

Islamabad; November 9, 2012

- **President launches Waseela-e-Taleem initiative**
- **Signs one-Million signatures' Petition presented by Gordon Brown in support of Malala**
- **Holds meeting with Mr. Gordon Brown**
- **Chairs BISP Management Board meeting**

President Asif Ali Zardari today launched “Waseela-e-Taleem” initiative under the umbrella of Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) whereby over 3 million children of the poor families of the country would be provided financial assistance for enrolling them in primary schools in next four years.

Addressing a special ceremony to launch the “Waseela-e-Taleem” initiative at the Aiwan–e-Sadr , the President said that government was according high priority to the promotion of education as no country can make any progress without investing in its human capital. He said that we firmly believe that ignorance and poverty go hand in hand, adding that poverty combined with ignorance fuels militancy and extremism. “We must fight against ignorance to fight poverty and militancy, he said.



Islamabad: President Asif Ali Zardari, Special Envoy of UN Secretary General on Global Education Gordon Brown and Federal Minister & Chairperson BISP Madame Farzana Raja handing over School Enrolment Certificate to a girl from BISP beneficiary family at Waseela-e-Taleem Launching Ceremony here at Presidency (Dated: Nov 09, 2012)

The President said that Waseela-e-Taleem program lays solid foundation for brighter future of the poor children of the country. Appreciating BISP, the President also thanked the international community especially DFID, World Bank and international development partners including UK, China and Turkey for their support in promoting education in Pakistan.

He said that BISP was the flagship Program of the present government for poverty alleviation and women empowerment and expressed satisfaction that the Program was developing into a comprehensive social safety net.

Lauding various components of BISP including cash grants to the poor, micro financing, skill development, life and health insurance, the President remarked that the program was not merely cash grant program but was enabling the poorest of the poor to stand on their own feet.

The President on the occasion reiterated country's commitment to achieve the goal of Universal Primary Education and said that a result of Constitutional Amendment it was now included in the fundamental rights. The President called upon the provincial governments to extend all possible support to BISP as their support was critical in successful implementation of the program. He urged the provincial governments to become partners in ensuring that each and every child was enrolled in the school and said that failure was not an option.



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The President said that the best way to pay homage to the spirit of Shaheed Mohatma Benazir Bhutto was to join hands and work together for the welfare and uplift of the poor segments of the society.

The ceremony was attended among others by former Prime Minister of UK and United Nations' Special Envoy on Global Education Mr. Gordon Brown, President and Prime Minister of AJK, Governor Gilgit-Baltistan, Federal Ministers, Parliamentarians, representative of the donor organizations and beneficiaries of BISP.

Addressing the gathering Mr. Gordon Brown thanked the President for inviting him to Pakistan and also lauded his leadership and vision for the promotion of education in the country.

In his remarks he said that today's launch of a special program that targets children education was a measure of determination of the Government and its leadership to promote education and to safeguard the future of the youth and the coming generations.

He assured that he would continue his efforts assisting the Government of Pakistan in all possible manners in the promotion of education in the country.

On this occasion, Mr. Gordon Brown also presented to the President a petition carrying one million signatures of the people across the world to show solidarity with Ms. Malala Yousafzai. The President also signed the petition during the ceremony.

Federal Minister and Chairperson BISP Ms. Farzana Raja and Federal Minister Sheikh Waqas Akram also spoke on the occasion.

Ms. Farzana Raja said that the launch of Waseela e Taleem, the Right to Education, was a landmark in the history of the country. She said that this was the first ever and the largest initiative for primary education, adding that it was one of the most significant components of BISP aiming at promoting education, empowerment and emancipation of children as per the MDGs of new millennium. Waseela-e-Taleem, she said, aimed at educating at least 3 million children of the poorest families in 4 years. This was done by convincing BISP's beneficiary families and providing them incentives of additional cash grants for sending their children to school, she added. Ms. Farzana Raja said that BISP has emerged as the vanguard in Pakistan's war against poverty as well as illiteracy.

Earlier, the President also had a separate meeting with Mr. Gordon Brown wherein the President reiterated that government was according high priority to the promotion of education in the country especially in the militancy hit areas as a long term tool to fight militant mindset, adding that this mindset was our biggest collective enemy. He reiterated commitment of the government to meeting the goal of the Global Initiative on Education and sought enhanced support and cooperation of UN and international community in education sector and achieving Accelerated Millennium Development Goals (AMDGs)

Those who were present during the meeting included among others Mr. Timo Pakkala, UNRC, Mr. Dan Rohrmann, representative for UNICEF, Pakistan, Dr. Kozue Kay Nagata, representative UNESCO and Mr. Jean Luc Sibiot, country rep, WFP.

From Pakistan side, the meeting was attended among others by Senator Dr. Abdul Hafeez Sheikh, Minister for Finance, Chairperson Benazir Income Support Program Ms. Farzana Raja, Sheikh Waqas Akram, minister for Education & Training, Nawabzada Malik Amad Khan, MOS for foreign affairs, Secretary General to the President Mr. M. Salman Faruqi and Begum Shahnaz Wazir Ali, Special assistant to Prime Minister on social sector and Spokesperson to the President, Senator Farhatullah Babar.

Spokesperson to the President, Senator Farhatullah Babar said that matters related to promotion of education in Pakistan, UN global initiative to promote education, BISP's Waseela-e-Taleem initiative, UK's assistance to the country in the education sector and the ways and means to promote education sector came under discussion during the meeting.

The Spokesperson said that the President while highlighting importance of Education said that the need for education was never felt as great as it was being felt today as the education holds the key to counter extremism and militancy besides ensuring socio-economic uplift of the people by bringing them out from the vicious circle of poverty.

The President said that the control and management of education sector has been devolved to the provinces, adding that the National Education Policy 2009, evolved in consultation with all the provinces aimed at achieving Education for All and Universal Primary Education.

The President during the meeting said that Pakistan would greatly welcome UN and donors' technical and financial support in Technical and Vocational Education, use of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs), and skill-based training of youth besides improving the curricula to enrich skills and competencies.

Mr. Gordon Brown briefed the President about the objectives of UN initiative "Education First" that aims at helping the member countries in promoting education and said that his mission in Pakistan was aiming at ensuring greater enrollment, provision of quality education, training of the teachers and promotion of education technology in Pakistan.

The President appreciated the UN initiative and Mr. Gordon Brown role in promoting education and said that his visit would help in promoting education in Pakistan besides further cementing cooperation of the country with the international community in the education sector.

The meeting with Mr. Gordon Brown was followed by a briefing by the management of BISP on Waseela-e-Taleem initiative of BISP which was also attended among others by Dr. Ishrat Hussain, Mr. Shaukat Tareen and Mr. Ijaz Nabi .

The Spokesperson said that during the briefing former Finance Minister Mr. Shoukat Tareen praised BISP saying that its credibility and effectiveness has been verified by the World Bank and International donors. He said that its was an effective mechanism to provide targeted subsidies to the poorest of the poor.

Former Governor State Bank of Pakistan Dr. Ishrat Hussain remarked that BISP was a great opportunity to reach out to the poorest in a state that was dominated by the elitist considerations.

Mr. Ijaz Nabi, Professor of Economic in LUMS, said that the Program's credibility within the country would create fiscal space for the continued operation of the Program.