**Informer to get 10pc of benami asset`s value: PM**

By Syed Irfan Raza |

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| ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan said on Friday the government was making the whistleblowers law more attractive for those who would reveal benami bank accounts and assets of others as they (informers) would get 10 per cent of the value of recovered assets after their sale.  He said the government would divert the money generated by the sale of recovered benami assets to its flagship programme Ehsas for the uplift of poor and downtrodden people.  The prime minister said this at the launching ceremony of Rs42.65 billion National Poverty Graduation Initiative where cheques for soft loans were distributed among 391 deserving individuals, including women, to enable them to launch small businesses.  Such ceremonies were held in dif ferent parts of thecountry and soft loans were given to 82,000 deserving people.  The main objective of the initiative is to steer the poorest household out of poverty by providing them interest-free loans, asset transfers and vocadonal and skills trainings.  `Presently three per cent of the value of a recovered benami asset is given to the informer after its sale but now the government will give the informers 10pc, the prime minister said.  `I think that with the sale of benami assets the funds of Ehsas programme will become higher than the total federal budget,` he said.  Mr Khan did not miss the opportunity to criticise the opposition and said the people of the country were harvesting what the former rulers had sowed. `They [former rulers] brought the country`s foreign debts from Rs6,000 billion to Rs30,000bn and did not build even a single hospital in which they could get medical treatment,` he added.  He said despite putting the nation under heavy burden of foreign loans, the former rulers got medical treatment in foreign countries on taxpayers` money.  `On the one hand, the nation was drowning in debts and, on the other, former president Asif Ali Zardari paid 40 visits to Dubai and former prime minister Nawaz Sharif vis-ited London 40 times. The cost of their each foreign visit is said to be Rs300 million,` the PM said.  Responding to the remarks of Opposition Leader Shahbaz Sharif that `the prime minister should punish his opponents to the extent which he himself can also tolerate`, Mr Khan said, `I am ready to even die but you [Shahbaz Sharif] aren`t because you want to enjoy the wealth accumulated in London.  Talking about the initiative, he said people would see complete transparency in the programme, adding that the government had allocated Rs200bn for Ehsas programme in the budget.  Earlier, Special Assistant to the PM on Social Protection and Poverty Alleviation Dr Sania Nishtar said such poverty alleviation programmes were also launched by the previous governments but the funds were misused and relatives and friends of officials concerned and legislators benefited from the initiatives.  `Transparency is the main difference in our Ehsas programme,` she added.  Road to Makkah Meanwhile, Prime Minister Khan formally inaugurated the Road to Makkah project at the Islamabad International Airport on Friday on the occasionofthe departure of first Haj flight of the Pakistan International Airlines.  Under the project, immigration and other relevant processes for intending pilgrims are being conducted at Islamabad airport.  The project is said to be a gift from Saudi Arabia to Pakistani intending pilgrims and 21,000 pilgrimswill benefit from this initiative.  On Thursday, for the first time, Saudi immigration staff conducted immigration process of 368 Pakistani pilgrims at Islamabad airport as the Haj flight operation from Pakistan started.  The first flight of Saudi Airlines (SV-3719) with the 368 pilgrims on board took of f for Madina at 11am.  Before going through the immigration process, thepilgrims were administered polio drops.  The pilgrims were seen off by Minister for Aviation Ghulam Sarwar Khan, Minister for Religious Affairs Pir Noorul Haq Qadri and Saudi Ambassador Nawaf Bin Said Al Malki.  Mr Sarwar said that Pakistan had been included in the Road to Makkah project after Prime Minister Khan requested the Saudi crown prince in this regard. |