

September 18, 2012

Clarification

The news story published in daily "The News" titled "CEC takes notice of BISP's political use" dated Sep 14, 2012 is a totally biased and lamentable attempt to defame the programme which has become a national asset by bringing positive socio-economic changes in the lives of millions of our fellow deprived Pakistanis.

In the story, the journalist has given reference to one of his another news item published on Sep 7 in the same newspaper. The journalist seems ill-informed, partial and for the sake of personal vendetta and mere popularity has caused harm to 4 Crore people getting benefitted from BISP. Out of total insensitivity and ignorance, the writer has also jeopardized the image of his esteemed organization causing hatred in the hearts of those for whom this programme, for the first time in the history of Pakistan, has become a ray of hope to get them out of the claws of chronic poverty prevailing over the generations.

Few days ago, this senior journalist has put up the story of USAID's funds stoppage to BISP which was proved totally wrong as USAID is releasing the fund. At that very moment, out of journalistic ethics or for the sake of face saving the journalist should have come up with a clarification but that was only a wishful thinking.

One of the senior journalist/ analyst from the same group negated the story in a morning talk show by giving few comments which are quite thought provoking. He was of the opinion that in such a case of negatively criticizing and wrongly politicizing a welfare project, no political government will come forward to execute its party manifesto which is to work for the well being of the people. All the welfare and development projects at national and local level cannot be stopped thinking that they will benefit the government in coming elections as it will lead to utter disaster.

Coming to the story, Secretary BISP has rightly mentioned to the journalist that no data has been shared with anyone including any politician. This huge data base is maintained by NADRA and there are state-of-the-art protocols and procedures through which data is shared with BISP for payments to be made to beneficiaries. Personal and private information of the households cannot be shared according to the approved data sharing protocols between BISP and NADRA but only to Federal Government Departments, Provincial governments and their departments and international organizations for specific projects (Details are provided on BISP website). This data is a systematic collection and compilation in the digitized form which works systematically amongst the organization and cannot just be maneuvered or used as a tangible stuff.

BISP has introduced various exit strategies to rid the poor of extreme poverty by enabling them stand on their feet by launching businesses and acquiring demand driven

vocational and technical training. Various NADRA, SLIC, BISP officials and dignitaries are invited as Chief Guests only symbolically to attend these seminars/workshops/launches/other events related to these initiatives which are primarily focused on awareness of the beneficiaries so that they can get benefitted in most efficient, transparent and dignified manner. These inaugurations should not be taken as an exception where schools, colleges, roads, bridges shops, workshops, newspapers and media houses are launched and their anniversaries are fully attended by dignitaries, thus, this practice is not from out of this world. In fact it goes to the credit of BISP that we have brought the haves and have nots closer on the same venue. But, may be some elements, for their vested interests, do not want this gap between rich and the poor to be filled.

It is also made clear that BISP's primary initiative is monthly cash grants which have been disbursed to beneficiaries through Post Offices in the form of Money Orders. BISP has adopted alternate payment mechanisms i.e. ATM/ Debit Cards and Mobile Phone Banking where funds are electronically transferred to the beneficiaries' accounts and can be withdrawn from ATM Machines and Bank Franchise. There is no human involvement in the latest systems being adopted by BISP as these are intelligent, automated and counteractive systems which cannot be manipulated or misused by anyone at any level.

It is appalling to observe that after the passage of long 4 years of successful operations to bring socio-economic changes in the lives of the millions of poor across the country, the senior journalist has levied baseless allegations in a time when general elections are quite near, which can be well noticed by well-versed readers of this newspaper.

In fact the pre-poll rigging is carried out by this journalist whose reporting depicts a tendacious and partial approach towards BISP which is termed as a transparent and apolitical organization the world over. It seems that this baseless criticism is aimed at benefitting some political stakeholders in the coming elections.

It is also categorically mentioned that BISP being a government organization strictly adheres to the rules and procedures set by the constitution. It came into being through an Act of Parliament unanimously approved by all the parties irrespective of their political affiliations. So, as far the coming elections are concerned, BISP will be the first organization to abide by the rules that would be laid down in the Code of Conduct for general elections.

The senior journalist and the readers are well aware of the fact that international donors and financial organizations don't pay a single penny to the projects they found inefficient, ineffective, non-transparent or non-sustainable. This goes to the credit of BISP that most of the world organizations have reposed full trust and confidence on BISP operations, technology based systems and transparency. It is suggested to the

senior journalist to consider the boarder perspective of national interest and welfare. Baseless criticism just for the sake of personal interests, liking and disliking would harm a Programme working on the noble cause of improving the socio-economic lives of millions of our fellow Pakistanis.