

Govt will ensure extension of social protection to informal sectors: Sania

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In this file photo, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Social Protection and Poverty Alleviation Sania Nishtar said. — DawnNewsTv/File

ISLAMABAD: Protecting the most economically marginalised and vulnerable groups is the top priority of the government, Special Assistant to Prime Minister (SAPM) on Social Protection and Poverty Alleviation Senator Dr Sania Nishtar said.

She expressed these views at the launch of a report, Mazdoor Ka Ehsaas, held by the Ehsaas Delivery Unit, Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Division, in collaboration with International Labour Organisation (ILO).

Ms Nishtar informed participants that a bill envisaging inclusion of workers from informal sectors of economy has already been presented in the Senate. She said the report will provide the government a strategic dimension to implement its approach towards protecting vulnerable segments more effectively.

SAPM on Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Syed Zulfiqar Abbas Bukhari said the government is taking various initiatives to include workers from informal sectors of economy under social protection.

In this regard, he said, old-age benefits are being extended to those working in the informal economy. The government also aims to enhance pension up to at least minimum wage level.

Ms Ingrid Christensen, country director ILO, while facilitating the session said that we need to devise mechanisms to ensure that social protection and social security must cover informal employment.

Ms Mariko Ouchi, senior social security specialist ILO, said global development in extending social protection to the informal economy, through agriculture and self-employment.

Melis U. Guven, senior social protection economist, World Bank, said during the pandemic \$600 million financing for the Crisis-Resilient Social Protection Programme (Crisp), was approved by the World Bank. She said it was aimed at supporting Pakistan in the expansion of Ehsaas, to protect vulnerable households and increase resilience to economic shocks such as the Covid-19 pandemic.

Dr Aliya Khan, labour economist, said that while compiling the report all stakeholders including academia, legal and experts on economy and workers' representatives were consulted on reaching out to the informal sector of economy.

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