

**SPEECH BY THE
PRIME MINISTER
ON THE OCCASION
OF PHOTO EXHIBITION
ON SWAT AT PNCA,
ISLAMABAD**

General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, Chief of the Army Staff

**Distinguished guests,
Dignitaries,
Ladies and Gentlemen**

Assalam -o- Alaikum,

Today my participation in the photo exhibition under the title of “Swat Smiles Again” is a moment of fulfillment and self-actualization. It is a story of success and realization of a dream, a dream which the terrorists and extremists wanted to destroy. Our success in Swat and Malakand Division shows that a handful of terrorists and extremists cannot muzzle the voice of the majority. They cannot impose their conservative agenda if the people are resilient and ready to pay any price to protect their future. History has proven time and again that it is the truth which comes out victorious.

Ladies and Gentlemen

When the present government took over in 2008, the country was reeling under the burden of serious issues. Had these problems not been addressed head-on, they had the potential of threatening the federation. Our government was very clear in its vision and knew very well that the initiative involved taking bold, courageous and at times unpopular decisions for which it might have to get flak from the political opposition. Despite knowing the cost, the government preferred the national interest over everything else. Upon taking over, the most critical problem that stared the government in the face was that of terrorism and extremism. As an aggregate result of previous regime's failed policies, terrorism had become a monster. The terrorists struck at will and attempted to challenge the writ of the government. There was a near collapse of government's writ in the settled areas like Swat and Malakand Division. Had the

terrorists not been checked through effective military action, they would have tried to bring other areas of Pakistan under their influence.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me mention that military action was a matter of last resort, as it could entail collateral damage and cause displacement of people at a massive level. The government tried to find a negotiated settlement of the issue despite a very strong opposition and allegations of surrendering to the terrorists. Another problem that constrained the government from ordering military action was the absence of national consensus against militancy and terrorism. Once negotiations and dialogue failed, the government was left with no option but to establish its writ at any cost. The successful adoption of anti-terror resolution passed in the joint sitting of parliament helped evolve national consensus against terrorism. All Parties Parliamentary Committee constituted on the behest of the government to oversee the war on terror marked an institutional response to the national security challenges. The unity within our political ranks encouraged our armed forces to take on the terrorists and extremists in Swat through operation Raha-e-Rast. The successes achieved in the Malakand Division and the political ownership of the war enabled the armed forces to launch the 'Raha-e-Najat' to flush out terrorists from there.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The military action against terrorists as expected caused massive displacement of people in the neighbourhood of 2.5 million from Swat and Malakand Division. The government was confronted with the twin challenges of looking after the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and clearing up the areas of terrorists so that early rehabilitation of IDPs could be managed to win the hearts and minds. Had the situation not been handled wisely, it could well have developed into humanitarian crisis. But it goes to the credit of the present government that it mobilized all physical and human resources in looking after the IDPs. The completion of the military action within a record time and orderly rehabilitation of more than 2.5 million IDPs won accolade for the government, the armed forces, security agencies and civil administration both from Pakistan and abroad. The confidence of people of Malakand Division in the state institutions to provide security undoubtedly has been a critical factor in turning the tide

against terrorists. Our gratitude is due to our valiant armed forces who added a glorious chapter to the history of counterinsurgency. The record time within which the operation Rah-e-Rast was accomplished and IDPs rehabilitated astonished the world. Thus the Swat success model has come to be recognized globally being considered worthy of emulation. It explains why the top US and NATO commanders choose to visit Swat during their trips to Pakistan.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The people of Swat and Malakand Division in particular and people of Pakistan in general also deserve our abiding tribute for their immense sacrifices both in terms of human lives and material. Had they not supported the democratic government, it would have been difficult for us to overcome the challenge in such a short time. In the end, I would like to state that we stand committed to safeguarding the frontiers of Pakistan and protecting its people from any external and internal dangers.

I congratulate the organizers of this exhibition for bringing us these amazing images from Swat. I also thank the sponsors for coming forward to support such inspirational activities. I would end my speech with an Urdu verse:

Irada jin kay pukhta hoon, nazr jin ki Khuda per ho

Talatum khaiz mojoon say wo ghabria nahi kertay

Pakistan Painda Bad.