

September 6 and a reaffirmed commitment



By Madam Farzana Raja, Federal Minister and Chairperson BISP

September 6, which is marked as our national Defence Day holds a special significance in the history of our beloved country as 37 years ago, it was the day the armed forces as well as entire Pakistani nation stood in front of the aggression to defend our homeland. Hence, it is the day to remember the sacrifices of our martyrs and to pay them homage for remaining steadfast in such a difficult time.

The founder of Pakistan Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah always wished for a strong Pakistan which has an impregnable defence. Later, the history of Pakistan is evident that Pakistan Peoples Party has a special commitment with the cause of making the defence of Pakistan invincible. It is a commitment of strengthening the nation to the level that no aggressor could even think of inflicting any harm to Pakistan and its people. In fact, the very foundations of PPP, under the charismatic and dynamic leadership of Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, were laid on the promise of making Pakistan a modern, progressive and strong state, which would be capable of neutralizing all sorts of hostile designs towards it.

The visionary leadership of Shaheed Bhutto not only introduced and encouraged modernization process in the armed forces of Pakistan but also envisaged nuclear power project keeping in view the nature of regional and global threats and the future needs pertaining to the defence of the country.

Later, while treading on the foot step of her father, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto, the first women prime minister in the Islamic world, paid special attention towards the emerging needs of the armed forces as well as the new challenges in a changed global scenario. Shaheed BB realized very soon that only the nuclear power would not be an effective deterrence unless it is not coupled with state of the art missile technology. Consequently, she proposed and worked hard for augmenting the defence of Pakistan by adding missile technology to its armory. This was of course an immediate need in the context of the overall security paradigm of South Asia.

It is so because of the firm believe and vision of the PPP leadership that our befitting defence capability would not only ensure the geographic integrity of the country but also to safeguard our ideological boundaries that are based on a just and egalitarian modern democracy.

Today, the brave soldiers of Pakistan Army are again sacrificing their lives while fighting with anti-Pakistan forces and militants within the borders of the country only to secure the future of our coming generations. While acknowledging this great service of our soldiers for the nation, the present government, under the able leadership of the President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, has kept the great tradition of PPP alive. The democratic government has rendered its full support to Pakistan Army and has ensured that all the requirements pertaining to our much needed defence are being fulfilled.

While at one front, the war against terrorism is being fought by the armed forces of Pakistan, the war against poverty is being fought from the platform of BISP considering the fact that poverty is one of the root causes of the extremism leading to militancy and terrorism. The democratic government believes that a considerable reduction in the poverty and creation of a social welfare state would ultimately strengthen the State of Pakistan, free from all sort of social injustices as well as extremism and terrorism.

To achieve the objective of creating a social welfare state, which was in actuality, the vision of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto, the democratic government has adopted an innovative but highly effective approach. The introduction of a transparent, effective and comprehensive social protection programme such as Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) was the step of the PPP government right after the inception aiming to translate the vision of serving the poor people of Pakistan into a reality.

The launch of BISP was in fact a clear pronouncement of the PPP led government that it believes in the welfare of the people and that was the reason it launched BISP which is endorsed by of the people of Pakistan. It is also a clear acknowledgment of the fact that no war could be won without the support of the people and without catering for their fundamental needs. It is a matter of great satisfaction for us that due to its highly transparent and efficient mechanisms BISP, during a short span of four years, has not only attracted global admiration and appreciation but has also been able to achieve significant breakthrough with regard to its various stated objectives i.e. providing immediate relief to downtrodden segments of society, women empowerment as well as promoting education.

These efforts of BISP are expected to bear fruit not only with regard to poverty alleviation but also to curb the extremist tendencies in the society and hence, it would strengthen the defence capabilities of our nation with an increased resolve and commitment.

Today, while remembering our martyr of the War of September 1965, we would like to reaffirm that the war against poverty would be continued till all the desired objectives are achieved according to vision of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto and the aspirations of the 180 million people of Pakistan.

· Especially written article in connection with National Defence Day of Pakistan