



External Relations Department

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President of Pakistan appreciates SBP for the leadership role in promoting financial inclusion of women and digital payments

The President of Pakistan, Dr. Arif Alvi, has appreciated the Governor State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), Dr. Reza Baqir, for leading the initiatives of SBP in the areas of women empowerment through financial inclusion and expanding the landscape of digital payments in the country. He was addressing an online meeting with Governor State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), Dr. Reza Baqir, SAPM on Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety, Dr Sania Nishtar, senior SBP officials, Presidents/CEOs of banks and other stakeholders.

On Women Empowerment, Governor SBP gave a detailed briefing to the President about a number of regulatory and financing measures to enhance the flow of financial services to women. He said that SBP has been providing financing, under its subsidized Refinance and Credit Guarantee Scheme for Women Entrepreneurs, since 2017 to facilitate women owned startups and small scale businesses by providing loans of up to Rs5 million. To particularly benefit the women of Balochistan encouraging them to avail loans under this scheme, he apprised the President, that a quota of 20% has been reserved for women entrepreneurs of Balochistan.

Adding further, Governor Baqir shared that SBP's efforts are aligned with the Government's priorities of encouraging self-employment as, under the Prime Minister Kamyab Jawan Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme, a quota of 25% has also been reserved for women. He remarked that SBP is collaborating with Ehsaas program to implement the Prime Minister's vision of having 'One Woman One Account' beyond the existing facility of cash disbursements through branchless banking agents only. He also highlighted the key features of SBP's upcoming 'Banking on Equality' Policy, which would engender equality in banking and reduce gender gap in financial inclusion.

On digital payments, the Governor SBP briefed the President on various initiatives to promote it in the country. He elaborated SBP's multipronged strategy including developing an interoperable and digital payments infrastructure, providing enabling legal and regulatory environment, ensuring security of digital payment channels and finally promoting and experimenting with new technologies and fintechs companies. Sharing numbers on the progress of digital payments, Governor Baqir updated the President that digital transactions in Pakistan have seen an upward trend in recent years. He highlighted that, during FY20, 906 million transactions amounting to Rs66 trillion were processed through retail e-Banking channels, whereas internet-banking channels processed 57 million transactions amounting to Rs3 trillion. He added that a promising growth could also be witnessed in mobile banking with 3 million new users added within one year and overall number of transactions of 83 million worth Rs2 trillion during FY20. Further, e-commerce transactions amounting to Rs35 billion were conducted and bill payments worth Rs213 billion were made by consumers using digital payment channels in Pakistan.

The President of Pakistan, Dr. Arif Alvi, thanked Governor for SBP's efforts and progress on women empowerment and promotion of digital payments. He also acknowledged the role of MPG in unlocking the potential for economic benefits. He also appreciated the idea that the young female entrepreneurs with large social media following may be identified as brand ambassadors to create awareness among public about SBP policies and products for promoting gender financial inclusion.

SAPM, Dr. Sania Nishtar thanked SBP for its support on facilitation of Ehsaas beneficiaries through Branchless Banking. She further added that they are working with SBP on use of micro payment gateway for facilitating digital payments to Ehsaas beneficiaries.

Earlier, Deputy Governor Ms. Sima Kamil gave an update on implementation timelines of micropayment gateway. Meeting was also attended by CEO/Presidents of banks and representatives from digital payments ecosystem, who shared their unique perspectives and experiences on women empowerment and digital payments.
