three loans (one after the other) until they graduated beyond the 40 score.

“Once people graduate beyond the 40 score, they are able to access and benefit from the conventional microfinance available across the country without worrying about their ability to repay – their businesses have been established and are economically viable,” Khan added.

In 2017, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and government of Pakistan signed an agreement to take forward the National Poverty Graduation Programme (NPGP), a six-year \$150 million poverty alleviation initiative to be implemented by the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund.

The programme has three main components: social mobilisation, livelihoods development (through asset transfers), and financial inclusion (through the provision of interest-free loans).

Meanwhile, the PPAF in a statement said, it participated in a global research study on poverty graduation in 2008.

This was carried out with 4,000 households (treatment and control group) in Sindh coastal areas. The research in Pakistan was part of the broader global study on Midline (2012) and endline (2015).

The results showed significant improvements in ultra-poor household’s incomes, consumption, asset base, and savings, the statement said.

“The Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund went to scale after the midline results of 2012, and extended the programme to reach over 100,000 households across the country, this time using the poverty score-card as a way to objectively identify ultra-poor households,” it said.

The poorest people (also known as the ultra-poor and vulnerable poor) fell between 0-18 on the poverty score card and many of them were also beneficiaries of the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), the PPAF said.

The stipend they received from BISP was enough to help them survive, but not enough for them to improve their lives in any meaningful way.

For these people PPAF provides them with an asset that can be used to generate incomes – because these are rural communities many of the assets take the form of either livestock or agriculture associated goods.

The procurement of assets should be done in a participatory and transparent manner and PPAF’s community procurement process was an essential step of this programme.

For those people who were on the higher end of the 0-18 bracket and were willing to earn a skill, PPAF offered them the opportunity to receive vocational training, as a result of which they could either get a job or set up their own small business, the statement added.

The next category of people fell in the 18 to 40 poverty band and they were slightly better off than the poorest and might require financial support to begin their own work. A small capital injection or loan was sufficient to help them become economically active, the PPAF statement said.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/418172-pakistan-poverty-alleviation-fund-disburses-rs10-836-billion-in-four-years>

‘COUNTRY’S HALF OF WOMEN’S POPULATION SUFFER FROM MICRONUTRIENT DEFICIENCY’

RECORDER REPORT | JAN 11TH, 2019 | ISLAMABAD

More than half of Pakistani women and two-thirds of children are suffering from micronutrient deficiency, widespread vitamin A, vitamin D, zinc, folic acid and iron deficiency anaemia in Pakistan.

Speakers said this during the one-day capacity building training for civil society organisations on fortification awareness and resource mobilisation, arranged by TheNetwork for Consumer Protection here at a hotel on Thursday.

It was a unique event to build capacity of community-based organisations on proposal writing, so that they would get funding from international donors, it would further help them in making their organisation's role sustainable in ending malnutrition in Pakistan.

“These organisations have vibrant role to influence the stakeholders for improving the compliance with the standards of fortification through engagement with different stakeholders and enforcing the existing laws. These CSOs also have very deep roots in the community and can influence the communities for increased demand for fortified food,” said Nadeem Iqbal, CEO TheNetwork.

Pakistan is losing 2-3 percent GDP annually because of high burden of malnutrition. The lack of iron, vitamins A and D and other minerals limits ability to fight disease, making it a major contributor to high maternal newborn and child death rates. The newborn death rate is 42 per 1000 while childhood death rate is 74 per 1000. Malnourishment also affects cognitive and physical development, ultimately leading to reduced learning abilities and lower productivity in adulthood. Pakistan's rates of malnutrition are stagnating compared to reductions seen in neighbouring countries.

Food fortification, the addition of vitamins and minerals to common foods is an effective, affordable and safe measure to lower the burden of micronutrient deficiency, reducing economic loss due to malnutrition and making Pakistan healthier. “We are supporting PM Imran Khan in fight against malnutrition and government vision 2025 to address malnutrition,” he further added.

Dr Nausheen Hamid, Federal Parliamentary Secretary National Health Services, was the guest of honour on the event. She appreciated the civil society efforts to fight against malnutrition. She said PM Imran Khan highlighted nutrition issue in his very first speech. Nutrition emergency is declared in Balochistan because of nutrition crisis. Multination reduces the productivity.

She emphasised on the need for creating awareness among masses to increase demand for fortified food. This event is very important for nutrition. It will contribute in ending malnutrition at grassroots level. The government is ready to support civil society in order to address the issues of fortification and overall nutrition, she said.

She said there are number of the people who don't have resources to purchase expensive food items to maintain their health. Use of edible oil/ghee is inexpensive way to reduce micronutrient deficiency among women and children.

Professor Dr Prof Dr Mehr Taj Roghani, Member Senate Standing Committee on National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, said that Pakistan is facing various challenges to end malnutrition. There is a need to create awareness about fortification. Breastfeeding rate in Pakistan is very low. Breastfeeding to newborn should be ensured because it is very first food for a child and has all the nutrients. “Our PM Imran Khan is committed to ending malnutrition. Joint efforts of the government and civil society are the need of hour. Together we can make a difference in the lives of the masses especially the poor,” she said.

Representatives of more than 30 civil society organisations were present in the event. Certificates were distributed among participates at the end of the event.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/01/20190111438792/>

SINDH, CENTRE FAILED TO CHECK UNABATED DEATHS OF THARI CHILDREN, SAYS SENATOR

Hanif Samoon Updated January 10, 2019

MITHI: Head of Senate's standing committee on problems of less developed areas, Mohammad Usman Kakar, has lamented dismal performance of both Sindh and federal governments in Thar desert where hundreds of infants have died from complications caused by malnutrition and seasonal infections.

Mr Kakar, accompanied by Haji Momin Khan Afridi, Mohammad Shafeeq Tareen, Gayanchand and others who reached here on Wednesday to assess drought conditions, told media persons after meeting officials and local Pakistan Peoples Party lawmakers that children were dying of hunger and the jobless were committing suicide but rulers kept harping on the same tune that Thar would change Pakistan.

He termed it a cruel joke with Tharis and said that federal government had not bothered to spend even a single penny either on relief packages or on any development scheme in the desert region over the past many years.

He urged the federal government and its ministries to play their role to save lives of Tharis by launching projects for training Thari youngsters in various skills so that they could raise standard of their lives.

The Sindh government, too, should focus on real issues of the drought-stricken people instead of doling out alms without launching long-term projects and said that governments were carrying out huge uplift schemes in cities only instead of mitigating sufferings of people living in backward areas.

He said that if only one per cent of royalty of Thar coal reserves were spent on the desert the situation would greatly improve over the coming years.

It was a cruel joke to say that Thar which was itself facing the worst power crisis with only 200 out of 2,600 villages electrified so far was going to provide power to the entire country.

He criticised the Sindh government for its failure to provide water and healthcare facilities to Thar and said that it was a matter of great concern that desert people were forced to drink highly contaminated water.

Senator Kakar demanded that a huge amount of Rs4 billion, which had been "squandered away" by Dr Samar Mubarkmand on underground coal gasification plant near Islamkot, be recovered from him and spent on development projects in Thar as the massive project was just a means to embezzle public money.

He cautioned against making any move to tinker with the Constitution to roll back certain clauses of 18th Amendment and said that such attempts would be foiled. All the democratic forces would ensure that more powers were devolved to provinces to strengthen the federation.

The country faced uncertainty because of one-sided accountability, he said, adding that all the persons who had committed corruption should be sent to jail but they must have the right to due process.

The National Finance Commission Award should be calculated on the basis of level of poverty and backwardness instead of size of population.

PPP MNA Dr Mahesh Kumar Malani, government officials and PPP leaders briefed members of the Senate committee and claimed that Sindh government had launched mega projects to provide health and safe drinking water facilities in Thar.

The senators visited different areas including Thar coalfield and were briefed by officials of Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company about coal extraction and power plants.

On Tuesday, the committee had arrived in Badin where Mr Kakar addressed a news conference at deputy commissioner's office and deplored that flawed, self-centred and myopic policies of successive rulers had pushed backward areas into darkness.

He said that people would resist the move to construct controversial dam which had already been rejected by assemblies a number of times. Instead of creating hype over construction of more dams the government needed to first focus on judicious distribution of the available irrigation water among federating units, he added.

It was a matter of great concern that oil and gas companies were not ready to spend anything on the development of backward areas like Badin despite earning billions of rupees from extraction of petrochemicals, he said.

He said that most lawmakers deemed it below their dignity to raise chronic issues of their areas in assemblies and complained that during their visit to Badin no local lawmaker bothered to meet them and brief them about the issues of the district.

He said the committee would compile a report on burning issues of backward areas and submit it to upper house for debate.

Badin DC Dr Abdul Hafeez Siyal briefed the senators about the issues of the district.

Published in Dawn, January 10th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1456485/sindh-centre-failed-to-check-unabated-deaths-of-thari-children-says-senator>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DEC 31st TO JAN 6th 2019

‘FOOD FORTIFICATION MUST FOR HEALTHY WOMEN, CHILDREN’

Sumaira Jajja Updated January 02, 2019

KARACHI: In a country where millions grapple with hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity, there is a dire need for fortifying oil, ghee and flour to ensure health and vitality of the people and future generations. This was a unified consensus of stakeholders at the Karachi district launch of the Food Fortification Programme (FFP).

The event was jointly organised by the Food Fortification Programme (FFP), UK Aid and Thardeep Rural Development Programme (TRDP), with representation from the Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) and Trade Development Authority of Pakistan and NGOs.

According to a 2017 report by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), 37.5 million people in Pakistan are not receiving proper nourishment.

Sharing the impact of vitamin A deficiency that leads to night blindness particularly among the poor urban and rural population, TRDP CEO Dr Allah Nawaz Samoo said food fortification was immediately needed.

Dr Samoo stressed that adding vitamins and minerals to wheat flour and edible oils would lead to disease prevention and boost immunity and improve cognitive development and productivity.

Some 37.5 million people in Pakistan are not receiving proper nourishment, says UN food agency

Talking about demand and supply trends, he said that more efforts should be made to create awareness among millers and buyers.

Data from the National Nutrition Survey 2011 shows that 60 per cent pregnant women in Pakistan were anaemic.

Some 37pc women have low iron levels, 46.7pc have vitamin A deficiency and 71pc have vitamin D deficiency while up to 44.5pc have low zinc levels.

These high levels of micronutrient deficiency not only affects the wellbeing of women, but also has lasting impact on the health of their children right from the moment they are conceived leading to premature and low birth weight babies and a vicious cycle of wasting and stunting.

“We are working on wasting and stunting which affect children but there is a dire need to focus on micronutrient deficiency and ensuring that expectant mothers have access to good food,” said Dr Naveed Bhutto, Programme Policy Officer/Lead at the Provincial Fortification Alliance (PFA) Sindh.

He stressed that Pakistan needed to work on legislation for wheat fortification to achieve results.

Citing the success of universal salt iodisation (USI) programme that was adopted by Pakistan in mid 1990s and saw a significant reduction in goitre cases, he said replication was needed.

“With the ongoing efforts, the results of the 2018 nutrition survey might not be hopeful, but things will surely improve by 2023,” he added.

President of KCCI Junaid Esmail Makda said a plant protection department should be made to check the quality of palm oil when it lands at the port.

The FFP is already working with chambers of commerce across the country to raise awareness of fortified flour and oil among millers and traders.

Dr Gul Sher, who heads the Lady Health Worker (LHW) Programme in Sindh, assured that work was being done on creating demand for fortified food. The province would be utilising the strength of its LHWs to create awareness. “We have already included FFP in our training materials,” he added.

With the discussion focused on collaborative efforts, Sindh health secretary Dr Usman Chachar highlighted the need for having academia onboard with government departments and policy makers and finding solutions for the multifaceted issue of malnutrition and stunting.

A participant stressed the need for research and development to come up with nutritionally rich varieties.

Another participant said fish and meat exports from Pakistan should be checked as exports were creating shortages in the country increasing their prices and depriving locals from having them at low rates.

Micronutrients, which are present in all natural foods, are partially lost when wheat is grounded into flour and during the processing of palm oil. In its simplest terms, food fortification is the process by which essential vitamins and minerals are added to staple foods.

According to a leaflet of FFP, “wheat flour and edible oil/ghee are consumed daily by most people and by fortifying these foods, nutritional status can change quickly — after one year of sustained consumption — without changing eating habits”.

Funded by the UK Aid and managed by Mott MacDonald in partnership with Nutrition International, FFP is a five-year programme in Pakistan which aims to equip the government to enforce mandatory legislation for fortification across the country by 2021.

It further seeks to improve standards, regulatory compliance, quality assurance and quality control.

The programme aims to improve management and administration to meet legislative requirements, technical assistance for mixing and storage of premixes, building industry capacity for compliance and testing.

Over 1,000 wheat flour mills and 100 edible oil mills will be meeting standards.

Consumers will be aware of and positive towards the benefits of fortified foods. So far a total of five laboratories have been set up in Sindh (four in Karachi and one in Hyderabad) for quality assessment of flour and oil.

A major goal of the project is to reduce iron deficiency and anaemia by one-third and at least a one-quarter reduction in vitamin A deficiency among women and children.

In effect, births with neural tube defects are also expected to decline. FFP also seeks improvement in vitamin D deficiency in the next three years.

Published in Dawn, January 2nd, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1454898/food-fortification-must-for-healthy-women-children>

IFAD COMMITS ADDL FINANCING OF \$25M FOR POVERTY ALLEVIATION

M RAFIQUE GORAYA 2019/01/01

LAHORE: The International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD) has committed an additional financing of \$ 25 million for poverty alleviation of over 1.131 million poorest of the poor households for another three years up to 31st March 2021 in the districts of Bahawalpur, Bahawalnagar, Muzafargarh, Rajanpur, Rahim Yar Khan, D, G, Khan, Layyah, Bhakkar, Mianwali and Khushab.

Chairman Planning & Development Board Habib-ur-Rehman Gillani said here on Monday that the government has approved the revised programme of poverty alleviation of South Punjab at the total cost of Rs. 7565.78 million for implementation in the respective districts with special focus on women and youth.

He said that the Punjab government and its development partner National Rural Support Program (NRSP) will jointly implement this programme by combing support for immediate needs with a longer-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.

In this connection, Project Director South Punjab Poverty Alleviation Project Muhammad Saghir & Chief Executive Officer Rashid Bajwa from NRSP signed a MoU. Gillani, chairing the signing ceremony, stated that Southern Punjab and less developed areas of the province have been given top priority by the present government and practical steps have also been taken for the development of the Southern Punjab. He also said Southern Punjab Secretariat will start working from the next fiscal year. People living in South Punjab will have not to go to Lahore for redressal of their grievances.

It may be added that aim of the IFAD funded project is to assist the ultra-poor and very poor in graduating out of poverty on a sustainable basis. This will be done by simultaneously improving their overall food security, nutritional status and income generating capacity.

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2019/01/01/8-page/756450-news.html>

February 2019

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEB 18th TO FEB 24th 2019

PPAF AIMS TO PULLOUT 157,000 BISP HOUSEHOLDS FROM POVERTY

RECORDER REPORT | FEB 21ST, 2019 | KARACHI

Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) is scaling up its National Poverty Graduation Programme (NPGP) worth \$150 million to support 157,000 households through the asset transfer programme to pull them out of extreme poverty.

These households are beneficiaries of Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) that will be provided assets, skills training, vocational training and/or access to interest free loans for improving their living standards in the period of 2018-2023. The programme is supported by the International Fund for Agriculture Development and the Government of Pakistan for over 5 years.

The poverty graduation model used under NPGP costs around \$150 million for three main components i.e. Asset Creation, Interest Free Credit and Training on Livelihoods and vocational skills. The National Poverty Graduation Programme (NPGP) by PPAF allows distribution of assets to 157,000 households in 375 Union Councils across the country. Please reconcile the accuracy of figures in the bold fonts.

BISP and PPAF have recently inked a MoU to collaborate together and share data, information and research. It is because of the fact that the stipend received by these BISP is enough to help them survive but not enough for them to improve their lives in meaningful way. The collaboration between both the institutions ensures mutual cooperation for joint ventures to graduate the poor, especially living in extreme poverty zones of the country. Samia Liaquat Ali Khan, Senior Group Head Quality Assurance, Research & Design, PPAF informed that PPAF utilises BISP's National Socio-Economic Registry data to support BISP beneficiaries for graduating out of poverty through its assets transfers, financial services, and investment opportunities.

Up till June 2018, PPAF has provided 111,476 assets to households under various programmes. The cost of each asset is approximately Rs50,000 while skills' training is recommended to enhance the household's ability to utilise the asset effectively for improving income, he added.

PPAF assessment stated PPAF programmes show that over 60 percent of these households have moved up the poverty ladder and are engaged in income-generating activities to support themselves on the sustainable basis through micro-level businesses to meet their living expenses sufficiently.

PPAF provides them with an asset that can be used to generate incomes, which are mainly livestock or agriculture associated goods and proven to be sustainable cashable resources in rural communities. The purchase of assets is done in a participatory and transparent manner by PPAF's community procurement process – an essential step of this programme.

However, around 20-25 percent of households will always require some form of social protection (monthly/quarterly stipends that BISP provides), as these households due to various constraints are unable to graduate out of poverty.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/02/20190221448920/>

JAPAN TO PROVIDE PAKISTAN \$10.6M GRANT FOR FIGHT AGAINST MALNUTRITION

Amin Ahmed Updated February 20, 2019

ISLAMABAD: The Japanese government announced on Tuesday a grant assistance of \$10.6 million for Pakistan to fight malnutrition, improve livelihood and increase resilience to natural disasters in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh and Balochistan.

The latest assistance is part of a partnership that the Japanese government signed with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Food Programme (WFP) in Islamabad.

Out of the total \$10.6m, \$3.5m will be used for early identification and treatment of 155,000 acutely malnourished mothers and children in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including families who have been displaced from Afghanistan and vulnerable host populations.

“WFP is extremely grateful for the continued partnership and generosity of the Japanese government in providing emergency life-saving nutritional support for malnourished mothers and children. We are proud to be working together to support some of Pakistan’s most vulnerable families,” said WFP representative Finbarr Curran.

Assistance will also help improve livelihood and increase resilience to natural disasters in KP, Sindh and Balochistan

The Japanese contribution also includes \$3.55m towards the UNDP’s ‘Stabilisation through Inclusive Livelihoods’ initiative in the tribal districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which is being implemented in close collaboration with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government and the erstwhile Fata secretariat.

It will support 20,700 people by improving their access to basic services, enhancing their economic opportunities and improving social cohesion in Kurram and Orakzai tribal districts.

In addition, the Japanese government will support the government at national and local levels to prepare for natural disasters, pilot tsunami early warning systems, and enhance resilience of coastal communities to coastal hazards with a specific focus on women and children. Implemented in Malir and Karachi West districts of Sindh and Gwadar district, the project will benefit 15,000 people.

The project is being implemented by UNDP in partnership with the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), provincial DMAs of Sindh and Balochistan, Pakistan Meteorological Department, district administrations of Karachi and Gwadar, and other technical and community-based organisations working in the coastal areas.

“Empowering vulnerable local communities and enhancing their resilience to withstand crises requires coordinated efforts by all stakeholders,” said the acting UNDP resident representative, Ignacio Artaza.

“Through these funding for Afghan refugees and their hosting communities, and the people in the newly merged districts of KP, we would like to show our message to the people that Japan continues its support for the stabilisation of their life.

“By sharing experiences of natural disasters in Japan, we secure our cooperation to share efficient monitoring and warning systems for earthquake and tsunami through UNDP’s policy and instructive support,” Japanese Ambassador-designate Kuninori Matsuda said.

Published in Dawn, February 20th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1464829/japan-to-provide-pakistan-106m-grant-for-fight-against-malnutrition>

FIVE MORE KIDS DIE IN THARPARKAR

RECORDER REPORT | FEB 19TH, 2019 | THARPARKAR

Epidemic diseases and malnutrition continue to claim lives of infants and minors in Tharparkar as five more kids surrendered to it on Monday. According to details, five minors lost their lives in Mithi Civil Hospital due to

malnutrition and other epidemic diseases. The latest deaths have taken the death toll in Tharparkar to 38 for this month and 105 in only the beginning of this year.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/02/20190219448403/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEB 11th TO FEB 17th 2019

FIRST-OF-ITS-KIND POVERTY ALLEVIATION PLAN ON THE CARDS: PM

Bureau Report February 16, 2019

PESHAWAR: While launching Sehat Insaf Card in the tribal districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Friday, Prime Minister Imran Khan said the health insurance facility was a big relief for people who faced militancy and subsequent crackdowns in the erstwhile Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata).

The prime minister also announced a countrywide programme for poverty alleviation, which would also be launched from the tribal districts of KP. This programme was the first of its kind in the country's history, he said, explaining that it would be a coordinated effort of government organisations.

Mr Khan said his government was striving for wealth creation with an aim to fight poverty and the programme for poverty alleviation would help achieve this objective.

About the upcoming visit of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman, the prime minister said that it would bring a huge investment in the country.

Sehat Insaf Card launched in tribal districts

Emphasising fast-track development under a roadmap prepared for the region, Mr Khan said the government would give funds to the merged tribal districts first to kick-start development in the region. He said the government had already prepared a special development plan for the region. He said unrest in the tribal districts had done considerable damage to the region and the country. He said the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf had always raised voice against military operations, because such operations hurt local population also. He said the government would work on the development plan and set up schools and hospitals in the region.

During his day-long visit to Peshawar, the prime minister presided over three meetings including that of the apex committee, which reviewed the functions of the newly constituted advisory committee in the context of newly merged districts of the province. Mr Khan also met KP Chief Minister Mahmood Khan and Governor Shah Farman besides chairing the provincial cabinet meeting.

The chief minister and the governor briefed the premier about the administrative and security issues as well as extension of existing public entities and their functions to the newly merged districts. They also discussed the plan for rehabilitation and reconstruction and the start of economic and development activities in the tribal districts.

Mr Mahmood said the KP government had prepared a comprehensive development plan for the people of the tribal districts. Economic activities would open up these areas to expeditious development, he said, demanding that the federal government provide resources for rehabilitation and integrated development to bring the people of the region into the national stream of development.

The prime minister said his government had a commitment with the people of the region for their expeditious development, mitigating their suffering. He assured the chief minister of provision of resources for the expeditious development in the tribal areas. The government would construct schools, hospitals and institution of social services, he said.

He said the extension of Sehat Insaf Card was a big relief for the poor segment of society, as each family in tribal district with this card would get health care facilities worth Rs720,000 every year.

He also directed the provincial ministers to visit the tribal districts and supervise the work for extension of their departments and the functions for efficient services delivery in the tribal districts.

When he took over, he said, the country had started sagging under the weight of internal and external debts but the situation had improved considerably with coordinated efforts of the PTI government. He said that the Saudi crown prince visit to Pakistan was a historic occasion for massive foreign investment in the country. "This visit would create mass-scale employment, bring stability to the country's economy and we would be able to pay back the debts," he said.

Published in Dawn, February 16th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1464141/first-of-its-kind-poverty-alleviation-plan-on-the-cards-pm>

LIVELIHOOD PROGRAMME LAUNCHED IN DIR UCS

A Correspondent February 16, 2019

UPPER DIR: A non-governmental organisation has started a two-year project under its livelihood support and promotion of small community physical infrastructure project in Akhgram and Wari union councils.

The project would run with the financial assistance of Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund and German Development Bank.

The project is going to give aid of Rs50,000 per head to provide an opportunity to poor people to start own small businesses. The project was launched the other day at a ceremony, where additional deputy commissioner, Upper Dir, Mussarat Zaman was the chief guest.

District nazim Sahibzada Faseehullah, Khwando Kor NGO's regional programme officer Maqsood Azhar, and others were also present.

Mussarat Zaman and Sahibzada Faseehullah said the government always appreciated the services of NGOs that delivered to the betterment of community.

They said close coordination among NGOs, the district administration and the district government was necessary to avoid doubling of development projects and ensuring quality work.

Project officer Maqsood Azhar briefed the participants about the project, saying they had completed the initial survey. He said transparency was their priority.

He said apart from giving cash the project would also execute water schemes, construct water channels and pave streets in the two UCs.

TWO INJURED: Two persons were injured in house collapse incidents owing to heavy snowfall and rains during the last four days.

The incidents occurred in Dir city, Sheringal and Charkom areas. In Dir city, a two-room house of Said Hamid Jan caved in, injuring a child and an elderly man. They were shifted to the district headquarters hospital.

Meanwhile, four passengers were injured when a vehicle plunged into a ravine in Tikarkot on Friday, police said.

They said the vehicle was on way to Brawal. As a result, four passengers were injured and were shifted to Brawal hospital. The victims were identified as Fazal Rahim, Ahrar, Shah Faisal and Nomanullah. Condition of the two injured is stated to be critical.

Published in Dawn, February 16th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1464115/livelihood-programme-launched-in-dir-ucs>

15PC CHILDREN UNDER FIVE SUFFERING FROM MALNUTRITION: SURVEY

RECORDER REPORT 2019/02/13

LAHORE: A recent survey conducted by the UN World Food Program found that 15 percent of children under 5 in Pakistan are suffering from acute malnutrition, the second highest rate in the region.

This was disclosed at a ‘Nutritional Awareness Day’ organized by the Bayer Pakistan- Crop Sciences as part of its community outreach efforts at a local Government school.

The purpose of the activity was to create nutritional awareness among children and their parents to help foster an environment of health and wellbeing. This is because poor nutrition compromises the quality of life of school-aged children by increasing the risk of developing eating disorders, nutrient deficiencies, poor bone health, stunting etc., and jeopardizing their potential to benefit from education. Students from the Institute of Diet & Nutritional Sciences, University of Lahore were invited to impart knowledge and information pertaining to healthy diet and hygiene. The young boys and girls participated in fun activities that stressed the importance of a healthy, balanced diet, and received healthy snacks, milk box and nutrition charts to take home.

“As one of the world’s leading life sciences company, we hold ourselves to a high standard for driving social change,” said Azeem Niazi, Corporate Lead at Bayer Pakistan – Crop Science.

“As part of Bayer’s commitment towards advancing health and nutrition, such activities will make a sustainable difference in the fight to eliminate malnutrition, and lay the foundation for a healthier and safer life for children”.

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2019/02/13/16-page/763114-news.html>

POVERTY SURVEY REMAINS INCOMPLETE IN 3 YEARS

By Shabbir Hussain Published: February 13, 2019

ISLAMABAD: The Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) has failed to conduct a countrywide poverty census, which it had been asked to carry out three years ago by the previous government. The survey, which was to be carried out under the BISP, was to be completed in two phases, with its first phase costing Rs900 million and the second phase costing Rs9 billion.

The BISP administration launched the initial phase of the survey in July 2016 in 16 districts, which was to be completed by the end of that year, while a strategy was formulated to replicate the survey in all districts in January 2017. However, the authorities failed to complete the survey in the specified districts in the first phase, while the second phase was never launched.

According to sources, the previous government had in 2017 directed the BISP to complete the countrywide survey before the 2018 elections. To that end, the BISP hired companies to execute the plan. The government had also launched a national rollout programme on March 8 last year to carry out the survey in districts across the country.

According to the programme, a poverty survey named 'National Social and Economic Registry' was to be conducted in 137 districts of the country. However, despite the passage of a year, the activity is yet to get off the ground.

The sources privy to BISP affairs say that representatives of the companies hired by the programme are working in the relevant districts so that they can provide a timeframe during which they will be able to complete the survey. However, they add, so far no data has been shared by the companies with BISP officials.

The BISP sources said that to conduct the countrywide survey, the 140 districts of the country have been divided into eight clusters on geographical basis. The data will be gathered through computer-assisted personal interviewing and work on it is under way. According to available information, the Aurat Foundation and the Rural Support Programme Network (RSPN) are implementing partners in the survey, while the Initiative Development Solution, a private-sector consultancy, has been hired for third-party monitoring of the clusters.

The sources say that Aurat Foundation is responsible for the survey of clusters 1 to 5, while clusters 6 to 8 will be covered by the RSPN. Clusters 1 to 5 include Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Gujranwala, Muzaffarabad, Rawlakot, Mirpur, Sargodha, Faisalabad, Lahore, Multan, DG Khan, Sahiwal, Gilgit-Baltistan, Malakand, Hazara, Mardan, Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu, Larkana, Sukkur, Shaheed Benazirabad, Mirpurkhas and Bahawalpur. Clusters 6 to 8 include Karachi, Hyderabad, Kallat, Makran and other divisions.

During 2010-11 a poverty survey was carried out in which the data of 27 million families was obtained. Of these, around 7.7 million people were living below the poverty line. As a result of the survey, it was decided that these people would be granted Rs3,000 on a quarterly basis under the BISP. In the past five years, the amount has been transferred to 5.6 million people on quarterly basis, while the rest are yet to receive it.

According to the BISP Act 2010, it is important to carry out a survey after every four to five years so that it can be ascertained whether the percentage of those living below the poverty line is increasing or decreasing.

A fresh survey was expected to commence in fiscal year 2015-16, but it was delayed due to multiple reasons. The 16 districts that were chosen for the survey in the initial phase included four from Punjab, three from Sindh, three from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, three from Balochistan and one each from Gilgit-Baltistan, Azad Kashmir and the tribal region.

A poverty survey under the 'desk approach' was conducted in Sukkur, Nasirabad, Bahawalpur and Haripur, where those in need of assistance submitted their details at the relevant desk. A house-to-house survey was conducted in 12 other districts, including Faisalabad, Layyah, Chakwal, Jacobabad, Thatta, Charsadda Lakki Marwat, Qilla Saifullah and Katch.

According to BISP officials, the survey process on cluster basis in different districts is underway. In some of these districts the survey has been completed while the process is underway in others, they added.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1909172/1-poverty-survey-remains-incomplete-3-years/>

FOUR MORE INFANTS DIE IN DROUGHT-HIT THAR

RECORDER REPORT | FEB 11TH, 2019 | MITHI

Four more children died from complications caused by malnutrition and other waterborne diseases in the drought-hit Tharparkar district in the last two days, taking the death toll to 76 this year so far. Sources at the Civil Hospital, Mithi said the four children, who were brought to the medical facility for medical attention, died over the last two days.

Children have become more vulnerable to waterborne diseases and infections owing to lack of facilities in the rain-dependent arid zone of the province. Lately, the district administration had informed the Sindh chief minister that relief activities in the drought-hit areas are in full swing.

Tharparkar Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Asif Jamil said more than 600 children are under treatment in different health facilities of the district. He said that in the third phase of free wheat distribution scheme 1681 families have been provided with 50kg of free wheat bag each. Besides, the 18 families who could not get free wheat during phase II of wheat distribution scheme were also been provided with free wheat in phase III.

In all 247,406 families in phase I, 252,393 families in phase II and 138,180 families in phase III of free wheat distribution scheme have so far been provided with free wheat bags of 50kg each.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/02/20190211446261/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JAN 28th TO FEB 3rd 2019

INFANT MORTALITY RATE ON THE DECLINE IN THAR

By Our Correspondent Published: January 28, 2019

KARACHI: The ongoing relief work and improvement in health services in Thar district have borne efficient results as the infant death rate has come down considerably, according to the Sindh government.

Out of 110 children brought in critical condition to different district and taluka government hospitals, only one child died after being administered the required medical treatment, while 37 children were discharged healthy.

This was stated in a daily report that was submitted by Thar district Deputy Commissioner Asif Jameel to Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Sunday.

The report mentioned that 73 children were currently being treated at the hospitals. Meanwhile, 546 children were treated under outpatient department (OPD) services extended by the health department and 434 children were treated in the OPDs of 31 Basic Health Units (BHU) and 18 government dispensaries under the administration of the Peoples Primary Healthcare Initiative (PPHI).

The death of the child reported at Mithi Civil Hospital was, according to the Medical Superintendent, due to septicaemia. The deceased child, Tanweer son of Partab, was four and a half months old and hailed from Mithi Town.

His weight was 3.5kg and he was admitted to the Mithi Civil Hospital on January 23. Necessary treatment as per protocol was given to him and all possible efforts were made by the doctors, but the child could not survive and pa on January 26 (Saturday).

The Livestock Department camps are operational in eight villages of different talukas in the district. Four camps were established in Islamkot whereas one each was set up at Mithi, Diplo, Chachro and Nagarparkar.

As many as 51 animals were treated whereas 2,939 animals were vaccinated and 247 were drenched. Till now, the Livestock Department has treated 28,145 animals whereas 1,854,919 animals have been vaccinated and 198,035 animals have been drenched.

Four union councils (UC) of Islamkot taluka are engaged in the government-initiated distribution of fodder to livestock owners. As many as 4,298 cattle owners have been provided fodder which includes 50kg Wanda Feed and 25kg Rice Polish. The report mentioned that 25 UCs have been identified for distribution of fodder in the next phase for which survey would be started by Thar Foundation – the unit assigned by Livestock Department to conduct the fodder distribution activity in a fair and transparent manner.

Free wheat distribution activities are in progress across the district. On Thursday, 3,258 families were provided wheat under Phase-III of the campaign. Moreover, 22 families of Phase-II were given 50 kg wheat bags.

Three families that had not collected their wheat bags in Phase-I, also approached their respective sentinel points and collected wheat bags. Till date, 247,409 families of Phase-I, 252,415 families of Phase-II and 141,438 families of Phase-III have received wheat bags.

The Population Welfare Department's camps set up for awareness, tubal ligation and Jadelle contraceptive procedures in six villages and held family planning awareness sessions with 116 clients. Moreover, one woman also underwent the Jadelle procedure.

The third phase of ration bags to pregnant and lactating women has also started from this week. Up to 123 pregnant and lactating women were provided ration bags at their doorsteps. Two phases of ration bags distribution had already been completed during which 103,292 ration bags were distributed.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1898176/1-infant-mortality-rate-decline-thar/>

A NEW HOME FOR EXTREME POVERTY: MIDDLE-INCOME COUNTRIES

28 Jan, 2019

The share of the world's population in extreme poverty — subsisting on less than \$1.90 a day, adjusted for inflation and cost of living across countries — has plummeted from 42 percent in 1981 to 10 percent in 2015. Poverty fell not only proportionally but in absolute terms as well: The number of people in extreme poverty fell by 1.17 billion between 1981 and 2015, even as the global population grew by almost three billion. The reduction was driven in large part by the fast-growing economies of Asia, in particular, China and India.

But decline of poverty in those countries has fed an erroneous belief in the West that economies rising into middle-income status are on track to end extreme poverty and no longer need assistance — and that major donors need to focus on the fragile and conflict-ridden countries left behind.

This redirection of global aid risks neglecting the hundreds of millions who may never escape poverty despite living in countries that are becoming relatively rich.

Bill and Melinda Gates, whose yearly contributions to international development exceed the aid budgets of countries like Canada and Norway, have argued that “as extreme poverty disappears from many places, including China and India and, increasingly, many countries in Africa, it gets more and more concentrated in the most challenging places in the world” — mainly in sub-Saharan Africa.

Britain in 2015 committed to devoting 50 percent of its aid to “fragile states and regions.” And the 2017 replenishment of the International Development Association, the World Bank's fund for least-developed countries, doubled the bank's financing for such countries to \$14 billion over three years.

Data released by the World Bank in September shows that the rate of extreme-poverty reduction is slowing down, from an average of one percentage point per year from 1981 to 2013 to 0.6 percentage points per year between 2013 and 2015 and below half a percentage point per year since.

China, India, Nigeria and several other countries still have huge populations of poor people and have become more unequal as they have grown. This has created two concentrations of poverty in the world.

In 1987, nine out of 10 extremely poor people generally lived in low-income countries. But by 2015 only four out of 10 lived in low-income countries, while the rest lived in middle-income countries, over half of them in India, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Kenya, Yemen, South Africa, China, Pakistan and Zambia.

Conflict, inequality and weak institutions may cause growth to reverse, as in Yemen, which since 2015 has slipped from the ranks of middle-income countries. But poverty reduction propelled by economic growth, as in China, may

also be running out of steam. This growth was rooted in low-skilled laborers moving out of agriculture and into manufacturing industries bolstered by high global demand and trade.

Now, manufacturing is on the decline and automation is spreading in rich and poor countries. From 2013 to 2015, total employment in India, for instance, shrank by seven million, more than Illinois's entire civilian labor force of 6.5 million.

Aid doesn't reach the majority of the poor because the middle-income countries they live in either never received much or have outgrown eligibility.

India and Nigeria, the countries with the two largest populations of extreme poor in the world, received nearly the lowest net aid per poor person among all aid-receiving countries in 2016. India got about \$15.25 per poor person; Nigeria, \$28.90. But the average low-income country containing more than 1 percent of the world's poor in 2015 got \$107.80 per poor person. China, which has 10 million extremely poor residents, and Indonesia, with its 19 million, were net aid donors.

This confluence of factors has created a large, and largely invisible, poor population spread across low- and middle-income countries, out of the reach of growth and, often, aid.

The end of aid in high-poverty middle-income countries would not be a problem if these countries could take care of their citizens. But these governments are often slow to redistribute income to the poor for two main reasons: problems of capacity and problems of will.

A country must tax if it is to redistribute resources to the poor. But the tax-collecting abilities of high-poverty middle-income countries are not keeping pace with their overall economic growth and remain at about the level of low-income countries. Government size, measured by final government consumption spending as a share of gross domestic product, is lower on average in high-poverty middle-income countries than in low-income countries, mostly because the latter still receive high levels of aid.

Rich countries have solved a lot of the problems that undermine tax capacity. A goal for donors who aim to end poverty should be not only to help victims of war and famine but also to increase the tax and redistribution abilities of high-poverty middle-income countries by working with governments to increase data capacity, train staff members and put in place mechanisms to minimize graft. That could be the most effective way to reach the people who endure life at subsistence level.

Problems of will may be even harder to solve. Often politicians spend resources on projects that seem frivolous given the high rate of poverty in their country and that could be justified only through complex, trickle-down reasoning. The Indian government's space program is one example; Rwanda's nearly \$40 million sponsorship of the Arsenal soccer club last year is another.

Problems of will also arise when leaders are more responsive to certain groups of citizens than others. Our analysis of Indian data shows that growth benefits upper-caste Hindus before others: From 1987 to 2011, the share of India's extremely poor people who were Muslim or lower-caste Hindus rose to 55 percent, from 46 percent. Indian Muslims also benefit less, on average, than other socioreligious groups from the broadening access to education.

In Brazil and South Africa — two other middle-income countries with large poor populations — there is evidence that growth is as unequal along racial lines as it is along caste and religious lines in India. And the problem of unequal distribution is, of course, by no means confined to high-poverty middle-income countries: Research shows that when aid arrives in low-income countries, it often reaches elite groups first.

The temptation for donors is to focus on the poor in the most wretched, conflict-ridden countries and reach them directly through philanthropic and nongovernmental organizations, bypassing messy, corrupt governments. This practice is appropriate in some cases — for instance, when delivering humanitarian aid. But that type of aid will not create systems for the invisible poor to have a voice in their countries in the long term.

Solving problems of will requires giving the poorest citizens information and the political heft to hold their leaders accountable. That is best accomplished by strengthening democratic institutions. Poverty is political: Solving problems of will, like problems of capacity, requires rolling up our sleeves and working with the governments in the countries where the poor live to redistribute not only income, but also power.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/28/opinion/inequality-poverty-global-aid.html>

March 2019

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAR 25th TO MAR 31st 2019

STUNTING CRISIS

Editorial March 31, 2019

ACCORDING to a recent Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey, every third child under the age of five in Punjab suffers from stunted growth. Figures for children in the rural parts are particularly alarming at 34.3pc, compared to 26pc in the urban areas. Just a day before these figures were revealed in a report by the Punjab Planning and Development Board, Prime Minister Imran Khan announced his grand social welfare and poverty alleviation programme, while mentioning that the prevalence of malnutrition and stunting among children was one of the biggest challenges facing the country. It was in a similar vein to his inaugural speech to the nation as prime minister in August during which he held out X-ray images of brains of children suffering from stunting — these were significantly smaller than the brains of healthy children. According to Unicef, 38pc of children under the age of five are stunted in South Asia, ie 64m children. In Pakistan, the figure is even higher than average at 44pc — the third highest in the world. The main causes of stunting amongst children are poor diets resulting in insufficient nutrients in the first two years of life, combined with poor hygiene and sanitation practices in households. Unwashed fingers are used to feed children, resulting in faecal bacteria entering their bodies. Additionally, a report by the World Bank last year revealed high rates of E. coli in ground and surface water when untreated faecal sludge and wastewater seeps into the irrigation supply due to open defecation and badly planned sewerage drains.

There is another factor that causes high rates of stunting in South Asia, and that is the poor nutrition of mothers before and during pregnancy. Indeed, a significant percentage of stunting in early childhood occurs in the womb due to maternal malnutrition. Due to deeply ingrained societal biases, women's health and well-being are largely ignored. In many households, girls are often fed after the boys or given the leftovers to eat. Consequently, over half of all South Asian adolescent girls are underweight or anaemic. The importance of breastfeeding in the early years, along with awareness of better nutrition and hygiene practices, must be reinforced through various forums, including the media, in order to obtain the desired behavioural changes in the population. But unless the gross gender imbalances in our society are addressed, children (and women) will continue to suffer on account of choices they have not made.

Published in Dawn, March 31st, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1472981/stunting-crisis>

ANTI-POVERTY INITIATIVE

Editorial Updated March 29, 2019

THE steps announced by Prime Minister Imran Khan as part of his anti-poverty initiative 'Ehsaas' sound innovative and sincere.

The amendment to Article 38 (d) of the Constitution to redefine access to food, shelter, clothing, health and education as a fundamental right would certainly, in a legal sense, change the relationship of the state with its citizenry. Along

with this, Mr Khan also announced an increase in the amount of money the state intends to spend on underprivileged segments of society — from Rs80bn to Rs120bn by 2020. The prime minister also announced a new ministry for social protection and poverty alleviation would be set up, though the details were scant.

All of these are sound priorities to pursue for a leader, and there can be little doubt that Mr Khan, on his part, has shown a sincere desire to deliver to the poor. The problem is with the path forward.

In the past, too, we have heard the prime minister speak about stunting in children and malnutrition, and the distribution of poultry as income support for low-income households. To date, there is scant evidence that much has been done to follow up on these announcements. To earnestly improve access to food, shelter, clothing, health and education, far more than constitutional amendments will be required. The prime minister said that after the amendment has been made, any citizen would be able to approach a court and demand his or her fundamental rights.

The first thing that will be required will be the numbers in parliament to make this amendment to the constitution. Given the kind of relationship that Mr Khan and his government have with the opposition parties, this looks like a challenging task.

Second, the capacity of the state to actually produce results is debatable. What is obstructing better health and education outcomes at present is not the fact that they are not legally recognised as fundamental rights. Instead, the challenge lies in the lack of resources, overlapping jurisdictions, and the absence of any commitment made by the political elites to prioritise social welfare objectives and give their undivided attention to the task. A constitutional amendment will give the courts the power to carve a role for themselves in the provision of social services, but this does not mean that the judiciary would be able to deliver the services in question.

It is good for Pakistan that its leadership should speak of poverty alleviation and social service delivery as important priorities of the state, and seek innovative ways to improve performance in these crucial areas. But both priorities have highly developed approaches and a wealth of past experience to learn from. A new ministry will have much to reflect on and learn, before it can embark on an effective course of action.

Published in Dawn, March 29th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1472561/anti-poverty-initiative>

CORPORATE GIVING AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION

By Dr Pervez Tahir Published: March 29, 2019

The launch of the Poverty Alleviation Programme Ehsas, this week by the Prime Minister recognises poverty as problem number one. There are only two known paths to overcome mass poverty. One is the Chinese way of double-digit growth sustained over at least two decades to push people out of poverty. The other is a caring state and society helping people out of poverty. In the past decade and half, growth in Pakistan has been less than the historic average of six per cent. Even this average was far less than the potential. The state, even in the best of times, has never spent more than four per cent of GDP on social sector and transfers to the poor, leaving a huge gap to be filled by society. While we like to imagine ourselves as the most giving nation on earth, the undocumented sources and beneficiaries have landed us in trouble with the international watchdogs of terror financing.

However, there are many documented sources of giving. Among these, the most documented is the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The PM's programme aims to better target the CSR.

Looking at the current status here. With UNDP assistance (it seems no report is possible any more without assistance from somewhere abroad), Pakistan Centre for Philanthropy has published a report, 'Corporate Philanthropy in Pakistan 2017'. It covers 464 Public Listed Companies (PLCs), 204 Public Unlisted Companies (PUCs) and 208

Private Limited Companies (PvLCs). The largest amount of Rs7.56 billion came from PLCs, 79 per cent of which was contributed by top 25 companies of the group. The contribution by the PUCs and the PvLCs was just Rs1.03 billion and Rs1.5 billion. The larger the company the more it gives. To see how much is enough, the absolute numbers have to be put in some perspective. Like the never-achieved target of 0.7 per cent of GNP for Overseas Development Assistance, the target for corporate giving is one per cent of profit before tax. (Originally, the international target was also one per cent of GNP as it included private flows also.) According to the report, the PUCs have contributed 0.7 per cent of their profits before tax. Since 2012, the gap has been widening rather than narrowing.

Where is the money going? The report maps CSR programmes around Multi Poverty Index (MPI) and Human Development Index (HDI) to conclude “that the neediest areas do not get much of CSR spending”. There seems to be a problem with the mapping exercise. As per the report, the CSR foundations and departments spend 41 per cent of their resources on quality education, 28 per cent on good health and eight per cent on clean water and sanitation. Also, the report finds that the oil and gas exploration companies are the largest contributor to CSR. These companies are located in the poorest and the most backward areas. What else is the definition of the needy areas in the eyes of the authors of the report? In a goal-counting exercise, the report observes, “Undoubtedly, health and education are the areas where Pakistan is lagging behind even the poorest countries in the world but other areas included in the SDGs are equally important and need to be focused on. The least focused Sustainable Goal is ‘No Poverty’ which only gets 0.12% share from the total annual giving.” This after admitting that poverty is multidimensional! ‘No Poverty’ can only be the outcome of multiple interventions, education and health being the most important. This is also the message of Ehsas.

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<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1939226/6-corporate-giving-poverty-alleviation/>

‘EHSAS’ AND CHINA’S TURNAROUND

By Editorial Published: March 29, 2019

China’s dramatic rise from poverty is truly inspirational. According to World Bank, 500 million people were lifted out of extreme poverty in China over the last three decades so much so that today poverty in China refers mainly to the rural poor. Poverty rate in China — as measured by the percentage of people living on the equivalent of \$1.90 or less per day in the 2011 purchasing price parity terms — fell from 88% in 1981 to 6.5% in 2012. From there onwards, the percentage of people living below the international poverty line continued to fall to 4.1% in 2014 to 2% in 2018 — with President Xi Jinping upbeat about completely eradicating poverty by 2020.

Imran Khan’s admiration of China’s poverty alleviation efforts is well known. Time and again has the Prime Minister, in his speeches, quoted the miraculous rise from poverty of the Chinese population, accounting for more than three-quarters of global poverty reduction. Eyeing a similar turnaround, Prime Minister Imran has launched Ehsas (meaning compassion) — an ambitious social safety and poverty alleviation programme meant to ensure five things to the public as their fundamental right. These five things are food, shelter, clothing, education and healthcare. Under the programme, the Prime Minister says, the money spent on underprivileged segments of society will be increased by an ‘unprecedented’ Rs120 billion by the year 2020.

The PM talks of amending Article 38(D) of the Constitution and creating a new ministry for social protection and poverty alleviation to ensure the five fundamental rights — with the former measure aimed at enabling people to approach the courts in case of the government’s failure to protect these rights. While that shows the PM’s Ehsas for public welfare, his idea of poverty alleviation can only work if it is backed by a comprehensive economic reforms programme. In case of China too, it was a protracted period of high economic growth that helped its people get rid of poverty. And the high economic growth was achieved under a wide-ranging reforms programme highlighted by measures to attain trade surplus, attract foreign investment and improve human capital.

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<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1939210/6-ehsas-chinas-turnaround/>

IMRAN LAUNCHES AMBITIOUS SCHEME TO REDUCE POVERTY

Aamir Yasin March 28, 2019

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Wednesday launched an ambitious social safety and poverty alleviation programme 'Ehsaas' for the welfare of poor and downtrodden segments of society with a special focus on empowerment of women.

Speaking at the launching ceremony of the programme at the Jinnah Convention Centre, the prime minister declared that his government wanted to change the Constitution in order to ensure provision of food, clothing, housing, education and medical relief to all the citizens without any discrimination by the state considering them as their "fundamental rights".

Referring to Article 38(D) of the Constitution titled "promotion of social and economic well-being of the people", he vowed to include the five above-mentioned basic necessities in the list of fundamental rights as enshrined in Chapter One of the Constitution. According to Mr Khan, this change would give right to the people to take the government to courts upon its failure to provide them these basic amenities.

Amendment to Constitution planned to make provision of food, clothing, housing, education and medical relief fundamental right • New ministry of poverty alleviation to be created • Economic empowerment of women through 'one woman one bank account plan'

Highlighting salient features of the programme amid sloganeering by Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf activists, the prime minister said the government had decided to allocate Rs80 billion for the well-being of the underprivileged segments of society and it would be increased to Rs120bn next year.

Mr Khan also announced setting up of a new ministry for poverty alleviation aimed at increasing coordination among all organisations and departments presently working for the welfare of the poor and providing them financial and other aids.

He said that presently a number of organisations such as Baitul Maal, Poverty Alleviation Council, Benazir Income Support Programme and Zakat councils were working in the country, but there had been no coordination among them. He said Baitul Maal would construct 10,000 sweet homes for orphans and five homes for old people over the next four years.

Regretting that presently no precise data about poverty was available, Mr Khan said his government would launch a new survey which would be completed by December. "We will launch new survey of poverty to identify poor and poverty-stricken areas in the country. The survey will be completed by December end and we will have computerised record and the government will provide them service and monetary assistance."

The government, he said, would provide mobile phones to 5.7 million women and enable them to open and operate their saving accounts in banks. He said the government had also decided to provide free legal assistance to those who could not afford fees for court cases.

In order to make the people self-reliant, he said a fixed proportion on state lands would be allocated for the people so that they could establish kiosk/café to make ends meet. Besides this, he added, the poor would have a share in auctions of shops in a town and tehsil committees.

"Every ministry has been directed to develop pro-poor goals and measureable indicators. Welfare of transgender, street children, bonded labour and daily wagers will also be on top priority of the government under 'Ehsaas' programme," he said.

The prime minister also announced setting up of a Rs5 billion fund to provide interest-free loans to the poor for construction of their houses. “We will start construction of five million houses from April and we will give joint ownership of these houses to spouses in this government-supported housing scheme,” he said.

Vowing to improve implementation of labour laws in the country, the prime minister announced a number of special measures for labourers, including an increase in pension through EOBI (Employees Old-Age Benefit Institute) from Rs5,200 to Rs6,500. Without elaborating, he said the pension would also be paid the workers of informal sector like housemaids and other workers.

He said 40 microfinance companies in the country having Rs400bn would be directed through the State Bank of Pakistan to help people start their own businesses. He said the government would facilitate technology innovation by enhancing broadband internet services and basic telephony to almost 12,000 villages in 45 districts and this would give benefit to 30 million people.

“E-learning and television-based education will be launched after this connectivity of broadband and internet for the education of the people,” he said and added that the people in remote areas would be provided vouchers for getting education in private schools.

He said the government would provide technical education to labourers who wanted to go abroad where they would get a three-year contract instead of one year. Terming malnutrition and stunting among children a major problem for the country, the prime minister vowed to resolve the issue through its inclusion in the new programme.

He said the government had a plan to provide goats and hens to widows living in villages, which would not only help them earn money, but would also overcome the issues being faced by them due to malnutrition. Besides this, kitchen garden would also be promoted in villages and free of cost seeds would be provided to the people, he said.

Referring to a survey which revealed that more than 75 per cent of milk being supplied to main cities was a mixture of washing powder and chemicals, the prime minister said they were starting a plan to improve milk supply initially in Islamabad and Lahore.

He also announced setting up of 20 centres for persons with disabilities, where they would also be provided wheelchairs and other equipment.

Earlier, speaking on the occasion, Poverty Alleviation Coordination Council chairperson Dr Sania Nishtar said the plan was about equality and opportunity for all and it was about lifting lagging areas and leaving no one behind. She said they wanted to invest in human capital, educate girls and give economic empowerment to millions of women.

Published in Dawn, March 28th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1472347/imran-launches-ambitious-scheme-to-reduce-poverty>

”EHSAAAS” LAUNCHED: POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMME

ZAHEER ABBASI | MAR 28TH, 2019 | ISLAMABAD

Prime Minister Imran Khan on Wednesday launched a poverty alleviation programme “Ehsaas” and promised to amend the Article 38 (D) of the Constitution for making food, shelter, health and cloth as fundamental rights of the people and increase spending in the backward districts to Rs 80 billion.

Addressing the poverty alleviation programme “Ehsaas”, the Prime Minister also stated that welfare State of Medina that had treated the poor and the weak with compassion is an example for the Muslims who are suffering because of departure from the principles of the State of Medina. The Prime Minister said that this is the first step in the right direction to move towards a welfare state by taking responsibility of the poor and weak segments. He said, “We are

increasing spending for backward areas to Rs 80 billion and this amount would be increased incrementally to Rs 120 billion.”

“A new ministry namely Social Protection & Poverty Alleviation is being created and that would be tasked to coordinate with all the departments helping the people from one platform,” he said. Additionally, he said, a database would be completed by December 2019 that would provide accurate number of the poor people in the county and enable the government to launch a countrywide campaign against poverty.

“The government would provide cash to 5.7 million women through saving accounts along with a mobile phone to have access to their bank account.” He said that stipend of cash transfer will be increased from Rs 5,000 to Rs 5,500. Khan continued that Tahafuz Programme would be available at a call distance to the people in difficulty for legal aid as well as educational grants and health facility to those who do not have Insaf Health Cards.

Under the platform ”Tahafuz”, he said the government will also provide financial help to widows, said the Prime Minister and added, “We will also coordinate with the non-governmental organisations to provide assistance to bonded labourers, gypsies, and members of transgender community, etc.

The Prime Minister stated that Bait-ul-Maal will also be directed to build sweet homes for 10,000 orphans and a nine-point policy is also being developed for those with stunted growth from starting campaign to foring a multi-sectoral nutrition coordination body to oversee the nutrition programme across the country. He also stated the government has decided to help the poor women in rural areas by providing them goats and chicken, as this is tried and tested model across the world, as well as seeds for kitchen gardening.

The Prime Minister regretted that a survey revealed that 75 percent open milk being sold is not drinkable and the government will soon initiate a drive against it in Lahore and Karachi.

He said that clusters will also be established to facilitate the people in backward districts and announced to increase the Employees” Old-Age Benefit Institution (EOBI) pension to Rs 6,200 from Rs 5,200 and biometric system will be introduced to ensure transparency in it. “We will construct 5,000 houses for the poor, 500 digital hubs are being made in various backward districts, while Rs 5 billion have been earmarked for special programme namely Panah Gah,” he added.

The Prime Minister said that Article 25 of the Constitution provides the children right of education and where the government schools are not available, the government will provide them the vouchers while e-learning is also being introduced. He said Rs 3 billion will be provided to Higher Education Commission (HEC) for backward district.

The Prime Minister said that to exploit overseas market, NAVTEC will also be involved to provide various skilled training to the youth. He said that without women participation, no government can progress and the government will help women in rural areas as well. “We are trying to provide equal opportunities to female. Technical and vocational training is most important priority areas of the government and it will be started from school level, he added.

The Prime Minister also came down hard on the opposition and stated that ”revenge of democracy” has increased the country”s debt to Rs 30 trillion from Rs 6 trillion during the last ten years and now the government is paying Rs 6 billion daily for debt servicing of loans. As the discussion on NFC Award has been started, the federal government would try to ensure that backward districts are provided increased resources in the provincial NFC awards. Agriculture and livestock sectors are priorities of the government because of huge potential, especially in exports of Halal meat. He said that Pakistan will get help from China in fisheries.

The Prime Minister stated that safety net for labour will be ensured as there are no rights for the workers in informal sector and houses to do away with the exploitation. “We have to think creatively how to increase the income of the people. We are also thinking to involve rickshaws for garbage disposal,” he said. The Prime Minister also cited the example of China in lifting 700 million people out of poverty trap in 30 years and congratulated Dr Sania Nishtar for developing a first of its kind programme in the country.

Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) Dr Sania Nishtar said that the plan is about equality and opportunity for all, and lifting lagging areas at par with developed parts of the country in order to make sure that no one is left behind.

“It’s about investments in human capital. It’s about girls’ education, and economic empowerment of millions of women. It’s all about financial inclusion and access to digital services,” she maintained. In the same breath, Dr Nishtar continued that the programme is all about poverty alleviation not just through the safety net approach but also through job creation in areas where there are quick wins.

She said that the programme would be tapping whole of government, ensuring joint federal-provincial leadership, and mainstreaming the role of the private sector through an approach which will provide a level playing field on the one hand, and foster locally relevant innovation on the other.

Besides, she said that the principle resonates with the spirit of the sustainable development agenda. She said that the success of this plan will hinge on two factors: the speed with which Pakistan will control its population control; and the effectiveness of reform of governance, especially curbing elite capture. “Our Prime Minister is personally committed to both these areas,” she declared. A short documentary was also screened on the issue of children with stunted growth on the occasion.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/03/20190328459001/>

SEVEN CHILDREN DIE IN THAR

RECORDER REPORT | MAR 28TH, 2019 | THARPARKAR

Malnutri-tion and epidemics continues to claim more lives as seven children expired on Wednesday, health department said. According to details, seven children expired at Mithi Hospital, Tharparkar while dozen others affected of malnutrition and epidemics were still under treatment.

The latest deaths have taken the death toll in Tharparkar in March to 38 and 184 in the ongoing year. According to the health department, every year 1,500 children die due to malnutrition, infections and lack of proper medical facilities in the remote region.

Earlier, a report released by the United Nation’s Children Fund in April 2018 stated that Pakistan is among countries with the highest infant mortality rate.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/03/20190328459032/>

STARVING DESPITE FOOD ABUNDANCE

By Editorial Published: March 28, 2019

Pakistan is a unique country where the abundance of food and malnutrition and stunted growth among the children, especially in Sindh and Balochistan, go together.

According to a report by the International Food Policy Research Institute, around one in five of Pakistan’s more than 200 million people are malnourished. For the last so many years not a day passes without one or the other report about children dying of malnutrition or due to non-availability of proper and timely medical attention in Tharparkar district of Sindh.

Isn’t it puzzling that Pakistan, despite being well-off in wheat and rice production, has one of the highest infant mortality rates, mostly attributed to malnutrition or starvation? A recent report in this newspaper quoted the US Department of Agriculture projections as estimating Pakistan’s wheat export at 500,000 tons and that of rice at 7.4 million tons from May 2018 until April 2019.

Given this food availability of wheat and rice, one is compelled to believe that all this suffering of children and their mothers must be due to lack of interest or mismanagement on the part of the government.

Even judges of the superior courts have repeatedly pointed out corruption in management of food supplies and medical facilities to the people of Thar. The food is there but the people don't have access to it; budget allocations are there but medicines are not being supplied; millions of rupees have been spent on RO plants but they are not functioning.

It was probably the realisation of this mismanagement that the Food and Agriculture Organisation has pointed out that "poor physical infrastructure, particularly in the remote rural areas throughout Pakistan, is also a limitation on access to food," and "this is also linked to inadequate water and sanitation, education and health service delivery, which together with the lack of awareness of appropriate dietary intake contributes to greater food insecurity and malnutrition."

Published in The Express Tribune, March 28th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1938542/6-starving-despite-food-abundance/>

POVERTY, POPULATION GROWTH DISCUSSED AT SFPR

RECORDER REPORT | MAR 27TH, 2019 | ISLAMABAD

Former senators belonging to opposition political parties on Tuesday fell short to appreciate the Prime Minister's emphasis on managing poverty and population growth. The meeting of Senate Forum for Policy Research (SFPR), which met here with ex-senator Col Syed Tahir Hussain Mashhadi (retd), deliberated upon population planning and the political system in the country. Mashhadi directed that members must study World Bank's report, 'Pakistan@100: Shaping the Future,' which had painted a grim picture about where Pakistan would be when it completed a century if it didn't mend its ways. He also told the members to submit written recommendations within 20 days to the committee. He said it was the responsibility of parliamentarians to ensure that the democratic system in Pakistan was not compromised. He said a seminar must be conducted on a very high level so that senior politicians could

share their wisdom with the younger generation. That would help stop blotting of the parliamentary process, he added.

While discussing the issue of population planning, Senator Jehanzeb Jamaldini was of the view that saving lives was more important than population control. He said that as mentioned by population experts in a meeting previously, the concept of Universal Health Coverage presented by the World Health Organisation (WHO) was important and must be pursued on both provincial and national levels.

Former Senator Afrasiab Khattak was of the view that the Council of Common Interests and the Ministry of Inter-Provincial Coordination (IPC) must play their roles in promoting population control in Pakistan.

Another ex-Senator Ilyas Bilour opined that it would be beneficial if Pakistan learned from the example of its neighbouring countries, especially Bangladesh and Indonesia. Senator Nisar Muhammad Khan was of the view that it was imperative that the forum focuses on the issues that stem from population growth.

Ex-Senator Sehar Kamran said there was a strong need that Pakistan transitions to a welfare state, adding the tendency of distribution of amenities and assets on the basis of population size must be curbed.

The meeting was attended by ex-senators including Nisar Muhammad, Afrasiab Khattak, Mir Naseer Mengal, Sehar Kamran and Ilyas Ahmed Bilour, and Senator Jehanzeb Jamaldini.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/03/20190327458787/>

PM MAY UNVEIL POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMME THIS WEEK

AAMIR SAEED | MAR 26TH, 2019 | ISLAMABAD

Prime Minister Imran Khan is expected to announce a flagship poverty alleviation programme this week and a Poverty Alleviation Coordination Council (PACC) would be established for its implementation with cooperation of the provincial governments.

Official source told Business Recorder on Monday that the federal government has decided to bring all welfare projects and departments in the provinces including Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) under the ambit of the coordination council to enable the government to coordinate all programmes with the objective of alleviating poverty.

He said the government has dropped the idea of merging all welfare projects into Poverty Alleviation Authority due to legal hitches and not getting a positive response from the provincial governments to bring all public social welfare organisations under one umbrella.

He said the PACC which is expected to be officially notified this week would be mandated to chalk out a poverty alleviation strategy across the country and coordinate with relevant provincial government departments to initiate result-oriented efforts for poverty reduction.

Prime Minister Imran Khan had pledged to unveil poverty alleviation package during the first 100-days of his government. The government intended to create a poverty alleviation unit by bringing together around 16 government and semi-government organisations under one platform, but the provincial governments, under whose authority Zakat and Ushr Departments operated, were not on board.

“For the merger of all these departments, the government has to do it through an act of Parliament after approval of the Council of Common Interests (CCI) but this is not doable in the current political circumstances,” he said, adding that public social welfare organisations have been currently working in the center and provinces under different set of laws and acts.

The official said that the coordination council would not interfere in working of the provincial welfare departments but would facilitate them, set specific targets in specific areas to be achieved with the help of the federal government.

The government was earlier planning to set up the authority through an act of parliament or through an official notification, but Ministry of Law and Justice had advised against it as it may have created legal issues between provinces and the Centre, he added.

The coordination council will be mandated to improve technical skills of youth through education, increase employment opportunities, enhance access to financial assistance for promotion of small-sized businesses and provide inexpensive accommodation, social protection and Sehat Insaf Card.

Among all these public welfare organisations, including Bait-ul-Maal and Zakat and Ushr Department, Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) remains the largest in terms of allocation of funds and number of beneficiaries.

The PTI government allocated Rs124.7 billion for BISP for fiscal year 2018-19 to provide monthly cash stipend to around 5.7 million beneficiaries, out of 7.7 million eligible families for the programme as identified through a Poverty Scorecard survey in 2010.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/03/20190326458508/>

COUNTLESS MALNOURISHED IN PAKISTAN DESPITE ABUNDANCE OF FOOD

AFP Updated March 25, 2019

KARACHI: A frantic mother cradling her seven-month-old baby rushes towards the special paediatric ward in a desolate town, the boy's eyes are blank and he is smaller than most newborns.

He is starving in a country that has no shortage of food, but which has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the world and where malnutrition is rife. The infant weighs just 2.5 kilograms — the average for a healthy child of that age is almost three times that.

His case is not unique for the doctors at the Mithi Civil Hospital in hunger-stricken Sindh where millions survive on less than \$1 a day.

Of the 150-250 patients who come in each day, roughly one-fifth are suffering from malnutrition, says Dr Dilip Kumar, head of the paediatric department.

Inside the ward, nine other malnourished infants are crying inside glass incubators. A young mother, Nazeeran, clutches the hand of her toddler. "Her weight is dropping, even though we consulted many doctors," the 25-year-old says.

The International Food Policy Research Institute (Ifpri), a poverty and hunger watchdog, estimates around one in five of Pakistan's more than 200 million people are malnourished.

And yet, the nation is not short of food — in fact, according to the US Department of Agriculture, it is projected to export 500,000 tonnes of wheat from May 2018 until April 2019, and 7.4m tonnes of rice in the same period.

A newspaper even reported a potato glut earlier this month.

The issues, experts say, are socio-economic — that is, just because food is available, does not mean people can access it. "There are four key pillars of food security in Pakistan: The first is availability, then accessibility, utilisation and stability," says Dr Ambreen Fatima, senior research economist at the Applied Economic Research Centre of the Karachi University.

In Tharparkar, where Mithi Civil Hospital is located, all four are lacking, she explains, adding that in other parts of the country they are present only to varying degrees.

"Pakistan is quite well off in wheat production," comments Dr Kaiser Bengali, a veteran economist, who has done field research on poverty and hunger, but adds that much of it is sold for export.

This means ordinary people in the country may not have access to it, and if they do they may not have the resources to pay for it.

"Affordability is the biggest challenge here in Pakistan," he says.

Even in cities like Karachi, Bengali says he has seen alarming examples of poverty and deprivation.

"In our surveys we came across the kids who had never eaten an apple, and when we offered him an apple he was reluctant to take the bite wondering whether it was an edible thing or not," Bengali reveals. "In another case a family had never had eggs in their whole lives," he adds.

A survey of Planning Division in 2017 found that 40 per cent of the country's population lives in multi-dimensional poverty.

That means they are not just short of money, but are also facing a shortage of basic needs, including health, clean water, and electricity, among other factors — all of which can impact their access to food.

“Poor physical infrastructure, particularly in the remote rural areas throughout Pakistan, is also a limitation on access to food and influences market prices,” according to a recent statement from the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).

“This is also linked to inadequate water and sanitation, education and health service delivery, which together with the lack of awareness of appropriate dietary intake contributes to greater food insecurity and malnutrition.”

Published in Dawn, March 25th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1471708/countless-malnourished-in-pakistan-despite-abundance-of-food>

April 2019

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 1st TO APRIL 7th 2019

THAR'S RELIEF WORKS REPORT FURNISHED

RECORDER REPORT | APR 7TH, 2019 | HYDERABAD

The Deputy Commissioner Tharparkar said in report regarding healthcare facilities, children deaths and relief activities that 209 children were admitted in different government hospitals in gasping condition at district and Taluka level.

Report further state that 62 children after being administered appropriate treatment and health cover has been discharged to their homes. Moreover, 139 children are under treatment at the hospitals. 313 children were also treated under OPD services extended by health facilities of Tharparkar under the administration of Health department. 357 children were also treated today in OPD of 31 BHUs and 18 Government Dispensaries under the administrative control of PPHI. Three sick children admitted in the Hospital died due to multiple health complications.

According to report the Livestock Department under the command of Deputy Director Livestock setup their veterinary camps in 03 villages of different talukas

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/04/20190407462103/>

BALUCHISTAN CM TO HEAD POVERTY CONTROL CELL

By Mohammad Zafar Published: April 7, 2019

QUETTA: The Baluchistan government has decided to establish a cell at the chief minister's secretariat in order to control poverty and promote social development in the province.

A notification issued by the Planning and Development Department on Saturday said that the cell would be headed by Chief Minister Jam Kamal Khan Alyani with Senator Anwarul Haq Kakar, MNA Rubeena Irfan, Additional Chief Secretary for P&D Sajjad Ahmed Bhutta and civil society representative Amjad Rasheed as members.

The cell will provide assistance in the fields of social sector investment, skills development and social development funds.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1945190/1-baluchistan-cm-head-poverty-control-cell/>

TOURISM GROWTH TO TACKLE POVERTY, UNEMPLOYMENT: PM

By Our Correspondent Published: April 3, 2019

ISLAMABAD: Underscoring Pakistan's credentials as a premier tourist destination, Prime Minister Imran Khan has said that the industry has the potential to provide employment and reduce poverty levels.

Speaking at a tourism summit in the federal capital on Wednesday, the prime minister (PM) said that the country's various virgin and unexplored beautiful areas, unmatched diversity of mountains, landscapes, deserts, beaches, and religious sites coupled with a new visa regime make Pakistan an attractive tourism destination which is now open for all without any restrictions.

"It was very difficult for foreign tourists to visit some areas including in the north due to restrictions. Tourists had to get a no objection certificate (NOC). We have eased and reversed the situation," he said.

Highlighting the natural beauty of Pakistan including the virgin beaches of Balochistan, he regretted that the country's elite were used to visiting Europe and England in summer.

While referring to his passion of the world tour, especially visiting countries such as Switzerland, Austria and Africa, he said that they don't compete the riches that Pakistan has. "The diversity and beauty with a combination of deserts, beaches and mountains bestowed by the Almighty upon Pakistan is unmatched in the world."

Reminiscing about his first visit to Gilgit-Baltistan while a college student, he said he was very much impressed by the beauty of northern areas including the Karakoram Range. "With Suleman, Himalayan and Karakoram ranges, we have diversity in mountains," he remarked.

He also underscored the importance of social media in the promotion of tourism, referring to a visit to Upper Dir. "The social media team of PTI uploaded the video clip on social media, and that clip attracted thousands of domestic tourists to that otherwise isolated place."

He said that during a visit to the northern parts three years back, he found all the hotels booked by tourists as opposed to before when tourists opted to stay away due to concerns over terrorism. "I found British, European and American Pakistanis who had come there for tourism. Then I realised that we have to explore this potential of tourism," he added.

The prime minister said the people of Pakistan were very fond of tourism, which he said was also evident from the traffic jams on weekends from Murree Road to Nathiagali. "We have some 100 such Nathiagalis in Pakistan," he remarked.

The prime minister said the huge potential of tourism in Pakistan was also attractive for investment with high rate of returns. He said besides profits in hotel business, the enhanced tourism in Nathiagali during the last few years, especially during the PTI government's tenure in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P), also resulted in an increase in real estate prices in the area.

While acknowledging that it was the private sector that had the pivotal role in promoting tourism, he said that the government on its part would ensure the provision of all facilitation to the tourists and entrepreneurs.

He also highlighted the importance and potential of religious tourism in Pakistan, which besides having lost of shrines of Sufis and Saints also had sacred and historic sites of Buddhism, Hinduism and Sikhism.

The prime minister said since Malaysia and Turkey were earning \$22 billion and \$40 billion, respectively, per annum through tourism, Pakistan by exploring its true potential of tourism could address its issues of less foreign exchange inflows, poverty and unemployment.

He said according to the statistics division, the ratio of unemployment and poverty in K-P dropped during the last five years of PTI rule, which he added was due to the promotion of tourism.

Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Chaudhry Fawad Hussain on Wednesday asked media to promote a positive image of Pakistan to boost the tourism sector.

Addressing a tourism summit titled “Role of Media in Rebuilding Pakistan Shaping the Right Narrative”, he said that the media should represent a positive image of the country to increase the influx of tourists.

Fawad Chaudhry said the country had faced many challenges in the decades of 1970s and 1980s due to its negative perception at the global level. However, the minister said the image and prestige of Pakistan has jumped up during the tenure of the current government.

He lauded the PTI government for taking steps to promote tourism in the country. He said the country has great potential for religious and mountain tourism. “What we need is its proper and strong projection,” he stressed.

The minister said that the change in visa policy regime by the interior ministry was an excellent step which would go a long way in promotion of tourism in the country. APP

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1942918/1-no-country-tourism-potential-like-pakistan-pm/>

‘EROZGAAR PROGRAM’ FOR 25 DISTRICTS OF PUNJAB

RECORDER REPORT | APR 3RD, 2019 | LAHORE

The Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB) and Youth Affairs, Sports, Archeology & Tourism (YASAT)’s joint project, “eRozgaar Program” is ready for new intake in 25 districts of the Punjab. The districts include Sheikhpura, Sargodha, Gujrat, Lahore, Vehari, Faisalabad, Khushab, Mianwali, Sahiwal, Jhelum, Gujranwala, Taxila, Wah, Rawalpindi, Sialkot, Attock, Multan, Bhakkar, Narowal, Rahim Yar Khan, Layyah, Lodhran, Dera Ghazi Khan, Taunsa Sharif and Khanewal. The interested candidate can apply latest by May 5, 2019 on link <https://www.erozgaar.pitb.gov.pk/apply>.

Under this programme, so far 8,917 graduates have received training in creative, technical and non-technical areas and have verified foreign exchange earnings equivalent to Rs Rs 9,70,97,000 through free lancing.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/04/20190403460658/>

GOVT’S ‘INTENTION’ TO RENAME BISP DRAWS PPP IRE

Amjad Mahmood Updated April 01, 2019

LAHORE: The reported intention of the federal government to amend the name of Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) has drawn ire of the Pakistan Peoples Party, which has vowed to resist the plan tooth and nail.

During his visit to Ghotki in Sindh on Saturday, Prime Minister Imran Khan reportedly agreed with Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf allies that the name of the BISP should be changed after they alleged that the PPP was misusing the poverty alleviation project.

PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari responded to the development by saying in Shikarpur on Sunday that the government was ‘conspiring’ to wrap up the project by initially changing its name and then reducing its funds.

Under the BISP, in operation since 2010, more than Rs124 billion had been allocated in the budget for 2018-19 for distribution among 5.6 million women at a rate of Rs4,834 per quarter for each recipient.

Mr Bhutto-Zardari said the BISP was the best welfare project of the country as it was empowering women and strengthening the economy.

Bilawal sees plot to wind up welfare scheme; Fawad says govt won't change BISP's name

Pledging to resist the government's move to change the name of the programme, PPP secretary general Syed Nayyar Bukhari said the BISP was a recognition of the services of Benazir Bhutto for the country and a source of assistance for millions of needy women.

He said removing the name of the first woman prime minister of the country from the nomenclature would be an 'insensible' act and also an uphill task as the BISP had been given legal cover through an act of parliament. "It cannot be undone through an administrative order (by the prime minister)."

Benazir Bhutto's daughter Bakhtawar Bhutto-Zardari, in a social media message, advised the government to save its "time and energy" by rejecting the proposal to change the BISP's name.

"It would save a lot of time & resources if puppet governments don't attempt to re-label & really badly recycle the Benazir Income Support Programme & instead just accept its glory (credit @AAZ) & continue to fund it. #HealthCardsAlreadyExist #GoatToBeKiddingMe #PTI," read her tweet.

Criticising the prime minister at a ceremony in Sukkur, PPP leader Khursheed Shah said: "Imran Khan, you may remove the name of Benazir Bhutto (from a project's nomenclature), but how would you remove her from the hearts of people. The history written with one's blood cannot be washed away so easily."

Taunting the PTI government, Mr Shah said he feared that the "Naya Pakistan wallahs" might also remove the Quaid-i-Azam's picture from currency notes.

Federal Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry responded to Mr Shah by saying he (Shah) was the "termite that is eating out institutions". He advised the PPP leader to "stop selling" (the names of) Benazir Bhutto and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

Meanwhile, the ruling PTI leaders do not seem to be on the same page vis-à-vis renaming of the BISP.

Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi told the media in Multan that he was not in favour of renaming the BISP. He explained that some leaders of allied parties in Sindh had proposed a change in the project's name.

Fawad Chaudhry, while talking to a private news TV channel, said the government was not going to change the name of the BISP, but would "continue its operation under the Ehsaas Programme".

On the other hand, Sindh Governor and PTI leader Imran Ismail said he did not know when Mr Qureshi opposed renaming the BISP. In reply to a query after visiting MQM-P leader Khwaja Izharul Hasan in a Karachi hospital where he was admitted after being injured in a road accident, the governor said: "I'm not aware when Shah Mehmood Qureshi opposed changing the name of the Benazir Income Support Programme, but the name of the programme will be definitely changed."

Sindh Local Government Minister Saeed Ghani cautioned the federal government that if it planned to change the name through an ordinance, the opposition had the option of nipping the move in the bud through a resolution against the ordinance in the Senate or the National Assembly.

The opposition enjoys majority in the upper house.

Mr Ghani said the prime minister ought to be fully aware of the law and only then talk about it.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1473180/govts-intention-to-rename-bisp-draws-ppp-ire>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 8th TO APRIL 14th 2019

‘PEOPLE ARE DYING FROM HUNGER, BUT PPP IS BUSY IN LOOTING PUBLIC MONEY’

The Newspaper’s Correspondent April 14, 2019

BADIN: The Leader of the Opposition in Sindh Assembly has held the Sindh government responsible for the “mess and mismanagement” in the entire province.

Addressing a press conference in Badin Press Club on Friday evening, Firdous Shamim Naqvi criticised the PPP leadership for the “destruction” of institutions across the province and accused former president and PPP co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari and his friends of looting the funds meant for the welfare and well-being of the public.

“PPP leaders are still busy in loot and plunder when the people are dying of hunger and starvation in districts like Badin, Thar and Dadu,” he said and added that it was high time to get rid of the “corrupt” rulers.

The PTI leader claimed that despite the great improvement in water flow in rivers due to abundant rains and snowfall, the PPP rulers instead of focusing on even distribution of irrigation water among farmers, were only busy in diverting the flow of water towards their own lands by creating blockages.

“The influential figures are forcing irrigation and Sida officials to irrigate the lands of PPP lawmakers and leaders in Badin and other districts of the province while common farmers and villagers are on the roads in protest seeking their due share of water,” he added.

He warned the provincial government to mend its ways.

The PTI lawmaker observed that Mr Zardari and his “cronies” were deceiving the people of Sindh by saying that the federal government had stopped their funds of development schemes.

He claimed that the PPP leaders were only crying hoarse when the noose around their neck was being tightened by state agencies due to their “massive corruption and indifferent attitude towards real issues of Sindh”.

He alleged that the entire province had been ruined because the public funds had been “pocketed by Asif Ali Zardari and his henchmen”.

He asked PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari “not to waste his energies in saving his corrupt father and others, who had made the lives of the people miserable”.

Published in Dawn, April 14th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1475870/people-are-dying-from-hunger-but-ppp-is-busy-in-looting-public-money>

DOES CHINA PROVIDE A GOOD MODEL FOR NAYA PAKISTAN?

By Syed Mohammad Ali Published: April 12, 2019

Despite bleak external assessments, the current government is insisting that Pakistan’s economy is out of the crisis mode. In terms of grappling with the lingering challenge of poverty reduction, our PM, and many other senior policymakers, remain keen to emulate the so-called Chinese model of poverty alleviation. However, two obvious issues to think about here are whether the Chinese model can work in Pakistan, and whether it is even worthy of emulation.

There is no denying that much of the dent in global poverty in recent decades is due to China's economic success. China made an evident commitment to increased economic cooperation with Pakistan during the PML-N government tenure under CPEC. After Mr Khan met Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing a few months ago, China reportedly agreed to also give \$6 billion in aid to Pakistan, although the terms of this bailout remain opaque.

However, just because China has engaged in greater economic cooperation with Pakistan does not mean that we can, or even should, try to implement the Chinese vision of economic growth or poverty alleviation.

The authoritarian rule in China, on the back of which it has achieved poverty alleviation, remains deeply problematic. During Mao's 'Great leap forward', and the subsequent 'cultural revolution', tens of millions of people died. Deng Xiaoping liberalised the Chinese economy in the 1980s and 1990s, which accelerated the economic growth. However, despite liberalising the economy, the ruling party's grip on everything remains as vice-like as ever.

Many argue that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is no longer communist or socialist in any significant sense. Today, the CCP is also relying on the 'trickle-down' model as never before. Xiaoping's famous dictum "Let some people get rich first" has been put into hyperdrive. Billionaires are now a common sight in China.

As a result, Bloomberg recently noted how inequality in China is growing. This inequality is being manifested not only in terms of income but also via other crucial indicators, such as educational disparities. This is hardly a model for an already deeply inequitable country like Pakistan to emulate.

The Pak-China ties have often been defined in euphemistic terms, like being 'higher than the Himalayas' and 'deeper than the deepest sea'. There is clearly not much common ideological ground between the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the Communist China. It is instead realpolitik which has led the two to remain close strategic partners. China has long used Pakistan as a buffer against India. Even today, the increasingly closer Pak-China relationship is based not only on a convergence of economic but also strategic imperatives of counter-balancing the growing US-Indian ties.

One is not suggesting that Pakistan should not partner with China at the strategic or economic level. Yet, this does not mean we need to gloss over China's many problems, or worse yet, try to emulate the Chinese model blindly.

The fact that China has been accused of debt diplomacy elsewhere under the Belt and Road initiative is an issue we need to remain weary of. Fears that unregulated Chinese investment in agriculture will deplete our water resources is another legitimate fear.

The fact that the Chinese model of growth continues to marginalise ethnic groups in China is a serious problem. Consider, for instance, the uproar in the Balochistan Assembly at the findings of the Planning and Development Department's CPEC-related cell, which last year showed that Balochistan has so far received only a minuscule share of the total investment committed under CPEC.

One hopes that the present government's desire to emulate the Chinese model of growth does not make us even more callous about Baloch concerns, or less concerned about the prevailing inequalities within our midst, than we already are.

Published in The Express Tribune, April 12th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1948530/6-china-provide-good-model-naya-pakistan/>

“EHSAS” FOR THE POOR

BR Research April 11, 2019

After the launch of Insaaf health cards, the government has recently taken another step in the human capital domain. Under the concept of a welfare state, the Prime Minister had recently launched a poverty alleviation program titled "Ehsas". And just a few of days ago, the PM released the policy statement of his poverty reduction plan.

A few initial remarks by the Prime Minister caught attention. First, setting up a new division in the name of Social Protection and Poverty Alleviation Division to coordinate functions of all federal and provincial departments, agencies and programs working on poverty under the newly launched Ehsas Program is being appreciated as an attempt to bring everything under one roof for a more targeted assistance.

Second, the idea of making food, shelter, health and clothing all fundamental rights will push the whole poverty alleviation up a rung on the priority ladder. The government plans to amend the Constitution's Article 38 (d) by moving it from the "Principles of Policy" section into the "Fundamental Rights" section, which will make food, clothing, shelter, education and medical relief for the needy a state responsibility.

However, there has been more criticism than praise. Those who argue the program say that the poverty alleviation program is more about gaining political mileage as government's policy of increasing power tariffs, hiking up interest rates, and devaluing the currency so massively go against any poverty alleviation aims.

Also, another much valid criticism is no focus on how to fund the program. The PM announced additional Rs80 billion spending on social protection in the upcoming budget; this additional spending is going to be difficult for the government.

Nonetheless, the policy brief highlights a very diverse plan to counter poverty. There are 4 focus areas and 115 policy actions to combat factors like inequality, lack of investment in human capital and uplifting lagging districts, especially the rural areas. "The program is for the extreme poor, orphans, widows, the homeless, the disabled, those who risk medical impoverishment, for the jobless, for poor farmers, for labourers, for the sick and undernourished; for students from low-income backgrounds and for poor women and elderly citizens. This plan is also about lifting lagging areas where poverty is higher", says the policy brief. The four focus areas include: equality; safety nets for disadvantaged segments; jobs and livelihoods; and human capital development.

<https://www.brecorder.com/2019/04/11/488072/ehsas-for-the-poor/>

EHSAS: SHOW ME THE MONEY

Afshan Subohi April 08, 2019

RESPONDING to the massive development challenge — the deepening multidimensional deprivation of a significant proportion of Pakistanis — the PTI government launched Ehsas, a social safety programme, last month. With the introduction it added a new division to already bloated government machinery.

It is good that the government has shown empathy and is mindful of the painful impact on poor households of the policy options available in the current stabilisation phase.

To avoid default and unsustainable debt, the government had to strip the pretence of economic normalcy, expose reality and align fiscal and monetary policies accordingly. A curb on imports, utility rates rationalisation, devaluation and interest rate hikes were deployed to cool down the economy.

There is no way to perfectly shield the poor from the fallout of a dip in investment, employment and consumption. With the hike in inflation and the exchange rate, the government chops development spending and the private sector assumes a cautious stance. The job market squeezes as the real income and value of assets deplete.

The lack of clarity regarding the programme's finances is the key reason why the plan is not being taken seriously and is being treated instead as a political move

Those belonging to the lowest social rung are already caught up in a stressful battle for survival. The country ranks low on most global indices related to human development.

According to the Global Hunger Index 2018, Pakistan ranks 106 out of 119 countries assessed. With a score of 32.6, people suffer from a level of hunger that is categorised as ‘serious’. About a third of the population lives in the shadow of multidimensional poverty. The last National Nutrition Survey showed that in some districts half the children under the age of five are stunted and about 20 per cent suffer from wasting.

Ehsas sets an overarching policy direction for initiatives directed at providing relief to economically vulnerable segments such as the Benazir Income Support Programme. It proposes to amend the Constitution to legally bind the government to provide food, shelter and basic social services to all citizens.

The new division, created for the implementation of the social protection policy, will serve to supervise all pro-poor projects. The entity will create a dependable database of needy households. It will also develop a network of centres that serve the poor by helping them with legal aid, skill development, job placement and access to banks for micro-loans.

Prime Minister Imran Khan has promised special schemes for women to allow them to better care for themselves and their families.

The elaborate social safety plan, however, failed to start a debate or excite the public. This could partially be because the government has not clarified where the money to finance the new initiative is going to come from. Both debt repayment and defence spending are rising and prospects of higher revenue generations are grim.

Mr Khan committed to scrabbling another Rs80 billion for pro-poor spending in his speech at the launch but did not elaborate how the government plans to afford it.

Eminent policymakers told Dawn that in their opinion the lack of clarity regarding the programme’s finances was the key reason why the plan was not being taken seriously. It was being treated more as a political move aimed at diluting criticism of the government for perpetuating the status quo at the cost of the masses.

“The unprecedented ascent of the PTI in the last elections means the party should be willing to try better policy alternatives and develop a proactive management. It should be unafraid to bring about economic corrections without exerting avoidable pressure on people who are already struggling. The PTI can do so by diverting the cost towards a segment that can endure the pressure without experiencing a significant impact on its lifestyle,” an expert in Karachi commented.

He mentioned chopping the development budget while providing direct subsidies worth about Rs100bn to businesspersons.

The expert went on to criticise dual standards such as accommodating the violations of real estate tycoon Malik Riaz but ejecting petty traders who had been operating on encroached property. And the government’s capitulating to pressure by carmakers and real estate operators on the ban on non-filers and letting utility companies increase rates without showing any indication of structural improvement.

Dr Ijaz Nabi, a professor at LUMS who is also associated with multiple economic research institutes, welcomed the launch of Ehsas though he had yet to review the details of the programme. He, however, raised the issue of financing of the politically savvy initiative.

Dr Nabi mentioned the cycle of boom and bust over the last three decades and pointed out how successive governments were forced by circumstances to take corrective measures in the initial period of assuming power. In later period of their tenure they went for unsustainable expansion to build political capital with eyes only on the next general elections, or to extend their dictatorial rule.

“What the successive government missed was the next step, i.e. to persistently carry out structural reforms, improve the quality of governance and stop revenue leakages. There has been a lack of sustained focus on policy design. The

government will have to resist the temptation to compromise the long-term economic strategy for short-term objectives,” he commented over phone.

Published in Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, April 8th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1474533/ehsas-show-me-the-money>

‘CHARITIES STRIVING TO FULFIL STATE’S RESPONSIBILITIES’

By Press Release Published: April 8, 2019

KARACHI : Sindh Governor Imran Ismail has said that charitable organisations have assumed the responsibility to provide education and health services to needy people in the country as the state brazenly failed to fulfil its basic obligations.

The governor was addressing the joint fundraiser of the Green Crescent Trust (GCT) and Shahid Afridi Foundation (SAF) on Saturday night. Leading industrialist Sardar Yasin Malik hosted the fundraising event at his residence.

Prominent sports celebrities including Shahid Afridi, Jahangir Khan, Sarfraz Ahmed, Sadiq Mohammad, Sohaib Mohammad, Qamar Ibrahim, Kashif Jawwad and others attended the fundraiser whose memorabilia were also auctioned on the occasion to generate funds for the educational welfare projects of the two charities.

The Sindh governor, who was the chief guest at the reception, also personally announced Rs500,000 in donation for the same cause, saying that had he been a leading businessmen or industrialist of the country like those present among the audience, he would have announced a much bigger donation for the noble cause being pursued by the two charities.

“What I have been told here is that the Green Crescent Trust and Shahid Afridi Foundation have been striving to provide education and health services to thousands of needy families but one should keep in mind that it is basically not the job of these two charities to provide these basic services to needy people in the country,” said Governor Ismail. “By all means, it is the responsibility of the state to provide the same but it has miserably failed to fulfil all such fundamental obligations,” he added.

“Here the wealth and resources of the state have been plundered while rights of the poor people have been denied,” he said.

“The ideal state should be the one where you don’t find anyone to offer charitable services to if someone starts a welfare school or hospital as has been the case of countries in Europe, especially in its Scandinavian region. Now we have embarked upon the real challenge of establishing such a state here in Pakistan after winning the elections,” he said.

The governor lamented that so many successive governments had come to power in the country but they failed to establish even a single hospital of such top quality, which could compel people from Europe to get treatment here in Pakistan.

He said that the present government had launched the health insurance card scheme, under which each beneficiary family would be entitled to get health treatment of up to Rs750,000.

“The beneficiaries of this scheme would be the families who live below the poverty line as never before they had resources to get proper health treatment in the country,” he said, adding that they now needed proper hospitals, qualified doctors, paramedics and nurses to treat them. “For this, we once again look towards charities like the SAF and GCT to provide qualified professionals for the health sector,” he said.

GCT Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Zahid Saeed said that 29,000 students were enrolled in over 150 charitable schools of his trust as the two charities had joined forces to enrol 100,000 out-of-school children in the province.

He said that 40% of the 29,000 students of the GCT's schools were female, despite the fact that all the institutions were present in remote and rural parts of Sindh.

He said the joint fundraising event had been organised to find sponsors for least 6,000 of these children. Saeed revealed that the GCT had also been running water supply projects for 770 plus villages of Thar – a number that would soon increase, with the total number of its beneficiaries expected to rise to 220,000 persons.

He said that some of the leading top taxpayers of Pakistan also happened to be the patrons and donors of GCT whose services were also duly being recognised in the fundraiser.

Shahid Afridi said that a pathetic and alarming situation in the public health and education sectors had compelled him to start working for the greater humanitarian cause for the countrymen as for him, it was high time to pay back to his native land which gave him immense name and fame.

Global CEO of SAF Zeeshan Afzal said that Shahid Afridi had started its philanthropic work by establishing a charity hospital in Kohat District on his own ancestral land. Thus far, the hospital had provided treatment to 135,000 needy patients of the surrounding areas, including those from Kohat city.

Sports legends Jahangir Khan and Sarfraz Ahmed said that it was an honour for them to be associated with the charity event organised by the two leading charities of Pakistan that had been doing their best to provide basic necessities to people.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1945520/1-charities-striving-fulfil-states-responsibilities-sindh-governor/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 15th TO APRIL 21st 2019

NUTRITION PROGRAMME ACROSS SOUTH PUNJAB HIT BY STUNTED GROWTH

Mansoor Malik April 19, 2019

LAHORE: The Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Centre (MSNC) faces closure as the Punjab Planning and Development (P&D) Board has decided not to extend the contracts of district coordinators and sector specialists. Several other senior positions in the programme are already lying vacant.

The P&D Board secretary, however, says the board will reinvigorate the MSNC programme by recruiting human resources against vacant positions, adding that those working as sector specialists and district coordinators will continue their jobs.

The MSNC's four-year programme was set up at a cost of around Rs550 million with gestation period up to June 2020 – to facilitate implementation of Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Strategy of 2015 envisioned to create a single platform for inter-sectoral planning around nutrition. The project was launched in 11 south Punjab districts having high malnutrition and stunting incidence.

Initially, six sectors – health education, agriculture, population, water and sanitation and social protection – were given tasks to facilitate line departments in planning their schemes around nutrition.

The programme is in line with Prime Minister Imran Khan's vision to invest in human resources and his resolve to end malnutrition and stunting among children. The prime minister time and again called stunting and wasting major

problems for the country and recently included it in his ambitious social safety and poverty alleviation programme 'Ehsaas' for the welfare of poor and downtrodden segments of society.

Alarm bells have started ringing in the MSNC as centre's acting project director (on the instructions of the P&D Board secretary) wrote to district coordinators (one-member staff for coordination with deputy commissioners) in 11 districts that their contracts would not be extended. Similarly, three sector specialists based at the board office in Lahore were also handed over 'termination letters', saying that their contracts would not be extended. Two sector specialists were never recruited. Letters were issued by the board secretary on Wednesday.

As soon as the acting project director's letters reached coordinators, Rajanpur and Layyah deputy commissioners (DCs) wrote to the board chairman requesting extension in services of district coordinators of the MSNC at district level.

Both DCs stated that their districts were having highest percentage of malnutrition and undernourished population in the province and the programme helped stunting and wasting percentages slide down.

According to our Layyah correspondent, the DC stated that Layyah, being among top 10 districts having highest percentage of malnutrition and undernourished, showed signs of improvement with the critical role played by the district coordinator.

"In 2014, an MICS survey in Layyah district had 38.8 per cent stunted growth and 18.9 wasting but the critical intervention of district coordinator of the MSNC reduced the percentages to 29.6 and seven, as reported in the MICS 2018 report," he stated.

The DC also stated, "Winding-up the role of district coordinator from April 18 at district level after the completion of contract period may reverse the ongoing progress and scale back the achievements made through this programme".

Imran Ali Shah, member of Layyah district malnutrition committee, said the establishment of MSNC was an approved scheme in the Annual Development Programme but ironically the project was being closed down without proper evaluation of a third party validation.

The Rajanpur DC in his letter also stated that stunting rate in the district was 47.6 per cent and wasting 8.7 per cent and added the programme created various success stories and district could now be cited as a role model for rest of the districts.

P&D Board Secretary Iftikhar Ali Sahoo said the scope of the MSNC programme was being broadened on professional lines. He said the programme was not functioning with a well-knit team, adding that most key posts – project director, member (health), programme coordinator, health and nutrition specialist and a couple of sector specialists – continued lying vacant.

He said the MSNC programme was hit by complications since its inception and matters turned worse when litigation started by the then project director upon his termination, and added the board could get the stay vacated just a few days ago.

Stating that the contracts of the serving three sector specialists and 11 district coordinators will be extended, Mr Sahoo said the board would hire efficient officials against vacant posts to reinvigorate the programme.

Mr Sahoo said the board would soon advertise the post of MSNC project director and moved a summary to the chief minister for his approval to appoint a regular Member (Health) through the Punjab Public Service Commission.

He said the MSNC could utilise just Rs50 million of the programme and fund and that too on the payment of salaries and logistics charges. He said the board in a recent meeting with its chairman Habibur Rehman Gilani decided to reinvigorate the programme. From now onwards, he said the Board had decided to run the programme with Punjab's own funding.

Fareedullah Chaudhry contributed from Layyah.

Published in Dawn, April 19th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1477048/nutrition-programme-across-south-punjab-hit-by-stunted-growth>

PTI GOVT PUSHED POOR INTO ABJECT POVERTY: MURAD

Qurban Ali Khushik Updated April 15, 2019

SEHWAN (Dadu): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has called the federal government inefficient and said it has caused a tsunami of price hike and unrest and pushed the poor into abject poverty by further reducing employment opportunities.

He was speaking at the 12th death anniversary of his father, former Sindh chief minister Syed Abdullah Shah, at his native village Wahur near here on Sunday.

He said the ‘inefficient’ federal government had completely failed to deliver the goods as it had no capacity to rule and ameliorate the lot of the disadvantaged section of society and had no roots in people. Everyone knew very well how they had been propelled to power, he said.

Mr Shah said that when people asked him about launching of development works in their areas he replied “... the federal government has failed to release Sindh government’s due share from divisible pool. We, therefore, are facing shortage of funds and cannot start development works as we had started last year,” he said.

He vowed the provincial government would launch development schemes from its own resources from the next financial year.

About inauguration of Thar coal-fired power plant, the chief minister said that it was a major achievement of Sindh government. “We have realised the dream of Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto who had performed groundbreaking ceremony of the coal mine and the coal-fired power plant at Ketī Bandar,” he said.

“It was not a dream but a sincere and visionary step by Benazir Bhutto which was aimed at bringing an end to loadshedding in the country,” he said.

Mr Shah said that they had gathered in the village last year to observe Syed Abdullah Shah’s 11th death anniversary and then went to the polls. “Our opponents formed big alliances and groups but people of Sindh rejected them and instead voted PPP to power with more seats and more strength,” he said.

He said the PPP government would continue to serve people of Sindh because it was the party’s golden tradition.

He recalled that PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari was just going to Naudero to attend Z.A. Bhutto’s death anniversary on April 4 by train but people living from all nooks and corners of Sindh came rushing to railway stations to pour out their love and respect for the son of Benazir Bhutto and accorded him a warm and historic welcome.

“The historic welcome caused agitation in corridors of power in federal government. They are scared of Bilawal because they know he has the ability to deliver the goods for the country and its people,” he said.

PPP Sindh chapter president Nisar Khuhro said that Syed Abdullah Shah had the ability to deal with all the elements that had hatched conspiracy against Sindh and its people. Abdullah Shah was well aware of the people who had always promoted politics of hatred and division and managed to thwart their nefarious designs, he said.

He said that some people were once again talking about division of Sindh. “Whenever they (Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan leaders) are rejected they try to take its revenge from Sindh. You were defeated by Pakistan

Tehreek-i-Insaf in general election but you are exacting revenge on your motherland. It betrays your character,” he said.

He said emphatically: “Sindh is, was and will always remain united and we know how to defend its unity.”

Sindh Minister for Education Syed Sardar Shah said: “I want to tell them that Urdu-speaking people know very well the people who are once again singing the old song of Sindh’s division, and they will not be part of their old antics of pseudo nationalism,” he said, adding that people of Sindh, particularly Urdu-speaking Sindhis would never allow them to play into their hands.

He said that Abdullah Shah was a true lover of Sindh and its people. He served Sindh and its people to the best of his abilities. He was a brave and courageous leader who served this province to his best under the dynamic leadership of Benazir Bhutto.

PPP Jamshoro district president Asif Shah, Hyderabad divisional president Ali Nawaz Shah Rizvi and others also spoke at the gathering. Towards the end of programme the participants offered fateha for the departed souls of Syed Abdullah Shah, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Benazir Bhutto and slain workers of PPP.

Members of provincial cabinet, special assistants to chief minister, MNAs, MPAs, senators, PPP workers and members of general public attended the gathering.

Published in Dawn, April 15th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1476135/pti-govt-pushed-poor-into-abject-poverty-murad>

KASHF FOUNDATION DISTRIBUTES FOUR MILLION LOANS TO UNDERPRIVILEGED WOMEN

ABDULLAH MUGHAL | Apr 15th, 2019 | LAHORE

Managing Director of Kashf Foundation Roshaneh Zafar has said that they have disbursed nearly four million loans worth over Rs 95 billion among under-privileged women to enhance their role in society by improving their economic status and offering them microfinance business loans for financial independence and empowerment.

The Kashf Foundation is Pakistan’s first non-profit microfinance and wealth management organisation founded in 1996. It is also regarded as the first microfinance institution (MFI) of Pakistan that uses village banking methodology in microcredit to alleviate poverty by providing affordable financial and non-financial services to low income households, particularly for women to build their capacity and enhance their economic role. With headquarters in Lahore, the Foundation has regional offices in five major cities and over 200 branches across Pakistan.

In an exclusive interview with Business Recorder the other day, Kashf Foundation Managing Director Roshaneh Zafar spoke about various challenges of the under-privileged women and how they are working for their empowerment and integration in society.

“We work towards building entrepreneurial and financial management skills of women through capacity building, trainings and workshops. So far, 1.5 million women have been trained in enhancing their financial management skills and capabilities, 26,170 women were trained in business management and development skills and 1,567 women graduated from our vocational skill development workshops in various marketable trades. In addition, 842 participants were sensitized on child protection and safeguarding trainings to protect children from sexual child abuse,” Roshaneh said.

She said just providing loans to women through microfinance can be meaningless unless the women are also taught, trained and mentored in how to productively and efficiently use these loans. So, at Kashf, the capacity-building of women is intrinsically linked to their financial inclusion.

“We have also focused on safeguarding low-income households with credit safety nets for life insurance and micro-health insurance to protect the family from health shocks. Kashf Sehatmand Zindagi Bima programme offers a comprehensive health insurance programme for the entire family with 2.9 million policy holders so far. Kashf Credit Life Insurance has insured 6.4 million lives under life insurance,” added the MD.

According to Zafar, the Foundation is also actively involved in bringing about social change via television productions for the masses. Our recent drama serials and mini-series, such as Udaari, Rehai and Aakhri Station have covered topics such as child abuse, prostitution, early marriages, depression and the like. The response has been phenomenal so far, and the outreach is much wider, since a huge percentage of the population has access to television sets. We continue to strive for the betterment of our society by choosing sensitive topics which need to have light shed upon them, she pledged.

Since over 20 years of our establishment, the Foundation helped over 1.5 million women in establishing their businesses and the results shows that on a year on year basis, over 60 percent of women have reported increase in their gross profits and over 30 percent are able to save on a regular basis, she recalled.

To a query about her professional background, Roshaneh said: “I am an economist by training and studied finance and economics at the Wharton Business School – University of Pennsylvania at undergraduate level. Later, I went on to pursue a Masters in International and Development Economics at Yale. I worked for four years at the World Bank in Islamabad looking at the social impact of World Bank projects through a gender lens. It was during my time at the World Bank that my observations about the dynamics of a low-income household in Pakistan against the odds of power, control and access to resources found new meaning for me; and especially in context to the role of women and their inability to influence choices and lack of financial resources to invest in a better future for their children.”

When asked what inspired her of establishing a social organization focusing on women empowerment, she said: “The time I spent in documenting how investments in water and sanitation impacted on the lives of women, through my fieldwork at the Bank, was extremely important, for it brought me into direct engagement with hundreds of women from under-privileged communities.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/04/20190415464724/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 22nd TO APRIL 28th 2019

PM FOR CREATION OF GLOBAL FUND TO FIGHT POVERTY

RECORDER REPORT | APR 27TH, 2019 | BEIJING

Prime Minister Imran Khan Friday asked the participant countries of the Belt and Road Initiative to join hands in fighting climate change by planting 100 billion trees, establish tourism corridors and combat corruption. Addressing the Opening Ceremony of the Second Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation here at the China National Convention Center, the Prime Minister suggested a five-point road map to direct efforts and focus on the peoples of the participating countries, and towards addressing impediments to their way to sustainable growth.

Speaking on the theme of “Shaping a Brighter Future”, Prime Minister Imran Khan told the gathering comprising around 37 world leaders the urgency to create a poverty alleviation fund and the importance of efforts to further liberalize trade and investment flows.

The three-day meeting is being attended by leaders including Russian president Vladimir Putin, Italian prime minister Giuseppe Conte, UK chancellor Philip Hammond, and the heads of state of the 10 Asean – Association of South-east Asian Nation states, besides over 5,000 participants from more than 150 countries. The United States has sent a low-level delegation, while India opted not to attend.

Prime Minister Imran Khan used the occasion to invite the foreign leaders and delegates to avail Pakistan's liberal foreign investment regime. He urged them to focus in particular on infrastructure, railways, dams, IT and manufacturing.

Prime Minister Imran Khan elaborating his five-points called for joint efforts to mitigate climate change. He recalled how the provincial government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province has successfully planted one billion trees and said that the President of Chile has also mentioned this initiative.

"We launched a nationwide project to plant 10 billion trees. I suggest we launch a joint project to plant 100 billion trees in the next two years, so that we can mitigate the effects of climate change for our coming generations."

Imran Khan suggested establishment of a BRI Tourism Corridor to promote people-to-people contacts and inter-cultural understanding.

The Prime Minister also suggested setting up of an office of Anti-Corruption Cooperation to combat the scourge of white-collar crime. Khan who won a popular vote in recent general election on the promise to combat corruption pointed to the world leaders that "White-collar crimes are devastating the world."

Speaking about the importance of fighting poverty, Imran Khan spoke for creating a Poverty Alleviation Fund that can supplement national efforts in the fight against poverty and malnourishment.

"In Pakistan, we have recently launched a targeted poverty alleviation programme called Ehssas, or feeling."

He said it was aimed at emulating China's spectacular success in lifting 800 million people out of poverty within a matter of decades.

Prime Minister Imran Khan also called for making concerted efforts to further liberalize trade and investment flows encouraging our private sector and businesses to collaborate in projects.

The Prime Minister congratulated President Xi Jinping and the government of People's Republic of China for organizing the important event and said as the Belt and Road transforms from vision into reality, the gathering has provided a useful platform for taking stock and setting the agenda.

"In a world of geopolitical uncertainty, of rising inequality and barriers to trade, the BRI offers a model of collaboration, partnership, connectivity and shared prosperity," Khan said.

He said the BRI marks a new and distinct phase in the onward march of nations of the world along the path of globalization.

"The presence of so many world leaders today is proof that we choose hope over despair and cooperation over confrontation."

Imran Khan said 122 States and 49 International Organizations have signed on to BRI's vision and described it a historic and monumental development.

The Prime Minister said Pakistan was proud to have partnered and pioneered with China in this transformational endeavour. "We have been among BRI's earliest and most enthusiastic proponents."

He said the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, one of BRI's major components and one of its earliest manifestations, has made substantial progress. "Pakistan's energy supplies have increased massively. Our critical infrastructure gaps are being plugged.

Gwadar, once a small fishing village, is transforming rapidly into a commercial hub." Imran Khan said the Gwadar Airport will be the largest in the country.

Khan said together, Pakistan and China were entering the next phase of CPEC, with greater emphasis on socioeconomic uplift, poverty alleviation, agricultural cooperation and industrial development. “We are expanding the frontiers of knowledge through closer engagement and deeper cooperation in the fields of education, innovation and technology.”

He said Special Economic Zones were being set up, along the length of the Corridor, and would offer opportunities for investments for Pakistani, Chinese and foreign entrepreneurs.

Prime Minister Imran Khan said supplementing the next phase of CPEC, the two countries would sign an expanded Pakistan-China Free Trade Agreement.

“We are changing Pakistan’s economic landscape and Insha-Allah the destiny of our people. I want to thank China and its leadership for their unwavering support for Pakistan,” Imran Khan said.

“Our deep-rooted friendship, partnership and brotherhood with China remains strong, resilient and unbreakable, standing tall in the face of every challenge.”

Imran Khan said China’s marvelous civilization has given the world wisdom, harmony and prosperity. “It has gifted to humanity, great inventions, art and aesthetics and a culture of compassion and co-existence”, and recalled the famous Chinese proverb; ‘The Ocean is vast because it rejects no rivers.’

He said Pakistan will continue to work on the basis of mutual respect and equal opportunity, with China and other BRI partners, for a better future of our people.

“Pakistan will partner with all those who share the vision for a peaceful and prosperous world. We will work together to realize a future of hope and happiness,” Imran Khan told the gathering.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/04/20190427467610/>

MAN KILLS THREE FAMILY MEMBERS IN MARDAN

The Newspaper’s Correspondent April 24, 2019

MARDAN: A man axed to death three members of his family, including his father, wife and daughter, allegedly due to poverty in Bashkhali village here on Tuesday.

The officials of Chora police station arrested the alleged killer when he was trying to flee from the scene after committing the crime.

According to the police’s preliminary investigations and locals, the accused identified as Rehman Ali was hailing from Waray village of Dir and was residing in Mardan city after migrating from his native district some time ago.

They said that the alleged killer was frequently quarreling with his wife and parents due to unemployment and severe poverty.

However, on the day of the incident, the man axed to death his father, Shazullah, wife Rasiat, 35, and daughter Tamana, 15, while his four children who were in school and a seven-month-old son sleeping at the house at the time of the incident remained safe.

SP operations Mushtaq Khan told this correspondent that they had found a mobile telephone set at the crime scene, adding that they were investigating the case from different angles.

Chora police station lodged FIR against the accused on the complaint of his

brother, Ihsan Ali, and started further investigations.

Published in Dawn, April 24th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1478036/man-kills-three-family-members-in-mardan>

EHSAAS: THE GOOD, THE BAD, THE STRANGE

BR Research April 22, 2019

If there is one feeling, screaming out from the government's Ehsaas document, it is this: PM Khan's heart may be in the right place, but his policy statement for the poor is ill-thought out at the one end, and trivial at the other, with some good random points in between.

Let's start with examples of the good. The government intends to "screen the PC1" of every development project for its impact on poverty and equality. Disregarding the fact that not every PSDP project is aimed at poverty or inequality reduction, screening is a step in the right direction. However, the real test lies in impact assessment during and after the completion of the project; at PC1 stage, rosy projections of poverty reduction could be made, but whether those projections materialise is another affair.

Likewise, the document promises a new policy to guide the use of development expenditure by parliamentarians to promote transparency, independent oversight and accountability. While parliamentarians' spending was originally supposed to be dispensed with, one hopes the new policy will at least curb the growth in developmentally-useless, and politically-expedient projects.

Ehsaas also promises "a national strategy for the development of statistics" for strengthening quality and availability of statistics, and to ensure the independence of statistics from political/other undue influence. This item was sorely missed in the medium-term economic framework, and while the promise of independent statistics is good, poverty reduction should not be the only objective of a strong and independent statistics body.

They are also talking about a data accessibility and transparency policy, where for instance, there will be a District Development Portal in which poverty and other socio-economic indicators across Pakistan's district will be available to policymakers and the public. This, as well as the promised "awareness drive aimed at article 25-A", is seen as "an important accountability tool in the implementation of Ehsaas," so that the disadvantaged become aware of their right.

These plans rest on the assumption that people have the right to ask questions in this country, and that civil society institutions are vibrant and well-funded by domestic sources because of course, sources of funding are a threat to national security.

The document also promises to house a "population task force" under the direct supervision of PM Secretariat "for ensuring universal access to family planning predicated on the understanding that population is the denominator of poverty alleviation". Population is indeed important but largely ignored area, albeit, one wonders what great wonder can the PM office deliver when population is a provincial subject.

The policy also promises to facilitate electronic payments to promote freelancing and innovation challenge for start-up. Again, a right step, but it takes an imagination to pitch it as a pro-poor measure in a country where the poor are uneducated, and lack the skills needed for freelancing and start-ups.

Next stop, some examples of bad policy positions in Ehsaas.

For instance, Ehsaas promises "a need-based system in the framework of the new NFC Award", and that "members of the Council of Common Interests will be encouraged to improve the allocation formula to achieve our common goal of making opportunities equal for all Pakistani citizens." The PM would do well to remember that the CCI cannot be used to hammer out an NFC arrangement, whereas the federal government has only one vote in the NFC. Why make promises you cannot keep?

Likewise, they want to amend the constitution to move article 38(d) from the “Principles of Policy” section into the “Fundamental Rights” section. “This change will make provision of food, clothing, housing, education and medical relief for citizens who cannot earn a livelihood due to infirmity, sickness or unemployment, a state responsibility.”

This is again a promise which the PTI does not necessarily have the numbers to implement. Remember this is supposed to be a policy document not a wish list or a manifesto. A policy document that is not actionable, loses credibility. Besides, without thinking this through, this proposed amendment can create more problems for a devolved, fiscally constrained, and unresponsive state.

Much like the case of population, Ehsaas has abundant promises that lie in the provincial domain. For instance, registration of slum and Katchi Abadis residents to facilitate their transparent inclusion in the event of subsequent commercialization of the area; or initiative to address spurious and adulterated milk; or a policy to promote effective husbandry and hay and silage making.

Throughout the document, there is no discussion on how the wish list will be achieved; details of or even an emphasis on the strengthening of the CCI and the interprovincial coordination ministry are not even briefly mentioned when in fact the centre’s role in most of the poverty reduction measures enlisted in Ehsaas are provincial subjects.

Onto the strange bits that makes Ehsaas look like an exam copy of matriculation student who just wants to fill in the pages to impress the examiner. This include plans to earmark a share for poor in allocating Khokhas (cafés), tea shops, newspaper stands, shoe polishing booths in government offices and property; a “garbage collector challenge”; and the reinvention of traditional ‘Thela’. These are too trivial items for a ‘national policy’; it only makes a joke of the document. Is it really Islamabad’s job to run a garbage collector challenge as a matter of ‘policy’?

In the final analyses, there is nothing new about Ehsaas. While there are one-word or single-line mentions (passing references really) of justice, rights, opportunity and accountability, Ehsaas essentially reflects old thinking through its motely of random ingredients of various endowments & handouts. This in turn, reflects a poor understanding of poverty on the part of its drafters.

<https://www.brecorder.com/2019/04/22/491365/ehsaas-the-good-the-bad-the-strange/>

MAY, 2019

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 29th TO MAY 5th 2019

10M KIDS AFFECTED BY CHRONIC MALNUTRITION: EXPERTS CONCERNED OVER REPORT

RECORDER REPORT | MAY 4TH, 2019 | ISLAMABAD

A panel of health experts expressed concern over the fact that more than four out of every 10 children under the age of five years (over 10 million children) are affected by chronic malnutrition. A media dialogue on the nutrition situation affecting children, adolescents and women of Pakistan was organised by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) here on Friday.

The experts expressed concern that more than four out of every 10 children under five years of age are affected by stunting. Stunting is caused by chronic malnutrition. It inhibits children’s cognitive and physical development, damaging their growth in the long run. More than 15 percent of children in the same age-group suffer from severe acute malnutrition – an illness that can also be fatal.

The dialogue, held in collaboration with the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulation and Coordination (MNHSRC), Government of Pakistan, highlighted the challenges and opportunities related to nutrition in the country.

The interactive discussion featured distinguished guests such as Kanwal Shauzab, Member National Assembly and Parliamentary Secretary Planning Development & Reform, Dr Nausheen Hamid, MNA and Parliamentary Secretary NHSRC, Dr Abdul Baseer Khan Achakzai, Director Nutrition MNHSRC, Muhammad Aslam Shaheen, Chief Nutrition, Planning and Development Division, Planning Commission, Ministry of Planning Development and Reform, and the focal point for Scaling Up Nutrition in Pakistan, and Dr Saba Shuja, nutrition officer UNICEF Pakistan.

The nutritional status of adolescent girls and women impacts the growth and development of their future children. Attempts for reducing the number of underweight and anaemic adolescent girls between the ages of 10 and 19 years have also been slow. The diets of adolescent girls and women are often too poor to meet nutritional needs for their healthy growth and development as well as that of the future children.

Immediate and exclusive breastfeeding is critical for the achievement of many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It improves nutrition, prevents child mortality and decreases the risk of non-communicable diseases, and supports cognitive development and education. Breastfeeding is also an enabler to ending poverty, promoting economic growth and reducing inequalities. All these are global goals under the SDGs that Pakistan has also committed to achieving.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/05/20190504469771/>

PM IMRAN ANNOUNCES POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMME FOR LABOURERS

By News Desk Published: May 1, 2019

Prime Minister Imran Khan on Wednesday announced the launch of “Mazdoor-Ka-Ehsaas” initiative in a message he sent to not only Pakistan but the world on Labour Day.

In his message, he said that the initiative “is one of the pillars under the government’s priority social protection and poverty alleviation programme.”

It will be aimed at developing social protection measures for workers in the informal sector.

PM Imran also highlighted the policies undertaken for the welfare of overseas Pakistani workers under the Ehsaas initiative, “such as enhancing the number and quality of institutional arrangements that are responsible for protecting migrant workers, creating online interfaces to facilitate them, negotiations with host countries aimed at increasing the duration of the first contract of migrant workers and subsidies on air tickets for the workers who haven’t returned home for seven years.”

He said his government was trying to “strengthen the labour market and have a plan to create 10 million jobs over five years in key sectors like housing, SMEs, ICT, health, education, green economy and tourism”.

“The government is focused on regulating labour market along with a job placement mechanism supported by public-private partnerships to improve skill matching; enforcement of minimum wages; employees social welfare and measures against workplace harassment,” the premier maintained in his message.

He also said that Pakistan will join the global community today to commemorate the Labour Day and pay tributes to the heroic struggle and sacrifices rendered by the workers in Chicago for upholding their fundamental rights and ensuring a fair working environment.

Imran said that historic day also afforded the opportunity to recognise the valuable contributions that workers make for the progress and development of countries all over the world.

“I take this opportunity to felicitate the workers with the belief and confidence that they will become our partner in realizing Naya Pakistan and continue to participate in the development of the country with renewed zeal and vigour,” PM said.

President Dr Arif Alvi also reiterated the government commitment to effectively protect the rights of workers to help them meet emerging challenges of globalisation.

President in his message said the government will do its utmost to ameliorate and improve the socio-economic conditions of workers.

He said that this day is not only a reminder of the struggle of workers but also an acknowledgement of their importance for national growth and progress.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1963213/1-pm-imran-khan-announces-programme-labourers-may-1/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 13th TO MAY 19th 2019

DEVALUATION TO PUSH MASSES BELOW POVERTY LINE

Mansoor Ahmad May 19, 2019

LAHORE: The depreciation of rupee is a forced indirect tax on the poor that nullifies government narrative of protecting low end consumers from taxes. The businesses, including manufacturers and importers recover the devaluation cost from the consumers living on fixed income.

Much has been written on the impact of devaluation. It has been pointed out that devaluation impact on increase in state's foreign loans in rupee terms would increase the debt burden of the government with subsequent increase in debt servicing.

Also, petroleum products rates would shoot up corresponding to the rate of devaluation.

The cost of imports similarly would enhance in line with the decline in rupee value.

Duties and sales tax would also increase on enhanced dollar value of the imports that would compound the increase in costs. Electricity rates would have to be adjusted in line with the decline in rupee value, because almost 45 percent of the power is generated from imported fuels.

The rates of imported LNG would also increase. The cost of all imported inputs would also increase.

All these impacts have direct impact on the consumers, particularly those living at the edge of poverty. It is a well known fact that majority of the Pakistanis live in transitional state economically.

They periodically move above the poverty line when the economy is growing, but fall back in poverty when the economy is in stress. Even if economy is not under much stress, they feel the pinch whenever the price increases without corresponding increase in their incomes.

As far as the trade and industry is concerned, they may or may not feel the impact of devaluation on their profits. Businessmen pass on the increased cost to the consumers.

For some, the sales might go down as people lose purchasing power. However, there are certain products like food items that have to be consumed so the consumption would not be much affected and so will be the profits of the manufacturers/sellers.

For instance, there would not be much decline in the use of edible oil. The edible oil manufacturers import raw edible oil and process it for local consumers. They will increase the retail price and incorporate the increased cost in their margin.

In the same way, transporters would increase the fares and for shipping goods. Resultantly, the rates of even those items would increase in which there is no imported component.

The increase in power rates would increase the manufacturing cost of even products made from local inputs. Inflation would increase that would force the central bank to increase the policy rates.

This in turn would increase the cost of goods and services. These increases would be cyclic, triggering the increase of the other.

These high prices would impact the fixed income groups more than the businesses. The income of salaried class has never increased.

So they have to manage their needs within their income. The high salaried class would face problem in purchasing durable luxury goods or replacing the old ones with new.

The middle income group would have to compromise on frequent visits to famous eateries and curtail leisure drives on their vehicles and use of air conditioners.

These savings would enable them to spend more on food items.

The low paid employees get devastated when the rupee declines as sharply as it is declining these days. Rupee value has declined from Rs104 against one dollar to almost Rs150.

Their real income has declined in dollar terms by almost 45.8 percent. A minimum wager that was drawing a salary of Rs15,000 when dollar value was Rs104, was in fact earning \$144 per month. With no increase in minimum wage, the wage in dollar terms has declined to \$100/month.

These minimum wage earners are finding it very hard to even cover their food needs. They would have to live below poverty line.

The most depressing point in this regard is that there are hardly 25 workers in our labor force that enjoy the luxury of even this meager wage. The government has lost the writ to enforce minimum wage.

A glaring example came in the limelight after the bomb blast outside Data Darbar in Lahore, where four security guards lost their life.

It was found that they were drawing Rs8,000/month from registered security firm that hired them.

Most workers draw similar salaries. It is unimaginable how they survived even before the devaluation. Would they now?

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/473117-devaluation-to-push-masses-below-poverty-line>

‘INVESTMENT IN AGRI-VALUE CHAIN IMPERATIVE FOR POVERTY REDUCTION’

BR Research May 13, 2019

An interview with Simi Kamal, Head of Programmes at Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund

Simi Kamal is no stranger to the development sector in Pakistan. A geographer by training, she has been associated with areas of poverty reduction, social uplift, women empowerment, water, and environment for nearly four decades.

In her current role at Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund, she serves as Head of Programs. Here, she oversees grant-making and donor-funded programs across the various social sectors covered under organization's mandate. In addition, Simi is also the founder chairperson of Hisaar Foundation, which focuses on water, food and livelihood security.

A development specialist, she has worked as a consultant and headed multi-million-dollar programs both in Pakistan and across the globe; and worked in over fifty countries. In the past, she has worked with the Planning Commission on several poverty reduction policy papers and on the state of poverty in Pakistan and South Asia.

Passionate for both physical and human geography, her career has revolved around the themes intertwining land, people, and water. In this two-part conversation, BR Research discusses her current involvement with PPAF. The second part of this conversation will focus on themes related to water insecurity in Pakistan.

BR Research: For our readers, who may not be familiar with PPAF's history, please share a brief overview of your organization's roots and its current mandate.

Simi Kamal: Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) is Pakistan's premier organization working on poverty alleviation and poverty graduation. Started 20 years ago, PPAF is the pioneer of the microfinance sector in Pakistan and is assisting the government of Pakistan in meeting its development agenda. Specifically, PPAF's objective is graduating and moving people out of poverty and into prosperity.

Initially, PPAF was supported through funds from the Government of Pakistan, a small grant from International Fund for Agriculture Development and extensive funding by the World Bank through three big programs encompassing micro finance, social mobilization and infrastructure development. To date PPAF has disbursed more than \$2 billion through grants and financial services to effectively respond to poverty alleviation needs in Pakistan.

The core values of the organization are inclusion, participation accountability, transparency & stewardship. We ensure that all affected groups and communities are catered to without any domination by elites or by the perspectives of any single group.

We have in place legal and reporting frameworks and organizational structures, processes and procedures to ensure that funds are used in the most optimal manner. We are very transparent because we substantiate our achievements by evidence and clear reporting on our activities.

Our fifth core value is very interesting. We refer to it as stewardship; that is, responsible management of that which has been entrusted to us in the ecosystems and communities we serve. As caretakers of the environment and its resources, we believe in making a constructive effect within the ambit of our influence.

BRR: What areas of social uplift does PPAF specifically focus on?

SK: We work on improving quality of life of communities and their environments. We achieve that through a variety of interventions. These include social mobilization, financial inclusion, renewable energy sources, livelihood advancement, public goods, small infrastructure and enterprise development.

We also engage when necessary in rehabilitation of health and education. Due to its vast and well-developed network, when needed PPAF have stepped in to assist governmental bodies in disaster management?

BRR: Could you identify the focal geographic regions where PPAF's activities are most concentrated?

SK: Most of our work is concentrated in extreme poverty zones of Pakistan: Balochistan, KP, coastal Sindh, and districts of southern Punjab. Similarly, former FATA and PATA regions of KP province have received PPAF's special attention in the past due to extremely high levels of poverty and lack of state intervention.

We believe that we need to bring these backward areas at par with the relatively more developed peri-urban and urban regions by reducing the incidence of extreme neglect. And the way to achieve that goal is to concentrate our efforts there and to help lift these areas out of poverty.

In Pakistan the notion of rural economy, sadly, is intertwined with underdevelopment. Thus, our focus remains on rural poverty as we believe that rural districts not only suffer from higher incidence of extreme poverty in percentage terms, but also as a larger nationwide scale.

However, the phenomenon of rural to urban migration has picked pace in recent years, as economic growth has become concentrated in what are traditionally considered urban sectors. Therefore, we foresee that over time PPAF we will have to also start working on programs that alleviate urban poverty.

BRR: What is your view of social welfare and poverty focused programs led by the government of Pakistan? Is PPAF engaged with the same in any way?

SK: Under the mandate of Benazir Income Support Program (BISP), the government has made itself responsible for the welfare of families who lie between 0 and 16.7 on the Poverty Score Card. Social safety nets and unconditional cash transfers are among major social protection services that are offered under this program. Other programs geared towards achieving the same goal are funded through other government related initiatives such as Bait-ul-Mal and Zakat.

We believe that in order to move people up the Poverty Score Card ladder, it is insufficient to hand out cash transfers and social protection that takes monetary form only. We help poor people graduate out of poverty by providing them with livelihoods, assets, vocational training, interest free loans, linking to micro credit and developing social capital and physical and economic infrastructure.

BRR: You spoke of interest-free and concessionary loans disbursed to provide economic support. Does PPAF run a structured operation for microfinance loans or does this exist as an ancillary service on the organization's radar?

SK: PPAF is a major player in the microfinance sector. Back when we entered this area, there were only two to three microfinance institutions. That's nearly 15 years ago – at that time, microfinance lending constituted a major part of our developmental initiatives portfolio.

Since then, more than 60 microfinance institutions have been established, a majority helped and supported by PPAF. Meanwhile, the government has brought microfinance under banking laws. Under these regulations, only those organizations can issue micro finance loans that are registered as micro finance institutions.

So, PPAF has separated its microfinance operations into a new company called Pakistan Micro Finance Investment Company (PMIC). Forty-nine percent of the shareholding in this institution is held by PPAF, and income generated is used to fund PPAF programs.

Remaining share is held by German Development Bank and Department for International Development (DFID) of United Kingdom, UK through its Karandaaz initiative.

Now that microfinance is handled by a separate entity, most of PPAF's core activities are focused around creating livelihoods, asset transfers, interest free loans, community infrastructure and integrated development.

BRR: Could you please describe examples of few specific initiatives taken by PPAF in these key areas? Are these initiatives mostly funded by foreign donors or PPAF's own revenue sources?

SK: Two ongoing programs in KP are funded by the German development bank, called KfW. One provides infrastructure for renewable energy in rural areas. The second project aims to achieve integration of small infrastructure with rural livelihoods through area development.

A five-year IFAD funded National Poverty Graduation Program has just commenced, as have a series of pilot programs focusing on agriculture and livestock funded by our own sources.

BRR: You referred to a program funded by the Italian government? Please share its broad contours.

SK: The Program for Poverty Reduction is currently operating in two provinces, Balochistan and KP. It was developed with the Italian Government through its agency for development cooperation.

The idea is sustainable condition of social and economic development in districts with extreme poverty such as Upper Dir; Lower Dir; Bajaur; Swat; and Chitral districts in KP. Districts from Balochistan include Zhob; Qila Saif Ullah; Pishin; Qila Abdullah; Gwadar; Panjgur; and Lasbela.

The initiative has been running in these districts for several years and we are now working towards closing the core development activities. The objective was to reduce poverty through the creation of sustainable conditions of social and economic development including income and productive capacity. Social mobilization, livelihood enhancement, small scale infrastructure, basic health services and basic educational systems were our core guiding principles.

Right now, we are experimenting with some interesting new concepts. For example, we are working on integrated area development where all the inputs go into the same area through various programs. We are also working to see if we should concentrate on entire districts and consider pulling the whole district out of poverty. In that context, we have developed the Chitral Growth Strategy and we are working to develop Chitral district.

BRR: You are identified as a major feminist voice in the developmental community. Does that also reflect into PPAF's initiatives? Please name any specific projects aimed at women empowerment.

SK: Women are at the heart of our work at PPAF. We ensure that they are addressed in all our programs. Women's share in all our programs is well above 50 percent, as they are specially targeted as beneficiaries of these initiatives. We define the share in terms of benefits and participation in institutions of the people that we foster at different levels (community organizations, village organizations and UC based organizations). PPAF has 120,000 community groups, 11,800 village organizations and 800 UC based organizations.

So, for example, in terms of micro-credit granted, over 60 percent beneficiaries were women. Similarly, over 46 percent of revenue-generating assets have been issued to women. This is not an unintended consequence but a matter of policy. We feel proud to note that in terms of community organization membership, three-fifth of our members are women.

BRR: In terms of a breakdown in percentage, what is the extent of donations received by PPAF from foreign agencies and multilateral development sector organizations?

SK: It needs to be emphasized that most of PPAF funding comes through the government of Pakistan in Pak rupees.

Loans and contributions made by foreign donor agencies to Government of Pakistan are disbursed to PPAF as grants from Government of Pakistan. While the government does not define the mandate of our programs, it is a party to agreements reached with multilateral and bilateral donors.

Thus, funds are disbursed to PPAF by the government of Pakistan, while we have full control of its planning and execution. The organization has an independent board comprising of nine members, three of whom are nominated by the government. The government is therefore fully aware of the work that we are doing and is part of the governance of this organization.

BRR: Could you identify your organization's major planned initiatives for the future?

SK: We are undergoing a phase of developing a strategy for the future in sync with global trends and in line with the mandate of the new government in Islamabad. We don't believe that the spectrum of our work will change but we may develop better ways of working in terms of reaching our goals.

We would like to work on building and funding valuing chains and help them progress into SMEs. For example, we have worked on olive cultivation in Balochistan and KP, which is currently in nascent stages. To expand this initiative, we are initiating a study tour to Italy. And we want to create a value chain for olive oil, which is a growing market in Pakistan.

BRR: Given PPAF's significant footprint in rural areas, what is the organization's involvement in developing infrastructure for water?

SK: Over the past 20 years, PPAF has had a huge footprint on water sector in the rural areas of the country. As a trained geographer, I work with PPAF to create a balance in using water resources and preventing unsustainable exploitation. We ensure that all the work that we do on social infrastructure does not damage the environment and does not further exacerbate the challenges currently facing the water economy.

BRR: As concluding remarks, how would you spell out PPAF's vision for poverty alleviation in Pakistan?

SK: We want all of Pakistan lifted out of poverty. In this respect, we are very clear that we need to redouble our focus in the rural economy, because that is where most of Pakistan's population still resides. Thus, we envision an increase in our footprint in agriculture, livestock, and water-related infrastructure as part of an integrated approach and taking financial inclusion in all its forms to the least served areas. We believe Pakistan's economy is largely agriculture and livestock based, and thus developing agriculturally based value chains (and providing assets, interest loans and training in these areas) can prove instrumental in lifting people out of poverty. This will, of course, involve developing in the long run a series of downstream high-value social enterprises, businesses and industries that rely on locally produced raw material.

<https://www.brecorder.com/2019/05/13/496411/investment-in-agri-value-chain-imperative-for-poverty-reduction/>

WELFARE MEASURES

By Editorial Published: May 13, 2019

The economically-distressed common people need relief. Prime Minister Imran Khan is of course not oblivious of the increasing economic difficulties of the masses caused by the galloping rise in prices of essential commodities due mainly to massive thievery and mismanagement by previous regimes. He is taking corrective measures. He realises what a poet has said: A dog starved at his Master's Gate/Predicts the ruin of the State.

The other day the PM presided over a high-level meeting where he announced the government had initiated 36 social welfare projects. Talking about the recently-launched 'Ehsas' welfare programme, he said it would not only help fulfil the state's responsibility to address issues like poverty, joblessness and health but also ensure effective utilisation of government resources for welfare of the people. To ensure good governance, he stressed the need for introduction of a comprehensive local government system for empowerment of the people. He also called for provision of better facilities to businesses. The PTI government has already taken steps towards a better local government system in Punjab. At the Centre, it has taken several measures for the betterment of the people like Panahgah shelters and interest-free loans for small farmers. The Bank of Khyber is working towards creation of jobs in erstwhile Fata. It is providing loans ranging between Rs50,000 and Rs100,000 to the youth in tribal districts so that they can start their own businesses. The bank also plans to launch projects for empowering women, economically.

There are indications that the PM is moving towards a 'New Deal' like US President Franklin D Roosevelt gave his country in the wake of the Great Depression of the 1930s. The New Deal was a series of programmes, public welfare projects, financial reforms and regulations enacted and implemented between 1933 and 1936. The New Deal gave the desired results. Pakistan too needs a New Deal. There can be no two opinions about this.

Published in The Express Tribune, May 13th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1971633/6-welfare-measures/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 20th TO MAY 26th 2019

FOUR NEWBORN DIE OF MALNUTRITION IN THARPARKAR

RECORDER REPORT | MAY 25TH, 2019 | THARPARKAR

Four newborn children died of malnutrition and epidemics in different areas of Tharparkar, health department said on Friday. Among dozens affected of malnutrition and under treatment at Civil Hospital Mithi and Tehsil Hospital Chachro, four newborn children breathed their last.

The latest deaths have taken the death toll in Tharparkar in May to 50 and 326 in the current year. According to the health department, every year 1,500 children die due to malnutrition, infections and lack of proper medical facilities in the remote region.

A report released by the United Nation's Children Fund in April 2018 stated that Pakistan is among countries with the highest infant mortality rate, with 22 infants dying before turning one-month-old. Among these countries, eight are in Africa and two in Asia, including Afghanistan which is ranked third.

"Pakistan is the riskiest place to be born as measured by its newborn mortality rate," the report stated. "A baby born in Pakistan is almost 50 times more likely to die during his or her first month than a baby born in Japan, Iceland and Singapore".

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/05/20190525479892/>

NUMBER OF MICROFINANCE BORROWERS REACHES 7.1 MILLION IN Q1

RECORDER REPORT | MAY 24TH, 2019 | ISLAMABAD

Pakistan Microfinance Network (PMN) Thursday released its quarterly outreach report showing an increase in the active borrowers of microfinance loans from 6.9 million in the last quarter (October-December) of 2018 to 7.1 million in the first quarter (January-March) of 2019.

The quarter under review also witnessed a strong growth in the Gross Loan Portfolio (GLP) of the industry increasing by 5% to surpass Rs 288 billion as compared to over Rs 274 billion in the previous quarter. This significant growth was primarily driven by the Microfinance Banks (MFBs) whose number of active clients was raised by 5.5% while GLP by 6%.

The growth in micro credit outreach remained modest as the microfinance banks continue to witness unprecedented rise in their GLP. Khushhali, Telenor and Mobilink microfinance banks made up 37% of the total portfolio of the market with over Rs 106 billion. The largest contributor was Telenor Microfinance Bank which added approximately 56,000 new borrowers during the quarter. Akhuwat remained the largest provider in terms of active borrowers to the sector with 999,930 borrowers and a loan portfolio of over PKR 17 billion. Overall, industry's portfolio at risk (PAR) less than >30 days increased slightly from 2.2% to 2.4%, primarily within the MFB and MFI peer groups, report said.

In terms of micro savings, the number of savers has seen a considerable growth of 11.6% reaching 39.4 million as compared to 35.3 million in 2018, whereas, the value of savings declined in this quarter to PKR 237.3 billion. Ubank contributed the most with PKR 1.2 billion, with TMFB and Finca following behind. Moreover, Mobilink Microfinance Bank remained the market leader with 45.6% of the total active savers in the sector.

Micro insurance also exhibited a positive trend in the first quarter of 2019 – policy holders increased by 3% to surpass 8.7 million while the sum insured depicted an increase of 3.4% to reach PKR 257 billion. Kashf, KBL and TMFB had the largest portfolios with 58.5 percent of the total sum insured in the sector. By the end of the quarter, credit life and health made up 55 and 44 percent of the total policies, report added.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/05/20190524478816/>

JUNE, 2019

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 27th TO JUNE 2nd 2019

BILAWAL CHAIRS MEETING TO REVIEW ‘SOCIAL PROTECTION STRATEGY’ FOR NEXT SINDH BUDGET

The Newspaper’s Staff Reporter Updated June 02, 2019

KARACHI: The Sindh government on Saturday briefed the chairman of the Pakistan Peoples Party, Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, on the social protection strategy to design the next fiscal’s budget in a manner that the ruling party’s promises made to the voters were fulfilled, officials in the Sindh government said.

A meeting, presided over by Mr Bhutto-Zardari, was held at the CM House, where Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, ministers Azra Pechuho, Ismail Rahu, Imtiaz Shaikh and Saeed Ghani, adviser to the CM Murtaza Wahab, the chief secretary and several other government functionaries discussed a briefing titled ‘Peoples promises’ presented by coordinator to the CM Haris Gazdar.

Officials said the strategy would be finalised in a week or so before it was formally applied to the next fiscal’s budget expected to be unveiled in mid-June.

“All the promises made by our chairman [of PPP] during the election campaign will be fulfilled through our social protection strategy,” a government spokesperson quoted CM Shah as saying at the meeting.

“It is order of chairman sahib that the promises on which our party has got people’s votes [in last year’s elections] should be fulfilled in all circumstances,” said Mr Shah. “The people of Sindh are to be safeguarded by all ways and means.”

The strategy, as the officials generally shared with the media, included plans for poverty alleviation, good medical facilities, Benazir Kissan Card, Benazir Women Agriculture Workers Programme and internship guarantee programme.

Mr Bhutto-Zardari said the PPP had always served the people; and through that strategy document that service had to be taken to the next level by improving it at grass-roots level.

“I want to make sure that every poor family should get meals thrice a day, shelter to live in and employment and means of livelihood,” said the PPP chairman.

Separately, Chief Minister Shah presided over a meeting at the CM House, where he said the completion of the LBOD (Left Bank Outfall Drain) scheme would provide water to Thar Coal Block-II.

He said it was an important scheme for further investment in the energy sector, asking the officials to go for appropriate technology for pre-treatment such as reverse osmosis or membrane bio-reactor (MBR) as soon as possible.

The meeting was held to discuss installation of pre-treatment for RO plants at Nabisar for Thar Coal Block-II. Energy Minister Imtiaz Shaikh, special assistant to the CM on irrigation Ashfaq Memon, P&D chairperson Naheed Shah, secretaries for energy, finance and irrigation and other officials attended.

The chief minister was told that the scheme for pre-treatment at Nabisar for Thar Coal Block-II was approved by the government at Rs3.25 billion. The scheme was prepared to feed 60 cusecs of raw water to RO plants. The design of pre-treatment was based on an ultra filtration basis.

The work later was stopped on the scheme and on a request of power companies, a revised scheme of Rs14.3bn was prepared based on the MBR technology and it was designed for the inflow of 75 cusecs.

The planning and development department raised serious objections against the rise in the cost from Rs3.25bn to Rs14.325bn and the matter was referred to the provincial cabinet. On the recommendation of the cabinet committee, Nespak was hired as a third-party consultant for recommendation of technology and financial review.

Now, the power companies have requested that due to urgency for operation of power units updated ultra filtration technology for discharge of 75 cusecs raw water should be approved to save the time required by the consultant, the meeting was told.

The chief minister asked the energy minister to call a joint meeting of power companies, SECM and Nespak to discuss the urgency of selection of the technology.

“We should resolve this matter so that operation of power plants being installed there can be started,” he said.

Published in Dawn, June 2nd, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1485941/bilawal-chairs-meeting-to-review-social-protection-strategy-for-next-sindh-budget>

ASIA-PACIFIC GOVERNMENTS ADOPT REGIONAL ACTIONS TO FULFIL PROMISE OF LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND

RECORDER REPORT | JUN 1ST, 2019 | BANGKOK

Senior government representatives from across Asia and the Pacific on Friday called for greater efforts to advance equality and empowerment for over four billion people across the region. Over 800 delegates attended the 75th Session of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) held from 27 to 31 May in Bangkok, which concluded with the adoption of nine resolutions aimed at strengthening regional cooperation and partnerships towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Addressing the closing ceremony, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of ESCAP Armida Alisjahbana said the decisions reached by member States will help guide the work of the regional body. “The resolutions are firmly anchored in the 2030 Agenda and provide solid foundations on which to build upon. Many are aligned with the priorities I set out earlier this week and are essential to achieving a transformed and resilient society in Asia and the Pacific.”

She further emphasized, “To deliver against these priorities, and others set by the 2030 Agenda, our ability to work effectively at the sub regional and regional level is critical. I am therefore pleased we were able to hold the first-ever dialogue with all major sub regional groups present in one session. I hope this will be a first step towards more systematically identifying common priorities to complement each other’s work, and to facilitate best practice exchange between subregions.”

The theme of this year's week-long meeting highlighted the need for greater empowerment and inclusion of marginalized groups. A report released to coincide with the meeting highlighted that the region was not on track to meet any of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

Despite significant increase in the availability of SDG indicators since 2017, data gaps remain for two thirds of the global SDG indicators. Endorsing the Declaration on Navigating Policy with Data to Leave No One Behind, member States recognized reliable and timely statistics as indispensable for evidence-based decision making, transparency, accountability and inclusive societies.

Innovation and use of new technologies for sustainable development and building community resilience also featured prominently among the resolutions passed. Delegates endorsed a call to advance science, technology and innovation, as well as implementation of the Asia-Pacific Plan of Action on Space Applications for Sustainable Development (2018 – 2030), and the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway.

Member States also agreed on the urgent need for regional cooperation to tackle air pollution challenges, and diversification of energy sources in this respect. Air pollution has increased considerably in recent years leading to a rise in premature deaths, threatening livelihoods and the sustainable development in the region, particularly in many cities with growing populations where air pollution is a major public health hazard.

Strengthening the development of national and local disaster risk reduction strategies was also underlined as a priority, through the Asia Regional Plan and Action Plan 2018-2020 for Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. The Commission further committed to strengthen the link between national, regional and global follow-up and review to the 2030 Agenda, and to continue providing capacity building assistance to landlocked developing countries towards the smooth implementation of the six priorities of the Vienna Programme of Action.-PR

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/06/20190601483064/>

PUSHED INTO ABJECT POVERTY: A TALE OF HUNGER AND LOYALTY

By Rana Yasif Published: June 1, 2019

LAHORE: Hina, the wife of a Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's stalwart whose left hand was amputated after suffering an electric shock while displaying banners of the party, said she could not believe how quickly the time has changed.

"I am alive but I die every passing day when I see my children with their eyes stick to the door awaiting someone to feed us as we mostly break our fasts with salt and water," she said.

This is the story of a destitute father, a mother and their five children. The family struggles every day to make ends meet.

"I am living only for my children or I would have committed suicide due to starvation," she said. "My children make demands of samosa and other snacks for Iftar but I have no option but to keep mum."

Hina said she could not believe how quickly the time could change and people turn a blind eye to the issues of party activists. Expressing her gloom, she said her husband was a party worker for Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz who loved his leader. During the day of the former prime minister's arrival from London, her husband was displaying banners at Shahdara when he suffered a heavy electricity shock.

As a result of the incident, his left hand was amputated while the right hand requires a surgery. Hina has no money for his medical treatment.

“Neither can I see my husband’s deteriorating health nor the poor condition of my children who put demands of different food items but I remain unable to meet them.”

Hina said she had been moving from pillar to post and visited former chief justice of Pakistan Mian Saqib Nisar but all of her efforts were in vain. She added that she also submitted complaints to former chief minister Shahbaz Sharif’s office and his son Hamza Shahbaz Sharif’s office for their support but no one addressed her concerns. Her grievances were not addressed by any of the PML-N leaders.

“It is regrettable that my husband’s hand was amputated for doing work of the very political party whose leaders are even not ready to meet with the victim,” she said. Her husband was taken outside by different MPAs that day for decorating the area with banners and banners when the unpleasant incident occurred.

“Since the day of the incident no one has visited us even to console us,” Hina said while shedding tears. Hina works as a dishwasher and also stitches clothes but the money is not enough for her family’s survival. Her husband is unable to work now and all her children are minors.

Sajjad Ali, Hina’s husband, said he regrets going outside to work that day. He held himself responsible for being amputated, adding that small party workers are always ready to sacrifice their lives for their leaders but when the workers pass through bad times, the leaders turned a blind eye to their plight.

Sajjad further said the most difficult moment for him was to respond to the question when he was asked whether any of the PML-N leaders had visited him. The second painful moment for him was when he heard his children discussing that no one has come at their door to even see the family.

“This is the first Eid-ul-Fitr for our children when they have no new clothes to wear and this moment is not less than a moment of doomsday for us,” Sajjad said while shedding tears. “My children sometimes console me and say that their Baba need not worry about their Eid clothes but I know this is just their way of comforting me.”

Sajjad added that his family is not greedy for money. He further said, “Our God will help us and steer us out of this situation.” He left the youth with a message to think a hundred times before rendering their services for political parties.

Published in The Express Tribune, June 1st, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1984527/1-pushed-abject-poverty-tale-hunger-loyalty/>

VARIOUS PROGRAMMES BEING IMPLEMENTED TO ALLEVIATE POVERTY, NA BODY TOLD

ABDUL RASHEED AZAD | MAY 30TH, 2019 | ISLAMABAD

Advisor to the Prime Minister on Poverty Alleviation and Social Protection Division (PA&SPD), Dr Sania Nishtar has said that the government is committed to alleviating poverty from the country for which various programmes are being implemented at federal and provincial levels.

While briefing the National Assembly Standing Committee on Cabinet Secretariat which met here under the chairmanship of Syed Amin-ul-Haque, she briefed the panel about the functions and organisational structure of the division and autonomous/attached departments under its administrative control.

Nistar said that the PA&SPD was created to administer the policy regarding social protection, formulate strategies for poverty alleviation and establishment of various innovative challenges to design initiatives for poverty alleviation in coordination with the relevant stakeholders.

The special assistant to the PM apprised the committee that PA&SPD was created with the basic aim to bring all the departments and organisations dealing with the social protection and poverty alleviation under one roof.

She said that the division would administer the policy regarding social protection, formulate strategies for poverty alleviation and establishment of various innovative challenges to design initiatives for poverty alleviation in coordination with the relevant stakeholders.

She further informed that the present democratic government is conscious of the plight of marginalized segments of the society and all those living below the poverty line; therefore it has launched a comprehensive and multidimensional pro-poor Ehsaas programme.

She said that the programme shall play a pivotal role in creating a welfare state. She said that economic empowerment of women and human development are also highlights of the programme. The committee appreciated the creation of the PA&SPD, however, it decided to have a comprehensive briefing on Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal and Benazir Income Support Programme in next meeting of the committee.

The committee later discussed the Constitution (Amendment) Bill, 2018 (Amendment of Article 27), moved by Aliya Kamran, MNA; and Federal Public Service Commission (Validation of Rules) Ordinance, 2018 (Ord. No. XII of 2018) and pended further discussion on both the Bills for its next meeting.

The committee directed Law Division to record its views on the summary moved by Establishment Division at the earliest so that it could take up the Bill in its next meeting. The committee also directed the Establishment Division to apprise the committee about the FPSC Ordinance in light of the latest order of the Supreme Court.

The meeting was attended by Ali Muhammad Khan, Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs, Dr Sania Nishtar, Advisor to the Prime Minister on Poverty Alleviation and Social Protection Division; Saleem Rehman, Ali Nawaz Awan, Muhammad Aslam Khan, Uzma Riaz, Muhammad Hashim, Shahnaz Saleem Malik, Syed Mehmood Shah, Aliya Kamran, Secretary PA&SSD, Chief Executive Poverty Alleviation Fund, Managing Director Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal and Senior Officers of the concerned departments.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/05/20190530482256/>

PM TO LAUNCH QARZ-I-HASNA, ASSET TRANSFER SCHEMES NEXT MONTH

Syed Irfan Raza Updated May 28, 2019

ISLAMABAD: The government will start next month the process of distributing over 80,000 loans and moveable/immovable assets every month to the deserving families under Qarz-i-Hasna and assets transfer schemes.

Both schemes will be launched by Prime Minister Imran Khan under the ambitious Ehsaas programme.

According to the Prime Minister Office, under the Ehsaas Qarz-i-Hasna scheme, over 80,000 loans will be disbursed every month among youth and women, enabling them to undertake their own business ventures and help their families extricate from poverty trap. These loans would be prioritised in the underdeveloped districts.

Under the asset transfer scheme, people will be given livestock (goats and chickens), agriculture tools and supplies, sewing machines or material to support local crafts, small shops or cash to help them start small businesses. "Assets" under this scheme will be given as one-time support and are not expected to be returned.

Appreciating the efficacy of the existing programme, Prime Minister Khan approved injection of an additional amount of Rs5 billion into the existing fund so that the programme could be launched in collaboration with the existing partners of the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund. "We aim to turn Pakistan into a welfare state based on the model of Riyasat-i-Madina that takes full ownership of the needs of its poor and vulnerable," said the prime minister.

Approves injection of additional Rs5bn into existing fund for ambitious Ehsaas programme

The decision was taken on Monday during a briefing by Dr Sania Nishtar, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Social Safety Nets and Poverty Alleviation (PASS), on the status of implementation of the Ehsaas programme.

Ehsaas is a comprehensive and multifaceted programme with 115 policies under four pillars — addressing elitism and making the government system work to create equality; safety nets for the disadvantaged segments of population; jobs and livelihoods; and human capital development. It is an inter-sectoral programme to be implemented by 26 federal agencies, four provinces and special areas.

Dr Sania briefed the prime minister on timelines to implement projects under the Ehsaas Programme and policies related to poverty alleviation and social safety and its attached departments. The timeline was also set for implementation of the Kifalat programme and inclusion of women in it.

She also briefed the prime minister on the safety net Tahaffuz (protection) programme. Details and deadlines for graduation and interest-free loans programme and the new solutions challenge policy for the underdeveloped districts were also discussed. The prime minister was also briefed on a nutrition initiative to address malnutrition in all its forms, the new socio-economic registry which is being executed by the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), the Ehsaas undergraduate student scholarship initiative and plans to extend education conditional cash transfers for such districts.

Dr Sania informed the prime minister that in order to protect and ensure social security net to workers in the informal sector, several weekly meetings of the labour expert working group had been held. Briefing was given on the timeline of policy formulation. Details were also shared about plans to revitalise the trust for voluntary organisations and to make its governance effective and transparent so that the organisation could be used to upscale successful models in the non-governmental sector.

A number of other projects also came under discussion, including a plan to open 20 centres for the special people, opening of National Centre for Human Nutrition, setting up a forum for non-governmental stakeholders and diaspora.

The prime minister was also briefed on governance reforms in safety nets institutions, including the BISP, to ensure maximum transparency and efficiency.

Dr Sania said the policies concerning various components of the Ehsaas programme would be presented before the cabinet after June for its approval.

The prime minister appreciated the progress being made by Dr Sania and her team.

He also approved creation of the Ehsaas Steering Committee which would be headed by the prime minister himself.

A meeting of implementers of the Ehsaas programme at federal and provincial levels will be convened soon to chalk out strategy for roll-out and smooth implementation of the programme components which are responsibilities of ministries other than the division of poverty alleviation and social protection.

Published in Dawn, May 28th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1485003/pm-to-launch-qarz-i-hasna-asset-transfer-schemes-next-month>

CM MURAD FINALISES POVERTY REDUCTION PROGRAMMES FOR NEXT FISCAL YEAR

By Our Correspondent Published: May 28, 2019

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah presided over a meeting on Monday to finalise the Social Protection Strategy, under which poverty reduction programmes were being planned to be launched in the next budget, in order to implement Pakistan Peoples Party's (PPP) election manifesto pledges.

The meeting was attended by Adviser to CM on Information, Law and Anti-Corruption Barrister Murtaza Wahab, CM Coordinator Hariz Gazdar, Planning and Development Chairperson Naheed Shah, Principal Secretary to CM Sajid Jamal Abro, Finance Secretary Najam Shah and other officers.

The CM said that the PPP Chairperson Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has directed him to launch social protection programmes as announced in the 2019 election. These programmes would focus on poverty reduction and provide social security to the marginalised sections of the population, he added.

These programmes include projects for poverty reduction, family health, mother and child support programme, Benazir Hari Card, Benazir Women Agricultural Workers Programme and Internship Guarantee Programme.

According to the CM, some of the poverty reduction programmes were already going-on under different departments but now they would be grouped under a single department so that proper focus is ensured. He directed Naheed Shah to establish a separate unit in her department, in this regard.

Different proposals to reduce poverty were shared including schemes such as advancing small loans, to youth and women for small businesses, which could be returned on easy installments. Women in the agriculture sector would benefit as they would get seeds and fertilizers under this programme while youth would be given scholarships to continue higher education.

The meeting decided to firm up proposals for launching these programmes which would be approved by the relevant forum.

In a separate meeting, the CM reviewed the development portfolio of the health department. Sindh Health Minister Dr Azra Fazal Pechuho, Naheed Shah, Sajid Jamal Abro, health special secretary, finance secretary and others attended the meeting.

The CM was informed that 10 schemes of Rs13.5 billion were in progress against which Rs7.6b has been released. Of the released funds, Rs5b has been utilised and the remaining would also be utilised by the end of the financial year.

The CM said he was keen to complete up-gradation work of DHQ Hospital Mithi at a cost of Rs1.6b, THQ Kashmore at a cost of Rs763.2m and various other projects of upgradation and expansion of DHQs.

The meeting discussed outsourcing all lab facilities in government hospitals so they could run around the clock.

Meanwhile, the CM also visited the Malaysian Consulate and recorded a condolence message in the condolence book opened on the demise of King of Malaysia His Royal Highness Sultan Ahmed Shah Al-Musta'in Billah. He was received by Consul-General Khairul Nazran Abd Rehman on his arrival at the consulate.

Published in The Express Tribune, May 28th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1981617/1-cm-murad-finalises-poverty-reduction-programmes-next-fiscal-year/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUN 3rd TO JUN 9th 2019

CAN THE NAYA PAKISTAN HOUSING PROGRAMME WORK?

Ibrahim Khalil | Umar Nadeem June 09, 2019

Back in mid-April, at a ceremony to mark the transfer of 580 houses to former federal government employees, Federal Minister for Housing Tariq Bashir Cheema could not help himself. He simply had to go off-script.

The written talking points he had been given were the standard platitudinous fare: he was supposed to wax lyrical about how the government cares deeply for people who spent their entire lives in stable, permanent government jobs, enjoying full pensions, and who were about to be handed the keys to heavily-subsidised houses.

But Cheema, an old-school Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) jiyala, once suspected of being in league with Murtaza Bhutto's Al-Zulfikar outfit, is no shy guy. He just could not help himself. As he looked out at the faces of the beaming pensioners, he let slip a telling comment: "It took an entire decade to build 580 houses here. Given that my government has promised to build five million homes through the Naya Pakistan Housing Policy, the rate of delivery by the Pakistan Housing Authority (PHA) is a matter of grave concern."

The PHA, which was responsible for building those houses for retired federal government employees, is not to blame. At least, not entirely. Housing policy in Pakistan tends to be the same as all public policy: of the rich and privileged, by the rich and privileged, for the rich and privileged. The Naya Pakistan Housing Policy (NPHP), which is one of the most ambitious and laudable policy initiatives that any government has ever conceived, will struggle to break the mould. The only way to avoid utter failure for the NPHP is to engage in a substantial re-think of the manner in which the NPHP is being deployed, and a serious examination of who the NPHP is for, versus who is most likely to benefit from it.

Given the severe housing crisis in the country, the government's housing initiative is both important and ambitious. But is it more rhetoric than practical? And what can be done to fix it?

The World Bank estimates that around 47 percent of urban households live in informal settlements (katchi abadis) with limited access to civic infrastructure and sanitary services. The immediate public health costs, and long-term social capital costs, of nearly half the city living in non-house homes are staggering. The total national housing deficit is estimated at over 10 million units, and this gap increases by 350,000 units every year with the incremental deficit expected to rise to 400,000 units per annum in the near future.

Improving the stock of housing is a meaningful mid-term instrument of macroeconomics. One estimate indicates that a 100,000 increase in housing units in a year in Karachi could drive growth in over 50 connected industries and contribute as much as 2.2 percent of the GDP to overall national output. Any increase in housing construction spurs growth right across the economy, including transportation, environmental services and the social sectors.

The NPHP is not the country's first experience with major public housing programs. From Karachi's Korangi in the 1960s to the resettlement of katchi abadi residents (Hawke's Bay) in the 2000s, major increases to the housing stock have been tried before. In 2010, the Government of Punjab launched the Ashiana Housing Scheme targeted at low- and middle-income buyers but delays in construction and balloting led to accusations of irregularity and eventually the arrests of those involved in the project.

Like all reformist political movements that sweep into power, the PTI is struggling to give real world granularity to its lofty goals. It originally committed to delivering five million housing units in five years.

As of June 2019, the government has about 50 months left in office. With zero houses built so far, it would need to construct about 100,000 each month from July 2019 till the next scheduled election in 2023.

But what is more worrisome is that the inexperience of the government in conceiving, formulating, planning, delivering and monitoring very large and ambitious projects may render the genuine effort being invested in NPHP to be ineffective in tackling the spirit of the NPHP. This spirit — to insure Pakistani families and communities against the vagaries of a vastly underdeveloped, unequal and sometimes cruel housing market — cannot be met if the government's efforts to deliver the targets of the NPHP only succeed in establishing greater choice for higher income groups in the country, whilst continuing to ignore the middle and lower income groups.

In short, even if five million houses are not delivered (and it is very unlikely that they will be), the NPHP can be successful if it can penetrate and alter the housing market to the advantage of middle and lower income Pakistanis.

The government's housing policy is a combination of the NPHP and the State Bank of Pakistan's "Policy for Promotion of Low-Cost Housing Finance."

The NPHP is essentially supposed to serve as a policy framework that articulates and tackles the overall challenge, of substantially reducing Pakistan's housing deficit. Of course, elected officials like Minister Cheema and his boss, Prime Minister Imran Khan, want results fast.

As a result, the NPHP has also become a parking lot where officials are trying to repackage and rebrand already existing housing schemes. This would be a perfectly legitimate thing to do if it weren't for the foundational problem that NPHP was supposed to solve.

Existing housing schemes tend to be slush funds either (i) for interest groups, like the retired federal government employees, who use their access and privilege to secure subsidised land and housing, as in the case of the Kuri Housing Scheme in Islamabad or (ii) for resourceful real estate agencies and developers, who use their access and privilege to secure large tracts of land at throwaway prices, only to realise insanely high profits.

Among many factors that prevent safe and secure shelter for Pakistanis is the architecture of the existing real estate market — it is a market that actively excludes middle- and low-income groups, and extracts great profits from those who can afford to be fleeced. The promise of the NPHP is that it can substantially break the hold of this engineered market failure — in part, by delivering a massive number of new housing units to the market, and in part, by making access to these new units affordable and realistic for middle- and lower-income groups.

The SBP policy itself does not lack the right spirit. In a policy paper preceding the actual policy, the SBP had indicated its intent to make mortgages and financing low-income houses easier for both consumers themselves, and the banks and financial institutions that would provide the loans. It also indicated the SBP's appetite to establish a refinancing facility for banks and financial institutions — both Islamic and conventional — to facilitate long-term affordable funding for special segments. Under this facility, up to 100 percent of housing finance extended to special segments would be refinanced by the SBP. Special segments include widows, children of martyrs, special persons, transgenders and persons in areas severely affected by terrorism.

The eventual SBP policy lives up to this promise through two notable policy measures. The first is subsidised rates for the otherwise underserved potential consumers that it refers to as the special segment. The second is a substantial reduction in the general reserve requirements for banks that establish measurable and viable low-income housing financing departments or programmes. The overall thrust of the SBP policy is to subsidise mortgages so that housing is made affordable for low-income groups. In all, the equity credentials of the SBP policy are impressive.

Unfortunately, the existing combination of the government approach through NPHP and the SBP policy for low-cost housing have three significant flaws that will make the achievement of the policy outcome that PTI is seeking through NPHP, very, very difficult.

The first killer flaw baked into any housing policy for Pakistan is the absence of a viable housing finance or mortgage sector.

The cost of building a house is prohibitive, across all classes outside of the rarefied world of the Pakistani elite. In most countries that have managed to avoid the kind of housing deficit that Pakistan has, the driver of housing growth is a viable mortgage sector — in short, the ability of ordinary people, of ordinary means, to walk into banks and have a range of options that allow them to borrow money to buy or build a house.

Mortgage finance in Pakistan is virtually non-existent. Pakistan's mortgage finance-to-GDP ratio (referred to as mortgage depth) is at 0.23 percent — the lowest in South Asia. It is three percent for Bangladesh and seven percent for India.

As of 2018, the total number of housing loans outstanding was less than 70,000 mortgages, with a total outstanding loan balance of only 83 billion rupees and a tenor of 13 years. Only 1,500 new mortgage loans are extended every year with the average loan size in 2016 being 6.1 million rupees and an average loan-to-value (LTV) ratio of 48 percent, forcing the borrowers to arrange the remaining 52 percent of the price from their own savings.

Not only is the current mortgage finance market in Pakistan very small, but it also only caters to the highest end of the high-income group in the country. Again, of the rich and privileged, by the rich and privileged, for the rich and privileged.

The second killer flaw, which also flows from the first, is the twin threat of the absence of affordability for middle- and low-income Pakistanis on the one hand, and the ineligibility of such Pakistanis to be able to access mortgages, on the other.

The prevailing average price of land is estimated to be 3,379 rupees per square foot, and the cost of construction is estimated at roughly 1,250 rupees per square foot for grey construction — which is the term used for an otherwise fully constructed, basic house, that lacks any fixtures or switches or other bells and whistles that make a house liveable. This makes the sticker prices for such an unfinished 80 square-yard, single-storey house around 3.3 million rupees. Outright purchase at this price point is beyond the reach of the vast majority of Pakistan's population. It is certainly well outside the budgets of the poor and vulnerable in the country.

The driver of housing growth is a viable mortgage sector — in short, the ability of ordinary people, of ordinary means, to walk into banks and have a range of options that allow them to borrow money to buy or build a house.

Table 2 shows Pakistan's average monthly household income distribution as well as estimates of a sustainable housing finance monthly instalment for each income group or quintile assuming a 33 percent debt burden.

Using the advertised prices of NPHP Phase I housing projects announced for Lodhran, Chishtian and Renala Khurd, the monthly instalments of the various tiers of housing units offered are summarised in Table 3.

It is clear that lower-income segments (on average) will not be able to afford the announced housing units under NPHP given the insufficiency of their income levels to support the required mortgage servicing — even at our reduced debt servicing assumption of 33 percent

An affordability analysis for housing unit values by each income group or quintile is presented in Table 4. This is calculated by estimating the total value of a housing unit that can be supported by a given income group or quintile's income with the proposed financing rate and varying tenors assuming a 33 percent debt burden.

This analysis further highlights the affordability gap. The NPHP housing products launched to date are beyond the reach of 80 percent of all Pakistanis, even if the term of financing is nearly doubled from the currently mandated 12.5 years to the more common 20 years allowing financing of a higher value housing unit. This analysis does not cover special segments for now.

Approximately 68 percent of the urban working population is employed in the informal sector of the economy without a verifiable or steady source of income. Both the SBP Policy and the NPHP are targeting borrowers earning less than 60,000 rupees.

The NPHP even allows the income of all family members of the borrower household to be clubbed to calculate the mortgage amount. If the combined household income still classifies the family as a low-income group, there is a high likelihood that all of the earners are part of the informal economy. Commercial banks decide on extending a mortgage loan after assessing the borrower's repayment capacity.

Repayment capacity is calculated by verifying the borrower's income history, future income potential and net worth. Unfortunately, a low-income borrower working in the informal sector will not be able to provide the income history, future income potential and net worth to the satisfaction of the bank to qualify.

In certain circumstances, banks do qualify a borrower for mortgage by considering the value of the housing unit. However, as shown above, such units will not help the borrower qualify for mortgage.

The third flaw in the current government policy framework is that the NPHP envisages non-high-rise units to be the core of the initiative, with three million of the five million units to be either single-storey homes, or ground-plus-three floors, or additions to existing houses.

High-rise units comprise only 425,000 of the total units (or less than nine percent of the total). The problem with non-high-rise housing units is that they require vast tracts of land. Pakistan has plenty of land but urban centres, where the jobs tend to be, also tend to be highly dense, with highly contested land, if any is ever available. Large tracts of land for massive new housing schemes that may achieve the NPHP targets would necessarily be far away from city centres.

The NPHP scheme for Lodhran is one example of potentially many, with demand for new houses in the NPHP scheme for Lodhran reportedly very low, given both how far it is from the heart of Lodhran city, and how much more cheaply land can be secured just outside the boundaries of the NPHP scheme there.

When housing schemes are located at longer distances from employment opportunities and public services, the transportation costs for those home owners increase and this adds to the total cost of ownership for new home owners (and likely borrowers that have already had to secure a mortgage). Distances from urban centres do not get reflected in debt burdens but they strain the disposable income of borrowers — especially any potential owners of new homes that happen to belong to the middle- or low-income groups that need to be an important target for the NPHP.

A number of significant reforms are required to tackle both the scale of the housing crisis in Pakistan, and the specific nature of the manner in which this crisis hurts the middle and lower-income segments of the country. Urban planning reform is among the most obvious of policy areas that merit attention. One of the tools to tackle the inequality aspect of housing crises in other countries has been Affordable Housing Obligations (AHOs) — in which builders and developers are legally obligated to ensure a minimum percentage of residential units classified as low-cost in all new high-rise construction. AHOs have the effect of creating low-cost housing stock in every new building, while at the same time not concentrating poverty in any particular building or area.

Another vitally important area that demands policy attention is land records. Land record management information systems (LRMIS) help maintain real-time digital records of all properties, their ownership history as well as charges/liens registered by lenders over them.

While provincial LRMIS systems have done a great job in digitising land records, their efficacy and applicability for NPHP will have to be assessed carefully. The National Database Regulatory Authority (NADRA) and the Central Depository Company (CDC) can be utilised in this regard, but it took NADRA five months to enter the half million applications submitted to the government for NPHP registration. The intent-capacity gap for NPHP is best crystallised by this mere fact. A government needing to build 100,000 houses per month is taking five months not to build 500,000 houses, but to register the applications of 500,000 potential house owners.

Perhaps most importantly, the government needs to devise new mortgage instruments that address both the mortgage market and the affordability challenge. We have proposed a modification to the SBP policy in the shape of a shared equity mortgage (SEM) structure. The most important outcome of adopting the SEM based mortgage financing model we have designed, would be the expansion of affordability to almost 60 percent of the population, or the top three income quintiles (up from the current highest 20 percent).

There are a range of other important policy considerations that will be necessary, and that have the potential for transformative change to the housing market. These include the capacity for credit appraisal in the financial sector, and the potential establishment and growth of credit bureaus.

Housing insurance, at the front end, and risk appraisal and management for the banking and finance sectors at the back end, can be important indicators of the success of a housing policy. Good public policy in the housing sector must also

tackle the scourge of speculation — discouraging malign market behaviour with strong legislation and even stronger enforcement. There are also fiscal implications in any good housing policy, with improved land records, and an expanded mortgage sector offering tax authorities much more detailed information on who owns what and how.

All in all, the Naya Pakistan Housing Policy is a remarkably ambitious policy gambit. It offers Pakistan a genuine opening for economic growth, and improved equality. Unfortunately, a lack of experience and preparation risk undermining the good intentions of those that conceived of the NPHP. Rent-seekers, elite interests and the special interest groups that prevent growth and development in other areas actively threaten housing policy, too.

To avoid the NPHP from being of the rich and privileged, by the rich and privileged, for the rich and privileged, the government must pay much greater attention to the design of low-cost housing finance at the State Bank; it must ensure that a much more substantial share of the NPHP houses are high rise units that are designed to tackle both equity issues, as well as access issues of access to urban centres. Most of all, the government must carefully examine the income profile of those that are first in line for new houses and prevent the crowding out of the poor and the middle-income groups in the country.

This article is based on Tabadlab's Working Paper 01 Optimizing the Naya Pakistan Housing Policy and Working Paper 02 Mortgage Market Design for Low- Cost Housing Units in Pakistan. Both can be downloaded from <http://www.tabadlab.com>

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<https://www.dawn.com/news/1487001/can-the-naya-pakistan-housing-programme-work>

NEW RATION CARDS SCHEME TO BE LAUNCHED SOON: SANIA

By APP Published: June 9, 2019

ISLAMABAD.: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Social Security and Poverty Alleviation Dr Sania Nishtar on Saturday said that a new ration cards scheme would be started soon to provide nutritious food to one million deserving persons under the Ehsaas Programme.

Talking to the media, Dr Sania, who is also the chairperson of Ehsaas Programme, said, "Special nutritious fortified food will be ensured for the infants less than two years of age and vulnerable pregnant and lactating women to avoid stunting."

Under the Ehsaas Programme, the special assistant said, 80,000 deserving poor would be given interest-free loans, besides sewing machines, cattle and retail shop provisions to start their own business.

Sania said social security and poverty alleviation budget was being doubled by the government.

"This is a significant step towards achieving the goal of a truly welfare-oriented Pakistan and make optimal use of resources for the benefit of the poor," she said, adding that as many as six million women identified transparently through the ongoing Socio Economic Registry Survey would get stipend in their saving accounts and their access to cell phones would be increased.

“Five hundred Kifalat Centres will provide online access to free courses to poor women and their children,” she said. “They will have access to free school lessons, free IT courses, free adult education and certificate courses in stitching, kitchen gardening, electrician and plumbing courses.”

The government has decided to provide free wheel chairs to all disabled persons, free hearing aids to the deaf, free white canes to blind under the Ehsaas Programme.

The National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA)-registered disabled persons would be provided Insaf cards for free treatment for self and family up to Rs720,000 from registered hospitals, she said, adding that 2% disabled quota had been reserved in government jobs.

“Deserving students will be provided tuition fee, hostel fee under scholarship scheme being launched in collaboration with the Higher Education Commission (HEC),” said Sania, adding that yet another scheme Girl Voucher Scheme (second chance) would be initiated under the Ehsaas Programme to give a chance to dropped out girls to again start education.

Shelter homes would be constructed in every major city for the homeless, she said, adding that the poor would be provided loans for constructing their own homes.

As many as 10 million families would get Insaf cards by the year’s end for obtaining medical treatment.

“Tahafuz programme is being introduced to assist the people within 48 hours, who do not have Insaf cards and are stuck by sudden medical conditions,” said Sania. “It will cover court cases, including illness and accidents, etc.”

She said the pensions for the elderly given by Employees Old-Age Benefits Institution (EOBI) had already been enhanced from Rs5,050 to Rs6,500.

“Building Ehsaas homes for the elderly homeless has begun. The number of orphanages are being increased and provided more facilities. The number of community welfare attaches is being increased for overseas Pakistani workers. Subsidised tickets will be provided to those overseas Pakistani workers, who did not visit home in the last seven years,” said Sania.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1988424/1-new-ration-cards-scheme-launched-soon-sania/>

SURVEY PLANNED TO UPDATE BISP DATABASE

Ikram Junaidi Updated June 03, 2019

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Social Protection and Poverty Alleviation Dr Sania Nishtar has announced that the government will provide mobile phones and quarterly stipend to seven million women and facilitate opening of their banks accounts.

Besides, a fresh survey would be conducted to ascertain whether those registered with the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) still needed assistance and to add other deserving persons in the database, Dr Nishtar told a press conference on Sunday.

She also announced that under the Kafalat programme seven million women would be educated on financial and communication matters enabling them to run bank accounts and use mobile phones.

Chairperson says 7m women to be given mobile phones, quarterly stipends under Kafalat scheme

“We have decided to involve the State Bank of Pakistan and private banks [in the programme]. Process of accounts opening will be started in October this year,” she said.

“Moreover, under the Tahaffuz programme, in case of any sudden emergency such as accident, health issue etc, people would be able to contact the government through SMS (short message service) and assistance will be provided to them within 48 hours,” she said.

About the fresh survey, Dr Nishtar said the last BISP survey had been conducted nine years ago and according to international practices fresh survey should be held after every five to 10 years, as financial condition of people changes.

“I came across a woman who stopped receiving BISP stipend. The woman told me that she was a widow so she had accepted financial assistance but after some years her son went to the United Kingdom and started sending her money. Thereafter she stopped receiving BISP assistance,” explained the special assistant to the premier.

She said around Rs10 billion would be spent on the fresh survey.

“We have decided to introduce mechanism to continuously include new members so that there will be no requirement of holding another survey in future,” she said.

Dr Nishtar said Prime Minister Imran Khan had launched the ‘Ehsaas’ social safety programme having four major components and 115 policies in March. The first component was aimed at cutting government expenses and bringing transparency in procurements, appointments and tenders, she said. For social protection, the second component of the Ehsaas programme, the budget was doubled, she added.

“The third component is to generate employment for which interest-free loans will be provided to 80,000 persons every month. The fourth and last component of the programme is to improve human capital by providing education and skills to them,” she said.

“All the government institutions, which are doing welfare work such as Baitul Mal, Zakat, BISP, etc would be brought under one division and it would be evaluated if really deserving persons were getting the assistance,” she added.

The BISP chairperson said strict action was being taken against those using the name of the BISP through SMS for offering fake assistance and cash awards.

Reacting to her presser, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz leader and former Sindh governor Mohammad Zubair Umar said 1.2 million people had lost their jobs since August 2018.

During the next two years, eight million people would go below the poverty line, he feared. He said the special assistant to the PM Dr Nishtar was competent and highly respectable but she put her credibility at stake by deciding to work with the PTI. “She will soon realise it,” he said.

“The BISP has [already] conducted some fresh surveys and they can be used. The PTI had claimed that a number of problems would be solved within [the first] 100 days [of their government]. But till date the real problems have not been even considered by the government,” he said.

Mr Zubair said there could be 115 policies of the Ehsaas programme but who would pump money to implement those policies.

Published in Dawn, June 3rd, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1486232/survey-planned-to-update-bisp-database>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUN 10th TO JUN 16th 2019

MALNUTRITION CHALLENGE

By Editorial Published: June 13, 2019

Acute malnutrition remains in a state of nutrition emergency in Pakistan. That's summarised by the National Nutrition Survey 2018-19 — the biggest-ever in Pakistan's history covering 115,600 households across the country. Overall fifth, the survey is the first to provide district-wise data to help policymakers develop evidence-based policies to address the root causes of malnutrition. The study group included children under five, women of reproductive age and adolescent boys and girls (10 to 19 years).

About children under five, findings of the survey reveal: prevalence of stunting (low height for age) at 40.2%; wasting (low weight for height) 17.7%; proportion of underweight (low weight for age) 28.9% and overweight (high weight for height) 9.5%. The same figures for the 2011 survey were: 43.7%, 15.1%, 31.5% and 5% respectively. Besides, undernourished women of reproductive age constitute 14.4% of the lot as compared to 18% in 2011. However, the proportion of overweight and obese women in the same group has increased from 28% in 2011 to 37.8% now.

The statistics on adolescents are disconcerting as well. The survey shows that almost one in eight adolescent girls and one in five adolescent boys are underweight. More adolescent girls are overweight compared to their male peers, at 11.4% and 10.2% respectively. None of the previous surveys included the adolescent category.

Comparison with figures from the 2011 survey shows that Pakistan has made extremely slow progress on the indicators relating to the nutritional status of women and children. No wonder Pakistan ranks as the second most malnourished country in Asia, according to a 2017 report by the Washington-based International Food Policy Research Institute. Does that need to be over-emphasised that poor nutrition in the crucial early years triggers irreversible mental and physical defects which have a lifelong impact on a child's productivity and immunity against disease and earning capacity as an adult? The malnutrition challenge must be taken up on a war footing.

Published in The Express Tribune, June 13th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1991056/6-malnutrition-challenge/>

SEPARATE MINISTRY OF POVERTY ALLEVIATION FORMED

By Our Correspondent Published: June 12, 2019

ISLAMABAD: The government has formed a separate ministry of poverty alleviation to devise and implement programmes for social protection in the country.

According to the budget 2019-20 document, the Ehsaas Programme will benefit extremely poor people, orphans, homeless, widows, differently-abled persons and unemployed individuals, while a new ration card scheme is also being introduced for provision of proper nutrition to one million deserving people.

As per the scheme, mothers and children would be given special diets for their health. In addition, 80,000 people would be given interest-free loans.

Six million women would be given financial support in their saving accounts and access to mobile phones while free online courses would be offered to women and children from the 500 Kifalat houses.

The differently-abled people would be given wheelchairs and hearing aids while parents of the children living in districts who lag in education would be given awareness about sending their children to school.

In addition, the government decided to form an Ehsaas Ghar Programme for elderly people.

As per the programme, 5.7 million extremely poor households were given Rs5,000 per quarter under the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) for which Rs110 billion has been reserved.

Keeping in view the recent inflationary pressures, the quarterly payment had been increased to Rs5,500. The social and economic data pertaining to poor households was being updated and would be ready by May 2020.

During this time, a survey of 32 million households would be conducted while Rs750 scholarship per student was paid to girls in 50 districts under the BISP scheme.

The programme would see an extension of 100 more districts while the scholarship amount was being increased from Rs750 to Rs1,000.

On the other side, the poor people were given insurance facility under the health programme. The deserving people were provided health cards through which they could avail medical treatment amounting to Rs720,000 from 270 hospitals in the country.

In the first phase, the health insurance scheme was being provided to 3.2 million families in 42 districts of Pakistan. In the next phase, the scheme would be extended to 15 million families.

The scheme would be applicable to people of all districts, including Tharparkar and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa.

The prime minister's five million housing programme would benefit 28 industries while employment opportunities would also be created.

Land for the housing scheme purpose had already been procured while investment procedures were being undertaken.

In the first phase, 25,000 housing units would be built in Rawalpindi and Islamabad and 110,000 in Balochistan.

In addition, economically-priced loans amounting to Rs100 billion would be offered for new business ventures while subsidies and reliefs were being given for industrial sector, including Rs40 billion subsidy for electricity and gas, Rs40 billion for the export sector, and continuation of the long-term trade financing facilities.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1990517/1-separate-ministry-poverty-alleviation-formed/>

SINDH NEEDS RS140BN UNDER FEDERAL TRANSFERS TO PROVIDE RELIEF TO POOR: MURAD

The Newspaper's Staff Reporter June 11, 2019

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah said on Monday that the provincial government was in a fix due to shortfall of around Rs140 billion in the head of federal transfers and it was finding it difficult to provide relief to the poor.

"I am sorry to say the federal government has neither the vision nor the intention to provide relief to the poor people of Pakistan," he said.

The CM said this while talking to the media during a visit to the residence of late Allama Abbas Kumaili in Soldier Bazaar to offer his condolence. He was accompanied by provincial ministers Saeed Ghani, Imtiaz Shaikh and special assistant Rashid Rabbani.

Mr Shah said that the federal government in June had communicated to the Sindh government that it would be given Rs666bn during the current financial year.

The CM says Centre cut another Rs35bn from the share of provincial govt

"So far, we have received around Rs492bn and the federal government has to release about Rs174bn by the end of this month. But, this morning the finance department has received a letter that Rs35bn has been further curtailed from the share of the provincial government," he said.

He said his government could provide some relief to the people of Sindh if the federal government released Rs140bn.

“This precarious condition is not prevailing only in the Sindh government but all other provinces are facing the same situation,” he said and recalled that he had been making budgets of the provincial government for the past 10 years but had never witnessed such a serious financial crunch in which budget-making could become an impossible task.

In reply to a question, Mr Shah said that the budgets normally invited criticism but this time the federal government had appeared to be drowned in its inefficiency to achieve the revenue collection targets and had totally refused to give any relief to the people of the country.

Talking about the K-IV water supply project, the chief minister said that Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf leaders were making hue and cry that the provincial government had destroyed the project. “Maybe I or someone else had done [something] wrong with the project but it doesn’t mean that you [Centre] are adamant to punish the people of Karachi by abandoning the project,” he said.

To another question, he said that incidentally the PTI had won some seats in the 2018 election, “otherwise neither they have roots among the people nor any intention to establish [roots]”.

He urged the media to ask the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan as to how the PTI had won their traditional constituencies, particularly the seat of its now-sealed Nine Zero headquarters in Azizabad.

Earlier, Mr Shah offered fateha for Allama Kumaili during a meeting with his son Kazim Abbas Kumaili. He said the late religious scholar was a great human being and had always worked for sectarian harmony.

His death created a vacuum which would be difficult to fill, he said, adding that his services would always be remembered.

Later, the chief minister went to the residence of Major Moez Maqsood Baig, who was martyred in North Waziristan on June 7.

The chief minister met the father of the martyred officer and expressed his condolence with him.

Talking to the media, the chief minister said that the nation and the family of Major Moez were proud of his sacrifice and he would always be remembered as a hero of the nation.

When asked about any compensation by the provincial government to the family of the martyred army officer, the chief minister said that the Sindh government always gave compensation to the families of martyred policemen and Rangers personnel. “However, I will find ways and means to provide relief to the family of Shaheed Major Moez,” he said.

Published in Dawn, June 11th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1487375/sindh-needs-rs140bn-under-federal-transfers-to-provide-relief-to-poor-murad>

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE FALLS FROM 5.9 TO 2.79 PERCENT

NUZHAT NAZAR | JUN 11TH, 2019 | ISLAMABAD

The unemployment rate has decreased from 5.9 percent in 2014-15 to 2.79 percent in 2017-18, while the highest unemployment rate of 15.17 percent has been recorded in females as compared to 10.5 percent for male, states the Economic Survey 2018-19. According to Labour Force Survey 2017-18, the youth unemployment rate is even higher as compared to the average unemployment rate.

According to the Economic Survey of Pakistan 2018-19, the female participation in the labour market has decreased with the passage of time from 15.8 percent in 2014-15 to 14.5 percent in 2017-18. The Labour Force Survey 2017-18 indicates that women are concentrated in agriculture with a share of 67 percent, while in manufacturing they have a share of 16 percent and in community and personal services they have a share of 14.6 percent. In the case of

occupational groups, women are mostly working as skilled agricultural workers, 55 percent, elementary/unskilled workers, 18 percent, and craft and related trade workers, 14 percent, it maintained. However, the share of agriculture-related employment has declined from more than 48.42 percent in 1999-2000 to 38.5 percent by 2017-18. This shows almost 10 percentage points decline.

The employment ratio has increased from 34.25 percent in 1999-2000 to 37.6 percent in 2017-18 as this sector provides jobs which are diverse in nature such as unskilled, semi-skilled, skilled and high skilled, which includes doctors, engineers, advocates, builders and financial consultants. In these sectors the total participation rate has increased.

The share of employment in industry sector (manufacturing and construction) has increased from 17.33 percent in 1999-2000 to 23.89 percent in 2017-18. The unemployment situation in the region is comparatively better than Pakistan except in Iran. The unemployment statistics show that Pakistan's unemployment rate of 5.79 percent is higher than that of India (2.6 percent), Bangladesh (4.3 percent), and Sri-Lanka (4.4 percent).

The total population of Pakistan increased by 57 per cent (excluding Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan), with an average annual growth rate of 2.4 percent during 1998-2017, as recorded in the 6th National Population and Housing Census which was held in Pakistan after a lapse of about 19 years.

According to the Economic Survey, the government is focused to generate more job opportunities for the youth; the government has launched a new programme -Kamyab Jawan Programme. Under this programme, the National Bank of Pakistan, Bank of Punjab and Bank of Khyber will provide low-cost loans to the youth (between 21 – 45 years) for establishing small businesses enterprises. These loans will be classified into three tiers.

The early harvest projects under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) have created more than 75,000 direct jobs and 200,000 allied jobs for Pakistanis while the midterm and long projects under the CPEC are poised to create more than 700,000 employment opportunities in the country. An amount of Rs 510.919 million has been allocated for population welfare programme in Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan, AJK, and merged areas.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/06/20190611485050/>

EVERY THIRD CHILD IS UNDERWEIGHT IN PAKISTAN: SURVEY

By Razya Khan Published: June 10, 2019

ISLAMABAD: The National Nutrition Survey 2018-19 has painted a bleak picture of children's health, stating that "every third child" in the country "is underweight".

The survey was released on Monday during a ceremony chaired by Adviser to the Prime Minister on Health Dr Zafar Mirza and attended by Health Secretary Zahid Saeed, National AIDS Control Programme Manager Dr Basir Achakzai, Unicef representative and others.

The survey was compiled by experts working under the auspices of the Ministry of Health and Unicef.

The report stated, "Breast-feeding has increased in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P), while malnutrition in Balochistan and erstwhile Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata)."

It stated, "Every four out of 10 children are malnourished. Over 40% children are affected by malnutrition in which the number of girls is higher than that of boys."

Giving the break-up of the malnourished children, the report stated, "In the country, 40.9% boys are malnourished, while 39.4% girls are victims of malnutrition and 28% are underweight.

“Over 9% children are overweight. During the last seven years, the number of overweight children has doubled as in 2011 only 5% children were overweight while now the ratio stands at 9.5%. About 50% girls in Pakistan suffer from anemia while 48.4 % children are given mother’s milk. The ratio of children being fed mother’s milk stands at over 60% in K-P.

“In Pakistan, 36.9% of the population face malnutrition. In Balochistan, 50% people are malnourished while in erstwhile Fata the ratio is 54.6%.”

Addressing the ceremony, Health Adviser Dr Zafar Mirza said, “In line with the vision of Prime Minister Imran Khan, the Ministry of Health is taking drastic measures to overcome malnutrition.”

Mirza said, “The data obtained from the survey will help in policy making and devising strategies.”

He said they would join hands with the provinces in taking effective steps in the field of nutrition in light of the data obtained.

“The incumbent government has already decided to tackle the biggest issue – undernourishment, especially in women and children,” said the PM’s aide, adding that the national survey had revealed that 40% children under the age of five were victims of stunting.

Mirza acknowledged the fact that positive signs regarding more women feeding their milk to their newborns were received. “About 10% improvement has been recorded in mothers feeding their children their own milk.”

Mirza said, “The ratio of people consuming clean water has increased, whereas only 21% water has been found fit for consumption.” He said information and steps regarding women giving birth had improved. “About 63% women come to clinics when they are pregnant, while 68% avail the expertise of experts, which has reduced the ratio of death among newborns,” said Mirza.

About anemia, Mirza said, “Several women and children suffer from this condition. It has been reported that over 50% children suffer from anemia, while 62% lack Vitamin A.”

He said that there had been an increase in the consumption of iodine salt, which “is a positive sign”.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1989494/1-every-third-child-underweight-pakistan-survey/>

POVERTY ALLEVIATION A LA CHINESE STYLE

ANJUM IBRAHIM | JUN 10TH, 2019 | ARTICLE

Prime Minister Imran Khan while addressing the opening ceremony of the second Belt and Road initiative (BRI) summit in Beijing titled “Shaping a Brighter Future” reiterated his admiration for China in lifting 800 million Chinese out of poverty within a matter of decades yet again.

Researchers Ke Zhang, John Dearing, Terence Dawson, Xuhui Dong, Xiangdong Yang and Weiguo Zhang acknowledge the significant gains made by China in eradicating poverty and in a scholarly article identify the cost of the Chinese growth model: “Spectacular economic growth over the past 30 years has made China the world’s second largest economy, taking more than 600 million people out of poverty (World Bank 2007). At the same time, environmental deterioration has become a major threat to China’s future sustainable development (Liu and Diamond 2005). With growing evidence for reduced crop yields (Guo et al. 2010, Ray et al 2013), polluted water bodies (Gao and Zhang 2010) and higher frequencies of extreme flood events (Dai and Lu 2010) as unintended consequences of agricultural development, it seems that a conventional approach to environmental management in China is failing.”

In 2017, China released details of its national carbon market covering power generation (contributing to half of China’s overall emissions) subsequent to the 2009 pledged 34.6 billion dollars for development of clean technology;

however other major emitters including automobiles, industrialization of the agriculture sector, chemical complexes, steel mills and cement factories did not initially fall under this programme. Chinese initiative for the development of clean technology was deemed necessary given that high growth had led to an increasingly unstable farm output, with a projected decline in output of wheat, corn, rice; with the ecosystem more vulnerable with an increased frequency of pests and diseases (exposure to 50 percent higher malaria transmission probability rate), decrease in water resources, more floods, and drought and extreme weather conditions.

Many of these negative environmental factors plague Pakistan today and one wonders at the nature of the recommendations pertaining to the agriculture sector under preparation by the supposed PTI expert on farming, Jehangir Tareen. To produce a higher output than one's competitors in a micro context is not the same within a macroeconomic context, and one would hope the Prime Minister has learnt this lesson from his earlier confidence on Asad Umar's capacity to deliver on the economy which after less than eight months, he was compelled to acknowledge was misplaced.

Irrespective of Prime Minister Imran Khan's pledge to follow the Chinese model for poverty alleviation his administration has been effectively disabled from following it given the prior International Monetary Fund (IMF) conditions (two already implemented while implementation of the third, notably a primary deficit of 0.6 percent of the GDP in the budget 2019-20, would be revealed on 11 June) and during programme conditions that are widely known (though the precise quantitative time bound structural benchmarks would be made available as and when the IMF uploads the entire agreement on its website). The IMF had projected a growth of 2.8 percent for next year before the staff level agreement was reached and after the agreement it would be safe to assume that growth would be further downgraded to around 2.5 percent at most, notwithstanding the over optimistic figure of 4 percent cited during the APCC.

Imran Khan has pledged house ownership for the poor at cheaper rates. In 1999 China established a housing fund (after millions were laid off in state owned entities) by which employees would contribute to it (the exact amount was left to the local governments to determine as they would be in a better position to be aware of land values and associated construction costs in their area of operations) and be eligible for preferential mortgage rates, be able to repair/maintain houses and/or get a rent subsidy; if the fund remained unused it could be redeemed on retirement and would function as a secondary pension. Additionally, the Chinese government allowed these funds to be used during emergencies for example unforeseen medical expenses.

In April, the Pakistani cabinet approved the Naya Pakistan Housing Authority for construction of 13500 apartments in Islamabad and Balochistan in the first phase for targeted construction of 5 million houses in five years pledged by the Prime Minister. The Authority has yet to be established and there is no clarity as to who would initially fund the houses as the Prime Minister has repeatedly stated that the federal government would not fund them and that it would be through public private partnership. He further stated that the World Bank has said it would help but the terms and extent remain a mystery probably because a formal request has not yet been submitted to the World Bank; China and Malaysia have shown an interest in the project, the Prime Minister added, but their interest may fizzle out unless a profit can be made. The question therefore would be who would pay for the initial cost of building flats/houses and at what agreed price would then be on-sold to the poor? And the solution: why not follow the Chinese model as it takes account of all issues including extending assistance to those with an emergent need for funds.

So what is Imran Khan's poverty alleviation strategy? He has frequently referred to the launch of a targeted poverty alleviation programme called Ehsaas, or feeling, (with "Mazdoor-Ka-Ehsaas" launched on Labour Day – 1 May – falling on the same day as the 23 foundation day of Pakistan Tehrik-i-Inssaf). The same day the Prime Minister further pledged that "a number of policy measures have been approved for the welfare of overseas Pakistani workers under Ehsaas, such as enhancing the number and quality of institutional arrangements that are responsible for protecting migrant workers, creating online interfaces to facilitate them, negotiations with host countries aimed at increasing the duration of the first contract of migrant workers and subsidies on air tickets for the workers who haven't returned home for 7 years."

The actual modalities of the Ehsaas programme were worked out by his Special Assistant on social protection and poverty alleviation Dr Sania Nishtar who outlined four pillars on Sunday last. And to appease the Prime Minister's sensibilities she stated that the Ehsaas programme was formulated keeping in mind the principles of the state of Madinah whose objectives she defined as reducing inequality, investing in people, and lifting lagging districts. The Ehsaas programme Dr Nishtar revealed would comprise of 115 policies and four pillars which are as follows: (i) all departments including Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal, Zakaat, Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund, Trust for Voluntary Organizations would work under an umbrella of the ministry to address issues in efficient way. This would do away with duplication and be a one-window operation for the beneficiaries, a pillar that can be fully supported; (ii) Kifalat programme (stipends to be distributed to 7 million women to undertake their own business – BISP envisages a similar programme) while the tahafuz programme, an entirely new programme, would be geared towards those who suffer an unexpected financial problem (perhaps this can be better handled through the housing fund as in China), and opening of half way houses in various cities is also appreciated though only a small number would be able to enjoy this facility; and a welfare and pension scheme for the informal sector would be launched as per the recommendations of the Labor expert group and for welfare of workers abroad; (iii) Human capital development ranging from tackling malnutrition, preschool or early education, protecting children from harm, ensuring access to quality education, skills and jobs, long-term commitment to Universal Health Coverage, and measures for empowering women and girls with many components envisaged in BISP; and (iv) employment generation.

These are good pillars however the amount budgeted for next fiscal year is, as per the Prime Minister and his Advisor on Finance, around 180 billion rupees – an amount that PTI claims is double what has been spent in the current year. Revised estimates of 2017-18 reveal that BISP was disbursed 113 billion rupees, while other development expenditure (including grants for poverty alleviation fund) accounted for another 40 billion rupees. Allocation for the current year in the April 2018 PML-N budget was 180 billion rupees hence claims of 180 billion rupees being double what was targeted this year are inaccurate however the available funds from other government entities that would henceforth be working under the umbrella of the Ministry have not been identified and may well double the funds of the ministry.

To conclude, there is much good in the programme formulated by Dr Nishtar though its ambitious nature requires funds well in excess of what the government can possibly provide today given the appalling state of the economy. But as envisaged and implemented under BISP there would be a steady refining and expanding of the Ehsaas programme but under a name that would be associated from henceforth with PTI rather than the PPP.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/06/20190610484331/>

ENDING MALNUTRITION IN PAKISTAN #ZEROHUNGER

By Joanna Reid / Aida Girma Published: June 14, 2019

Around two billion people in the world suffer from various forms of malnutrition, making it one of the greatest global health challenges. Pakistan faces a silent crisis of malnutrition that is amongst the worst globally, affecting people of all ages particularly children, adolescents, and women.

Poverty amplifies the risk of malnutrition. Approximately two-thirds of households across Pakistan are deprived of a nutritious diet. Eight out of 10 children do not eat the right quality and quantity of food. Poor nutrition in childhood has profound effects on immunity, growth and cognitive development. Thanks to the Government of Pakistan's new National Nutrition Survey (NNS) 2018 – the largest household survey ever conducted in Pakistan – we now have a clear vision of where we stand, and the steps required to combat malnutrition. The UK, through the Department for International Development (DFID), along with UNICEF, is proud to be associated with NNS 2018. UNICEF's work in nutrition has benefitted millions of people globally. The UK government has pledged to improve nutrition for 50 million women and children globally by 2020.

Unlike the previous NNS, which was conducted in 2011, this survey has a wealth of data collected at district level on health, the nutritional status of adolescent boys and girls, and household water quality.

Unfortunately, malnutrition rates have not improved much since 2011. Stunting in children under the age of five is 40% as compared to 44% in 2011, while wasting has increased from 15% to 18% and obesity is on the rise.

The special focus on child disability in the 2018 survey is particularly important. Most countries with high levels of malnutrition also report higher rates of developmental delays and disability. The data collected on child disability using an internationally recognised method has identified that 13% of children aged 24 to 59 months have at least one functional difficulty. Such assessment will enable the government and donor community to target future nutrition interventions to prevent all forms of disability.

Moreover, healthy mothers are the foundation for healthy future generations. Both NNSs established that more rural mothers are undernourished than their urban counterparts. Pregnant women need a more diverse and vitamin-rich diet but sadly they are not getting this in Pakistan. Expecting mothers are mostly undernourished and so their children are born with low birth weight, which can lead to ill health.

Exclusive breastfeeding (EBF) for the first six months is vital for preventing malnutrition in infants but Pakistan has one of the lowest EBF rates in South Asia.

Both the UK government and UNICEF are supporting nutrition-specific interventions including treatment of children with severe acute malnutrition, food fortification, micronutrient supplementation, diversified diets, enhanced breastfeeding practices, and nutrition sensitive interventions such as immunisation and other child services in water, sanitation and hygiene or early childhood development. The UK's nationwide food fortification programme in Pakistan will provide over 70% of the population with fortified edible oil and reach over 50 million people with fortified wheat flour.

Considering the fresh evidence received through the NNS 2018, the overarching priorities for the government and its partners should be to: scale-up proven multisectoral interventions using existing service delivery platforms, in particular the primary health care system; increase investment in the first 1,000 days of a child's life as it offers an extraordinary window of opportunity for preventing undernutrition and its consequences; take concerted action to improve nutrition practices through at-scale social behavioural communication change; strengthen multisectoral coordination and accountability at all levels; introduce innovations to accelerate results; and finally, empower women to make decisions about when and how many children to have. Decisions about spending household resources on food for them and their children would be transformational.

It is high time we address the sombre issue of malnutrition. As the World Bank's Pakistan@100 report said, increasing population growth rate, urbanisation and alarming climate changes will result in an increase in food shortage in Pakistan. More mouths, less land and less food to consume will make the situation worse in the coming years. Pakistan's future depends upon tackling its malnutrition crisis. Now that we know where we stand with the findings of the National Nutrition Survey 2018, the Federal and Provincial Governments should plan and prioritize their future nutritional interventions accordingly. The development partners stand ready to help – together we are committed to combat malnutrition to improve the lives of the poorest in Pakistan.

Published in The Express Tribune, June 14th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1991890/6-ending-malnutrition-pakistan-zerohungers/>

11 NEWBORNS DIE IN THAR

A Correspondent June 15, 2019

MITHI: Eleven newborns died, 10 of them at the Mithi Civil Hospital alone, on Friday from the diseases and complications attributed mainly to malnutrition, infection and lack of proper medical facilities. One infant's death was reported from Chachhro taluka.

With the fresh reported deaths, the toll of infant mortality due to such factors since January 1 was unofficially put at 380.

Published in Dawn, June 15th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1488245/11-newborns-die-in-thar>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUN 17th TO JUN 23th 2019

BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE CAN LIFT 32M OUT OF POVERTY: WORLD BANK

ReutersUpdated June 20, 2019

WASHINGTON: China's massive Belt and Road infrastructure drive could speed up economic development and reduce poverty for dozens of developing countries, the World Bank said on Tuesday in a new report that called for deep policy reforms and more transparency for the initiative.

The long-delayed report said that the Belt and Road — a string of ports, railways, roads and bridges and other investments connecting China to Europe via central and southern Asia — could lift 32 million people out of moderate poverty conditions if implemented fully.

Still, there are "significant risks," the World Bank said.

"Achieving the ambitions of the Belt and Road Initiative will require equally ambitious reforms from participating countries," World Bank Vice President for Equitable Growth Ceyla Pazarbasioglu said in a statement.

"Improvements in data reporting and transparency — especially around debt — open government procurement, and adherence to the highest social and environmental standards will help significantly," she added.

World Bank President David Malpass skipped China's second Belt and Road summit in Beijing in April to take his first foreign trip to Africa instead. Malpass was a critic of Belt and Road when he was an official at the US Department of the Treasury, arguing that it was saddling some countries with unsustainable debts.

The report found that for some countries, the costs of new infrastructure could outweigh potential economic gains and the benefits would be unevenly distributed among participating countries.

Real income gains in the Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan, and Thailand could be above eight per cent, but Azerbaijan, Mongolia and Tajikistan could experience negative welfare gains due to high infrastructure costs, the analysis showed.

The World Bank said real income for Belt and Road corridor economies could be two to four times larger if they ease trade restrictions and institute reforms to reduce border delays.

Increased private-sector participation in Belt and Road, now dominated by China's state-owned banks and enterprises, can help sustain the initiative in the long run, but participating countries would need to institute reforms to improve their investment climates, including stronger legal protections and regulations, the report said.

"Little is known about the processes for selecting firms" for Belt and Road projects, the report said. "Moving toward international good practices such as open and transparent public procurement would increase the likelihood that BRI projects are allocated to the firms best placed to implement them."

There was also a need to increase transparency of debt terms and conditions for Belt and Road projects to allow governments to assess the risks to their ability to sustain debt, the report said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1489292/belt-and-road-initiative-can-lift-32m-out-of-poverty-world-bank>

POOR NUTRITION IN THAR: PPP'S MPA SLAMS SINDH GOVERNMENT OVER INFANTS' DEATHS IN THAR

RECORDER REPORT JUN 20TH, 2019 KARACHI

The PPP's minority legislator in the Sindh Assembly on Wednesday slammed his party's government for failing to tackle the growing rate of infants' death from poor nutrition in Thar, saying that it has deviated from the late Benazir Bhutto's vision.

PPP's lawmaker, Rana Hamir Singh during his speech on budget 2019-20 said that the children's death in Thar is rising, adding that the lady health workers lack the capacity to handle the issue of the poor nutrition demises in the arid district of the province.

He criticised the PPP for deviating from late Benazir Bhutto's vision, saying that the Sindh government has no feelings for people's problems. However, appreciated the government's move to set up a university in Tharparkar, but said, "It should have been much earlier".

PTI's woman lawmaker, Rabia Azfar said that the government's budgetary announcement of Early Child Education is poorly conceived plan since there is no trained academic staff to cater to the needs of this sector. She said the government has not determined the quality of education to be imparted through this system. She pointed out that there are 16 different schemes of Early Child Education schemes that continue since 2016 without a budget allocation.

PPP's Sarfaraz Hussain Shah appreciated the Sindh government's budget propositions for the next fiscal year, saying that the healthcare system at the province hospitals has improved but there is still a space for further improvement. PPP's legislator, Siraj Qasim Soomro said that situation in Thar is not that deteriorated, though not good enough, adding that the continuing drought is the worst in 150 years.

He said that the government is going to build three new dams in Nangarparkar-Tharparkar district that will help relieve the water problems. GDA's Arif Mustafa Jatoi questioned the Sindh government's investment plans despite its claims of being insolvent from low release of funds from the federal government. He asked where the Sindh's development funds are being invested. He said that the government's food department suffers from Rs 80 billion of debt.

PPP's Heer Ismail Soho criticised the federal government for heavy taxation, saying that taxing will affect the poor in the society badly. PTI's Sanjay Perwani said that hospitals in Sindh are in tatters with no medicines are available for patients, while MQM's Hashim Raza Zaidi called the PPP's 12th provincial budget a 'part' of the past, based on biased and prejudice. PTI's Muhammad Riaz Haider demanded for investigations into over 75 schools built in Thar.

PPP's Dr Abdul Karim Soomro called the provincial budget 'balanced', saying that the federal government

has triggered inflation in the country. PPP's lady lawmaker, Perveen Bashir blamed the PTI's federal government for economic deterioration in the country. GDA's Dr Rafiq Banbhan also demanded for inquiry into low enrolment of children in schools, saying that his constituency lacked even an ambulance to transport patients timely to hospitals in case of emergency. The house will now meet on Thursday morning at 11am.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/06/20190620488518/>

500M YOUTH RISK POVERTY IF GOVTS FAIL TO TAKE ACTION: UN

Amin Ahmed Updated June 21, 2019

ISLAMABAD: Around half of the youth population in the developing countries — 500 million — are at the risk of falling below the poverty line if the countries fail to implement effective policies and invest in the future of these individuals, says the '2019 Rural Development Report'.

The youth mostly live in rural areas and they are prone to poverty and inequality and are held back by a series of constraints, including lack of training and skills, limited access to land and credit, scarce availability of inputs and restricted links to social networks, says the report published by Rome-based UN agency, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

But policy-makers need to act quickly to avert bigger crises, warns the report, pointing to the impacts of climate change on agriculture generally, the need to seize opportunities presented by a digital revolution spreading across the developing world, balanced with the growing aspirations and demands of young people themselves.

This number rises to 780 million when semi-rural and peri-urban areas are also included.

to 174m by 2050 — a 70 per cent increase in countries that often lack the means to deal with the challenges ahead, warns the report.

The challenges for rural youth in the least transformed countries are extremely daunting, yet these nations account for only about 20pc of the developing world's rural youth population.

Globally, about 20pc of the developing world's rural youth live in its most transformed countries, another 20pc in the least transformed, and the rest in countries with mixed levels of transformation.

Overall, 72pc of the developing world's rural youth live in countries with low levels of rural transformation. Young people have a tough time escaping poverty by engaging in farming activities in these countries; most will earn a better living by transitioning into other sectors.

The remaining 28pc of rural youth reside in countries that have achieved relatively high levels of rural transformation and offer more attractive opportunities in farming.

The smallest group, with 10pc of the developing-country rural youth population, is composed of countries where farming can yield relatively attractive returns but where there are limited off-farm opportunities.

Today, around 65pc of the world's rural youth lives in Asia and the Pacific, and 20pc in Africa but Africa's share is projected to rise to 37pc by 2050, while Asia and the Pacific's will fall to 50pc, according to the report.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1489486>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUN 24th TO JUN 30th 2019

4M MORE PEOPLE BEING PUSHED BELOW POVERTY LINE: BILAWAL

Hamid Asghar Updated June 30, 2019

Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari has described the recently passed finance bill as ‘selected’ and anti-public budget. — DawnNewsTV/File

GUJAR KHAN: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari has described the recently passed finance bill as ‘selected’ and anti-public budget.

Speaking at a rally on Saturday, he criticised the government’s policies and claimed that another four million people were being pushed below the poverty line.

He said the price hike was going to wreck havoc with the country’s economy and the poor were being turned into homeless and helpless people.

Responding to slogans chanted by party workers against Prime Minister Imran Khan, Mr Bhutto-Zardari said the end of what he called puppet government was near and the rise of a new Bhutto would be there.

He said that leaders and workers of PPP were always punished for confronting dictators and oppressors.

The PPP chairman said his father Asif Ali Zardari faced jails and torture but never bowed before the dictators. He said the Bhuttos always stood for democracy and rights of the downtrodden and he would also stand for the restoration of ‘snatched rights of the poor people, peasants and youths’.

He criticised the government for increase in prices of edibles, medicines, petroleum products and gas and devaluation of the rupee. He termed the federal budget anti-Pakistan.

He said he called Imran Khan selected prime minister because he was selected as a cricketer at Oxford, he was selected for politics by Gen Hameed Gul, he was selected as a member of the National Assembly during the Musharraf regime and now he was selected as the prime minister.

Mr Bhutto-Zardari said he was starting his campaign against Imran Khan in Punjab right from Gujar Khan and said that this area had been a PPP stronghold since the days of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

He alleged that Punjab was being deprived of Rs240 billion in the budget.

He said acquittal of PTI leader Babar Awan and conviction of PPP leader Raja Pervez Ashraf in the Nandipur power project case by an accountability court was a clear message that those who joined the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf were given a clean chit while those who refused to compromise were being convicted.

Published in Dawn, June 30th, 2019

‘NO RELIEF FOR POOR IN BUDGET’

June 30th, 2019

CHARSADDA: Qaumi Watan Party (QWP) Chairman Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao on Saturday declared the budget controversial, saying the government didn’t give any relief to the people.

He was addressing the participants of a rally at the Farooq Azam Chowk here. The rally was held to protest the spiraling price-hike and ill-conceived policies of the government.

A large number of QWP workers, carrying banners and placards, were present on the occasion. They chanted slogans against the government for what they called its anti-masses policies.

Aftab Sherpao said the government was acting on the diktats of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) by implementing its tough conditions.

He said the so-called bailout package from the international money-lending institution would not revive the economy as tough conditions were attached to it. Criticising the government, he said that its wrong policies were a threat to the national security.

He further said that all segments of the society, including the traders, labourers and farmers, were reeling from the poor policies and anti-masses budget. He said the people were left with the only option to take to the streets to vent their anger and frustration.

The QWP leader said it was the worst budget ever presented in the country's history. The regressive taxation would erode the purchasing power of the common man, he feared.

He said the government had imposed heavy taxes in line with its agreement with the IMF, adding the rulers had set an overambitious revenue collection target.

Aftab Sherpao said the opposition parties would observe July 25 as a 'black day' to register protest against the poorly conceived policies of the federal government.

He said the provincial government too passed on the burden to the poor and even taxed the farmers in the budget.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/491524-no-relief-for-poor-in-budget>

RELIEF FOR THE POOR

HINA RIAZ JUN 30TH, 2019

Health is recognised as a fundamental human right in the constitution of Pakistan and in the UN Sustainable Development Goals. For a nation to prosper, everyone must have access to quality healthcare. Healthy people make a healthy nation; good health allows children to learn and adults to earn, it helps people to play their role in the social and economic development of a country.

In the developing countries of the world, the budget spent in the health sector is considered as investment instead of expenditure. The developed countries have ensured provision of healthcare services to all and sundry under the blanket of health insurance system; the expenses of health insurance are born by either the government or social security departments.

In Pakistan, people are afraid of falling ill; accounting less for the disease and more for the financial burden it brings along. The family of a patient has to face financial consequences in addition to the painful experience of the disease itself. Unexpected illness drags the poor segment of society into the pit of borrowing money, forcing them assets sellouts and burnout of lifetime savings.

The provision of quality healthcare services to the public is the foremost responsibility of the state. Fortunately, Punjab has a Health Minister who boasts of a career as top medical professional having the perfect combination of excellent medical expertise and strong ambition to reform the healthcare sector. Dr Yasmin Raashid has correctly measured the pulse of healthcare service delivery and introduced Sehat Insaf Card to transform the existing healthcare system into a more accessible, affordable and reliable system.

Approximately 7.2 million families consisting of 32 million members living below poverty line will benefit from Sehat Insaf Card scheme initially. According to the standard definition of poverty line, anyone earning less than 2 dollar (PKR 300) per day will be entitled to benefit from the scheme. The scheme covers approximately 30 percent population of Punjab at present with a scope to cover the entire population in the next few years.

Initially, the Sehat Insaf Card scheme was announced only for the marginalized; the real deserver of the facility gets the card. Therefore, the data of National Socio Economic Registry (NSER) has been utilized for registration of deserving people and families which is further verified by Nadra for transparency.

The Sehat Insaf Card provides a comprehensive cover to its beneficiaries, the holder of the card will be entitled to get free-of-cost hospitalization, emergency services, in-patient services (all medical and surgical cases), fractures/injuries, referral transportation, maternity services and free follow ups. In addition to the secondary care services, eight major diseases will also be covered under priority cover package, including cardiovascular diseases, diabetes mellitus, burns and road traffic accidents, last-stage renal diseases and dialysis, chronic diseases (TB, Hep A/B/C, HIV, chronic liver disease), organ failure, oncology and neurosurgical services.

The holder of Sehat Insaf Card will be able to get treatment up to PKR 720,000 annually. It is a laudable feature that the treatment cost of Rs 720,000 can further be topped up if needed. In case if a card-holder or his family member gets any major disease which is expensive then the treatment won't be stopped due to exhaustion of insurance amount rather in such cases, the government can provide further relief in the form of over excess of loss amount which is PKR 360,000 per family per annum and get the treatment completed.

Apart from the medical facilities, Sehat Insaf Card provides support in transportation also. The transportation cost of PKR 1,000 will be paid to per family per visit. Another valued feature of Sehat Insaf Card is the provision of burial support. If a patient dies while admitted to the hospital, burial support of PKR 10,000 per person will be paid to the bereaved family to support them in the hour of grief.

Another feature of Sehat Insaf Card scheme is inclusion of both public and private hospitals on panel list. Before this scheme the poor could not even imagine going to private hospitals as they are costly but now they can confidently walk into these hospitals and avail treatment. To ensure quality treatment, hospitals with adequate medical facilities have been taken on panel. Total 111 hospitals are empaneled till now.

The Sehat Insaf Card will improve service delivery in public sector hospitals. As the treatment in government hospitals is either free or low cost, the patient load in government hospitals is immense. With a lot of patients getting treatment from public sector hospitals, these hospitals fail to provide adequate health services which results in referrals and complaints. The Sehat Insaf Card has unlocked choices for public, now they can opt for any empaneled hospital, government or private. The inclusion of private hospitals will reduce the burden on public sector hospitals and this will result in an inevitable improvement of quality.

The implementation on this scheme has been started. In the first phase of the project, Sehat Insaf Cards are introduced in 23 districts; however the project will soon be extended to all 36 districts of Punjab. The distribution of Sehat Insaf Card under the Sehat Sahulat Programme is a great initiative. Pakistan has not seen such schemes at this scale. The Sehat Insaf Card will empower the poor and neglected strata of society. Now people with low incomes won't be deprived of treatment.

The facility of Sehat Insaf Card is by no means less than the health insurance provided in countries like America and the UK. Very much like the developed countries, treatment will not be denied to any patients for lack of money. It will be provided by the government.

The Sehat Insaf Card scheme is a milestone in the history of Pakistan Federal government has launched Sehat Insaf Card scheme in the country. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) had introduced Sehat Insaf Card scheme in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province during their last term. The implementation of health cards garnered widespread success in the province of KP previously and now this facility is being provided to the poor population of Punjab also.

The Sehat Insaf Card is going to be a game changer in the health sector of Punjab. It will put an end to the suffering of poor and marginalized people by allowing them to get timely treatment in standard hospital with dignity. The poor people who used to struggle for the treatment of their dear ones won't have to beg in front of anyone, no one will have to trade their self-esteem, and no mother will have to sell the assets of home for the treatment of her child. The poor will have equal access to the health facilities.

With a sense of security, people will have a peace of mind that the well-being of their families is very well taken care of. Healthy people will shape a healthy society which will boost financial and social activities in the homeland. The country will progress according to Prime Minister Imran Khan's vision. Imran Khan is optimistic about gaining Pakistan a dignified place in the comity of nations. He envisions a new Pakistan where justice is for all, where health is for all. A Pakistan liberated from poverty, disease, unemployment and illiteracy.

Let us keep our fingers crossed that one day Pakistan will achieve the dream of quality healthcare for all. Sehat Insaf Card is only the first leap, albeit giant one, towards this goal.

(The writer is associated with the Programme Management Unit, Government of the Punjab. The views expressed in this article are not necessarily those of the newspaper)

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/06/20190630493064/>

JULY, 2019

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 1st TO JULY 7th 2019

PM TO LAUNCH 'POVERTY GRADUATION INITIATIVE' TOMORROW

Recorder report 2019/07/04

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan will launch the National Poverty Graduation Initiative Friday, which has been designed to impact 16.28 million people over a period of four years.

The Prime Minister will unveil details of the initiative during the planned launch. He was given a briefing on the federal government's initiative on Wednesday.

Special Assistant to Prime Minister (SAPM) for Information & Broadcasting Dr Firdous Ashiq Awan, SAPM on Media Affairs Yousaf Baig Mirza, Secretary Poverty Alleviation & Social Safety Division Shaista Sohail, and Secretary Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) Ali Raza Bhutta were also present during the meeting.

The Prime Minister reviewed various aspects of the programme including budgetary allocation, programme design, criteria and the manner through which transparency will be ensured.

An official stated that various institutions including BISP, Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal, Zakat, Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) are expected to work under the umbrella of the programme and a one window operation is also expected to be developed in this regard.

In March 2019, Prime Minister Imran Khan had launched Rs 80 billion poverty alleviation programme 'Ehsas' to help the downtrodden and vulnerable people including the poor, orphans, widows, homeless, disabled, undernourished, jobless and others.

He added that the government would allocate an additional amount of Rs 80 billion for social protection programme and spending will be increased to Rs 120 billion in 2021.

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2019/07/04/1-page/789575-news.html>

LOW-INCOME PEOPLE: 80,000 INTEREST-FREE LOANS TO BE GIVEN ACROSS COUNTRY EACH MONTH: DR SANIA

NUZHAT NAZAR JUL 7TH, 2019 ISLAMABAD

Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Social Protection and Poverty Alleviation, Dr Sania Nishtar, on Saturday said 80,000 interest-free loans would be given countrywide every month under the National Poverty Graduation Strategy programme to enable the low-income persons to start their own businesses.

While talking to the media about National Poverty Graduation Strategy under Ehsaas Programme at a press conference, Dr Sania said that the interest-free loans would be disbursed in the next four years. As per policy, 50 percent interest-free loans would be disbursed among the females.

Dr Sania said Rs 42.65 billion have been allocated for the National Poverty Graduation Strategy programme; however, 16.2 million people would get benefit from it and 80,000 people would be provided interest-free loans every month, she added.

She said the programme would consist of three components, including interest-free loans, skill training and transfer of small assets such as sewing machines, livestock and agricultural equipment to bring the marginalised sector into the mainstream.

The Ministry of Education and Professional Training would provide skills to the youth. It will be made sure that everything should be processed under fair and good governance.

She said over 391 cheque distribution ceremonies have already been held across the country where 86,151 interest-free loans worth Rs 3.02 billion were given out to the deserving persons. She said the programme is comprehensive and multidimensional with 115 policies under four pillars including, addressing elite capture and making the government system work to create equality, safety nets for disadvantaged segments of the population, jobs and livelihoods and human capital development.

With the creation of Ministry of Social Protection and Poverty Alleviation Coordination, she said, all the departments including Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal, Zakaat, Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund and Trust for Voluntary Organisations would work under the umbrella of a ministry to address the issues in an efficient way.

Moreover, 28 federal government departments were interlinked with one other to make it one-window social protection operation, to assist beneficiaries of social protection, besides reducing duplication, she maintained.

Nishtar said a new policy is being formulated to guide the use of development expenditure by parliamentarians to promote transparency, independent oversight and accountability.

She further said that the government is committed to making the lives of the people easier by initiating programmes which would pull them out of abject poverty. She also revealed that the programme is going to be presented in front of the World Health Organisation (WHO) in an upcoming meeting where a briefing upon the undertaking would be given to the attendees.

She also announced that the programme would become functional within a month in all the provinces of the country.

The government's anti-poverty programme would be different from the previous programmes, which had been marred by corruption and nepotism; however, the government would ensure maximum transparency in its programme that is more integrated and synergised, she continued.

The initiative would be executed by BISP and 40 partnering non-governmental organisations, including the Rural Support Programme and Akhuwat.

She said on July 15, the government would give a briefing on Ehsaas programme which would be first of its kind not only within the country but also throughout the world.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/07/20190707495172/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 8th TO JULY 14th 2019

IMF BACKS COMMITMENT TO INCREASE SPENDING ON BISP

Sardar Sikander Shaheen July 9th, 2019 Islamabad

Pakistan has made commitment to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that it is aiming to increase spending on the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) to 0.4 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on an annual basis, reveals the IMF country report. According to the report, the IMF supports Pakistan's commitment to expand the social safety nets and reduce poverty in Pakistan.

Pakistan, it says, will strengthen BISP and social assistance programmes by taking the following steps: protecting the most vulnerable from the impact of adjustment policies by providing a one-off disbursement of Rs 1,000 to existing BISP beneficiaries by end-August 2019; making the disbursement of stipends more efficient by signing new banking contracts and, in parallel, launching the "one woman one account" initiative that will ensure financial and digital inclusion of around 6 million women by end-October 2019; boosting girls' educational enrolment by augmenting the BISP-provided Waseela-e-Taleem programme with a girl bonus of Rs 250 to be regularly provided on a quarterly basis (end-December 2019); finalising the update of the National Socio-Economic Registry (NSER) by end-June 2020; following completion of the database, the federal government will increase the amount of cash transfers from the current Rs 5,000 and will seek ways to index benefits; and launching of new programmes under BISP such as the graduation programme and a programme on nutrition.

The BISP, working with international partners, is responsible for the implementation of social assistance programmes through their conditional and unconditional cash transfer programmes, currently reaching over 5 million families, the document reads. The IMF document says, the recently introduced Ehsaas Programme is Pakistan's main poverty reduction strategy, aimed at reducing inequality, supporting the economic empowerment of women, and lifting areas where poverty is higher.

The IMF country report terms poverty reduction as the cornerstone of the federal government's commitments to the people of Pakistan. "Despite considerable progress over the past two decades, Pakistan's poverty headcount remains high. We are determined to make significant headway in eradicating poverty by strengthening and broadening our safety nets. To this end, we have established Ehsaas as our main poverty reduction and safety nets programme. We will use the BISP to implement many of these initiatives," the report quotes Pakistan's commitments made before IMF.

The document says Pakistan's immediate commitments include: to protect the most vulnerable from the impact of IMF's adjustment policies, it will issue by July 15, 2019, a government directive to provide a one-off disbursement by end-August 2019 in the amount of Rs 1,000 to existing BISP beneficiaries; finalising the new banking contracts for stipend disbursements and launching financial inclusion programme for women by end-October 2019; updating the benefit structure of Waseela-e-Taleem (WeT) to narrow the educational gender gap; for boosting girls' educational enrolment, the federal government will work with development partners and modify by end-December 2019 WeT's structure by providing a girl bonus of Rs 250 to be regularly provided on a quarterly basis. The government will have 35 percent of the estimated household caseload surveyed, quality assured and validated with NADRA database by end-December 2019. It will aim to expand BISP cash transfer coverage under a progressive design.

Following completion of the database, the federal government will permanently increase the amount of BISP cash transfers from the current Rs 5,000 at least with the rate of inflation, but ideally more than that, for families that continue to be eligible. Thereafter, the government will seek to maintain the real value of BISP's stipends through an

adequate and fiscally sustainable indexation mechanism. Other commitment included launching of BISPS's graduation programme in line with ongoing donor support and agreements to provide greater employment opportunities for those receiving cash grants.

According to the IMF document, to ease the impact of the adjustment on the most vulnerable, the federal budget 2019-20 contains a significant increase in social safety net spending in Pakistan. Allocations to the BISP, the main and best-regarded social assistance programme at the federal level, will be increased by 80 percent on an annual basis.

Moreover, the budget contains an additional Rs 50 billion in subsidies to insulate the poorest households from increases in power tariffs.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/07/20190709495493/>

K-P TO LAUNCH ITS OWN POVERTY REDUCTION PROJECT

By our correspondent Jul.09, 2019

PESHAWAR: Following on from the federal government, the provincial government has decided to launch its own poverty reduction and welfare scheme: “EhsaasProgramme”.

The project will operate side-by-side and in coordination with that of the federal government so that the provincial project supplements the federal one and avoids duplication.

This was agreed between Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) Chief Minister Mahmood Khan and the Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Social Protection and Poverty Alleviation DrSaniaNishtar at the Pakhtunkhwa House in Islamabad on Monday.

DrNishtar, who also heads the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) briefed CM Mahmood about the Ehsaasprogramme. She added that its strategy has been articulated in four pillars and it currently embodies 115 policy actions, which will be expanded as the process of consultations over the programme further widens.

The four pillars include: addressing elite capture and making the government system work to create equality; devising safety nets for the disadvantaged segments of the population; creating jobs and livelihoods; and human capital development, she elaborated.

“It is targeted at driving the government’s entire might in pursuit of objectives such as equality and human development,” she said. The programme, DrNishtar said, is geared for the extremely poor, orphans, widows, the homeless, the disabled, those who risk medical impoverishment, for the jobless, for poor farmers, for laborers, for the sick and undernourished; for students from low-income backgrounds and for poor women and elderly citizens and also lifting lagging areas where poverty is rampant.

To tailor the programme, she said that they are in the process of compiling fresh data on the subject so that the weaknesses of past programmes

are properly covered in a timely manner.

The K-P chief minister said that efforts should be made to ensure that the benefits of the programme easily and specifically reach those for whom it has been formulated.

He further said that the selection of beneficiaries should be made in a transparent manner and no political or personal affiliation should affect or interfere with the process. In this regard, he appreciated the efforts to compile fresh data.

He hoped that the programme brings the deserving segments of society out of the poverty trap. In this regard, he said that the specific local dynamics and untapped potential must not be ignored.

Mahmood assured DrNishtar that the provincial government will not only contribute to and support the federal government in the programme but also launch its own programme with its own set of indicators where efforts of the federal government will be supplemented.

For this purpose, it was agreed that the Ministry of Poverty Alleviation and Safety Nets will soon organise a proper and detailed briefing for the government so that the province can also prepare its own programme while avoiding possible duplication.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2009076/1-k-p-launch-poverty-reduction-project/?amp=1>

PDP VOICES CONCERN OVER RISING POVERTY

RECORDER REPORT JUL 12TH, 2019 KARACHI

Pasban Democratic Party (PDP) chairman AltafShakoor has expressed concern that basic kitchen commodities are getting out of reach for millions of poor families, raising poverty and hunger in Pakistan to new alarming levels. He said the government has raised tariffs of gas and electricity besides increasing prices of petroleum products, which have resulted in a sharp price hike.

He said that the rulers are happy on receiving the first installment of the IMF loan, but in fact this loan is a death trap for the national economy.

He said previously the PPP and PML-N governments had taken heavy loans from the IMF and now the PTI's 'change regime' has also taken heavy loan from the IMF and completed hat trick of IMF loans.

He said the sitting government has taken IMF loans with harsh conditionalities without getting them discussed in parliament, which is deplorable.

AltafShakoor expressed fear that now as the result of the conditionalities of this loan, poor Pakistani people would be further burdened with poverty, hunger, price hike, joblessness and deprivation.

He said the PTI government had done no homework on economy and they just fooled the people of Pakistan with catchy slogans and false promises.

He said instead of generating revenue from local available resources the rulers opted for the IMF loans having very harsh anti-people conditionalities and this act of the selfish rulers have shattered the dreams of Pakistanis for getting self-sufficiency and upholding sovereignty.

He said the claim of rulers that no new tax was slapped in budget is pack of lies.

He said the real fact is that the budget-making was actually done by the stooges of international lending agencies including the IMF, who were handpicked by the PTI government on dictation of loan givers.

AltafShakoor said the people of Pakistan have once again to struggle for getting rid of the foreign agents and slaves who are deciding the fate of this nation.

He said we have also to get rid of corrupt electables including the looters of urban areas and Waderas of rural areas.

He said unless the true and real representatives of Pakistani people are sent to parliament, the basic issues of the poor Pakistanis could not be resolved.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/07/20190712496550/>

PML-N GOVT LIFTED 6.2% POPULATION OUT OF POVERTY

By shahbazrana

Jul.12, 2019

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has lifted 6.2% of its population out of acute poverty during five-year term of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), as the number of people living in multidimensional poverty stood at 38.3% in 2018, states a new report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The incidence of multidimensional poverty in Pakistan is 38.3% but the intensity is considerably higher at 51.7%, according to the new Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) that is based on data of up to fiscal year 2017-18. The report was released on Wednesday.

Jointly developed by the UNDP and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) at the University of Oxford, the 2019 global MPI offers data for 101 countries, covering 76 per cent of the global population.

The report shows that over one-third of children in Pakistan under the age of 5 years were malnourished and suffering from intra-household inequality. The UNDP has defined the intra household inequality as deprivation in nutrition where one child in the household is malnourished and other is not.

Overall, in South Asia 22.7% of children under age 5 experience intra household inequalities in deprivation in nutrition, says the report.

The 38.3% of the people living in multidimensional poverty by end of 2017-18 suggests the previous government managed to reduce acute poverty in the country. The UNDP report shows that in 2012-13, 44.5% of the population lived in acute multidimensional poverty.

The intensity of poverty also reduced from 52.3% in 2013 to 51.7% in 2018.

The PML-N government had achieved average 4.8% economic growth rate during its five years term, although it missed the annual targets. Rather than income and wealth alone, the MPI uses broader measures to determine poverty based on access to healthcare, education and the overall standard of living, thus giving a more detailed understanding of poverty.

The report notes that Kenya and Pakistan have a similar incidence of multidimensional poverty but inequality in education in Pakistan is twice that of Kenya. The 41.3% of the population was deprived of education – a startling figure that underscores the

need to heavily invest in humans.

In order to ensure that Pakistan does not cut the spending on health and education, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has introduced an indicative target in the programme.

The UNDP notes that Pakistan reduced deprivations in six out of ten indicators. About 27.6% of the total population still lacked access to health related facilities. Nearly one-third of the population did not have access to better standards of living.

Out of the total population, about 21.5% was suffering from severe multidimensional poverty. In addition to 38.3% of the population that lived in multidimensional poverty, another nearly 13% were vulnerable to the poverty.

Nearly one out of every three citizens did not have access to cooking fuel – a ratio that was 38.2% in 2013. About one-fifth did not have access to sanitation, which was less than 29.4% ratio in 2013. Nearly 8% population lacked access to clean drinking water –better than 9.1% in 2013.

The indicators on school attendance and child mortality were also improved but these were still not very impressive. 27% of the population lacked access to nutrition, which was 32.4% five years ago. The child mortality rate went down from 8.7% to 5.9%.

However, 7.1% of the population did not have access to electricity as compared to 6.3% five years ago.

The UNDP has also mentioned the national poverty line – defined by the federal government –in its new report. According to the national poverty line, only 24.3% of people were living below poverty line.

Overall, across 101 countries, 1.3 billion people— or 23.1 per cent—people were living a multidimensional poverty. The UNDP notes that there was massive variation in multidimensional poverty within countries. Half of the 1.3 billion multidimensional poor people were children under age 18. A third were children under age 10.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2011528/1-pml-n-govt-lifted-6-2-population-poverty/?amp=1>

NCHD & OSDI SIGN MOU FOR POVERTY ALLEVIATION

RECPORDER REPORT JUL 14TH, 2019 KARACHI

National Commission for Human Development (NCHD) and Organization for Social Development Initiatives (OSDI), a Karachi based Social Policy Think Tank, have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to collaborate and work together for poverty alleviation and economic sustainability and creation of jobs in the rural areas of Pakistan.

Both the organizations have mutually agreed to collaborate on improving the lives of the vulnerable people through engaging in education, health-care and livelihood programmes in the focused communities of district Mardan (KPK), Thatta (Sindh) and Lasbela (Baluchistan).

OSDI shall construct and renovate Temporary Learning Centers (TLCs) and Feeder Schools; along with donation of necessary school equipment to facilitate the students. NCHD on the other hand shall, appoint and train teachers in all the educational facilities intervened by OSDI. Moreover, both the organizations shall support each other in School Based De-Worming programme (SBDW), Ear, Nose and Throat (E.N.T.) tests, setting up Free General Medical Camps (GMCs) in the focused communities and provide vocational trainings to empower the youth. Besides this, NCHD shall also facilitate in training of farmers in Livelihood Assistance Programme (LAP) of OSDI.

A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed by both the organizations in a simple and graceful ceremony held the other day where Col Dr Amirullah Khan Marwat (Retd), Chairman, NCHD and Aasim A Siddiqui, Founder Trustee OSDI, came into a formal agreement for mutual co-operation. Sheheryar N Khan, Manager Programmes from OSDI and Shafqat Ali Janjua, Director Education, from NCHD were also present on the occasion.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/07/20190714497265/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 15th TO JULY 21st 2019

HUNGER ON THE RISE WORLDWIDE AS 821 MILLION AFFECTED: UN

RECORDER REPORT JUL 16TH, 2019 UNITED NATIONS

More than 821 million people suffered from hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition worldwide last year, the United Nations reported Monday - the third year in a row that the number has risen.

After decades of decline, food insecurity began to increase in 2015 and reversing the trend is one of the 2030 targets of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

But getting to a world where no one is suffering from hunger by then remains an "immense challenge," the report said. "The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World" was produced by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and other UN agencies including the World Health Organization. "To safeguard food security and nutrition, it is critical to already have in place economic and social policies to counteract the effects of adverse economic cycles when they arrive, while avoiding cuts in essential services, such as health care and education, at all costs," it said.

The authors said a "structural transformation" was needed to include the poorest people in the world, a move they said would require "integrating food security and nutrition concerns into poverty reduction efforts" while tackling gender inequality and the exclusion of certain social groups. Malnutrition remains widespread in Africa, where around 20 percent of the population is affected, and in Asia where more than 12 of people experience it. In Latin America and the Caribbean, seven percent of people are affected.

Adding the number of people suffering from famine to those hit by food insecurity gives a total of more than two billion. The FAO said current efforts were insufficient to meet the goal of halving the number of children whose growth is stunted by malnutrition by 2030. Around 149 million children currently suffer from hunger-related growth delays. At the same time, the report notes that obesity and excess weight are both on the rise in all regions, with school-age children and adults particularly affected.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/07/20190716497839/>

MILITARY EXPENDITURE AND GLOBAL POVERTY

M ZIAUDDIN JUL 17TH, 2019 ARTICLE

In 2018 India incurred a colossal \$66.5 billion in military expenditure as compared to a lowly \$11.4 billion by Pakistan the same year rejecting the notion that the latter was ensnared in an arms race with the former. India had actually increased its military spending in 2018 by 3.1 percent while increase in Pakistan's military expenditure the

same year was as much as 11 percent. Still, in absolute terms Pakistan's spending was too paltry compared to that of India's.

Meanwhile, total world military expenditure rose to \$1822 billion in 2018, representing an increase of 2.6 percent from 2017, according to new data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). The five biggest spenders in 2018 were the United States, China, Saudi Arabia, India and France, which together accounted for 60 percent of global military spending (World military expenditure grows to \$ 1.8 trillion in 2018, published on April 29, 2019, in a Stockholm International Peace Research Institute publication).

Experts said 10 percent of this amount (\$1822 billion) would be enough to fund the global goals agreed upon by United Nations to end poverty and hunger by 2030. This gives some sort of perspective that can allow people to see what is the opportunity cost involved with global military spending.

Almost half the world - over 3 billion people - live on less than \$2.50 a day. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the 41 Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (567 million people) is less than the wealth of the world's 7 richest people combined. Nearly a billion people entered the 21st century unable to read a book or sign their names. One billion children live in poverty (1 in 2 children in the world). 640 million live without adequate shelter, 400 million have no access to safe water, 270 million have no access to health services. Less than one percent of what the world spent every year on weapons was needed to put every child into school.

Military spending by the US increased for the first time in 2018 since 2010, while spending by China grew for the 24th consecutive year. Total global military spending rose for the second consecutive year in 2018, to the highest level since 1988-the first year for which consistent global data is available. World spending is now 76 percent higher than the post-cold war low in 1998. World military spending in 2018 represented 2.1 percent of global GDP or \$239 per person.

'In 2018, the US and China accounted for half of the world's military spending,' says Dr Nan Tian, a researcher with the SIPRI Arms and Military Expenditure (AMEX) programme. 'The higher level of world military expenditure in 2018 is mainly the result of significant increases in spending by these two countries.'

The US military spending grew - for the first time since 2010 - by 4.6 percent, to reach \$649 billion in 2018. The USA remained by far the largest spender in the world, and spent almost as much on its military in 2018 as the next eight largest-spending countries combined. 'The increase in US spending was driven by the implementation from 2017 of new arms procurement programmes under the Trump administration,' says Dr Aude Fleurant, the director of the SIPRI AMEX programme.

China, the second-largest spender in the world, increased its military expenditure by 5.0 percent to \$250 billion in 2018. This was the 24th consecutive year of increase in Chinese military expenditure. Its spending in 2018 was almost 10 times higher than in 1994, and accounted for 14 percent of world military spending. 'Growth in Chinese military spending tracks the country's overall economic growth,' says Tian. 'China has allocated 1.9 percent of its GDP to the military every year since 2013.'

Military expenditure in Asia and Oceania has risen every year since 1988. At \$507 billion, military spending in the region accounted for 28 percent of the global total in 2018, compared with just 9.0 percent in 1988.

In 2018, India increased its military spending by 3.1 percent to \$66.5 billion. Military expenditure by Pakistan grew by 11 percent (the same level of growth as in 2017), to reach \$11.4 billion in 2018. South Korean military expenditure was \$43.1 billion in 2018 - an increase of 5.1 percent compared with 2017 and the highest annual increase since 2005. 'The tensions between countries in Asia as well as between China and the USA are major drivers for the continuing growth of military spending in the region,' says Siemon Wezeman, a senior researcher with the SIPRI AMEX programme.

Several countries in Central and Eastern Europe made large increases in their military expenditure in 2018. Spending by Poland rose by 8.9 percent in 2018 to \$11.6 billion, while Ukraine's spending was up by 21 percent to \$4.8 billion. Spending by Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania and Romania also grew (ranging from 18 percent to 24 percent) in 2018. 'The increases in Central and Eastern Europe are largely due to growing perceptions of a threat from Russia,' said Pieter Wezeman, a senior researcher with the SIPRI AMEX programme. 'This is despite the fact that Russian military spending has fallen for the past two years.'

At \$61.4 billion, Russian military spending was the sixth highest in the world in 2018. Its spending decreased by 3.5 per cent compared with 2017.

Military spending in South America rose by 3.1 percent in 2018. This was mainly due to the increase in Brazilian spending (by 5.1 percent), the second increase in as many years.

Military expenditure in Africa fell by 8.4 percent in 2018, the fourth consecutive annual decrease since the peak in spending in 2014. There were major decreases in spending by Algeria (-6.1 percent), Angola (-18 percent) and Sudan (-49 percent).

Military spending by states in the Middle East for which data is available fell by 1.9 per cent in 2018.

Total military expenditure by all 29 North Atlantic Treaty Organization members was \$963 billion in 2018, which accounted for 53 percent of world spending.

The largest absolute increase in spending in 2018 was by the USA (\$27.8 billion), while the biggest decrease was by Saudi Arabia (-\$4.6 billion).

Military spending in Turkey increased by 24 percent in 2018 to \$19.0 billion, the highest annual percentage increase among the world's top 15 military spenders.

Six of the 10 countries with the highest military burden (military spending as a proportion of GDP) in the world in 2018 are in the Middle East: Saudi Arabia (8.8 percent of GDP), Oman (8.2 percent), Kuwait (5.1 percent), Lebanon (5.0 percent), Jordan (4.7 percent) and Israel (4.3 percent).

SIPRI monitors developments in military expenditure worldwide and maintains the most comprehensive, consistent and extensive data source available on military expenditure. Military expenditure refers to all government spending on current military forces and activities, including salaries and benefits, operational expenses, arms and equipment purchases, military construction, research and development, and central administration, command and support. SIPRI therefore discourages the use of terms such as 'arms spending' when referring to military expenditure, as spending on armaments is usually only a minority of the total.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/07/20190717498016/>

PAKISTAN PRESENTS PROGRESS REPORT, PLANS ON ANTI-POVERTY SDGS TO UN

RECORDER REPORT JUL 18TH, 2019 NEW YORK

Pakistan on Tuesday presented its progress report and future plans on meeting the globally agreed and nationally adopted anti-poverty Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to the United Nations (UN). The Pakistani diplomats headed by Maleeha Lodhi said that the government of Pakistan led by Prime Minister Imran Khan was committed to accelerating human development in the country.

The progress report was in the form of a Voluntary National Review, a mechanism in which countries inform the UN about its implementation strategies to meet the goals and targets of the sustainable development agenda, also known as Agenda 2030.

Highlighting recent initiatives of Prime Minister Imran Khan to eradicate poverty, Pakistani envoy Maleeha Lodhi told the United Nations that the country will continue to work towards achieving the global sustainable development goals despite economic challenges.

"A key aspect of the implementation strategy is strengthening existing alliances and forging new ones, leveraging technology and mobilizing finance," Ambassador Maleeha Lodhi said while opening the third global workshop in preparation of the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) at the 2019 High Level Political Forum (HLPF).

A forum, held on Sunday, was organized by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs and hosted by the Permanent Mission of Pakistan.

Ambassador Lodhi mentioned that through political commitment and ownership, Pakistan has been able to integrate SDGs into its national development agenda.

She referred to recently launched Ehsaas Programme of Imran Khan's government, saying that it was aimed to expand social protection, safety nets and support human capital throughout the country.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/07/20190718498340/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 22nd TO JULY 28th 2019

STRATEGY TO IMPLEMENT EHSAAS PROGRAMME FINALISED

Syed Irfan Raza Updated July 24, 2019

ISLAMABAD: The government has formulated a strategy how to implement its flagship programme Ehsaas aimed at poverty alleviation and provision of social protection to the needy and downtrodden people.

The strategy was finalised in the first meeting of the Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Division's (PASSD) Ehsaas Implementation Group chaired by Special Assistant to the Prime Minister and Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) Chairperson Dr Sania Nishtar on Tuesday.

The meeting discussed the roles, key areas of execution and monitoring mechanisms of different organisations involved in the implementation of Ehsaas programme under the umbrella of the PASSD.

Speaking during the meeting, Dr Nishtar explained that all the organisations under the PASSD involved in implementing Ehsaas were given roles that were mutually reinforcing and that there was every effort made to exploit synergy.

Under the strategy, the BISP is being mandated to run cash transfers, Pakistan Baitul Mal's role is to be responsible for demand side social protection whereas the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund has the responsibility for poverty graduation.

Dr Nishtar said she wanted to ingrain the culture of collaboration within the PASSD and, therefore, cross-organisational committees were being formed. "The government is giving special emphasis on governance and integrity, which is why we have launched the governance and integrity policy last week," she added.

She apprised the participants that the PASSD would be mainly engaged with all organisations concerned under Ehsaas to ensure policy coherence, governance oversight, coordination and monitoring. "To avoid duplication among the implementing organisations, an online portal would be set up to provide one window visibility of all social safety and poverty alleviation interventions being carried out under Ehsaas," she added.

The meeting was also attended by Ali Raza Bhutta, secretary of the BISP; Shahid Naeem of the Ministry of Planning, Development and Reform; retired Capt Asadullah Khan, additional secretary of the PASSD; Aon Abbas Bappi, managing director of the Pakistan Baitul Mal (PBM); and heads and senior officials of the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF), Trust for Voluntary Organisations (TVO), Centre for Social Entrepreneurship and Centre for Rural Economy.

The BISP secretary said that his organisation had technical infrastructure in hand to share database facilities with the stakeholders concerned for identification and targeting of beneficiaries based on poverty score card. He shared details about the new National Socioeconomic Survey, which is under way.

Dr Nishtar appreciated that the supply centred role of BISP under the Ehsaas programme as its national socio-economic registry survey would provide the basis for all policy interventions to be executed under Ehsaas.

The PBM managing director, while sharing his organisational functions and jurisdictional roles, said that under Ehsaas, 150 schools for the marginalised would be rehabilitated, 150 women empowerment centres (educational and vocational set-ups) would be supported for socio-economically uplifting rural women. In addition, five old people homes will be developed under Ehsaas.

He said efforts were under way to develop a policy on orphanages.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1495880>

FOUR OF 10 UNDER-FIVE CHILDREN STUNTED IN KP: SURVEY

Bureau Report Updated July 24, 2019

PESHAWAR: Four in every 10 children below five years of age have been found stunted and another two in 10 suffer from wasting in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, according to National Nutrition Survey 2018.

A statement said that findings of the survey conducted last year were made public at a ceremony here on Tuesday.

“In the newly merged districts, formerly known as Federally Administered Tribal Area, three of every 10 children have wasting,” Prof Zulfiqar A. Bhutta, the director of Centre for Excellence in Women and Child Health, Aga Khan University, Karachi, told the participants.

He said that the survey also revealed that over 20 per cent of under-five children were underweight in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He said that during the course of the exercise, the nutrition status of 17,305 households across the province was assessed.

Prof Bhutta said that under-five children, adolescent girls and women of child bearing age were the primary focus of the data related to nutrition, access to water and its quality, hygiene and sanitation, food security and disability among children.

It shows that in both Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and newly-merged districts, adolescent girls and boys bear burden of malnutrition with over 30 per cent of adolescent girls in the province. More than half of them were anaemic.

Prof Bhutta said that over 10 per cent children between two to five years had one or another form of functional disability in Pakistan.

Health Secretary Dr Syed Farooq Jamil said that access to adequate nutrition was a fundamental human right and a precondition for overall human health, wellbeing and national development.

He said that government was aware of the fact that addressing the problems of malnutrition was of paramount importance.

“We must work together to implement effective interventions to address these issues for the welfare of our people,” he said.

Unicef deputy representative Dr Tajudeen Oyewale said that their actions to tackle the troubling trends of malnutrition would have to be bolder, not only in scale but also in terms of multi-sectoral collaboration, involving health, agriculture, food, education, social protection, water and sanitation and other relevant sectors.

The special secretary of planning and development department said that improved nutrition had significant economic and social benefits as it reduced morbidity and mortality besides improving the quality of life.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1495786>

OVER 50% FAMILIES CAN'T HAVE TWO MEALS A DAY

By Tufail Ahmed Published: July 24, 2019

KARACHI: Nearly half of all households in Pakistan are unable to meet their nutritional needs, the first ever survey of its kind in the country has revealed.

According to the National Nutrition Survey 2018 – a copy of which is available with *The Express Tribune* – poverty keeps more than 50 per cent of Pakistani families from having two meals a day, leading to severe dietary deficiencies.

As a result, as many as 40.2 per cent of all children in the country are affected by chronic malnutrition and stunted growth, which inhibits both their cognitive and physical development, the exercise carried out by the Ministry of National Health Services (NHS) revealed.

The survey also discovered that 36.9 per cent of Pakistani households remain food insecure and lack reliable access to affordable nutritious food in sufficient amounts.

To counter the nutritional emergency as quickly as possible, the federal government has already drafted a food fortification bill for the first time in Pakistan's history, Pakistan Pediatric Association (PPA) Secretary General Dr Khalid Shafi said. The bill, among other things, will make the addition of micronutrients in items like flour and ghee mandatory, he told *The Express Tribune*.

The objective of the survey, which will be released publicly today in a ceremony in Karachi, is to draw the attention of policymaking institutes towards the ever growing problem of malnutrition among Pakistani children.

The survey is one of the biggest in Pakistan's history and covers both the rural and urban population of all four provinces, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir. As many as 115,600 families, including 145,324 women, 76,742 children under five years of age and 145,847 minors aged between 10 and 19 years were studied during the course of the survey.

Teams conducting the research took blood and urine samples from participants and investigated water quality and sewerage situation in and around their homes to determine their natural body development and whether it was hindered by diseases or lack of nutrients.

Participants were also interviewed to ascertain their industrial independence, level of education and in the case of women and infants, breastfeeding ratios.

Among the key findings of the survey is that only 48.4 per cent of women in Pakistan breastfeed their children during infancy. It also found malnutrition to be at least partially a hereditary issue as women who lacked necessary nutrients in their diet gave birth to weak children.

The study pointed out that the early years of child are extremely important in terms of nourishment and malnutrition at this stage hinders cognitive and physical development, affecting both growth and immunities in the long run.

Four out of every 10 children under the age of five in Pakistan were discovered to be affected by stunted growth and lack of education and awareness was found to be a significant factor behind this. The study also discovered dietary discrimination in the favour of boys over girls in a significant number of families in the country.

Speaking to *The Express Tribune*, National Institute of Child Health Chairman Prof Jamal Raza noted that it is alarming that the percentage of children suffering from malnutrition in Pakistan is the same as 24 years ago. He stressed the importance of a proper diet during pregnancy, urging expecting mothers to realise that what they eat is transferred directly to their children.

Dr Shafi, meanwhile, pointed out that being underweight in children often result in both underdeveloped cognitive capacities and a history of recurring medical problems.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2019836/1-50-families-cant-two-meals-day/>

K-P GOVT URGED TO TAKE ‘BOLD’ STEPS TO CURB STUNTING

By Our Correspondent Published: July 24, 2019

PESHAWAR: With four out of every 10 children under five-years-of-age in the province facing stunting, the provincial government and its international partners suggesting that there is a need to take bolder, joint actions to tackle the issue.

This was disclosed as the results of the National Nutrition Survey (NNS) 2018 were formally announced at the provincial level in Peshawar on Tuesday.

The survey assesses the nutrition status of 17,305 households across Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) and newly-merged districts (NMD). Children under-five-years-of-age, adolescent girls and women of child-bearing age are the primary focus for the data collection on indicators related to nutrition, access to water and its quality, hygiene and sanitation, food security and disability among children.

The survey had been led by the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination (MoNHSR&C) and was implemented by the Agha Khan University, funded by the United Kingdom (UK) with technical support from the UNICEF.

Apart from stunting, the survey showed that two out of every 10 children in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) suffer from wasting — low weight for height because of acute significant food shortage and, or disease.

The situation was a little worse in the erstwhile federally administered tribal areas (Fata) where three out of every 10 children are affected by wasting.

The survey further revealed that over 20% of children under-five-years-of-age are underweight and over 10% are overweight.

The NNS points out that in both K-P and NMDs, adolescent girls bear a twice the burden of malnutrition than boys with over 30% of adolescent girls in K-P and more than half of them in NMD anaemic.

While launching the survey, K-P Health Secretary Dr Syed Farooq Jamil said that they understand that access to adequate nutrition is a fundamental human right and a pre-condition for overall human health, wellbeing and national development.

Noting that improvement of the health sector was a top priority for the incumbent government, he said that they consider addressing problems of malnutrition holistically an issue of paramount importance.

He emphasised that they must work together to implement effective interventions which can best address the nutritional rights of the most vulnerable.

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Deputy Representative Dr Tajudeen Oyewale conceded that their actions to arrest troubling trends in malnutrition will have to be bolder. In this regard, he said that they will have to be stronger not only in scale but also in terms of multi-sectoral collaboration, involving health, agriculture, food, education, social protection, water and sanitation, and other relevant sectors.

The UNICEF, Dr Oyewale said, will continue to support the provincial as well as the federal government in its efforts to curb malnutrition.

K-P Planning and Development special secretary said that improved nutrition has significant economic and social benefits as it reduces morbidity and mortality while improving the quality of life. He further revealed that women and children in the province have levels of nutrition that are far below acceptable — an alarming situation which requires urgent attention.

Earlier, the survey findings were shared by Agha Khan University Centre of Excellence in Women and Child Health Founding Director Professor Dr Zulfiqar Bhutta.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2019920/1-k-p-govt-urged-take-bold-steps-curb-stunting/>

CHILDHOOD STUNTING

Editorial July 25, 2019

IN his inaugural address to the nation, Prime Minister Imran Khan spoke about Pakistan's appalling rates of stunting, apparently the third highest in the world. Stunting is a lifelong impairment which cannot be reversed; it increases the risk of contracting non-infectious chronic diseases in children. During that speech, Mr Khan held out X-ray scans of the brain of a stunted child next to that of a healthy one, showing the visible difference in size between the two. The contrasting images underscored that stunting is not only a physical impairment, it is an intellectual one as well, with grave consequences for the nation's future. There are several reasons for the prevalence of stunting in our region, and all are linked to the high rates of poverty, the lack of access to proper healthcare and poor hygiene practices in the general population, and the secondary status of women in society. Stunting is caused when children do not have access to a nutritious diet in the first two years of life; when mothers are malnourished before and during pregnancy; when proper sanitary precautions are not practised within the household; and because of inadequate psychosocial stimulation. While it was encouraging then to see the prime minister put a large-scale but largely ignored health concern at the top of his agenda when he came into power, it seems to have since fallen out of the list of priorities.

Now, the government and Unicef have come out with the National Nutrition Survey 2018, which sheds some light on the topic. According to the report, the highest rates of stunting occur in KP (merged with tribal areas), with 48.3pc of children under the age of five suffering from the condition. Second worst were Balochistan and Gilgit-Baltistan (46.6pc each), followed by Sindh (45.5pc). In Azad Kashmir and Punjab, the rate of stunting stood at 39.3pc and 36.4pc respectively. Meanwhile, Islamabad had the lowest at 32.6pc. Sadly, even at its lowest, the figure is far too high.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1496094/childhood-stunting>

UNDERWEIGHT CHILDREN, STUNTING RATE HIGHEST IN SINDH: SURVEY

Faiza Ilyas Updated July 25, 2019

KARACHI: The province of Sindh has the highest number of underweight children — 41.3 per cent — in the country and the prevalence of stunting in the province, which is at 45.5pc, is also higher than the national average of 40.2pc, it emerged on Wednesday.

The data was shared at the launch of Sindh-specific findings of the National Nutrition Survey (NNS) 2018 here.

Jointly sponsored by Unicef, the national health services, regulation and coordination ministry and the British High Commission, the survey was undertaken by experts at the Aga Khan University. According to the data presented at the event, five out of every 10 children aged five or under are stunted while two out of every 10 suffer from wasting.

The NNS 2018 is the fifth national nutrition survey since 1965 but the first to yield district-representative data and to include adolescents and a component on water. The last such survey was conducted in 2011.

The study group included under-five children, adolescent boys and girls and women of reproductive age with primary focus on nutrition, access to water and its quality, hygiene and sanitation, food security and disability among children. The survey sample in Sindh consisted of 18,768 households.

It was identified that adolescent girls bear the double burden of malnutrition in the province and that 40pc of them were found to be anaemic. Wasting was also found most prevalent among under-five kids in Sindh (23.3pc).

More than 10pc of the children between two and five years were identified to suffer from some form of functional disability.

The report stated that Sindh, Balochistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir had more undernourished women (of reproductive age group) while overweight and obesity were more pronounced in Islamabad, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and KP's newly merged districts.

‘Malnourishment couldn’t be attributed to poverty’

Speaking at the event, Sindh Health Minister Dr Azra Fazal Pechuho said malnourishment couldn’t necessarily be attributed to poverty.

“It is largely due to lack of knowledge, inappropriate choice of food and also misconceptions about the food available,” she said, calling for concerted efforts to address the health-related challenges the province was facing.

Responding to the fact shared in the report about the high number of underweight children as well as growing obesity in a group of children, she said the situation was quite common across the country and that discrepancies were also quite evident.

“An alarming concern is also the fact that diabetes type one, peculiar to children, is also emerging as significant disease among children,” she said.

The health minister emphasised the need to impart health education at the grass-root level and sensitise the masses about simple, efficient and cost-effective interventions to protect children against malnourishment.

She called for collaborative efforts and said each section of society, particularly the media, had to play a role in tackling health challenges.

“This report is an important document. This is so because it carries credible data and provides comprehensive, context-specific and evidence-based information encompassing all indicators related to nutrition,” she said.

The district-specific data, she hoped, would help policymakers in the province to plan and allocate resources in accordance with public needs.

The overall picture of the country’s nutrition status as presented in the national survey report 2018 is bleak and calls for close collaboration between the federal and provincial governments to address the emergency situation Pakistan faces in the health sector, particularly in the case of its children and mothers.

The event was also addressed by Unicef’s chief field officer for Sindh Cristina Brugiolo, Sindh Planning and Development Board chairperson Naheed Shah and founding director of the Centre of Excellence in Women and Child Health at AKU Prof Zulfiqar Bhutta.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1495978/underweight-children-stunting-rate-highest-in-sindh-survey>

47% CHILDREN UNDER FIVE 'STUNTED

OUR CRRESPONDENT July 26, 2019

QUETTA: Around 46.6% children under five years of age in Balochistan are stunted and 18.9% suffer from wasting (low weight for height). according to the National Nutrition Survey (NNS) 2018.

The report further reveals that the double burden of malnutrition is becoming increasingly apparent, with almost 31% children being underweight alongside a high prevalence of being overweight - 16.7% - in the same age group. The trend analysis for malnutrition in Balochistan shows a steady and linear increase in the proportion of wasting in children when the data from 2001 is compared with that of 2018.

However, the occurrence of stunting is almost the same with a slight decrease between 2011 and 2018. On a similar note, the percentage of underweight children increased between 2001 and 2011 and then decreased between 2011 and 2018.

the overall prevalence of ferritin deficiency in children under five from Balochistan is 31.6%. Indicators for malnutrition among adolescent girls as indicated by the NNS shows that the overall prevalence of being underweight was 12.2%; overweight 13.6% and obesity 9.1%. The NNS findings also reveal that among women of reproductive age, 14.5% were underweight, 22.1% overweight and 12% obese.

Speaking on the findings of the NNS, National Health Services Parliamentary Secretary Dr Nausheen Hamid on Thursday said the federal government was determined to deal with the alarming problem of malnutrition among children and women along with its associated factors.

"The parliamentary secretary was speaking at an event organised by the Balochistan health department, the provincial nutrition directorate, UNICEF and the federal health ministry in connection with the survey.

Dr Nusheen urged all development partners to expand their interventions to the remote areas of the province to address the issue of malnutrition until the federal government started a proper national programme.

She also stressed the need for reducing the high maternal mortality rate in Balochistan.

"The district health officers must play a proactive role," she added.

Speaking on the occasion, provincial health minister Mir Naseebullah Marri urged the federal government and other key stakeholder to assist the province in improving the nutritional status and attaining the best possible outputs in the sustainable development goals.

"the province's social, economic and other indicators depict a dismal picture and Balochistan health department will play its part to deal with the situation but only together can we achieve the best results," he noted.

https://epaper.tribune.com.pk/DisplayDetails.aspx?ENI_ID=11201907260014&EN_ID=11201907260004&EMID=11201907260003

BAIT-UL-MAAL SEEKS FCCI'S COOPERATION IN REDUCING POVERTY

RECORDER REPORT JUL 28TH, 2019 FAISALABAD

Bait-ul-Maal seeks Memorandum of Understanding with the Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) to restore the reputation and trust of its organization, Malik Muhammad Azam, Chairman Bait-ul-Maal, said while

addressing to the business community of Faisalabad, here on Saturday. He said that Bait-ul-Maal is trying to get the five major Chambers of Commerce of Punjab in direct contact with them to complete their programme.

He said that when he took over as Chairman of Bait-ul-Maal, there were Rs 40 million in our treasury. He told that recently huge share has also been transferred to the city of Faisalabad. He also invited the President FCCI in the inauguration ceremony of 'Chief Minister Bait-ul-Maal Programme' planned in the near future.

He said plans are underway in Bait-ul-Maal including Honahar Talib-e-Ilam programme, Ek Ghranna Ek Silaei machine programme, Be Asra Bachi, Ehsas programme, Humare Bazurag Humare Jannat (wheelchair programme) and collective marriages. In addition, Bait-ul-Maal is trying to restore its image and promoting its activities in cooperation with various Chambers of Commerce, multinational companies and other organisations.

Earlier, Director General Dr Afshan Kiran Imtiaz gave a detailed presentation about Bait-ul-Maal, saying that our organization has been working to help the poor and needy people from the past thirty years. Earlier, Syed Zia Alumdar Hussain President Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce gave a brief introduction of Faisalabad and FCCI and said that being an industrial city, it is a leader in providing employment to millions of people. He said that renowned industrial groups and companies are operating in Faisalabad He further said that Faisalabad has always participated in every test and time faced by the country.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/07/20190728501014/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 29th TO AUGUST 4th 2019

PROTECTING THE POOR

Editorial August 03, 2019

THE reality shaping up for the poor is a dire one. Inflation has hit double digits for the first time in almost six years, while the price of petrol and diesel has seen another major hike, even though international crude prices are dropping. It is common knowledge that the poor are hit hardest by inflation, and that the government must attach importance to their interests and vulnerabilities when it formulates its economic policies. For the moment, it is apparent that the march of inflation is set to continue as the impact of the recent fuel price increase will now work its way through various price levels. In fact, further fuel and power tariff hikes lie in wait in the months ahead. The government is projecting average inflation for the current fiscal year to come in at around 13pc, which means the Consumer Price Index, which hit 10.3pc in July, could rise far above this level before it begins to taper off. There is a steep and rocky hill to climb in the months ahead, and the government needs concerted focus on the most vulnerable groups in society as it charts its course forward.

Such a concerted focus is clearly absent at the moment. This was more than evident when the prime minister ordered that gas tariffs for tandoors be brought back to the level they were at before July, in an effort to bring the price of bread down again. What this action betrayed was the fact that the poor are merely an afterthought in the calculus of power that drives the government. This is not right. It has been known for many months now that the state of the economy will force the government to undertake difficult adjustments, which will necessarily fuel inflation and make interest rate hikes inevitable, thereby contributing to unemployment as well. Such stop-and-go steps are not what qualify as sound governance in these times. The commitment to social protection schemes that the government has given to the IMF is also little more than window dressing, considering the scale of the difficulties that are being hoisted upon the poor. Close to 55m Pakistanis live below the poverty line, while the programmes mentioned in the IMF agreement cover only a few million at best. Far larger thinking is required to protect this group from the ravages of the adjustment that the government has launched.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1497856/protecting-the-poor>

AUGUST, 2019

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 14th TO 18th 2019

UPLIFT OF WEAKER SEGMENTS OF SOCIETY TOP PRIORITY: PM

OUR CORRESPONDENT AUGUST 18, 2019

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan Saturday said his government's vision is based upon the basic humanitarian principles of lifting the conditions of the downtrodden and weaker segments of the society.

Addressing the launching ceremony of Sehat Sahulat programme for the disabled, the prime minister said the human society has roots in the compassion and consideration for the downtrodden. He said improving the condition of the deprived segments of society is the responsibility of the state. The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf government's vision is focused on improving the conditions of weaker people of the society or those unfortunate who have been suffering from various issues, he added.

The prime minister said they want to introduce a centralised and data-based programme in Pakistan in collaboration with all the institutions involved in financial support of the poor and deprived classes, and cited launch of the Sahulat Card and the Ehsas programme aimed at improving the economic conditions of the poor.

The prime minister said every nation has a vision and that Pakistan is the only country to have been created in the name of Islam. "But, unfortunately, we have gone far from our goal for which this country was created," he lamented. "The vision for Pakistan's creation was to make it an Islamic welfare state on the principles of the State of Madina," he said. "The State of Madina was a modern state as its foundation was laid on the basis of humanity and justice. Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) is a role model for us and if we follow his Sunnah and teachings, we will be successful," he said. "The Muslims ruled the world for one thousand years following the principles of the State of Madina," he added.

<https://daillytimes.com.pk/449390/uplift-of-weaker-segments-of-society-top-priority-pm/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 19th TO 25th 2019

HUNGER GAMES

Zarrar Khuhro August 19, 2019

FAMINE, the third Horseman of the Apocalypse, is getting ready to ride. A withered husk of a man atop a black steed, he holds in his hands weighing scales. Because when famine rides, food becomes the most scarce and thus most valuable commodity in the land. On that day, it is in the cruel scales of Famine that a handful of flour will be measured against gold.

From symbolism to statistics: in its latest world hunger report, the UN tells us that the number of hungry people in the world has risen to over 821 million — that's one in nine people alive today — and is projected to increase further. The world to come — and its coming sooner than we would like — will be one of deprivation, scarcity, and the dull ache of a long empty belly.

Yes it is true that that global food production is and has been rising in absolute terms and will likely continue to do so but the growth is nowhere near the rate needed to feed the 10 billion humans projected to be inhabiting this world in 2050.

We're also running out of land to grow food on. In the last 40 years alone, we have lost one third of all available farmland to erosion, population growth, pollution and a whole infernal battalion of lesser demons.

And yes, it's going to get worse thanks to the recently inducted Fifth Horseman of climate change, which is due to take a serious toll on food production worldwide. And yes, once again the brunt will be borne by the 'developing world' (that's us!) and also by those unfortunate countries most at risk from climate change (us again!).

While you chew on that, consider that each year 1.3 billion tonnes of food — a third of all that is produced — is wasted. In developing countries, this is due to unintentional losses due to poor logistics and infrastructure, but in the wealthy parts of the world it is quite literally thrown away. The extent of this loss is such that the UN estimates that if only a quarter of this perfectly edible food were to be saved, it would ensure no one goes hungry anywhere in the world.

Modern food production has its issues as well, especially when it comes to meat. Globally, animal farming takes up a staggering 83 per cent of all available agricultural land while providing only 18pc of our calories. Beef production accounts for the lion's share of this and producing a single kilo of beef requires using anything from 5,000 to 20,000 litres of water while also contributing vast amounts of greenhouse gases. It's a sign of how serious this is even that a dedicated carnivore like myself has to concede that the vegetarians were right after all. Don't get too smug, vegetarians, you're still annoying.

Here's another fun fact though: the UN report also reveals that the number of obese and overweight people in the world may be close to a billion.

While most of the world's hungry are located in Asia and Africa, obesity knows no borders and while the US and China lead in this race, African countries like Ghana (where 37pc of the adult population suffers from stunting due to childhood mal-nutrition) have seen obesity increase by 500pc in just a few decades.

At first glance, this may look like the effect of income inequality — and in part it is — but then consider that low-income groups in the US have seen a massive rise in obesity, as they spend their limited money on (cheaper) processed food which fills the belly while starving the body. In true dys-topian style, while many are not getting the food they need, many are also not getting the nutrition they need from the food that they do get.

No surprise then that a more modern interpretation, coming from Neil Gaiman and Terry Pratchett's Good Omens series, shows famine as a businessman with a line of 'foodstuffs', which look taste and smell like food but contain absolutely no nutritional value. In short, while the classic famine takes away your food, the modern famine gets his kicks seeing you eat your way to starvation.

Where to go from here? Certainly reducing meat consumption would go a long way, and technologies like lab-grown meat and meat substitutes can help, if related taboos can be overcome. The same goes for genetically engineered crops, which are the subject of much controversy. Locally, new trends in urban farming and space-saving vertical farming can make a difference. In Pakistan, priority must be given to increasing yields, but not at the cost of sustainability. Priority must be given to improved logistics and storage, which will curb food losses. Luckily, we have at least a few organisations working on reducing food wastage, and we need to support them while also changing our highly wasteful habits. If not, rest assured the future will eat us alive.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1500373>

PM TO LAUNCH KAMYAB NAUJAWAN PROGRAMME NEXT MONTH

The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Updated August 23, 2019

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan will launch the Kamyab Naujawan Programme next month.

A meeting presided over by Mr Khan at the Prime Minister Office on Thursday was informed that under the programme, 500,000 youths will be given soft loans worth Rs100 billion.

Speaking on the occasion, the prime minister said the programme would not only provide monetary assistance to youths but also help prosper local industries.

"Pakistani youths are very talented as they prove themselves in all fields," he said.

Special Assistant to the PM on Youth Affairs Usman Dar briefed the prime minister on the programme and said that in first phase, the framework of National Youth Development Strategic Roadmap had been completed and also National Youth Council had been set up.

He said that under the programme, many schemes, including Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme, Green Youth Movement, Start-up Pakistan, Internship Programme, Hunarmand Naujawan and National Entrepreneur Programme, would be launched.

Mr Dar said a special portal was being formed under which record of all youths, to be registered under the programme, would be gathered. "This will provide credible data of youths," he added.

He said there was a limited scope of utilisation of youth loans in the past but in this programme, the scope of loans had been expended.

The special assistant said that under the first category, youths would be given Rs100,000 to Rs500,000 and in the second category, they will get loans up to Rs5 million.

He said the government had removed the condition of personal guarantee of a third person in provisional loans from banks and now young people would get loans directly through the portal.

In the first phase, the National Bank of Pakistan, Bank of Khyber and Bank of Punjab will provide loans.

Mr Dar informed the prime minister that basic purpose of establishing the portal was to eliminate possibility of any favour, choice and discretionary powers but to ensure transparency and merit in provision of loans.

He said all applications would be forwarded to banks through the portal and their record would also be maintained at the PM Office so that the prime minister could keep an eye on the whole process.

The special assistant said that in the past youth loans could be utilised in limited sectors, but in this programme it was being ensured that youths would do their businesses in information technology, e-commerce and other such sectors.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1501168>

PUNJAB CM OPENS SEHAT INSAF CARD SCHEME FOR SAHIWAL DIVISION

Our Correspondent August 25, 2019

LAHORE: Chief Minister Sardar Usman Buzdar on Saturday inaugurated Sehat Insaf Card scheme for Pakpattan, Okara and Sahiwal.

The chief minister also inaugurated seven mega projects of Rs80 crores, including Police Complaint Cell, computerised driving licensing lab and Pukar, 15 control room for Sahiwal division.

Sardar Usman Buzdar also announced three mega projects of Rs1.19 billion, including upgrade of Sahiwal District Headquarters Hospital as a teaching hospital.

The CM arrived at Sahiwal Circuit House and inaugurated the model cattle market of Chichawatni, reconstruction of Quaid-e-Azam Cricket Stadium and installation of floodlights, Government Boys Degree College in Kameer, municipal committee office, provision of basic facilities in rural health centre (RHC) and project of 60-bed tehsil headquarters hospital in Renalakhurd. The CM also planted a sapling a part of the tree plantation campaign in the circuit house and prayed for success of the campaign.

Later, addressing the inaugural ceremony of Sehat Insaf Card scheme for the three districts, the CM said that people were deprived of quality health facilities in the past. Sehat Insaf Card would provide an opportunity to the white-collar people to get free-of-cost treatment facility from the private hospitals in a dignified manner.

Treatment, medicines and test facilities would be made available to the Sehat Insaf Card holders free-of-cost as the bill would be paid by the Punjab government.

Travel expenditures would also be provided to the patients having Sehat Insaf Card. Sehat Insaf Card will provide treatment facilities and free follow-up for eight diseases to its holder. Sehat Insaf Card will also provide special treatment facilities to the mother and child.

The CM said that 6.7 million families of 24 districts were benefiting from Sehat Insaf Card.

He said that Sehat Insaf Card had been given to 25 per cent population of Sahiwal, 29pc of Okara and 27 pc population of Pakpattan. He said more than 2 million people of Sahiwal division were getting Sehat Insaf Card. He maintained that Sehat Insaf Card would be given to the government employees under a phased programme.

Similarly, Sehat Insaf Card will be distributed among ulema, mashaikh, Khateeb and students of seminaries, as well.

He said that setting up a computerised driving licensing lab, Pukar 15 and control room in Sahiwal would provide relief to the people. He said that establishment of the police complaint cell would help to resolve public complaints regarding police besides maintaining law and order in the division. Sardar Usman Buzdar said that seven development projects had been inaugurated at a cost of Rs80 crore for Sahiwal division.

He said model cattle market had been constructed at a cost of Rs29.3 crore in Chichawatni. Similarly, Rs4.26 crore has been spent on the installation of floodlights in Quaid-e-Azam Cricket Stadium in Sahiwal.

The construction project of Government Boys Degree College in Kameer had been completed at a cost of Rs11.8 crore.

Office of Kameer Municipal Committee has been constructed at a cost of Rs10 million. Necessary facilities will be provided in Kameer RHC at a cost of Rs1.67 crore. Tehsil headquarter hospital in Renalakhurd has been completed at a cost of Rs18.61 crore.

Usman Buzdar said that 316 projects worth Rs68 billion had been included in ADP for Sahiwal. Funds for the ongoing development projects in Sahiwal would be provided on a priority basis. The CM maintained that three mega projects for Sahiwal were being completed at a cost of Rs7.19 billion.

The district headquarters hospital will be awarded status of teaching hospital which would cost Rs6 billion. Dual carriageway from Arifwala to Bahawalnagar will be constructed at a cost of Rs.67 crore whereas Arifwala bypass, bypass from N-5 Royal Hotel to Sarwar Chowk will be constructed at a cost of Rs43 crore.

Fifty crore saplings would be planted under the Ten Billion Tree Tsunami Programme. He said that the only plantation was not enough but proper care of the plants was also essential. He said that he had firm belief that enlightened citizens of Sahiwal would actively participate in the tree plantation campaign and play their due role in making the motherland clean and green.

He also distributed Sehat Insaf cards among the citizens of Sahiwal, Pakpattan and Okara. The ceremony was also addressed by Provincial Minister for Health Dr Yasmin Rashid and health secretary.

Provincial Ministers Dr Akhtar Malik, Noman Langrial, Ijaz Alam, secretaries and other officers concerned were also present.

Earlier, the chief minister held a meeting with journalists at Sahiwal Circuit House and listened to their demands and proposals. The CM assured the journalists that the demand for the journalist colony would be considered. A policy is being considered to set up journalist colony in every division.

He said good news would be brought to the journalists during his the next visit to Sahiwal. The commissioner should indentify land for the journalist colony in Sahiwal and present a report, he added.

The commissioner Sahiwal and other officials concerned were also present on the occasion.

The CM also visited the Sahiwal Coal Power Plant and planted a sapling there. He was told in the briefing on the generation and supply of electricity from the plant that the plant had generated 19.6 billion kilowatts of electricity. The CM praised the power generation and environment-friendly measures.

The Punjab government will continue cooperation for the coal power plant under the CPEC because this is the symbol of Pak-China friendship. The CM visited various parts of the plant.

Punjab Energy Minister Dr Akhtar Malik and other officers concerned were also present.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/517033-punjab-cm-opens-sehat-insaf-card-scheme-for-sahiwal-division>

UNDERSTANDING POVERTY AS MENTAL TRAUMA

Samrah Humayun August 25, 2019 [Leave a comment](#)

The young are more at risk from poverty-related mental health issues

As Pakistanis and citizens of the Global South, we see poverty daily. Evidence of its outreach and consequences can be found in every street, nook and cranny. In every child who should be in school but is, instead, begging on the roadside dressed in rags; or in the family of 10 that lives in two rooms with neither a concrete roof over their heads nor access to clean drinking water; or the wretched of the earth, both man and animal, who rummage through garbage pile after garbage pile in the hope of happening upon small scraps of food.

General consensus recognises that poverty goes hand-in-hand with unemployment, rising crime and lack of education and healthcare facilities. These represent tangible cause and effect. Yet what of the nexus between poverty and mental health? This is an area that needs urgent attention.

Chronic poverty may be defined in terms of an individual or group that experiences poverty over an extended period of time; living on one meal or less a day and never knowing from where the next one will come. In such circumstances, children inherit poverty. When parents are unable to provide food, clothing and shelter to children – the psychological fallout may manifest itself in feelings of overwhelming helplessness and depression. Similarly, prolonged bouts of being ‘down on one’s luck’ due to lack of opportunity can provoke extreme negativity. All of which are comparable to the emotions and behavioural patterns exhibited by those suffering from mental trauma.

The young are more at risk from poverty-related mental health issues. Pakistan is currently home to the largest percentage of youth in its history; making it the second youngest country in South Asia after Afghanistan. According to the (2018) National Human Development Report (NHDR): 64 percent of the total population is below the age of 30 years while 29 percent is aged between 15-29 years. In its report, Preventing suicide: a global imperative, the World Health Organisation (WHO) notes that suicide was the second leading cause of death for 15-29-year-olds globally in 2016; 79 percent of which occurred in low and middle-income countries. Pakistan falls into the lower-middle income bracket. The crisis could not be clearer.

Impoverished nations have limited means of guaranteeing the full social, economic, and political participation of citizens that is so necessary to tackling mental health challenges. Fiscal constraints mean that such avenues, including crucial community-based support, do not receive adequate funding. Thereby leaving young people vulnerable to drug abuse.

Pakistan has much work to do. According to the WHO, as per 2014 data, the number of practising psychiatrists in the country totals 400; with just five healthcare facilities equipped to treat mental health issues. A mere 0.4 percent of the budget was allocated to mental health (2014). When it comes to meeting child and adolescent mental healthcare needs, the situation is even direr. In short, there is no form of mental health support in terms of education, facility or expertise that caters either to the poor or to the young.

Poverty directly impacts how our brains work. Indeed, current research identifies a link between poverty and depressed cognitive development in children and adolescents.

Poverty directly impacts how our brains work. Indeed, current research identifies a link between poverty and depressed cognitive development in children and adolescents. This not only affects memory, attention and problem-solving but also the ability to cope with chronic trauma.

Addressing mental health needs can boost preventive treatment while helping individuals to better cope with chronic adversity. It is never too young to start. If, for example, children are encouraged from an early age to tune into emotions and behaviour, they will inevitably be in a better position to channel these in more constructive ways. Moreover, increasing evidence suggests that the implementation of mental health programmes for schools positively affects academic performance as well as overall well-being.

It is therefore imperative that Pakistan prioritise mental healthcare preventions and solutions. However, this will require support from all agencies, particularly government and education institutions.

<http://tns.thenews.com.pk/understanding-poverty-mental-trauma/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 26th TO Sep 1st 2019

HALF OF HOMELESS TO GET HOUSES FROM 2020: MINISTER

SAQIB VIRK AUGUST 28,2019

ISLAMABAD: Eliminating homelessness from the country was one of the rather ambitious promises the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf made when it campaigned for votes ahead of the 2018 elections. But even though the country has witnessed a significant economic setback during the party's first year in power, the PTI government still appears confident it can pull this promise off.

"We aim to begin work on providing housing to 50 percent of Pakistan's homeless by 2020," Federal Minister of Housing and Works Tariq Bashir Cheema told The Express Tribune in an interview. "We stand by Prime Minister Imran Khan's vision in this regard and construction work on housing projects is expeditiously underway," he said.

According to Cheema, the government has already formed the Naya Pakistan Housing Authority (NPHA) to carry the Naya Pakistan housing Programme to completion. "The agenda of NPHA is to build five million houses with the Housing and Works Ministry working as a facilitator," he said.

"Another two-and-a-half million houses will be built over the next two-and-a-half years by the Federal Government Employees Housing Authority (FGEHF) and Pakistan Housing Authority (PHA), both subordinate institutions functioning under Housing and Works Ministry," he added. "We will begin handing over these houses to homeless Pakistanis in 2020."

At present, there is a shortage of as many as 11 million houses in Pakistan, the minister said, "As such, this residential project is a big challenge that Prime Minister Imran's government is working hard upon."

One way to meet the demand for houses in the country is to construct more high-rise buildings, suggested Cheema. Talking about the Thalian Housing Project in Islamabad, he said authorities will cease the joint venture if matters pertaining to land and road access cannot be resolved.

Meanwhile, work of the Bara Kahu project has begun, he said. "There was a dispute with the Capital Development Authority over a commercial area located in G-14. Now the Housing Foundation has attained the status of an authority, so we will review it ourselves."

Talking about the agreement of his party - Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid- with PTI on ministries, Cheema said: "We had an agreement regarding two ministries with PTI. At present, our party has assigned one of them to me.

Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain can assign the other to who-ever he wishes." That said, the minister added that his party would not take a second ministry if doing so triggered reservations from several quarters.

Regarding the United Arab Emirates' move to confer an award on India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Cheema termed the move 'highly concerning'. "UAE has awarded a man whose hands are stained with blood. It should remember the time when Pakistan used to help them. It does not take long for fortunes to change," he said.

The minister, however, hailed the move to grant army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa an extension as a 'Great step'. Extending Gen Qamar's tenure is one of the best decisions of the current government. It was the need of the hour," he insisted.

Regarding India's illegal actions in Occupied Kashmir, Cheema said: " There are on- going discussions over the Kashmir dispute at the international level. Kashmiris have the right to self-determination, which they will attain.

https://epaper.tribune.com.pk/DisplayDetails.aspx?ENI_ID=11201908280055&EN_ID=11201908280019&EMID=11201908280007

HARD TIMES: WHEN POVERTY KILLS

By Ahtisham Khan Published: August 28, 2019

PESHAWAR: It is widely understood that poverty and violence go hand in hand but nowhere does this idea ring truer than in the home lives of those born destitute. While the better off among us take for granted the comforts of our residences, the violence that poverty begets follows those less fortunate to home in the form of domestic hostility that at times can turn fatal.

The story of two-year-old Aiman is just one of the many such cases of fatal domestic violence triggered by crippling poverty. The infant girl was murdered by her own father, her body dumped next to a hill on the outskirts of Nowshera. As he confessed to the crime upon arrest, he claimed poverty and family arguments led him to commit the heinous deed, police officials said.

An off and on labourer by profession, Aiman's father Hasan Muhammad married his wife in 2008 and left for Dubai just 15 days later in search of greener pastures. But six years in the United Arab Emirates failed to turn Hasan's fortunes around and he returned to Nowshera as financially unstable as he was when he left, according to Investigation Officer Salim Khan, who looked into the case.

The first two years back home were tough for Hasan as he was unable to gain employment, Salim said. When he finally did find work, it was at a hotel for a meager Rs12,000 a month salary. Hasan was unable to hold that job long and subsequently worked on and off, often living penniless, the officer added.

Back at home, Hasan's inability to find work wreaked havoc on his familial life. "He often fought with his wife over financial issues. In his confession, he admitted that just six months before he murdered Aiman, he threatened his wife that he would kill both of them to 'free himself of any worries'," Salim told The Express Tribune.

When he finally did act on his threat, Hasan tried to get away with his daughter's murder by claiming she was kidnapped. "He told his family that some random stranger had kidnapped Aiman. They even registered an FIR with us," Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Khalid Khan said. "But in actuality, it was Hasan himself who abducted the two-year-old from their home. He took her to the hill on the outskirts of Nowshera, where we found her body, and strangled her himself."

According to both officers, police began acting on the FIR by recording the statements of Aiman's mother and other residents of the area they lived in.

When the statements failed to yield any evidence, they listed Hasan and other members of his families as potential suspects. After coming across some clues that pointed to Hasan as the culprit, police investigators interrogated him and he confessed to heinous crime. A local court has now sent Hasan to jail, the officers added.

Talking to The Express Tribune, Saima, an activist and manager of an NGO working for women's rights in K-P, said the incident both highlighted how poverty translates into anger and even derangement, and how women and girls often bear the brunt of the violence it triggers.

"Many sections of our society continue to view and treat women – be they mothers, sisters, wives or daughters – as a burden and as a result, they are often subjected to both physical and emotional torture," she lamented. "We need to include women's rights into the national curriculum so that the next generation of Pakistanis can move beyond this attitude," she suggested. She also called for strongly enforcing existing laws pertaining to women and enacting new ones to prevent incidents like Aiman's murder.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2043727/1-hard-times-poverty-kills/>

PRESIDENT BRIEFED ON BISP, EHSAAAS PROGRAMME AND INITIATIVES

The Newspaper's Staff Reporter August 29, 2019

ISLAMABAD: President Arif Alvi visited the headquarters of the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) on Wednesday, for a detailing briefing on the Ehsaas programme and its various components.

Praising the programme and its National Socio-Economic Registry (NSER), Tahafuz and Kafalat components, Mr Alvi said these initiatives have been holistically designed and align with the government's agenda of change through poverty alleviation.

He was also informed of the various interventions being made to benefit BISP beneficiaries. He was told that the payment mechanism for BISP beneficiaries has transformed greatly over the years, and biometric verification system-based payments have been adopted in 90pc of areas in coordination with banks, telecommunications companies and the National Database and Registration Authority.

BISP Chairperson Dr Sania Nishtar, who is also the minister for social protection and poverty alleviation, briefed Mr Alvi on the Ehsaas programme, its policies and its strategy.

She said the programme has 115 policy pillars to be executed with a multidimensional approach. A total of 28 agencies are involved in its implementation, she said.

BISP Secretary Ali Raza Bhutta spoke about BISP's activities, including the NSER, unconditional cash transfers and new payment system, and conditional cash transfers.

The methodology for the Poverty Score Card was also discussed. It includes a doorstep survey of every household, a questionnaire administered through a computer application (43 variables) and a household's assets and consumption data (proxy means test), and the calculation of each household's scores out of 100.

Third party validation of the survey and validation of identification by Nadra is also carried out.

Mr Alvi was also told that new initiatives, including a grievance redress and appeals process, validating and cross-validating results and establishing a national data exchange portal are being introduced.

A savings account-linked limited mandate account is also being introduced for beneficiaries so they can withdraw cash in full or keep some money in a savings account. The savings account would be linked to a verified SIM card in the beneficiary's name.

He was told that an interactive voice recording facility in local languages will also soon be provided at BISP call centres. Beneficiary awareness and financial literacy initiatives leading to financial and digital inclusion are also being implemented.

The Conditional Cash Transfer programme, functional in 50 districts across the country, was also mentioned. Mr Alvi was informed that each beneficiary household is provided Rs750 per quarter per child under the programme on the condition of 70pc attendance in the quarter.

He was told that 2.7 million children have been enrolled in school, 49pc of whom are girls, with a budget of Rs3.16 billion in 2018-19. He was told that the impact of the programme according to Oxford Policy Management is the increase in enrolment of children in schools, with 13pc for boys and 15pc for girls, and an attendance rate of 83pc for boys and 81pc for girls.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1502277>

LIFTING DOWN-TRODDEN FROM POVERTY MY PERSONAL MISSION, SAYS PM

Imaduddin August 30, 2019

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Thursday said that helping down-trodden and lifting them out of poverty was his government's main focus which he himself was pursuing as a personal mission.

Expanding tax base, institutional reforms, and out-of-the-box solutions for service delivery are the priority areas for achieving the goal of good governance, stated the Prime Minister while talking to Shixin Chen, Vice President of Asian Development Bank (ADB), who called on him along with Senior Advisor Ehsan Khan and Country Director ADB for Pakistan Ms. Xiaohong Yang.

Minister for Economic Affairs Muhammad Hamad Azhar, Advisor on Finance Dr. Abdul Hafiz Sheikh and senior officials were present during the meeting.

Vice President ADB briefed the Prime Minister regarding short, medium and long term support to Pakistan in various sectors of the economy, particularly trade and competitiveness. He stated that Pakistan, being a founding member, was an important partner of ADB.

The Vice President ADB discussed various proposals for enhancing institutional capacity of the Government that would help Pakistan achieve its development and economic stability agenda.

Chen noted that Pakistan could play a very important role in promoting regional cooperation and integration in Central and West Asia region. He informed the Prime Minister that he had fruitful meetings with Prime Minister's Special Assistant on Social Protection & Poverty Alleviation Dr. Sania Nishtar and ADB wanted to support the Government's flagship Ehsaas Programme.

The Prime Minister was informed that Minister Economic Affairs had extended invitation on Prime Minister's behalf to President ADB for visiting Pakistan, which was accepted by the President ADB.

The Prime Minister directed Economic Affairs Division to fast-track the processing and implementation of ADB's projects so as to facilitate ADB's support towards economic prosperity of Pakistan and its citizens.

<https://www.brecorder.com/2019/08/29/520583/lifting-down-trodden-from-poverty-my-personal-mission-says-pm/>

SEPTEMBER, 2019

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEP 2nd TO 8th 2019

PM'S 'BACKYARD POULTRY INITIATIVE' LAUNCHED

Amin Ahmed Updated September 03, 2019

RAWALPINDI: The Ministry of National Food Security and Research and the Punjab government launched the 'Backyard Poultry Initiative' of the prime minister, at the Poultry Research Institute here on Monday.

The project is designed to provide five million pre-vaccinated high laying birds throughout the country including Islamabad Capital Territory, Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan.

The project will cost Rs1.6 billion, of the total cost, 30pc would be borne by the federal and provincial governments, while 70pc would be shared by the beneficiaries.

Minister for National Food Security and Research, Sahibzada Mohammad Mehboob Sultan along with Punjab Minister for Livestock and Dairy Development, Sardar Hasnain Bahadar Dreshak and PTI leader Jehangir Khan Tareen inaugurated the backyard poultry initiative, during which birds and chickens were distributed among the beneficiaries.

Speaking on the occasion, Sahibzada Mehboob Sultan said Prime Minister Imran Khan in his very first speech to the nation expressed his grave concern for malnutrition and resultant stunted growth in children.

“This programme is one of the steps for the provision of animal protein and other food nutrients to under nourished population,” he said.

The provision of cheap poultry products was a good step to address the issue of malnutrition, Mr Sultan said.

Under the project, 5 million vaccinated chickens would be distributed at subsidised rates and would be accessible to all and sundry, he said.

According to the National Nutrition Survey 2018-19, 40pc children up to five years of age in Pakistan have different physical and mental health issues, and according to the survey conducted by Unicef, Pakistan ranks third in this menace.

“We need to take concrete steps to address the issues in small children and achieve zero hunger target. The ‘Prime Minister’s Agriculture Emergency Programme focuses on economic, agricultural and social revolution in the country, and the backyard poultry is successful internationally tested programme,” he said.

Mr Mehboob Sultan said that the project could prove vital for our women especially those residing in villages. This initiative will strengthen them physically and economically , Sultan added.

Punjab Minister Husnain Dreshak also spoke on the occasion.

PTI leader Jahangir Khan Tareen reiterated that to bring agriculture revolution, the government would leave no stone unturned. “We are hoping that after successful completion of these initiatives Pakistan would be able to export agricultural products instead of importing,” he added.

National Food Security Secretary Dr Hashim Popalzai said the focus of this initiative was to bring the rural population out of poverty and the ministry was grateful to the prime minister, who attached great importance to address the issue of malnutrition.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1503161/pms-backyard-poultry-initiative-launched>

CONCERN VOICED OVER MALNUTRITION AMONG CHILDREN

RECORDER REPORT SEP 5TH, 2019 LAHORE

Expressing concern over malnutrition among children in the country, health professionals have urged the government to help facilitate availability of health and nutritional products for children at cheap rates by reviewing heavy import and regulatory duty structure.

Nearly four in 10 under five children in Punjab are stunted while nearly two out of every 10 children under five also suffer from wasting, a form of malnutrition which puts affected children at high risk of dying, they said while quoting a survey. Health professionals added that 23.5% of children under five were found to be underweight while 9.9% were overweight in Punjab.

Moreover, as per survey, they said, one in eight adolescent girls and nearly two in eight adolescent boys are underweight in the province of Punjab while approximately 41% of the adolescent girls are anaemic.

They expressed concern over soaring prices of nutritional products, which are now regulated by DRAP; and customs authorities are charging 63 percent duties in comparison to 19 percent with other health products.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/09/20190905515548/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEP 9th TO 15th 2019

‘MANY STEPS TAKEN TO HELP POOR THARIS’

A Correspondent September 14, 2019

MITHI: The Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) has undertaken many initiatives to reduce poverty in the 23 most backward districts of the country, including the desert district of Tharparkar, under the National Poverty Graduation Programme (NPGP).

This was stated by PPAF senior group head Samia Liaquat Ali Khan on Friday while speaking to reporters after conclusion of a three-day orientation workshop.

She said that in the 23 districts around 177,000 families would benefit while they (NPGP) were all set to approach nearly 95,000 families in Sindh with the support of three organisations, the Thardeep Rural Development Programme (TRDP), National Rural Support Programme (NRSP) and Sindh Rural Support Organisation (SRSO). They were all committed to alleviate poverty in the selected districts, including Tharparkar, by undertaking sustainable plans and policies.

She said that their prime goal was to assist in steering out of poverty the ultra poor and very poor on a sustainable basis and to simultaneously improve their overall food security, nutritional status and resilience to climate change.

She said: “Those households are beneficiaries of the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) that will be provided assets, skills training, vocational training and/or access to interest-free loans for improving their living standards in the next five years in the 23 backward districts of the country.” The programme was being supported by the International Fund for Agriculture Development and the government of Pakistan.

She said the poverty graduation model used under the NPGP cost a huge amount for three main components ie assets creation, interest-free credit and training on livelihoods and vocational skills.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1505133>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEP 16th TO 22nd 2019

34 AGENCIES, FEDERATING UNITS TASKED TO IMPLEMENT EHSAAS PROGRAMME

SARDAR SIKANDER SHAHEEN SEP 17TH, 2019 ISLAMABAD

The federal government has tasked its 34 agencies and all federating units to implement Ehsaas Programme which, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government claims, is the largest social safety initiative in the history of Pakistan and aims to bring 10 million poor families in social safety net.

The details are part of the Ehsaas Strategy, a detailed document about Ehsaas Programme launched by Poverty Alleviation & Social Safety Division (PASSD) on Monday.

The 57-page document says that Ehsaas is the "biggest and the boldest pro-poor and pro-equality programme ever launched in Pakistan. It is an overarching coordinated whole-of-government umbrella initiative and its objectives are to: address elite capture and make the government system work for equality of opportunity; provide effective and comprehensive safety nets for the marginalized and the vulnerable; create livelihoods and jobs for the poor; invest in people for human capital formation; and lift lagging areas."

According to the document, the programmes' goals and targets are: safety net for at least 10 million families; livelihood opportunities for 3.8 million individuals; financial access to healthcare for 10 million families; scholarships and education incentives for five million students (50 per cent girls); financial and digital inclusion for seven million individuals (90 per cent women); enabling environment for poverty reduction; and equality promoting multi-sectoral partnerships and innovations.

It says non-governmental stakeholders - private sector, civil society, philanthropy community, academia, and international partners - will also be invited to contribute to Ehsaas in an appropriate framework.

The Ehsaas Strategy paper says that for the chronic poor, the cash transfer system of the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) is undergoing reform under the theme of 'Kifalat.' "To protect the poor against catastrophic risks, 'Tahafuz' is being launched-Pakistan's first shock-oriented precision safety net. There is a suite of policies for the differently-abled. For the first time, welfare initiatives are being introduced for the elderly poor, the homeless and the most marginalized (orphans, street children, seasonal migrants, transgender community, victims of child and bonded labour, daily wage workers and substance abusers). There is an emphasis on developing normative capacity in the safety nets area, particularly with regard to developing standards, which can help tap the potential of the private sector and philanthropy more optimally. For the first time, enhanced interventions are planned for the welfare of Pakistani workers abroad and policies are being developed in an evidence-based manner to incrementally accrue social security benefits to workers in the informal sector."

The document reveals that the federal government intends to launch one-window social safety operations under 'Ehsaas One-Window,' with the merger of all the federal-government run social safety organisations in Ehsaas Programme. Currently, there are not less than 198 social safety organisations operating in Pakistan.

"Several assessments have pointed to the fragmented nature of social safety net arrangements in Pakistan. Overall, safety nets in the country comprise a large number of small, thinly spread (in terms of resources) and weakly coordinated overlapping programmes. Overall there are 198 safety net institutions/programmes in the country."

Before commencement of Ehsaas, as per the document, various federal safety net/poverty alleviation-related institutions were reported to different ministries, which constrained policy coherence and coordinated operations. The BISP (Benazir Income Support Programme) and PPAF (Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund) were attached to the Finance Division. Zakat came under the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Inter-faith Harmony. Bait-ul-Mal was attached to the Cabinet Division. The Centres for Social Entrepreneurship and Rural Development were under the Planning Commission whereas a dormant Trust for Voluntary Organizations was under the Economic Affairs Division. Immediately after the launching of the Ehsaas framework, PASSD was established. Under Ehsaas all the federal social protection agencies were placed under the stewardship of PASSD. "This step has been instrumental in promoting policy coherence and reducing fragmentation. It will enable the creation of a One-Window Ehsaas operation with ease. Managed by the Division, the creation of the One-Window Ehsaas for all social protection operations will assist beneficiaries of social protection and reduce duplication and abuse," the document reads.

It cites Planning Commission's consumption-based estimates which suggest that poverty in Pakistan has declined from 57.9 percent in 1998 to 24.3 percent in 2015, but it still remains 'unacceptably high.'

"A much higher percentage of the population faces non-monetary deprivations. Prevalence of multidimensional poverty is 38.4 per cent (including education, health and living standards). There are stark regional disparities in the prevalence of poverty. Rural multidimensional poverty headcount is as high as 55 per cent, in contrast to urban areas where only nine per cent of urban population is multidimensionally poor. Disparities are also found at the district level, where some districts in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have more than 90 per cent of the population living in multidimensional poverty while several urban districts like Lahore, Karachi and Rawalpindi have less than 10 per cent of their population as multidimensionally poor. Therefore, there is strong evidence and public policy rationale to address poverty and inequality. As a long-term umbrella initiative, Ehsaas is one of the vehicles through which the

government envisages implementing its vision for a welfare state. There is a short-term requirement to prioritise its Safety Net Pillar in view of any economic hardship that may arise as a result of the current fiscal austerity measures."

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/09/20190917518291/>

ZTBL COLLABORATES WITH GB GOVERNMENT TO ALLEVIATE POVERTY

RECORDER REPORT SEP 20TH, 2019 ISLAMABAD

Zarai Taraqati Bank Limited (ZTBL) and Government of Gilgit-Baltistan have signed a Memorandum of Understanding focusing on to mitigate poverty and to positively contribute to develop synergies, which will ultimately lead to food security and economic uplift of rural populous of Gilgit-Baltistan.

The initiative is undertaken in compliance to the Prime Minister's vision for agriculture development and poverty reduction in less developed areas.

The MoU signing ceremony was held at Gilgit-Baltistan House, Islamabad, and was attended by Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan, Secretary Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, Government of Gilgit-Baltistan and Shiekh Aman Ullah, Acting President ZTBL along with team of ZTBL Executives on 19th September 2019.

Under this MoU, using its already operational branch network of 11 branches in Gilgit-Baltistan, ZTBL will extend the financing facilities to the farmers, under Chief Minister's Initiative for Livestock Production Farms in GB through Public Private Partnership.

This initiative will promote dairy, livestock and meat sectors in the area envisaging the saving of Rs 14 billion heavy expenditure presently incurred by the Government of Gilgit-Baltistan for acquiring milk and dairy products along with meat requirements fulfilment from other parts of the country.-PR

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/09/20190920519089/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEP 23rd TO 29th 2019

REKO DIQ RESIDENTS STRUGGLE WITH UNEMPLOYMENT, HUNGER

By Muhammad Akbar Notezai in Reko Diq | 9/23/2019 12:00:00 AM

ONCE a month, Wahid Mohammadzai goes to Afghanistan by a pick-up to bring dried wood to sell in local markets.

Earlier, he worked at Reko Dig gold-cum-copper mining project as a labourer to earn a monthly salary of Rs20,000.

I meet Wahid near Kili Hummai, his village, some 15km from the main camp site of Reko Diq. He says he is a chowldidar at a privately owned mine in the Reko Dig area. He is paid by his employer a pittance and that too after three months. That's why he has to bring wood all the way from Afghanistan in order to feed his family.

He wants the Tethyan Copper Company (TCC) to return to Reko Dig to resume work at the copper-cum-gold mines. The reason: he will be getting Rs20,000 every month.

After travelling for almost over 500km from Quetta, the derelict Naulcundi town appears along the National Highway.

Naukundi is also the hometown of Senate Chairman Sadiq Sanjrani.

Reko Dig is 85km from Naukundi. Between Naukundi and Reko Dig, there is not a single human settlement across the road.

There are few human settlements on the eastern side of Reko Dig. One of them is Kili Siah Reg, close to the main camp of TCC. The village has about 40 houses that have been abandoned following the closure of the TCC camp. Empty houses of this hamlet are filled with sand. Walls have either collapsed or eroded due to extreme weather. My driver tells me the residents were supplied water by the TCC and it was the Reko Dig project's closure and consequent halt to water supply which forced the thirsty residents to move elsewhere.

Under the shadow of the picturesque Hummai Gar mountains, Kili Humai comprises two tiny twin villages having a hundred or so houses made of mud bricks and stones.

Stone Age In Hummai, my host is Saleem Mohammadzai, who is in his 30s.

He tells me these days his major source of income is the dried wood business. Like him, other villagers also depend on this business. 'If you can't do it, then you and your family won't have a morsel to eat for days,' he says, eyes brimming with tears.

Hummai lacks basic amenities, only has a well, from where women and children fetch water. Besides, the village has been severely hit by drought, like other remote areas of Chagai district. Livestock, the main asset of the villagers, has perished.

'It has rained only after we lost our cattle,' bemoans Ghulam Mohammad Mohammadzai, another villager. 'Water table has also plunged to unreachable depths.'

When the TCC was working in the area and most of locals were engaged there in labour work, 'we were merely chowkidars of Reko Dig, despite the fact that we have been living here for centuries,' laments Saleem.

'I pray for company's return' Habibullah Mohammadzai, 60, comes to meet me at Saleem's house. He does not have children, and lives with his wife. In his twilight years Habibullah was working with the TCC as an amir. Now he is financially supported by his brothers. But, day by day, it is becoming difficult for him to survive. Sometimes he and his spouse have to sleep on empty stomachs.

Saleem's nine-year-old son sits next to me. I put into his pocket a Rs1,000 note. After a while, Habibullah whispers in my ear whether I could take care of him too.

Next day, Hummai seems almost vacant. Saleem says most of the locals have left for a truck that has brought ration for the drought-stricken village, for the first time in their lives. The truck has been sent by Sadiq Sanjrani's father Asif Khan Sanjrani. He sends these people truckloads of rations, to secure the vote bank for his family, especially ever since his son assumed the office of the Senate Chairman.

https://epaper.dawn.com/DetailImage.php?StoryImage=23_09_2019_003_008

MOU FOCUSING ON POVERTY ALLEVIATION SIGNED WITH BILL GATES FOUNDATION

9/27/2019 12:00:00 AM

NEW YORK: The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (B&MGF) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Pakistan for its Ehsaas initiative on poverty alleviation.

Prime Minister Imran Khan and Bill Gates, co-chair of the B&MGF, witnessed the signing ceremony as Special Assistant to PM on Poverty Alleviation Dr Sania Nishtar and president of Global Development at B&MGF Dr Chris Elias inked the MoU here on Wednesday.

The B&MGF will assist the Pakistan government with a range of activities, including acceleratingstuntingreductionprogrammes, supporting financial inclusion initiatives and investing in public health systems to improve health and reduce maternal, newborn and child mortality. The foundation plans to spend about \$200 million in Pakistan in 2020.

Earlier, the meeting between Prime Minister Khan and Bill Gates and Chris Eliasfocused on Ehsaas and finding ways of its collaboration with B&MGF on funding, technical assistance, and help of global experts in improving health, nutrition and financial inclusion in Pakistan.

Mr Khan said that Ehsaas aimed at providing effective safety nets through 134 new poverty-focused policy actions and programmes, was the largest anti-poverty project ever launched in the country.

He said since assuming office, he had set out an ambitious plan to alleviate poverty and improve health and education for the most vulnerable people.

Mr Khan expressed commitment to take steps to end polio in the country.

Pakistan`s ambassador to the United Nations Dr Maleeha Lodhi, Adviser to the PM on Finance Dr Abdul Hafeez Shaikh and Adviser on Commerce Abdul Razak Dawood attended the meeting.

The new collaboration of the government with Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is in continuation of the Foundation`s more than decade-long work in Pakistan.

The earlier programmes have covered a range of shared development priorities, including polio eradication, financial inclusion, routine immunisation and maternal, neo-natal and child health.-APP

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1507584/mou-focusing-on-poverty-alleviation-signed-with-bill-gates-foundation>

POVERTY ALLEVIATION: B&MGF SIGNS MOU WITH EHSAA

RECORDER REPORT SEP 27TH, 2019, NEW YORK

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of Pakistan for its Ehsaas initiative on poverty alleviation. Prime Minister Imran Khan and Bill Gates, co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (B&MGF) witnessed the signing ceremony as Special Assistant to PM on Poverty Alleviation Dr Sania Nishtar and President of Global Development at B&MGF Dr Chris Elias inked the MoU in New York late Wednesday, on the sidelines of 74th session of UN General Assembly.

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation will assist the Government of Pakistan with a range of activities including acceleratingstuntingreductionprogrammes, supporting financial inclusion initiatives and investing in public health systems to improve health and reduce maternal, newborn and child mortality.

Earlier, the meeting between Prime Minister Khan with Bill Gates and Chris Elias focused on Ehsaas and finding ways of its collaboration with B&MGF on funding, technical assistance, and help of global experts in improving health, nutrition and financial inclusion in Pakistan.

The prime minister said Ehsaas, aimed at providing effective safety nets through 134 new poverty-focused policy actions and programmes, was the largest anti-poverty project ever launched in the country.

He said since assuming office, he had set out an ambitious plan to alleviate poverty and improve health and education for the most vulnerable people.

He mentioned that Ehsaas aimed at radically improving Pakistan`s progress towards achieving the UN Sustainable Development Global Goals for its more than 210 million people.

The prime minister expressed commitment to put measures in place to end polio once and for all, as well as make progress on the micro-payment gateway and financial inclusion.

The ‘One Woman One Bank Account’ programme, which comes under Ehsaas, was also discussed in relation to how it could accelerate both financial inclusion and women empowerment.

Pakistan’s ambassador to the United Nations Dr Maleeha Lodhi, Adviser to PM on Finance Dr Abdul Hafeez Shaikh and Adviser on Commerce Abdul Razak Dawood attended the meeting.

The new collaboration of the government with Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is in continuation of the Foundation’s more than decade-long work in Pakistan.

The earlier programmes have covered a range of shared development priorities including polio eradication, financial inclusion, routine immunization and maternal, neo-natal and child health. The foundation plans to spend about \$200 million in Pakistan in 2020.

Ehsaas is about the creation of a ‘welfare state’ by countering elite capture

and leveraging 21st century tools such as using data and technology to create precision safety nets, promoting financial inclusion and access to digital services, supporting economic empowerment of women, economic growth and sustainable development and overcoming financial barriers to accessing health and post-secondary education.

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<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/09/20190927521257/>

BIRTH CONTROL CAN HELP CURB POVERTY, ILLITERACY AND UNEMPLOYMENT: EXPERTS

By Our Correspondent Published: September 27, 2019

Medical experts stressed the importance of using contraceptives for controlling rapid population growth during a panel discussion organised by the Express Media Group on the occasion of World Contraception Day on Wednesday. photo: express

Medical experts stressed the importance of using contraceptives for controlling rapid population growth during a panel discussion organised by the Express Media Group on the occasion of World Contraception Day on Wednesday. photo: express

KARACHI: Medical experts stressed the importance of using contraceptives for controlling rapid population growth during a panel discussion organised by The Express Media Group, in collaboration with the welfare organisation, PathFinder International.

Attributing the steep rise in the birth rate in Pakistan to the reluctance of using contraceptives, the panellist said that adopting birth control methods could help curb poverty, illiteracy and unemployment.

Raheel Saad, who was moderating the panel discussion, said that the contraceptive prevalence rate in Pakistan, at present, is the same as it was during 2012 and 2013. He said that according to statistics, 17% of women in the country had expressed willingness to use contraceptives but they weren’t able to for various reasons.

During the discussion, the panellists also emphasised on raising awareness about the importance of using contraceptives to curb population growth. Most people in the country still do not know how to use contraceptives and where to get contraceptive products, they said.

Further shedding light on the matter, one of the panellists, Dr Agha Zahir said that people often consider using contraceptives un-Islamic and lack of awareness further aggravates the situation.

According to Dr Rubina Sohail, an executive member of the Pakistan Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, more than half of the people in the country do not consider family planning important and hence, it is necessary that awareness is raised about the use of contraceptives.

According to Dr Sohail, 4 million abortions take place in Pakistan annually. Adding to this, the panellists revealed that approximately 10 million women conceive children every year in Pakistan, out of whom 40% pregnancies are unintended.

Sindh Population Welfare Department Secretary Zahid Ali Abbasi also spoke on the occasion. PathFinder International country directors, Dr Tabinda Sarosh and Miss Zainab Feroze Khan, and a large number of students attended the event.

Published in The Express Tribune, September 27th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2066202/1-birth-control-can-help-curb-poverty-illiteracy-unemployment-experts/>

OCTOBER, 2019

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEP 30th TO OCT 6th 2019

'SOUTH ASIA HAS LARGEST NUMBER OF POOR'

By APP Published: October 2, 2019

SUKKUR: Adviser to Prime Minister on Institutional Reforms and Austerity Dr Ishrat Husain has emphasised the need for collaboration and cooperation among the public sector, private sector and civil society in a bid to overcome economic challenges.

Addressing the South Asian Management Forum on the theme “Challenges of Inclusive Growth and Sustainability: The South Asian Context” on Tuesday, Husain said despite all the progress South Asia’s economy had made, there were still “challenges ahead of us and we still have the largest number of poor in this region as we have growing inequalities”.

“Business and management education can play a pivotal role in addressing these challenges,” he suggested.

The event was organised by Sukkur IBA in collaboration with the Association of Management Development Institutions of South Asia and the Association of Management Development Institutions in Pakistan.

Husain underlined the importance of employee retention in a business organisation and suggested that organisations should not lay off experienced employees by keeping short-term goals in the view instead their efforts should be directed towards continued effectiveness.

Sukkur IBA Vice-Chancellor Professor Nisar Ahmed Siddique, in his inaugural address, said the major challenges posed to education systems in member countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) included globalisation, the emergence of technology, population growth, water shortage, environmental issues and capitalism that led to the unjust distribution of wealth.

He pointed out that the conference was aimed at providing solutions to different challenges and issues. The key objective was to provide a platform for scholars, researchers, academics, practitioners and business leaders to share their thoughts, ideas, solutions, and empirical evidence.

The two-day conference included five-panel discussions on topics like inclusive growth, local entrepreneurship, etc. There were also parallel sessions in which researchers from all over South Asia presented their research work related to the theme of the conference.

Delegates from various countries including Sri Lanka and the Maldives participated. Deans, directors and vice-chancellors of reputable institutes of Pakistan took part in the Vice Chancellors Forum and discussed the role of management development institutions in inclusive growth and business education.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2070096/2-south-asia-largest-number-poor/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 7th TO 13th 2019

ADB APPROVES \$200M TO SUPPORT BISP CASH TRANSFERS

Amin Ahmed October 08, 2019

ISLAMABAD: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) on Monday approved a \$200 million loan as additional financing to help support the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), which supports more than five million eligible families across the country through over \$3.6 billion in total cash transfers disbursed so far.

The \$200m additional financing for the project will continue to support cash transfers as well as help the BISP implement institutional strengthening measures. The ADB-financed Social Protection Development Project, approved in October 2013, has enabled the enrolment of over 855,000 women beneficiaries to the BISP, or about 15 per cent of the eligible beneficiaries.

The ADB's additional financing will support further institutional strengthening and improvements in financial management and controls in the BISP.

A policy research unit would also be established within the BISP to help monitor and improve the performance of ongoing programmes and design new cost-effective and evidence-based initiatives such as poverty graduation programmes and conditional cash transfers for health and nutrition in line with global best practices, said the ADB Country Director for Pakistan, Xiaohong Yang.

The BISP is part of a larger government strategy called 'Ehsaas' to reduce poverty and inequality. The BISP, which is primarily funded by the government of Pakistan, supports 'Ehsaas' through cash transfers, poverty graduation programmes and a targeted social safety net.

"Social protection programmes like the BISP are crucial to ensure that the poorest segments of the population do not go further into poverty, especially at a time when the country is facing difficult macroeconomic challenges," said Tariq Niazi, Director of Public Management, Financial Sector, and Trade at ADB's Central and West Asia Department.

Mr Niazi said: "We are also committed to helping the government implement alternative modalities for social protection and poverty reduction such as asset transfer programmes that promote improved human capital and reduce intergenerational poverty."

The ADB is committed to achieving a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific, while sustaining its efforts to eradicate extreme poverty. In 2018, it made commitments of new loans and grants amounting to \$21.6 billion.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1509622/adb-approves-200m-to-support-bisp-cash-transfers>

PM LAUNCHES 'EHSAA S LANGAR SCHEME'

ZAHEER ABBASI OCT 8TH, 2019 ISLAMABAD

Prime Minister Imran Khan said on Monday that the government is striving to help businesses and industry so that they may make money and pay taxes, which the government would spend on the poor to make the country a welfare state. Speaking at the launch of 'Ehsaas Langar Scheme' in the federal capital, the Prime Minister stated that under an agreement with the Saylani Welfare Trust, Ehsaas will open 112 Langar (free meal centers) in the first phase and these would be gradually expanded to all the vulnerable areas across the country.

"We have to take the responsibility of the poor and vulnerable, which happens in welfare state like State of Medina," he said. He said the government policies during the last few years have widened the gap between the poor and the rich and stated there are various schemes under Ehsaas program and Naya Pakistan that would be based on the concept of a welfare state.

Currently, the Ehsaas Langar site in Islamabad provides food two times a day to around 600 people. For lunch, the charity food is served from 12:00pm to 2:00 pm and for dinner from 6:30pm to 8:30pm. The people are pleased with the food quality and the degree of respect and dignity with which they are being served.

The Ehsaas scheme will now be extended countrywide with as many as 112 Langar schemes being set up over the period of two years to feed millions of people particularly in Karachi, Hyderabad, Faisalabad, Rawalpindi, Quetta and Peshawar. The Langar scheme has been designed with the ethos to contribute substantively to SDG 1 and SDG 2 ie no poverty and zero hunger respectively.

Later on a statement issued by the Prime Minister Office stated that the present government is putting in its maximum efforts and resources to bring a positive change in the society and ensure welfare of the poor. In this respect, this joint initiative has been launched by Ehsaas in partnership with Saylani Welfare International Trust (SWIT).

As part of this collaboration, the federal government has extended on-the-ground facilitation and support, while the Trust has brought in its kitchen and food distribution resources for the marginalized. Later, a memorandum of action was signed between the federal government through Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Division and Saylani Welfare International Trust to undertake establishment of Ehsaas Langar for the poor and destitute laborers and travelers in Pakistan, particularly in the vicinity of hospitals, industrial areas and at railway stations.

The SWIT is a prestigious charity feeding organization that has over the years successfully developed its forte in providing cooked food to the needy and destitute across several major cities of Pakistan. With over 60 different sectors, they primarily feed thousands of hungry people each day, hundreds more are given the hope of life through medical health care, many are educated to become leaders of tomorrow and several are given the opportunity to stand on their feet financially.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/10/20191008525499/>

MILLIONS OF PAKISTANIS SHELTER LESS: PDP CHAIRMAN

By RECORDER REPORT on October 8, 2019

Giving poor people food, clothing and shelter has been a popular political slogan in Pakistan for decades, but millions of Pakistanis are shelter-less even today when the world is celebrating international habitat day, said Pasban Democratic Party (PDP) Chairman Altaf Shakoor on the occasion of World Habitat Day.

He said successive governments in Pakistan have only given lip-service to their voters, instead of really working on giving them food, clothing and shelter. He said countless people sleep beneath the open sky. He said still majority of Pakistanis live in Katchi Abadis, slums and shanties. These people live a life that is worse than the life of animals.

They are deprived of even basic facilities of clean water and sanitary lines, what to speak of education and healthcare. These people live like homeless people of war-ravaged regions of Kashmir, Palestine, Burma and Syria. He said the constitution of Pakistan makes bound the government to ensure basic facilities for each and every Pakistani citizen, but the rulers only take care of the vested interests of elite class, neglecting mammoth population of poor people.

Altaf Shakoor warned that if the government failed to fulfill its electoral promises and give the poor masses at least basic facilities of life, it would ultimately face the anger of these suppressed people.

<https://www.brecorder.com/2019/10/08/528056/millions-of-pakistanis-shelter-less-pdp-chairman/>

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP: GOVERNMENT TO RUN SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMMES: SANIA

RECORDER REPORT OCT 8TH, 2019 ISLAMABAD

Special Assistant on Social Protection and Poverty Alleviation Dr Sania Nishtar has said that the government has decided to run social protection programmes under a public-private partnership. Addressing a press conference here on Monday, she said that the social welfare programmes will be expanded through a partnership with trusts. Sania Nishtar said that a Langar (free meal centre) was opened in Islamabad on Monday in collaboration with Saylani Welfare International Trust to provide free food to the needy. She said under the memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed with Saylani Trust, quality of food will be ensured.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/10/20191008525553/>

FEEDING THE HUNGRY

Editorial October 09, 2019

IT is laudable that Prime Minister Imran Khan remains committed to his cherished aim of creating a welfare state in Pakistan. Sadly for him, patience is running out and the schemes that have been launched thus far appear to many as mere photo ops. He recently renewed his pledge to push ahead for a welfare state that provides for the poor and the needy on the premises of a soup kitchen run by the Saylani Welfare International Trust near Peshawar Morr, Islamabad. He promised 1,200 more such facilities across the country in what seems to be a cooperative model between private and government initiatives to run welfare schemes. He also used the occasion to ask critics as well as his supporters to be patient, once again invoking the example of the state of Madina while also arguing that 70 years of 'wrong policies' in Pakistan could not be reversed in 13 months.

But perhaps the event is more noteworthy for what was not said. For example, when he came to power, the prime minister had himself told the country to give his government three months before criticising his administration. Today, 13 months later, he is asking for patience but cannot say how long the people will have to wait to see the promised benefits. He has also said nothing about how the model soup kitchen he unveiled will be scaled up. When launching the Ehsaas programme back in March, he had pledged to carry out a string of important reforms, with legislative changes accompanying the rollout of the programme. But as of today, most of those promises are languishing while the photo ops continue. For instance, the accompanying policy statement of the Ehsaas programme said that the allocation formula of the NFC award would be retooled to make it more "need-based" and more responsive to welfare-oriented goals. However so far, his government has not been able to advance the NFC talks, and the agenda it brought to the last round of talks was not in keeping with the policy statement of the Ehsaas programme.

No doubt the prime minister is right to point out that profound or radical change will not come in 13 months. But surely, the public should be witnessing greater effort and progress in this direction. A ministry has been created for social protection and poverty alleviation, and various programmes have been clubbed under it. But eventually, the poor need protection from rising inflation, especially food inflation. Soup kitchens are fine as a palliative in these

times, but they do not amount to a policy response. The government needs to stop taking critical comments to heart, and focus its energies on more holistic policy responses to get through the difficult times it says we must live through before the break of a new dawn.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1509843>

EXPERTS WARN SUICIDE TREND ON THE RISE IN COUNTRY

Staff Reporter October 10, 2019

KARACHI: Experts at a press briefing on Wednesday said every third person in Pakistan was depressed and the trend of suicide was alarmingly on the rise in the country.

Marking World Mental Health Day, which is being observed on Thursday (today), the experts said at the briefing that key factors behind increasing depression among the society were low standard of living, social deprivation, etc.

The press briefing was organised by the Neurology Awareness and Research Foundation at the Karachi Press Club.

The foundation's president Dr Mohammad Wasay said the problem relating to mental health was equally important for every country since it led to various socioeconomic issues.

He said people were committing suicide every 40 seconds in the world and Pakistan was among the countries where that trend had horribly increased.

"The ratio of suicides is greater in women in Pakistan," said Dr Wasay.

He said the growing acrimony, chaos, melancholy, lack of confidence, poverty, joblessness, police torture, anxiety for greater marks in school and college examinations and changing social norms had contributed immensely to increase in such trends, including committing suicide.

He added that increased pressure for better marks in examinations exerted by parents and teachers threw students into depression.

"For such reasons, many young children have committed suicides."

He referred to the World Health Organisation, which said depression was a key factor for many diseases, disorders and disabilities. Every third person in the world is depressed and "situation is not different in Pakistan either".

He said the country was facing a serious dearth of neurologists and other experts, which was contributing negatively in dealing with the issue.

Dr Wasay said mental health issues were greater in Karachi than any other city of the country where more than five million people were enduring such disorders, particularly depression and anxiety.

Prof Iqbal Afridi said there were no facilities of psychotherapy and counselling of patients in the country.

He added there was a mental health law in the country, yet, the role of psychiatrists and psychologists had not been accepted in it.

Dr Afridi said people were committing suicide because of deteriorating political and economic issues. Besides, environmental issues like increasing noise and air pollutions were also contributing to those disorders.

He said half of the mental health problems began when patients were still in a tender age; most of those problems remained undiagnosed and untreated since parents and teachers were not capable of dealing with it because of lack of awareness to identify those symptoms.

Dr Afridi said solving those issues and improving the existing mental health situation was needed in Pakistan since “suicides among teenaged people [are] dangerously on the rise”.

Prof Raza Rehman and Dr Qirat Khan said demand for drugs for curing tension and antidepressants was on the rise. However, the users of those drugs were susceptible to committing suicide.

They said increasing trend of suicides was a sign of danger. Such people could be stopped from committing suicide through counselling; yet socioeconomic issues and lack of social justice forced people to end their life.

The experts said an improved community support system, better awareness among communities, educationists and medical practitioners could also stem the rising trend of suicides.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1509924/experts-warn-suicide-trend-on-the-rise-in-country>

EHSAAS PROGRAMME A STEP TOWARDS ELIMINATION OF POVERTY: SINDH GOVERNOR

By RECORDER REPORT on October 12, 2019

Governor Sindh Imran Ismail on Friday said that Prime Minister Imran Khan's initiated Ehsaas Programme was a sure step towards elimination of poverty and the entire nation paid tribute to him for initiating the programme. Addressing the 11th annual LADIESFUND(R) for Women Awards Pakistan 2019 at the Governor House, he said that the role of women was also very important in the development of the country.

He said that the women had gained prominence with their full potential and extensive experience in all walks of life. Imran Ismail said that the role of women in every field was admirable. The lives of proud women were role model for the other women. The Governor said the women were also playing an important role in the development of the national economy with their full potential. He said the present government would continue to provide all possible help and support for the full empowerment of women.

Appreciating the efforts of LADIESFUND(R), he said that women were being supported through Ladies Fund, which was commendable. In today's era, women were playing a key role in not only maintaining their homes but also providing financial stability for their families, said the Governor. He felicitated the award winning women on the occasion.

<https://www.brecorder.com/2019/10/12/530056/ehsaas-programme-a-step-towards-elimination-of-poverty-sindh-governor/>

BISP BOARD BRIEFED ABOUT GOVERNANCE, TRANSPARENCY IMPROVEMENT STEPS

By RECORDER REPORT on October 12, 2019

Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Poverty Alleviation and Social Protection and Chairperson BISP Dr Sania Nishtar briefed the Board on the governance and transparency improvement measures introduced in the Programme. She termed the signing of the banking contracts as a step towards transparent payment mechanism and evidence that the present government continues to bring about significant governance improvements for creating a welfare state modeled on Riasat-e-Medina, a press release issued on Friday said.

The Board meeting held today at the BISP Headquarters, Islamabad was attended by Secretary BISP, Zafar Khan, Atif Bajwa, Khawar Mumtaz, Ashfaq Hassan Khan, Qazi Azmat Isa and representatives of various government departments.

The Board deliberated upon a number of agenda items including provision of emergency relief package to affectees near the LOC. In view of the national importance of the item the Board approved the provision of emergency relief to the residents of villages along the Line of Control and directed that the recommendations of the Board may be submitted to the Federal Cabinet for approval.

The Board also approved the plan to extend the Conditional Cash Transfer programme for education to another 50 districts around the country to bring out of school children within the education system. In line with the Ehsaas framework, the Board also approved to increase the stipend amount for girls from Rs 750/- to Rs 1,000/- to create a further incentive for the parents to send their daughters to school.

In order to fulfill the Prime Minister's agenda to address stunting and malnutrition, already emphasized in Ehsaas, a pilot project to provide specialized nutritious food packets to poor mothers and their children was also approved. The project will be launched in one district of each province along with GB, AJK and merged districts of KP.

One woman one Account strategy under the Kifalat programme was also approved to provide savings accounts to more than five million poor women. These accounts will be opened within the next three months under the contracts signed with the Bank Alfalah and Habib Bank on the same day immediately after the Board meeting.

Dr Sania Nishtar said that with the approval of these projects Ehsaas has entered in the next phase of its implementation and she expressed confidence that the staff and management of BISP will play their role in this phase and will help her in realizing the dream of the Prime Minister to create a state that works for the poor.

She thanked the Board members for their leadership and contributions in the development of these projects and for continuing to provide the oversight during the implementation of these projects. Immediately after the Board meeting, contract with Bank Alfalah and Habib Bank were signed, and witnessed by Dr Sania Nishtar and all members of BISP Board to launch Kifalat financial inclusion program.-PR

<https://www.brecorder.com/2019/10/12/530159/bisp-board-briefed-about-governance-transparency-improvement-steps/>

ADB, PAKISTAN SIGN \$200 MILLION LOAN AGREEMENT

By Our Correspondent Published: October 12, 2019

ISLAMABAD: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the government of Pakistan on Friday signed a \$200-million loan agreement for additional financing to help support the Pakistan's flagship social protection programme – the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP).

The agreement was signed by ADB Country Director Xiaohong Yang and Economic Affairs Division Secretary Noor Ahmed while Minister for Economic Affairs Hammad Azhar witnessed the signing ceremony.

BISP is part of a larger government strategy called Ehsaas aimed at reducing poverty and inequality. BISP, primarily funded by the government of Pakistan, supports Ehsaas through cash transfers, poverty graduation programmes and a targeted safety net.

The ADB-financed social protection development project, approved in October 2013, has enabled the enrollment of over 855,000 women beneficiaries in the programme.

The \$200-million additional financing will lend support to the initiative and help BISP implement institutional strengthening measures.

“ADB's additional financing will further support institutional strengthening of BISP,” said Xiaohong. “A policy research unit will be established within BISP to help monitor and improve ongoing programmes and design new evidence-based initiatives such as conditional cash transfers following global best practices.”

She added that the ADB was committed to helping the government of Pakistan implement alternative modalities for social protection and poverty reduction that promoted improved human capital and reduction in intergenerational poverty.

Minister for Economic Affairs Hammad Azhar appreciated the ADB's commitment to support the government of Pakistan and its people.

"Assistance from the ADB will help further strengthen the national social protection programme and provide support for the poorest segment of the population under the government's Ehsaas strategy," he said.

Azhar emphasised that Ehsaas was a multi-pronged strategy consisting of many pro-poor initiatives, which were not only aimed at poverty alleviation but also included poverty graduation programmes.

Also speaking on the occasion, BISP Secretary Ali Raza Bhutta said the government valued the long-standing partnership with the ADB and its support for the Ehsaas strategy.

He was of the view that the policy research unit, to be established by the ADB, would help BISP in developing and refining new initiatives for promoting primary education and to address the issue of stunting among the poor population through conditional cash transfers.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2077638/2-adb-pakistan-sign-200-million-loan-agreement/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 14th TO 20th 2019

ONE-THIRD OF YOUNG CHILDREN UNDERNOURISHED OR OVERWEIGHT: UNICEF

AFP Updated October 16, 2019

PARIS: A third of the world's nearly 700 million children under five years old are undernourished or overweight and face lifelong health problems as a consequence, according to a grim UN assessment of childhood nutrition released on Tuesday.

"If children eat poorly, they live poorly," said Unicef Executive Director Henrietta Fore, unveiling the Fund's first State of the World's Children report since 1999.

"We are losing ground in the fight for healthy diets." Problems that once existed at opposite ends of the wealth spectrum have today converged in poor and middle-income countries, the report showed.

Despite a nearly 40 per cent drop from 1990 to 2015 of stunting in poor countries, 149 million children four or younger are today still too short for their age, a clinical condition that impairs both brain and body development.

Another 50 million are afflicted by wasting, a chronic and debilitating thinness also born of poverty.

At the same time, half of youngsters across the globe under five are not getting essential vitamins and minerals, a long-standing problem Unicef has dubbed "hidden hunger." Over the last three decades, however, another form of child malnutrition has surged across the developing world: excess weight.

"This triple burden — undernutrition, a lack of crucial micronutrients, obesity — is increasingly found in the same country, sometimes in the same neighbourhood, and often in the same household," Victor Aguayo, head of Unicef nutrition programme, said.

“A mother who is overweight or obese can have children who are stunted or wasted.” Across all age groups, more than 800 million people in the world are constantly hungry and another two billion are eating too much of the wrong foods, driving epidemics of obesity, heart disease and diabetes.

Among children under five, diet during first 1,000 days after conception is the foundation for physical health and mental development. And yet, only two-in-five infants under six months are exclusively breastfed, as recommended. Sales of milk-based formula have risen worldwide by 40 percent, and in upper middle-income countries such as Brazil, China and Turkey by nearly three-quarters.

Missing vitamins and minerals, meanwhile, can lead to compromised immune systems, poor sight and hearing defects. A lack of iron can cause anaemia and reduced IQ.

“It’s ‘hidden’ because you don’t notice the impact until it is too late,” Brian Keeley, editor-in-chief of report, said.

“You don’t notice that the child is running a little slower than everyone else, struggling a bit in school.” The rise of obesity, however, is plain to see.

The problem was virtually non-existent in poor countries 30 years ago, but today at least 10 percent of under five year olds are overweight or obese in three-quarters of low-income nations. “There needs to be a focus on obesity before it is too late,” said Keeley.

“Unless you deal with it in a preventative way, you’re going to struggle to fix it later on.” Cheap, readily available junk food, often marketed directly to kids, has made the problem much worse.

“Children are eating too much of what they don’t need — salt, sugar and fat,” Keeley added.

Progress in fighting undernourishment will also be hampered by climate change, the report warned.

A single degree Celsius of warming since the late-19th century has amplified droughts responsible for more than 80 percent of damage and losses in agriculture.

Earth’s average surface temperature is set to rise another two or three degrees by 2100.

Research by scientists at Harvard University, meanwhile, have shown that the increased concentration of CO₂ in the air is sapping staple food crops of those essential nutrients and vitamins, including zinc, iron and vitamin B.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1511121/one-third-of-young-children-undernourished-or-overweight-unicef>

SAVING FOOD CAN FEED 795M HUNGRY PEOPLE, MOOT TOLD

| 10/17/2019 12:00:00 AM

KARACHI: Around 1.3 billion tons of food is wasted every year around the globe which amounts to \$1 trillion while the world food production for human consumption is 3.9 billion tons.

Only one quarter of all wasted food could feed the 795 million undernourished people around the world who suffer from hunger. The world produces enough food to feed all seven billion people but due to uneven distribution around one billion remain undernourished and two billion people suffer from hidden hunger. Zero hunger could save lives of 3.1m children a year.

These views were expressed by Dr Abid Jalaluddin Shaikh, provincial programme manager Food Fortification Programme Nutrition International Pakistan on Wednesday.

He was speaking to a seminar held at the Department of Food Science and Technology, University of Karachi.

The department organised a food exhibition and a seminar to mark World Food Day. The department also arranged panel discussions to shed light on the issue and how to overcome the problem with minimum efforts.

He shared that some 795m people in the world do not have enough food to lead a healthy, active life whereas around 780m of those people live in developing regions.

Dr Shaikh said that 66m primary school-age children attend classes hungry across the developing world with 23m in Africa alone.

Within every 10 seconds, a child dies from hunger-related diseases. In Pakistan, anaemia, iron and zinc deficiency, and Vitamin A and D deficiency are the most common diseases among children under the age of five years.

The chairperson, Department of Food Science and Technology, KU, Dr Shahina Naz expressed that it is unfortunate that while humans have reached the moon, explored the deepest ocean, split the atom, and mapped human genome and other extraordinary achievements, we are still talking about the possibility of zero hunger by 2030.

She informed the audience that every country in the world is affected by one or more forms of malnutrition.

Owing to undernutrition 45 per cent people are underweight while micronutrient deficiency causes improper growth and inactive life whereas 41m people die every year due to obesity.

Dr Naz said that 6.7 billion ton of milk is wasted and fish production is one million ton per year but per capita consumption is only two kilograms in Pakistan. The country has 8,000 edible plant species of which 600 species are with nutritive and have medical value whereas some wild fruits have better nutritive value than cultivated crops.

Assistant Professor at the food science department Dr S.M. Ghufraan Saeed said that world hunger is on the rise again after a period of decline. He mentioned that conflicts, extreme weather events linked to climate change, economic slowdown, rapid increase in overweight and obesity levels are reversing progress made in the fight against hunger and malnutrition.

He shared that 1.9bn people, more than a quarter of the world's population, is overweight of which 3.4m people die each year due to being overweight.

KU Vice Chancellor Professor Dr Khalid Mahmood Iraqi said that hunger and malnutrition are no doubt very serious issues. The speakers and panellists had highlighted the root causes and suggested some doable remedies to overcome the problems.

He hoped that policymakers, government bodies, food producers, manufacturers, agencies related to food security and safety, consumers and academia would work together to find out the ways to eradicate hunger from the country and reduce the malnutrition problems.-PPI

https://epaper.dawn.com/DetailImage.php?StoryImage=17_10_2019_116_005

WORLD FOOD DAY MARKED: MINISTER DISPELS IMPRESSION OF FOOD INSECURITY IN SINDH

By RECORDER REPORT on October 17, 2019

The World Food Day-2019 was marked by the Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations (FAO) at a local hotel on Wednesday. This year the World Food Day theme was "Our Actions are Our Future. Healthy diet for a zero hunger world."

Sindh Agriculture Minister Muhammad Ismail Rahoo talked about the fears of increasing food insecurity in Sindh province, saying, "We are bestowed with rich natural resources including fertile agriculture land, fisheries, forests and others, which we should protect for the future generations."

He further said that farmers produce food for the growing population here, but they are facing hardships to have nutritious food for their children. We must take steps for well-being of these poor farmers.

The minister said the farmers deserve more to have sufficient food, proper education and health care to their children. He accredited FAO for working for nutrition and awareness raising of marginalised people in Sindh through its partner organisations. He said the provincial government has also launched different projects for ending poverty and providing employment opportunities to youth through skill-enhancement programmes.

He said Sindh has an agriculture policy to promote agriculture and help farmers. He said they are also working to provide health cards to the deserving people of Sindh province.

Secretary for Livestock and Fisheries Mr Aijaz Mahesar said previously deep sea fishing trawlers had been awarded licenses, which destroyed fishing grounds through huge fishing nets. Now these trawlers have been banned and the Sindh government is trying to restore these marine resources.

Ms Genevieve Hussain, representing FAO, said that healthy diets can only be achieved through a food system approach that starts with healthy soils and sustainable agriculture practices. For FAO, nutrition indicates health, productivity and overall well-being of people and prosperity of societies.

<https://www.brecorder.com/2019/10/17/531783/world-food-day-marked-minister-dispels-impression-of-food-insecurity-in-sindh/>

MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY STANDS AT 38.4PC, SAYS DR SANIA

October 19, 2019

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Social Protection & Poverty Alleviation, Dr Sania Nishtar has said the multidimensional poverty stands at 38.4 percent in Pakistan.

The government is currently conducting a fresh poverty digital survey and expecting to announce the National Poverty Survey in February 2020, said Dr Nishtar while briefing the Senate Standing Committee on Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety.

The committee met with Senator Dr Jehanzeb Jamaldini in the chair here on Friday where parliamentarians raised questions over the poverty ratio in the country.

Senator Lieutenant General Abdul Qayyum (retd) said the recent skyrocketing inflation coupled with rupee depreciation turned table and more people have gone below the poverty line.

Dr Nishtar responded that according to old data, income poverty measures at 24.3 percent while multidimensional poverty stands at 38.4 percent. To get the correct picture, digital survey was in the field and would be finalized by February next year, she added.

She further said the government has earmarked Rs 190 billion for Ehsaas programme to address poverty and inequality. It is the biggest and boldest pro-poor programme ever launched in the country. There are 134 programs, policies and initiatives while 34 ministries at the federal level have been tasked with implementation.

She said it was the only ministry to receive sizable international assistance in one year including \$200 million each from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

She further said Rs 5 billion Undergraduate Education Scholarship Scheme would be launched next week. She further said digital payment system was completed in six months after a delay of 10 years. Dr Nishtar further said that good governance and effective policies were the top most priorities of the government, which were ignored in the past.

The special assistant to the prime minister while replying to a question blamed the Sindh provincial government for not agreeing to finance sharing for health card, due to which the health card scheme was not launched in the province. She said that except Sindh, other provinces have agreed to 30:70 formula (province 70 percent, federal government 30 percent) for launching health card scheme.

She further said that from now onward, Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) payment would be totally made after biometric verification as huge embezzlement was reported in the past.

Replying to a question, she said Langars were being run on public-private partnership where the government's investment is zero. Around 112 such langars would be set up across the country, she added.

The managing director Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal (PBM) also briefed the committee on different initiatives of PBM. He said that the organization has been given the mandate to work for the destitute and needy widows, orphans and other such people of the society. Several initiatives are on the cards to provide technical education and other skills and make such people valuable asset of the society, he said.

The committee expressed serious concern over the low budget for PBM, saying that at one time it was Rs 28 billion which has been slashed to Rs 5-6 billion. The committee recommended for increasing PBM budget to avoid any hindrances in its operation as it is providing best services in the country.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2019/10/19/17-page/806316-news.html>

THE POLITICS OF HUNGER

Muhammad Amir Rana October 20, 2019

THE current government seems to have a very simplistic idea of the welfare state. Its much-trumpeted slogan of 'change', which the government keeps infusing with religious narratives, utopian dogmas and mantras, also appears to be merely for public consumption.

The Ehsaas-Saylani Langar Scheme is yet another reflection of the government's obsession with showcasing something 'big' to reflect 'change'. Addressing the inaugural ceremony of the scheme, Prime Minister Imran Khan protested against the people's criticism of his vision of the state of Madina, which he said "could not be realised in only 13 months".

There is nothing new in the prime minister's complaint regarding this criticism or even in his approach to poverty alleviation. Many countries in the developing world, especially Pakistan, have been trapped in flawed plans aimed at poverty reduction.

Just a week after the launch of the langar, or free kitchen, scheme, an economist of Indian-origin, Abhijit Banerjee, and his French-born wife, Esther Duflo, along with another economist Michael Kremer, won the Nobel Prize for their experimental approach towards alleviating global poverty. Their landmark work, *Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the Way to Fight Global Poverty*, challenges conventional approaches to poverty alleviation and examines the real nature of the issue, and also how the poor react to incentives.

Giving more food or money to the poor is not a remedy for the curse of poverty.

The experts spent time in the field, living with the poor in 18 countries, to find that developing countries are not doomed to failure because they are poor, or because they have had an unfortunate history, but that these nations need to fight ignorance, ideology and inertia. Their work should be essential reading for the prime minister and his

socioeconomic managers and policymakers. It will help them understand that giving more food or money to the poor is not the remedy for the curse of poverty.

Allama Iqbal wrote an introduction to a book on economics in 1904. The preface provides an interesting assessment of the viewpoints of Muslims on economics, still relevant to some extent in Pakistan's context. Challenging the dominant view of his time, Iqbal argued that the knowledge of wealth did not make nations greedy but was meant to make them capable of controlling their ambitions of war to be able to live in peace and harmony.

The preface reflects that for Muslims of the Indian subcontinent, subjects such as science and economics were hardly an intellectual pursuit. In the absence of a structured thinking process on the economy, the state of Pakistan still relies on mediaeval narratives such as opening free kitchens for the poor, views that are extremely simplistic and will hardly lead to the desired social change.

Pakistan ranks 94 out of 117 qualifying countries on the recent Global Hunger Index and has been described as facing a 'serious' level of hunger. The latest poverty estimates show that 24pc of Pakistan's population lives below the poverty line. This is a huge challenge that can only be confronted through a comprehensive and structured programme.

The Chinese poverty alleviation programme, which largely inspires Prime Minister Khan, is part of China's overall development strategy. The Dibao programme mainly focuses on low-rent housing, health reforms, education emergency and temporary support for families encountering sudden disasters. However, one of its components for the rural areas includes conditional food assistance to people without livelihoods. People are expected to work for government projects and, in return, get food besides their income. Most importantly, local bodies play a leading role taking forward such initiatives, contrary to Pakistan's centralised approach.

India is yet another example. International bodies have acknowledged India's efforts to reduce poverty, but the pace of change is slow. India ranked 102 out of 117 countries, and according to the Global Hunger Index, it has the highest percentage of acutely undernourished children. India may remove 3pc of its population from poverty in the next couple of years, but experts have noted that its model for poverty-alleviation programmes smacks of what they call 'developmental nationalism'. Such programmes prioritise constituencies where the ruling party has won or wants to expand its support base.

This could also be described as 'hunger politics', as extremist and hard-line Hindutva groups such as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) have come to the government's assistance and are systematically targeting slums occupied by low-caste Hindus to bring them into the fold of the overarching Hindu identity. The RSS is expanding its network of schools, medical camps and other welfare schemes in these slums to stop religious conversions which Hindutva groups see as a threat to Hindu nationalism.

In Pakistan, some religious charities, mainly associated with banned militant groups, have been following in the footsteps of the Hindu radical groups, especially in the localities of Sindh and Punjab with clusters of religious minorities. However, the scale of the charity programmes of these groups is quite small as compared with the RSS and its affiliates' initiatives. Another issue is that these groups are under increased global scrutiny.

In the last election, the BJP government in India effectively used the hunger card and attracted the votes of the poor. On the other hand, poverty was not a major political issue during the 2018 election in Pakistan, and the ruling party focused, instead, on the eradication of corruption. The topic generates popular support, but it is an uphill task for developing nations to come up with structural responses to counter corruption. Moreover, sustaining political support merely on anti-corruption sloganeering has a short shelf life.

To ease the pressure to perform and divert attention from their real challenges, governments tend to take populist steps such as opening langars and providing sasti roti, but all this contributes nothing to a country of over 200 million. The Nobel Prize winners have good advice for countries like Pakistan and India: they have to fight ignorance, ideology and inertia if they want to truly eradicate hunger.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1511902>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 21st TO 27th 2019

ADDRESSING POVERTY TO SPUR ECONOMIC GROWTH

Jawaid Bokhari Updated October 21, 2019

In times of severe economic crises, it is not business as usual. It is the political economy that tends to play, sooner or later, the primary role in setting the correction course, particularly during the transformational phase in an extended period of hard times.

Read: Where the government's handling of the economy is going wrong

Responding to mounting domestic business, citizen and political pressures to revisit the government's policies, Prime Minister Imran Khan has reiterated that his foremost priority is to run the economic system on a sustainable basis: a system which would help create job opportunities, enhance investor's confidence and promote local industry. His focus is also shifting to achieving price stability to subdue the growing double-digit rate of inflation.

In this endeavour, the prime minister has called for regular meetings of his economic team so that enhanced inter-ministerial coordination is ensured for formulation and implementation of policy decisions. The finance team may have to be more receptive to what other economic ministries have to say. Currently, it is too preoccupied in tackling challenging twin deficits while dissenting voices are becoming louder that it needs to look at a much bigger picture. The prime minister has himself started weekly monitoring to ensure that ensuing problems are quickly resolved.

The finance team is too preoccupied with tackling the twin deficits to look at the bigger picture and be more receptive to what the other economic ministries are saying

Similarly, the powers to allow supplementary grants have been transferred to the federal government from the finance division. And no grant was issued during the first quarter of the current financial year.

The policy to boost tax revenues at the cost of looming de-industrialisation seems to be under review. For relocation of Chinese industrial units to Gwadar and for installation for machinery and other equipment at the port, the government has granted a 23-year tax exemption to China Overseas Ports Holding Company. There is some official talk of exchange rate stability and policy rate coming down early calendar year 2020. The pickup in economic activity may yield better tax revenues.

No doubt the immediate problem is to stimulate investment and shore up the sagging manufacturing sector when the private sector borrowings from banks are showing an alarming negative trend. In the first quarter of the current fiscal year, the private sector retired Rs49.39 billion as compared to net borrowings of Rs113bn in the same period of last year.

In fact, the government was stated to have emerged as the sole borrower from scheduled banks. The commerce advisor Razak Dawood says industrial production is set to slow down as imports of industrial raw materials are plummeting.

For the forging of an economic system running on a sustainable basis, the prime minister may find some comfort in the statement of the new International Monetary Fund (IMF) chief who has some serious advice to offer. She says "the key is to recognise that inequalities are a drag on multilateralism and a drag on growth."

In her first speech, IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said: "policymakers for too long have ignored the people harmed by globalisation which tends to be good for educated, urban, younger people."

Incidentally, in Pakistan unemployment among the more educated and qualified professionals is disproportionately higher. And “the prevalence of decent work is extremely low,” says Dr Abdul Hafeez Pasha adding that “typically workers put in long hours but are underpaid.”

Overall, 53 per cent of the labour was not paid prescribed minimum wages, as determined by the findings of the Pakistan Labour Survey 2017-18. The ratio jumped to 89pc among farm labour and 56pc in manufacturing and 54pc in wholesale and retail trade. As against this, only 9pc of the workers in public administration and defence services earned less than the minimum wage.

And the World Bank report on South Asia Economic Focus: Making Decentralisation Work says “poverty reduction, which was uninterrupted since 2001, is expected to stall during the macroeconomic adjustment period.”

As joblessness and poverty are rising, Ms Georgieva’s observations need to be translated into IMF policies being pursued by Islamabad. This creates an opportunity for borrowers like Pakistan to seek a review of the Fund’s policies to have a better adjustment of growth vs. stability strategies.

From time to time, independent economists and businessmen have stressed that policymakers have to find space, sooner rather than later, to encourage domestic industrial production.

They do not expect the government to deviate from the agreed broad IMF policy framework or the policy direction set by it but want reforms to move with a more appropriate pace to shore up growth. ‘When the majority is struggling for the bare sustenance, the need for a productivity-enhancing growth strategy is absolutely critical’, says former Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission Dr Nadeem ul Haque.

In the context of the much needed industrial growth, the critical problem areas are the over-ambitious tax revenue target, rising utility prices, double-digit inflation, higher than core inflation policy rate and an undervalued rupee. IMF’s economist Gian Maria Milesi-Ferretti says the performance of the agreed programme with Islamabad has exceeded our expectations and the country is now picking up stability.

While the policymakers are still struggling with much of the conventional wisdom to resolve the current crisis, the international economic literature tends to offer fresh ideas to come out of the current difficult predicament: economies with less inequality will perform better.

Against the background of growing inequality worldwide and Sino-US trade frictions IMF Chief Georgieva said “in 2019, we expect slower growth in 90pc of the world. The global economy is now in a synchronised slowdown. It is a crisis where no one is immune and everyone has a responsibility to act.”

Imran Khan has come up with the idea that priority should be given to small industrial units at a local level to create job opportunities. But for things to change at the grassroots it is necessary to develop participatory democracy which is considered a tool for social change. Giving voice to the voiceless or less heard and empowering the disadvantaged are crucial for removing inequity and inequality.

The investment in human capital — the primary productive asset in this digital area — will generate its own resources and momentum of economic growth.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1512032/addressing-poverty-to-spur-economic-growth>

SINDH POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY: EXISTING ECONOMIC HUBS CAN ACT AS RURAL GROWTH CENTRES: CS

By RECORDER REPORT on October 25, 2019

The Sindh government is committed to eradicating poverty and the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) has rightly identified existing economic hubs as rural growth centers instead of creating new sites.

This was stated by Mumtaz Ali Shah, Chief Secretary Sindh, while presiding over a dissemination session of seminar on Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS).

Mumtaz said the political leadership is behind the strategy which aims at reducing urban and rural poverty. He emphasized that collaboration with European Union (EU) is of high value to the government of Sindh and it is clear that the government of Sindh will attain robust milestones in common efforts to reduce poverty. The seminar was held to present the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS), a 215-page comprehensive plan prepared by Sindh Planning & Development Department in collaboration with the EU supported Technical Assistance (TA) team to address rural and urban poverty.

The strategy was formally approved by the Sindh Cabinet in October 2018 with a target budget of Rs 72 billion envisaged for implementation over a 5-year period. Naheed Shah Durrani, Chairperson Planning and Development Board outlined Sindh Government's commitment and agenda for addressing poverty.

She emphasized the need for integration of schemes as each department executing its schemes in silos had not delivered the desired results.

She said that the Poverty Reduction Strategy is an attempt to bring together all the initiatives under a common framework. She also underlined the importance of developing a string of small urban centres as they aid in more efficient organization of economic activities.

Androulla Kaminara, Ambassador designate European Union to Pakistan in her remarks commended the government's approach of using advanced data techniques in their planning and appreciated the government's Poverty Reduction Strategy.

She said that EU has a 7-year budget cycle and this is a good time to assess the progress to date and plan for the future.

She said that EU will continue to be a development partner for Sindh and that more funds could be available for the next cycle for development needs. She said that she had earlier visited Tando Mohammed Khan and was impressed by the mobilization of women.

Dr Kaiser Bengali, member of the EU TA team, explained that poverty reduction requires a range of measures to address rural and urban poverty differentially and requires combined government & community-based actions. He said that the strategy has been prepared in broad consultations with government officials, members of academia, business representatives, and community activists. GIS technology has been used to identify clusters of villages in close proximity and a village within identified as a growth centre, where social and economic infrastructure will be consolidated. He said that five districts have been approved for piloting the strategy and to this end Sujawal, Thatta, Badin, Tharparkar and Larkana have been identified. Work in Sujawal is in an advanced preparatory stage.

<https://www.brecorder.com/2019/10/25/537711/sindh-poverty-reduction-strategy-existing-economic-hubs-can-act-as-rural-growth-centres-cs/>

ALARMING NUTRITION DEFICITS IN CHILDREN PREVAIL ACROSS PAKISTAN

Staff Reporter October 27, 2019

KARACHI: The alarming prevalence of vitamin and mineral deficiencies in children is undermining Pakistan's ability to achieve its development potential, noted experts during a three-day international conference, which concluded at the Aga Khan University (AKU) on Saturday.

They also called upon the government to adopt a more comprehensive approach towards early childhood development to enhance its far-reaching impact on human and social development.

A major highlight of the conference titled ‘Nutrition and Early Human Development’ was the National Nutrition Survey 2018 whose findings were discussed and analysed in detail during the event.

‘Poverty not the sole cause of malnutrition’

The survey shows that the country faces a triple burden of malnutrition with micronutrient deficiencies, undernutrition and obesity co-existing in Pakistan’s population.

Over six out of 10 children (62.7 per cent) across the country are vitamin D deficient while more than half of under fives (53.7pc) suffer from anaemia or a lack of vitamin A (51.5pc).

Only one in seven children between 6-23 months of age receive meals with minimum dietary diversity that include four food groups. Furthermore, fewer than one in 20 children (3.6pc) are fed complementary foods that would ensure optimal growth.

These nutrition deficits, according to speakers, are present across all socioeconomic strata and are noticeable in the country’s most affluent areas.

“Poverty isn’t the sole cause of Pakistan’s malnutrition challenge as vitamin and essential mineral deficits also prevail in the wealthiest households,” said Prof Zulfiqar A. Bhutta, founding director of Aga Khan University’s Centre of Excellence in Women and Child Health.

Pakistan’s nutrition challenges, he noted, were not just the responsibility of the ministry of health as malnutrition affected indicators in education, gender equity, as well as the country’s ability to address social inequalities.

“That’s why we need solutions that cut across sectors such as agriculture, education and clean water and sanitation, which actively involve parents and communities,” he observed.

Prof Bhutta in his presentation also referred to Pakistan’s long-running programmes to fortify cooking oil, ghee and wheat with vitamins and noted that the levels of vitamin A and vitamin D deficits and severe iodine deficiency had risen since the last survey in 2011 despite those programmes.

As part of measures to address the challenge of nutrition deficits in children, speakers suggested a broader role of lady health workers who could be trained and tasked to educate families on the importance of key minerals in child growth and health awareness sessions targeting primary schoolchildren.

They expressed concern over the fact that the country lacked a complementary food strategy and called on the government to form a multi-sector working group to lead efforts in this area.

Dr Ghazala Rafique, director of AKU’s human development programme (HDP) in Pakistan and the conference co-chair, said a thriving child needed access to much more than just healthcare and education.

Adequate nutrition, equal access to opportunities and a safe, stimulating home environment, in her opinion, were some of the many other determinants of a child’s well-being and required integrated policies and strategies at the government level.

Pakistan’s health and education systems, however, tend to work in isolation which resulted in many missed opportunities, she observed.

In this context, Dr Rafique shared that mothers who brought their children to a basic health unit for vaccination could easily be informed of the importance of creating a stimulating learning environment at home.

Similarly, she noted that schools could make a contribution to good health and nutrition by incorporating health messages into the curriculum.

Professor Kofi Marfo, director of AKU's Institute for Human Development (IHD), said often education was viewed from the level when a child stepped into a school, though a child's peak brain development occurred in the first year of life.

"This suggests that the education ministry needs to broaden its focus beyond schools and to explore how parents can be motivated to create a stimulating learning environment in the home," he observed, emphasising that a political will was required to get things implemented to make a real-world impact.

During the course of discussion, experts also called for the creation of a ministry for child health in Pakistan that would enable a long-term approach to address the country's interconnected development problems.

There was a consensus that Pakistan required a parliamentary caucus that would ensure children's interests and the value of early childhood development remained on the legislative agenda.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1513103>

INFANT MORTALITY IN THAR CANNOT BE CONTROLLED UNLESS UNDERAGE MARRIAGES ARE CURBED: PECHUHO

By A Correspondent | 10/27/2019 12:00:00 AM

MITHI: Sindh Health Minister Dr Azra Pechuho, who visited various government health facilities in Chhachhro and Dahli talu1(as of Tharparkar district on Saturday, held underage marriages mainly responsible for the high rate of infant mortality in the region. She said parents should be educated on the issue and underage marriages must be discouraged to control the situation.

The minister was speaking to local journalists after inspecting the working and facilities being offered to patients at hospitals in the two talukas.

She made it clear that birth of underweight babies and their deaths would continue until and unless parents stopped marrying off their underage daughters.

She observed that parents and their children in Thar mostly lacked such knowledge which was leading to complications and infant mortality.

Dr Pechuho stressed the need for adopting methods of birth control and spacing in bearing babies on the part of rural families.

She asked media person-nel to report happenings and issues sensibly and responsibly with regard to the healthcare situation and infants` deaths in the desert district in order to present a `true` picture.

This, she said, would help both the Sindh government and the non-governmental organisations working in health sector to address issues.

`Correct reporting of happenings and problems being faced by people will help us find the root cause of the issues and act promptly to provide relief to them, she said.

She noted that there weremultiple reasons behind the mess persisting in this region for a few years.

The health minister pointed out that the provincial government, in collaboration with Unicef, was posting trained personnel, including nurses, at 65 dispensaries across Tharparkar district to ensure proper facilities to patients. Establishment of mother and child health centres was part of the initiative, she added.

Dr Pechuho said the centres would greatly help expecting mothers in taking proper care of their own health during pregnancy as well as their newborns.

She said Sindh government had taken many measures to ensure provision of adequate medical facilities to people at town and UC levels. `A number of programmes are being launched in this district to train nurses and other employees of both health and population welfare departments. The trained personnel will provide guidance to both men and women on health issues, she said.

During her visit to various health facilities, the minister warned the doctors and paramedics against slackness and negligence.

She asked them to perform their duties honestly to justify their salaries and other perks which in this district, she claimed, were almost double than in the rest of the province.

MPA Qasim Siraj Soomro also spoke at the centre's inauguration ceremony. He said the PPP government was committed to addressing all basic issues being faced by people of this district without any discrimination.

Officials of the health and other relevant departments accompanied the minister during her day-long visit.

https://epaper.dawn.com/DetailImage.php?StoryImage=27_10_2019_117_004

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCT 28th TO NOV 03rd 2019

HELPING THE POOREST OF BALOCHISTAN

Nasir Jamal October 28, 2019

Nestled among the dry, arid hills of Amuri, almost four hours of drive from Dalbadin, Ali Dost's fields produced scarcely enough wheat and vegetables in a good rainy year to sustain his family through the next harvest. For cash, he would work as a 'daily wager' in Dalbadin or Taftan, the border town famous for illegal trade between Pakistan and Iran. But that was a few years ago.

Today Ali Dost, in his mid-50s, harvests a hefty wheat crop and grows vegetables throughout the year even in times of poor rainfall and drought. "I no longer have to worry about feeding my family or leave home for work in the city. I now harvest enough wheat and vegetables to feed my family and sell the surplus in the market for cash," he told a group of journalists from Lahore during a visit to the area earlier this month. "A surplus crop saves me Rs80,000 in cash a year."

What changed his fortunes? A few small, inexpensive but sustainable interventions and training in irrigation water management by an independent non-profit, Islamic Relief Pakistan (IRP), have brought about dramatic changes in the lives of poor farmers. IRP was founded in 1984 by postgraduate Muslim students in the United Kingdom. It is headquartered in Birmingham and is operating in over 30 countries.

It has helped farmers scattered over scores of small villages across the drought-prone Chaghi, the largest but poorest district of Balochistan bordering Afghanistan and Iran that hit headlines internationally when Pakistan conducted a series of nuclear tests in its mountains in 1998. The IRP has been working in different drought-hit parts of the province, mostly in Chaghi, which is ranked among the poorest, least developed regions of the world, for more than last two decades.

The non-profit organisation Islamic Relief Pakistan has spent Rs250m to implement sustainable interventions to improve irrigation in drought-prone Chaghi

The organisation has been supporting the local communities facing an acute water scarcity to enhance their agriculture output and household income by using modern techniques like drip irrigation, adopting drought-resilient seed varieties

and crops, and establishing olive, date, grape and pomegranate orchards under their Drought Resilient Agriculture Modelling (Dram) project. Under this programme, it has helped more than 24,000 individuals with a funding of Rs250 million spent over three years.

The villagers are also helped in damming rainwater to store it for a longer-term for drinking, irrigation, household usage and recharging the groundwater table. The charity has established community-based organisations and provided them with solar water pumps, green tunnels to grow off-season vegetables in a controlled environment and solar dryers to dry their surplus.

Furthermore, unsold vegetables and fruit are offered for sale during the off-season, poultry is distributed for domestic and commercial use, linkages are established with the market for earning a fair profit on their produce and solar electricity provided to their homes. Treatment for blindness, which is common in the area, is also arranged.

“We operate in areas where neither the government nor any other non-profit has reached to avoid duplication,” said IRP programme manager in Balochistan Muhammad Essa Tahir, adding his organisation works closely with the provincial government and its departments to ensure the long-term sustainability of the interventions. The communities have to contribute to programme interventions by donating land required and providing labour to ensure their ownership of the projects.

“Our need-based interventions have protected livelihoods of the communities we work with, enhanced their household income levels, enabled them to send their children to schools where the facility is available, spend more on their health, raised social awareness and helped check migration caused by desertification of large patches of drought-hit farmland. There are villages where women no longer have to walk miles to fetch water from the wells; we have brought water through pipes at their doorsteps.”

The desert climate of Balochistan is generally arid with some regions like the Chaghi district receiving an average annual rainfall as low as 50 millimetres (the average annual precipitation in Balochistan varies between 50mm and 500 mm and evaporation rates generally vary from 1,830mm to 1,930mm per annum).

Long spells of drought in parts of the province have led to the desertification of agriculture land and forced communities to migrate to cities, reduction in the size of livestock, loss of livelihoods and spread of disease. The groundwater table across the province, including cities like Quetta, has drastically depleted because of heavy pumping and drought over the last 30 years. The government either does not have enough money to help the affected village communities scattered in far-flung areas or is unable to reach them because of rough terrain or the poor law and order conditions.

In some districts the water scarcity has reached an alarming level because of a lack of planning to combat the impact of the changing climate that has dried up the traditional irrigation system, karez, threatening the livelihoods of a large number of people dependent on agriculture and livestock. At least two-thirds of the province is deprived of drinking water and more than 58 per cent of its land is uncultivable owing to water scarcity.

“Recurring spells of drought have dealt a serious blow to farmers, leading to mass migration in some parts of this district. Poverty, unemployment, harsh weather, smaller, scattered pockets of population, and a lack of education and healthcare facilities and awareness are major problems of Chaghi and most other parts of the province,” asserted Zahoor Shah, deputy director at the agriculture department in Chaghi.

He agrees that there is a dire need for introducing drought-resistant crops and promoting efficient irrigation methods and practices to help villagers. “Prolonged drought spells have badly affected rainwater dependent agriculture and livestock. The widespread use of solar pumps (encouraged by falling prices of solar equipment) to mindlessly draw groundwater across the province is developing into yet another disaster: it is dramatically depleting the groundwater table.”

A senior journalist from Quetta, Shahzada Zulfikar, points out that it is a major governance crisis in the province that has led to the current situation. “The government does not have the capacity to handle the environmental challenges and combat the threat of climate change facing the province and destroying livelihoods of poor farmers. It is more about efficient governance and planning than a shortage of funds. Efficient use of whatever money the government has and effective planning will go a long way in helping the poor farmers affected by long spells of drought.”

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<https://www.dawn.com/news/1513227/helping-the-poorest-of-balochistan>

CONTRARY TO SLOGAN OF JOB CREATION, UNEMPLOYMENT ON THE RISE IN PAKISTAN

By Salman Siddiqui Published: October 28, 2019

KARACHI: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) promised in its election manifesto before July 2018 polls that it would provide 10 million jobs over a span of five years. Instead, its policies in the very first year of its rule have resulted in massive layoffs nationwide.

The ongoing structural reforms, aimed at fixing the faltering economy, have crippled almost every sector, particularly the agriculture and large-scale manufacturing sectors, at least for the time being. The economic slowdown has not only prevented employers from hiring fresh graduates and newcomers in the market, but has also forced many of them to lay off staff in order to adjust to the emerging tough working environment. The Economic Survey of Pakistan, unveiled in June 2019, reported a slight drop in the rate of unemployment to 5.79% in fiscal year 2017-18.

Employers, however, have challenged the reading, arguing that it does not reflect the actual bleak situation in the job market. “If we take a holistic approach, it (the rate of unemployment) is not less than 14-15%,” Employers’ Federation of Pakistan (EFP) President Majyd Aziz told The Express Tribune. “The unemployment numbers reported by different governments from time to time are incorrect,” he said. The Economic Survey 2018-19, citing the Labour Force Survey of 2017-18, reported that the unemployment rate had decreased to 5.79% in 2017-18.

In 2017-18, the total civilian labour force was 65.50 million, consisting of 50.74 million males and 14.76 million females. Out of this, 61.71 million (94.21%) were employed and the remaining 3.79 million (5.79%) were unemployed. The unemployment rate in Pakistan, on average, has remained at 5.5% since 1986.

“If the unemployment rate was that low (nearly 5.79%), then it meant that almost every newcomer in the job market was getting a job in Pakistan. This should be a source of great joy and happiness for the people. In America, however, 4% unemployment rate is considered as full employment,” Aziz said. “This (5.79% unemployment level) is unrealistic. It means there is no such thing like unemployment in Pakistan.”

He claimed that Pakistan had witnessed huge layoffs in recent months. According to an estimate, one million people may lose their jobs due to the ongoing structural reform drive. “Employers have stopped making new appointments. Silent staff retrenchment is going on in the country,” he said. “Some 3-3.5 million people come into the job market every year in Pakistan.

We need a sustainable minimum 8% GDP (gross domestic product) growth to provide jobs to almost everyone,” the EFP president added.

Contrary to that, the economic growth rate has decelerated to a nineyear low at 3.3% in the fiscal year ended June 30, 2019. “How can the two major sectors of the economy – agriculture and large-scale manufacturing – which are lagging behind create the required employment opportunities?” he asked.

“The economy is not performing well. The agriculture sector has grown a little bit while the large-scale manufacturing sector has contracted for the first time in the past 10 years,” he pointed out.

Successive governments have never taken into account two to three things while measuring unemployment. These include the inflow of refugees, migration of people from their hometowns to urban centres (Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad) and semi-rural ones in search of jobs, and growing ranks of unskilled labour due to a high dropout rate at schools and colleges.

Way out? According to Aziz, the construction industry holds the key to providing employment to almost everyone. The government should implement its low-cost five-million housing scheme in true letter and spirit. This will activate the construction and 40-45 allied industries like cement, steel, brick kilns, tiles, paints and woodwork.

They will provide jobs to a majority of the jobseekers including the unskilled labour. Besides, the government needs to come up with a plan for skills development and revival of vocational training centres to train and improve skills of the workforce. THE WRITER IS A STAFF CORRESPONDENT

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2088407/2-contrary-slogan-job-creation-unemployment-rise-pakistan/>

PPAF CONFERENCE: INNOVATIVE IMPROVE SOLUTIONS HELP IMPROVE POOR PEOPLE’S SOCIO-ECONOMIC STANDARDS: EXPERTS

By TAHIR AMIN & ZAHEER ABBASI on October 31, 2019

Small interventions and innovative solutions can help the poverty-stricken people improve to the next level in socio-economic ladder, the experts at an international conference held here on Wednesday said. The conference titled ‘Beyond Action, Towards Transformation’ was organised by the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF).

The third international conference focused on research works and developing further dimensions over poverty alleviation, and also assessed how PPAF's interventions for the poor have led to transforming lives and communities in the country. Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety, Dr Sania Nishtar said the deliberations of the conference would help the government navigate the impact of the Poverty Graduation Programme on a national scale.

She added that the Poverty Graduation Program would help provide the vulnerable segments of society with livelihoods and social protection to become self-reliant. “The government in the battle for greater social and economic equality is constantly striving towards this goal and aims to enhance the process of transformation of livelihood of the vulnerable segments of society,” she said, adding, “Under the ambit of Ehsaas, the government envisions to empower millions across Pakistan by laying greater emphasis on asset transfer.”

The speakers highlighted that poverty graduation means move over from level to another at the poverty score card. The Poverty Scorecard for Pakistan has been developed by the World Bank as a tool to measure change in poverty in an effective way and to support the management of development programmes that focus on alleviating poverty.

There are various parameters for determining each level at the score card, such as the scorecard 0-11 weights are extremely poor, those in the range of 12-18 are chronically poor, 19-23 are transitory poor, 24-34 are transitory vulnerable, 35-50 are transitory non-poor and people in the range of 51-100 are non-poor.

CEO PPAF Qazi Azmat Isa said that based on World Bank guidelines, PPAF's experience of implementing the poverty scorecard were being used to identify people in different categories. He expressed the confidence that the outcome of International Conference on Research and Learning would help the PPAF to provide the poorest of poor the opportunities and support to attain economic stability.

Dr Imran Rasul, Professor of Economics at University College London, presented findings on asset versus cash transfers as sustainable option for ultra-poor. He said, "Structural inequalities and macroeconomic trends impact strongly on poverty, in order to move people out of the cycle of poverty and induct them into cycle of prosperity it is imperative for them to be financially independent, asset building is a key step towards this approach."

The conference discussed how poverty graduation approach could extend to supporting the rural eco-system by creating opportunities for households to link up to value chains and local markets. Hubert Boirard, Country Programme Manager Pakistan, International Fund for Agricultural Development, also addressed the gathering.

Samia Liaquat Ali Khan, Senior Group Head Graduation Group and Programme Director National Poverty Graduation Programme at PPAF said the focus on graduation and institution building lead to transformation for the vulnerable segments. The key objective of the two-day international conference is to learn from both successes and failures of various projects while showcasing the diverse work of PPAF and its partner organisations.

The goal of conference was to create prolific opportunities for further collaboration between various institutes, giving way to productive and extensive research work and eventually translating into more apt and sustainable policies and actions.

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<https://www.brecorder.com/2019/10/31/539700/ppaf-conference-innovative-improve-solutions-help-improve-poor-peoples-socio-economic-standards-experts/>

‘LEARNING POVERTY’ IN REGION: PAKISTAN AT LOWEST POSITION AFTER AFGHANISTAN: WB PRESIDENT

By TAHIR AMIN on November 1, 2019

World Bank President David Malpass has pointed out that Pakistan is at the lowest position after Afghanistan at "Learning Poverty" in the region and urged the government for improving coordination between the federal and provincial governments as well as optimal utilization of funds to achieve learning target, it is learnt.

Official sources privy to the meeting held between Federal Education Minister Shafqat Mahmood and World Bank President David Malpass and his high-level delegation revealed that WB president pointed out that Pakistan was 75th position at Learning Poverty Index which was lowest in the region leaving Afghanistan. Learning Poverty is defined as the percentage of 10-year-old children who cannot read and understand a simple story.

The WB official further urged for increased coordination with provincial government to achieve learning target.

Sources confirmed that except Sindh, education ministers of other provinces attended the meeting. However, secretary education Sindh attended the meeting. The WB president tweeted, "Held a productive dialogue with Pakistani Education Minister Shafqat Mahmood & provincial finance and education ministers. We discussed improving literacy, reducing Learning Poverty & the importance of policy coordination. Good educational outcomes are vital for growth", he added.

According to the official statement issued by the Education Ministry, Shafqat Mahmood led a critical dialogue with David Malpass and his high-level delegation on how to ensure all Pakistani children can read by age ten (10). The meeting was also attended by Planning Minister Khusró Bakhtiar, chairman Higher Education Commission (HEC) and provincial education and finance ministers along with their secretaries. The two sides discussed critical actions that are required by the government to help Pakistan come out of its Learning Poverty. It was agreed that helping children achieve their full learning potential is critical and requires effective use of technical and financial resources. Mahmood highlighted that quality education is the single key factor required for building human capital.

The government is ensuring equality of opportunities geographically and across various streams of education. He highlighted the role of Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (MoFEPT) in building a national consensus on key reform areas, especially uniformity in curriculum standards and its implementation. The federal minister also mentioned that plans are underway to reorganize the ministry to set up a Policy and Research Unit to analyze critical information on students learning outcomes, school data and education financing from across Pakistan to ensure better policy and decision making. The World Bank launched its ambitious “Learning Target” this year in the annual meetings held in October 2019. The World Bank President emphasized the need for coordination in political, financial and management approaches to ensure that countries can bring students back to school and improve learning outcomes to enhance productivity and economic growth. “The World Bank will continue its support and is keen to work with Pakistan on the programs discussed in the meeting”, he concluded.

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<https://www.brecorder.com/2019/11/01/540165/learning-poverty-in-region-pakistan-at-lowest-position-after-afghanistan-wb-president/>

WB TO LAUNCH LIVELIHOOD PROJECT IN BALOCHISTAN

Amin Ahmed November 07, 2019

ISLAMABAD: The World Bank will assist the Balochistan government in launching a livelihood and entrepreneurship project aimed to create employment opportunities for rural communities and achieve sustainability of enterprises in eight districts, including the five affected by the prolonged presence of Afghan refugees.

Rates of poverty in the eight districts of northern Balochistan — namely, Zhob, Chagai, Nushki, Sherani, Killa Saif-ullah, Killa Abdullah, Pishin and Mastung — are high since long and the presence there of refugees for about 40 years, has put an unsustainable strain on resources of the province.

A World Bank report says that the \$50 million project expected to be approved next month by the bank’s executive board, includes grant assistance worth \$35m from the International Development Association (IDA) and another of \$15m from MDTF, the World Bank-administered trust fund for crisis-hit areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan.

According to the relevant documents, promoting enterprise development and livelihoods will be the major component of the project which will be allocated \$32.26m and which will support local entrepreneurs and individuals to enhance profitability, job creation and income. The activities will be implemented in the areas adversely affected by refugees.

Using IDA resources specific for refugees and host communities, the federal government will implement a national-level project to undertake necessary reforms with regard to refugees and also develop sophisticated monitoring systems to track refugees based in Pakistan.

The UNHCR is liaising with the government for additional rights for refugees, including registration of businesses, issuance of drivers’ licences and ownership of assets.

In the context of prevailing socio-economic conditions in the targeted districts, the proposed interventions will be guided by the principle that support would be extended with the aim of enhancing profitability of an enterprise, which implies facilitating improved productivity, higher sales and reduced cost of production.

The project support will contribute towards job creation by enabling rural enterprises to grow and create job opportunities and through skills enhancement, which is cited as the main constraint for employment.

With a financing of \$9.46m on economic mobilisation, the project will support both the refugees and host communities in rural and peri-urban areas of selected districts to collectively access technical and financial resources and address issues related to low population density and high cost of delivery in an inclusive manner.

A baseline study completed as part of the project preparation shows that Sherani and Nushki districts have negligible social capital and will require greater investments in building enterprise and saving groups.

According to the documents, the project will rely heavily on local facilitators and technical resource persons who will be representing the project at the community level. The project will adopt a multi-tiered and private sector-oriented approach towards implementation. As part of the project, a ‘citizens engagement strategy’ will be developed and rolled out to seek change community perceptions regarding savings and investments and also to promote inclusive enterprise development, focusing particularly on women, youth and refugees.

The aim of the strategy will be to develop adequate methods of citizens’ engagement given the intra- and inter-district diversity within Balochistan.

Published in Dawn, November 7th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1515381>

MALNUTRITION ALARM

Editorial November 07, 2019

A RECENT flagship report by Unicef looks into patterns of food and nutrition intake by children around the world. The findings are disquieting, particularly when it comes to the state of children’s health in South Asia. The region has been marked ‘red’ on the United Nations map. The organisation warns that nearly half of all children are not receiving a sufficient diet — the highest global figure in this regard. Poor consumption patterns lead to issues with growth, cognitive impairments, and go on to negatively impact the region’s economies. According to the report, titled The State of the World’s Children, approximately 409,000 children under the age of five died last year in Pakistan. Meanwhile, our neighbours India and Afghanistan recorded 882,000 and 74,000 deaths respectively in the same period. The region shows disproportionately high rates of chronic malnutrition, wasting and stunting.

Are policymakers paying attention to these figures? Pakistan hosts the world’s fifth largest population, and the majority is young. Despite malnutrition affecting such a large portion of the total population, the issue rarely features in public discourse or political speeches, taking a back seat to the demands of realpolitik and more ‘glamorous’ topics. When Prime Minister Imran Khan was elected to power last year, many pinned their hopes on him to give such matters their due importance. In his victory speech after last year’s general polls, observers were pleasantly surprised to see him highlight a very neglected public issue — the high rates of stunting among the nation’s children. A year later, we have not seen the topic raised again by him, despite several new studies and reports being published on the extent of the problem. While this government has announced an ambitious social welfare programme, a lot of work is needed on the ground. Many of these issues are interconnected. For instance, the appalling health and growth indicators amongst children are linked to poor water and sanitation supplies, or lesser acknowledged gender disparities within households. Poverty is also endemic in the region, which leads to families under-investing in proper diets. There is also a lack of awareness of what even consists of nutritious food, while access to health facilities remains out of the reach of many families, particularly in far-flung rural areas. With the growing population showing no signs of slowing down, this country’s children and their futures need to be accorded top priority.

Published in Dawn, November 7th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1515423/malnutrition-alarm>

‘ISLAMIC BANKING CAN HELP ADDRESS POVERTY’

Staff Reporter Updated November 07, 2019

KARACHI: Islamic banking can play a key role to address the four major challenges of poverty, income equality, regional disparity and illiteracy facing the country, said Austerity and Reforms Adviser Dr Ishrat Husain.

Delivering a keynote address at the third International Conference on Islamic Banking and Finance on Wednesday, organised by the Institute of Business Management (IoBM), Husain argued that Islamic banking can contribute heavily to solving poverty alleviation, affordable housing, microfinance, financial inclusion and educational outreach.

The two-day conference hosted international speakers from the USA, Australia, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Malaysia and Qatar.

“Those who do not believe in financial inclusion because of faith can be reached through Islamic bankig,” he said.

The adviser highlighted that non-performing loans are one of the biggest challenges to the industry; Islamic banking, being Shariah-compliant, can assess the risk better than conventional institutions.

He said that using the same strength, Islamic banking is more suitable to fund startups which are otherwise avoided by conventional banks.

“The government is investing in the knowledge economy to develop human capital,” he said, adding that there is a need to help young entrepreneurs, provide education to rural women and promote the programme-lending business model.

Husain stressed the use of Ijara in agricultural financing and to educate poor students from backward areas. “The prime minister is very keen on providing low-cost affordable housing to people and Islamic banking can play a pivotal role in it.”

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<https://www.dawn.com/news/1515407>

NOVEMBER, 2019

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOV 04 TO 10, 2019

ITALIAN SHIP WITH 151 RESCUED MIGRANTS DOCKS IN SICILY

Agencies November 04, 2019

ROME: An Italian offshore supply vessel has brought 151 migrants to Sicily after rescuing them in waters off Libya a day earlier.

The Asso Trenta docked on Sunday at Pozzallo with the migrants. It wasn't immediately known if they would stay in Italy or be distributed among other European Union countries.

Hours earlier, a German charity's rescue boat, Alan Kurdi, had disembarked 88 migrants at Taranto on the Italian mainland. Under an EU-brokered deal, 67 of them will go to four other countries, while the others will stay in Italy.

A Taranto official, Gabriella Ficocelli, told the Italian news agency ANSA the migrants included five unaccompanied minors who were “tired and tried by the voyage.”

They disembarked eight days after being rescue in the Mediterranean Sea from Libyan-based traffickers' unseaworthy vessels.

The transfer of migrants from overcrowded camps on the islands to the Greek mainland continued over the weekend, with authorities saying 415 arrived at the port of Eleusis west of Athens Saturday afternoon and another 380 expected around noon on Sunday.

The migrants had been living on the island of Lesbos, at the Moria camp where almost 15,000 migrants still live in a space designed for 3,000. They were being transported by Greek Navy ships usually used to transport tanks.

A senior government official speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk about certain aspects of government policy said that the government plans to move 5,000 migrants to the mainland over the next 15 days.

The official said the migrants will be housed in hotels, as the peak tourist season is over. He said some parts of the mainland, such as northern Greece, will be exempted because there are many migrant camps, or hotspots, there already.

He added that the government would cap the number of migrants at 0.8 percent of the local population per prefecture. He did not mention whether more permanent locations would be used in the future.

Greece is divided into 54 prefectures, but about half of them would be exempted from the migrant resettlement scheme, including all islands.

Several of Greece's eastern islands, all close to the Turkish coast, as well as the land border with Turkey in the northeast, are migrants' preferred entry points.

The large presence of migrants on those islands about 35,000 in all has aroused the hostility of parts of the local population. Local authorities complain the islands are turning into dumping grounds for migrants while the processing of asylum requests is very slow and expulsions of those deemed ineligible for asylum very few. The government has promised to speed up both processes.

Published in Dawn, November 4th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1514731/italian-ship-with-151-rescued-migrants-docks-in-sicily>

41 MIGRANTS FOUND ALIVE IN REFRIGERATED TRUCK IN GREECE

Agencies November 05, 2019

THESSALONIKI: Forty-one migrants were found alive in a refrigerated truck in northern Greece on Monday, said police, who arrested the driver.

The migrants, of apparent Afghan origin, were mostly in good condition but seven received first aid in hospital, the police said.

"The truck contained men and boys. Identifying their nationality will require a couple of days," a police source said.

The truck was stopped by police on the Egnatia motorway between the towns of Xanthi and Komotini. The driver, a man from Georgia, was arrested.

Local media reported that police were also seeking a second man from Turkey in connection with the incident.

The discovery came after 39 people, all believed to be Vietnamese nationals, were found dead in a refrigerated truck in Britain last month, highlighting the risks of illegal migrant routes to Europe, even for those avoiding perilous travel by sea.

Two people have been charged in Britain and eight in Vietnam over the deaths.

The refrigeration system in the truck where the migrants were found in northern Greece had not been turned on, and none of the migrants was injured, though some asked for medical assistance, a Greek police official said.

Police had stopped the truck near the city of Xanthi for a routine check, arresting the driver and taking him and the migrants to a nearby police station for identification.

Greece is currently struggling with the biggest resurgence in arrivals of migrants and refugees since 2015, when more than a million crossed into Europe from Turkey via Greece.

Most of them are reaching Greek Aegean islands close to the Turkish coast via boats but a large number also come overland, using a river border crossing with Turkey.

Road accidents, mainly in northern Greece, involving migrants trying to cross into other countries have become more frequent in recent years. Police have arrested dozens of people believed to be involved in human trafficking so far in 2019.

About 34,000 asylum seekers and refugees are being held in overcrowded camps on the Aegean islands under conditions which human rights groups have slammed as appalling.

The conservative government that came to power in July has vowed to move up to 20,000 off the islands and deport 10,000 people who do not qualify for asylum by the end of 2020.

Greece is experiencing its highest asylum-seeker arrival figures since 2016, when a controversial deal between the EU and Turkey stemmed previous flows of nearly a million people.

Scores arrive daily, overwhelming camps on Greek islands facing Turkey where over 34,000 people are staying, most of them in deplorable living conditions.

A two-year-old girl from Iraq died on Monday when she was hit by a car on the island of Chios, state agency ANA said.

Arrivals of unaccompanied children have also increased. About 1,000 minors have arrived since July, the Greek labour ministry said, with the total number estimated at over 5,000.

A fifth of them are now missing, the ministry said, pledging to build more facilities and shelters for migrant children.

Published in Dawn, November 5th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1515011>

‘INJUSTICE, POVERTY FUELLING VIOLENCE IN SOCIETY’

Staff Reporter November 09, 2019

KARACHI: A seminar on ‘Non-Violent and Tolerant Society: Transforming Youth into Heroes of Tomorrow’ was held on Thursday at the department of psychology of the University of Karachi (KU).

Speaking on the occasion, Prof Dr Iqbal Afridi, head of Pakistan Psychiatric Society, said that to build a peaceful society, one needed to curb the elements which promoted violence and intolerance among general public. “The socio-economic injustice within the system, poverty, lack of education ... corruption and unemployment are some major reasons due to which violence and intolerance can be seen in societies,” he said.

“Political and religious extremism are two well known types of extremism found in every society of the world regardless of their faith, race and colour. Due to extremist activities, 3,329 people lost their lives in 2000 while 32,658

people died due to same reasons in 2014. In 2015, about 29,376 people were killed of which 577 persons were victims of terrorism. The highest numbers of casualties were reported from Nigeria, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan in the same year,” he said.

Dr Imran Yousuf, founder of Transformation International Society, asked the audience to implement the teachings of Islam in letter and spirit. He said: “We all know Islam is the religion of peace and harmony, but unfortunately we don’t practice tolerance in our daily lives. When we learn to forgive others and start living by accepting each other, we will be able to create a tolerant society,” he said.

KU Vice Chancellor Professor Dr Khalid Mahmood Iraqi informed that the university had zero tolerance when it came to sexual harassment. He said that they had a central anti-harassment committee whereas every department had its own anti-harassment committees due to which decisions were made without any delay whenever the university received any complaint.

He urged that people must have basic information and knowledge about the laws and whenever they witnessed any wrongdoing, they should raise their voice against injustice, but refrain from taking the law into their own hands. “The media is supposed to work for the accountability of society, but it should not issue judgment and remarks when there is an investigation under process as this can mislead the masses and it might be used to put pressure on the institutions or individuals or group of people,” he added.

Prof Dr Abuzar Wajidi, former dean of the Faculty of Management and Administrative Sciences at KU, said there was a dire need to change the mindset of the public and that teaching children at home was necessary so that they should understand their role in society.

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<https://www.dawn.com/news/1515796>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOV 11 TO 17, 2019

WE NEED TO FIGHT POVERTY THROUGH EDUCATION: MINISTER

By News Desk Published: November 13, 2019

A total of 100 exemplary schools will be established in the provincial capital within the next two to three months, said Provincial Minister for School Education Murad Raas. “Lahore needs at least 1,000 schools and this target will also be achieved soon.”

He said this while speaking at the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI). LCCI President Irfan Iqbal Sheikh, Senior Vice President Ali Hussam Asghar and Vice President Mian Zahid Jawaaid Ahmad also spoke on the occasion, while Executive Committee Members Wasif Yousaf and Zeeshan Sohail Malik were also present.

The minister said that provision of quality education is the top priority of the provincial government. “Another 110 model schools would be established by April-May of next year in 11 districts of the province. A total of 1,000 science laboratories and 1,000 new computer labs are also being established.”

Special attention is being given to technological advancement which is the need of the hour, he added. “Transfer and posting system for 0.4 million teachers has been made transparent. The entire education system in Punjab will be automated.”

The minister said that the government is going to introduce a new teachers training programme within the next 30 to 45 days. “Under this programme, 400 trainers would be sent abroad for modern training and later these master trainers would be posted in 36 districts of the province for the teachers’ training.”

The government has prioritised education for out of school children, he maintained. “Punjab government provided facilities in 22 districts of the province that brought 21,000 children back to school. Education at the primary level would be in Urdu, while English would be included as a subject so that students can learn easily.”

The LCCI president said human resources should be imparted technical education as export of skilled labour force can bring foreign remittances to over \$30 billion.

“The provincial government would increase allocation for the education sector.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 13th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2098388/1-need-fight-poverty-education-minister/>

ITALY PLANS TO INVEST 40M EUROS IN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES: ENVOY

Bakhtawar Mian November 17, 2019

ISLAMABAD: Italy plans to invest 40 million euros on youth, health infrastructure, education development policies and programmes in collaboration with the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF).

This was stated by Italian Ambassador Stefano Pontecovero at the closing ceremony of poverty reduction training sessions conducted by the PPAF in collaboration with Italian Agency for Development Cooperation in Pakistan (IADCP) and Luiss Business School.

These trainings were especially conducted for communities based in Balochistan, KP and tribal districts to uplift their socioeconomic conditions.

He said 65 per cent of Pakistan’s population is under 35. Immense potential lies in the youth and Italy hopes to invest more in youth development policies to empower the future of the country and contribute towards a prosperous tomorrow, he said.

Says Rome hopes to invest more in youth development policies to empower future of country, contribute towards a prosperous tomorrow

Speaking on the occasion, IADCP Director Emanuela Benini said the training would have a good impact for communities in Pakistan.

The participants, she said, would contribute to the sustainable development of their respective areas.

PPAF Chief Executive Officer Qazi Azmat Isa also lauded the efforts of the Italian government and said without their active participation such sessions could not have been possible.

“Positive interventions cannot be done in isolation. It is imperative for multiple stakeholders, including academia, NGOs and governments, to collaborate and work towards bringing a sustainable change,” said the PPAF head.

The PPAF’s programme for poverty reduction runs in 14 districts of Pakistan covering 38 union councils in collaboration with 17 partner organisations. The goal is poverty reduction through the creation of sustainable conditions of social and economic development, including income and production capacity increase.

It mainly focuses on key areas of social mobilisation, livelihood enhancement and protection, construction and improvement of small-scale community infrastructures and establishment of basic health and educational services.

Published in Dawn, November 17th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1517156/italy-plans-to-invest-40m-euros-in-development-programmes-envoy>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOV 18 TO 24, 2019

GOVT EAGER TO END POVERTY, UNEMPLOYMENT: BULEDI

By Our Correspondent Published: November 20, 2019

QUETTA: Balochistan Finance Minister Zahoor Ahmed Buledi on Tuesday said that the incumbent regime in the province is taking all measures for sustainable development, adding that controlling poverty and unemployment remain the key objectives of the current cabinet.

He shared these views while addressing a forum held to discuss the role of parliamentarians, civil society and academia regarding development goals.

“Steps are being taken to ensure the provision of quality health and education in the province,” affirmed Buledi, adding that Balochistan Chief Minister Jam Kamal and his cabinet are committed to sustainable development in the province.

Deputy Speaker PA Sardar Babar Khan Musakhail, MPA Mah Jabeen Sheeran, Nasrullay Zeeray, Zeenat Shahwani, Bushra Rind, Qadir Nail and other officials from the government and the civil society were also present on the occasion.

The finance minister lauded the role of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and maintained that practical measures are being taken to uplift Balochistan’s development sector and ensure the prosperity of the masses. The UNDA chief in the province Zulfikar Durrani has pledged full support for the provincial government while stressing upon developing skills of the youth.

Talking about Livestock Expo 2019, Buledi said at least 80 foreign and national companies are participating in the event which would end the perception that there is a security risk in the province.

“Delegations from Australia, China, Iran, Thailand and other foreign countries are participating in the mega exhibition. The livestock industry would benefit in the future through foreign and local investments,” Buledi reiterated.

He continued that 70% population in Balochistan is connected with livestock and agriculture sectors hence the provincial government is keenly working for their development. Buledi also criticised the previous governments for neglecting the aforementioned departments of the province.

“Chief Minister Balochistan Jam Kamal and Minister for Livestock Mitha Khan Kakar deserve applause for modernising livestock sector which would greatly benefit the province’s economy,” he said.

The finance minister also welcomed the support of BNP-M Chief Sardar Akhtar Khan Mengal and former chief minister Dr Malik Baloch and added that the government is planning to conduct more expos on mining and other lucrative sectors of the province.

“The perception that Balochistan was not safe and secure has vanished today as larger number of international investors and delegations are participating in the expo,” added Buledi. “The delegations and investors are being briefed about the investment opportunities in Balochistan.”

Published in The Express Tribune, November 20th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2102870/1-govt-eager-end-poverty-unemployment-buledi/>

MICROFINANCE CAN HELP START NEW BUSINESS, REDUCE POVERTY

By Omar Qureshi Published: November 22, 2019

KARACHI: Microfinance can steer financial inclusion in Pakistan as it provides required capital for starting small businesses and reduces poverty in the country, said Akhuwat Foundation Chairman Dr Amjad Saqib.

Speaking at a seminar titled “Practical Implications of Microfinance” at the Institute of Business Administration (IBA) main campus on Thursday, Saqib said microfinance schemes could promote entrepreneurship culture in Pakistan and also help increase the number of small and medium enterprises (SMEs). He pointed out that microfinance supported wealth creation which, in turn, sparked a multiplier effect in the economy and enhanced economic activity.

Wealth creation and increasing the number of SMEs is part of the government agenda aimed at creating millions of jobs in the economy.

“People with an entrepreneurial mindset having no capital can utilise microfinance schemes for starting their business and can contribute to economic growth,” he said.

Saqib emphasised that microfinance also encouraged women empowerment and their participation in the workforce. “In fact, 42% of the recipients of Qarz-e-Hasna (interest-free loan) from our organisation are women.”

He clarified that microfinance was often confused with microcredit, which was itself a part of microfinance. Elaborating, Saqib said microfinance included microinsurance as well as micropayment systems.

He regretted that around 30% of the people willing and able to work could not participate in the workforce due to certain reasons like being handicapped or widows having the responsibility for children.

He expressed hope that microfinance would help the excluded mass enter the workforce and alleviate poverty in Pakistan.

He expressed concern that banks had adopted microfinance and capitalised on it by charging exorbitant service charges, which the poor segment of society was unable to repay. “Still 85% of microfinance in Pakistan is disbursed by the banking sector,” he said.

Concluding the session, Saqib said his organisation would soon introduce microfinance for housing needs to provide shelter to the poor segment of society.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 22nd, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2104261/2-microfinance-can-help-start-new-business-reduce-poverty/>

CHILDREN RECOVERING FROM MALNUTRITION GET PRIZE

By Our Correspondent Published: November 24, 2019

QUETTA: A seminar on mother and child’s health was organised by the People’s Primary Healthcare Initiative (PPHI) at Elementary Girls College Sibi. Deputy Commissioner Sibi Syed Zahid Shah was the chief guest on the occasion.

Addressing the seminar he said that education and health were the most important departments that were directly linked with the well-being of the children.

“Healthy society requires healthy people,” he said and added that organising a PPHI programme and seminar was commendable. He stated that Balochistan being the largest province of the country had scattered population.

“Mostly population in the countryside needs awareness on malnutrition,” he remarked. Shah stressed on the use of supplements provided by PPHI and other healthcare institutions for expecting mothers and children who were born weak.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 24th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2105413/1-children-recovering-malnutrition-get-prize/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOV 25 TO DEC 01, 2019

AUTHORITY TO BE SET UP IN BALOCHISTAN TO ALLEVIATE POVERTY

Saleem Shahid November 27, 2019

QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Jam Kamal Khan Alyani has said that steps are taken to establish an authority for poverty alleviation and social protection in the province.

While presiding over a meeting here on Tuesday, the chief minister said Balochistan had vast natural resources compared to other provinces but these resources could not be explored and utilised for development of the province. But his government, he said, would surely succeed in alleviating poverty by utilising these resources.

Mr Alyani said there was great potential and scope of improvement in every sector. “The government is committed to bringing progressive change in every sector of the province,” he said.

He said it was the right time to utilise the entire government machinery and departments under a well planned strategy by adopting a comprehensive policy in the best interest of the people of Balochistan.

“Unfortunately, the previous governments failed to achieve the targets of development and progress in the province,” he added.

The meeting also discussed matters related to human resource development, public-private partnership and development of technical education skills. It was informed that the World Bank would provide financial assistance for establishment of the proposed authority for poverty alleviation and social protection.

Provincial Minister for Social Welfare Mir Asad Baloch, Chief Secretary retired Captain Fazeel Asghar, Additional Chief Secretary Planning and Development Abdul Rehman Buzdar and other officials concerned attended the meeting.

Published in Dawn, November 27th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1519044/authority-to-be-set-up-in-balochistan-to-alleviate-poverty>

PM VOWS TO COMBAT ISSUE OF MALNUTRITION

By RECORDER REPORT on November 29, 2019

Prime Minister Imran Khan on Thursday said that the present government was fully committed to combating the issue of malnutrition in Pakistan. He was talking to Princess Sarah Zeid of Jordan, the World Food Programme's Special Adviser on Mother and Child Nutrition, who called on him here at the Prime Minister House.

While welcoming the Princess, the Prime Minister expressed appreciation for her dedication to increasing awareness about Mother and Child Nutrition. The Prime Minister mentioned that in his very first address to the nation, he committed to addressing the severest form of malnutrition, including the prevalence of stunted growth in children in the country as a matter of priority for his government.

He apprised the Princess of the steps taken by the government of Pakistan under Ehsaas and other poverty alleviation programmes, concerning women's empowerment. Princess Sarah Zeid of Jordan briefed the Prime Minister on her engagements in Pakistan during the visit and expressed appreciation for Pakistan's efforts including the prioritization of mother and child nutrition.

The Princess also appreciated the personal leadership of the Prime Minister on the issue of stunting and malnutrition, describing it as “inspirational and critically important”.

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<https://www.brecorder.com/2019/11/29/548720/pm-vows-to-combat-issue-of-malnutrition/>

JORDANIAN PRINCESS VOWS TO ADDRESS MALNUTRITION IN PAKISTAN

Amin Ahmed November 30, 2019

ISLAMABAD: Princess Sarah Zeid of Jordan, who is the World Food Programme's Special Adviser on Child Health and Nutrition, concluded her visit to Pakistan on Friday with full assurance to the government to cooperate on the issue of malnutrition.

Resources will be provided to Pakistan from different organisations in collaboration with the Islamic Development Bank, she said during her meeting with Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on National Health Services Dr Zafar Mirza.

Dr Mirza informed Princess Sarah that the government had prepared a programme at a cost of Rs538 billion to address the issue of malnutrition and stunted growth.

The Jordanian princess lauded the government's commitment to address malnutrition across Pakistan, and reiterated that malnutrition has long lasting consequences for families and countries. “I highly appreciate the multisectoral programmatic steps being taken by the government under ‘Ehsaas’ to achieve nutrition driven outcomes,” she told Dr Sania Nishtar, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Nets. The princess discussed current projects aimed at fighting malnutrition in Pakistan.

Sarah lauds government commitment to address malnutrition issue

Dr Sania Nishtar informed Princess Sarah that five actions had been undertaken since the launch of ‘Ehsaas’ programme, under which the Pakistan National Nutrition Coordination Council was established as the country's highest coordinating body on nutrition to drive forward multi-sectoral action.

In collaboration with the World Food Programme of the United Nations, a new mother and child health and nutrition initiative has been taken to address stunting in children using specialised nutrition food while conditional cash transfers were in the final stages of getting deployed.

‘Ehsaas’ is planning to introduce a ration card scheme in collaboration with the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and WFP for poverty-stricken newly merged districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Dr Nishtar said.

Princess Sarah campaigns globally to bring attention to the critical of good nutrition in the first 1,000 days — from pregnancy to two years — as a strategy to reduce malnutrition.

The 1000-day window is critical nutritional outcomes for the health of children and mothers, Dr Sania Nishtar said.

“Our country is grappling with the double burden of malnutrition, under-nutrition in young children and over-nutrition later in life lead to higher risk of costly diseases, like hypertension and diabetes. Both sides of the same coin of malnutrition are on painful display. We are committed to addressing these,” she reiterated.

During her four-day visit, Princess Sarah saw first-hand how WFP is supporting the government in addressing barriers to good health and nutrition for the country’s children. She visited the community health and nutrition centre in Pishin where she learned about WFP work in stunting prevention in collaboration with the Aga Khan University.

The research and evidence generated from the collaboration will support and accelerate efforts in reducing malnutrition, particularly stunting and wasting.

During her meetings with top government officials, including Prime Minister Imran Khan, the princess advocated for the partners to focus more on the first 1,000 days — from pregnancy to two years — as a strategy to reduce malnutrition.

According to a recently released national nutrition survey, two-thirds of households across the country cannot afford a nutritious diet while only three per cent of children receive the right quality and quantity of foods.

Published in Dawn, November 30th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1519625/jordanian-princess-vows-to-address-malnutrition-in-pakistan>

PBIF VOICES CONCERN OVER RISING POVERTY

By RECORDER REPORT on November 30, 2019

Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum's (PBIF) President, Mian Zahid Hussain has expressed concern over increasing poverty at a rapid pace while price volatility is taking a toll on masses.

He said that the government's steps to provide small loans and free food to poor are laudable but economic turnaround will require restoration of confidence of the business community.

He expressed that the economic situation is not as we are told. Inflation continues to make life difficult for the masses while the interest rates are not being reduced despite calls by economists and the battered business community.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that some tough decisions have improved some sectors and satisfied IMF but it has also damaged other sectors that should not be ignored.

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<https://www.brecorder.com/2019/11/30/549083/pbif-voices-concern-over-rising-poverty/>

GOVERNMENT WORKING TOWARDS REDUCING INEQUALITY: PM

By MUHAMMAD SALEEM on December 1, 2019

Terming the provision of loans to small farmers and small and medium industries as major sources of employment and poverty alleviation, Prime Minister Imran Khan Saturday said the government's economic initiatives are aimed at uplifting the downtrodden and reducing inequality between rich and poor.

“Pak rupee is stabilizing, confidence of businessmen and stock market has revived and investors are looking towards Pakistan,” the PM said while addressing a signing ceremony of Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the Punjab

Land Record Authority (PLRA) and major private commercial banks here on Saturday. Under the agreement, a digital link would be established between the central database of land records and the banks which would verify the status of land of the farmers reducing the loan processing time from 30 days to three days just after three visits of the bank.

The premier said through this initiative, a common farmer would get agriculture loan by visiting a bank and getting his land record verified without any hassle. "This is a revolution. This is a beginning and a tremendous job. Because getting loans by the small farmers has almost been impossible so far, it was a revolution to ease out the procedural difficulties the farmers had to face to get credit so far," he said, adding: "Even small and medium industry, which is the backbone of an economy and creates the most employment, also faces difficulties to get loan." He added that around 95 percent of farmers in Pakistan owned not more than 12 acres of land that was why they needed agriculture credit.

Punjab Chief Minister Sardar Usman Buzdar, special assistants to Prime Minister Dr Firdous Ashiq Awan and Zulfiqar Bukhari, senior PTI leader Jahangir Khan Tareen and Governor State Bank of Pakistan Raza Baqir also attended the ceremony.

The PM said that civilized societies always played collective role to bring their people out of poverty that had also been the characteristic of the State of Madina which had taken the responsibility of its poor citizens. He said China had steered around 700 million people out of poverty within 30 years just because the state had played its due role and farmers were fully supported.

Talking about 'Ehsaas Programme', Imran Khan said, "Despite tough financial situation, the government had earmarked Rs 200 billion for various anti-poverty programmes to provide loans to youth, cash grants to women through a database connecting all the public and private sector institutions working for the poverty alleviation."

Referring to the country's economic condition during the first year of the government, the PM said the government could not concentrate on any other thing except the economy when it had to pay back US \$10 billion loan taken by previous government, control the devaluing currency and bridge the current account deficit.

Quoting the Governor State Bank, the PM said it was welcoming that the farmers had been given record credit of Rs one trillion in a year which also showed that the economy was picking up. He appreciated various initiatives of the Punjab government which could brighten the future of Punjab and called for publicity of those initiatives to make the people know.

The premier appreciated performance of CM Punjab Sardar Usman Buzdar and said more hard work is required to get good results. He said civilized societies do not differ in rich and poor and the government is collecting data for its largest Ehsaas Programme. He said the government is spending about 200 billions of rupees for welfare of the poor under this programme. He said an accurate database is being prepared so that no deserving is left unattended.

Governor State Bank Raza Baqir said stability is a step towards growth. He said economic growth will generate employment opportunities which will lead to prosperity in the country. He said the State Bank is working to reduce income disparity in the country through regularization and cooperation with banks. He said low income people will be provided loans.

Earlier, the premier reached Lahore on a day-long visit and deliberated on provincial affairs with Punjab Chief Minister Sardar Usman Buzdar, provincial bureaucracy and senior police officers. Sardar Usman Buzdar briefed the PM on the political and administrative issues. In his meetings with newly-appointed Chief Secretary and IG Police Punjab, the PM directed to do every work on merit and fulfill the responsibility of serving the masses. The IG Punjab was also directed to improve police culture. Imran Khan asked Usman Buzdar to improve law and order situation in the province.

IG Punjab Shoaib Dastagir apprised the PM of his vision regarding police reforms and improvements in law and order situation. Imran Khan directed him to work without any political influence. The PM said appointments in bureaucracy

and other posts have been made on merit and the PTI government has freed the officers from any political interference. He said the police department enjoys legal authority but this power should only be used to serve the masses and bring improvement in the lives of the people. A competent bureaucracy is inevitable to bring about the economic development, the PM said, adding steps need to be taken for improving the law and order and governance system in Punjab province. "In Naya Pakistan, we have to change the old mindset. Old system can no more continue."

The prime minister told the senior officers that public service was their foremost responsibility and asked them to strive for uplifting the living standard of the poor man. Assuring the officers to ensure security of their service tenure, the prime minister also instructed them to curb the child abuses and protect the powerless against the powerful elements. "In the past, the police stations used to protect the influential ones. But now, your duty is to protect the poor against the powerful ones," the PM directed.

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<https://www.brecorder.com/2019/12/01/549306/government-working-towards-reducing-inequality-pm/>

DECEMBER, 2019

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 02 TO 08, 2019

GOVT SET TO EXPAND NUTRITION PROGRAMME

By APP Published: December 4, 2019

ISLAMABAD: The Health Department's provincial nutrition directorate has planned to expand the Nutrition Project across the province to curtail highest mother and child mortality rates recorded in Balochistan.

Talking to APP, an official on Tuesday said the government has already declared nutrition emergency in the province, realising the mass threat posed to the mothers and infants' lives in the province.

He said half of the children in Balochistan were showing signs of stunted growth.

The number of exclusive breast feeding and age appropriate complementary feeding were the lowest in Balochistan as compared to the rest of the country, he added.

He said the recent wave of drought had imparted devastating impact on the health and nutrition status of the masses. He said collective and concrete efforts were needed, such as community based intervention, to address acute malnutrition of mothers and children.

The official urged the organisations concerned to extend their support in all the districts of the province in reaching out to the people living in poor condition in far flung areas. He said fight against malnutrition was the top agenda of the government.

"It gives me immense pleasure to announce that children and mothers are availing best possible health nutrition care facilities in seven districts of Balochistan," he added.

The official said despite all the challenges, the government of Balochistan was committed to addressing malnutrition, particularly among children and mothers in the province on long-term basis. He said that the Nutrition Programme was raising awareness among the masses on mother and child health status in the province, adding the postpartum women should be encouraged to receive adequate nutrition, which was possible through consumption of a balanced, healthy diet.

He said that nutrition directorates had been established in the province for scaling up nutrition interventions in all areas.

“Provision of Multiple Micro-nutrient Sachets (MMS) is being ensured to address the micro-nutrient deficiency in all children aged six to 23 months,” said the official.

Moreover, the Ready to Use Therapeutic Food (RUTF) was being provided to severely malnourished mothers and children. The severely malnourished children with complications were being referred to stabilisation centres established at District Headquarters Hospital for treatment and follow-up, he mentioned.

He said the goal for Infant Young Child Feeding (IYCF) strategy was to further improve the nutritional status, growth and development, survival of the infants and young children through providing F-75 and F-100 milk.

“The children under five suffering from diarrhea are also being provided ORS, dietary supplements and zinc to meet deficiencies,” he said.

Published in The Express Tribune, December 4th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2111215/1-govt-set-expand-nutrition-programme/>

‘MICROFINANCE KEY TO TACKLING POVERTY’

PPI Updated December 05, 2019

ISLAMABAD: Finance Adviser Dr Abdul Hafeez Shaikh on Wednesday said the government was committed to increasing production capacity of microfinance sector to grab maximum benefits out of minimum resources.

Addressing a two-day microfinance conference here, the adviser said that stable economy was pivotal for promotion of the sector, which has been made possible due to timely and effective measures by the government.

He said the unprivileged segment of society could be brought out of extreme poverty by promoting microfinance. Shaikh pointed out that due to huge fiscal deficits in the past, provision of loans to the private sector got affected.

However, fiscal deficit during the first five months of this fiscal year not only went down as, but also entered surplus zone if interest payments were not taken into account.

“For the first time, primary fiscal balance is in surplus now. Our revenues are more than expenditures, which is a positive sign for economy,” he added.

The adviser also said the government would bring down the cost of doing business especially in microfinance.

Talking about the government’s achievements in macroeconomic indicators, he said last month (November), almost 10 per cent increase was recorded in exports while imports declined considerably, which resulted in contraction of current account deficit by over 36pc. Meanwhile, revenues had also increased by 17pc in the first five months of current fiscal year.

“Due to positive macroeconomic indicators, more and more people (investors) from abroad are attracted to Pakistan, as evident from portfolio investment of around \$1 billion during this fiscal year.”

If all institutions performed well then there would be no need to go back to the International Monetary Fund again, he added. The adviser said foreign direct investment witnessed a record increase of 236pc last month, whereas local investors were also showing more trust given the country’s stock market witnessed a significant positive change and crossed the 40,000 barrier.

“Bloomberg has reported that in dollar terms, Pakistan Stock Exchange has proved to be the best performer in the world during the previous three months,” Shaikh said, adding that non-tax revenues had also posted a record increase of over 100pc and hoped that the government would easily surpass the target of collecting Rs1,200 billion non-tax revenue by the end of 2019-20.

He continued that Moody's on Monday upgraded Pakistan's economic outlook from negative to stable which sent a positive message across the globe about the country.

Published in Dawn, December 5th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1520548>

SHRC FINDS NO MAJOR PROGRESS ON THAR'S KEY SOCIAL INDICATORS

Shazia Hasan Updated December 05, 2019

KARACHI: Sindh Human Rights Commission (SHRC) chairperson retired Justice Majida Rizvi said on Wednesday that despite efforts made by the provincial government no significant improvement in education and health sectors could be achieved in Thar.

She was sharing some key insights and findings about her recent visit to Tharparkar at a briefing held at the Sindh Secretariat here.

Justice Rizvi visited Thar on Nov 26 and 27 to inquire into human rights violation complaints.

On the trip, she was accompanied by Pushpa Kumari, a member of the commission, and Krishan Sharma, a social activist and member of a SHRC's subcommittee along with staff member Adnan Khaskheli. They visited Nagarparkar, Islamkot, Mithi and adjacent areas.

Retired Justice Rizvi says the issue of child mortality in the desert region needs in-depth investigation

She said the commission noted that despite efforts and budgetary allocation made by the Sindh government, significant improvement in social indicators such as education and health could not be achieved.

One of the issues that they looked into was the extraction of granite from the Karoonjhar Hills.

"We heard conflicting stories from the government departments with no clarity about which department owns the mineral-rich hills. Though the extraction work has stopped now, damage has already been caused and we urge the government of Sindh to come up with a comprehensive policy on the extraction of mines and minerals given the new realities of Thar and other parts of the province where large development projects have been initiated," she said.

"We were also informed about a site of mineral extraction where the contractors did not fill in the deep pits and some children fell into it to their deaths. The commission has ordered local revenue authorities that the pits should be filled immediately," she said.

Thar is mineral-rich and there has been increased activity in extraction of minerals particularly from the Nagarparkar area, which is equally important for local people as they see these mountains as a part of their culture and heritage. It is said that these hills and the forest there was a source of livelihood for the people living around the area.

"The commission urges the government that any such activity must take into account the fact that no cultural site is damaged or affected," she said.

"The commission also received complaints that the labourers at these sites in many cases are not local and even when locals are hired they are not paid proper wages. We ask local authorities to ensure that the indigenous people are hired and wages are paid to them according to the law. The commission plans to undertake a comprehensive exercise involving the labour department so that rights of workers are protected," she said.

The team also visited the area in Thar where 26 people were killed due to lightning strikes and their families have still not been properly rehabilitated or compensated.

“The government needs to pay immediate attention. The poor families of the deceased should be given due compensation. There is also a need to look into precautionary measures to avoid such incidents in the future,” she said.

“Thar is prone to calamities and droughts but there is hardly any proper rescue and support programme on the ground to help in such emergencies. The commission has written to the Provincial Disaster Management Authority about this,” she added.

Coming to the issue of child mortality in Thar, she said that it remains high, which is a major concern.

“The issue needs in-depth investigation as everyone says that children in Thar die in infancy due to poverty and undernourishment. However, a major phenomenon noticed by the commission is marriages of minor girls whose reproductive system has not even fully developed. As a result, their babies are born with weaknesses.

“The commission has directed local authorities including the police to ensure implementation of the Sindh Child Marriage Restraint Act 2013, and we will continue to engage with stakeholders to find a lasting solution to this problem,” she said.

Regarding coal extraction and power plants in Thar, she said that it had resulted in the relocation of many villages and they had received a complaint from one village consisting of about 150 families which was badly affected as a particular company was not willing to arrange relocation on the basis that the village was not on the map of revenue department.

“Now these villagers have to travel miles to find a way out as the company has cordoned off their area from many sides. All the villages here may not be on maps but people have been living in these villages for centuries. The commission will look into this matter in detail but we urge the government of Sindh and relevant companies to ensure human rights in all development projects. Any development there is for the people and it must lead to convenience for them, not difficulties,” she pointed out.

Another issue, discussed by Justice Rizvi was the increasing number of suicides committed by women, men, young girls, children and even couples in Thar.

“It is mostly because of depression, which is not easily diagnosed. The matter needs further investigation and research to ascertain the exact reasons so that remedial measures can be taken,” she said.

Justice Rizvi also said that Thar has a large number of religious minorities but she was glad to see that unlike their previous visits where they used to learn of human rights violations against minorities, this time around they did not receive any major complaint of any persecution against minorities.

“We note this with satisfaction that religious harmony exists in the Thar area and people share sentiments of love, affection and sympathy with each other as communities coexist in a peaceful environment,” she said.

“But that said, we have asked the police and other government agencies to keep an eye on miscreants and not to tolerate any activities that may harm the peaceful environment of the area.”

Finally, the commission also noted that despite Sindh government’s efforts and budgetary allocation, significant improvement in social indicators such as education and health could not be achieved.

“The commission has sought detailed reports from local authorities regarding this matter. We shall take up the matter at the highest level.”

Justice Rizvi said that she planned on releasing a detailed report in the coming weeks along with hosting a consultation to look for solutions to the problems faced by the people of Thar.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1520518/shrc-finds-no-major-progress-on-thars-key-social-indicators>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 09 TO 15, 2019

DOUBLE STANDARDS: THE POOR MAY WAIT FOR ETERNITY

By Rana Yasif Published: December 11, 2019

LAHORE: When it comes to any manner of official or legal business, it often feels as if there are two separate codes of conduct in Pakistan to deal with the haves and have-nots.

Take the recent case of Nawaz Sharif and his temporary release to seek medical attention abroad. Whatever the debate surrounding the former prime minister's actual condition and supposed real intentions, the issue dominated both the news cycle and our judiciary's attention until the matter was finally and relatively promptly resolved.

When it comes to the common Pakistani, however, many often question whether they would receive the same promptness in Nawaz's situation. Convict Faizan Ahmed's present predicament is a case in point. Diagnosed with a form of blood cancer over three years ago, the 20-year-old inmate of Mandi Bahauddin jail has received no such relief.

Faizan's alarming diagnosis came when he was referred to Lahore's Jinnah Hospital in 2016. Incarcerated in Mandi Bahauddin District Jail, prison authorities initially referred him to Lahore Central Jail for preliminary medical examination.

"Convict Faizan Ahmed, 19 years of age, was initially examined by me. [He had] history of typhoid fever in November 2015, when he was extensively investigated by the general physician of DHQ Hospital Mandi Bahauddin," wrote the medical officer of the Lahore Central Jail in a report which was submitted to the Lahore High Court November last year.

"He was then referred to Jinnah Hospital Lahore for [further] investigation and management. He was diagnosed as a case of Chronic Myeloid Proliferative Disorders viz. Chronic Myelogenous Leukemia (CML) in March 2016 with the help of bone marrow biopsy," the officer, who initially examined Faizan, wrote.

CML is a form of cancer that affects the white blood cells. Those who suffer from it "are very prone to infectious diseases like Cytomegaloviruses, Tuberculosis and Hepatitis-C," the report pointed out.

Faizan's treatment was initiated by Jinnah Hospital Oncology Department Head Dr Muhammad Akram shortly after diagnosis. In September 2016, when he was transferred back to Mandi Bahauddin District Jail as an under-trial prisoner, Faizan was registered as a patient with the Punjab CML Project run by the provincial health department.

"Since he [Faizan] needs regular complete blood count monitoring from Shaukat Khanam Hospital Lahore every month and BCR/ABL fusion gene [test] by FISH method from Aga Khan Medical University Karachi every six months... he is an immune [system] compromised patient," report pointed out. "It is recommended not to keep him inside jail premises for best health," it clearly stated.

LHC Justice Muhammad Qasim Khan sought the Lahore Central Jail medical officer's report when Faizan's counsel Nauman Attique challenged a trial court order sentencing the youth to life imprisonment in a murder case. Citing his serious medical condition, the lawyer sought the suspension of Faizan's sentence.

After the report was submitted in November 2018, the case was adjourned without a fixed date for the next hearing as the concerned judge became part of the LHC Multan Bench. The case was later assigned to Justice Sardar Ahmad Naeem and has been pending ever since. "We submitted applications for early hearing repeatedly," said Nauman. "But no development has taken place so far."

Members of Faizan's family, meanwhile, lamented the lack of attention paid to the youth's case. "We have moved from pillar to post. Faizan is close to dying in jail, but no one seems to be ready to take up his case," said one family member. "We barely have enough money to engage a lawyer."

"They say everyone is equal in the eye of the law. But then why is it that cases concerning the elite are treated with urgency and those concerning the poor are ignored," said another. "Everything is possible for the rich and powerful, but if it is the poor being punished, then there is no relaxation," the family member said, alluding to Nawaz's case.

Faizan's family urged LHC Chief Justice Sardar Muhammad Shamim Khan to take notice of his predicament and suspend his sentence as interim relief so that he could spend the time he had left with his loved ones.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2115434/1-double-standards-poor-may-wait-eternity/>

IN PAKISTAN, MILLIONS MORE TO FALL BELOW POVERTY LINE

By Shahbaz Rana Published: December 11, 2019

ISLAMABAD: At the end of two years of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government, 18 million more people may slip into abject poverty due to low economic growth and double-digit food inflation, claimed Dr Hafiz A Pasha, the country's renowned economist.

The national poverty ratio, which was 31.3% in June 2018, would sharply jump to over 40% by June 2020, said Pasha in an article that first appeared in Business Recorder.

In absolute terms, people living in poverty will increase from 69 million in June 2018 to 87 million by June 2020, indicating 26% increase in poverty or an addition of 18 million people in first two years of the PTI government.

As per Pasha's claim, eight million people have already been added to the ranks of the poor by the end of the first year of the PTI government. He has projected that 10 million more people will slip below the poverty line by the end of the current fiscal year.

"The situation is very alarming due to an economic growth rate that is close to the population growth rate and an exponential increase in prices of perishable food items," said Pasha while talking to The Express Tribune on Tuesday.

Pasha has worked out these numbers on the basis of a cost-based methodology amid the federal authorities' inability to firm up official poverty figures over the past three years which also include one year of the PTI government.

"We do not have latest official poverty statistics," responded Federal Minister for Planning and Development Asad Umar when he was contacted for the government's version.

The minister said the country was exiting a severe balance of payments crisis which had its own implications. Umar said the PTI government accelerated the poverty alleviation measures aimed at protecting the poor and vulnerable people from the adverse impact of macroeconomic adjustments.

Pasha said that the government's decision to simultaneously increase taxes, energy tariffs and devaluation of currency contributed to the increase in poverty. He said that the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government's decision to keep the rupee-dollar parity stable kept the inflation under check. The PTI government is implementing probably the toughest International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme of the country's history aimed at overpowering fiscal and external accounts challenges.

By June next year, four out of every ten Pakistanis will be poor, according to Dr Pasha's working. Dr Pasha is the former finance minister of Pakistan and has also advised Prime Minister Imran Khan at the time of building consensus on signing an IMF programme.

At the end of the PML-N government, three out of ten Pakistanis were living in poverty when the poverty ratio had been estimated at 31.3% by Dr Pasha. A year ago Dr Pasha had estimated that national poverty ratio would increase to over 37%, which he now has updated in the aftermath of a surge in food inflation.

The food inflation was recorded at 16.6% in cities and 19.3% in rural areas in November over a year ago, according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics.

The official poverty figures are missing since 2014-15 – a year after start of the last IMF programme.

In his article, Dr Pasha said that the incidence of poverty fell from 36.8% in 2015 to 31.3% in 2017-18. The decline of 5.5 percentage points implied that almost six million people were taken out of poverty in these three years, he added.

The year 2018-19 has, unfortunately, witnessed a change in the trend. The per capita income growth was only 0.9% and more recent estimates indicated that it may have been even lower, he added.

He further stated that there was an increase in the incidence of poverty by 3.7 percentage points, from 31.3% in 2017-18 to 35% in 2018-19. This implies that almost eight million people fell below the poverty line in 2018-19, claimed Dr Pasha.

He argued that in 2019-20, the GDP growth rate is expected to be close to 2.4%, therefore there will be no increase in per capita income.

“There is a real risk that the incidence of poverty could increase by almost 5 percentage points from the level of 35% in 2018-19. Therefore, by the end of 2019-20, the level of poverty in Pakistan could once again approach 40%,” he added.

Published in The Express Tribune, December 11th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2115274/2-millions-fall-poverty-line/>

GOVERNMENT WANTS TO UPLIFT POOR SEGMENTS OF POPULATION: PM

By RECORDER REPORT on December 12, 2019

Prime Minister Imran Khan Wednesday said the government had focused its energies on the uplift of the poor segments of population, particularly in the low cost housing sector.

The prime minister was talking to Director General of Central & West Asia, Asian Development Bank Werner Liepach who called on him here, PM Office Media Wing in a press release said. He highlighted the efforts of the government's economic team for putting the country's economy on path to stability. He observed that there was immense scope for expansion in the existing technical support in the Ehsaas flagship programme, low cost housing and provision of good quality food items to the people through the Utility Stores.

Werner Liepach lauded the steps taken by the Government of Pakistan for steering the country out of difficult economic condition towards stability.

Minister for Economic Affairs Division Muhammad Hammad Azhar, Advisor on Finance Dr Abdul Hafeez Shaikh and Country Director, Pakistan Resident Mission ADB Xiaohong Yang were also present during the meeting.

The prime minister appreciated the ongoing support from the Asian Development Bank in the social protection, agriculture sector, and infrastructure development and towards financial efficiency in the country.

The ADB DG also highlighted that under the Financial Infrastructure Programme, the Bank had contributed significantly towards construction of water resources, particularly the barrages in Pakistan.

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<https://www.brecorder.com/2019/12/12/552523/government-wants-to-uplift-poor-segments-of-population-pm/>

WORLD BANK FOR COMMITMENT TO MITIGATE, OVERCOME LEARNING POVERTY

By TAHIR AMIN on December 12, 2019

World Bank (WB) has termed the learning poverty rate of 75 percent in Pakistan a big crisis and recommended for political and financial commitment to mitigate and overcome the challenge. Learning poverty is defined as the percentage of 10-year-old children who cannot read and understand a simple story.

Pakistan is currently spending around \$500 per student a year which is amongst the lowest and one of the reasons behind the fact that 75 percent of children in Pakistan have trouble in reading a story by age 10, said Jaime Saavedra, Global Director for Education, World Bank Group. He said Pakistan needed to invest more in education to improve the quality of education.

Saavedra was addressing at the lunch of a National 100-day Action Program to support girls' education and women's economic empowerment at Quaid-i-Azam University, supported by the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Human Rights, and the World Bank Group.

"This is a moral and economic crisis, which can and must be addressed urgently," said Saavedra. "Not being able to read by age 10 means that a child is 'learning poor'. What is required is a learning revolution that involves everyone: parents, teachers, school principals, policymakers, and partners to rally around one goal: getting rid of learning poverty," he added.

The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) No 4 ensures that all girls and boys complete free, equity and quality primary and secondary schooling by 2030.

Three in every four children in Pakistan cannot read and understand a simple story by age of 10, highlighting that learning poverty in Pakistan is at 75 percent, which is substantially higher than the average in South Asia of 58 percent.

He said there were two underlying factors to this. First, 27.3 percent of all children remain out of school, which particularly affects girls who are more likely to never be enrolled and to drop out faster in early adolescence. Second, 47.5 percent of children cannot read and comprehend a simple paragraph by age 10, even though they make it to school. This means that literacy instruction in schools is not adapted to the needs of children, particularly those from illiterate families.

The difference between the learning poverty in Pakistan and other countries was different as around 22 million children in the country were out of school while learning poverty was around 48 percent among the school going, he added.

He further said that 250 million children across the world were out of school while only in Pakistan the number was 22 million. He further said the speed of improvement was very slow as witnessed during the last 15 years and with that speed it was expected that just 10 percent improvement and learning poverty may reduce to 43 percent by 2030. There was much needed to bring it by half at least, he added.

The WB official said that relentlessly call attention was needed to mitigate the crisis in Pakistan and the urgency to accelerate efforts. He said there was need of persistent political and financial commitment and need for more investment.

Federal Minister for Education Shafqat Mahmood admitted that the country was facing the crisis and maintained that they were working within the government as well as with donors to make a pitch for increasing investment in the sector. It was agreed that helping children achieve their full learning potential was critical and requires effective use of technical and financial resources.

Mahmood highlighted that quality education was the single key factor required for building human capital. He further said that to tackle the issue of learning poverty, the government was revamping the curriculum and working to devise uniform curriculum. He further said the government was also looking at innovative solutions rather than just relying on conventional as the latter was no more working. He further said students would be engaged through new technology. Mahmood said that improvements in the education sector would be visible in next 1-2 years.

"Girls and women are central to Pakistan's long-term aspirations to become a prosperous country when it turns 100," said Illango Patchamuthu, World Bank Country Director for Pakistan. "The World Bank is committed to supporting all stakeholders to prioritize actions for girls to excel in education and women to thrive in the workplace." He further said that learning poverty was a big challenge in Pakistan and the Bank would continue its commitment to support the country in achieving the milestone of improvement in the education sector.

The 'Girls Learn, Women Earn' (GLWE) initiative was launched here on Wednesday with an evidence for policy-making conference. Sessions focused on challenges and opportunities in eliminating learning poverty and increasing women's economic empowerment. The initiative highlighted statistics that show that 55 percent of Pakistan's 22.5 million out-of-school children are girls and only 26 percent of women are active in the country's labor force. The 100-day campaign calls for awareness, advocacy and action on a national scale to address this.

The 'Girls Learn, Women Earn' conference concluded with a roundtable discussion on women's participation in the labor force, led by Dr Sania Nishtar, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister and Chairperson of the Benazir Income Support Program. The session focused on enabling women as a crucial aspect of inclusive growth, and on ways to provide more women with the education, skills, opportunities and environments to become contributing members of the economy.

"Women in the workforce hold the key to a vibrant economy. Pakistan's goal is to increase women's participation in the workforce from 26 to 45 percent, and the World Bank is ready to support the government achieve this, said Louise Cord, Global Director for Social Development, World Bank. Concerted efforts are needed to empower women and girls by expanding their skills, access to information, mobility, along with access to finance and assets."

The 'Girls Learn, Women Earn' initiative invites any institution to sign up to be a GLWE champion from December 31, provided they meet the registration criteria, which will be set by an independent panel of advisors. The GLWE campaign began on December 1, 2019 and will continue until March 10, 2020, just after International Women's Day on March 8.

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<https://www.brecorder.com/2019/12/12/552506/world-bank-for-commitment-to-mitigate-overcome-learning-poverty/>

FAR-FLUNG AREAS: PANEL FOR LAUNCHING EFFECTIVE POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMME

By ABDUL RASHEED AZAD on December 13, 2019

A parliamentary panel has recommended the government to effectively launch and monitor the poverty alleviation programme in far-flung areas of the country.

The recommendations were given by the Senate Standing Committee on Poverty Alleviation & Social Safety which held here under the chairmanship of Senator Jehanzeb Jamaldini.

The chairman committee asked the Chairperson Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) Dr Sania Nishtar to fill the vacant positions in BISP on immediate basis in far-flung areas of Balochistan, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir so that the benefits of the social protection programs can be extended to the marginalized people of the most backward areas of the country.

Nishtar further said that the government has allocated Rs 180 billion to BISP program under which countrywide poverty alleviation drive has been continued for a decade. She said that women are given special preference under the BISP and after every three months, Rs 5,000 are transferred to their bank accounts.

Briefing on the Ehsaas program, she said the entire Ehsaas agenda is focused on the uplift of poor women, as 6 million women would benefit from Kifalat Program. She said not just health and education, but jobs and economic empowerment are crucial for poor women, adding in this regard, the graduation initiative preferentially serves women.

Regular monitoring and evaluation of results across the Ehsaas framework would be gender-disaggregated and would seek to capture the impact on women's empowerment, she added.

The panel observed that poverty is increasing in the country and the government, besides social safety networks programs, must also launch such programs focusing on employment generation enabling the youth to make best use of their time. The panel said that increasing level of unemployment will be resulted in law and order situation and it is the responsibility of the state to provide conducive environment to the people so that they can respectfully earn their livelihood.

Senator Abdul Qayyum said that the government must focus on speeding up the industrial and agricultural growth of the country by putting aside political differences, saying development of the country should be prime agenda instead of serving political interests.

The chairperson BISP said that not just health and education, but jobs and economic empowerment are crucial for poor women, adding in this regard, the graduation initiative preferentially serves women.

Regular monitoring and evaluation of results across the Ehsaas framework would be gender-disaggregated and would seek to capture the impact on women's empowerment, she added.

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<https://www.brecorder.com/2019/12/13/552856/far-flung-areas-panel-for-launching-effective-poverty-alleviation-programme/>

PAKISTAN RANKS 152ND IN HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX

By TAHIR AMIN on December 13, 2019

Pakistan dropped a spot to 152nd among 189 countries in the 2019 Human Development Index, according to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report.

The UNDP in Pakistan launched the Human Development Report 2019, on Thursday. The UNDP's Human Development Report (HDR) "Beyond Income, Beyond Averages, Beyond Today: Inequalities in Human Development in the 21st Century" gave Pakistan a score of 0.560. Sri Lanka is ranked at 130th, Bhutan, 134th, India, 129th, Bangladesh, 135th, Nepal, 147th, Pakistan, 152nd and Afghanistan is ranked at 170th on the list in the South Asia.

The UNDP launched the 2019 Human Development Report Pakistan at a function here which was attended by Dr Sania Nishtar, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Social Protection and Poverty Alleviation, Dr Sabina Alkire, Director Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, Dr Aisha Ghaus Pasha, Member National Assembly of Pakistan, Shandana Gulzar Khan, Member National Assembly of Pakistan, Ignacio Artaza, Resident Representative of

UNDP Pakistan, and Umer Malik, Policy Analyst, Development Policy Unit, UNDP Pakistan. It was announced that a national human development report would be launched next year.

This year's report shows that a new generation of severe inequalities in human development is emerging, even as the gap is narrowing on many of the unresolved inequalities of the 20th century. These emerging dynamics under the shadow of the climate crisis and technological change demand new approaches in policies at national and global levels.

Sharing the findings of the report, Umer Malik said that Pakistan's 2018 HDI of 0.560 is below the average of 0.634 for countries in the medium human development group and below the average of 0.642 for countries in South Asia. From South Asia, countries which are close to Pakistan in 2018 HDI rank and to some extent in population size are Bangladesh and India, which have HDIs ranked 135th and 129th respectively.

Pakistan's HDI for 2018 is 0.560. However, when the value is discounted for inequality, the HDI falls to 0.386, a loss of 31.1 percent due to inequality in the distribution of the HDI dimension indices.

As the inequality in a country increases, the loss in human development also increases, Malik added.

According to the data, Pakistan's life expectancy stands at 67; while the expected years of schooling was at 8.5 years, with the mean years of schooling standing at 5.2.

The country's Gross National Income (GNI) per capita was \$5,190, the data showed.

However, the trend from 1990 till 2018 showed that Pakistan had steadily improved from being a low human development country to a medium development country, but the pace is very slow.

The HDI was created to emphasise that people and their capabilities should be the ultimate criteria for assessing the development of a country, not economic growth alone.

The report talks about the importance of addressing the different kinds of inequalities in the world today. The report measures the countries' progress beyond just economic growth, with the ultimate aim of unlocking people's full potential.

In Pakistan, 38.3 percent of the population (75,520 thousand people) are multi dimensionally poor while an additional 12.9 percent are classified as vulnerable to multidimensional poverty (25,454 thousand people).

The breadth of deprivation (intensity) in Pakistan, which is the average deprivation score experienced by people in multidimensional poverty, is 51.7 percent. The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), which is the share of the population that is multi dimensionally poor, adjusted by the intensity of the deprivations, is 0.198. Bangladesh and India have MPIs of 0.198 and 0.123 respectively.

Inequalities in human development are not just about disparities in income and wealth. The 2019 HDR explores inequalities in human development by going beyond income, beyond averages, and beyond today. The report analyzes inequality in three steps: beyond income, beyond averages, and beyond today.

The report has highlighted that over a third of Pakistani children under the age of five experiences such "intra-household inequality".

Speaking on the release of the report, Resident Representative of UNDP Pakistan Ignacio Artaza stated the Global HDR puts a lot of emphasis on going 'beyond today' to study inequality.

This means that we cannot solve the problem of inequality if we fail to understand the factors that will shape it in the future. "The Pakistan NHDR has a similar philosophy, hoping to put together a holistic brief on inequality reduction in the country that aims to bridge the gap between the richest and the poorest quintiles in Pakistan," he added.

"Evidence is the key to planning and we want to make sure that we review the findings of the report and analyze how best they can inform policy," said Dr Sania Nishtar. She also called for revision of National Finance Commission (NFC) formula to make it more targeted and reduce the poverty rate as well as inequality.

She further said that Ehsaas is about the creation of a 'welfare state' by countering elite capture and leveraging 21st century tools such as using data and technology to create precision safety nets; promoting financial inclusion and access to digital services; supporting the economic empowerment of women; focusing on the central role of human capital formation for poverty eradication, economic growth and sustainable development; and overcoming financial barriers to accessing health and post-secondary education.

She further said that the program's premise is grounded in the importance of strengthening institutions, transparency and good governance.

The program is for the extreme poor, orphans, widows, the homeless, the disabled, those who risk medical impoverishment, for the jobless, for poor farmers, for laborers, for the sick and undernourished; for students from low-income backgrounds and for poor women and elderly citizens. This plan is also about lifting lagging areas where poverty is higher

The Ehsaas' poverty reduction strategy is articulated in four pillars include: addressing elite capture and making the government system work to create equality; safety nets for disadvantaged segments of the population; jobs and livelihoods; and human capital development, Dr Nishtar added.

Aisha Ghuas Pasha said that flawed fiscal policy, taxation structure, expenditure policy and the state captured by elite having access to influence policies are some of the major drivers behind the increasing inequality in the country. She said the country spends around 5 percent of the GDP on social protection which is not enough to tackle the situations. She further said that there is need of inclusive growth which could create job opportunities for the youth.

She also said that as mentioned in the report power imbalance is another reason behind the rising inequality in the country.

Dr Alkire reiterated the use of multidimensional poverty index to track progress with regard to the impact of poverty interventions. She lauded Ehsaas that is multi-sectoral and whole of the government programme to address poverty.

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<https://www.brecorder.com/2019/12/13/552824/pakistan-ranks-152nd-in-human-development-index/>

DRIVE LAUNCHED TO CONNECT MALNUTRITION EXPERTS WITH DIGITAL MARKETERS

Kalbe Ali December 15, 2019

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Social Protection and Poverty Alleviation Dr Sania Nishtar on Saturday stressed promotion of breastfeeding, hand washing and sanitation besides adopting balanced diet to tackle malnutrition needs in Pakistan.

She was speaking at the launch of a partnership with Facebook, 'Design Hackathon' to counter malnutrition in the country, which is not only due to poverty and lack of resources but also because of changing lifestyle and eating habits.

'Design Hackathon' will connect experts in malnutrition with digital marketers who, with additional support from Facebook, will help build innovative digital campaigns around the specific challenges of malnutrition.

The digital campaign, approved by the Ehsaas Poverty Alleviation Programme, will run at the Facebook platform free of cost to create awareness about malnutrition and help connect those in need with those who can help.

PM's special assistant stresses promotion of breastfeeding, sanitation and balanced diet to tackle malnutrition needs

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Nishtar said campaigns had to be culturally related to Pakistan, adding many measures suggested by experts to counter malnutrition were beyond the financial reach of ordinary citizens.

"To fight malnutrition today, we need 21st century tools such as digital marketing techniques on social media that can reach wide audiences," Dr Nishtar said.

"We recognise millions of children in Pakistan suffer a range of health and development consequences due to malnutrition in all its forms, and that is why we have made malnutrition a top priority area of the Ehsaas programme."

She said stunting, obesity and chronic diseases were closely interlinked.

During the hackathon, 10 teams will work to develop possible campaign solutions and designs that can be developed further and implemented as the Ehsaas programme's official content on Facebook.

Throughout the hackathon, participants will benefit from industry-expert mentors providing guidance in a range of necessary skills, including in pitching, budgeting and impact assessment.

On the final day, three teams will be selected to present their ideas to a panel of leadership from the Ministry of Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Division along with representatives from the World Bank.

The winning team will receive advertisement credits and additional support from Facebook to launch their malnutrition focused digital marketing campaign on the leading social media platform.

By partnering with technology and social media platforms, the Ehsaas programme would be able to reach more people across Pakistan with educational messages on malnutrition.

The applicants include interesting digital agencies, health startups, NGOs and individuals with applicable skills displaying commitment to social justice and poverty alleviation.

Pakistan is facing a crisis in terms of malnutrition and it has been estimated that the country loses around three per cent of GDP annually due to health-related issues, including stunting among children.

Speakers at the launch said a large population of the country was suffering from obesity due to mismanaged diet whereas the increase in number of underweight adults and adolescent was also due to dietary issues.

Published in Dawn, December 15th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1522300/drive-launched-to-connect-malnutrition-experts-with-digital-marketers>

GROWING POVERTY

By Editorial Published: December 15, 2019

For centuries, we have been instilled with the idea that the people collectively represent a nation. However this seems to remain far from the truth. Dr Hafiz A Pasha, the country's renowned economist, estimates that by the end of the current fiscal year, 10 million more people will slip below the poverty line while 8 million had already been added last year.

"The situation is very alarming," laments Pasha while claiming that population growth and increase in the price of perishable food items, coupled with increasing taxes, energy tariffs and devaluation of the rupee, have contributed to this sharp increase in the poverty rate. PM Imran Khan has fancied China's model of poverty alleviation as a

framework to strive towards. However, when Asad Umar, the planning minister, was approached for a government version, he did not have the latest official poverty figures. Thus PTI's claim at working on alleviation measures aimed at protecting the poor can be questioned. Even though the rupee is expected to strengthen and peak around 150 to a dollar, by the end of next year, 4 out of 10 Pakistanis will be poor. Now let that sink in.

The fact is that there is an alarming gap between the social classes in the country and statistics only represent the rich, as the majority of the wealth is only concentrated in the hands of a selected few. From data provided by the World Bank, it can be inferred that the top 18,000 people in Pakistan earn as much as the 18 million poor. The difference will keep increasing. In the case of economic crisis, the lower class is used as collateral damage while the rich reap the benefits of profit, the effects of which are now being seen. It becomes evident that economics and statistics related to growth, progress and prosperity do not accurately represent the living condition of the entire nation.

A famous Chilean poet Nicanor Parra wrote, "There are two pieces of bread. You eat two. I eat none. Average consumption: one bread per person". It is important to look beyond statistics at the actual conditions the masses are living in.

Published in The Express Tribune, December 15th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2117876/6-growing-poverty/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 16 TO 22, 2019

SHELTER HOMES IN CAPITAL FACE SHORTAGE OF FUNDS

The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Updated December 16, 2019

ISLAMABAD: Although the idea of Prime Minister Imran Khan to establish Panahgah shelter homes for homeless people (where they can spend nights for a peaceful sleep) was widely hailed, these homes are being run on 'help yourself' basis and putting an extra monetary and administrative load on the already cash-strapped local authorities.

The government established Panahgahs in the federal capital and two provinces — Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa — without allocating funds for them. It is believed that it has become difficult to run these homes on long-term basis if the government does not provide funds for them.

Some of these shelter homes were established in government buildings, some in makeshift structures and some in rented buildings. Initially the cost of the buildings and furniture of Panahgahs was borne by local administrations and provincial departments. However, they need funds on a regular basis for their better management.

After speaking to different officials concerned, Dawn has learnt that the local administrations have been 'forced' to run these shelter homes without providing a budget by the government.

Now the local administrations are engaging some NGOs to make both ends meet.

The social welfare departments of provincial governments have also been involved in running these shelter homes but they have also not received special funds for them by Centre or the provincial governments of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

"Panahgahs are being managed in a way our police stations are being run on others' pockets. For example, without paying any money a low-salaried policeman is asked to take an under custody accused to the court for a hearing and then bring him [the accused] back to the lock-up," a senior officer of a local administration said on the condition of anonymity.

In the federal capital, three Panahgahs have been built and the government — which takes credit of introducing shelter homes for homeless people who were compelled to sleep on roads or footpaths — has turned a blind eye to the expenses of these centres.

Despite establishment of three shelter homes in the capital, a large number of people are still seen sleeping on roads and footpaths in the night.

Published in Dawn, December 16th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1522500/shelter-homes-in-capital-face-shortage-of-funds>

PROTECT THE POOR

Editorial December 19, 2019

IN the middle of an intense austerity drive, it is important to ask who is looking after the interests of the poor. In a democratic dispensation, the pain and anguish of the people gets channelled upward into the corridors of power through the elected representatives. But at the moment, much of the government is being run by people who are not elected, the finance division being one of the biggest examples. It is the seat of today's austerity agenda, and where the purse strings are being controlled with meticulous care for the interests of the country's billionaires and textile barons, its bankers and creditors, its high officialdom and their perks. Through it all one must ask, who is looking out for the poor?

One person who evidently has the interests of the poor weighing on his mind is the prime minister. In part this is because, despite the divided opinion regarding his often controversial politics, his conversation — and previous actions such as building a free cancer hospital — has indicated an interest in the welfare of the poor. In equal part it may be because his popularity is precious to him, as it would be to any politician. Of late, the prime minister has been talking of soup kitchens and shelter for the hungry and homeless, especially in this chilly winter. He has also detailed plans for providing housing to low-income segments where the country's real estate market is largely in the throes of elite capture, as well as emphasised greater social service delivery through the databases built up by the Benazir Income Support Programme, which now form the foundation of the PTI's expanded Ehsaas programme.

Unfortunately, there are not many in this government who can credibly be seen to have the interests of the poor at heart — beyond spouting the usual political rhetoric that is. It is, therefore, important that the finance division learn to work more closely with the prime minister to ensure that austerity is targeted in a way that makes the burden fall more on those who can bear it the most, and that the resources necessary to make these programmes successful are not cut. Today, we can see, for example, that the shelters announced with some fanfare recently are struggling for resources to be able to operate. It is the job of the finance team to ensure that this is rectified immediately.

Published in Dawn, December 19th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1523148/protect-the-poor>

PUNJAB TO LAUNCH 'INSAF RATION CARD' PROGRAMME

By RECORDER REPORT on December 19, 2019

The Punjab government will launch Insaaf Ration Card Programme under which the most poor will be given the facility of buying ration worth Rs3000 every month, said Punjab Industries Minister Mian Aslam Iqbal here on Wednesday.

He was presiding over a meeting here on Wednesday to review proposals for finalizing additional agri fair-price shops and Insaaf Ration Card Programme. The Punjab Additional Secretary Industries, DG Industries and representatives of different departments attended the meeting. Addressing the meeting, the Minister said that they have chalked out

different programmes to facilitate the impecunious strata. "The Insaf Ration Card scheme is being given final shape to help the poorest of the poor. Shops will be registered for this programme where purchase of items could be made through Insaf Ration Cards, which will be issued to the poorest section of the society," he added.

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<https://www.brecorder.com/2019/12/19/554528/punjab-to-launch-insaf-ration-card-programme/>

RS9 BILLION BISP FUNDS LAPSED, PAC PANEL TOLD

By Saqib Virk Published: December 20, 2019

ISLAMABAD: Audit officials on Thursday told a subcommittee of the Public Account (PAC) – the parliament's accountability arm – that more than Rs9 billion allocated to be disbursed among poor households under the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) could not be spent.

The subcommittee, chaired by Pakistan Peoples Party's Senator Sherry Rehman, later called a separate briefing on the BISP, a social safety net programme started by the PPP's last government in 2008.

Expressing her amazement, Sherry said people in Pakistan are becoming poorer but the government could not find people to disburse allocated funds, which later lapsed.

The meeting was reviewing grants of the finance ministry for the year 2014-15. During the review, audit officials told the panel that Rs.9.19 billion lapsed from the BISP grant. "Do you say that poverty is one the rise in the country but you are not getting people for assistance under the BISP?" she asked.

The convener directed officials to give a detailed briefing on the BISP in the next committee meeting.

The committee was informed that 27 million house holders were surveyed in 2010 and 5.4 million people were registered under the programme.

The audit officials informed the committee that the pensioners 'records were not kept properly. The subcommittee directed the Ministry of Finance to digitize record of the pensioners.

Sherry remarked that with digitisation of record, pensioners will be able to receive their pensions through ATM instead of waiting in long queues outside banks carrying pension books in their hands.

"Files of pensioners are getting dusty in Finance Ministry's racks; therefore, digitalization will be even helpful for the ministry to the maintain pensioner's record," she added.

Another subcommittee of the PAC summoned details of the expenses incurred on Umrah and Hajj performed by minister for religious affairs and officials on the ministry's expense.

The committee also directed the audit officials to audit performance of Khuddam-ul-Hajjaj – officials responsible for facilitating pilgrims at annual pilgrimage in Makkah – and the ministry.

This sub-committee of the PAC was chaired by convener Noor Alam Khan to review the audit objections with regard to the Ministry of Religious Affairs for the year 2017-18. The committee expressed ire over the ministry's secretary not holding the Departmental Accounting Committees (DAC) meetings.

Noor Alam Khan said: "You are busy traveling abroad. How is the ministry working? Details of foreign visits of federal minister and his staff should also be provided."

The convener said the list of employees of the Ministry of Religious Affairs who have gone to Hajj and Umrah at government expense should be provided to the committee and if anyone has performed Hajj at government expenditure more than once or twice, then the money spent should be recovered.

The subcommittee also lashed out at Khuddam-ul-Hajjaj's poor performance.

"Khuddam-ul-Hajjaj only serve parliamentarians and bureaucracy while they do not pay any attention to the poor helpless pilgrims. I have never seen Khuddam-ul-Hajjaj anywhere except the dispensaries.

"Details of how many khuddam have been sent to Hajj during the last five years and expenditures incurred on them should be provided to the committee," the convener said.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2121607/1-rs9b-bisp-funds-lapsed-due-non-use/>

RS26.3M ZAKAT FUNDS DISTRIBUTED AMONG ORPHANS, PA TOLD

Tahir Siddiqui December 21, 2019

KARACHI: The Sindh Assembly was on Friday informed that the zakat and ushr department had disbursed Rs26.31 million among 1,445 poor orphans and needy girls from Jan 2017 to June 2018.

Furnishing a statement and replies to the lawmakers' queries during Question Hour in the house, zakat and ushr parliamentary secretary Heer Soho said that the beneficiary girls were Muslim and dependent on their parents, guardians or social welfare organisations for subsistence.

Zakat and Ushr Minister Sohail Anwar Siyal was not present in the proceedings for the second consecutive time to furnish the answers.

Ms Soho also shared the district-wise details of the zakat funds provided during the period in question.

Opposition members belonging to the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf and Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan pointed out that meagre amounts were disbursed in the densely populated districts in Karachi, while huge money was distributed in other districts of the province.

One of them said that there were only 17 beneficiaries in Karachi who were paid Rs170,000 or Rs10,000 each, while the number of beneficiaries in Khairpur was 202 and the amount disbursed among them was Rs4.04m.

When the opposition members asked the parliamentary secretary to explain the reason behind this disparity, she could not come up with a reply to their satisfaction.

MQM-P member Mohammad Hussain asked her why the amount of Rs10,000 each was given in some districts and Rs20,000 in other districts.

The parliamentary secretary said that the allocations were made on the basis of population in each district and the Rs10,000 aid was given in the district where more applications were submitted.

Mr Hussain confronted her and said the amount should have been Rs20,000 in Karachi as there were less number of applicants. The parliamentary secretary had to cut a sorry figure when the Muttahida member asked for details of district-wise allocations of zakat fund.

Initially, she advised Mr Hussain to submit a fresh question as it did not relate to the written question on the agenda, but later she said that she would provide the details during the course of assembly proceedings.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1523376/rs263m-zakat-funds-distributed-among-orphans-pa-told>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 23 TO 29, 2019

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2019

By ANJUM IBRAHIM on December 23, 2019

Pakistan was ranked 152 out of 189 countries on Human Development Index (HDI) as per the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) annual report. The index measures long-term progress on life expectancy, knowledge (number of years of schooling) and standard of living (Gross National Income expressed in 2011 international dollars using purchasing power parity – PPP).

The applicable year is 2018 which effectively implies that the onus of such low ranking must fall on the previous administration. The UNDP cautions each year that “it is misleading to compare values and rankings with those of previously published reports, because of revisions and updates of the underlying data and adjustments to goalposts.”

The table provides HDI trends for Pakistan based on consistent time series data and new goal posts as determined by UNDP. Three observations are in order. Firstly, life expectancy rose from 60.1 years in 1990 to 62.8 years in 2000 while it rose much faster between 2000 till 2018 to 67.1 years. Secondly, years of schooling also rose much faster between 2000 and 2018 (5.4 to 8.5 years) relative to the decade before (from 4.6 to 5.4) as did GNI that is rose more sharply between 2000 and 2018 (from 3358 to 5190 in 2011 PPP dollars) relative to the decade before (from 3195 to 3358). And in 2017-18 Pakistan's intensity of deprivation was 51.7 percent.

In 2010, UNDP began to compile a multidimensional poverty index (MPI) looking at multiple deprivations suffered by individuals in 3 dimensions notably health, education and standard of living. The most recent survey data is for 2017-18 wherein 38.3 percent of the Pakistani population is multi-dimensionally poor while an additional 12.9 percent is classified as vulnerable to multidimensional poverty.

The percentage intensity of deprivation in Pakistan for 2017-18 was 51.7 percent (against Bangladesh's 47.5 percent and India's 43.9 percent), and vulnerable to multiple dimensional poverty 21.5 percent (against Bangladesh's 16.7 percent and India's 8.8 percent). However, those below the percentage of poverty line in Pakistan was very low, at 3.9 percent (against 14.8 percent in Bangladesh and 21.2 percent in India) which may be reflective of what Prime Minister Imran Khan has always maintained notably that Pakistanis, individually and institutionally, are one of the highest donors to charity in the world. However this low figure implies that the need for safe houses is not acute in this country.

The question is how come the post 2000 Pakistani administrations were more focused on improving HDI? The answer may partly lie in the millennium summit 2000, where 147 heads of state and representatives of 189 countries adopted the Millennium Development Declaration which proposed eight development goals referred to as Millennium Development Goals. By 2015, 195 countries agreed on specific sustainable development targets/goals for their country – a commitment that gave leverage to multilaterals if a signatory country sought project/programme (budgetary support) loans. Pakistan – termed a perennial borrower from the IMF as well as other multilaterals (at present we are on the 23rd International Monetary Fund programme) – could not ignore the targets set as SDG targets, though the country has always fallen short of achievement of targets.

Comparisons with regional countries including with the South Asian average show Pakistan performing poorly in terms of: (i) inequality in life expectancy at 29.2 percent (compared to South Asian average of 20.2 with India far outpacing Pakistan at 19.7 and Bangladesh at 17.3 percent), (ii) human inequality coefficient at 30.2 percent for Pakistan against India's 25.7 percent and Bangladesh's 23.6 percent with total South Asian estimate at 25.3 percent; and (iii) inequality in education at 43.5 percent against India's 38.7 percent and Bangladesh's 37.3 percent (with South Asia at 37.5 percent). A similar picture with Pakistan performing the worst in the region emerges for gender

development index though Pakistan performs well in terms of female seats in parliament due without doubt to reserved women seats – unelected and based on the party leader's choice rather than on the ballot box.

The question that the public needs a response to is whether the Prime Minister's signature ehshaas programme has the capacity to improve Pakistan's poor statistics? There is no doubt that Imran Khan's vision is to end poverty, improve the standard of living and ensure the provision of social infrastructure to a greater percentage of Pakistanis than before. However Ahsan Iqbal's Vision 2025 was no less 'visionary', read unrealistic based on the country's macroeconomic indicators, and implementation suffered due to lack of adequate funding by the then Dar-led Finance Ministry which was focused on reducing the fiscal deficit.

The indicators today are no better though the IMF has approved the 2019-20 budget, a prior condition, that envisages considerable increase in current expenditure (40 percent from last year and in actual terms around 1.5 trillion rupees though allocations for BISP/Ehsaas are embedded in current as opposed to development expenditure outside the Public Sector Development Programme as in previous years) while development expenditure was budgeted to rise by 40 percent (around 200 billion rupees). Be that as it may, as per the consolidated federal and provincial budgetary operations data released by the Ministry of Finance for the first quarter of the current year (July-September) disbursements were as follows: (i) only 8.8 percent of the total budgeted under PSDP, though Monday last the Finance Ministry claimed that actual development spending during the first four months of the current year rose by 27 percent compared to the same period the year before. The actual amount disbursed for October was not shared; and (ii) social protection was disbursed 547 million rupees which is 0.27 percent of the budgeted commitment. Given that Sheikh has placed many items under different heads in the budget, no doubt to give himself space to defend lower disbursements than the budgeted amount for any specific item/sector, it is difficult to determine exactly how much has been released for BISP and or Ehsaas during the first quarter. If so, then clarity rather than confusion, the basic mantra of economists, is being compromised.

Be that as it may, Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) was launched during the Zardari-led government and by 2018-19 the Khan administration released 118.6 billion rupees for BISP. This year BISP and Ehsaas (it is unclear how much overlap there is between the two, if any) are budgeted to receive 200 billion rupees as stated by Dr Hafeez Sheikh during a press briefing hence assuming that the current year's total BISP disbursement remains at least at the same level as last year the rise in allocation is around 81.4 billion rupees – not as significant a rise as claimed by Dr Hafeez Sheikh.

The question is would Dr Hafeez Sheikh be allowed to continue not to disburse the budgeted amount for Ehsaas? While Dar's position in the cabinet was virtually that of deputy prime minister, Dr Hafeez Sheikh does not have the same standing in the Khan-led cabinet. Besides Dr Hafeez Sheikh, with no history of standing up to any directives issued by his boss – be they economically appropriate or not – will be able to stall disbursements for the Ehsaas programme if specifically instructed by the Prime Minister to do so.

To conclude, the higher budgeted allocation for the current year for social sector development/Ehsaas, if actually disbursed during the current year, is not sufficient to cater to the needs of the growing ranks of the unemployed leave alone make a difference in raising the percentage of those under a state subsidised social security blanket.

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<https://www.brecorder.com/2019/12/23/555628/human-development-report-2019/>

DEWORMING CAMPAIGN TO HELP OVERCOME MALNUTRITION, ANAEMIA

APP Updated December 24, 2019

ISLAMABAD: First Lady Samina Alvi on Monday said the campaign to deworm 17 million children in Pakistan will not only help achieve sustainable development goals but overcome malnutrition and anaemia among children.

She was speaking at the launch of awareness campaign of the second Annual Mass Deworming at the Islamabad Model College for Girls, F-7/4. The annual event will be held on Jan 23 on Deworming Day.

The school-based deworming programme being launched in coordination with the Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education will treat 547,000 children aged between five and 14 years in Islamabad to overcome intestinal infections.

Begum Alvi termed ‘alarming’ the findings of a national survey to assess intestinal worm infections, revealing that approximately 17 million school-age children in the country, including around 574,000 in Islamabad, were in need of regular deworming.

She expressed satisfaction that the Islamabad Deworming Initiative successfully treated 200,320 children in its first round of mass deworming in 2019, with a target of treating 574,000 children in the second round.

First lady asks parents to send their children to school on Jan 23 for taking deworming medicine

Education Minister Shafqat Mahmood said deworming of children would ensure their improved physical and cognitive growth, resistance to infections and positive school performance.

He said the education ministry in collaboration with a non-governmental organisation (NGO), Sight Saver, had finalised another project to check vision of schoolchildren and provide them free eyeglasses, besides treatment at Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (Pims), if necessary.

Parliamentary Secretary for Planning Kanwal Shauzab said the initiative was in line with Prime Minister Imran Khan’s vision of addressing the health challenges of children, including malnutrition and stunted growth.

She urged parents to send their 5 to 14-year-old children to their nearest government or private schools on January 23 during school timings for administering free and safe deworming medicine.

Parliamentary Secretary for National Health Services Dr Nausheen Hamid said malnutrition was a big challenge with the highest mortality rate in the region.

She said according to the World Health Organisation’s estimates, Pakistan was a ‘high-burden’ country for its population infected with intestinal worms.

For the initiative, the World Health Organisation has provided deworming drugs through its donation programme.

Published in Dawn, December 24th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1524010/deworming-campaign-to-help-overcome-malnutrition-anaemia>

GOVT STRIKES OVER 800,000 NAMES OFF BISP DATABASE

Syed Irfan Raza December 25, 2019

ISLAMABAD: The federal government on Tuesday gave approval to the removal of 820,165 names from the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) database, describing the beneficiaries as “undeserving”.

The decision was taken at a cabinet meeting after Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Social Welfare and Poverty Alleviation Dr Sania Nishtar informed it that the database of the BISP was being revised to exclude “undeserving” persons, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Information Dr Firdous Ashiq Awan said while addressing a post-cabinet meeting press conference.

The changes in the BISP database were made in the wake of reservations expressed by some cabinet members in the previous meetings that the supporters of opposition parties, especially those backing the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), were benefiting from the programme while those belonging to the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf were being ignored.

Launched in July 2008, the BISP is the country's largest single social safety net programme with around 5.4 million beneficiaries, according to the 2016 data.

Dr Nishtar apprised the cabinet that in view of some complaints and need to update the BISP data, the survey was being reviewed with the help of the National Database and Registration Authority.

Cabinet throws out Maryam's plea for foreign travel; announces package for families living along LoC

She said during the review, some aspects were being looked into. For example, she added, it was being ascertained whether the family of a beneficiary had any motorcycle or car or whether a spouse was a government employee. The cabinet was further told that those who had over 12 acres of land also did not fall in the category of "deserving" people. After the exclusion of 820,165 people, really deserving people would be included in the programme, she added.

"If we look into these aspects, then it comes to the fore that 820,165 people should not come in the purview of BISP," Dr Awan said.

The cabinet in its Tuesday meeting also decided to bar Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Vice President Maryam Nawaz from travelling abroad by rejecting her request on the recommendation of cabinet's subcommittee that deals with the Exit Control List (ECL).

Talking to the media, Dr Awan said: "Today recommendations of the subcommittee were placed before the cabinet suggesting that the VIP lady [Maryam Nawaz], who had laundered politically made assets abroad, not to leave the country."

In all, the PM's aide said, 24 cases regarding the ECL were brought before the cabinet through an interior ministry summary. It was decided to remove eight names from the no-fly list, reject the request for the removal of one name from the list and place four names on the ECL, she said, adding that eight cases were deferred. However, she did not disclose the fate of the remaining three cases.

Dr Awan said the cabinet unanimously rejected the request to remove the VIP's name from the ECL. She explained that the cabinet endorsed the subcommittee's recommendation that everyone should be treated according to law.

Earlier, ruling Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf leader and legal expert Babar Awan had said the rules concerning placement of name of persons on ECL did not allow the government to entertain the PML-N vice president's application to remove her name from the no-fly list. Similarly responding to a question about the application Ms Nawaz had filed before the Lahore High Court (LHC) to seek removal of her name from the ECL, federal Minister for Water Resources Faisal Vawda in a TV show had said the government would challenge court's decision if the judiciary allowed her to go abroad and visit her ailing father in London.

In a statement issued on Sunday, PML-N Information Secretary Marriyum Aurangzeb said the government decision to bar the daughter of ex-prime minister from travelling abroad was not a surprise move considering that the PTI regime was always desperately looking for opportunities to victimise and persecute the leadership of the opposition party. "The decision of the subcommittee has no logical reason for keeping Maryam on the ECL, as the government has failed to prove any allegation against her in 16 months," she claimed. Ms Nawaz had to file a plea before the court also, because the PML-N was aware of the 'prejudice and vengeful mindset' of the ruling PTI, she said.

According to the PM's aide, the cabinet announced a compensation package for the people who often fall victim to indiscriminate Indian firing and shelling from across the LoC. "More than 79,992 houses remain under target of Indian

firing and shelling and the government has decided to provide relief under Benazir Income Support Programme to 13,982 families living on the LoC,” she said.

Under the PTI government’s flagship programme, Ehsas, Dr Awan said ration would be supplied to the families living along the LoC. Besides, she said, the government would provide monetary assistance of Rs5,000 to each married woman of 33,498 families along the border on a quarterly basis. This would require a sum of Rs670 million for the year 2019-20, she added.

She also announced that the amount of stipend had been increased from Rs5,000 to Rs5,500 under the Ehsas Kifalat programme.

According to her, the cabinet meeting also approved proposed amendments to tax laws including Income Tax Ordinance-2001, Tax Act 1990, Customs Act-1960 and Federal Excise Act-2005.

In a separate decision, the cabinet approved appointment of retired Rear Admiral Zakaur Rehman as general manager of Karachi Port Trust (KPT), reformation of National Power Parks Management Company [NPPMC] board, appointment of members of the National Commission of Human Rights, Irfan Bukhari as ECO Exim Bank, Hamid Haroon as senior member of Federal Land Commission and Farrukh Iqbal as CEO of First Women Bank Limited.

Published in Dawn, December 25th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1524212>

2020 TO BE YEAR OF UPLIFT, NEW JOBS, END TO POVERTY: PM

The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Updated December 25, 2019

ISLAMABAD: Amid prevailing economic crisis and inflation, Prime Minister Imran Khan on Tuesday showed a ‘ray of hope’ to the nation by saying that 2020 will be the year of progress, development, alleviation of poverty and creation of jobs for the people.

“2019 was the year of difficulties as we had to overcome a huge deficit, but 2020 will be the year of economic stability and development and progress for Pakistan,” he said while addressing the launching ceremony of the Pakistan Post’s initiative for delivery of remittances by overseas Pakistanis through 500 designated post offices in various cities.

“2020 will be the year of progress and stability in which on the one hand people will get jobs and, on the other, poverty will be eliminated through Ehsas programme,” he added.

Terming the previous system of the country a remnant of British rule in the subcontinent, the prime minister said his vision of Naya [new] Pakistan was based upon discarding the old mindset and patronising merit system which in the past had badly hampered the functioning of all government departments. “The mindset of our officer is still that do not facilitate complainants and treat them rudely. But in Naya Pakistan we are trying to change this mindset,” he said.

Premier praises overseas Pakistanis’ contribution to the economy

The prime minister said that the establishment of the state of Madina also had taken time (and it happened) after the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) changed the mindset of the people.

Referring to the functioning of the Pakistan Post, he said that due to recent introduction of merit, it had turned into a profit-making entity.

“The West shifted from monarchy to democracy, but our countries went to the opposite side,” he observed and cited the progress of China due to introduction of merit system there under the leadership of President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang who had worked tirelessly for many decades.

Prime Minister Khan said that efforts were being made by his government to make the merit system prevail and counted recent drastic measures to make the PIA a profit-making organisation and curbing the losses of Rs100 billion in power sector.

Prime Minister Khan said that a scheme was on the anvil to give some sort of prizes or special cards, including the health cards, to the families of overseas Pakistani labourers to motivate them to send remittances through legal channels.

He appreciated overseas Pakistanis' contribution towards the national economy and said that his government would take measures to facilitate them. "In the past, the embassies and missions did not look into their issues, but I have given special instructions and now special attention is being paid to their problems," he added.

"Overseas Pakistanis will be given facilities and extra steps should be taken to resolve their issues. If they send remittances through legal channels, they should be given the incentives like Rs700,000 health cover, etc," he said.

The prime minister expressed the confidence that the Pakistan Post initiative would be helpful for those working in hard conditions abroad as a total of 500 centers would be functioning to facilitate them.

Minister for Communications and Postal Services Murad Saeed gave an overview of the steps taken to make the Pakistan Post fully functional and profitable with the launch of various initiatives.

Communications Secretary Jawad Rafiq Malik in his welcome remarks briefed the participants about various achievements of the Pakistan Post during the last one and half years.

Under the Pakistan Remittance Initiative, launched on Tuesday, remittance beneficiaries by using the National Bank of Pakistan portal could collect their payments free of any charge from 500 post office locations.

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<https://www.dawn.com/news/1524282/2020-to-be-year-of-uplift-new-jobs-end-to-poverty-pm>

OVER 140,000 BISP BENEFICIARIES WERE GOVT EMPLOYEES: DATA

Syed Irfan Raza December 26, 2019

ISLAMABAD: The Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) data has revealed that out of over 800,000 beneficiaries removed from the programme, more than 140,000 were those who or their spouses were government employees.

The federal cabinet had on Tuesday given approval to the removal of 820,165 beneficiaries from the BISP database, describing them as "undeserving".

Meanwhile, Bakhtawar Bhutto-Zardari, daughter of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto, criticised the government for depriving poor women of monthly stipend. "Almost 1 million beneficiaries of the only social safety net for women are cut off for meeting just one of the ridiculous criteria. Shameful that the idea of further suppressing and taking away independence of a woman came from a woman. Cut off from monthly stipend because of her husband's phone bill," she said in a tweet.

Bakhtawar lashes out at PTI government for depriving poor women of monthly stipend

The changes in the BISP database were made in the wake of reservations expressed by some cabinet members in previous meetings that the supporters of opposition parties, especially those backing the Pakistan Peoples Party, were benefiting from the programme, while those belonging to the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf were being ignored.

Launched in July 2008, the BISP is the country's largest single social safety net programme with around 5.4 million beneficiaries, according to the 2016 data.

Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Social Welfare and Poverty Alleviation Dr Sania Nishtar had apprised the cabinet that in view of some complaints and a need to update the BISP data, the survey was reviewed with the help of the National Database and Registration Authority.

She said that during the review some aspects were looked into. For example, she added, it was ascertained whether the family of a beneficiary had any motorcycle or car or whether a spouse was a government employee. The cabinet was informed that those who had over 12 acres of land did not fall in the category of "deserving" people. After the exclusion of 820,165 people, really deserving people would be included in the programme, Dr Nishtar said.

Out of total 820,165 beneficiaries removed from the BISP database, 14,730 were government employees or employees of railways, post office and BISP despite the fact that the facility was not meant for government servants. According to the data, 127,826 were those whose spouses were government employees or employees of the above-mentioned departments.

It said 153,302 were those who travelled abroad once and 195,364 were those whose spouses travelled abroad once. The number of beneficiaries who travelled abroad more than once stood at 10,476. Similarly, 166,319 spouses travelled abroad more than once.

The BISP removed 692 people from its database because they owned one or more than one vehicle, while 43,746 were deprived of the facility because their spouses have one or more than one car.

A person who can pay monthly telephone bill of Rs1,000 is not eligible to get monthly stipend from the programme and, therefore, 24,546 people were removed for falling into this category. Similarly, 155,767 were thrown out of the database as their spouses paid Rs1,000 or more telephone [PTCL, mobile] bill.

For applying passports via executive centres, 666 beneficiaries were excluded and 580 were removed as their spouses did the same.

A total of 36,970 people were expelled from the list of BISP beneficiaries because three or more than three members of their family paid executive fees for obtaining computerised national identity cards.

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<https://www.dawn.com/news/1524377>

PRESIDENT DESCRIBES 'EHSAAS' AS STATE GUARDIANSHIP PROJECT FOR DEPRIVED PEOPLE

By RECORDER REPORT on December 27, 2019

The Ehsaas Undergraduate Scholarship Project is a state guardianship for the deprived, as it is responsibility of the state to counter elitism by facilitating people in employment as well as education and health sectors.

This was stated by President Dr Arif Alvi while addressing the 27th Vice Chancellors Committee meeting held on Thursday in connection with Ehsaas Undergraduate Scholarships. The heads of public sector universities across the country attended the meeting at HEC Secretariat. Many of them joined through video link from their respective campuses, said a press release issued here on Thursday.

Dr Alvi regretted that students from low income families were forced to quit education after matriculation or intermediate due to financial constraints. "If only three percent of students acquire college education, 97 percent of the country's intellect is neglected," he asserted.

He stressed that the State was responsible for countering elitism by taking such measures as the launch of the Prime Minister's Ehsaas Programme. Elaborating his own experiences, he highlighted the importance of merit and need-based scholarships in a student's life. He said it was a major development that provision of educational opportunities to undergraduate students was focused under this project.

The President urged the Vice Chancellors to take a 'quantum jump' for enhancement in quality of education in order to make country's youth productive in terms of provision of service to the society. He stressed the need for ensuring fairness and transparency in the execution of Ehsaas Undergraduate Scholarship Project.

Appreciating the gender balance maintained in the project, he said it is a social obligation not to let the women's productivity and contribution to society go waste. He regretted that, according to a report, 80 percent of women graduating from medical institutions did not work. He also advised the University heads to take greater care of specially-abled students in whatever form they needed it.

Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Social Protection and Poverty Alleviation Dr Sania Nishtar said the project aimed at promoting human capital investment, as it was imperative to invest in the human capital making the youth technologically skilled to meet the future challenges. She said those scholarships were part of a much broader effort being made under the Prime Minister's Ehsaas Programme, to intervene on behalf of the welfare of the poor.

Dr Nishtar termed the project a paradigm change in the State scholarship policy. She said Prime Minister Imran Khan was keen that the programme should benefit maximum number of students across the country, adding the government would allocate more resources for that in the coming years.

Chairman HEC Tariq Banuri underscored that 249 out of 250 students from low income families could not afford to acquire undergraduate education, so the government must enhance budget for Ehsaas Scholarships. He informed the gathering that as many as 132,000 students had submitted applications under the first phase.-PR

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<https://www.brecorder.com/2019/12/27/556696/president-describes-ehsaas-as-state-guardianship-project-for-deprived-people/>

PTI GOVT UPS EHSAA S KIFALAT GRANT BY RS500

By Our Correspondent Published: December 29, 2019

ISLAMABAD: The government has increased the quarterly cash grant for 4.3 million beneficiaries of the Ehsaas Kifalat Programme of the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) from Rs5,000 rupees to Rs5,500.

In a statement, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Poverty Alleviation and Social Protection Dr Sania Nishtar said the increase means that the government would provide additional Rs8.6 billion for cash transfer to the beneficiaries.

She said the BISP now has 4.27 million active beneficiaries after the delisting of 0.82 million "undeserving" ones.

The governments has recently removed the names of over 820,165 people from the BISP list of beneficiaries, saying that they were undeserving and their standard of living was above the criteria set for poor people.

Dr Nishtar said the BISP would save around Rs60 billion annually after the exclusion of undeserving beneficiaries from the list.

"More deserving people who fulfill the criteria laid down in the programme will be included in the [BISP] list throughout the country," she added. The SAPM said the decision to strike names from the BISP was taken after the approval of the federal cabinet.

She said some aspects were looked into before going ahead with the move, ie, it was ascertained whether or not the family of a beneficiary owned a motorcycle or car or their spouse was a government employee.

Of the 820,165 beneficiaries removed from the BISP database, 14,730 were government employees, including workers of Railways, Post Office and the BISP even though the facility was not meant for the people working in government departments.

According to the data, Dr Nishtar said, 127,826 of them were those whose spouses were government employees. She added that 153,302 were those who had traveled abroad once and 195,364 whose spouses had traveled abroad once.

The number of beneficiaries had who had traveled abroad more than once stood at 10,476. Similarly, spouses of 166,319 beneficiaries had traveled abroad more than once.

The BISP removed 692 people from its database because they owned one or more vehicles, while 43,746 were taken off because their spouses owned one or more than one vehicles.

A person who pays a monthly telephone bill of up to Rs1,000 is not eligible to get monthly stipend from the programme and therefore 24,546 people were removed from the database for falling into this category.

Similarly, 155,767 persons were excluded from the database as their spouses paid phone bills of up to Rs1,000. The SAPM said 666 beneficiaries were removed for applying for passports via executive centres and 580 others whose spouses had done the same.

The BISP also excluded 36,970 people from the database because three or more of their family members paid executive fees for obtaining computerised national identity cards (CNICs).

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2126807/1-pti-govt-ups-ehsaas-kifalat-grant-rs500/>