

**SPEECH OF THE
PRIME MINISTER
ON THE OCCASION
OF 44TH CONVOCATION OF
COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS & SURGEONS PAKISTAN
(5TH AUGUST, 2010)**

Makhdoom Shahabuddin, Federal Minister for Health

Begum Shahnaz Wazir Ali, Special Assistant to Prime Minister

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Councilors of CPSP

Medical Specialists of the Country

New Fellows and Members of CPSP

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my privilege to be part of this eminent gathering today on the occasion of the 44th Convocation of College of Physicians & Surgeons Pakistan (CPSP). The day marks a major step forward in the professional life of FCPS and MCPS awardees who are having the singular honour of passing out of this prestigious medical institution of the country. Let me take this opportunity to congratulate them on achieving this important milestone in their lives.

It is a matter of immense satisfaction that since its establishment in 1962, this premier postgraduate medical institution has set higher standards of academic excellence, research, effective service delivery, and self-reliance. The College can rightly take pride on producing some of the best medical professionals in the world who have brought laurels both to their institution as well as their country. The College of Physicians & Surgeons

Pakistan's partnership with elite medical institutions of the US, UK, Malaysia and Saudi Arabia speaks volumes about the dedication, commitment and professional excellence of its Fellows and management and is a national honour.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is no denying the fact that health sector did not receive the policy attention it rightfully deserved. The centralization of decision-making processes and complexity of health governance further aggravated the problem. The systematic flaws of our mixed health architecture resulted into wastage of resources, duplication of work and our inability to build state institutions responsible for spearheading reform agenda. The lack of continuity of policies also contributed to this state of affairs. To cap it all, no serious attention was paid to the broader structural dimensions such as decentralization, mechanisms of social protection, labour market interventions which also adversely impacted the health system.

Upon taking over in March 2008, the democratic government embarked on a long but laborious path of designing institutional response to the problems of the health sector. On my directions, a Health Policy Task Force was established in 2008 to present comprehensive recommendations to transform the health sector of Pakistan. The Task Force was further divided into six sub-groups and each group was allocated different subject to work on such as hospital management, health services in governance, health financing, medical education, human resource development, and medical ethics etc.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is on the basis of the recommendations presented by the Health Policy Task Force that the government has formulated the National Health Policy

2010 in consultation with all key stakeholders. It is the third National Policy which builds on the gains of previous two Health Policies worked out in 1997 and 2001 but is far more dynamic in terms of its scope, and coverage of health issues. Additionally, this Policy is also alive to the challenges and realities of globalization. I am sure that effective and sustained implementation of the National Health Policy 2010 would go a long way in meeting the Millennium Development Goals.

You are aware that the democratic government has created history by purging the Constitution of all undemocratic insertions and restoring it to its original character. The abolition of the Concurrent List from the Constitution after the unanimous passage of the 18th Amendment and historic adoption of the 7th National Finance Commission Award has empowered the provinces politically, administratively and financially. These fundamental constitutional shifts have been factored into the formulation of National Health Policy 2010. Health and Education are purely provincial subjects and it is now on the provinces to rise to the occasion and make the difference through innovative policies. I urge the provinces to focus on building their capacity for effective delivery of health services at the grassroots level.

Distinguished audience,

The Federal Ministry of Health has a different role to play now than what it has been accustomed to so far. It would now handle the key functions of resource mobilization, coordination, information collection and analysis, disease security, ensuring compliance with international health regulations and streamlining aid effectiveness agenda. The operational details have solely been left to the provincial governments. National Health Policy incorporates key priorities such as family planning, maternal and child health, workforce development and meeting the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I believe that these goals would remain unmet unless all of you sitting here play your role and make essential contribution side by side your government. It is our collective responsibility to bring about change in the lives of our people. They deserve better and it must be our earnest and sincere effort to give back what is their due. In doing so, you must be guided by the ideals of public service, human compassion, social responsibility and excellence.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I admit that our country, at present, is up against grave challenges and all is not well. But our resolve to take on these challenges to ensure the welfare of common man must be greater. Nations often confront such circumstances, which test their integrity, unity and character. Our great nation has already trodden that road many a time but having been equipped with steel-like determination and will power, we always came out victorious against heavy odds. We need people who are optimist and instill hope among those around you. We need to make devotion and commitment as the hallmarks of our conduct. I believe if there is the passion to win, weakness can be turned into strength, obstacle into opportunity and challenge into achievement through demonstration of leadership and vision.

I recall a quote of Qaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah who said: “Pakistan is proud of its youth who are the nation builders of tomorrow. They must fully equip themselves by discipline, education and training for the arduous task lying ahead of them.” In the end, I would again congratulate graduates as well as the management of the College on the 44th Convocation and wish you all the best.

Thank you!