

Benazir Bhutto Becomes Prime Minister [1988]

In the 1988 elections, Pakistan Peoples Party won 94 seats in the National Assembly without forming any alliance. With the cooperation of 8 M. Q. M. members and 13 members of the Federally Administered tribal Area, the P. P. P. showed a clear majority. Benazir Bhutto, daughter of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, was sworn in as the Prime Minister, the first woman to govern an Islamic State.

Soon after taking oath, Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto announced that the ban on Student Unions and Trade Unions would be lifted. The P. P. P. Government hosted the fourth S. A. A. R. C. Summit Conference in December 1988. As a result of the Conference, Pakistan and India finalized three peace agreements.

But soon, Benazir's Government started facing problems on the political front. A. N. P. deserted the Pakistan People Party and on November 1, 1989, a no-confidence motion was moved against the Prime Minister by the opposition. Benazir was barely able to pull through with 12 votes to her advantage. M. Q. M., which had formed an alliance with the P. P. P. also broke away and started creating trouble in Sindh.

Serious conceptual differences arose between the P. P. P. Government and the Establishment. Less than two years later, on August 6, 1990, her Government was accused of corruption and dismissed by the President, Ghulam Ishaq Khan, who exercised his power through the controversial Eighth Amendment of the Constitution.

Ghulam Ishaq Khan becomes President [1988-93]

In 1988, President Zia-ul-Haq dissolved the Junejo Government and announced that fresh elections would be held in November 1988. But on August 17, 1988, he was killed in a C-130 plane crash in Bhawalpur, along with five senior Generals and the American Ambassador. The cause of the crash has never been ascertained and still remains a riddle.

After the death of General Zia, Ghulam Ishaq Khan, Chairman of the Senate, took over as acting President. Elections for the National and Provincial Assemblies were held on November 16 and 19, 1988, respectively. The Revival of the Constitutional Order had amended the Constitution, which empowered the President to appoint, at his discretion, any member of the National Assembly as Prime Minister. Ghulam Ishaq Khan appointed Benazir Bhutto as Prime Minister of Pakistan on the condition that she would offer full support to him in the forthcoming presidential elections.

According to the deal between Ghulam Ishaq Khan and Benazir Bhutto, Pakistan Peoples Party voted for Ghulam Ishaq Khan. Ghulam Ishaq Khan was also the consensus candidate of Islami Jamuhri Ittehad. Four candidates took part in the elections, with Ghulam Ishaq Khan winning

and securing the highest 608 votes. Constitutional Amendments made by the R. C. O. and the Eighth Amendment, that had given the President a great deal of power, inevitably led the President and the Prime Minister into conflict. The conflict between the President and the Prime Minister arose in two areas; the appointment of the Military Chiefs and the Superior Court Judges.

The conflict between the President and the Prime Minister had its drop scene on August 6, 1990, when the President dissolved the National Assembly and Benazir Bhutto was dismissed from power. The dissolution of the National Assembly was soon followed by the dissolution of the Provincial Assemblies. Fresh elections were scheduled on October 24, 1990. President Ghulam Ishaq Khan appointed Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi as the caretaker Prime Minister.

Elections for the National and Provincial Assemblies were held on October 24 and 27, 1990, respectively. Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif was elected as Prime Minister on November 1, 1990. Nawaz Sharif's Government remained in power till April 19, 1993. President Ghulam Ishaq Khan again dissolved the National Assembly, exercising his power once again through the Eighth Amendment, and appointed Mir Balakh Sher Khan Mazari as the caretaker Prime Minister. General Elections were scheduled to be held on July 14, 1993, but were canceled when the Supreme Court quashed the Presidential Order and reinstated Nawaz Sharif as the Prime Minister.

Differences between Nawaz Sharif and Ghulam Ishaq Khan arose once again. This time they deepened to such an extent that they led to the resignation of both President Ghulam Ishaq Khan and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on July 18, 1993. The National and Provincial Assemblies were also dissolved. Moin Qureshi was appointed as the caretaker Prime Minister, and Ghulam Ishaq Khan was appointed the caretaker President. Fresh elections for the National and Provincial Assemblies were held. Benazir Bhutto returned to power for the second time and Farooq Ahmad Khan Leghari was elected as the new President of Pakistan.

This brought to an end the presidency of Ghulam Ishaq Khan, which brought about the dismissal of two elected governments. It followed the unhealthy tradition of removing elected governments through the use of the controversial Eighth Amendment. The next President followed the same tradition and created continuous instability in the country.