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[PRESS RELEASE]

Federal Minister for Poverty Alleviation & Social Safety and Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme - Madam Shazia Marri, addresses the conference held by the Sindh Mental Health Authority

Karachi, February 18, 2023: Federal Minister for Poverty Alleviation & Social Safety and Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme - Madam Shazia Marri, addressed the conference held by the Sindh Mental Health Authority, at the Regent Plaza in Karachi. Titled "How Benazir Income Support Programme (B.I.S.P) can help with Mental Health Issues", the conference focused on the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic, the rain and flood havoc and environmental issues, in worsening mental health issues around the country.

Lauding the work of the Sindh Mental Health Authority, in highlighting the importance of targeting mental health issues in society, the Minister also thanked the doctors, psychologists, psychiatrists and members of civil society who were attending the conference.

Acknowledging the work of Dr Karim Khawaja, the Minister lauded the wonderful work being done in Sindh and highlighted the recent report published by the Sindh Mental Health Authority. The Minister stressed on the importance of mental health issues stating that there was no health without mental health, as the brain was a vital organ that needed care too. She further stressed the necessity of ending the stigma surrounding mental health issues, through the efforts of the media in promoting mental health awareness.

The Minister then stated that mental health issues were rather common, as they could also be seen in political figures around the country. She however, reiterated that it was necessary to talk about mental health, so that people could feel comfortable in attaining help with regards to their issues. Citing the Covid-19 pandemic and the havoc wreaked by the recent floods, the Minister acknowledged the impact of these disasters on the mental health of the victims.

Expressing dismay over yesterday's terrorist attack at the Police Station in Karachi, the Minister addressed the prevalent issue of terrorism and its terrible impact on the mental health of the victims of terrorist attacks. Madam Shazia Marri further shed light upon the issues of child marriage, sexual harassment and incest, and stressed how crucial it was that the mental health issues caused by these horrors, were also addressed.

The Minister then emphasised the need for stability in the country and lambasted the people trying to destabilise the country. She particularly condemned the people responsible for facilitating the rise of terrorism in the country, and acknowledged the sacrifices made by the nation and its armed forces, in the fight against terrorism.

The Minister reiterated that it was necessary to not just fight terrorism but also the mindset that bred extremism in the country. She further stated that her red line was her country and that any threats against it would cross that red line.

Appreciating everyone's presence at the conference, the Minister then suggested the extension of mental health support services to all the women enrolled in BISP, in collaboration with the Sindh Mental Health Authority.

This conference was attended by prominent members of the World Health Organization, the medical community and civil society, particularly doctors, psychologists and psychiatrists from some of the most renowned hospitals and universities in Karachi.