

IDPS, DISASTER & FOOD SECURITY

IDPs & Disaster

Refugee Status to Stay Beyond 2012

As the federal government has yet to make final decision about the future of 1.6 million registered Afghans living in the country, the United High Commissioner for Refugees says under the international law, the United Nations will recognize them all as refugees beyond Dec 31, 2012. The Pakistani government must decide what status it offers to 1.6 million Afghan refugees from January 1, 2013 onward, but under the international law, the UN will recognize them as refugees, UNHCR country head Neill Wright. Minister for Safron Shaukatullah said the federal government had yet to decide about whether to give further extension to PoR cards' holders or not. The government has issued Proof of Registration cards to 1.7 million Afghans in 2009 to legalize their stay by the end of 2012. The Peshawar High Court had ordered not to extend stay of registered refugees, while the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government had asked both documented Afghans to make preparations for returning to their country before the expiry of the cards. Undocumented Afghans had already been ordered to leave province as soon as possible. The minister said the government would respect the court's verdict about Afghan refugees but had also to follow international commitments. He said the government would not expel documented Afghans by force. "The government will facilitate voluntary repatriation process and this is not possible to bundle Afghans into trucks and send them across the border," he said. He said refugees were being convinced through the jirga to encourage them to avail opportunity and go back to Afghanistan. He said returnees would be provided all facilities including financial assistance. He said the government acknowledged efforts of UNHCR in implementing the agreement between the two sides and facilitating a surge in voluntary repatriation for the remainder of the year. He said the government was in the process of formulating a new strategy for Afghan refugees in 2013 and beyond which, of course, would require the approval of the federal cabinet. Neill Wright said that the organization had supported Pakistan and provided hundreds of millions of dollars of assistance to refugees hosted on the sovereign territory over the past three decades. The new assistance package offered by UNHCR includes the provision of non-food item kits distributed to the returning families at Chamkani, Timergara and Quetta voluntary repatriation centers. These items include jerry cans, buckets, soap, mosquito nets, sleeping mats, blanket, cooking set, plastic tarpaulins, quilt, sanitary cloths and winter clothes. Since September this year, UNHCR has also started facilitating the group return of families that originate from the same areas inside Afghanistan. So far, four groups consisting of some 1,300 Afghan refugees have returned home under the Facilitated Group Return programme from Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Dawn – November 9, 2012

Humanitarian Disaster Feared In Kurram: KPK

More than 4,630 internally displaced families, who have been relocated to the central tehsil of Kurram Agency, stand exposed to harsh weather owing to nonexistence of shelter as humanitarian organizations are reluctant to assist them. In the face of a harsh winter ahead, it will prove to be the worst humanitarian disaster if swift action is not taken to provide shelter to these families, said an official. He added that UNHCR and other humanitarian bodies had expressed helplessness to come to the rescue of those families owing to non-availability of resources. UNHCR spokesperson Dunya Aslam Khan told that her organization had already done a lot to reach out to the people in distress and provide them relief. She said that UN agencies and

their partners had provided tents, non-food items and other basic facilities to the returning displaced persons in Kurram Agency. Security forces had cleared Masoozai area of central Kurram of militants and Fata Disaster Management Authority (FDMA) was directed to send displaced families living in and off IDP camps back to their homes. The government had registered 17,760 displaced families after the operation was launched in July 2011 in the tribal region.

According to FDMA, total 4,630 displaced families comprising 20,000 individuals have been relocated to Masoozai area while thousands of families are still waiting in New Durrani Camp and with host families to go back to their homes. The affected families complained that their houses had been flattened in the combat zone. Each returning family had to be content with the single tent provided by UNHCR, the only aid they had received so far. The returning IDPs needed winterized tents and quilts to keep themselves warm in the chilly weather. Authorities in Fata have sought emergency assistance from humanitarian organizations to assist them in this tough time. The federal government's response was lukewarm as it didn't take notice of the plight of the IDPs in Fata. The Saudi government is yet to fulfill its commitment to provide about 1,300 single-room shelters to IDPs in Kurram Agency. The UN refugee agency, which had been playing leading role in providing relief to IDPs, had informed the quarters concerned that it could not provide further assistance to the returning people. Return of IDPs to South Waziristan and other parts of Fata had been slowed down owing to lack of resources though security forces had declared those areas safe for rehabilitation work.

Dawn – November 14, 2012

Damage Compensation

Rs71.56billion is the amount National Database and Registration Authority claims it has disbursed in two phase among 2010 flood victims. The authority designed a Citizen Damage Compensation Programme to dole out Rs40, 000 to each family through Watan cards.

The Express Tribune – November 14, 2012

United States Helps Flood Affected Dairy Farmers Double Their Income: USAID

With US assistance more than 22000 flood-affected dairy farmers throughout Pakistan doubled their income since May 2010. US Agency for International Development (USAID) Entrepreneurs Programme was discussed at a conference for Pakistani entrepreneurs affected by natural disasters. Today's Livelihood Recovery Support Conference was specifically designed to address this challenge by bringing together entrepreneurs, government officials, academia and the media so they could share their experiences dealing with disasters and discuss best practices for responding to them and rebuilding their businesses. Under normal conditions, Pakistan's entrepreneurs face challenges on many fronts. These issues are compounded by Pakistan's particular susceptibility to natural disasters, said Ms Catherine Moore, Deputy Mission Director, USAID Pakistan. We are delighted \$4 million of US support has successfully revitalized economic growth in disaster-affected regions and enabled resilient Pakistani entrepreneurs to recover and rebuild their businesses. A recent impact assessment of USAID's rehabilitation programme found that, since May 2010, more than 22,500 dairy farmers increased their incomes by more than 200 percent as a result of receiving US government flood-related assistance.

Daily Times – November 15, 2012

NGO Mapping Flood – Hit Areas Illegally, Says NDMA

An international non-governmental organization continues to map flood devastated areas using the Geographic Information System (GIS) despite having been declared a 'security risk' by the National Disaster Management Authority. NDMA Chairman Dr Zafar Qadir said that since January the Information Management and Mine Action Programs (iMMAP) had been operating in the country as an illegal entity. He said the UN Habitat, UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the World Food Program also had GIS mapping facility. The NDMA has been writing, since January, to the interior ministry, ISI, the foreign ministry through its director general for UN, the MI and the economic affairs division to inform them that iMMAP is no longer supposed to be associated with the NDMA or related institutions.

The organization has been working in Pakistan with the UNOCHA. It was taken on board after the 2010 floods to develop a 'single reporting format' project for the NDMA to standardize the procedures, enabling all stakeholders to report progress on various projects and activities during and after emergencies. Despite a lapse of 11 months, the iMMAP has failed to develop the web-based program in accordance with the NDMA's specifications. The NDMA disassociated itself from the iMMAP in January, Dr Qadir said. The foreign ministry in a letter on April 12 said: Presence of iMMAP in Pakistan will not only give an incorrect message internationally but can also pose serious problems for Pakistan at international fora and create confusion among the stakeholders. It said the mission statement of the iMMAP focused on mines clearance and it usually operated in conflict zones. The Foreign Office said Pakistan is neither in a state of conflict nor a post-conflict country. Pakistan has a proven record in the field of mines clearance which has been acknowledged world over. Therefore, this ministry concurs with the NDMA that all activities of the iMMAP may be discontinued with immediate effect.

According to the Foreign Office, some international NGOs are performing unauthorized functions, including spying, in Pakistan under the garb of humanitarian efforts. An official said several international NGOs had engaged irrelevant personnel of various nationalities to work in the country. The EAD issues permits to international NGOs to help the government in emergency situations. There is no policy to grant them long term (three or five years') permission to operate in the country. There is an interim plan under which international NGOs are granted permission to operate. That permit is renewed every four months, he said. The EAD official said the iMMAP had not been registered with the government, adding its activities should be a cause of concern for security agencies. Having informed the government earlier that iMMAP had been functioning without obtaining a NoC from the economic affairs division, the NDMA sent another letter on Aug 18 to all the stakeholders. The iMMAP functioning from the office in Islamabad and its activities anywhere in Pakistan are not in the best interest of the state and it should be stopped from functioning at the earliest,"it said. On Sept 5, the NDMA asked the chief secretaries of all provinces and Islamabad to close the offices of iMMAP, including the one in the capital's F-7/2 sector. It remains inexplicable how the iMMAP has been able to disregard the government's instructions about winding up its operations as does interior ministry's decision to extend visas to its personnel. When iMMAP's Country Director Craig Von Hagen was contacted for comment, he said: "I don't know anything about this."

Dawn – November 19, 2012

Food Insecurity

ECC Raises Wheat Support Price by Rs150 per 40 Kilogram

In an apparent move to woo the farming community in the lead-up to the general election and formalize a barter trade deal with Iran, the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) raised the support price for wheat by Rs150 per 40 kilograms to Rs1200, up by 14.3 per cent over the

existing price of Rs1050 per 40kg. Finance Minister Abdul Hafeez Shaikh, also allowed export of 400,000 tons of sugar, took measures to discourage import of cars, restored subsidy on agricultural tube wells in Balochistan and directed public and private companies to utilize services of Pakistan National Shipping Corporation so that it could tide over its financial crisis. The ECC increased the support price for coming wheat crop to Rs1200 per 40 kg from Rs1050 on the recommendation of the ministry of food security “to facilitate and encourage wheat growers.

The News – November 23, 2012

Wheat, Tea Prices Up

THE government decision to increase wheat support price to Rs1200 per 40kg was expected by commodity traders but it fell short of satisfying farmers. After the announcement of the decision on November 22, wholesale wheat prices went up from Rs3100-Rs3150 per 100kg to Rs3250-Rs3300 per 100kg. Farmers Association of Pakistan had demanded that the new support price be fixed at Rs1400 per 40kg—up from Rs1050 per 40kg set last season—keeping in view the increase in the prices of crop inputs like certified seeds, fertilizer and higher electricity, gas and fuel charges. Wheat prices have remained firm in the last few weeks owing to a declining trend in exports. In October Pakistan exported only about 11000 tonnes down from about 15000 tonnes in September. And total exports between July and October fell below 100,000 tonnes from more than 300,000 tonnes last year. During the week ending November 23, sugar prices remained flat at Rs50 per kg to at Rs51 per. Availability of an estimated carryover stock of about 800,000 tonnes and the beginning of cane crushing amid news of a bumper cane crop contributed in keeping prices under control. Traders say these two factors were strong enough to offset any upward pressure on prices after recent government decision to allow fresh exports of 400,000 tonnes of the sweetener. In the international market, there is no big spike in demand for sugar. That’s why our sugar mills failed to consume full export quota of 400,000 tonnes allowed in two installments.

With the arrival of winter wholesale and retail tea prices of various varieties of black tea went up after mid-November. Not only the prices of loose tea rose by up to 10 per cent but manufacturers of famous brands of tea also withdrew the price cuts made earlier. Tea traders said black tea Danedar-BP 1 gained Rs65 per kg and was selling at Rs540 per kg against its pre-winter price of Rs475 per kg. Similarly black tea Leaf PF-1 gained Rs20 per kg and rose to Rs515 per kg against its last-quoted price of Rs495 per kg just two weeks ago. Retail prices of packets of both of these varieties being sold under different brand names shot up to Rs560 per kg after the manufacturers withdrew the price-cut they had announced a few months ago. Similarly, family mixture tea of a famous brand became costlier as the tea blender that markets it started selling it again at Rs590 per kg after keeping its price at Rs540 for some time. Pakistan Tea Association says tea prices have increased during this winter (despite reduction in sales tax from 16 per cent to five per cent and lower incidence of smuggling to neighboring Afghanistan) because of higher international prices and depreciation in the rupee value. International prices of black tea are up primarily due to lower-than-expected production in Kenya from where Pakistan imports half of its total requirements. Tea blenders and wholesalers have imported larger quantity of tea for winter. Imports of the commodity shot up to more than 13,700 tonnes in October from a little less than 9,800 tonnes in September. Value-wise, overall imports during July-October crawled up to about 40,400 tonnes from about 39, 750 tonnes in the same period last year.

Dawn – November 27, 2012

