

PRESS RELEASE

August 5, 2020: Youth Economic Forum held yet another deliberative session on the most recent and pressing aspect of the current pandemic, that is, its impact on religious obligations and festivals. In the current scenario, it is Eid-ul-Azha. This year Eid-ul-Azha was different just like the Eid-ul-Fitr. The COVID-19 pandemic has totally altered the course of these religious festivals. Our panel discussed how the COVID-19 pandemic shaped the festival, its economic aspect, the government's policies and response to this.

The session was moderated by Jamal Nasir, PR Associate YEF and had our experts Ms. Amina Bajwa and Mr. Bahlol Ali Khan. Amina Bajwa is the member of the Prime Minister's Strategic Reform & Implementation Unit. Amina Bajwa provided us with insights in regards to the administration and policy implementation by the government. Next, up we had Mr. Bahlol Ali Khan, who is the co-founder at Meating.pk. Bahlol provided talked about the topic in terms of business opportunities and the economic aspect.

The session proceeded with the question that whether the Smart Lockdown by the government of Pakistan is an effective way of tackling the COVID-19 spread. As many nations reacted towards the virus differently i.e. Iraq and Oman imposed strict curfews, Canada advised Muslims to pray at home. Ms. Amina Bajwa initiated the discussion. She was of the opinion that indeed Smart Lockdown approach is effective. She said that Pakistan is fortunately healing from the virus because of this Smart Lockdown. Although its nature has been altering over the course of time, it altered in terms of its severity, policies and the public's response to it and the government has participated actively in dealing COVID-19 with an iron hand.

The session proceeded with Mr. Bahlol talking about his startup "Meating.pk" with is based on e-commerce business model. He responded to Jamal's point that how this current pandemic has given rise to innovative businesses like his start-up. Bahlol said that digitalization is the future and his startup was the need of the hour. Next, YEF imposed another striking question: Pakistan fortunately is on its way of COVID-19 healing as 81% of the patients recover. However, there is chance of a potential second wave as PM Imran Khan warns. WHO also released guidelines for the Eid. There is greater chance as well because this Eid involves obligations with less sanitation, activities like meat distribution, which involves mobility. Therefore, instead of the sacrifice all the money should have been donated to the deserving segment of the society, which is a more elevated religious obligation. Our expert Amina Bajwa totally agree with the notion and she shared how she donated the money instead of the sacrifice. She reached NGOs who have access to the needy because this pandemic has shocked the deserving economically. Bahlol added further that how positively his start-up has provided livelihood to the poor livestock farmers.

The session concluded with the aspect that how this Eid was less economically benefiting to the nation as a whole. Ms. Amina Bajwa lauded Bahlol's start-up in this regard. She was of the opinion that private companies must play their role in this regard by trading with local livestock farmers. Bahlol said that the local farmers must be provided subsidized resources like in terms of animal feed, transport or more opportunities like using their animals in Pakistan's huge meat export. We are in this together and we have to deal with pandemic all together. There is a huge potential in our private sector and it must join hands with the government. Although the retail industry has suffered as well with minus 6% growth and rural economy has good. Ms. Amina Bajwa added that how positively SECP has provided ease of business to new start-ups. But we are hopeful that future bring only good in all aspects.

