

# A Dark Day of History

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Undoubtedly, July 5, 1977 was one of the darkest days in the history of Pakistan. It was an unfortunate day when a dictator uprooted the blossoming sapling of democracy to unleash the curse of his unconstitutional rule on the democracy loving people of Pakistan. This act of high treason committed by Gen. Zia had disrupted the process of nation building and throttled the efforts leading towards an honorable and dignified status of Pakistan in the comity of the nations.

As Pakistan came into existence through a truly democratic process, the only way forward for it also lies in the democracy. This way forward is making Pakistan a modern, progressive and prosperous state as it was envisioned by the father of the nation, Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah. Quaid-e-Azam Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto realized the same reality and led a momentous struggle to restore and revive the democracy in the country after several eras of long undemocratic rules.

The Quaid-e-Azam believed and strived for Pakistan which was truly an egalitarian state based on the social justice and equality. But the act of overthrowing the democratically elected government of the Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto Shaheed, Gen. Zia made the dreams of making Pakistan a model of a democratic state sour and unattainable. Besides numerous remarkable steps taken by the democratic government of Shaheed Bhutto for a stable and prosperous Pakistan and for the wellbeing of the people, the Constitution of 1973 was one of the most exceptional achievement of the leadership of Quaid-e-Azam.

Today, the political heirs of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto are again confronting the challenges posed by undemocratic forces rigorously. The undemocratic as well as some fascist elements are again hell bent in pushing the democratic Pakistan of the Quaid-e-Azam and Quaid-e-Azam into the dustbin of history and the only option available with present

democratic government is root out this medieval retrogressive approach iron fistedly.

Today, terrorism is another phenomenon which Pakistani society is confronting besides the other threats to democracy as well as the security of the nation. The peoples government believes that a grand national reconciliation among the genuine political forces of the country is the need of hour. Likewise, by following the political philosophy of Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, the democratic government is fighting against poverty and terror simultaneously.

The peoples government also consider that democracy is the best revenge. Therefore, to give a befitting response to the followers of Gen. Zia's legacy, the government has made the strengthening of democracy and service to poor masses of the country, its prime focus.

The democratic government, under the leadership of President Asif Ali Zardari and the Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani is striving to empower the people of Pakistan. This empowerment is imperative to free them from the clutches of endless tyranny and oppression. Shaheed Quaid-e-Awam founded Pakistan Peoples Party based upon the same notion of empowerment and with the slogan "Roti, Kapra aur Makan".

It was the democratically elected government of Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto that invoked a new spirit among the hopeless and shattered people who were earlier haplessly facing looming threats to social, political and geographical integrity of the country posed by internal and external forces alike. To bring harmony and unite the people, he gave the country the unanimous Constitution and initiated mega developmental projects including Steel Mills and Kamra Aeronautical Complex aiming to revitalize the ailing economy of the country.

Besides numerous revolutionary pro-poor steps, the main thrust of the policies of Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and the manifesto of his party was to uplift the lives of poor and downtrodden segments of society. He always exhibited deep love and affection for the poor and envisaged economic

policies and development strategies with a specific purpose of eradicating poverty and alleviate the economic sufferings and hardships of the masses.

Shaheed Quaid-e-Awam, throughout his political career and his democratic regime, strived hard to strengthen institutions, correct the economy and improve the living standard of the nation. Similarly, soon after its inception, the present democratic government also decided to take immediate steps to alleviate the hardships of the masses, especially, of the most poor and downtrodden tiers of society.

The peoples government, in line with the wishes and dreams of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and vision of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto, took drastic measures to provide relief to these underprivileged people of the country. In same spirit, Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) was launched, which is first ever comprehensive social protection initiative, could be termed as continuity of “Bhutto-ism” and of course a tribute to the vision of Shaheed Quaid-e-Awam and his courageous daughter Mohtarma Shaheed. This huge social safety net is expanding despite the fact that ongoing ‘war on terror’ adversely affected the already unstable socio-economic structure of Pakistan.

BISP has been envisaged as a comprehensive economic revival of the poor masses of Pakistan. Besides providing monthly cash grants, the programme has introduced various other initiatives including long-term interest free financial assistance and vocational and technical training opportunities to registered beneficiary families. To discourage favoritism and to ensure the real deserving people are getting benefitted through these measures, BISP has made transparency and objectivity hallmarks of its initiatives.

Translating the vision of Quaid-e-Awam in to reality, BISP is indeed the one and only initiative in the history of social sector of the country, which has ensured transparent mechanisms at all stages. Hence, it has gained support and trust of various prestigious international organizations. Likewise, to protect the self esteem of poor masses of the country, BISP

has launched door to door nationwide poverty survey for the identification of the deserving families.

The peoples government being the custodian of the Butto's Legacy, hastaken concrete measures to revive the hopes of people. July 5 not only reminds us of the unprecedented sacrifice of Quaid-e-Awam for the democracy and for the rights of the people of Pakistan but is also an occasion to reaffirm our commitment with democracy and to fulfill the unfinished agenda of ShaheedZulfiqar Ali Bhutto and MohtarmaShaheed. This agenda is nothing else but to make Pakistan a truly social welfare state.