

1. SELF-RELIANT SHAMIM, ZAHIDA INSPIRATION FOR BISP BENEFICIARIES: MARVI

Published in Business Recorder, March 17, 2016

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State and Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) Marvi Memon Wednesday said self-reliant women like Shamim Akhtar and Zahida Kazmi were the source of inspiration for the BISP beneficiaries. "Breaking stereotypes and driving through gender-based obstacles are critical to social and financial empowerment of women," she said while addressing a function organized by BISP here.

The event titled "BISP Empowers Talk (BET)" was organized to share struggle of first female truck driver in Pakistan Shamim Akhtar and taxi driver Zahida Kazmi which made them to earn respectable livelihood. She said the present government was committed to create an environment in which role of women grew in the betterment of their families, society and country.

"Shamim Akhtar and Zahida Kazmi are role models of self-reliance and source of inspiration for Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) beneficiaries," Marvi added. Marvi said that the objective of "BISP Empowers Talk" was to put women role models in front of most vulnerable women of the country to encourage them to get out of misery created by poverty and other discriminations.

BISP was the beacon of light for the struggling beneficiaries with an aim to break the poverty net and become self-sufficient as envisioned by Prime Minister, Muhammed Nawaz Sharif, she added. The Chairperson said "BISP Empowers Talk (BET)" is a BISP initiative to encourage idea generation, success transfer, motivation and inspiration for BISP beneficiaries in order to

increase empowerment, dignity and meaning to life".

Under this initiative, BISP invited Shamim Akhtar and Zahida Kazmi for a talk with BISP beneficiaries. Shamim Akhtar, a 53-year-old single mother from Rawalpindi, is Pakistan's first female truck driver who started driving in the face of financial hardships.

She highlighted that she was the only one to get Public Service Vehicle (PSV) license whereas eleven male applicants couldn't even pass the driving test. She narrated that she started from knitting and sewing and further switched over to driving and then established a driving school.



More than thousand drivers have been trained in her driving school. Zahida Kazmi, a widow, is the first Pakistani female taxi driver who has been earning livelihood as taxi driver for the past two decades. She started as a clerk in Sindh secretariat, switched over to driving when Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif gave her first taxi of Yellow Cab Scheme.

Once denied entry into airport as a taxi driver, she rose to the position of chairperson of the All Pakistan Yellow Cab Federation. On invitation of Aurat Foundation, she has trained twelve female drivers. Now she aims for UC district member from Rawalpindi.

While talking to BISP beneficiaries, Shamim Akhtar and Zahida Kazmi emphasized upon depending on own strengths in order to survive and contribute in the welfare of their families.

They argued that nothing was too difficult if women had the will.

However, if women made them believe that they could not do certain tasks, nothing would work for them. They appealed BISP beneficiaries to get advantage of the social and financial assistance received from BISP in overcoming the problems of hunger and poverty. They praised the Prime Minister for his pro-poor policies that had become instruments in supporting needy and courageous women like them.



The event was attended by members of Parliament, diplomats, representatives of government organizations, national and international organizations, media, civil society, Secretary BISP Muhammad Saleem Ahmed Ranjha, BISP officials and a large number of BISP beneficiaries.

(Nation, Frontier Post, Patriot, Nawainvaqt, Express, Dunya, Naibaat, Khabrain, Pakistan, Jinnah and Ausaf carried the story and picture)