

President of Pakistan, **Mr. Asif Ali Zardari** has conferred on the Federal Minister and Chairperson, BISP **Ms. Farzana Raja** the honor of **Hilal-e-Imtiaz** (Crescent of Excellence) on her Struggle, Service and Success



Personal Profile

Ms. Farzana Raja, Member National Assembly of Pakistan is the Federal Minister and Chairperson of the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP). Ms Raja is Vice President of the Young Parliamentarians Forum of the 13th National Assembly of Pakistan. She is also an active member of the Women Parliamentary Caucus of the National Assembly of Pakistan; working beyond party lines for the uplift of Pakistani women.

Ms. Farzana Raja has a long-time affiliation with the Pakistan Peoples Party and has been at the forefront for the Party's struggle for democracy and rights of the underprivileged sections of society. Ms. Raja remained member of the provincial assembly (MPA), Punjab from 2002 to 2007. She has always been actively participating in the policy formulation work of the Party, especially in the areas of women empowerment, foreign policy and media relations.

Ms. Raja is a famous print and media commentator and commands great respect in the journalists' society of Pakistan. She is also an eloquent speaker and has spoken at various conferences / seminars organized by national and international institutions. She also has a special interest in writing articles / columns on diverse topics and has contributed for the last 10 years in leading English and Urdu newspapers of Pakistan.

Chairperson BISP

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In view of Farzana Raja's long-lasting commitment to the poor and vulnerable sections of society and her desire to work for their betterment, she was appointed as Chairperson of the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) in 2008. It was the time both exogenous as well as indigenous factors had affected Pakistan's economy severely. Immediate relief to the common citizen was the biggest challenge facing the government. It was under these tough circumstances that Mrs. Farzana Raja took over as the Chairperson of the BISP. In a span of about four years, she transformed BISP into the largest and most credible ever social protection initiative of the country. It was her devotion to the cause of improving the lives of the millions of poor that BISP has managed to reach out to more than 7 million families in the country. Similar welfare initiatives took other countries like Brazil & Mexico almost a decade to achieve. Through her undaunted commitment to the cause, relentless hard work and strong principles, Mrs. Farzana Raja evolved a culture of transparency in the disbursement of cash grants amongst the marginalized and the poorest sections of Pakistan.

Minorities were given equal opportunity to receive benefits from BISP, by meeting the criteria like any other Pakistani. BISP was made apolitical program, which enhanced the credibility and believability, resulting into smooth functioning on fast pace.

Mrs. Farzana Raja personally visited all corners of the country, from small villages and Internally displaced people's camps to the big cities to meet the people to get their direct feedback and to create a personal human connection, to give hope for better future, to truly deserving and marginalized families.

This commitment, dedication and resolve of Mrs. Raja has won accolades for BISP worldwide. In a meeting with Mrs. Farzana Raja, the UN Secretary General Mr. Ban ki-Moon called BISP "a model for other developing nations. Among other dignitaries of the world, the World Bank President, the US Secretary of State, the President of Asian Development Bank, President CSIS, Washington DC, the UN Special Envoy on Global Education, UN Assistant Secretary General and Assistant Administrator, UNDP acknowledged the transparency, objectivity and technology-based operations of BISP.

Federal Minister/Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme

Ms. Farzana Raja receiving
Gold Medal, 'Human Rights Defender Award'
by President of Pakistan
Mr. Asif Ali Zardari

In recognition of her services for the protection of human rights, struggle for democracy and untiring efforts for poverty alleviation



ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari conferred Human Rights Defender awards on Ms. Farzana Raja Federal Minister/Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme, on International Human Rights Day, December 10, 2010.

She received this award in recognition of her services for the protection of Human Rights, struggle for democracy and efforts for women empowerment. The day marks the anniversary of the General Assembly's adoption of Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948.



The president, while speaking at the occasion of award ceremony, said the PPP-led government would continue to follow the vision of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto regarding upholding basic human rights of all individuals regardless of caste, creed or any other consideration.

Among others, federal ministers, parliamentarians, armed forces personals, diplomats and prominent citizens also attended the ceremony.