

H.E Syed Murad Ali Shah, Chief Minister, Government of Sindh,
Honorable Mr. Jam Mehtab Dahar, Minister Education,
Government of Sindh,
Respected Mr. Abdul Aziz Uqaili, Secretary School Education, Government
of Sindh,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,
Assalam-o-Alaikum

It is a great pleasure for me to be here with you today at this inauguration and handing-over ceremony of schools that have been constructed with Japan's Grant Aid Projects intended for upgrading primary girls schools into middle schools in Southern and Rural Sindh, worth 1.8 billion Japanese Yen, equivalent to around Rs. 1.8 billion.

This Grant Aid is being implemented through two phases. Phase-1 has completed in Southern Sindh and today's ceremony is to hand over the schools constructed under this phase. Phase-2 has also commenced in Northern Sindh. The Grant Aid is being used for infrastructure improvement and extension of school buildings and will also provide necessary school furniture and computers for IT education.

After the completion of both Grant Aid projects, 54 primary girls' schools would have been upgraded to middle schools and every year, it is anticipated that 6,600 girls can be admitted in the schools in rural Sindh. This assistance will help to minimize the gender gap and gap between urban and rural formal education in selected Districts of Sindh.

Availing of this opportunity let me also share with you, Japan's other involvements in the education sector in Pakistan. We recognize that 11 Million children of primary & middle school age in Pakistan are still out of school, out of which 3.8 million are in Sindh, 4.3 Million in Punjab, 1 Million each in Balochistan and KPK. They require alternative non formal education system which is equivalent to formal primary education with prospects for bringing them into the formal education. For this purpose Japan is assisting Pakistan through its Advancing Quality Alternative Learning project assistance. Though the schools constructed under the Japan's Grant Aid are providing formal education, we would also like to encourage the Government to consider utilizing these schools for teaching non formal education to out of school children in the afternoon/evening after the regular school hours. Similarly, the adult literacy classes could also be made possible in the same school premises.

Sindh is a leading pro-women province of Pakistan owing to the fact that the first Pakistani woman Prime Minister, Late Benazir Bhutto, was from Sindh province and the government is pursuing pro-women policies and initiatives. Women's education and economic empowerment are also priorities for Japan. Mr. Shinzo Abe, Japan's Prime Minister has also openly expressed Japan's commitment for creating "a society in which women shine" in Japan and other parts of the world, in his address at the UN General Assembly in 2013.

Japan is fully committed and would continue to support improvement of basic education, non-formal education, technical education and girls and women's education and economic empowerment. Today, we are pleased to hand over the schools constructed under the Japan's Grant Aid for Southern Sindh to School Education Department with the expectation that they would manage these schools on sustainable basis with good student enrolment, teachers deployment and effective utilization of the school buildings for both formal & non formal education in Sindh. I would also encourage the parents to ensure that their daughters continue their education from primary to middle level & beyond. Education is the key to a brighter future.

Thank you very much, Mahar Bani

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