



1. POVERTY THREATENS NATIONAL, REGIONAL, INTERNATIONAL SECURITY: MARVI MEMON

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ISLAMABAD: Nations overwhelmed by poverty are the most vulnerable to crime and terrorism as poverty threatens not only national security but regional and international security as well.



The Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) Chairperson Marvi Memon while speaking as chief guest at a round table discussion said, "It is not a co-incidence that foot prints of terrorism are found in the poor and fragile regions of the world. The moot titled "Poverty Alleviation and National Security" was organised by Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI).

Other keynote speakers on the occasion were senior Economist Dr Hafiz A Pasha, BISP Secretary Muhammad Saleem Ahmed Ranjha, Taleem Foundation Chairman Dr Zafar Qadir, National Rural Support Programme (NRSP)

CEO Rashid Bajwa and SDPI CEO Abid Sulheri.

On the occasion, the BISP chairperson said that the government recognises poverty as driver of conflict and believes in providing conducive environment for sustainable growth. Benefiting from Prime Minister's interest free loans, a number of BISP beneficiaries are expected to graduate out of poverty.

The E-commerce and BISP entrepreneurial partnerships would change the financial landscape of the country. The BISP chairperson said that the BISP is updating National Socio Economic Registry (NSER) adding that updated NSER would pave path for policy making which ensure no one falls fodder to extremism.

The BISP chairperson stressed on the need for regional cooperation on best practices for poverty alleviation as it is international commitment to safeguard the future generations from poverty as per United Nations (UN) charter.

She stated that the BISP identifies the vulnerable, leads on poverty management and further helps them graduate out of poverty so that they do not enter the terror cycle. The chairman also gave an overview of other BISP initiatives like Waseela-e-Taleem and campaign for Climate Smart villages, which would contribute towards poverty alleviation in the long run.

ISSI Director General Ambassador Masood Khan in his welcome address highlighted global perspectives of poverty and explained various paradigms of poverty. He stressed that



the poverty is a global concern that needs immediate international decisions to guarantee financial inclusion.

The BISP secretary reiterated that the social protection is a state responsibility. He urged the private sector to come forward towards the noble cause of poverty alleviation and economic empowerment. The diplomats, prominent social activists, academicians and students attended the event.

(Express Tribune, Pakistan Observer, Patriot, Express, Nawaiwaqt, Dunya, Naibaat, Jinnah, Khabrain and Ausaf carried the story and picture)

2. LACK OF GROWTH PUSHING UP POVERTY: PASHA

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Economist Dr Hafiz A Pasha Friday said poverty in the country has been increasing instead of decreasing due to absence of growth in economic activity while in Sindh poverty and drop in literacy rate is relatively higher. Speaking at a roundtable discussion on 'Poverty Alleviation and National Security' organised by Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad (ISSI), Pasha said poverty has been on the rise during the last 10 years because of lack of growth in economic activity.

As a result, he stated, there was no employment opportunities to absorb the growing number of youth. Hafeez Pasha stated that there is a link between poverty and national security because poverty leads to crime and militancy. He

underlined the need for making considerable increase in the BISP allocation and the programme extension beyond cash transfer.

Poverty deprives people of life with dignity, which is fundamental human right. While highlighting the major trends in poverty, he said that most of the researches point out that poverty over the years has been increasing. There was some decline in the poverty during the first five to six years of the century; however, since 2008 it has been on the rise. Hafeez Pasha stated that rural poverty is higher than urban poverty. There is a lot of poverty up and down in regional context in Pakistan, Pasha added.

He said rural Sindh has same poverty as that of rural Balochistan which is alarming. Khyber Pakhtunkhawa (KP) has done better due to inflow of remittances as 35 percent of national remittances flow into KP. In some districts poverty is around 50 percent, other big pocket of poverty is in southern Punjab, with 8 districts up to 50 percent.

Pasha said there is extremely high percentage of poverty in FATA with two third of the people living in poverty and with literacy below 20 percent that of national average. He also pointed towards the growing inflation and unemployment that becomes the fodder for militancy. During 2001-02 and 2013-14 there was a decline in nutrient value in major urban areas, as in Karachi it has fallen by 10 percent and nationally by 10-15 percent, Pasha added.

Presenting statistical evidence on inequality and land acquisition, he said that agriculture land concentration has increased. Only 0.2 percent farmers own 12 percent land and this



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has increased to 8 percent from 2000-10. Around 100 families own 67 percent of the corporate assets of Pakistan. Former Advisor to Prime Minister on Finance stated there has been very little improvement in distribution of assets. Speaking on the occasion, chairperson of BISP Marvi Memon stated that there is a symbiotic nexus between poverty and insecurity in Pakistan which can be attacked most effectively through the propagation of the rule of law and access to justice.

She added that BISP was working to ensure reduced malnutrition, conditional cash transfers to ensure that women get pre-natal visits, family planning products, and malnutrition supplements. She also said that BISP is working to promote education and has enrolled its 1 million children of which 47 percent are girls. BISP is also working on providing vocational training and more than 100,000 of them have received interest free loans. She emphasised that BISP is Pakistan's only platform which if fully utilised can help identify the poorest, provide custodianship in every respect to them and then graduate them out of poverty.

She further said that with the BISP's target of one million graduates of poverty will be an achievement, adding that the programme caters to 5.2 million female. Abid Sulheri, Executive Director Sustainable Development Policy Institute said that rich in Pakistan are getting richer and the poor poorer. He said that conflict between the haves and the have-nots is a direct threat to security and emphasised the importance of human security which should be taken as a national security problem. He said that there is a need to bring the 25 or so social

safety nets at federal and provincial level under one umbrella in order to co-ordinate and manage poverty alleviation efforts in an effective manner. Ambassador Masood Khan in his concluding remarks thanked the participants.