

Update on Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

IDPs of Conflict-Hit Areas

UN to Issue another Flash Appeal for IDPs

The United Nations is likely to renew its flash appeal for providing assistance to the displaced persons from different conflict-hit areas, officials say. A UN Official said that the government had set the deadline of April 30 for return of IDPs from Federally Administered Tribal Areas, but they are not ready to go back owing to different reasons. According to him, there are 106,000 displaced persons at Jalojai camp, 250,000 in Dera Ismail Khan and 85,000 in Tank, who aren't ready to go back to their homes despite the government's decision to send them back.

These people have been displaced from Bajaur, Waziristan, Orakzai and Mohmand agencies owing to military operation against militants. The UN, which is supposed to provide food, shelter, protection and healthcare facilities to them, has already been facing financial crunch. In January this year, the UN launched an appeal of \$535 million for next months ending in June but it received only \$120 million. Sources said that the amount can hardly meet the administrative cost of the UN agencies involved in relief and rehabilitation activities. There is an urgent need for more money to continue provision of relief services to the displaced people.

The UNICEF has even indicated to close the schools it runs for the children in the camps. Meanwhile, the UN is urging the government to provide favourable conditions to the displaced persons in their respective areas so they can return without fear. "The displaced persons don't want to return till the improvement of situation in their areas. In the settled districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the tribesmen feel secure," said sources in Jalojai camp. Quoting displaced people, they said that the tribesmen also faced problems from the government in case of attacks on army and state-owned properties as they were taken to task under the collective responsibility clause of the Frontier Crimes Regulations. "While in the settled districts, they live peacefully," they added. There are several relief packages being distributed among the displaced persons almost every day in the camps besides giving them flour, oil, soap, sugar etc on regular basis. Hundreds of the displaced persons have hired homes in the nearby villages but visit the camps every day to collect relief goods. Selling of the relief goods has become profitable business for the displaced people.

According to UN sources, the government is still undecided about the repatriation of the displaced persons as the general coordination meeting has not taken place from the past three weeks. They said that the government was supposed to hold meeting of the general coordination to discuss the latest situation with regard to the displaced persons, but delaying the meetings showed the government's inability to chalk out strategy for their return. The WHO, which recently sent five emergency medical kits to Tank and Dera Ismail Khan enough for 15,000 people for one month, is also in need of more funds to provide uninterrupted health services to the displaced persons. Given the uncertain situation, the United Nations has again asked its clusters (UNICEF, WHO, WFP, Unocha etc) to inform it of their financial needs for the next six months, from July to December. "After the estimation by the cluster groups, the UN would again launch flash appeal in May or June to meet the expenses of the displaced persons till end of the year," sources said.

[Dawn – May 10, 2010]

FBR not Likely to Propose Continuation of IDPs Tax

The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) is not likely to propose continuation of the IDPs tax imposed in the budget 2009-10, and an amendment is to be introduced in the Finance Bill 2010, FBR official sources said on May 19. The authorities strongly feel that the tax levied on taxpayers falling in higher income slots has not been able to achieve the desired results, and there is no need to maintain this levy for another fiscal year. "IDPs tax, introduced in budget 2009-10 was to support IDPs for their rehabilitation," the sources said, adding that the revenue from the IDPs tax was expected to be Rs 1.4 billion during 2009-2010. "However, some persons obtained stay orders against the levy... as a result FBR was unable to generate the projected amount of Rs 1.4 billion during the period under review". The concept of IDPs still exists in the country, but the litigation resulted "in below the mark returns, and there is no need to impose this levy again in the next fiscal year".

The government had originally introduced the IDPs tax in budget 2009-10 to raise additional funds for the rehabilitation of IDPs from Swat, Dir and Buner. The IDPs tax was only applicable on individuals, whereas companies were not liable to pay it. Contributions made by the private sector were also exempted from the IDPs tax, as well as contributions made in the prime minister's relief fund for IDPs. Foreign organisations and other international relief organisations were not liable to pay the tax either.

[Daily Times – May 20, 2010]

IDPs of Hunza Valley

Hunza IDPs Suffer Due to Lack of Facilities in Camps

The IDPs of Hunza who are taking refuge in different camps set up by the government are facing a number of hardships due to the inclement weather. After the formation of artificial lake in Attabad due to land sliding, the government shifted the residents of low lying areas in Hunza Nagar and Gilgit to the relief camps set up in 30 different spots. About 25000 to 30000 IDPs are taking shelter in these camps. As many as 360 tents and a camp providing refuge to 3000 people in Faizabad were declared vulnerable last night and the IDPs from there are now being relocated to a girls hostel near Karakorum University and Special Education Complex. Meanwhile, the IDPs of Danyor camp in Gilgit have complained that they have to suffer from a number of difficulties in the camps set up by the government due to bad weather conditions. They said the IDPs are not being provided things required for cooking besides other necessary items of daily use.

[The News – May 28, 2010]

Government Provides Rs60m to Hunza IDPs

Federal Government has provided Rs 60 million to the Gilgit-Baltistan government for the relief operation. Federal Minister for Population Welfare Dr Firdous Ashiq Awan said the Federal Government provided one month 'Ration' to the affected families of the massive landslide. She stated that construction of the Karakorum Highway damaged portion has begun and the government and army are taking special measures to save the adjoining areas. She said that 16 kilometer area adjoining to Hunza lake is inundated due to thawing of the glacier and it also affecting nearby areas including Aainabad, Sashkat and Gilgit.

[The Tribune – May 19, 2010]

UNICEF Sends \$100,000 Relief Goods for IDPs

In order to provide immediate relief to people displaced by floods in Hunza valley and the damage expected in downstream areas if the Attabad Lake overflows, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has dispatched essential life-saving supplies to Gilgit. Relief items worth US\$100,000 have been handed over to authorities for distributing in IDPs camps for people displaced by the crisis. About 20,000 people are estimated to be displaced and in need of assistance, including 4,080 women and 12,000 children. Unicef has dispatched relief items to protect children and families from the spread of disease due to unsafe water, inadequate sanitation and poor hygiene. In total, Unicef has handed over 5,000 hygiene kits, 8,000 bathing soaps, 100,000 water purifying tablets, 60,000 Pure Sachets, 5,000 jerry cans, 750 latrine slabs and 50 tarpaulin sheets to the authorities for distribution in the IDP camps.

[The News – May 25 2010]

FM-93 Goes on air in Hunza to Facilitate IDPs

Radio Pakistan's channel FM-93, the first FM channel in the Gilgit-Baltistan area, started its broadcasts from Hunza. The channel has been set up near the Attabad lake in a record time of one week to give people in Hunza and the adjoining areas the latest updates on the lake. The programmes of the channel are being broadcast in three languages, Shina, Brosheski and Wakhi. Radio Pakistan has already been giving extensive coverage to the Attabad lake crisis and the extended transmission of Gilgit Radio continues until midnight and resumes in the morning from 5am.

[Daily Times – May 24, 2010]

UN Agencies Getting Cold Response from Donors

Some United Nations agencies have started arranging provisions of humanitarian assistance for Hunza IDPs out of their own resources after the mighty donors have given a cold shoulder to the prevailing catastrophe. Apart from the 'peanut' donations offered by some government bodies and NGOs, none of credible donor state or agency, till date, has announced any substantial aid for the internally displaced people of Hunza. The only considerable donor pledge that is likely to be materialised in the coming days is the \$100 million aid support

from Saudi Arabia which was part of previous year's humanitarian response plan and it would be adjusted under this year's humanitarian aid solely specified for South Waziristan's IDPs and those of related belt. Apart from that, the important UN agencies that have an instrumental role to play in humanitarian assistance related matters including United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) have not so far received any funds for Hunza crisis. The UNHCR dispatched over a dozen trucks carrying shelter kits and other relief items to Hunza while the UNICEF had sent similar kind of aid items to the same venue. Sources in both the agencies confided that funds for Hunza affectees were arranged 'indigenously' from the teller of 'unspecified aid funds' and 'not a single penny' was received by any donor state or agency for Hunza cause. On the other hand, UNFPA is still consuming last year's humanitarian funds as the agency stands entirely funds starved in the ongoing year. Sometime back, the Representative of UNFPA Pakistan Yu Yu had confirmed to TheNation that UNFPA was consuming last year's funds that would be exhausted by the coming July and that the UN agency remained fund less this year against its \$2m humanitarian appeal. The UNFPA cannot afford at all to allocate funds for any humanitarian cause when its own 'survival' stands at stake in Pakistan. Moreover, the relief items that UNHCR and UNICEF had dispatched for Hunza IDPs do not exceed \$0.3 million compared to over \$30 million required for the complete rehabilitation of 27,000 to 30,000 IDPs in Hunza.

[The Nation – May 27, 2010]