

Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto:

The legacy goes on

By Madame Farzana Raja, Federal Minister and Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP)

The Pakistani Nation today is marking 84th birthday anniversary of Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, the first elected Prime Minister of the country and a great statesman of the world. It is not just an historic day but an occasion to invigorate our hopes and aspirations in democracy and to reaffirm our commitment to keep the struggle to protect, strengthen and nurture democracy at every level.



Shaheed Quaid-e-Awam prescribed democracy as the only form of the government that may guarantee the fundamental rights of the people and safeguard the interests of the poor masses of the country. He had firm believe in the people and thus envisioned a country where people can write their own destiny as well as choose a destination for the country. His vision was based on empowering people and to liberate them from endless tyranny and oppression.

On the face of powerful adversaries and all sorts of pressures, Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto stood tall during those testing hours. To organize his struggle for democracy and to give the people their rights and voice, he founded Pakistan Peoples Party, carrying slogan of “Roti, Kapra aur Makan’. It was depiction of his economic vision for Pakistan which revived the hopes of the people. Besides, giving people their voice was a hallmark of his momentous struggle against the tyranny.

Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto infused a new spirit among the people at a time when their hopes were diminishing and their dreams were getting shattered. These were the difficult hours when the courageous people of Pakistan, as a result of follies of their short-sighted rulers, were haplessly facing looming

threats to social, political and geographical integrity of the country. However, Shaheed Quaid-e-Awam dealt with all the threats that were posed by internal and external forces alike.

It was the unmatched wisdom of Shaheed leader when he prescribed greater national harmony as the only solution to keep the social, political and geographical integrity intact and protected. Therefore, he gave the country and the people a gift of unanimous Constitution. Besides, he initiated mega developmental projects including Steel Mills and Kamra Aeronautical Complex aiming to revitalize the ailing economy of the country and to lay down the future economic roadmap of the country.

Shaheed Bhutto had phenomenal love and affection for the poor and downtrodden of the country. This fact is quite evidentiary from the fact that he took numerous revolutionary pro-poor steps in short span of time. The main thrust of the policies of Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and the manifesto of his party was to uplift the lives of socially and economically deprived segments of society.

It was out of this deep love for the poor that Quaid-e-Awam envisaged his economic policies and development strategies in line with the purpose of reducing poverty as well as to alleviate the economic sufferings and hardships of the masses. Furthermore, he invoked courage and confidence among the laborers, peasants and common citizens so that they could make their voices heard. To improve the lot of common man, he deemed education as an essential tool and envisaged policies to provide free education to their children.

Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto created political awareness among the people so that they could realize their fundamental and constitutionally protected rights. To uplift the lives of working class, the leader of the masses introduced a labor policy where laborers were entitled to get five percent from the annual profit of the factory. This was huge and unprecedented step in the history of Pakistan.

Furthermore, it was result of his socio-economic as well as labor policies that bonus for employees, old age benefit scheme and similar other steps were introduced during his democratic regime. It was for the very first time in the history of Pakistan that the workers were allowed to seek justice from the labor courts in case of any grievances.

Considering education a key to bring about a real economic revolution, new educational institutes and Polytechnic institutions were established and upgraded by his democratic government. Besides, scholarships for the students were increased aiming to further promote education through such incentives.

Throughout his democratic regime, Shaheed Quaid-e-Awam strived hard to strengthen institutions, correct the economy and improve the living standard of the people. It's indeed a coincidence that the present democratic government which is the heir of Bhutto's legacy, is confronting similar daunting tasks of correcting the ailing economy as well as to develop, strengthen and safeguard democratic institutions.

Today, the democratic government under the leadership of President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani is striving hard to advance this legacy of serving poor and destitute of society. The PPP led Federal Government took courageous steps soon after its inception. These steps were to alleviate the economic troubles and hardships of the masses while following the dreams of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and vision of his great daughter, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto.

Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) is indeed a true depiction of Bhutto's legacy. BISP is first ever comprehensive social protection initiative which is expanding by every passing day despite various economic woes regarding our national economy. In this regard, the Programme has introduced various initiatives including long-term interest free financial assistance, vocational and technical training opportunities to poor beneficiary families and life insurance in addition to monthly cash grants.

Translating the pro-poor and pro-people socio-economic vision of Shaheed Bhutto into reality, BISP has now launched Waseela-e-Taleem initiative to provide education to millions of children of poor deserving families. It is worth mentioning here that Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto wanted to protect the self esteem of poor masses of the country and thus, recently completed door to door nationwide poverty survey was actually in cognizant of the same vision.

Today, at the birth anniversary of Shaheed Quaid-e-Awam, PPP led government is rightly feeling pride and honor on reviving hopes of people and laying the foundations of a social welfare state as it was envisioned by Shaheed Quaid.