



## 1. ALLEVIATING POVERTY

Using empowerment as a tool

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She said this was a historic beginning which will change the lives of the poorest women of Pakistan. Marvi Memon reiterated that through BISP E-Commerce, the products of beneficiaries are already available online giving international recognition to the traditional products of the country. She further added that market access to the handicrafts of marginalized segments would contribute in their financial empowerment. The exhibition was held through mutual collaboration of BISP and Cheezmall at Darbar Hotel Ground, Karimabad, Hunza.

## 2. INVESTING IN WOMEN EMPOWERMENT WAY TOWARDS POVERTY ALLEVIATION

*Published in Pakistan Observer, July 18, 2016*

**BISP, Cheezmall hold exhibition under E-commerce initiative**

Islamabad Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) in collaboration with Cheezmall held an exhibition of handicrafts made by BISP beneficiaries for their encouragement and open new doors for their products. Speaking at the inaugural ceremony, chairperson BISP, Marvi Memon said investing in women's economic empowerment sets a direct path towards poverty alleviation and financial inclusiveness. "BISP is a social safety net that not only lends a hand in poverty management but endeavours to harness entrepreneurial potential of its beneficiaries by marketing the products of beneficiaries so that they may graduate out of poverty", she stated.

Cheezmall, originating from China, is an online shopping website created by professionals of E-Commerce who have past experience of managing and running Alibaba, a global leader in the field. In order to replicate the successful model of Alibaba, Cheezmall utilizes expertise of Alibaba for training of their managers. It started its operation in Pakistan last year. The collaboration between BISP and Cheezmall, entering into its pilot phase in seven districts of the country, one in each province and territory.

Starting from Gilgit Baltistan Hunza, aims at online promotion and sale of BISP beneficiaries' products at international level. Cheezmall deals directly with the beneficiaries for purchase of products; BISP being only the facilitator. The event was marked by the presence of minister of State/ Chairperson BISP, Deputy Speaker Gilgit Baltistan Assembly Jafarullah Khan, Senior Minister Dr. Mohammad Iqbal, Gilgit Baltistan local politicians, Director Cheezmall Ghazanfar Ali Khan, large number of beneficiaries and local public.



During the exhibition, BISP beneficiaries showcased a large variety of products which were purchased by Cheezmall immediately and visitors and on spot payments were made to beneficiaries. Products worth approximately half million rupees were purchased by Cheezmall which would further market the products bought on their website to ensure international and national sales. The visitors took great interest in the wide range of exhibited products that included caps, shoulder bags, wall hangings, wallets, key chain, door bells, pouches, cushion covers, wooden products, carpets, jewelry items, gems, shawls, local dresses and shoes.

Director Cheezmall Ghazanfer presenting the message of Cheezmall on behalf of Chief Executive Officer Aurangzeb Khan and Co-founders Wang Qu and Lichenglong, said Cheezmall was highly interested in promoting and maximizing the profits for the products of poverty ridden BISP beneficiaries. He added that this exhibition was a first step towards long term cooperation between BISP and Cheezmall focusing on the betterment of the poor beneficiaries in all provinces of Pakistan. APP

(Jinnah and Ausaf also carried the story)

### **3. SUBSIDY ON FERTILIZER**

*Editorial Published in Business Recorder, July 18, 2016*

The federal government appears to be routing the subsidy on urea fertilizer to farmers through urea producing companies instead of a

direct cash subsidy to small farmers having landholdings of 12.5 acres or less since it does not have a mechanism in place to do so. This is despite a proven fact that cash grants are more beneficial than blind subsidies and there is less wastage in direct subsidy. Why is it not possible to give cash grants? *Don't we have data of small or subsistence level farmers at least at the provincial level? The success of the BISP scheme shows that it is possible, at least now, through use of technology. The BISP board comprising eminent persons has utilised the poverty survey to minimize misuse of funds. The big farmers have been the major beneficiaries of support price for wheat and there are media reports of cornering of gunny bags by them.*

The federal government has earmarked an amount of Rs 160 billion for urea subsidy. According to domestic manufacturers of this commodity, domestic sales have come down from a peak of Rs 110 billion in 2011 to Rs 21 billion last year and total subsidy amount on account of urea has declined from Rs 132 billion to Rs 24 billion in the same period. This is inclusive of net subsidy in natural gas and direct subsidy on urea imports.

Let us endeavour to ensure that price of urea drops in the domestic market. For the first time the price of imported and domestically produced urea is minimally different. The big importers can import urea free of import duty and sales tax as they have resources to do so or can pool their resources. The big guns are a dominant force in the elected assemblies and they want to hog the government funds. They should not be allowed to do so. We understand that the drop in commodity prices is hurting the



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agriculture sector in a big way. However, our industrial manufacturing as well as food security are dependent on producing commodity like cotton and also wheat domestically as well as minor crops locally instead of importing from across the border. We must remain self-sufficient to retain our sovereignty. We need to strive for it or else be prepared for a large current account deficit in future.