

### **PM to launch Qarz-i-Hasna, asset transfer schemes next month**

ISLAMABAD: The government will start next month the process of distributing over 80,000 loans and moveable/immovable assets every month to the deserving families under Qarz-i-Hasna and assets transfer schemes.

Both schemes will be launched by Prime Minister Imran Khan under the ambitious Ehsaas programme.

According to the Prime Minister Office, under the Ehsaas Qarz-i-Hasna scheme, over 80,000 loans will be disbursed every month among youth and women, enabling them to undertake their own business ventures and help their families extricate from poverty trap. These loans would be prioritised in the underdeveloped districts.

Under the asset transfer scheme, people will be given livestock (goats and chickens), agriculture tools and supplies, sewing machines or material to support local crafts, small shops or cash to help them start small businesses. “Assets” under this scheme will be given as one-time support and are not expected to be returned.

Appreciating the efficacy of the existing programme, Prime Minister Khan approved injection of an additional amount of Rs5 billion into the existing fund so that the programme could be launched in collaboration with the existing partners of the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund. “We aim to turn Pakistan into a welfare state based on the model of Riyasat-i-Madina that takes full ownership of the needs of its poor and vulnerable,” said the prime minister.

Approves injection of additional Rs5bn into existing fund for ambitious Ehsaas programme

The decision was taken on Monday during a briefing by Dr Sania Nishtar, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Social Safety Nets and Poverty Alleviation (PASS), on the status of implementation of the Ehsaas programme.

Ehsaas is a comprehensive and multifaceted programme with 115 policies under four pillars — addressing elitism and making the government system work to create equality; safety nets for the disadvantaged segments of population; jobs and livelihoods; and human capital development. It is an inter-sectoral programme to be implemented by 26 federal agencies, four provinces and special areas.

Dr Sania briefed the prime minister on timelines to implement projects under the Ehsaas Programme and policies related to poverty alleviation and social safety and its attached departments. The timeline was also set for implementation of the Kifalat programme and inclusion of women in it.

She also briefed the prime minister on the safety net Tahaffuz (protection) programme. Details and deadlines for graduation and interest-free loans programme and the new solutions challenge policy for the underdeveloped districts were also discussed. The prime minister was also briefed on a nutrition initiative to address malnutrition in all its forms, the new socio-economic registry which is

being executed by the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), the Ehsaas undergraduate student scholarship initiative and plans to extend education conditional cash transfers for such districts.

Dr Sania informed the prime minister that in order to protect and ensure social security net to workers in the informal sector, several weekly meetings of the labour expert working group had been held. Briefing was given on the timeline of policy formulation. Details were also shared about plans to revitalise the trust for voluntary organisations and to make its governance effective and transparent so that the organisation could be used to upscale successful models in the non-governmental sector.

A number of other projects also came under discussion, including a plan to open 20 centres for the special people, opening of National Centre for Human Nutrition, setting up a forum for non-governmental stakeholders and diaspora.

The prime minister was also briefed on governance reforms in safety nets institutions, including the BISP, to ensure maximum transparency and efficiency.

Dr Sania said the policies concerning various components of the Ehsaas programme would be presented before the cabinet after June for its approval.

The prime minister appreciated the progress being made by Dr Sania and her team.

He also approved creation of the Ehsaas Steering Committee which would be headed by the prime minister himself.

A meeting of implementers of the Ehsaas programme at federal and provincial levels will be convened soon to chalk out strategy for roll-out and smooth implementation of the programme components which are responsibilities of ministries other than the division of poverty alleviation and social protection.

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