

Launching of Benazir Income Support Programme's

"Waseela-e-Haq" Initiative

President House, 15th September 2009

Text of Prime Minister's Address

Honorable President Asif Ali Zardari,

Chairperson, Benazir Income Support Programme Farzana Raja,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentleman

Assalam - o - Alaikum,

Today I am very much please and proud that our government has achieved yet another milestone by launching the Benazir Income Support Programme's Waseela-e-Haq which is a major step for the welfare of the people of Pakistan. This is a major achievement and a fulfillment of the vision are great leader Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and Mahtrama Benazir Bhutto Shaheed

You are aware that Pakistan People's Party formed government amidst the most challenging and turbulent times of our history. The economy was in a steep decline, poverty levels were crossing over 30% of the total population, the country was facing stark prospects of hyper inflation, rampant terrorism, electricity shortage, wheat scarcity, and our key national institutions were in complete disarray.

Right from day one, the focus of the Peoples' Government has been to confront the challenges through a multi-pronged approach without ignoring any of the issue sat hand. Today, by the Grace of Allah, the situation is much stable, some of the key issues comprehensively addressed

and we are steadily progressing on the core Party agenda of economic justice and welfare for all.

Benazir Income Support Programme is a key pillar in our policy of rehabilitating the poor masses, getting them out of the cruel poverty cycle, and redirecting their energies towards nation building, through well directed and well coordinated state interventions.

A 100% transparent system, without any political discrimination, the Benazir Income Support Programme is a first of its kind providing direct cash support to the vulnerable population. People have started benefiting from the programme from day one through immediate relief. This we believe will have significant impact in empowering the poor, particularly women, and has the potential to rejuvenate the nation by sending a strong signal of hope across the country. Finally, the poorest of the poor can have some more power, mobility and opportunity to cherish life.

Initiation of the Waseela-e-Haq is a revolutionary initiative of BISP to transform the lives of the poor. The dependent poor receiving basic cash assistance will become income generating, independent and productive members of the society.

Under the Waseela-e-Haq initiative the government has planned to give a cash loan of Rs. 300,000 to deserving families, who would be randomly selected through a computerized draw out of 2.2 million present beneficiaries. Waseela-e-Haq will help thousands of poor families graduate out of the monthly subsistence, and set up their own small businesses and live a life of dignity and self respect,

InshAllah, this programme in addition to providing direct help to beneficiary families, will also bolster the economic activities in entire communities where these families would be setting up their own small businesses and employing some from their own communities. Concurrently, while the number of families benefiting directly will be huge, the positive multiple effect on entire regions and districts, where poverty is often concentrated, will be manifold.

The core programme of BISP of providing monthly financial assistance to the poor has achieved tremendous results in a short span of less than a year. Today 2.2 million poor families are receiving monthly cash grants. The Government has so far disbursed more than 19 Billion rupees to the deserving families.

It is satisfying to know that BISP has initiated the planning to modernize the payment mechanism to bring more transparent technology based solutions like the Benazir Smart Card.

The adoption of the internationally recognized instrument for beneficiary identification for cash transfer programmes, the Poverty Scorecard, by the Government of Pakistan has helped the Programme to reach out to those truly deserving who were hitherto unreachable. The door to door survey being carried out with the assistance of the World Bank has provided the programme much needed international support. We are grateful to our development partners for their technical and financial assistance to BISP.

With the introduction of Health & Accident Insurance and vocational training cover for the identified families, BISP is fast on its way to become a comprehensive social protection and poverty eradication programme.

The objective and transparent criteria for beneficiary identification adopted by the BISP for the overall programme has also been made mandatory for beneficiaries selected under the Waseela-e-Haq Initiative to ensure that only the truly deserving get to benefit without any personal or political bias.

I am sure, we will InshaAllah be as successful in *the Waseela-e-Haq Initiative* as we have been in the overall Programme, and fully confident that this unprecedented intervention will go a long way in eliminating poverty across the districts and provinces of Pakistan.

On this occasion, I must applaud the efforts and dedication of Minister and Chairperson of the Programme, Farzana Raja, and her entire team for making the Benazir Income Support Programme a success.

I thank you all; Pakistan Paindabad.