

### **Steps to take 6 months to yield results: PM**

- ‘Naya Pakistan Housing Authority’ launched

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan has launched ‘Naya Pakistan Housing Authority’ to provide a one-window operation to the industry for construction of five million houses, saying the scheme will attract foreign direct investment, create employment opportunities and spur growth.

Addressing the launching ceremony of Naya Pakistan Housing Program here on Wednesday, the Prime Minister stated that construction of housing is a real scheme that will bring prosperity in the country by involving 40 industries directly linked to the sector.

The Prime Minister also urged people to be patient as there is no reason to be disillusioned, saying the government is taking loan to deal with the external account crisis created by ruthless external borrowing by the previous two governments during the last 10 years that took the total debt to Rs 30 trillion from Rs 6 trillion.

“We don’t have the dollars to repay loan instalments,” he said but assured the people that short-term crisis will usher in a dawn of good time. “We are seeking help from friendly countries and borrowing from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a short period after intensive discussion whether to seek help from friendly countries or borrow from the Fund,” he added.

The Prime Minister stated that reforms initiated by the government including broadening of tax base, action against money laundering, incentives to revive the closed textile units and austerity drive will take at least six months to yield results and this period of six months will be a difficult one. He said that Pakistan is facing the problems today because of mismanagement and corruption in the past.

According to the US State Department report, he stated, every year \$10 billion money laundering was done from Pakistan and nothing was done to channelize the informal remittance that a study reveals are equal to \$20 billion remittance in the country through formal channel. “We can meet our current account deficit need by preventing money laundering and taking steps to channelize informal remittances,” he said expressing hope that revival of closed textile units following incentives given by the government will increase exports to at least \$10 billion in the coming years. “When a nation tolerates corrupt politician, it pays the price of corruption,” he said assuring the nation that this bad time will be over very soon.

The Prime Minister said that the housing schemes announced by the previous government remained unsuccessful because they could only be afforded by those who had money unlike other countries where people borrow to construct the houses. He said that only 0.25 percent people take loans for construction of houses.

The government’s target is to construct five million houses for ordinary and salaried-class people in five years who could not think of having their own house with monthly earning of Rs 10,000 to Rs 25,000.

The second target is to provide employment to the youth as 40 industries are linked with the construction sector and housing sector and employment opportunities will be created for youth, he said, adding that the government will also initiate a skill development programme for construction industry.

The housing sector will also attract foreign direct investment and people have started approaching the Ministry of Housing from one country as the secretary housing has hinted at \$20 billion investment in the sector. The government's role will be of a facilitator and it will try to develop public-private partnership.

The Prime Minister said he will himself oversee the Naya Pakistan Housing Authority to remove bottlenecks. The authority will be set up in 90 days and before the formation of authority, a 17-member task force is being formed to oversee the matter.

“We are forming a land bank to have information of federal and provincial governments' lands and the government will provide land only and investment will be made by the private sector,” he said. He further said the government will collect data of kachi abadis (slums) to relocate the people in the houses with ownership rights. The government will construct vertical buildings on the sites of kachi abadis to house those living in those slums.

A pilot project will be started in 60 districts for registration campaigns to gather information about those who intend to register themselves for the government housing scheme. The registration campaign will be for 60 days, he added while announcing registration for federal government housing scheme from today (Thursday).

There was no financing model for mortgage and the government will set up a national financial regulation body with the help of State Bank of Pakistan to deal with the hindrances. A framework will be ready in 60 days for legislation, he added.

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