

#### Rain Brings Grief

Powerful millers and shopkeepers with full backing of concerned authorities continue to charge higher rates for 'atta' despite a marked decline in the price of wheat in the open market during the past two weeks. Despite the fact that ex-mill rate of 20-kg bag of 'atta' has been fixed at Rs765 and retail price at Rs785 by Punjab government, profiteers and hoarders are selling a 20-kg bag at Rs840 to Rs860 in the open market and at Rs815 in Utility Store Corporation (USC) outlets. The Utility Store Corporation (USC) increased price of a 20-kg 'atta' bag by Rs80 from Rs735 to Rs815. The management also assured to reduce the price after finalization of wheat procurement policy and fixation of ex-mill rate. But, USC is selling a 20-kg bag of 'atta' at Rs815. On the other hand, 'naanbais' are taking full advantage of the situation as they have increased the prices of 'naan' and 'roti' on their own. 'Naanbais' are selling 'naan' and 'roti' at different rates in different localities at Rs8, Rs9 and Rs10. Some 'naanbais' did not increase prices, but decreased the weight of 'naan' and 'roti' to 70 grams instead of the official weight of 100 grams. It seems that there is no management in Rawalpindi therefore 'atta' and 'roti' sellers looting innocent public with both hands while concerned bosses were busy in fruitless meetings to cover their deficiencies seeing the whole drama with closed eyes. Similarly, bakers had increased prices of bread, bun, rusks, biscuits and other items by Rs7 to Rs10 and promised to lower down prices when government will give ex-mill price of 'atta' but still they are selling all items in higher rates.

Pakistan Flour Mill Association (PFMA) Vice-Chairman (Punjab) Khawaja Rehan Anjum confirmed to 'The News' that Punjab government has finalized procurement policy 2013-14 and fixed the price Rs1330 for 40 kilogram. The committee, he said has also fixed the rate of 20-kg bag of 'atta' at Rs765 (ex-mill) and Rs785 (retail shopkeeper). He also said that the committee has fixed price of a 100-kilogram sack at Rs3,450. "We were buying 40-kilogram wheat at Rs1450 from open market three weeks back but now we are buying 40-kg wheat at Rs1,330," he claimed. The Punjab government will provide Rs18 billion subsidy on flour. The Food Department is releasing wheat to flour mills at price of Rs1,330 per 40 kg. The provincial government announced that flour would be available to consumers across the province at price of Rs785 per 20-kg. Government had stock of more than 3.9 million metric ton, which was 500,000 metric ton surplus against the province's need. Punjab Chief Minister Mian Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif claimed that the Food Department had prepared a strategy to ensure the provision of subsidy and quality flour to a common person. City district government across the province including Rawalpindi and food department have been advised to take strict actions against those who sell 'atta' at higher prices. District Food Controller (DFC), Rawalpindi Shabbir Khan Niazi has said that Punjab government has fixed ex-mill prices at Rs765 and retail at Rs785. "We are taking strict action against profiteers and hoarders," he claimed.

The reliable sources said that majority of millers and 'atta' dealers prefer to send commodity to Peshawar and Afghanistan on higher prices. The millers and dealers are selling a 20-kg bag at Rs1100- Rs1200 to Peshawar and Afghanistan, the sources said. The 'atta' dealers are trying to create an artificial shortage of commodity here only to increase the rates. Locals said that concerned authorities should consider the financial difficulties of public. The food department and city district government, Rawalpindi not checking hoarders and profiteers they are looting public with both hands, they alleged. Mukhtar Ahmed a senior citizen said that powerful flourmill owners, wholesalers and retail shopkeepers are all hand in glove to increase 'atta' price. A twenty-kilogram

bag of 'atta' is being sold at different rates in the market from Rs840 to Rs860 and some shopkeepers are selling a 20-kg bag at Rs900. "It seems that there is no government writ here in Rawalpindi therefore hoarders and profiteers are looting public both hands," he denounced. Shazia Manzoor, a poor lady said that 'roti' is a basic need of all, but it seems government will snatch it. Punjab government should start 'Sasti Roti Scheme' to get a 'roti' at Rs2. Punjab government started 'Sasti Roti Scheme' in PPP period only for point scoring although this government could re-start this scheme to provide maximum relief of public, she appealed.

The News - September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2013

## Earthquakes in Pakistan

### Quake Jolts Balochistan: Awaran Flattened

In magnitude it was reminiscent of the 2005 apocalyptic temblor. It was far less deadly, though. One of the reasons may be because its epicentre was in a sparsely-populated district of Balochistan, a province where human settlements are already widely scattered. September 24<sup>th</sup> afternoon's massive earthquake nevertheless rattled the province, flattening hundreds of mud houses and killing dozens of people. With little or no communication network, it was immediately difficult to determine the scale of devastation caused by the 7.9-magnitude temblor whose tremors and aftershocks were felt as far afield as the Indian capital of New Delhi and the Gulf states of Oman and the UAE. Officially, the death toll is under 100 – but the US Geological Survey (USGS) issued a red alert, warning that heavy casualties were likely based on past data. According to the USGS, the epicenter was 23 kilometers below the ground in Awaran district. It was so powerful that it caused the seabed to rise and create a small, mountain-like island off Gwadar coast in the Arabian Sea. In 2005, a 7.6-magnitude quake centred in Azad Kashmir had caused widespread damage, killing at least 80,000 people and leaving millions shelter-less in one of the worst natural disasters to hit Pakistan.

September 24<sup>th</sup> quake hit Quetta, Chagai, Dalbandin, Naushki, Panjgur, Turbat, Gwadar, Pasni, Ormara, Mastung, Kalat, Sorab, Khuzdar, Sibi, Naseerabad, Jaffarabad, Lasbela, Taftan, Nokkundi and dozens of other cities and towns of the impoverished province. Awaran district has an estimated population of around 300,000, scattered over an area of more than 21,000 square kilometers. "Over 50% of urban and around 90% of rural areas of the district has been ravaged by the quake," Mir Quddus Bizenjo, the deputy speaker of Balochistan Assembly, told reporters by phone. He put the death toll at 150-plus in Awaran alone. Local journalists fear the casualties figure could be higher. Administration officials, however, gave conflicting death tolls: local tehsildar Ilahi Bakhsh said he could confirm 50 fatalities in Awaran town alone, while the commissioner of Kalat Division, Dr Akbar, said only 33 people died. The provincial government declared an emergency in Awaran and the army mobilized its medical teams as well as 200 soldiers and paramilitary Frontier Corps troops to help with the immediate relief effort. "We have received reports that many homes in Awaran district have collapsed. We fear many deaths," provincial government spokesperson Jan Muhammad Buledi said.

"There are not many doctors in the area but we are trying to provide maximum facilities in the affected areas." "All state-run hospitals in Kalat Division, of which Awaran is a part, have been put on high alert to deal with the possible influx of quake victims," Commissioner Dr Akbar said. "If needed, the casualties could be sent to Karachi for better treatment." The government ordered a massive rescue operation. Army and civil rescuers have been sent to the affected region to pull out casualties as residents said dozens of people are trapped under the rubble of their collapsed houses.

The acting chief of the Provincial Disaster Management Authority, Latif Kakar, said that his agency has sent 1,000 tents and food packets to Awaran. Asked about the death toll, he said it was difficult to give a definite figure as information was pouring in from the affected region. "Damage to the cellular phone network was hampering communications in the area." The deputy commissioner of Awaran, Abdul Rashid Baloch, confirmed widespread death and destruction. "We have started moving the survivors into temporary shelter camps set up for them at safer places," he told The Express Tribune by phone. "Some of the injured are being shifted to Khuzdar, Uthal and Bela." Chief Minister Dr Abdul Malik Baloch was saddened by the death and destruction. He directed the administration officials to assess the damages of their respective districts, prepare report and inform the provincial chief secretary. In a statement, Dr Baloch said his government shared the grief and suffering of people and would take all possible steps to help them cope with the natural calamity. He said that with the cooperation of army, helicopters would be used to carry out relief activities in the areas which are not accessible by land.

### **High-Intensity Quakes since October 2005**

October 8, 2005

Magnitude: 7.6-7.8

Death toll: 80,000

Epicenter: Muzaffarabad District, AJK

October 29, 2008

Magnitude: 6.4

Death toll: 215

Epicenter: Ziarat, Quetta

January 18, 2011

Magnitude: 7.2

Death toll: —

Epicenter: Dalbandin, Balochistan

April 16, 2013

Magnitude: 7.9

Death toll: 1

Epicenter: Saravan, Iran (near Pak border)

September 24, 2013

Magnitude: 7.8

Death toll: Over 40

Epicenter: Awaran District, Balochistan

**The Express Tribune - September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2013**

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### **Balochistan Earthquake: 328 Dead and Counting**

Desperate villagers clawed through the debris of their ruined mud-houses – a day after a 7.8-magnitude earthquake ravaged parts of Balochistan, flattening hundreds of houses and killing their occupants. Until late September 24<sup>th</sup>, the picture wasn't clear. The temblor damaged the cellular phone network in the impoverished province where infrastructure is already shoddy. The quake was centered in Awaran district – a dirt-poor expanse of land where 50% of urban and 90% of rural

settlements was flattened. On September 24<sup>th</sup>, there were conflicting reports about the death toll. Officials, however, agreed it wasn't more than a few dozens. On September 25<sup>th</sup>, they confirmed that fatalities have jumped past 300. "At least 328 people have been confirmed dead and more than 450 injured," the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) said in a statement.

### **Local Politicians Disputed The Figures.**

"I have confirmed figures ... the earthquake has killed over 1,000 people and injured many more," Mir Qudus Bizenjo, the deputy speaker of the Balochistan Assembly, told reporters at the Quetta airport on Wednesday September 25<sup>th</sup>. "Over 40,000 houses have been flattened." Most of the casualties were reported from Awaran and Kech districts – the Mashkey and Hoshap areas in particular. Provincial government's spokesperson Jan Buledai said at least 285 people were killed in Awaran and another 43 in Kech. The figures were confirmed by Kech Deputy Commissioner Abdul Hameed Abro.

However, a local journalist claimed that at least 177 people died in Mashkey and over 400 were injured, most of them seriously. Naseer Mosiani, the assistant commissioner of Mashkey, told The Express Tribune that at least 70 students – including 25 girls – died when two Islamic seminaries collapsed in the region. Local media persons said the death toll was more than 400. They claimed that government officials and rescuers have yet to visit the inaccessible parts of Awaran and Mashkey where destruction was much more widespread. A television reporter, who reached Awaran late Tuesday night, said rescue and relief operations could not start until Wednesday afternoon – almost 24 hours after the earthquake struck. He said there was a single small Basic Health Unit in Awaran with only 12 beds. "There is no medicine, no doctor... three injured persons share one bed," he told The Express Tribune. He claimed that many dead in Awaran were buried without proper rites.

In the village of Dalbedi, the quake flattened some 250 houses, an AFP photographer said. Bewildered villagers dug with their hands through the rubble of their mud houses in the village to retrieve what was left of their meager possessions. The Balochistan chief secretary surveyed the scale of devastation in Awaran and its adjoining settlements from the air. Talking to reporters after the visit, he said supplies for the survivors have been sent from Karachi, Khuzdar and Quetta. According to Kalat Commissioner Dr Mohammad Akbar, 40 pickup trucks laden with relief goods and food had been rushed from Khuzdar to Awaran. The provincial government spokesperson said the government has sent 19 truckloads of relief items, food and medical supplies. By September 25<sup>th</sup> evening, trucks were seen moving towards Awaran. In Islamabad, Information Minister Pervaiz Rashid said that the state institutions were capable of dealing with the situation in Balochistan. Several countries and international donors have offered to help the quake survivors, but the government decided to face the challenge itself, he added. Earlier, the United Nations offered help in relief efforts. "The UN and its humanitarian partners are in close contact with the NDMA and stand ready to provide assistance and mobilize more support from the international community, if requested," said a UN spokesperson. "In the meantime, the World Health Organization has provided emergency health kits and a trauma kit to help thousands of people." (With additional input from WIRES)

**The Express Tribune - September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2013**

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### **Relief Efforts: Army to the Rescue, Again!**

Over a 1,000 troops of the Pakistan army have been mobilized to be sent to the earthquake-hit areas of Balochistan. They will launch a massive relief and rescue operation in affected areas,

according to the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR). More than 600 troops have been dispatched to Awaran from Malir Cantt along with male and female doctors and the medical equipment. Giving details of the operation to help the stricken people, the military spokesman said, "Over 7,000 kg of food items, 1,000 kg medicines and 200 tents have been distributed among the survivors. Cooked food is also being provided to homeless people in Awaran." In addition, a field medical facility of 21 doctors and 50 paramedics is providing medical treatment to the injured in Khuzdar and Awaran, the worst-hit area, the spokesman added. A medical camp has been set up in Gwadar, a Pakistan Navy spokesman said. So far, ten sorties have flown to the affected areas and six army helicopters are also participating in rescue operations.

According to the ISPR, Commander Southern Command Lt Gen Nasir Janjua, Frontier Corps IG Lt Gen Zia Shahid and General Officer (GOC) Commanding, Quetta Division, also visited the Awaran district. Search and rescue teams pulled out more than 300 bodies from under the rubble of collapsed building in Awaran and Kech, said a National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) statement. NDMA said 285 persons died in Awaran and 373 were injured. As many as 43 people lost their lives in Kech district while 72 others sustained injuries. "Pakistan Army, Frontier Corps (FC) and the civil administration are carrying out rescue efforts in the affected region," said the NDMA which has placed 5,000 tents at the disposal of Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Balochistan from its strategic reserves at Karachi. Resources were also mobilized to provide 7,000 food packs (53kg each) to the affected people in Awaran and Kech. "Forward Operating Bases (FOBs) are being established in Khuzdar and Bela for logistical support and provision of essential supplies (food and non-food items)," the NDMA statement read, adding that casualties were being evacuated to Khuzdar, Bela, Thal and Karachi.

Chairman NDMA, Maj Gen Muhammad Saeed Aleem also visited Quetta to coordinate with the provincial government besides monitoring the rescue and relief activities under way in affected areas, said an NDMA spokesperson. A military official told The Express Tribune that majority of the mud houses in Awaran, which is scattered over an area of 21,000 sq km had been destroyed. Speaking on condition of anonymity, the official feared that the death toll was expected to rise higher. He said the local Levies headquarters in Awaran district was also destroyed by the earthquake. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has directed the NDMA and the army to assist in relief activities. Nawaz, who is in New York to attend the UN General Assembly, directed the NDMA chairman to keep him updated on the losses, and relief and evacuation measures. The federal government will provide all possible assistance to the victims and the NDMA and Pakistan Army should assist the local administration in relief activities, Nawaz Sharif was quoted as saying in an official statement. "The prime minister has offered me a blank cheque to cater to the needs of the people of Awaran and Kech affected by a powerful earthquake," the NDMA chairman told media at the Quetta airport. The Balochistan government has so far dispatched 19 truckloads of relief goods, food and medical equipment and medicines, spokesman for the provincial government, Jan Buleidi, said.

**The Express Tribune - September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2013**

## **Internally Displaced Persons - IDPs**

### **131,000 New IDPs since March, Report Reveals**

Terrorism and armed clashes continue to cause a huge number of innocent people to flee for their life. They are left homeless, uncared for and without basic facilities of life. A recent report of the Internal Displacement Monitoring Cell (IDMC) and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) claims that as many as 131,000 persons have become internally displaced in the

country since March this year. The figure does not include many of them who are unregistered. The report says in Pakistan the internally displaced person (IDPs) exceeds 415,000 for the year 2012. About 1.1 million IDPs registered as displaced by conflict in the north-west of Pakistan. As many as five million people have been displaced by conflict, sectarian violence and widespread human-rights abuses in the entire north-western part of the country since 2004. Disaster induced displacement has been even more extensive. Around 15 million people were displaced across the country by three years of monsoon floods between 2010 and 2012, and millions more by earthquakes and drought over the years, the report adds. While the magnitude of conflict-related displacement reached its peak in 2009 when three million people were displaced, by the end of 2010, the number of IDPs had fallen to around one million. Since then, returns have been offset by new displacements.

Today, Pakistan faces a renewed displacement crisis, fuelled by massive new forced population movements in FATA, the current focus of conflict in the region. While experts say that the government has handled IDP related issues with extraordinary effort, the scale of the crisis has resulted in multiplying response difficulties. According to the report, while those living in camps are generally considered most needy, two-thirds of all IDPs outside camps live below the poverty line with inadequate access to food, housing and basic services. While national and international responses have been substantial, they have not consistently been rights-based. In the vast majority of cases, only IDPs who meet government criteria for registration are eligible for food assistance and assistance is usually not targeted towards the most vulnerable. Therefore, major reform in the government's criteria for registration is required to bring all displaced people into the assistance net, in line with the 'Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement' and to deliver assistance to those most in need, says the report.

Haleem Adil Sheikh, an expert on IDPs related matters concurs that scale is a problem. "Keeping in view the available resources and capacity, the government has accommodated IDPs' swift return but since 2008 till 2013, more than four million people have been displaced by conflicts and disasters which is again a big number to deal with," says Sheikh. IDMC and UN agencies are of the view that urgent measures are required to address protracted displacement and create the conditions in which Pakistan's growing numbers of IDPs are able to receive sustainable assistance. Humanitarian agencies are now calling for the government and the development sector to ensure the implementation of the Early Recovery Assistance Framework (ERAF) for FATA. According to IDMC, the government must take urgent steps to reduce bureaucratic constraints on humanitarian organizations and expedite their access to the displaced.

**The Express Tribune - September 03<sup>rd</sup>, 2013**

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### **Return of IDPs to Tirah Resumes**

Repatriation of internally displaced persons from Tirah valley of Khyber Agency resumed on Monday after three-day suspension as 153 Malikdinkhel families left the Jerma transit point near Kohat for their homes. Fata Disaster Management Authority had suspended the IDPs' return on Sept 19 after thousands of people from Khyber, Kurram and Orakzai agencies gathered at the Jerma food distribution centre in order to collect monthly food ration. Shah Daraz, a FDMA official at Jerma transit point, told Dawn by telephone that a total of 530 people, including 289 men and 241 women, embarked on their final journey towards their destination in vehicles provided by FDMA. He said 1,010 families, mostly from Malikdinkhel, had returned to Bagh-Maidan area of Tirah valley, while the return of IDPs to Bar Qambarkhel, Shalobar, Adamkhel and Zaodin-Zakhakhel areas would resume once FDMA secured a go-ahead from the Khyber Agency political administration for it. Meanwhile, Assistant Political Agent of Bara Mohammad Nasir told Dawn that the

administration's negotiations with Bar Qambarkhel's tribesmen had made headway during a jirga in Peshawar. He said another round of the jirga would be held in Sadda area of Kurram Agency on Sept 25 as most IDPs from Bar Qambarkhel were living either at Durrani camp or in its surrounding localities. "I am quite optimistic that the return of IDPs to Bar Qambarkhel will resume after the Sept 25 jirga," he said.

**Dawn – September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2013**

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