

**Speech of the Prime Minister
on the Occasion of
Launching of
Prime Minister's Emergency Action Plan for Hepatitis**

4th November 2010

**Makhdoom Shahbuddin
Federal Minister of Health**

**Dr. Mahreen Razzaque Bhutto
Parliamentary Secretary for Health,**

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Federal Secretary, Health**

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Director General Health,**

**Prof Aftab Mohsin
National Manager,
Prime Minister's Programme for Prevention and control of
Hepatitis**

**Ladies and Gentlemen
Assalam-o-Alaikum**

It is a matter of great pleasure for me to launch the National Awareness Campaign against Hepatitis today. As you would recall that no sooner had I taken over this office, I pointed out the grave threat posed by the spread of hepatitis; a disease that is fatal, but fortunately preventable. The focus of the programme is going to shift from treatment to prevention. However, my government is aware of the miseries of those suffering from end stage of liver disease, for whom the only hope is liver transplant.

At present our patients needing liver transplant have to travel abroad. I am pleased to announce a dedicated liver transplant centre in Islamabad. The work will start immediately on this project. Dr. Aftab Mohsin will look after it.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The theme of this campaign is Injection Safety. In Pakistan a large number of unnecessary injections are given using unsafe injection methods. The situation has reached alarming proportions and there is a need to educate the masses regarding the ill-effects of irrational and unnecessary administration of injections which is causing the spread of deadly diseases including Hepatitis B & C. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that both the communities and health providers are not only informed but also discouraged and dissuaded through effective public education strategy and enforcement of strict guidelines.

Distinguished audience

In line with the manifesto of Pakistan Peoples Party, our government has assigned the highest priority to the health sector. The government is committed to provide health services at the doorsteps of the masses through an efficient primary health-care system. As envisioned by our Shaheed leader,

Motharma Benazir Bhutto, a network of lady health workers and community midwives exists in the length and breadth of Pakistan – each providing the first line of defence against disease. We will, in the days to come, strengthen and fortify the services being provided by this vital link to our communities.

I must acknowledge here the role played by the health sector in meeting the challenge in the wake of recent floods. Both preventive and curative services worked in synergy to ensure that there was no epidemic in the flood-stricken areas.

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am pleased to be informed that under the Prime Minister's Programme for Prevention and Control of Hepatitis, treatment is being provided to those displaced during the floods. It is indeed an achievement that the affected were reached and provided life saving treatment by the programme. Ensuring safe blood for the people is an essential imperative to controlling the spread of blood-borne diseases like Hepatitis B and C and HIV-AIDS. Our government has ensured that only auto disable syringes are used as part of both Hepatitis Control and EPI Programmes. This is a vital step in stopping the spread of blood-borne infectious diseases through re-use of syringes.

Dear Participants

The Prime Minister's Hepatitis Awareness Programme, which is being launched today, instills a sense of urgency in our fight

against hepatitis and is reflective of a firm resolve to counter the challenge posed by the disease which is spreading fast amongst our communities. Though the thrust of the strategy under the new programme is on preventive services, a special provision is being made available to provide free of cost treatment to the selected high-risk, the deserving and the poor who would otherwise have little hope of any treatment. Realizing the importance and magnitude of this public health problem, the programme has been up-scaled by our government raising the allocation from Rs 2.59 billion to over Rs 13.904 billion. I would urge the provincial governments to align their programmes with the federal strategy and allocate additional resources for the initiative.

Ladies and Gentlemen

As awareness is the key to changing behaviours, a major component in Prime Minister's Hepatitis Prevention and Control Programme is dedicated to working with the communities, high risk groups and different stakeholders to change practices and behaviours that are responsible for the spread of different forms of hepatitis. The experience during the flood situation has highlighted the need for a robust disease surveillance and response system. It is indeed heartening to note that an integrated surveillance and response system is being introduced by the Ministry of Health. This will keep a close eye on infectious diseases across the country and initiate an early response when required.

I announce Rs 200 million as one time grant.

In the end, I commend the efforts of the Ministry of Health in putting together a comprehensive plan that provides a complete package of services on Hepatitis Prevention and Control.

I wish your efforts Godspeed.

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