

Bilawal slams 'conspiracy' to deregulate agricultural sector

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KARACHI: Pakistan Peoples Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari on Monday condemned what he called a conspiracy being hatched by “mafias, large business groups, industrialists and international forces” to deregulate the agricultural sector.

“In a time when climate change poses a question of life and death, suggesting deregulation of the agricultural sector is a foolish idea and plan,” he said, while speaking at the inauguration ceremony of the Benazir Hari Card here at Sindh Chief Minister House.

He described investment in agriculture as the only path to national development and demanded an immediate end to subsidies for fertilizer factories.

According to a press release issued by the Media Cell Bilawal House, the PPP chairman questioned the current state of the justice system, asking the people of the province if they were satisfied with it.

He stated that if the justice system seemed fair, it should continue, but if it was broken and unjust, the Charter of Democracy (CoD) had provided solutions for its flaws.

He suggested that establishing a constitutional court alongside regular courts could help resolve constitutional issues and protect fundamental rights. “If there is a dispute between the federation and a province, there should be a platform to resolve such issues,” he said.

The PPP chairman reaffirmed his party's two demands — the establishment of a constitutional court and the reform of the judicial appointment process — both of which, he said, were laid out in the CoD.

He criticised the judiciary for permitting military dictators to draft constitutions and pointed out that former chief justice Iftikhar Chaudhry had introduced a system that failed to deliver justice to the people but benefited the judiciary itself.

He stated that the constitutional amendment proposals by the PPP were based on slain former prime minister Benazir Bhutto's promises, enshrined in the CoD.

He announced that he would meet again with JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rahman and together they would bring improvements to the justice system through the 26th Constitutional Amendment.

Regarding the Benazir Hari Card, he said that his party had always worked to secure the rights of the poor, farmers, and women and the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) had become a global example in this regard.

He said that the PPP had fulfilled another promise from its election manifesto by launching the Benazir Hari Card in the province.

Under this programme, poor farmers and small-scale growers across the province will receive targeted subsidies, access to easy loans, assistance in acquiring modern agricultural technology, crop insurance, and immediate government aid in case of natural disasters.

He recalled that Ms Bhutto had envisioned the economy in a way that benefited farmers. "Even decades back, the IMF was present, and Pakistan was said to be at a critical juncture. But Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto spoke up for the rights of poor farmers."

Before the end of ceremony, the PPP chairman distributed Benazir Hari Cards among the farmers, whereas the other farmers and attendees joined online from respective districts of Sindh.

PPP-Women Wing President Faryal Talpur, PPP-Sindh President Nisar Ahmed Khuhro, Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, Sindh Agriculture Minister Sardar Muhammad Bux Khan Mahar and several parliamentarians were also present on the occasion of launching ceremony.

During the launch occasion, CM Shah announced that 1.4 million small farmers had been registered under the scheme.

Farmers with up to 12.5 acres of land will receive cash grants ranging from Rs1,000 to Rs2,000 per acre, while those holding more than 25 acres will receive Rs500 to Rs1,000 per acre, he added.

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