



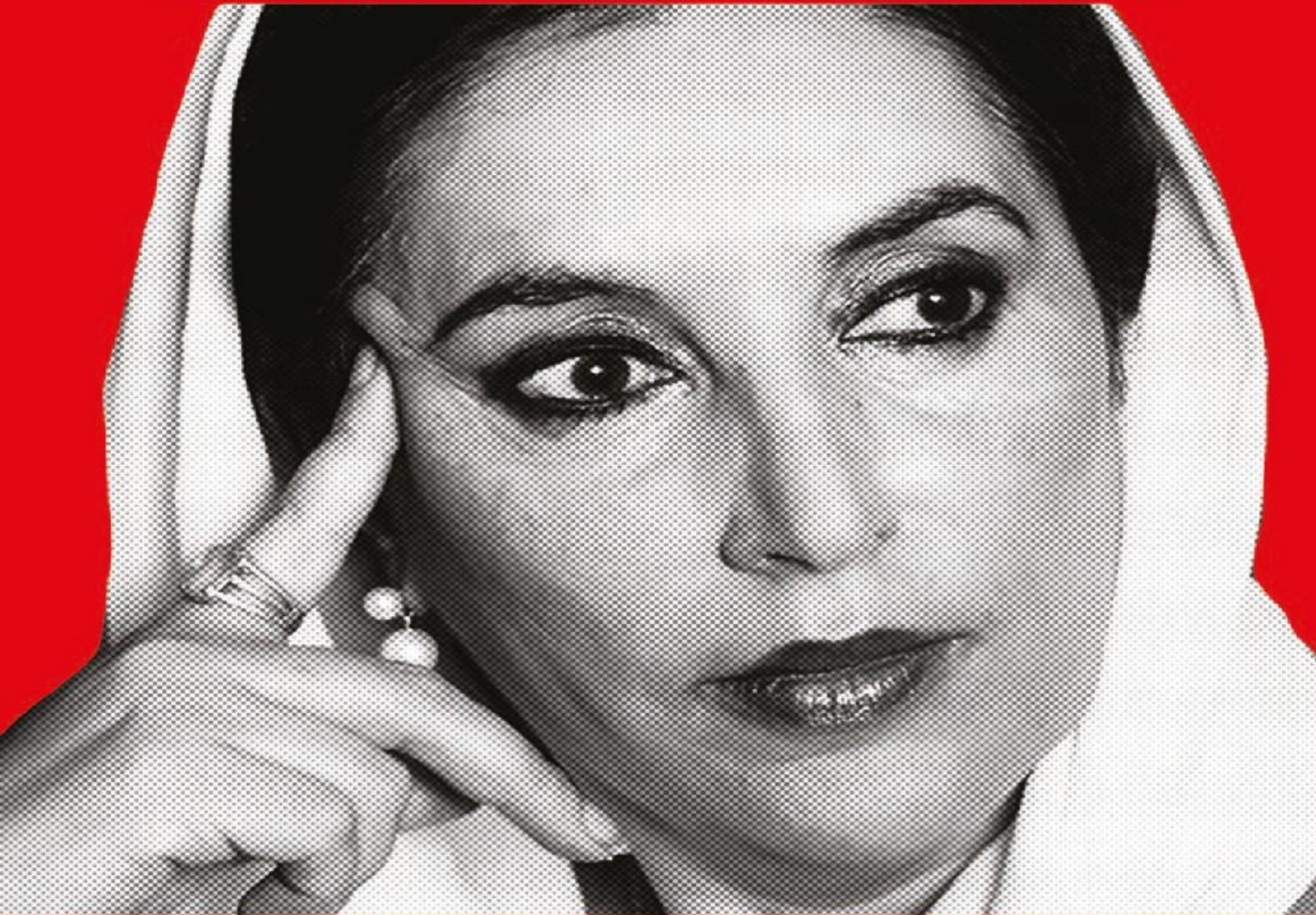
“...a most enjoyable and  
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# “BUT, PRIME MINISTER...”

A POLITICAL MEMOIR

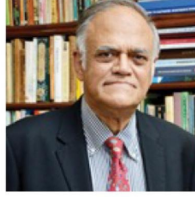
Interactions 1986-2000 with Benazir Bhutto,  
the world's first Muslim woman Prime Minister.



JAVED JABBAR

“Javed Jabbar narrates the real life fascinating story of his association with one of the most enigmatic Pakistani politicians of recent years; in a memoir that is part confessional, part creative non-fiction which is as engrossing as lived history can be. Jabbar’s straight talking presence is very much present in his writing as is his obvious admiration, compassion and respect for Pakistan’s first woman Prime Minister whom he served with distinction in his ministerial and political capacity. In a series of fragmental collages ranging from the intimacy of private meetings with a vulnerable yet strong woman to her courage in the face of massive opposition to her governance and gender; an unafraid Jabbar coaxes a brushfire of responses to his memoir from his readers with a slice of private Pakistani history that is eminent-ly readable.”

**-Navid Shahzad, reputed educational, media and cultural personality, author of “Azlan’s Roar : Turkish Television and the Rise of the Muslim Hero”.**



**Javed Jabbar** is a public intellectual with distinctive achievements in diverse fields. His work includes writing, film-making, media, voluntary service, education, environment, national and global affairs. He has received several national and international honours.

He was elected to the Senate of Pakistan 1985-91. He served in two Cabinets as Federal Minister and in one Cabinet as Minister of State. His portfolios included Information and Broadcasting, Science and Technology, Petroleum and Natural Resources and National Affairs.

Details at [www.javedjabbar.net](http://www.javedjabbar.net)

**Other books by Javed Jabbar:**

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A Man in the Queue (1971).

Snapshots: Reflections in a Pakistani Eye (1982)

6 Years: 46 Questions [*Che Saal: Chialis Sawaal*] (Urdu, 1992)

Soap & Soul: Marketing and Advertising in Asia and Pakistan (1995)

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Criss-Cross Times (2010)

Pakistan—Unique Origins; Unique Destiny? (2011)

Pakistan: Identity and Destiny (India, 2012)

Pathways (2016)

What is Pakistaniat? (2019)

Books edited, compiled, and /or contributed to:

Mass Media Laws and Regulations in Pakistan (with Barrister Qazi Faez Isa, 1997)

Citizens' Media Dialogue (2005)

Bridges or Barriers? (2005)

**3 of several Monographs:**

Spoken in Urdu — but not read in English! (2002)

Electronic Media Freedom Day (2003)

Voices of the People (2003)

**Report:**

Media Commission appointed by the Supreme Court (2013)

Anthology about Javed Jabbar:

Meet Our Friend JJ, compiled and edited by Syed Abid Rizvi (2014)

# “BUT, PRIME MINISTER...”

*Interactions 1986-2000  
with Benazir Bhutto, the world's  
first Muslim woman Prime Minister.*

*a political memoir by*

Javed Jabbar



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"But, Prime Minister..."

by Javed Jabbar

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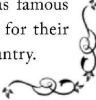
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Dedicated to the courageous, hard-working, intelligent, charming women-leaders — mostly unknown to news media — who work in rural villages and urban centres across Pakistan in a wide range of capacities and sectors, and help advance the dignity and status of women. Who, without being even remotely as famous as Benazir Bhutto render invaluable services for their families, their communities and their country.



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## *About the Title*

This book's title reproduces a phrase spoken by Salim Abbas Jilani during a conversation with this writer a few years ago.

He is a highly distinguished, former Civil Service of Pakistan officer who was Principal Secretary to Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto during her first term as Head of Government. As a witness-participant of Cabinet meetings of the first Government, he recalled with some amusement that, while most other Cabinet Members preferred not to express strong or open dissent with the Prime Minister, this writer was the only Cabinet Member who often began his comments on an important agenda item with the words: "But, Prime Minister...". Even if the Prime Minister had already indicated her own views on a given subject. And my own views emerged as being quite different from her viewpoint.

To be fair: in my view, there were a few other Members who occasionally dissented but I was probably the most unreasonable of them. Which is why he associated me with the phrase that became the title of this book. I am indebted to him for his sharp memory.

As an outstanding CSP officer, Salim Abbas Jilani possibly has the unequalled distinction of serving as the Head of the largest number of public sector organizations. He was Secretary-General, Defence for several years after having earlier served as Chief Secretary, separately, of Sindh and of Balochistan, and subsequently as Chairman of many major public sector bodies. These included PIA, Civil Aviation Authority, Fauji Foundation, Pakistan Steel Mills, Pak-Arab Refinery (PARCO), Sui Southern Gas Co. Ltd., Rice Export Corporation of

Pakistan, KESC and others. He also served as Caretaker Federal Minister of Defence and Defence Production in 2008.

## *Acknowledgements*

**M**y late remarkable mother, Zain Mahal Khursheed set me, at the ripe age of 9 years on the path of writing. The path continues to tempt and challenge. My late gentle father, Ahmad Abdul Jabbar, himself a keen reader reinforced and encouraged an interest in reading which has become an incurable addiction. The beautiful, perceptive woman — Shabnam — whose husband I am privileged to be, patiently enables devotion of all the time required to read, reflect and write. She gives me immeasurable support. Daughter Mehreen Jabbar; with her individualistic talent and skills as a Director of TV serials, plays and two cinema films, and son Barrister Kamal Kadeer Jabbar with his acumen in the legal complexities of international banking and corporate affairs make one humbly proud to be a parent. After his arrival on this planet in 2014, grandson Zaka Zahir Jabbar with his intelligence and verve inspires me to focus on the future without forgetting the past. His mother Zainab Dossa symbolizes the charm and courage of Pakistani women.

Five esteemed individuals kindly agreed to peruse the manuscript before I gave it final form. To each of them, many thanks for their valuable time, insightful comments and helpful suggestions. Though I was not able to incorporate every single suggestion, I greatly appreciate the constructive spirit in which all the valued views were offered. These respected individuals are: Dr Hassan Askari Rizvi, eminent scholar, author of, among other books, *The Military and Politics in Pakistan*; Ahmad Bilal Mehboob, an astute columnist and President, Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency; Owen-Bennett Jones, veteran BBC broadcaster and author of *The Bhutto Dynasty: the Struggle for*

*Power*; Ms Nadya Chishty-Mujahid, acerbic literary critic and dedicated educationist, Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Social Sciences, Institute of Business Administration, Karachi; Ms Navid Shahzad, the reputed educational and cultural personality, author of *Azlan's Roar: the Rise of the Turkish Muslim Hero*.

At the Inter-Parliamentary Union Secretariat in Geneva, Switzerland, Stephanie Derouet and Serguei Tchelnokov promptly and courteously helped confirm details about an election victory achieved 31 years ago at a location over 14,400 kilometers distant from Karachi --- as narrated in Part III.

I am fortunate to know all those persons — alas too numerous to name individually — who, in different capacities and at different times provided friendly cooperation and support during my political journey that began in 1985 and included the 14 years in which I was in regular or irregular contact with Benazir Bhutto.

Iqbal Saleh Mohammad, Chairman, Paramount Books (Pvt.) Ltd. is an exceptional publisher. He has advanced the legacy of his late father to new lengths by vastly expanding the enterprise to produce textbooks of quality for general and specialized education, and books for general reading on diverse subjects. Ms Sana Shahid, Manager, Publishing Division at Paramount Books and her colleagues, specially Mr Ismail Nazeer, Head of the Design Unit provided very helpful and timely technical support. Ms Neshmia Salahuddin, a gifted skilled designer — granddaughter of my Publisher — created the striking cover design.

In exploring prospects for publishers in countries and regions outside Pakistan, my old friends, erudite Professor Akbar Noman at Columbia University, New York, Mani Shankar Aiyar, the distinguished Parliamentarian, author and writer in India and Owen-Bennett Jones (previously referred to) extended useful advice

and introductions.

Mohammad Salim Sheikh, co-proprietor of Gondal Graphics since 2003 whose association with the author commenced in 1969 when he became the first staff member to join MNJ Advertising facilitated the scanning of photographs which appear in this book. In earlier stages, Attaullah Khan and in 2019-2021, Ali Anwar have been associated with me on a part-time basis as skilled secretarial staff and rendered virtually all the word-processing work needed, all through and between different stages of writing.

While much effort has been made to ensure accuracy when referring to individuals and events by relying on books and other sources listed in the Prologue and the xvi But, Prime Minister Bibliography, responsibility for all the views expressed, claims and statements made — and any errors — in this book is entirely that of the author.

May 2021

Karachi

## *Prologue*

Does the past simply disappear and become nothing? Or irrelevant or inconsequential — except to those who have been part of a particular phase that is being recounted or recorded? Or is the past, in some esoteric, remote way, worth recounting — for individuals and generations who were present at the same time or who have grown up after the times being recounted?

In theory, history is always relevant. In practice, relatively few people take as deep an interest in history as they do in the current times in which they live.

Be that as it may, in this writer's view, anything past has an enduring relevance, abiding interest and permanent value. Because this past, all of the past, publicly reported, or unreported, and known only to direct participants in a particular episode, is a constituent component of the large mosaic that is the actual representation of history, an authentic, though always subjective view of the past.

It is only partly relevant whether the masses at large, the people, know about all of these constituent components or they do not know. If they do, it would be appropriate, and ideal. But if they do not, their lack of knowledge, or their lack of interest in this version of the past, does not in any way detract from the truth or the value of any aspect of the past being recounted or recorded by a participant and a witness — even though this is done in an unavoidably subjective way.

*“But, Prime Minister...”* is a personal political memoir. It is neither a complete political biography of Benazir Bhutto nor the political autobiography of this writer. Nor is it a precisely chronological history of all aspects of the two



Federal Governments led by Benazir Bhutto. The text comprises my own recollections as well as reflections arising from revisits to the past, particularly to those aspects in which I was involved. No attempt is made in this book to cover the policies of Benazir Bhutto's two Governments on, say, Afghanistan and some other external and internal subjects which were also major concerns during her terms in office. To reiterate: this is a personal narrative, not a comprehensive overview.

The title of *Mohtarma* (Respected Lady) was adopted as the pre-fix for the name of Benazir Bhutto when it became evident that she would shortly become the first Muslim woman Prime Minister of the world. In the text of this book only her original full name or with the prefix of "Prime Minister" has been used. No disrespect is intended or implied by the non-use of *Mohtarma*.

This book is one in a series of five books. The series presents a portrayal of my experience in politics over a 20-year period onward of March 1985 to about 2005. In 2005, I decided to withdraw from Party-based politics but remain interested in public affairs and politics as a citizen.

Two books of this 5-book series comprise two volumes of speeches made in the Senate of Pakistan during my 6-year term from 1985 to 1991. These two volumes are preceded by an Introduction which summarises the "How" of the process that took me to the Senate and the "What" of the experience itself. That 6-year phase was marked by several important developments and by the upheavals that came with 6 changes of government. The second volume includes a few speeches made in the November 1996-February 1997 phase in the Senate not as a Senator but in the capacity of a Federal Minister in the Caretaker Cabinet appointed by President Farooq Leghari and headed by Prime Minister Malik Meraj Khalid.

One other book narrates my interactions with Farooq Leghari, and Meraj

Khalid and describes the formation of the Millat Party. A separate book is “A General in Particular” about my relationship with General Pervez Musharraf. The last of these three individuals had appointed me his Adviser on National Affairs and Federal Minister for Information & Media Development. The launch of all 5 books is planned to be completed in 2021-22.



# PART I



## *Introduction*

Benazir Bhutto's direct participation in the political arena as an individual in her own right began with the removal of her father Zulfikar Ali Bhutto from the Prime Ministership of Pakistan due to a coup d' etat by General Ziaul Haq on 5th July 1977. She actively campaigned for justice for her father up to his callous execution on 4th April 1979 after a rigged judicial process. The first of several ironies noted in the text that follows is the unpleasant truth that Z.A. Bhutto, in turn, was a party to the rigged elections held in March 1977.

His assassination irrevocably motivated her to sustain and build upon his legacy. During a total span of about 30 eventful years in politics from 1977 to 2007 she graduated through varied phases of tough struggle to two relatively brief tenures in office totalling about 5 years. In both her terms as Prime Minister she led her Governments through complex global and regional times marked by pivotal changes with long-term ramifications for international relations, state structures and bilateral relations.

Those times included the following events and trends:

1. The fratricidal Iraq-Iran war of the blood-drenched 8 years of 1980-88 had just ended.
2. Discontent with the authoritarian communist structures of the Soviet Union and of Eastern Europe as evident in Poland and elsewhere was becoming ominous. Eventually, this led to the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989. Internal crisis was building within the Soviet Union.

3. In April 1988, the agreement on withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan had been signed.
4. Despite the withdrawal agreement, a fall-out from the role of the Mujahideen in Afghanistan was most strongly evident in Pakistan which continued to suffer from rising levels of illegal sales of narcotics and weapons.
5. There were disturbing, recurring incidents of violent religious extremism and sectarianism within Pakistan. General Ziaul Haq's death on 17th August 1988 signalled the end of a dark era, only relieved by some elements of change and hope.
6. There were clear signs of volatile unrest building up in Indian-occupied Jammu & Kashmir.

These were not, by any measure, the best of times for a new, untested leader to take office.

Yet the charges of corruption, nepotism and misgovernance on the basis of which she was dismissed both times have diverted attention from her genuine accomplishments and some innovative policies that she and her Cabinets implemented. Due to the arbitrary termination of the two Governments' tenures, most of the progressive policies and plans could not be fully implemented, nor did their productive outcomes become visible and measurable.

The vicious aspect of the conflicts with Nawaz Sharif and the PML-N on the one side, and Benazir Bhutto and the PPP on the other generated undisguised virulence and defamation. This acrimony from 1988 to 1999 mixed facts with falsehoods, accuracy with speculation, exactitude with exaggeration. Both smeared each other to the extent that clarity and truth became so elusive as to be virtually lost. The accountability and judicial processes were subject to bias and

manipulation that deprived them of credibility. Even the Charter for Democracy signed by Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif in London in 2006 in which both pledged to end character assassination and revenge and instead, work together to replace General Pervez Musharraf 's rule with orderly, mutually respectful democratic conduct did not prove to be a consistent and always enacted agreement.

This writer was privileged to be associated with Benazir Bhutto in different capacities for about 14 years, from 1986 when we first met to our last meeting in mid-June 2000 in Damascus. These different capacities comprised: my status as a Senator who served from 21st March 1985 to 24th November 1988 as an independent Senator but with fairly close affinity with the PPP. The second status began when I accepted the invitation by Benazir Bhutto to become the first Senator to formally join the PPP in the 4th week of November 1988. The third status began with my induction into the first Cabinet of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto on 4th December 1988 and extended up to 6th August 1990 when the Government was dismissed. The fourth status covered the period from 6th August 1990 to 21st March 1991 when my Senate term concluded. During those 8 months I represented the PPP in the Upper House of Parliament up to the end of my 6-year term. The fifth status spawned the period from 21st March 1991 to August 1996, a period of about 5 years and 5 months in which one's relations with Benazir Bhutto went through varying phases of distancing, proximity, reconciliation, and then alienation leading to my resignation from the PPP.

The sixth status began immediately thereafter: onward of 5th November 1996 when I was inducted into the Caretaker Cabinet appointed by President Farooq Leghari to replace the second cabinet of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. Then came the seventh status onward of February 1997 up to 14th August 1998 when,

with Farooq Leghari this writer launched the Millat Party which, in one sense, became an adversary of the PPP that she led. An eighth phase came when, with the endorsement of the Millat Party, this writer joined the Cabinet of General Pervez Musharraf in November 1999 during which term I held the last meeting with her, described in the last chapter. The ninth phase covered the years between 2000 and 2007 when, subsequent to my resignation from the Cabinet, I returned to the Millat Party. But then in 2004, when despite my dissent, Farooq Leghari ill-advisedly merged the Millat Party with PML-Q led by Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, I returned to a kind of silent relationship with Benazir Bhutto. This was marked by only an occasional exchange of verbal messages of formal greetings but no direct meetings or encounters took place.

Through all these nine diverse phases, this writer retained an ambivalent mixture of thoughts and sentiments about this political pioneer of the Muslim world. That mixture began with admiration for her courage and resolve. There was then her capacity to apply a notable degree of intellect and education — rare even among male political leaders — to articulate and formulate political messages and themes. She then learnt fairly rapidly to address mass rallies and public meetings with the emotive rhetoric using her father's martyrdom to full effect. Aware of the retreat of State capitalism and socialism so avowed by her father, she deftly moved the ideological dimension of the PPP toward a new, even right-wing orientation — while retaining a profile of empathy for the poor and down-trodden. Respectful of PPP leaders and workers who had remained steadfast through the most difficult years of persecution she was also unwilling to accept the seniority and counsel of those veterans who disagreed with her approach. Despite — and perhaps because of — the inherent bondage between the Bhutto mystique and PPP's identity, she was unwilling to enable authentic internal party democracy from the fear that dissidents could attain high Party

office. By replacing her mother as Party Chairperson and also accepting — or arranging — the title of “Chairperson for Life” — she negated core principles of regular accountability and humility.

Possibly the most disagreeable facet of her persona was her willingness to allow corrupt practices by several colleagues, but most specially by her own husband. It is true that though cases were pursued against both her spouse and herself for several years, no convictions became binding and some cases were overturned. In one remarkable instance, the Lahore High Court was obliged to dismiss a pending charge against Asif Zardari because the entire set of original documents related to the case had simply disappeared from the office of the Court’s Registrar. The public was not informed about the fall-out from this mystery as to whether the Court conducted an investigation to affix responsibility and whether any one was found guilty.

Corrupt practices became synonymous with both her terms as Prime Minister, deflecting attention from some positive policies and actions she had overseen. An argument advanced by some of her sympathizers to the effect that, to respond to the vast funds and resources deployed against her and her Party by Nawaz Sharif, allegedly also by ISI and even by Osama bin Laden (in the unsuccessful November 1989 No-confidence motion), she and her spouse had no choice but to obtain substantial matching means to counter the offensive. But this rationale does not, at least in this writer’s opinion, justify permitting corrupt practices to become acceptable. The fact that there have never been enduring convictions in the legal process does not contradict the credibility of the allegations and charges. When she was not in power, cases were instituted against her and her husband by her opponents with dual aims. One: to actually persecute and harass. Two: to use the pendency of the cases as a bargaining chip or as outright pressure tactics to ensure reduced levels of opposition and secure co-operation.



The well-known weaknesses of the country's legal and judicial system enabled these twin aims to be pursued both against her, and by her when she wanted to do so.

In writing this book, this writer has tried to avoid letting the ambivalent mixture of one's perceptions about Benazir Bhutto shape the whole text. Wherever, in one's view, she richly deserved admiration and appreciation I have expressed the same. Whenever one disagreed with her or was disappointed with her I have also frankly said so. Where this writer himself was at fault or mistaken, I have tried to be honest in self-appraisal. There is no desire whatsoever to set oneself up in a morally superior position because I am always conscious of my own limitations and contradictions.

Though this book focuses on my interactions with Benazir Bhutto, there are also passages of the text that describe events and themes which principally concern my own activities and views. But such portions of the text are indirectly or directly related either to herself in the specific context of her role as Prime Minister or to my work as a Senator or Minister.

In all the nine phases of the fourteen years over which this writer interacted with her, Benazir Bhutto remained a radiant, beautiful personality. She was charming and engaging, almost always a pleasure to be with. I say "almost" only because there were a few occasions when she was briefly yet unpleasantly unhappy with something I had said or done or when, in my view, she was unable to accept stark reality. But for most of the time, even when I often said "But, Prime Minister" she would smile, and be graciously tolerant.

I relied on the following sources to write the text of this book: memory, personal notes, copies of summaries written for Benazir Bhutto, newspapers, books, internet websites.

In attributing quotes to her, reliance is placed exclusively on memory. Several

quotes are exactly the words spoken by her. Where I was not able to recall exact words spoken, I have formulated sentences that, in my view, most accurately summarize the substance of her sentences.

It is unfortunate that, from among those who served in the first Cabinet of Benazir Bhutto, only one person has written a whole book in English about his perspective. That gentleman was Iqbal Akhund, one of Pakistan's most distinguished diplomats. He served as Adviser on National Security with the rank and status of Federal Minister. He was a highly capable, soft-spoken counterweight to the also-distinguished presence of Foreign Minister Sahabzada Yaqub Khan who, notwithstanding his own individual distinction, was seen as a continuation from the era and mind-set of General Ziaul Haq in whose Cabinet he had rendered a laudable role on the world stage. Iqbal Akhund sadly passed away in 2020.

Iqbal Akhund's book: *Trial and Error: The Advent and Eclipse of Benazir Bhutto* (OUP 2000) is an outstanding analysis, particularly of the first of her two Governments. Consistently candid, accurate, insightful and balanced, the book so well reflects the integrity and capability of the author as also an excellent narrative on those facets of foreign relations and national security that the Government had to deal with. But no other book in English has been written by any other member of that Cabinet. In Urdu, there are books such as *Rafaquat ka Safar — Benazir Yaadein* (Journey of a Close Relationship: Memories of Benazir) by Bashir Riaz. But he was not a Cabinet member though he was close to her family and herself. There are other books in Urdu and Sindhi. Former Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gillani who served with me in the first Cabinet and served as Speaker of the National Assembly during the second tenure of Benazir Bhutto has written: *Chhahe Yousuf se ye aati hai Zadah* (A Voice from the Well of Yousuf) which is a pertinent source to learn about his perspectives. Of several

books by non-Pakistanis on Benazir Bhutto in English, some are listed in the Bibliography.

I hope this humble contribution adds to information and discourse.

*“Like going in there to get a tooth pulled out...”*

(13<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 1990)

**T**his is like going in there to get a tooth pulled out,” said Benazir Bhutto to this writer and a small group of persons walking with her.

The first Muslim woman Prime Minister of the world was walking through a corridor of the Parliament building in Islamabad on 13th February 1990 to appear for the first time to make a speech as the Head of Government in the Senate of Pakistan.

She walked with ease unusual for a woman who had only three weeks earlier, on 25th January 1990, given birth to her second child, a girl named Bakhtawar.

As the first Member of the Senate to join her party in November 1988 and as the Minister of State for Information & Broadcasting in her Cabinet since 4th December 1988 and then as Minister of State for Science and Technology since September 1989 this writer had been urging her repeatedly over the previous 13 months to pay her first speaking visit to the Upper House of Parliament.

Her one previous appearance in the Senate was a token, virtually silent brief presence over a year ago. That first appearance formally marked the fact that she had then recently assumed the office of Prime Minister. Since then, she had frequently postponed the apprehended ordeal of making a formal speech in the Upper House. But that time had now finally arrived in February 1990.

Her disquiet was caused by several factors. She had led the Pakistan People’s Party in the elections held in November 1988 to make the PPP the single largest

party in the National Assembly. Subsequently, with the support of coalition parties and independent members, she took oath of office as Prime Minister on 2nd December. However, the composition of the Senate in February 1990 reflected the continuation of the pre-November 1988 conditions.

***The roots of pain:***

When General Ziaul Haq and his colleagues imposed martial law on 5th July 1977, the Constitution was put in abeyance. The Federal Parliament comprising the indirectly elected Senate and the directly elected National Assembly, along with the four directly elected Provincial Assemblies were dissolved. After imprisoning ousted Prime Minister Z.A. Bhutto and obtaining the collusion of sections of the superior Judiciary, the father of Benazir Bhutto had been unjustly and brutally executed on the basis of a dubious, manipulated judicial process.

In February 1985, through the Revival of the Constitution Order (RCO) enforced under the continued umbrella of martial law, elections were held for all six legislatures on a non-party basis.

The aim was two-fold. To entirely exclude leaders or loyalists of the PPP and other parties which opposed martial law. And to manipulate those elected on a non-party basis to support the continuation in power of General Ziaul Haq.

Mohammad Khan Junejo, a senior political leader, former Minister of Railways in the Cabinet of the then- West Pakistan in the 1960s, and now a nominee of Pir Pagara, an influential religious-political leader of Sindh was selected in 1985 by General Ziaul Haq to be the Prime Minister of the Government established under the new arrangement introduced by the RCO.

In a brief initial phase, Mohammad Khan Junejo was a pliant Prime Minister. He was apparently fully obedient to the General. An Official Parliamentary Group (OPG) was formed to enable essential minimal co-ordination between the newly-elected legislators willing to support General Ziaul Haq.

This writer was invited to join the OPG by Syed Ghous Ali Shah, Chief Minister of Sindh and a former Judge of the Sindh High Court who entered politics after retirement. As politely as one could, I said to him, “No, thank you.”

Despite the official non-party basis of the elections of February-March 1985 some political parties did participate in the polls. Their leaders became successful candidates. The PPP and other parties that had formed the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD) in 1981 boycotted the elections of February-March 1985.

The parties which took part in the non-party-based polls of February-March 1985 included the Jamaat-e-Islami, the Jamiat-ul-Ulema Islam ( JUI-Samiul Haq group), and factions of the Muslim League. They were all historically opposed to the PPP. Successful candidates in these non-party polls also included individuals who had strong electoral bases due to feudal or religious or ethnic factors. There were also some individuals entering politics for the first time, either as the representatives of a new generation in families that had traditionally been in political power. Or they were persons from a professional discipline venturing into politics for the first time (such as this writer).

This last category of first-timers in the Senate and in Parliament was primarily created by a new provision introduced by the RCO for five additional seats in the Senate from each of the four Provinces. These five new seats were reserved for technocrats and for ulema/religious scholars. This feature was meant to introduce individuals into the legislatures with specialized knowledge and skills. The rationale was that technocrat-members could facilitate and deepen the capacity of legislatures to formulate new laws, improve old laws and help shape policies which responded to newly emerged knowledge: legislation which was pertinent to rapidly emerging new conditions.

The mode of election for technocrats and ulema was similar to the general

mode. This method required votes to be cast as secret ballots by members of the four Provincial Assemblies. Results were calculated through a formula of proportional representation/preferential choices. This meant that a voter would indicate first, second and third preferences amongst the candidates. Each tier contributes a certain number of points towards determining the total number of votes secured.

There were quite a few non-PPP Senators originally elected in March 1985 and in March 1988 willing to extend respect, and if vitally required, even voting support to Benazir Bhutto's Government. But in terms of the sheer majority of the Members, in terms of their political viewpoints and their ideological orientation, the over-all composition of the Senate in November 1988 and in February 1990 did not have an affinity with the PPP.

Within only 3 weeks of Benazir Bhutto becoming Prime Minister on 2nd December 1988, the majority in the Senate had rendered a formal verdict. On the death of General Ziaul Haq in the air-crash on 17th August 1988, the Chairman of the Senate, Ghulam Ishaq Khan had become Acting President as per the provisions of the RCO. The then-Deputy Chairman of the Senate, Senator Syed Fazal Agha (from Balochistan) had become Acting Chairman of the Senate, pending election of a new Chairman.

Senator Waseem Sajjad who had served as Federal Minister for Law in the Junejo Cabinet was nominated by the non-PPP parties, led by the Pakistan Muslim League-N, as the candidate for Chairman of the Senate.

The PPP and some Independent Members agreed to nominate Senator Tariq Chaudhry from the Independent Opposition Parliamentary Group as their candidate. I canvassed actively — even hyper-actively — to promote Tariq Chaudhry's candidacy. Yet one knew that prospects "Like going in there to get a tooth pulled out..." 17 for success were very limited. The result was: 53 votes

for Waseem Sajjad, 26 votes for Tariq Chaudhry.

The result reiterated the fact that, while the PPP and allies secured a majority in the National Assembly, in the Senate, with only one PPP member, we were nevertheless able to persuade as many as 25 non-PPP members to vote for the PPP nominee regardless of the prospects of victory. So even though the ruling coalition remained a minority in the Upper House it had still managed to mobilize new sources of support within three weeks.

This was the first time in the country's history where such a dichotomous situation existed in the Federal Parliament.

In elections held 18 years earlier in December 1970, there was a unicameral system with the National Assembly being the sole Central legislature. After the secession of East Pakistan in December 1971, the West Pakistan Members of the National Assembly went on to adopt the 1973 Constitution by which a bicameral system was introduced. The first Senate comprised 45 members from the four Provinces and regions (Islamabad) and was elected in 1973-74. The composition of this first Senate contained a majority of Members from the PPP and allies and was therefore in approximate harmony with the composition of the National Assembly. The number of Senate seats was raised to 63 in 1977 (later, to 87 in 1985. And then to 100 in 2002).

In 1985, through the RCO promulgated by Ziaul Haq under martial law, the number was increased from 63 to 87. As of November-December 1988, due to the boycott by the PPP of the non-party based elections of 1985, the PPP had no representation in the Upper House — until this writer joined the PPP on 24th November 1988.

On 13th February 1990, as Benazir Bhutto steeled her nerves and proceeded to the Senate chamber there were also factors outside Parliament that caused her considerable discomfort.



For the first time in the country's history, the largest populated Province in Pakistan — Punjab — was being governed by a party overtly hostile to the Federal Government in Islamabad which comprised the PPP led by Benazir Bhutto. Punjab Chief Minister Nawaz Sharif led a coalition dominated by the Muslim League, or the version of the Muslim League that he had forcibly taken over from Mohammad Khan Junejo in mid-1988 after the dismissal of Junejo by General Ziaul Haq on 29th May 1988.

The “forcible” part applied to the episode which occurred in Islamabad Hotel in June 1988 during a meeting of the PML. A faction of the party headed by Nawaz Sharif physically intervened to take charge of proceedings and elect Nawaz Sharif as President in place of Mohammad Khan Junejo.

The divergence in the compositions of the Federal Government and of the Punjab Government was creating an entirely new dynamic. Where immediately previously the Federal Government — civil-ruled, or not so in an even more authoritarian, dictatorial martial law — was the dominant and decisive factor in determining the direction and outcome of any issue affecting Centre-Province relations, now in the initial weeks of the Government led by Benazir Bhutto, the Punjab Government was already showing signs of impudence and defiance never previously witnessed.

Nawaz Sharif 's past association with General Ziaul Haq, the fact that Lt. General Jilani as Governor of Punjab had nurtured Nawaz Sharif, first as the Provincial Finance Minister, and then supported him in his bid for the Chief Ministership of Punjab was a major determinant of how Benazir Bhutto and the PPP viewed the Muslim League.

These factors of her perceptions included: the fact that the pre-dominant majority of Senate members was hostile to, or very skeptical of the PPP; the fact that the Chairman of the Senate, Waseem Sajjad had defeated the candidate

supported by the PPP; the fact that the Senate could not be — and was not — dissolved on 29th May 1988, under the arbitrarily amended Constitution order known as RCO by General Ziaul Haq when he dismissed the Government of PM Junejo and dissolved the National Assembly and the Provincial Assemblies elected in March 1985. Thus, in the eyes of the PPP, the Senate represented the left-over “remnants” of the martial law phase.

In the event, Benazir Bhutto’s first speaking appearance in the Senate ironically went smoothly — and without any controversial incident. An unavoidable, and for her, an unpleasant part of essential Parliamentary protocol was completed without the sharp pain of a tooth extraction. The tooth remained where it was, because, it was not so much the tooth as it was the gums — i.e. the legacy left by the generals — which were the actual cause of the discomfort. And the gums were not going away anywhere soon. As a dentist is reported to have told a patient, “Sir, your teeth are fine. But your gums will have to come out”.

As she entered the Senate Chamber on 13th February 1990 and we walked to the front row, there was a remarkably pleasant thumping of desks even by non-supporters of her Government.

We settled into our respective seats.

Senator Waseem Sajjad was in the Chair.

This writer had provided some talking points to the Prime Minister, a few of which she used in her maiden speech in the House.

It is appropriate to reproduce verbatim below the official record of Senate proceedings after Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto entered the Chamber.

**Mr Chairman:** Well, the Prime Minister, who is Leader of the House, is here. Mr Javed Jabbar, would you like to say something?

**Mr Javed Jabbar:** Mr Chairman, I would like to thank you for affording me

this opportunity in the midst of a debate on a Privilege Motion but I rise on behalf of my colleagues on the Treasury benches, as indeed of the Members of the House, if I can take that liberty, of acknowledging and welcoming the presence of the Leader of the House, the Prime Minister of Pakistan.

Mr Chairman, this is a moving moment for one personally because we all know that through the tumultuous period of our history, democracy has often remained an elusive dream which is as vital as breath is to a human body. Democracy has been snatched from the body politic on more than one occasion and to restore democracy is a long and painful process in which many hundreds and thousands of lives have been lost, in which many precious sacrifices have been made.

Initially in 1985 and then comprehensively in 1988 the nation was able to regain its fundamental right of democracy. Many thousands of people contributed to this process but perhaps one of the most important personalities in the last few years has been the person who is now privileged to be the Prime Minister of Pakistan. For me Mr Chairman, as a Member of the Senate it has been a privilege to be elected to this august House in 1985 and to contribute and to participate, and to learn from the proceedings of a House that has set very high standards of debate and has often demonstrated its abiding and unshakable commitment to democracy.

Since December 1988, it has been my honour to serve in the Cabinet of the Prime Minister and in acknowledging and welcoming her presence, I believe that I speak on behalf of all of us that her presence signals the strengthening, the restoration, the continued health and vigour of the democratic system. Thank you.

**Mr Chairman:** Thank you, Mr Javed Jabbar. Mr Muhammad Ali Khan (the Leader of the Opposition).

**Mr Muhammad Ali Khan (NWFP):** Mr Chairman, Sir I take this opportunity

of welcoming the Prime Minister to this august House, though I personally feel that it is rather a belated welcome. During her first visit to this august House everyone was surprised as no move was made by the Minister (of State) for Parliamentary Affairs (Dr Sher Afghan, MNA) at that time to welcome her. As per practice, we had expected that he would ask the Members of this august House to join him in extending her the formal welcome to this House. Had he taken this initiative, I am sure the Opposition would definitely have responded in a befitting manner. Alas that did not happen and the House was prorogued sine die within a few hours.

Sir, after a very long time our Prime Minister has been able to come to this House, the seat of the Leader of the House remained empty during consecutive sessions. Earlier Prime Ministers used to come and participate in the proceedings of the Senate quite often and I really hope that our Prime Minister would, InshaAllah, follow that tradition.

Sir, at this juncture, I would like to dispel the wrong notion of the Government that the Senate is up in arms against the present regime. I am sorry to say it may be the other way round. Once, one Minister complained that it was not possible for the Government to bring any legislation before Parliament because of a very strong opposition in the Senate. Sir, he made this statement despite the fact that we passed a number of Bills in a very short period. It was not that easy even in a House where the Government is in a strong position, or in a majority, but even then we tried our best, whatever was possible. Sir, to me it seems that he just wanted to take refuge under an absolutely unwarranted assumption.

Sir, on behalf of the Opposition, I assure the Prime Minister of our full co-operation and support in all matters which we feel are in the best interest of the country. If in case we oppose certain matters which the learned Members of this august House feel that they are detrimental to the interest of the nation at large, it

should, on no account whatsoever, be misconstrued that we want to oppose the Government for the sake of opposition, or that we want to raise objections for the sake of objections. In fact, we would be playing our role as Senators who are here for checks and balances. As a matter of fact we will be failing in our duty if we try to condone each and every action of any Government for that matter.

Sir, I am sure, the Prime Minister is well aware of the dignity with which we do our business here in the Senate and being the custodians of the Federation, this House deals with each matter on merit and merit alone. Privilege Motions were moved when it was felt that the late President Mr Muhammad Ziaul Haq had violated the Constitution. Sir, a Privilege Motion was discussed for four days on his action of the 29th of May 1988, and the heat that was generated compelled him to come to the Senate and announce the date of general elections.

Sir, there is a saying in Pushto which roughly means that things can be solved or problems can be solved by negotiations and discussions. So, I hope the Prime Minister will give us more of such opportunities and that the Government and the Opposition will, InshaAllah, be in a position to serve the nation to the best of their ability. With these words, I again welcome our Prime Minister to this august House and hope that we will, InshaAllah, soon be able to solve most of the problems facing the nation in a very cordial atmosphere. I thank you Sir.

**Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto:** (initially she spoke a few sentences in Urdu which are translated by this writer as follows).

Mr Chairman, through your honourable self I would like to express my thanks to the Leader of the Opposition, the esteemed Senator, for his gracious remarks of welcome. I would also like to felicitate you personally, Mr Chairman, for the sober and capable manner in which you have conducted the proceedings of this House. The process by which this House functions as a part of Parliament while maintaining the principles of Parliamentary procedure strengthens democracy. I

take this opportunity to also, through your kind courtesy, thank all the Members of the Senate for the constructive way in which Senators participated in the recent joint sitting of Parliament.

Members of the Senate, Mr Chairman, including the individuals of eminence, learning and professional distinction, the standard of debate in the House is also a proof of the maturity with which issues are analysed here in the larger interest of the country. I am conscious of the fact that on various occasions during the past one year, the Senate had acted promptly to debate and to pass the legislation referred to it by the National Assembly and we take this to be a manifestation of the shared and collective commitment to Parliamentary democracy in Pakistan. I thank you for the co-operation during the legislative work and look forward to constructive work in the future as well. As all the four Provinces of Pakistan are equally represented in the Senate, therefore, from the floor of this House, I would like to invite the Provincial Governments of all the four Provinces to participate in a new endeavour for co-ordination and cohesion for the benefit of our people and our country. Let us together face the challenge of ensuring the restoration of the Parliamentary Constitution, the challenge of creating a consensus, the challenge of respecting different points of view and at the same time operating by democratic principles alone. The Federal Government shapes and applies policies for national development on a tradition of commitment to the welfare of the people on available resources and economic realities. (End of my notes provided to her. The remaining comments were her own).

We welcome objective criticism and evaluation. Here, I would like to say a word about one of the criticisms which is sometimes levelled at the Federal Government which, in our view, is levelled somewhat unfairly.

For example, it is sometimes said that only those proposals for new development projects are approved by our Government which are beneficial to

only the constituencies where PPP candidates have won or which is in our Party's Government's partisan interests. I assure you that this is an incorrect assumption. I further assure you that, whether it is any Member of the National Assembly or the Senate, any project proposal which serves the people's interest will be given fair and due consideration and will be approved by our Government.

In all the deliberations we in the Federal Government have full faith in the Members of both the Houses of the Federal Parliament in respect of their undoubted ability to review policies and issues in the national interest and to set standards of democratic expression and tolerance which will help the Federal Government to fulfill the mandate given to it by the people of Pakistan with a particular reference to the acceleration of economic development and social justice.

I am also grateful, Mr Chairman, to the Leader of the Opposition for the words of advice that he has today given me and to the Federal Government.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition has said my Government sometimes, or often has a negative view of the Opposition's views or proposals. I want to stress that we are in favour of positive criticism. For example, whenever in the Cabinet meetings we learn of any reservations by a Senator (from the Opposition) about any project or policy of our Government, we advise the Minister concerned to consult with the concerned Senator in order to remove any mis-conceptions or mis-givings before the project is approved. We want to cooperate fully with the Opposition.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition has also suggested that previous Leaders of the House or Prime Ministers have not allowed the seats in this House, the Senate to remain empty. Of course, no politician likes to let a seat remain empty! I assure you that I will ensure that in future I will join you in this

House regularly. With reference to the couplet from Pushto poetry quoted by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition: as I do not speak Pushto I am unable to respond with an appropriate couplet in the Pushto language which I greatly respect, as I also respect all other languages of Pakistan. I look forward to remaining in frequent contact with this august House.”

(Senators thumped their desk in applause on the conclusion of the speech).

Despite the assurance of regular participation in the future sittings of the Senate, Benazir Bhutto did not return to the House after 13th February 1990. Just about six months later, she and our Government were dismissed by President Ghulam Ishaq Khan.



## *The first meeting in 1986*

Soon after her tumultuous return to Pakistan in April 1986, marked by the huge crowds that lined the streets of Lahore, Benazir Bhutto conveyed an interest in meeting the Independent Opposition Parliamentary Group (IOPG).

This Group comprised Members of the National Assembly and the Senate elected in the non-party polls of February-March 1985 who had not become Members of the Official Parliamentary Group (OPG) or the Pakistan Muslim League Group formally established by Mohammad Khan Junejo after the lifting of martial law on 30th December 1985.

The vast majority of Members of the IOPG were from the National Assembly. From the Senate, I was the only Member who participated in meetings on a regular basis. Tariq Chaudhry attended occasionally. IOPG Members from the National Assembly were Syed Fakhar Imam, who had been elected Speaker of the same Assembly in March 1985 by defeating Khawaja Safdar Ali (father of Khawaja Asif, the PML(N) leader), the favoured candidate of General Ziaul Haq. Syed Fakhar Imam's wife Syeda Abida Hussain, the first woman in Pakistan to be directly elected to the National Assembly as compared to other women Members indirectly elected on reserved seats; Makhdoom Syed Javed Hashmi from Multan who had served as Minister of State in the martial law Cabinet of General Ziaul Haq; Air Marshal (r) Nur Khan, former C-in-C, Pakistan Air Force and Governor, West Pakistan, elected from Attock, Punjab; Sardar Aseff Ali, elected from Kasur, Punjab; Sheikh Rashid Ahmed, elected

from Rawalpindi, Punjab, a former student leader; Ilahi Bukhsh Soomro, elected unopposed from Shikarpur, Sindh, a former Federal Minister, originally expected to become Prime Minister in March 1985 when General Ziaul Haq unexpectedly chose Muhammad Khan Junejo; Mumtaz Tarrar, elected from Gujrat, Punjab; Syed Nusrat Ali Shah, elected from Sargodha, Punjab; Mrs Rafia Tariq Rahim and Mrs Silwat Sher Ali, elected on reserved women's seats, both from Lahore, and a few others.

In our own respective individual ways, in the Assembly and in the Senate and sometimes acting in co-ordination with other Members, in less than half a year between March and October 1985, even before the formation of the IOPG, its Members had demonstrated a capacity for political views independent and frequently critical of the Presidency of General Ziaul Haq while he retained continued command of the Army. The IOPG was also critical of some of the policies and actions of Mohammad Khan Junejo's civil Government.

For about six months after the formal creation of the IOPG, Syed Fakhar Imam diligently ensured that he did not compromise his independence and impartiality in his capacity as Speaker of the National Assembly — notwithstanding the fact that his wife, Syeda Abida Hussain was an outspoken member of the IOPG.

But by March 1986, in only about a year after his surprise election as Speaker and despite his impeccable conduct as the custodian of the Assembly, the Junejo-led Muslim League, using all the overt and covert resources of the Government successfully moved a vote of no-confidence against him. Though he retained the confidence and loyal support of 72 Members of the Assembly — about three-fold more in number than the number of Members of our IOPG — Syed Fakhar Imam was replaced by Hamid Nasir Chhatta as the new Speaker.

Subsequent to this change, Syed Fakhar Imam became an active member of the IOPG whose meetings were often held at his residence in Islamabad. This home

always offered warm and gracious hospitality.

With colleagues such as Syed Fakhar Imam, Syeda Abida Hussain, Javed Hashmi and Tariq Chaudhry, I visited several cities, towns and rural settlements across Pakistan in 1985, 1986 and 1987 to address large and small public meetings, bar associations and other forums of civil society.

In our speeches and interactions, we called for strengthening the civil and political dimensions of the State, the end of the situation in which the same individual — General Ziaul Haq — concurrently held two positions i.e. that of President and of Chief of Army Staff. We called for the restoration of a political party system as the basis for fresh elections, and for improved governance and accountability in foreign policy, and in internal affairs. We received enthusiastic and warm receptions in every location we visited. We also met leaders of political parties that had boycotted the March 1985 polls to exchange views.

Through consultations, it was eventually agreed that the IOPG would arrange a meeting with Benazir Bhutto at the Pearl Continental Hotel in Rawalpindi (venue of my wedding reception in May 1969!) in the latter part of 1986.

During discussions about the programme and preparations, when it came to deciding as to who would render the welcome address, Shaikh Rashid Ahmed insisted on doing so on the basis that he would articulate IOPG viewpoints we would all endorse in advance. On the given day, he then delivered his speech at the reception in his engaging manner of using the English language. On behalf of IOPG, Shaikh Rashid acknowledged the sacrifices for democracy rendered by the PPP and its founder, appreciated the courage and determination shown by Benazir Bhutto, stressed the relevance of the non-party 1985 polls as a vital step for the restoration of full-fledged democracy and identified ways in which IOPG Members were furthering their goals, several of which were shared with the PPP. Syed Fakhar Imam also spoke briefly on similar lines.

In her own remarks, Benazir Bhutto acknowledged the distinct role being rendered by Members of IOPG and focused on the imperative that party-based elections alone could ensure authentic representation of the will of the people. She extolled the sacrifices made by the workers and leaders of the PPP, most prominently symbolized by the willingness of Z.A. Bhutto to face death rather than ask for mercy, as also the dedicated struggle of the workers and leaders of other political parties represented in the MRD. As she met us, turn by turn, with each introduction, her eyes reflected either instant recognition of a name previously heard, or of cordiality at meeting a Member for the first time but always, she had a pleasant smile. When I was introduced, she indicated prior awareness, and gently smiled.

She probably recalled, that about 14 years earlier in 1972 she and I had consecutively presented a series of current affairs programmes in English on PTV. The programme that I often wrote, or co-wrote but always presented on-screen titled: *The World Tonight* (without a tele-prompter!) was the first current affairs programme in English screened by PTV commencing in 1971. It had become to my pleasant surprise, widely viewed and appreciated. After about a year or more, I decided to end my association with the programme because I was unwilling to accept advice from the Foreign Office in Islamabad regarding the need to make my comments about certain other Muslim countries less critical and more circumspect. Some weeks thereafter PTV telecast a few programmes in a new series titled: *Encounter* whose on-screen presenter was Benazir Bhutto, daughter of the then-Prime Minister but, in her own right well-qualified to be an effective host of a current affairs TV programme.

There was a subtle stiffness in the interaction. The leader of a major party which had co-founded the MRD (1981) soon after the assassination of Z.A. Bhutto, whose party, with others, had boycotted the non-party-based elections

held under martial law in February-March 1985 during the regime of General Ziaul Haq, was now meeting formally for the first time, with individuals who had disagreed with the boycott. We the IOPG Members — who were non-MRD elements — had successfully participated in the 1985 polls. But we were nevertheless demonstrating defiance and independence from the influence or control of both the General, and even of the civil Government of Mohammad Khan Junejo.

In some matters, the views of MRD-related parties and IOPG coincided. In others they did not: for instance, the IOPG was of the view that while the next elections should certainly be party-based, their timing should be near to, or on the conclusion of the 5-year term of the legislatures elected in 1985. Whereas the MRD called for immediate elections.

On Benazir Bhutto's part — her reservations reflected the unspoken yet perhaps grudging awareness about the limited but real credibility achieved by the IOPG in particular, and by the 1985 Assemblies in general.

Fundamental issues about the Constitution, about the continued dual positions of the Chief of Army Staff and President, even after the lifting of martial law being held by the same individual, about the arbitrary power of the President to dissolve the legislatures — all of these had been vigorously and candidly articulated in both Houses of Parliament, in the print media and in public events by members of the IOPG.

Perhaps Benazir Bhutto, like some other MRD leaders felt uncomfortable with the spectacle of elements outside the MRD — like Members of the IOPG — upstaging the MRD and trying to show that the MRD did not have a monopoly on authentic opposition to General Ziaul Haq.

One extreme and cynical view about the IOPG was to the effect that the anti-Zia rhetoric was actually a tactic to conceal covert collaboration between the

General's regime and the IOPG so as to boost the credibility of the system introduced in 1985. While some Members of IOPG may well have been, deliberately or inadvertently acting as per the covert agenda of the Zia regime and the Junejo Government, I was convinced that the principal figures were acting and speaking as they did purely out of individual political convictions and beliefs in certain values.

In a parallel context, I knew that, at no time even before my own election to the Senate on 14th March 1985 nor afterward, had any representative of the Government or any intelligence agency ever approached me to covertly project their own line or their messages in the guise of my personal views.

The fact that the IOPG had achieved, in a relatively short period, its own peculiar credibility while being part of a transient political process which was only partially representative of public opinion — with several major political parties having boycotted polls for the legislatures — the IOPG had, at the same time expressed its commitment to full-blooded party-based elections and a fair democratic system. It had vigorously recorded its dissent wherever it deemed apt.

On the conclusion of the speeches at the Pearl Continental Hotel in Rawalpindi in 1986 and the questions-and-answers session with the print media representatives and overseas electronic media representatives, Benazir Bhutto and IOPG agreed to remain in contact in the future. But we never met her again as a group.

Over the next three decades, IOPG Members chose to become members of different political parties (including PPP, PML, PML-N) with contrasting approaches and features sometimes conveying their own individually distinct viewpoints, sometimes reversing themselves, and re-forming relationships with other parties.

*“Why are you so quiet?”*

(1987)

We were seated in garden chairs on the lawn of the residence in Karachi of Mr and Mrs Gulzar Ahmed in about February 1987. Mr Gulzar Ahmed was a senior banker in the National Bank of Pakistan. Mrs Gulzar Ahmed was a cousin of Nusrat Bhutto, the widow of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and the mother of Benazir Bhutto.

A mutual friend had suggested that, as an independent Senator whose views were quite close to those of the PPP and as a member of the IOPG in opposition to the PML Government of Prime Minister Mohammad Khan Junejo, and also opposed to the continued military rule of General Ziaul Haq, I should meet with the PPP leader to explore areas of common interest.

I preferred to listen to her. She recounted the tyranny of General Ziaul Haq, the blows inflicted by martial law, the various attempts even by the civil part of the Government led by Muhammad Khan Junejo to prevent the PPP from freely mobilizing the people. She recalled the tumultuous reception she received in Lahore on her return to Pakistan as an indicator of the level of popular support for her party and herself. She lamented how the non-party elections of March 1985 had resulted in a membership of the Federal and Provincial legislatures that could be held captive, who were pliant and had low public support.

But she did briefly acknowledge that, despite the legislatures being predominantly subject to the will of the ruling forces, there were nevertheless

individuals such as this writer who possessed their own individual viewpoints on issues. And that they had declined to become a part of the official power apparatus.

Two other persons present with us expressed variations of her views.

She noticed that I did not give my own viewpoint and said, “Why are you so quiet, Javed? Let’s hear your opinion”.

I was reluctant to speak. For perhaps two reasons. Firstly, the whole-sale criticism of Prime Minister Junejo’s Government was too sweeping and one-dimensional. While it was true that Prime Minister Junejo attained and retained his office at the pleasure of the President, rather than only by the support of the majority in the National Assembly belatedly obtained after being nominated — one knew from direct, first-hand observation that Prime Minister Junejo was also steadily and firmly creating his own space, separate and distinct from President General Ziaul Haq.

My membership of the Independent Opposition in the Senate and Parliament did not prevent me from an acknowledgement of this reality. This assertion of quiet authority by Prime Minister Junejo was explicit as well as subtle, but quite evident. The obvious manifestation was in the Prime Minister’s insistence that martial law be lifted at the earliest, and no later than the end of 1985, an insistence that had been successfully realized on 30th December 1985, albeit at a heavy price in the form of the Eighth Amendment which retained and reinforced distortions to favour the Presidency, rather than the office of the Prime Minister and also validated some regressive ordinances enforced by Ziaul Haq.

Another explicit sign was Mr Junejo’s publicly stated stress on austerity being applied across the board, to both the civil and military spheres. For instance, by his stating that even Generals should ride in small, compact Suzuki cars instead of large, expensive vehicles. The subtle yet evident ways of asserting civil



authority was the tone and inflexion used in Parliament to articulate the merits of a political and electoral approach to resolve issues instead of the use of military force or martial law.

During formal proceedings of the National Assembly or during joint sittings of Parliament in which I participated as a Senator, or from the visitors' gallery as an observer, or during the sessions of the Senate in which I formally interacted with Ministers and members of the ruling party, it was clear that they wanted to be recognized in their own right as freely elected representatives of the people — although through non-party based elections — rather than be seen as pliable, hand-picked obedient servants of the military.

Haji Saifullah Khan, a Member of the National Assembly was a prime example of this feature. During his speeches in the Assembly on subjects such as the simultaneous holding of the two offices of the Head of State and the Chief of Army Staff/and Chief Martial Law Administrator (this latter title only up to 30th December 1985) by General Ziaul Haq, Haji Saifullah Khan was extraordinarily pungent, often scathing, occasionally witty and always interesting to listen to. One cynical interpretation of his candour was that his posture of bold criticism was actually a contrived, put-up piece of theatrics rendered with the covert approval of civil and /or military intelligence agencies with the aim of building a credible perception about the non-party based legislatures. His freedom to be exceptionally biting was meant to prove that debates in Parliament virtually represented the reality of the discourse outside Parliament expressed by the political parties which had boycotted the March 1985 polls. Be that as it may, whether it was Haji Saifullah Khan or several other Members of the National Assembly and the Senate — including views expressed by this writer — opinions highly critical of martial law, of General Ziaul Haq and of their supporters were frequently and freely recorded in Parliament.

The second meeting with Benazir Bhutto concluded on a cordial note with a broad agreement to maintain contacts in the future.

In the months that followed, Benazir Bhutto married Asif Ali Zardari. There then commenced a relationship that would exert an impact on the PPP, on Pakistani politics, society and state far larger in scale and dimensions than a single matrimonial union's impact on a woman and a man.

I was not invited to the wedding festivities but read and saw its coverage in the media.

*“BiBi: please go to Lahore”*

(NOVEMBER 1988)

A few days after the results of the 16th November 1988 elections were declared, my good friend Khurshid Hadi, and I decided we should visit Benazir Bhutto at her residence in Clifton, Karachi to felicitate her on leading the PPP to victory in the National Assembly.

There was hustle and bustle at the gates of Bilawal House and dozens of persons waited about outside the walls and a smaller number inside the compound. Early versions of private security guards had already appeared while there was a uniformed police unit near the gates. It was after sunset. We had been given a confirmed time and were ushered into her presence only a few minutes later than the scheduled hour.

She smiled and warmly welcomed us. I do not recall the presence of a fourth person, except for periodic interruptions by unavoidable phone calls, and messages conveyed to her by assistants. We expressed our delight at the success with which she had led the PPP.

Of the 204 directly-elected seats in the National Assembly in the 16th November 1988 polls, the Pakistan People’s Party won 93 seats, the nine-party alliance known as the Islami Jamhoori Ittehad (IJI) won 54 seats, Independent candidates across the country including MQM candidates in Karachi and Hyderabad who contested as Independents won a total of 40 seats (the MQM share was 13 seats). All the other parties did not enter double-digit figures.

Jamiatul Ulema-e-Islam (Fazlur Rahman group) secured 7 seats, Pakistan Awami Ittehad, 3 seats, Awami National Party, 2 seats while assorted others managed 5 seats.

Voter turn-out was only 42.7 per cent from the total number of registered voters being 46.2 million. PPP secured 7.5 million votes, the IJI secured 5.9 million.

In Punjab, voter turn-out was slightly higher than at the overall national level. Of the 46.4 per cent of voters who cast ballots for candidates for the Punjab Assembly polls, the nine-party IJI obtained 37.2 per cent of the vote share while the single-handed efforts of the PPP secured 39.7 per cent of the vote-share. Independents took 22.9 per cent of the turn-out. Reflective of the anomalies of the first-past-the-post electoral system, IJI won 108 seats from the total of 240 while PPP duplicated the number of 93 seats which was the same figure for this party's share in the National Assembly.

Due to the IJI's vigorous pursuit of Independent Members in the Punjab Assembly spear-headed by Nawaz Sharif who was based in Lahore in contrast to the PPP's less aggressive approach — with Benazir Bhutto refraining from even visiting Lahore between 16th November and 2nd December 1988 when she became Prime Minister — the IJI was able to assemble a majority in the 240-Member legislature and eventually formed the Provincial Government.

In Sindh, the voter turn-out was virtually the same — 42.4 per cent — as at the overall national level. Even though one had expected a higher level of participation because the province was the home to the Bhutto family and this was the first party-based election held after the unjust execution of Z.A. Bhutto in April 1979. Though the PPP did dominate rural Sindh and secured 1.9 million votes from the total votes polled of 4.1 million, the total share of votes garnered by Independent candidates in Sindh was high at 1.4 million. MQM candidates

formally contesting as Independents took 1.11 million of the 1.4 million ballots in favour of Independents. The IJI barely registered itself in Sindh with a share of only 294,672 votes translating into a solitary seat in the Provincial Assembly. In terms of number of seats, the PPP had a comfortable majority of 66 in the total of 100 directly-elected seats while the MQM had 25.

Mirroring the notably fragmented political conditions of the then-North-West Frontier Province, (now the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province), the largest share of the voter turn-out at 37.1 per cent (resulting in 2.17 million cast votes from a total of 5.95 million registered voters) went to Independent candidates who attained 29 per cent of the total. They were followed by the IJI with 25.7 per cent which became 28 seats in a total of 80 seats. An alliance between the PPP with 21 seats, ANP with 13, JUI(F) with 2 and several of the 16 Independents led to a coalition majority forming the Provincial Government.

A similar segmentation emerged in Balochistan. Independent candidates secured the highest percentage at 25.9 per cent of the votes cast in a voter turn-out of only 29.4 per cent, even though this resulted in only 7 seats for Independents. JUI(F) became the single-largest party with 10 seats even though its votes share was only 13.2 per cent compared to IJI with 22.6 per cent vote-share to gain 9 seats in a House of 40 Members. The PPP managed only 3 seats with a 9.9 per cent vote-share, even lower than the Balochistan National Alliance with 10.6 per cent voteshare becoming 6 seats. As referred to elsewhere, the first coalition Government formed immediately after the polls lasted only a few days, with a new Government taking office in a swirl of allegations and controversy.

Benazir Bhutto instantly complained of the rigging in Punjab and elsewhere and held President Ghulam Ishaq Khan and the intelligence agencies responsible for inflating the number of votes secured by IJI, for disorder and violence at polling stations to prevent PPP voters from casting their votes, for obstructing

road transport for potential PPP voters; for manipulating the counting of ballots after the polls closed.

In principle, we agreed with her. However, both Khurshid and I had earlier in our discussions concluded, on the basis of phone conversations with friends in Punjab as varied as mutual friend Salman Taseer in Lahore and activists in Multan and newspaper reporters I knew, that only some of the complaints were valid.

The IJI certainly enjoyed the advantage of unspoken but tacit support from an administrative machinery accustomed over the past several years to working with Nawaz Sharif as Provincial Finance Minister and with other elements who were part of the Zia regime and in the Mohammad Khan Junejo tenure. This prior association gave the IJI a logistical advantage over the PPP which had been out of public office for over 11 years.

There had also emerged in Punjab a sometimes subtle — and sometimes an explicit — empathy openly expressed for Nawaz Sharif and his Kashmiri-Punjabi identity as a sharp contrast to the Sindhi identity of Benazir Bhutto.

While the Bhutto name and the PPP had a national, Federal persona, the Sindhi dimension of the leaders and the party, with the gender facet also construed as a nuance, had fostered the perception in a certain section of voters that there was a far greater affinity between Nawaz Sharif and the PML and Punjab, than there was between Benazir Bhutto and the PPP and Punjab.

On the social and economic levels of this phase in the country's history, there had also emerged a mercantilist and comprador class in urban Punjab, specially in central and northern Punjab which felt more comfortable with the business dimension of Nawaz Sharif's personality than it did with the primarily rural and agricultural and relatively distant aspect of PPP and Benazir Bhutto's personality associated with rural Sindh.

This shift of perception and identification had occurred partly spontaneously due to social, economic and demographic trends that emerged in the 1980s and were partly deliberately promoted by the IJI and PML perspectives about political power play.

This also comprised an unspoken but sometimes obvious disdain for a woman to be the supreme Head of a political party, reflective of the historical male chauvinist streak in society at large.

Even though Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah had served in late 1964-early 1965 as the Opposition candidate for the Presidency of Pakistan and had secured a respectable share of the electoral college votes, at this political stage in Pakistan in 1988, some segments had not yet fully-accepted a woman's presence at the very top.

The contrast between election results in the Punjab in 1970 and in 1988 was striking. Whereas the PPP had secured more seats in Punjab in the first election — 62 out of a total of 82 seats from that Province in the National Assembly and in Sindh, 18 seats out of a total of 27 seats — now in 1988, the figures were: PPP secured only 52 seats out of a total of 114 in Punjab while IJI bagged 45. In Sindh the PPP in 1988 won 31 out of a total of 46.

The assassination of Z.A. Bhutto in April 1979 remained a harsh memory. Millions voted in Punjab for the PPP in November 1988 to pay a debt of homage they believed they owed to the slain leader. But many more millions who must surely have felt the same warm and loyal sentiments simply did not bother to vote.

With the electoral system not requiring the casting of votes to be a compulsory act as per the law in about 22 countries around the world — to make voting results truly reflective of public opinion, the turn-out (42.7 per cent) in a party-based election was less than the turn-out recorded in the non-party based polls of

February 1985 which was 53.7 per cent.

Even after allowing for the customary and reflexive charges of rigging that arise after every single election held to-date in Pakistan, my own direct observance of polling conditions in Karachi in 1970 and in 1988, and information gained from friends and contacts in other parts of the country conveyed that the 1985 non-party polls were reasonably free and fair and the 1988 polls were also broadly fair, though multiple instances of rigging also occurred.

The question whether such rigging in 1985 and 1988 would have fundamentally altered the over-all result remains unsettled in a conclusive way.

Suffice it to say in this context that the politics of Punjab in November 1988 had changed, for whatever reason, to the detriment of the PPP, from the politics of Punjab in December 1970, and in February 1985.

***“Please go to Lahore immediately”***

Both Khurshid Hadi and self had agreed, in advance of our meeting with Benazir Bhutto in November 1988 that we would jointly urge her to immediately visit Lahore, take up residence at a location to be specially named to be exclusively associated with her father’s name, or her own name eg. “Bhutto House” and to oversee the attempt to form a PPP-led Provincial Government in Punjab.

“Your continued presence in Lahore at this time will make a catalytic difference” is what we individually and jointly requested her to consider. We said Nawaz Sharif and his colleagues in PML had already begun to extensively reach out to Members elected as Independents. They were also canvassing smaller parties. They were also possibly attempting to persuade a few MPAs elected on PPP tickets to switch loyalties, though there seemed to be dim prospects for success in this last category.



“You are going to be Prime Minister, God willing, in Islamabad. You need a PPP-led Government in Punjab. You are already assured of your Government in Sindh and NWFP, possibly also Balochistan. Please, Bibi (as she was often called specially before she became Prime Minister) go to Lahore tomorrow!”

She reacted with pique about the deliberate delay by President Ghulam Ishaq Khan in formally inviting her to form the Federal Government in the Centre despite the PPP having emerged as the largest single party in the National Assembly.

We joined her in expressing our deep disappointment at the President’s calculated delay. But we also pointed out that the invitation would ultimately have to come to her — he had no other choice.

To apply further pressure on him to hasten the invitation to her to form the Federal Government, we said that her presence in Lahore at this critical time would have a dual impact. Her Punjab-centric location would energize the Punjab PPP to successfully persuade enough independently elected Members to support the party in efforts to form the Provincial Government and would send a strong signal to Islamabad and Rawalpindi that PPP Governments in Islamabad and Lahore were viable.

Equally, to those elements in Punjab which misperceived or misrepresented the PPP as having become too Sindh-centric, her espousal of Lahore as her operating base at this time would also help dispel this inaccurate impression.

She said, “I am in almost hourly contact on the phone with our Party leaders, with Farooq Leghari, with Jehangir Badar, with Salman Taseer. So I am fully aware about the situation. They are confident about our prospects there. If only the President were to send me the invitation, that would make a vast difference to their efforts”.

At the risk of stating the obvious, and of offending her, I said, “Bibi, the route

to Islamabad is via Lahore”. To which she unsmilingly responded, “The PPP has a national, Federal vision, Javed, not confined to one Province alone”. Which was also an obvious, self-evident truth. But this was a view which did not acknowledge the nuances and the precise needs of that critical period in history.

Mumbling words to the effect that her presence in Lahore would have more than symbolic meaning and could make a dynamic difference, we regretted that we had been unable to persuade her to change her reluctance to go immediately to Lahore. We took our leave — as interruptions from others keen to meet her had increased.

Yet we could not comprehend her reasons for her reluctance to visit Lahore at this critical time. I understood why she thought — or had been persuaded by some others to think — that her going to Lahore at that time — before being invited by the President to form the Government at the Centre — would be misconstrued by most, and by most of Punjab, as a sign of weakness and lack of self-confidence.

She may also have thought that the PPP under her leadership had an inherent moral right to form the Government, both at the Centre and in Punjab, with the actual numbers in Punjab, as per this possible view, being of secondary importance.

Whatever the actual reason may have been, one’s opinion, subjective as it was, remains the same today in 2021, over 31 years later.

In a vital sense, by not visiting and staying in Lahore in November 1988, before going to Islamabad, Benazir Bhutto facilitated Lahore in eventually taking over Islamabad.

## “When are you joining the PPP?”

(NOVEMBER 1988)

In the last week of November and the first two days of December 1988, the Islamabad residence of Dr Zafar Niazi became the centre of attention. For that is where newly-elected Members of the National Assembly would visit every day and where undesignated Prime Minister-in-waiting Benazir Bhutto was residing.

PPP legislators, Party leaders and workers, newspaper reporters, well-wishers and friends thronged the place for virtually 18 to 20 hours out of every 24. Before meeting Benazir Bhutto at this location, I visited the place a couple of times with others who shared an interest in gaining glimpses of her, or in meeting her. I was told that she wanted to meet me. She smiled and welcomed me, and came directly to the point, “So Javed, when are you formally joining us?”

One knew there was an inevitability to my affirmative answer. It was only about 18 years in the making.

### ***Working for the PPP — without being a member:***

I recalled the time in Karachi in 1970 as the country prepared for the first-ever general elections to be held on the basis of adult franchise i.e. one vote for every adult woman and man (at that time, a person was recognized to be an adult on reaching 21 years of age, a level reduced to 18 years only 42 years later in 2002 in the elections held during the tenure of President General Pervez Musharraf).

In 1970, like several other persons of my age i.e. in their over-20s, the Pakistan

People's Party led by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was the most attractive choice among all political parties and leaders.

In spite of Z.A. Bhutto's close and long association from about 1958 till 1966 with the officially-sponsored version of the Muslim League, during which association he had also served as that Party's Secretary-General, and as forceful political advocate for Field Marshal Ayub Khan, there was a fresh contemporary ethos in his persona and in the PPP which he founded in 1967. The social and cultural changes that PPP appeared to represent were in an era when new global trends became evident. Mass awareness about the inequity of the US war against North Vietnam, the student and youth riots and protests in Paris, London and in Chicago, and in Kent University, USA and elsewhere, an affinity felt in the music of the Beatles, the anger against increased inequality and the perceived and actual extremities of capitalism. All these elements transformed into the indigenous milieu of Pakistan, in the late 1960s, West and East, a bubbling discontent and ferment articulated in the slogans of Islamic socialism arising as a reaction against military helmsmanship from 1958 to 1969. These trends continued thereafter with the takeover by General Yahya Khan in March 1969. Youth, labour and Provincial nationalists in East Pakistan, and in the newly-restored 4 Provinces of West Pakistan looked forward to the prospect of an unknown but promising democratic system.

This sense of hope and identification was shared with many friends in Karachi in 1970. They included friends like Salman Taseer who, with his wife Yasmine Saigal were neighbours of Shabnam and self in PECHS, Karachi between 1969 and 1971. Khurshid Hadi, the Chartered Accountant who, with Salman had established a new firm known as Taseer, Hadi Khalid & Co., in Karachi and of which my own partnership firm, MNJ Advertising (later in 1974 to become MNJ Communications) was the first client in 1969. Hussain Dawood, also recently

returned from an overseas college education to join his father, the industrial tycoon Ahmed Dawood. Muzaffar Hussain Shah, an aspiring lawyer, my former debating partner in the University of Karachi, nephew of a senior advocate G.A. Shah, son of a prominent agriculturist of rural Sindh (and later to become Speaker, Sindh Assembly and Chief Minister of Sindh).

Together, we had earlier decided to support Barrister Kamal Azfar, a person senior to us by a few years who had decided to enter the political realm by joining the Convention Muslim League (CML) led by Mumtaz Daultana. This was a version of the Muslim League different from the one with which Z.A. Bhutto had been associated from 1958 to 1966 during his Ministership in Field Marshal Ayub Khan's Cabinet.

While we had not been entirely at ease about Kamal Azfar's choice of party we were not yet fully enthralled with the PPP either. Perhaps we — or at least myself — were disturbed by the bombast and the rhetoric of Z.A. Bhutto. Perhaps deep down we were not fully convinced that the egalitarian dimension he projected was authentic. Only a few years later we were going to discover that our first instincts were right. But that is another story to be told elsewhere.

For in 1970, Kamal Azfar's decision to move from the CML to the PPP — a decision about which we were not aware of in advance of it being publicly known — possibly catalyzed us into our decision to actively support his candidature with a PPP ticket seeking a seat in the National Assembly. The constituency he chose comprised parts of the PECHS area in which most of us resided and other areas of eastern Karachi. This also included some suburbs and kachi abadis (unplanned, slum-like settlements) and some lower-middle income group areas where the religion-based party Jamaat-e-Islami led by Maulanas and other older politicians was active.

There was a reluctance on my part to formally becoming a member of the PPP.

One had reservations about the party's persona and its leader, specially the demagoguery and the diatribes. Yet, no other party exerted as ambivalent an appeal. So I procrastinated briefly, then worked and voted for the PPP in 1970.

So, with leaflets in hand for distribution, out we went, knocking on doors and speaking to voters to promote Kamal Azfar and the PPP. Our candidate had good credentials. Well-educated, soft-spoken, forward looking in his writings and speeches. We also made sure we ourselves were all registered as voters, as were our respective spouses.

Election day on 7th December 1970 was a new experience altogether. The indelible ink on the forefinger, the choice of the sword — the PPP election symbol — on the ballot paper, the visits to different polling stations, the wait for the counting of votes, the unsettling reports received that Kamal's wife, the elegant Naheed, had been harassed by the women workers of a rival party in a suburban area where we were not present. And then the disappointing result. For the NA-133 seat (Karachi 6) in which the registered voters were 184,186 the voter turn-out was about 54.4 per cent. Maulana Zafar Ahmed Ansari, as an Independent, supported by the religious parties secured 50,230 votes while Kamal Azfar representing the PPP obtained 26,783 votes.

Almost equally disappointing was the absence of any post-election meeting called by the candidate to share the experience with workers like us.

On the larger scale, in West Pakistan, there was startlingly good news for the PPP. It secured 62 seats in Punjab, 18 seats in Sindh, 1 seat in NWFP (now KP) but none in Balochistan.

There was a sense of joy, of new expectations in the news of the PPP emerging in December 1970 as the single largest party in West Pakistan. Yet, this joy was almost instantly tinged by uncertainty and apprehension at the sweeping victory of the Awami League led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in East Pakistan where the

Awami League won 160 out of 162 seats for the National Assembly.

***New year — new shocks:***

We temporarily put aside forebodings to celebrate New Year's Eve with verve on 31st December 1970. I recall passing by Aslam Azhar's residence on Shaheed-e-Millat Road in Karachi at the time when Z.A. Bhutto was also present at the party — and briefly dropped in.

1971 became a year that began on the high note of expectation. Then came a series of jolting shocks and flickering desperations. This included the harsh fact of West Pakistanis not taking the trouble to discover what was really happening in East Pakistan, yet in a way apprehending the horror of the bloody conflict, and being at the same time aware that India was gleefully stoking worse trouble ahead.

The first few jolts included the unsettling episode of the hijacking of an Indian Airlines plane bound from Srinagar to New Delhi, diverted forcibly to Lahore. The image of Z.A. Bhutto walking up to the aircraft to talk to the two hijackers who had openly broken the international laws of civil aviation—and India's own laws — and of his hailing the action revived my concerns about him. One knew that India, illegally occupying part of Kashmir, refused to agree to a plebiscite and used force to suppress the Kashmiris. All such actions violated UN Security Council Resolutions.

Yet was it appropriate for a Pakistani political leader, on the threshold of assuming public office, to welcome a hijacking action which, apart from breaking laws, also set up a dangerous precedent?

One immediate consequence indicated the potential for more bad consequences to follow. India seized on Pakistan's action of welcoming the hijack and refusal to promptly send the hijackers to Indian justice as the basis for suspending Pakistan's use of air space to over-fly Indian territory between West and East

Pakistan. PIA and other Pakistani aircraft henceforth had to take a route more than thrice the distance, via Colombo, flying over the Arabian Sea, the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal to maintain air links between the two wings.

Then came the ambivalent month of February. In Dacca (now Dhaka), Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's rigid position on the non-negotiability of the Awami League's Six-Points programme and his insistence that dialogue would only be conducted inside the newly elected National Assembly which awaited being convened. In West Pakistan, Z.A. Bhutto, leader of the largest single party in West Pakistan insisted that, in light of the peculiarly lop-sided election results — in which the majority party of one wing of the country had no representation at all in the other wing — a consensus prior to the first session of the new Assembly would be only fair and essential for consensus about a new Constitution.

History tends to regard Z.A. Bhutto's stance on this matter to have been deliberately destructive and meant to covertly polarize the situation in preparation for the disintegration of the Pakistani State — to be able to assume power in West Pakistan and to let East Pakistan be ruled by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Z.A. Bhutto certainly indicated traits of a thirst for power and did seem to be unduly reluctant to allow the majority party — the Awami league — to establish its legitimate dominance in the Assembly and, eventually, in Government. But, notwithstanding Bhutto's own apparent intransigence — mirroring Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's rigidity on the other side — there were three valid reasons for Z.A. Bhutto's insistence on an agreement on the future structure for the State of Pakistan prior to the first session of the Assembly being convened.

First: the Legal Framework Order enforced by President General Yahya Khan in 1970 under which the elections were held omitted to specify the voting basis



by which the Assembly would adopt a new Constitution for the country. In a normal legislative Assembly elected under a given Constitution already accepted by participants as the legislative framework, a simple majority of votes is universally used to adopt new legislation, or to make amendments to laws. However, the Assembly elected in Pakistan in December 1970 was firstly, to serve as a Constitution-making body and secondly, as a conventional legislature operating by the “simple majority” principle.

Across the world, Constitutions are formulated or amended by elected forums not by a simple majority of voting members but — depending on the particularities of each system — by a two-third, or a three-fourth majority of votes. In the case of a bicameral system, either both Houses of Parliament have to adopt a new Constitution or amend it through a two-third / three-fourth majority. Or, as in the case of the USA, in addition to the adoption by the Senate and the House of Representatives in Washington DC, the legislatures of three-fourths of the 50 States also have to approve a new amendment to the Constitution, or adopt any other Constitutional change e.g. a new Constitution.

The silence of the LFO on this crucial aspect of the voting process required for Constitution-making was an initial justification for Z.A. Bhutto’s preference for a prior consensus. He feared that by using a simple majority, the Awami League could bull-doze a Constitution based entirely on its Six-Points Programme, a manifesto which had not been endorsed in advance by the largest political party in West Pakistan.

Which brings us to the second valid reason for Z.A. Bhutto’s position. This was related to the fact that in 1970, even without formally being designated as such, the Pakistani State had, de facto, already become a Federation. The constituent units of a Federation, regardless of their respective populations or territorial sizes, enjoy equal status in some basic respects.

The population weightage is addressed by a bicameral system in which there are two forms — one reflective of populations — the other, reflective of the equality of the constituent units.

The One-Unit structure of West Pakistan was abolished in 1970 and four Provinces restored in the shape of Punjab, Sindh, North West Frontier Province and Balochistan. While, as before 1969, East Pakistan remained a single Province. Thus, Pakistan in December 1970 (when the elections were held) was a Federation comprising 5 Provinces. While fully respecting the overwhelming mandate received by the Awami League in East Pakistan, an equally stark fact was that the Awami League had absolutely no presence in any of the four Provinces of West Pakistan.

The Six-Points programme called for optimal autonomy for the Provinces. In real terms, if implemented, Pakistan would have become a loose Confederation instead of remaining a conventional Federation, or a Centre-ruled State as it had been in the previous 23 years. So radical a change in the very nature of the State — albeit justified in the light of the negative historical experience of East Pakistan between 1947 and 1970 — required a consensus between all 5 constituent units of the State rather than the will of only one Province i.e. East Pakistan.

Even if a Confederation would have been better than the disintegration which actually took place, the change from a Centre-centric or a Federal structure to a Confederal direction justified Z.A. Bhutto's demand for a prior consensus, specifically in view of the silence of the LFO about the voting procedure, as elaborated earlier.

The military-led Government demonstrated extraordinary incompetence and insensitivity in relation to the complexity of the situation. Earlier, through a laudable decision, the Government decided to hold the first-ever elections on the

basis of adult franchise. Later, through its actual, reasonably fair conduct of the elections, the military Government had shown the capacity for insight and efficiency. But in the period of December 1970-February 1971 it became clear that the Yahya Khan-led Government had not properly examined the implications of the Six-Points programme and left the review of its implications till too late a stage in the process. General Yahya Khan had also somewhat naively believed the assurances of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman that he would amend the Six Points after the polls in December 1970.

The military Government had also made the major error of permitting too long an election campaign between about January 1970 to December 1970. Spread over about 11 long months rather than an ideal of about 3 to 4 months, the apprehensions expressed by the Awami League at the continued alleged, and real exploitation of East Pakistan by West Pakistan led to a polarized alienation between East and West.

Rhetoric, repeated and reinforced over about 300 days became the source of sharpened ethnic, linguistic identity on which any retreat implied ignominious rejection of one's own persona. Instead of recognizing how deep and profound the alienation had become, the military Government wrongly and disastrously assumed that the problem could be resolved by the use of force. It also grossly under-estimated the effective covert role of India in fomenting discontent in East Pakistan.

The first action by President General Yahya Khan after several initial rounds of talks failed was to arbitrarily postpone the first meeting of the National Assembly scheduled to be held on 3rd March 1971 at the very last moment on 1st March 1971. He compounded the gravity of the postponement by failing to give a new date for the first meeting.

Instant rage erupted in East Pakistan. All the worst beliefs in the innate villainy

of West Pakistani-dominated civil and military elites were confirmed: that West Pakistanis were simply not prepared to respect the will of the Bengali people of East Pakistan and enable the elected majority to assume power. There were calls for outright secession in the form of calling for “Bangladesh” separating from Pakistan. Civil disobedience affecting every sector pulverized normal life. The Awami League directives and workers virtually became the new Government. In parts of the eastern wing there were violent, brutal and fatal attacks on non-Bengalis in which thousands perished. These massacres remain virtually unreported to the world. There was also an undeclared but enforced decision by the Government based in Islamabad-Rawalpindi not to publicize the killings of thousands of innocent, unarmed West Pakistanis in East Pakistan between 1st March and 25th March 1971 in order to prevent reprisals against Bengalis living in West Pakistan.

In belated realization of the blunder of postponement, a new date was then announced on 6th March 1971 to convene the first meeting of the Assembly on 25th March 1971 without any condition. But trust and confidence had been shattered, along with scope for flexibility in dialogue. Any change in the Awami League’s negotiating position was perceived as being a potential betrayal of the pledge given to implement the Six-Points *in toto*.

Accompanied by some of his senior colleagues, Z.A. Bhutto and leaders of other political parties, a few of whom were more respectful of the Awami League’s position than they were of the PPP’s, visited Dhaka to hold talks. Yet for about 23 days in March 1971, there was little or no real change in respective views.

Meanwhile, violent incidents continued in which West Pakistani non-Bengalis were most often the victims. Awami League’s calls for strikes and non-cooperation with the military Government resulted in deserted streets and a

virtual paralysis.

Confined to their cantonments or in their outposts scattered in different parts of East Pakistan, contingents of the Pakistan Army — with only a nominal presence of the Air Force and Navy — remained under strict restraining orders to desist from action to counter verbal and physical provocations by Awami League workers, to the open display of Bangladesh flags or to the burning of Pakistani flags. Worst of all, reports began to proliferate about atrocities being committed against unarmed West Pakistanis and non-Bengalis. Some units of the Army and para-military forces largely comprised of Bengalis either deserted or broke the steel-like discipline of the Armed Forces by mutiny and killed their West Pakistani officers.

With the decision to order full-scale action by the Armed Forces on the night of 25th March 1971 to crush “anti-State” elements who were hoisting Bangladesh flags, who were killing West Pakistanis and non-Bengalis and who were threatening the integrity of the State, the military Government began the phase of actions that culminated in the catastrophic break-up of the State on 16th December 1971.

However, as Z.A. Bhutto arrived at Karachi airport from Dacca soon after the start of the Army operation, he said words which, while they expressed genuine hope, also proved to be totally uncomprehending about the disastrous magnitude of the unfolding tragedy. He said, “Thank God – Pakistan is saved”. Which proved to be, less than 9 months later, the exact opposite of the direction in which Pakistan was headed.

Between 26th March and 16th December 1971, Z.A. Bhutto and the PPP went through different stages of their relationship with the situation in East Pakistan. While welcoming the Army action, they reiterated their commitment to reconciliation and the political process. Yet, as time progressed and the actual

on-the-ground situation deteriorated in East Pakistan, the PPP leader seemed to move further away from harsh reality — even as the situation worsened.

In the initial months after the launch of the military action, Pakistan Army troops gradually established control over many parts of East Pakistan in which violence and insurgent actions had occurred between 1st March and 25th March 1971. However, almost simultaneously, tens of thousands of Bengali citizens of East Pakistan, predominantly Hindus, began to seek refuge by crossing the frontiers into Indian territory. One unfortunate reason for the rush to seek refuge was the perception that existed in the Army to the effect that most of the Hindu citizens of East Pakistan were open or covert supporters of the Awami League which had declared its secessionist aims.

During the conduct of operations subsequent to 25th March 1971 settlements and villages where Hindus were concentrated became targets of Army action. While some Hindus may well have been active secessionists and therefore, from the Army's viewpoint, legitimate targets for preventive action, the majority of Hindus affected by Army actions comprised poor and peaceful citizens. The fear and panic that arose from the killings of Hindus on a limited scale was a magnified expression of a potent mixture of fact, rumour, reality and exaggeration.

Publicly-known leaders and workers of the Awami League in villages as well as in cities also fled successfully into India or were arrested and some of them killed in Army actions. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and one of his senior colleagues Dr Kamal Hussain (later the first Law Minister of Bangladesh) were arrested on the night of 25th March — the latter slightly later — and flown immediately to West Pakistan where they remained prisoners until their release in January 1972.

As part of its plan to aggravate conditions in East Pakistan and turn world opinion against the Pakistani State and particularly against the Armed Forces of

Pakistan, India commenced a new phase of its covert and overt campaigns to dismember its principal neighbour. In the public domain, Indian media and propaganda grossly exaggerated the number of refugees streaming into Indian territory from East Pakistan. To dramatize the human dimension, foreign media representatives were enabled to photograph freshly-arrived Hindu refugees while the numbers were multiplied manifold. A Bangladesh Government-in-exile was established in India headed by the Awami League leader Tajuddin Ahmad to lend further credibility to the claim of the Awami League representing the popular will and to bring eventual secession closer to reality.

Pakistan's military Government, whether headquartered in Rawalpindi or through its Army and civil officials in East Pakistan failed on two fronts. Internally, it was unable to reverse the perception within East Pakistan of severe alienation between the people, on the one hand, and on the other, the Pakistani State represented by the Army and the civil administration. Though the Pakistan Army, along with small deployments of the Navy and the Air Force regained control of vital centres, the armed militant force of the Awami League known as Mukti Bahini, principally supplied by India and with bases in Indian territory continued with guerilla-style operations in several areas.

Externally as well, the military Government failed to present to the world an acceptable alternative version of the realities of the situation, particularly with regard to the extensive covert role being rendered by India. In general, global public opinion became extremely sympathetic to the cause of Bangladesh and accepted as valid the charges of atrocities being committed by Pakistan's Armed Forces on a large scale.

Compounding the internal and external failures was the fact that neither the independent print media in West Pakistan nor the State-controlled electronic media in West Pakistan conveyed the harsh realities of the conditions unfolding

in East Pakistan to the people of West Pakistan.

During such times of gravely distorted perceptions and instability, a bizarre attempt was made by the military Government to hold elections in East Pakistan. The aim was to produce results to show that there were credible popular alternatives to the secessionist Awami League. These alternative elements were assumed to want East Pakistan to remain part of a single Pakistani State comprising both wings. It was an eloquent yet deeply disturbing indicator of how far the PPP led by Z.A. Bhutto had moved from a recognition of realities. The PPP nominated candidates in the farcical elections held in East Pakistan in November 1971. Though the results of these elections did produce successful candidates who could be identified as non-Awami Leaguers, there was little or no credibility whatsoever to the outcome of these polls.

Just weeks before the catastrophic disintegration of the Pakistani State, Z.A. Bhutto accepted General Yahya Khan's invitation to become Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister in the Cabinet with the prime goal of representing the military Government in the rest of the world and helping change perceptions in favour of Pakistan.

There was faint hope that this last-minute move would succeed. As the military situation continued to get worse for Pakistan and India brazenly invaded East Pakistan on 21st November 1971, Z.A. Bhutto in subsequent meetings of the UN Security Council in New York argued movingly and passionately to secure world support that would prevent his country's disintegration. Yet, efforts could not go beyond rhetoric and theatrics.

Subsequent to the surrender of about 42,000 troops of the Pakistan Armed Forces including small numbers of the Navy and Air Force on 16th December 1971, in Dhaka, leading eventually to the induction of Z.A. Bhutto as President of the residual Pakistan in the Western wing and as a civilian Chief Martial Law



Administrator, there came a sense of desperately needed hope for (West) Pakistan to be retrieved and begin anew from the ashes of defeat.

Yet within days of assuming power, Z.A. Bhutto's ambivalent character surfaced in a range of actions comprising sharply contrasting traits of brilliance and eloquence along with animosity against political opponents and vengeance.

In articles contributed by this writer to the new daily English newspaper called *The Sun* and to the weekly Outlook, both from Karachi as also to the weekly New Statesman in London in 1972, I was able to place on record my deep disquiet about how, so soon after assuming power, Z.A. Bhutto and the PPP were moving in extremely disturbing directions.

Except for brief shining moments such as the Islamic Summit in Lahore in February 1974 or in searching for promise about possible new beginnings, an increasing authoritarianism began to mark the tenure of the PPP's first term in power that ended with its termination on 5th July 1977 and the commencement of a new tragic phase of martial law under General Ziaul Haq.

Yet, between 1977 and 1988 even the unjust judicial and military assassination of Z.A. Bhutto in April 1979 could not change my basic sense of disquiet regarding the tendencies of the PPP to take aberrant positions and actions.

Earlier, in March 1977, this writer preferred to remain in Karachi in order to be able to cast a vote in favour of the PPP rather than avail of an invitation to attend an all-expenses-paid conference at the East-West Centre in Honolulu, Hawaii, USA taking place around 7th March, the polling day. One offers this fact as a small but hopefully indicative example of one's sincere desire to support the PPP, notwithstanding strong reservations about its leader and the Party's policies.

While I was profoundly shocked and greatly saddened by the execution of Z.A. Bhutto on 4th April 1979, I could not bring myself to set aside my reservations

to formally join the PPP.

***A critical choice:***

Now, in the last week of November 1988, this writer faced a critical and perhaps an unavoidable choice. To help the world's first Muslim woman Prime Minister to lead a Federal Government that could gain at least a minimal representation in the Upper House of the Federation by myself formally becoming a member of the PPP. Or to let the same first-ever Muslim woman Prime Minister function in a Parliament in which her party had absolutely no representation in the Upper House.

In the preceding three and a half years in the Senate, I had, on several occasions and on certain issues been broadly, coincidentally on the same side of public and political discourse as the PPP had been.

For the above two reasons, and also because I knew that membership of the Party would enhance the prospects for oneself to become a Cabinet member, I decided to accept the invitation from Benazir Bhutto.

At a Press conference held on the lawn of Dr Zafar Niazi's residence on 24th November 1988, with Benazir Bhutto seated beside me along with other Party leaders, I made public my decision to join the Party to a crowd of correspondents and cameras. A well-known correspondent of Jang titled the news report in the next day's edition *Baarish Ka Pehla Qatra* ("The first drop of rain — for the PPP in the Senate").

While this decision signaled the start of an entirely new phase in one's brief political life that had begun in March 1985, there was also a sense of unease about what the future would bring. I treasured my independence and the freedom to think, write and speak one's own mind and express one's own sentiments. This was the major reason why, even though I had secured the top position from Sindh in the CSS (Central Superior Services) examinations held in 1968 (with

results declared in 1969) I had declined to join the Pakistan Foreign Service which had been given as my first preference, in case of success.

Whereas virtually all other members of my family and most of my close friends were unanimous in insisting that I should accept the opportunity offered in the Foreign Service or in the Civil Service, my wife Shabnam — despite having become a bride only recently! — supported my decision to remain independent and pursue the risky but exciting prospects of developing one's own advertising firm.

I had appeared in the CSS exams only to obey the wish of my dear father, A.A. Jabbar, himself a former official of the Government of Pakistan. He graciously accepted my decision not to join Government service. Becoming a civil servant, subject to the discipline of the State would mean that I would not have the freedom to write and speak in the manner that I had grown accustomed to since the age of nine years when I had precociously commenced contributing to magazines and newspapers and to speaking in debates and in public events. In fact, even before the results of the CSS exams were announced in 1969, with 2 colleagues in advertising i.e. Majeed Ahmad and Nafees Ghaznavi, I had already established MNJ Advertising, after resignation from International Advertising Limited.

Whereas I had never subjected myself to the essential discipline of being a Government official, my volitional choice of becoming a member of a political party and one, moreover, that was going to form the next Government prompted forebodings on two levels. Firstly, one had immediately become subject to the discipline of Party policy. Secondly, as the same Party was going to form the Government, one had also become subject to Government policy which would normally be the same as the ruling Party's policy but which also required an additional dimension of being subject to the parameters of the principles of State

governance.

Be that as it may: the die was cast: I was now a formal Member of the Pakistan People's Party.

***Like a princess about to be crowned queen:***

A couple of hours after sunset on 1st December 1988, the long-awaited, deliberately delayed telephone call came from the Presidency inviting Benazir Bhutto for a meeting with Ghulam Ishaq Khan.

As she got into the large black bullet-proof sedan sent to fetch her for this crucial encounter with the President, and as I stood at some distance in the crowd of people on the lawn of Dr Zafar Niazi's residence, she looked like a Princess in a kind of fairy tale proceeding in a coach to be shortly crowned Queen.

Over the next 20 months, the quasi-fairy tale and the Princess-Queen were to ascend heights of hope and descend into depths of despair. But for now, that night was full of promise — and vindication.

*“I want you to be the Minister of State for  
Information & Broadcasting”*

(3RD DECEMBER 1988)

In the early forenoon of 3rd December 1988 I received a message by telephone from the Prime Minister’s House in Rawalpindi to come there for a meeting. On arrival, while waiting briefly to see her, Wajid Shamsul Hasan walked toward me from the room where the Prime Minister was presumably present.

He was well-known to me for several years. Apart from his having been senior to me in the University of Karachi, though in another Department, he was a close friend of Khawaja Moinuddin who, in turn, was the eldest brother of one of my closest friends from school days, Khawaja Fariduddin. I suffered an unusual and life-threatening illness in January 1972, (known as chicken pox myelitis) by which, reportedly if an adult is afflicted, there is a one-in-a-million chance of being paralyzed, with fatal consequences. Wajid Shamsul Hasan, as Editor, Daily News one of the leading English evening newspapers of Karachi, on his own kind initiative, published a news report to convey the seriousness of my condition and urged readers to pray for my survival and recovery. Due to my being the writer-presenter of the first English weekly current affairs programme on PTV, *The World Tonight*, my identity was reasonably well-known. By Allah’s grace, and with the unflagging prayers and care devoted to me by my wife Shabnam, the excellent quality of medical support at JPMC, Karachi and

because of prayers rendered by family, friends and strangers such as readers of the report in *Daily News*, I miraculously survived when doctors had virtually given up all hope. And I then rapidly recovered. I had always been indebted to Wajid Shamsul Hasan for his thoughtful expression of sympathy and support.

With his signature cigar in his fingers, bespectacled, a light smile and a twinkle in his eyes he told me, “Congratulations. You are going to be appointed Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting in Mohtarma’s Cabinet.”

Hearing his words gave me some pleasure, but also much disappointment. For, while it was good to learn that one would soon be a Member of a Federal Cabinet, I was expecting to be appointed a Federal Minister, and not Minister of State. While the latter position is also recognized in the Constitution, a Minister of State serves with a Federal Minister who has the rank and status as given in the title. A Minister of State is comparatively dependent on the work shared, or delegated to her or him by the Federal Minister.

There is also the option whereby the Prime Minister personally retains the Ministerial portfolio instead of also appointing another person as Federal Minister. In such a case, the Minister of State is able to work directly under the Prime Minister and has relatively more authority than when there is a separate Federal Minister for the same Ministry.

When I indicated to Wajid Shamsul Hasan that I was not interested in being a Minister of State, he promptly assured me, “There will be no Federal Minister... did you not hear her say so at yesterday’s Press conference?”

For some, now-forgotten reason, I had not attended her interaction with the Press the previous evening after her swearing-in as Prime Minister earlier the same day where I was present. She was said to have specifically declared, in response to a query, that a Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting, (and not a Federal Minister) and this being someone from the Senate, would be

taking oath shortly. In my quick appraisal of some newspaper reports before departing for the Prime Minister's House, I had not read any such report. So the news came as an unpleasant surprise.

When I reiterated my reluctance to accept the offer, if made, Wajid Shamsul Hasan urged me to say yes. An attendant asked me to follow him to the Prime Minister's office.

In her room, Benazir Bhutto was seated in a chair. On separate sofas on either side of her were seated Yahya Bakhtiar (from Balochistan), the reputed lawyer who had co-led the legal defence team in Z.A. Bhutto's trials in the High Court and the Supreme Court in 1978- 79. Next to him was Major General (r) Naseerullah Babar (from NWFP), formerly with Z.A. Bhutto. Next to him were Rao Rashid, a former Special Secretary and senior former Police official who had also served with Z.A. Bhutto and General Tikka Khan, former Chief of Army Staff who had joined the PPP after his retirement.

I felicitated the Prime Minister on taking oath of office the previous day. She smiled cordially and said, "Take a seat, Javed." Immediately after I sat down, she conveyed what I had already heard.

"Javed, I want you to be the Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting in view of your vast experience in this field."

I thanked her and said, "Prime Minister, while it would have been a privilege to serve in your Cabinet, I regret I am unable to do so because as Minister of State I will not have the authority to function effectively. Only as Federal Minister will I be able to do so. Why is it not possible to appoint me Federal Minister?"

Perhaps anticipating my response, the Prime Minister stressed that the country was at a critical stage, that we all needed to work together. To which I responded with words to the effect that I was willing to contribute fully from outside the Cabinet and Government and would place whatever experience I had in this field

in the service of the country.

Benazir Bhutto then said, “Javed, you need to appreciate that the Party and I have to take into account several factors. Forming the Cabinet is subject to many pressures that I cannot discuss with you in detail.”

I said words to the effect that if there are elements in the Party who do not want me to be a Federal Minister, then why make me a Member of the Federal Cabinet at all?

Rao Rashid interjected pleasantly. He assured me that there was no personal bias against me from any source. But that there were exigencies to the situation that I should understand.

I stressed that my reluctance did not reflect a lack of respect, either for the Prime Minister, or for factors behind-the-scenes. I suppose my facial expression and a slight shake of my head signalled my continued resistance. Yahya Bakhtiar and Major General Babar and General Tikka Khan each spoke in short, friendly yet firm sentences asking me to accept the position and to so demonstrate my respect for the Prime Minister.

Benazir Bhutto spoke a second time. “Javed, you will be, in practical terms, like a full-fledged Federal Minister because I am retaining the portfolio. We can communicate directly without any hindrance of another intermediate level of authority. We need your talent and your experience.”

The thought occurred to me that a continued insistence on status even after being informed that there would be no Federal Minister for me to report to, would — and correctly — be seen as pure egoism. Or of allowing mere titles to become more important than the work itself. I also probably wanted to be part of a team that would constitute the Federal Government during a historic transition from authoritarianism and military rule to an elected civil and political order.



I said, “Prime Minister, with the hope that we will implement several reforms in the Information sector under your leadership and, despite my reservations, I accept your gracious invitation and look forward to working with you.”

She beamed and said, “Thank you, Javed, we have so much to do”.

I took my leave, reciprocating the smile, but with the shade of disappointment still lingering.

As soon as I found a place and privacy, I called Shabnam in Karachi to convey the news to her.

She too was initially disappointed and said, “You deserve to be Federal Minister”. But then she also said she was happy at the news and said so would our family be. I also phoned my father in Karachi whose response was almost identical to my wife’s comments.

I reflected upon the unspoken factors that had been obviously considered by Benazir Bhutto in offering me the status of Minister of State rather than Federal Minister.

Feeling a curious mixture of elation, anticipation and let-down, I drove back to Islamabad and began to list the actions that needed to be taken to re-direct the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

But first of all, I prepared a letter of resignation dated 3rd December 1988 from the positions of Chairman and Chief Executive of MNJ Communications (Pvt) Ltd. so as to avoid any potential conflict-of-interest between my professional association with the advertising and media sectors and my imminent assumption of a public office directly concerned with the same sector.

***Taking a formidable oath:***

Next day, on 4th December, the oath-taking ceremony for the new Cabinet took place at the Presidency known as Aiwan-e-Sadr in Islamabad. President Ghulam

Ishaq Khan first administered oath to the Federal Ministers and Advisers. They included: Nusrat Bhutto as Senior Minister, V.A. Jaffery, Adviser to the PM on Finance and Economic Affairs, former Governor, State Bank of Pakistan. Sahabzada Yaqub Khan, Foreign Minister, with extensive military and civil experience. Iqbal Akhund, Adviser to the PM on National Security, former senior, eminent diplomat. Syed Ghulam Mustafa Shah, Minister of Education, former Vice Chancellor, University of Sindh. Rao Rashid, Adviser to the PM on Establishment, former Special Secretary with Z.A. Bhutto. Aitzaz Ahsan, Minister for Interior, former MPA and prominent barrister. Major General (r) Naseerullah Babar , Special Assistant to the PM, former Governor of then-NWFP (now KP). Yahya Bakhtiar, Attorney General, a senior Advocate of the Supreme Court. Makhdoom Amin Fahim, Minister for Communications, senior party leader; Yusuf Raza Gillani, Minister for Tourism, former Minister of Railways in Prime Minister Junejo's Cabinet; Mukhtar Awan, Minister for Labour and Manpower, a senior leader from Punjab. And others.

Due to the difference in the titles and related status, the oath of office for the Ministers of State is administered separately.

Other individuals who took oath with me as Minister of State were: Khawaja Tariq Rahim; Ghulam Sarwar

Cheema; Ehsanul Haq Piracha; Raja Shahid Zafar and Mir Baz Khetran.

Portfolios for each Federal Minister and Ministers of State are announced separately and later. While the Press, TV and radio projected the allocations of Ministries next day on 5th December, I received a notification to that effect from the Cabinet Division.

The experience of reading the oath of office as Minister of State repeating each part of the text as first read by President Ghulam Ishaq Khan, with the Prime Minister seated somewhat impassively next to him was a novel experience, for

more than one reason. Perhaps it is relevant to share excerpts from a brief reflection I wrote when I read an almost similar text about seven years later, on 5th November 1996 as Federal Minister in the Caretaker Cabinet.

“Reading aloud the oath of office is like getting dressed in full public view. Each sentence is a garment that conceals the nakedness of human nature. The pledge is a full formal dress that seeks to cast one as an angel. The oath is a see-through costume, transparent as well as tantalizing.

“The first time I read a similar though not identical oath was on 21st March 1985, after being elected to the Senate. The text of the oath is newly awesome in its implications: Can any mortal being always act upon every word of it?

“TV camera lights magnify the fine print. Still-camera flash bulbs punctuate the paragraphs. The silence around us is almost furtive, perhaps following every syllable that we speak, possibly wondering how large the gap will be between word and deed. Yet as the signature is affixed to the oath, the profound simplicity of the promises made warms the heart and fills the mind with confidence.”

Invitees to the swearing-in ceremony comprised leaders and senior workers of the PPP, Government officials, Chiefs of the Armed Forces, prominent citizens, spouses and relations and friends of those taking oath, representatives of the media.

We celebrated my induction with a few close friends who reside in Islamabad. Wasim and Mubina Zuberi, Ahmed and Shaheen Masood, Naeem and Salma Sarfaraz, Mansoor and Zehra Alam, Tariq Salim and a few others helped make life in Islamabad very convivial and enjoyable.

Later, I reflected upon the unspoken factors that had obviously been considered by Benazir Bhutto in offering me the status of Minister of State rather than Federal Minister.

First, was clearly the fact that my formal membership of the PPP was only a mere ten days old. Whereas most of the other Cabinet members were veterans of the Party for over ten to twenty years. Despite my demonstrated affinity with the PPP's views and causes, on the floor of Parliament and outside it, I was still too new within the Party to be "awarded" with a Federal Ministry. Perhaps the Minister of State status was meant to be a probationary phase! Though there were at least one or two major examples (Yusuf Raza Gillani being one of them) of persons who, just a few weeks earlier, had been part of the Muslim League and were now PPP members and Federal Ministers. But then they brought with them the advantage of directly elected representation, a virtue that I did not possess.

Second, was possibly the need felt by Benazir Bhutto and her closest advisers to retain ultimate authority over a sensitive Ministry rather than delegate full Ministerial authority to a person who had only recently joined the Party. Just in case I exceeded the limits, the Prime Minister — who was also the Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting — could either move me out or overrule me or simply dismiss the errant Cabinet member. This last option can in any case, always be exercised by the Prime Minister as the Head of the Cabinet. But the view must have been that in an important Ministry, a newcomer to the PPP should not be given too much leeway — even before requiring the Prime Minister's formal intervention.

Third, was probably the view that an individual such as myself who had participated in the non-party based elections held in February-March 1985 under the martial law regime of General Ziaul Haq in polls which had been boycotted by the PPP, should not be "gifted" with the status of Federal Minister at the very outset. After all, there were Party leaders, elected in November 1988 as well as unelected leaders and workers who had been long-serving, loyal members of the

PPP, who had suffered imprisonment, even torture, and persecution and harassment by the very same martial law regime under whose watch I had been elected to the Senate of Pakistan on 14th March 1985. Thus, while a person such as me could be useful to the PPP-led Government at the Centre, the status given, at least in the first phase, should not be construed as approval for participation in a martial-law-administered election. The fact that I had chosen to remain an independent, and in Opposition in the Senate, and often spoken out against the continuation or the excesses of martial law only partially mitigated the fact of one's participation in the 1985 elections.

While I thought of these three factors, I also winced at the strong likelihood that I was seen as an opportunist, both by some, or most PPP leaders and workers as well as by others. Most of them were, after all, unaware of the very precise reasons why I had not chosen to formally join the PPP, reasons cited earlier in this text. Any distant view of myself probably, and with some justification saw me as a person who decided to join the PPP only after the PPP emerged as the single-largest party in the National Assembly in the elections of November 1988 and only with the prospect of being offered a Ministry. This theory rankled — but also helped to thicken the skin a little more. My own conscience was almost clear. I had genuine reservations about certain aspects of the PPP, about certain words and actions of its founding leader, reservations that had not disappeared with the cruel assassination of Z.A. Bhutto in April 1979. Even after formally joining the PPP as late as on 24th November 1988, I continued to harbour some of the reservations felt while making the public announcement of my joining the PPP.

I say “almost clear” about my conscience because one part of me clearly wanted the pleasure of achieving membership of a Cabinet, of wielding Ministerial — albeit Minister of State status — authority, of enjoying the

transient, yet seductive glamour of senior public office.

There was also the irresistible dimension of being part of a historically unprecedented team. Benazir Bhutto had become the first woman in as many as 57 Muslim majority nation-states of the world — about one third the global membership of the United Nations — to become Prime Minister. And that too an elected, not an appointed Head of Government. I felt elated at the honour of having been personally invited by her to join her Cabinet. So, while remaining conscious of all the factors, I was confident that one could contribute positively to progressive change.

## *Taking charge of the Information Ministry*

(4TH DECEMBER 1988)

Within hours of being inducted into the Cabinet, there was a sudden flood of phone calls, telegrams, messages and visitors — from persons long known, some only recently known, and several never previously known — who began to vie for attention. But one had to immediately visit the Ministry and take actual charge.

The identity of the Secretary of the Ministry was a source of awkwardness. He was Mohammad Yusuf, a senior CSP official, a respected, capable bureaucrat with a generalist's background and long experience of Government. What made our juxtaposition unusual was the fact that he was related to my father's second wife, my step-mother, Afsar Fatima, a gracious lady. She, like my father, also hailed from Hyderabad Deccan. As a somewhat distant-close relation, Mohammad Yusuf and I had met in the past on several family occasions like weddings, parties and funerals. He was a pleasant, cordial, soft-spoken gentleman, at least a decade senior to me in age — which compounded the awkwardness. Because he had to defer to me, junior to him in private, personal relations, like a distant nephew of sorts and junior in age, but now as the Minister of State of his Ministry, and on a day-to-day basis, I was his senior.

We afforded each other mutual respect and never referred to our distant-close personal links during our working relationship.

The Secretary led the briefing for the new Minister of State and was followed

by the Heads of respective Departments and Corporations which function under the administrative control of the Ministry.

In addition to the Ministry's own Secretariat and officials, the other units were:

Press Information Department (PID)

Bureau of Research and Reference (BRR)

Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC)

External Publicity Wing (EPW)

Department of Films & Publications (DFP)

Information Services Academy (ISA)

Associated Press of Pakistan (APP)

National Press Trust (NPT)

Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation (PBC)

Pakistan Television Corporation (PTV)

Shalimar Recording Co. Ltd. (SRC)

Advising on the composition and work of the Wage Board for Journalists & Newspaper Employees formally constituted by the Ministry of Labour and Manpower.

Institute of Regional Studies, an otherwise autonomous research centre but whose Chairman was, in an ex-officio capacity, the Minister-in-charge.

Through its institutional role as the focal point of interaction between the Federal Government and all media, through control of all Federal Government-related advertising in the print media, through NPT, through PBC and PTV, the Ministry occupied a central position in the information and media sectors. It exerted, in theory and practice, a considerable influence on media content, related to Government in particular.

As radio and TV were State monopolies with all 100 per cent shares in both



PBC and PTV held by the Federal Government, the Ministry had a particularly powerful influence on the content of electronic media.

In multiple sessions convened, I listened to, and viewed the presentations about each department with a tinge of regret. It became clear to me yet again that the Ministry represented a virtual continuation, with some major exceptions, of the structure and goals inherited from the pre-1947 phase of British colonial rule and the post-Independence civil and military phases up to 1988.

Fundamental changes and reforms were required to make the Ministry and all its departments fully relevant to the new, rapidly changing era of media and information. Equally, or more importantly, the Ministry's rationale and operations needed to reflect the spirit and letter of the new multi-party Parliamentary democracy which commenced in November-December 1988.

In the post-1971 Pakistan, even under the elected Government of Prime Minister Z.A. Bhutto, the Ministry had been used as the hand-maiden of the Government with little respect afforded to the Opposition or to alternative viewpoints that differed from the viewpoint of the ruling party.

The period between 5th July 1977 and 17th August 1988 had been exceptionally stultifying. First, there was the rigidity and harshness of martial law for eight and a half straight years, up to 30th December 1985. Followed by the two and a half years of Prime Minister Mohammad Khan Junejo's less authoritarian and more tolerant Government up to 29th May 1988.

The rest of those 11 years had either reinforced the outmoded information policies and practices of the past or had only partially reduced their inhibitive nature. For instance, the formal repeal of the infamous black law known as the Press & Publications Ordinance of 1960/1962 took place in September 1988 i.e. it remained in place throughout even the Junejo Government's tenure.

In July 1988, a long-pending Private Member's Resolution which I had moved

in the Senate calling for the repeal of the law had been adopted by the Senate. An interim Government was in office, headed by Acting President Ghulam Ishaq Khan with no Prime Minister — despite a Prime Minister being mandated by the Constitution. Ilahi Bukhsh Soomro, the veteran political personality from Sindh and formerly a Member and colleague in the Independent (Opposition) Parliamentary Group of the National Assembly and the Senate, was the interim Minister of Information and Broadcasting.

In that particular session of the Senate on 9th July 1988, there was no conventional Government majority Junejo was already fracturing into factions, one led by Nawaz Sharif — who had quickly abandoned Mohammad Khan Junejo to form his own wing. The previous ruling majority was no longer cohesive or clear in the Senate. There was also a general mood of discontent among both the Muslim League-oriented Senators and the few independent or Opposition Senators like myself to undo a law so long unpopular with the Press.

At the end of an intensive debate on my Resolution, despite the assurance by the Minister that the law would soon be repealed and that the Resolution should either be withdrawn or rejected, a majority of Members actually approved it.

This was the first time in the 28-year history of the law's existence that such a Resolution had been adopted by a legislature in the country. Despite the fact that a Parliamentary Resolution, specifically a Private Member's Resolution does not have a binding status — i.e. the Government is not legally obliged to act upon it — the sheer adoption of the Resolution crystallized rejection of the long-lingering statute.

Just 8 weeks later in September 1988, the PPO was formally repealed and replaced with the Registration of Printing Presses and Publications Ordinance (RPPO). The new law removed almost all the destructive, coercive or punitive measures in the old law. The RPPO made it extremely convenient for an eligible

citizen to apply for permission to print and publish a newspaper or magazine and protected potential violators of the law from arbitrary action by the Executive.

In January 1988, a good friend in Karachi in the media sector, Syed Jawaid Iqbal, CEO of his public affairs firm and Editor-Publisher of the Third World journal had moved a Constitutional Petition in the Sindh High Court. On an inordinate delay by the District Magistrate (Karachi East) to validate his plan to publish a new magazine with the name of *Nation Today*, Syed Jawaid Iqbal challenged the lack of lawful authority with which the delay occurred and also said that the PPO was unduly restrictive of fundamental rights. Before the petition could be heard on a sustained basis, the Resolution which I had moved in the Senate was adopted in July 1988, leading to the formal repeal of the PPO as referred to earlier.

At least in one respect, the Ministry had already been moved closer to new realities.

The recently-inducted Minister of State also strove to enjoy the transient, ambiguous experience of being a Cabinet Member. During journeys by car in this term of public office to different points in Islamabad, and to cities and venues in northern Punjab for official events, I loved listening often to the great deep voice of Louis Armstrong singing “What a wonderful world” from my cassette tape that the Ministry’s driver had become accustomed to play soon after the passenger in the back seat took his place. The lyrics captivated me with their sublime simplicity. Over the next 20 months, as the tenure of our Government became rocky and uncertain, the song’s title became a teaser tinted with irony. Yet the sound was always so pleasurable to hear. As were also the ever-enchanting film songs from Pakistan and India created in the 1950s and early 60s.

## *A radical change in PTV and PBC news policy*

(7TH DECEMBER 1988)

**E**ven before the completion of presentations by all the Departments and units of the Ministry, I initiated a radical change.

When one uses the word “I”, one does so in all humility, as stated in the Introduction. One knew that the structural re-organization of the Ministry required passage through several phases. First, approval by the Prime Minister and the Federal Minister, in this case, one and the same person. Then, if she referred the proposed changes to the Cabinet, approval by a body that was likely to have diverse views, including reluctance to remove controls that suited a Government’s partisan interests. Thirdly, if approved by Cabinet, consequential amendments to the Rules of Business which, amongst others, regulate the formation of Ministries and the scope of work of Departments. Fourthly, changes in other Rules and Regulations. I foresaw this requiring a period of between three months at the minimum, to about twelve months, or more.

Yet I felt that there was a need to make an immediate change in the media sphere of Pakistan. Such a change would accurately signal that a radical shift was possible from the authoritarian nature of Government- controlled information on electronic media, a convention which went back all the way to 1947, to the very birth of Pakistan. And to even earlier, when the colonial British Government rigidly controlled radio in the years before 1947.

Nowhere was the authoritarianism more evident than in the context of the daily

news bulletins of Radio Pakistan and Pakistan Television.

These two media were the sole, exclusive national channels of electronic media. Though a large number of Pakistanis listened daily, or regularly, to the South Asia service of BBC Radio to obtain more balanced news and analysis, often critical of the Government of the day, and lesser numbers also listened to All-India Radio for another view, Radio Pakistan and PTV were the only indigenous sources of news and comment in electronic media. They also covered many aspects of national affairs which were not reported by overseas media.

But so politically one-sided were the news bulletins of these two media that the daily 9 p.m. main news programme of PTV known as *Khabarnama* (News edition) was derisively known as *Sadarnama* (President's edition) or *Wazeernama* (Minister's edition). Whether in the civilian, political phase of Z.A. Bhutto, in office from 21st December 1971 to 4th July 1977, or during the eleven years of General Ziaul Haq, 1977-1988, virtually every single PTV *Khabarnama* and its equivalent bulletins on Radio Pakistan would begin with one or several reports on that day's activities and speeches by the President and/or the Prime Minister, whoever happened to be the Chief Executive of Government at that time.

Even if the reports were accurate or interesting, they were seen as being entirely one-sided, to favour only the rulers, and rarely, if ever, covered even important activities and speeches of the Opposition.

This blanket de facto ban on the Opposition was in a way understandable in the eight years of martial law. But even in the pre-martial law phase of Z.A. Bhutto's civilian, political tenure of about five and a quarter years, the two electronic media broadcast news only of the Government, or about the PPP. If the Opposition was covered, it was only to malign the Government's critics.

There had probably been only four exceptions. During the election campaign

phase leading to the polls held in December 1970 and on 7th March 1977, the Heads of competing political parties were permitted to broadcast their speeches reflecting their respective manifestoes, and to respond to a panel's questions. Once, briefly, in April 1988 when Prime Minister Junejo convened a conference of political party leaders to brief them about negotiations with the Soviet Union about the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan and on the post-withdrawal plans, leaders such as Benazir Bhutto were glimpsed, for a few flashing seconds, in brief news reports. Then in the phase preceding elections on 16th November 1988, leaders of competing political parties were once again permitted to appear in the electronic media to project their parties' manifestoes.

Otherwise, in the case of Radio Pakistan, for virtually all its 41-year history (1947-1988) and of Pakistan Television for all its 21-year history (1967-1988), on every single day, for about 14,300 days on radio, for about 7,700 days on TV — every major news bulletin would begin with a minimum of one, if not multiple reports about the engagements and speeches by the Head of State and/or Government, and by Ministers.

So one-sided was the content that, even if the reports reflected words and actions of substance and relevance, and in the public interest, the perception about them in the majority of the audiences would range from dismissal to disdain, from skepticism to cynicism. Even after allowing for the past predominance of authoritarian Governments and their obsession with maintaining their exclusive presence in the electronic media, the pictures and sounds broadcast on TV news and radio news were simply unrepresentative of the larger political realities at any given time.

Now in December, 1988 we had robust multi-party Parliamentary legislatures in place, with 5 out of 6 (the Senate being the exception) reflecting the political preferences of the voting public as of November 1988, i.e. the National

Assembly and the four Provincial Assemblies elected in November 1988.

Notwithstanding the hold-over dimension of the Senate's composition in December 1988, the bulk of the membership of the other five legislatures represented a wide range of political opinions.

I proposed to make two basic changes to the reporting of political and Parliamentary affairs on a daily basis by Radio Pakistan and Pakistan Television.

First: that in every daily major news bulletin, news reports about substantive or relevant speeches and activities of leading Opposition parties would also be given coverage on the basis of their pertinence to public information and the public interest alongwith the conventional coverage normally given to the President, Prime Minister, Ministers and other official spokespersons.

Second: as news bulletins could not comprehensively report all principal points made by individual Members of the Senate and the National Assembly during their speeches inside each Chamber, a new format was introduced. With recording units of both electronic media placed immediately outside each legislative Chamber — with the special anticipated consent of the Chairman of the Senate and the Speaker of the National Assembly — the Parliamentarian who had spoken earlier inside the House would be requested to summarize the main points of his comments in a duration of about 1 to 2 to 3 minutes immediately after stepping out of the Chamber.

For the first time, listeners and viewers in Pakistan would directly hear the voices and see the faces of their elected representatives on electronic media. Previously, their voices and faces were either never broadcast — unless they were Ministers or ruling party Members — or their speeches were summarized second-hand by a presenter- narrator reporting the day's proceedings in Parliament.

On 6th December 1988, I called on the Prime Minister in her office. Aitzaz

Ahsan, Federal Minister for Interior, Law and Parliamentary Affairs, was also present. I outlined the rationale for making these two changes. To my pleasant surprise, Benazir Bhutto expressed only mild doubts about the wisdom of such major changes. But she assented to the new policy, advising caution in its implementation. Aitzaz Ahsan nodded in agreement.

Soon thereafter, I called the Director-General of PBC and the then-Managing Director of PTV. The Secretary of the Ministry, Mohammad Yusuf who was ex-officio Chairman of the Boards of Directors of both organizations was also present. The respective Directors of News and Current Affairs of PTV and PBC also attended.

They were told that the new policy should be implemented with immediate effect. Their expressions varied from surprise, to pleasure, to guarded impassivity. The last of the reactions may well have been prompted by a thought as to whether the new Minister of State was merely trying to be smart, and whether he had cleared such a major change with the Prime Minister. I answered the unspoken doubts by saying that the Prime Minister had approved these two new features.

Zubair Ali, a veteran news professional asked me, “What are your guidelines, Mr Minister?” I said, “None, no guidelines. You, each person who leads the News and Current Affairs Departments of PBC and PTV should exercise your own professional judgement on the basis of the classical norms of truthfulness, fairness, balance. If you want guidelines, these are the guidelines”.

While there were a couple of smiles, there were also expressions of disbelief. And uncertainty. These were senior individuals long accustomed to receiving either direct instructions from past Ministers or Secretaries of the Ministry about the precise prominence to be given in each major news bulletin to that day’s pronouncements by the President, Prime Minister or Ministers. If there were no



instructions received, these individuals were expected to telephone the Minister or the Secretary to convey their suggestions about the top headlines for the news bulletins to follow shortly and to obtain approval, or make changes, as the case may be.

Suddenly, like a baby being thrown into water for the first time and being expected to learn to swim on its own, virtually unaided, was a big jolt for these veteran news professionals.

The change began to be reflected within 24 hours. For the first time ever in the history of electronic news media in Pakistan, the Opposition began to receive almost daily coverage, either in the top headlines, or in supplementary headlines, sometimes also accompanied by visual coverage on PTV.

The other innovation of capsule comments by the Parliamentarians broadcast later, after the main news bulletins, in their own voices, and depicting their faces on screen also commenced, almost as promptly.

Together, within a few days, this new content on officially-controlled radio and TV began to impact upon the people. But not so much on the independent Press which, by convention, tends to be skeptical about any positive actions by a Government. Exceptions are relatively rare.

I began to receive congratulatory messages from friends, acquaintances, and citizens who were strangers but who wrote letters. Compliments also came from some leaders and members of the Opposition and some fellow Senators. Comparatively, there were fewer compliments received from colleagues in the PPP!

The extent of the almost 180-degree change became strongly — and harshly — apparent within a couple of weeks. It was not as if the two electronic news media vastly reduced coverage of the Head of State or Government or Ministers to replace this with coverage of the Opposition. Projection of the Federal

Government continued to take place prominently, but reasonable prominence was also given to Opposition news critical of the Federal Government and the PPP.

Radio Pakistan and PTV were, and are still in 2021, State-owned and Federal Government-controlled organizations. In 1988 they were also monopolies, not only within their own respective media sectors, but also across the country. None of the four Provincial Governments owned or operated a radio channel or a TV channel. Nor do they do so in 2021. But several private channels use provincial regional languages.

This contrast in ownership and control between the Federal Centre and the Provinces became a subject of concern because, as listed elsewhere, this was the first time in the country's history where the ruling coalition in Punjab, the largest-populated Province, was in bitter conflict with the ruling coalition at the Federal Centre. Exclusive control of the two electronic media by the Federal Government meant that the Opposition-controlled Provinces — Punjab, and for the first few days in December, Balochistan — complained that their views and activities were not being adequately projected on radio and TV.

Despite the fundamental changes introduced onward of 7th December 1988, with a new focus on the Opposition's views in the Federal Parliament, the Punjab Provincial Government led by Nawaz Sharif as Chief Minister was dissatisfied with coverage given to the Head of the Punjab Government and to other Provincial Government activities and leaders.

In the 30 to 45 minutes available for PTV Khabarnama from 9 p.m. to about 9.30/9.45 p.m., it was not possible to always do justice to the Federal Government and to all four Provincial Governments. Both PTV and Radio Pakistan did their best to accommodate the large number of requests for coverage received every day from Federal Ministers, Ministers of State and PPP

leaders in all the 4 Provinces as well as requests/ demands received from the four Provincial Governments.

This was a dilemma that continued up to about April 1989. It was eventually and only partly resolved in the most inappropriate way possible as is described later in this narrative.

At this point it is relevant to consider the imbalance between demand for coverage and the limits of time.

**Over-load:**

To address the large number of demands for coverage, I proposed a new daily capsule report with visual / audio reportage of Ministers and senior leaders of the PPP attending public events such as inaugurals, speeches at small or large meetings. Such reports, exclusively focusing on such and similar events were either partly accommodated in the main news bulletins, or in the time immediately thereafter.

On any given day, the average 30/45-minutes of PTV Khabarnama were required to feature the reports of the following individuals and/or events —

1. The President (very infrequent).
2. The Prime Minister (almost daily, including her meetings with overseas visitors, Cabinet Ministers, party leaders, speeches at events, etc.)
3. Federal Ministers and Advisers.
4. Ministers of State.
5. Governors of four Provinces.
6. Chief Ministers of four Provinces.
7. Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff and the three Service Chiefs.
8. Chief Justice of the Supreme Court (very infrequent).

9. Chief Justices of the 4 Provincial High Courts (very infrequent).
10. Meetings of the Cabinet or Cabinet Committees e.g. ECC.
11. Meetings of the Standing Committees of the Senate and National Assembly.
12. Any other major event of public importance or of public interest.
13. An overseas visiting dignitary, in which the President and Prime Minister were also covered.
14. A short but mandatory daily glimpse of the situation in Indian-occupied Kashmir.
15. Some coverage to major Opposition activities or speeches.
16. International news.
17. Commerce news.
18. Sports news.

At an early point in my tenure I advised PTV to restrict coverage of my own activities or speeches to the bare minimum, to place them way down in sequence and to prioritize others, except for when it was necessary to inform the public about a particular activity or statement.

As the above list indicates, it was not possible to accommodate all the above 18 subject-categories on a daily basis if all 18 were, by coincidence, engaged in activities of public interest simultaneously on the same date. In most of the 18 categories, there were multiple office-holders who required coverage. Thus, in principle, on any given day, over 100 to 150 individuals needed to be, or expected coverage in 30/45 minutes.

There was always someone somewhere who had cause for complaint against PTV — and the Information Ministry and the Minister of State — for having failed to provide adequate coverage. Or far worse, and quite frequently, having

failed to provide any coverage at all.

To take care of the latter issue — no coverage at all on the night of the event or even the day after — we introduced a kind of weekly round-up magazine feature to summarize activities that had not been reported at all in Khabarnama.

Inordinate and unreasonable lengths of valuable time were devoted to receiving complaints about coverage on PTV — and to a lesser extent on Radio Pakistan. In spite of the radical new news policy by which the Minister- in-charge had delegated authority to the news professionals and the Heads of the State media to take the required decisions, I was obliged to also often serve as a kind of Chief Editor of the news content and current affairs programmes of the two media.

*New appointments in the Ministry and PTV and  
PBC*

(15TH DECEMBER 1988 ONWARDS)

Within a few days of my taking charge of the Ministry, the Prime Minister transferred the Secretary, Mohammad Yusuf, to another Ministry. She informed me of her decision to make the change a day before it was notified. The new appointee was from outside the CSP cadre and was, fortunately, an individual I already knew. Rashid Latif Ansari is a respected professional with long experience of the audio dimensions of media. He is part of a family of brothers who together owned an ice cream manufacturing company whose brand was very popular. He had also served in the leading music recording and marketing company with international linkages known as EMI Pakistan. He had also been associated with radio, and was a share-holder in Shalimar Recording Co. Ltd. whose majority shares were Government-controlled through PBC, PTV, etc.

I welcomed Rashid Latif's appointment and we worked well together. On the few occasions we disagreed on some issues, each of us was willing to be flexible in case new facts or reasons were shared. Despite being an outsider, Rashid Latif was very familiar with the inner workings of the bureaucracy.

The Prime Minister also appointed Aslam Azhar as Chairman of both PTV and PBC. This appointment was, unlike the new Secretary's selection, quite predictable and anticipated. It was also widely welcomed because it was well

deserved. As one of the pioneers of the TV medium in Pakistan, as General Manager of Karachi TV Centre 1968-1971, and then as Managing Director, PTV 1972- 1976, Aslam Azhar rendered a formative contribution to PTV. He had later been transferred in 1976 to the State Film Authority as Chairman.

Then, with the military coup by General Ziaul Haq on 5th July 1977, Aslam's services were abruptly terminated alongwith the services of Khawaja Shahid Hussain, Managing Director, National Film Development Corporation (NAFDEC). Khawaja Shahid Hussain was re-instated by Benazir Bhutto in 1989 as Secretary, Ministry of Culture.

The Secretary of a Ministry is the administrative Head of the Ministry. He is also the Principal Accounting Officer, responsible for overseeing the disbursement of budget allocations made to the Ministry and its related Departments, and to ensuring that accurate accounts are maintained of all official funds.

The Federal Minister or, as in my case, the Minister of State under authority either formally delegated by the Prime Minister or the Federal Minister — in this case, one and the same person — is the policy Head of the Ministry. The Secretary reports to the Minister/MOS but also reports directly to the Prime Minister who has the sole authority to appoint, transfer and remove a Secretary.

Depending on the nature of the relationship between a Prime Minister and a Minister, the former may or may not consult the latter in making decisions regarding the appointment of the Secretary.

Though PTV, and to a lesser extent PBC intruded disproportionately into working time, there was a large agenda contained in my things-to-do list. Action was initiated on this programme simultaneous to the unfolding of the implementation of the radical new news policy for electronic media.

The names of all the attached Departments of the Ministry have already been

listed. They indicate the scale and range of sectors with which the Ministry is associated. From Government-controlled advertising to official statements, from publications to translations, from film archives and production of film documentaries to negotiations on Wage Boards which determine pay scales for journalists.

Toward the second half of December 1988 I initiated the process of placing senior journalists of eminence in NPT-owned publications such as The Pakistan Times and Mashriq. Details are given in a subsequent chapter. The Prime Minister had already appointed Wajid Shamsul Hasan, former Editor of Daily News, Karachi and a confidant of Z.A. Bhutto and Benazir Bhutto of long standing, as Chairman of NPT. The PPP was committed to disbanding the NPT originally established in the tenure of Field Marshal Ayub Khan. But for the time being, the Prime Minister conveyed to me that this would be done at an appropriate time, not immediately.

As Minister of State, I was, in terms of formal ranking, the second senior-most member of the Government's official Information team, the first senior being the Prime Minister. Other members of the team comprised the Secretary, now Rashid Latif Ansari, Wajid Shamsul Hasan, Bashir Riaz, Press Secretary to the Prime Minister and M. Kayani, a senior journalist with a Kashmiri background. The latter two were, in previous years, based in London where they had worked closely with Benazir Bhutto and Nusrat Bhutto during their efforts to mobilize opposition, both overseas and in Pakistan, to the rule of General Ziaul Haq. Other members of the Information team were the Heads of PTV and PBC and, depending on the specific subject that required attention, the Heads of the attached Departments of the Ministry.

For the most part, members of the Information team interacted with each other in a cohesive manner. Officials had to, in any case, defer to the seniority of the



Minister of State and the Secretary. However, in the case of outsider individuals like Bashir Riaz and Kayani who were seated in the Prime Minister's Office and therefore, on a day-to-day basis, had more frequent access to the Prime Minister than did the Minister of State or the Secretary, other members of the Information team knew that, in some matters, messages from them were likely to be messages meant to be conveyed to them for necessary compliance by the Prime Minister herself.

While this was probably inevitable, given the nature of their positions, and their past, longer personal association with Benazir Bhutto in London, this parallel process of messaging or later, even explicit instructions, disrupted the theoretically ideal process of communication — because it disregarded the conventional, more coherent channels of communication.

As the radical new news policy for electronic media was influential in the weeks and months after its introduction on 7th December 1988, this parallel process of communication directly between the Prime Minister's Office and other members of the Information team, particularly in PTV and PBC, increasingly by-passed the Minister of State and the Secretary. This obviously led to internal organizational confusion and contradictions.

So inappropriate did the parallel process become that even the Heads of PTV and PBC were bypassed and officers and news professionals junior to them received instructions directly from, or on behalf of the Prime Minister's Office-based members of the Information team. This tendency became a recurrent practice in April 1989. At a Cabinet meeting held in the Prime Minister's House in Rawalpindi, a non-agenda listed discussion took place, as it frequently did, on how inadequately and ineffectively the State media were projecting the good work being done by the Government and the rigorous services being rendered by Ministers.

The Prime Minister asked me, as the Minister overseeing the Ministry on a daily basis, to comment on this recurring complaint. I was obliged to say, “Prime Minister, I am sometimes, and in this particular matter unable to enforce efficiency and order. Because there are, in addition to me, at least two and a half other Ministers of Information who claim to act on behalf of the Prime Minister’s Office. Unless clarity and unity of command and communication are respected and practiced, one cannot be accountable for the complaints we have heard. In any case, with all due respect to my honourable colleagues, I do not agree with the claims that PTV and PBC are not doing justice to adequate coverage of our Government”.

Perhaps wishing to avoid further polarization on this issue, and visibly surprised at my impertinence in the Cabinet’s presence, by implying that the additional de facto Ministers were acting on her behalf, the Prime Minister said, “Alright Javed, we will discuss this later and ensure that no one else interferes with your work. Let us move to the next item on the agenda”.

After the Cabinet meeting concluded, I recall one colleague- Minister of State felicitating me warmly for having been blunt about the interference and the parallel process and another colleague, a Federal Minister, slipping me a small note saying: “Well spoken.”

But this was cold comfort. I soon saw that there was no action being taken by the Prime Minister to curb the parallel lines of direct communication.

What was the content of these parallel lines? The content was, to my mind, quite petty and trivial yet critical to credibility. Most of the advice and instructions conveyed directly to staff dealt with the placement, prominence or duration of news reports and current affairs programmes on PTV and PBC.

On the one hand, this was almost laughably minor. So what if the Prime Minister’s speech was relayed for 2 minutes instead of the 3 minutes it

deserved? As long as no important point was excluded? So what if three or four Ministers did not receive more exposure on screen than what a news professional judged to be relevant? After all, viewers knew that PTV was a State-owned medium.

But such imbalances were directly reversing and subverting the radical new news policy we introduced in December 1988. News of Opposition activities and statements critical of, or independent of Government began to receive, regressively, after March 1989, less and less time and coverage. The shift back, to favour the Government of the day on State media, was almost a complete reversal of the policy I had initiated.

To illustrate how palpable and measurable were the positive changes in content and credibility of PTV and PBC, it is relevant to refer to a report published in an issue of Time magazine in April 1989. The report said, in effect, that the radical new news policy of the State media introduced by the PPP Government's Information Ministry had made such an impact on citizens that, for the first time, listenership of the BBC's South Asian service was actually reported as having declined in recent months — because people were now ready to believe the principal news reports and views projected by the State media, in contrast to the propaganda of ruling Governments, as conducted through these two media in the past.

*“Benazir Bhutto is taking Pakistan towards  
atheism”*

(DECEMBER 1988)

The first explosive consequence of the new policy was caused by a headline narrated in PTV’s Khabarnama in the second half of December 1988.

Referring to a speech delivered at a public meeting by Nawaz Sharif in his dual capacities as the Leader of IJI — the Opposition coalition also represented in the National Assembly with 54 seats — and in his capacity as Chief Minister of Punjab, PTV’s Khabarnama’s first — repeat, *first* — headline was to the following effect: “Punjab Chief Minister Mian Nawaz Sharif, who is also the IJI chief, says that Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, the Prime Minister of Pakistan is taking the nation towards atheism”.

The word “secularism” is most often translated into Urdu as “laadeeniyat” (without faith) or “atheism”. In a population that is 97 per cent Muslim, atheism is overwhelmingly seen as being heretical and sacrilegious. Secularism has three real meanings — respect for all faiths, respect for the universality and unity of Nature, and respect for all of humanity. And non-imposition of one particular set of religious beliefs into the State Constitution and laws so as to prevent discrimination among citizens on the basis of religion.

Article 1 of the Constitution of Pakistan bestows the title of “The Islamic Republic of Pakistan” to the State, thus defining the symbiotic relationship

between being Muslim and being Pakistani — even though to be Muslim is not to seek to impose Islam on non-Muslims — as is enunciated in the Holy Quran.

Article 25(1) of the Constitution states: “All citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law...”

The new policy I had outlined did not mean that I personally withdrew, fully or partly, from monitoring the substantive content of the two State-owned news media. While introducing the new policy I stressed that I would continue to keep a close eye — and ear — on how Radio Pakistan and PTV would implement it. Further, either on a daily basis or once every 2 or 3 days, I would discuss the content of the most recent news bulletins.

The allegation by Nawaz Sharif was false and preposterous. It broke the norms of partisan political discourse to become callous character assassination.

While both Nusrat Bhutto and Benazir Bhutto were modern, not conservative Muslims, they were both firm adherents of Islam with a profound respect for its basic principles and practices. In no way could they be justifiably accused of being non-believers or atheists or apostates, leave alone conspiring to divert the country’s population toward becoming a Godless society.

Hurled irresponsibly to a population hyper-sensitive about the name of Islam, about faith, about the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him), about the Holy Quran, the accusation was worse than being accused of treason.

From its inception, the PPP was portrayed by the Opposition’s orthodox, conservative, religion-based parties as being secular, Western / Christian-oriented, and its leaders allegedly being habituated to un-Islamic practices.

Years earlier, during one of his speeches to a huge crowd, Z.A. Bhutto responded with vigour, wit and telling sarcasm to the charge that he consumed alcohol by defiantly saying at a public meeting: “Yes, I drink. But at least I do

not drink the blood of the poor, like most other parties' leaders do!"

Yet later, to pre-empt campaigns and protests by the Opposition before and after the March 1977 polls for *Nizam-e-Mustafa* (an Islamic system) alleging that the PPP Government had massively rigged the polls, the very same Z.A. Bhutto banned the sale of alcohol to Muslims (but not to non-Muslims), prohibited gambling (as in betting on horse races, etc) and shifted the weekly holiday to Friday instead of Sunday. None of these three concessions to the mullahs curbed the intensity of the call for his ouster and for fresh elections. The image persisted of the PPP and its leaders being Westernized. And this anti-PPP bias of other parties was inherited by Nusrat Bhutto and Benazir Bhutto when they assumed the leadership of the party after the judicially sanctioned execution of Z.A. Bhutto on 4th April 1979.

In the election campaign of October-November 1988, the IJI publicity wing circulated widely to the Urdu Press, photographs of Nusrat Bhutto on a dance floor taken some years ago as also images of Benazir Bhutto from her student days in Harvard and Oxford to depict them as Westernized women unfit to lead a Muslim nation. Photographs were also doctored and fabricated to present the two women in an unfavourable light. For the record: one of the individuals who, as per credible reports widely shared at that time, engineered this defamatory, scurrilous campaign was Hussain Haqqani. Just 4 years later, the same individual abandoned Nawaz Sharif and IJI and was appointed Secretary of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in the second Government of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto (1993-1996).

Fortunately, the people of Pakistan, despite the overwhelming majority being Muslim, and despite, at that time, the majority being illiterate and therefore in theory being liable to be easily misled, had tended to show extraordinary maturity.

When it came to casting their votes in elections for the National Assembly and the Provincial Assemblies they voted on political, not religious grounds. Even after 11 years of the extreme obscurantism and bigotry promoted by General Ziaul Haq, the people had made the allegedly secular, Westernized-oriented PPP led by a woman into the single largest political party. As usual, both in 1970 and later, the religion-based political parties received well less than 10 per cent of the popular vote.

But in December 1988, with the Punjab ruled by a coalition hostile to the Federal Government and the PPP, and with the knowledge that Nawaz Sharif and the IJI overtly represented the military and the civil bureaucracy that had traditionally been hostile to the PPP, the telecast of this particular report about the speech of Nawaz Sharif alleging atheism on the part of the PPP Prime Minister produced an instant and angry response.

I received a call within minutes on the green phone — which is used for highly-restricted communication between the senior-most levels of State and Government — from Nusrat Bhutto. She said, “Javed, what kind of freedom have you given to PTV and Radio Pakistan?! To freely broadcast all kinds of lies and slander about BB? What are you doing about this?” And further words to the same effect. When I could respond, I expressed my regrets and acknowledged that even if Nawaz Sharif said what he did, PTV was not obliged to report verbatim what was clearly an outright lie and thereby carry a falsehood to millions more than those thousands who attended the public meeting. Nusrat Bhutto abruptly put the phone down, clearly very unhappy with the Minister of State for Information.

Benazir Bhutto did not call me on this particular occasion. But she was probably seated with Nusrat Bhutto in the same room when the latter called. Indeed, I recollect hearing her voice in the background while Nusrat Bhutto was

speaking to me. Benazir Bhutto probably wanted me to get an earful from the Chairperson of the PPP who was also Senior Minister in the Cabinet.

In discussing with the PTV News team this extreme and irresponsible use of the new freedom, I had to bear in mind some covert elements. On the face of it, the new freedom to use their own professional judgment to decide which event deserved lead reporting and what duration had, in this instance, simply been used correctly, or literally correctly. A major political figure, the Head of the leading Opposition alliance and the Chief Minister of Punjab had laid a serious charge against the Prime Minister — certainly an event of high news value.

Yet, in the context of the medium still remaining a State-owned, Government-controlled medium, should not greater consideration have been given to the sheer outrageousness of the allegation and to its patent falsehood? If so, then did this allegation deserve to be the first lead story in the news? Could it not have been placed far further down, later, in keeping with its obviously scurrilous nature?

There was also the possibility that the prominence given to this allegation was due to the unspoken, tacit loyalty of members of the PTV/PBC news teams to the previous authoritarian era of General Ziaul Haq of which Nawaz Sharif had been an active part, indeed a principal beneficiary? Under the guise of simply being professional, perhaps a calculated act of mischief had been carried out.

The main point underlined in my own comments was that even if a major public figure makes a substantive statement, news professionals nonetheless have an obligation to take into account the credibility of a statement, the potentially negative fall-out from prominently projecting a statement of a dubious or false nature and placing the treatment given to a particular news item within the larger national context of social reality and public sensibility.

No punitive actions were taken against any member of the news team. My



comments were meant to serve as adequate reprimand and a caution for the future.

Coverage of the Opposition on a daily basis on radio and TV continued. Inevitably, the Government and the PPP, being the elected holders of public office and power received comparatively more time and prominence.

During sittings of the National Assembly and the Senate, at various points, or in the corridors, when and if the Opposition grudgingly acknowledged that its views were now receiving some projection through State media, there was also the complaint about the duration of such coverage being far less than it deserved to be.

To address this perception of bias, I asked Radio Pakistan and PTV to initiate a daily report to me listing the exact subjects and durations of all items reported in the main news bulletins of the previous day. I used to duly receive these reports early the next day. The same were circulated to the Prime Minister. Whenever required, the data from such daily reports were quoted in Parliament or outside and in interactions with the Press.

## *Hot and cool in Parliament*

As Minister of State — who was also a Senator — I was eligible to be seated in the Government/Treasury rows in the National Assembly, the legislature of which I was not a Member. Apart from representing the Ministry during Question Hour and representing the Government in general during sittings, one was also occasionally required to speak on behalf of a fellow Cabinet Member when he or she was unable to be personally present due to unavoidable — or even avoidable — reasons, or due to indisposition. And had requested me to represent the absentee.

Inclusive of both the directly elected Members and the indirectly elected Members on seats reserved for women — and minorities — the total membership was 204. There were also seats for five Advisors to the Prime Minister permitted by the Constitution who are normally not elected but possess skills and attributes required to assist the Head of Government.

In the initial few weeks of the Government's tenure and until the election of PPP nominees to the Senate much later, I was the only Senator-Member of the Cabinet who participated in proceedings of the National Assembly.

I had some limited prior experience of sitting in the National Assembly. When, for instance, joint sessions of the two Houses were held between March 1985 and 29th May 1988 (on which date the National Assembly was dissolved by General Ziaul Haq but the Senate remained alive). Members of both Houses sat together to listen to, and later debate, the annual Address by the President or at a

joint sitting specially convened for a particular purpose. Another example was an in-camera briefing in 1987 by Lt. General Hameed Gul, the then-DG, ISI on the situation in Afghanistan. Or to honour a visiting high dignitary, in which Members only listened and applauded, but did not speak. Using the President's Address as a basis for their positions, Members in joint sittings expressed their views on a wide range of subjects.

In the National Assembly, the PPP Members and Members from allied parties like Pakistan Awami Ittehad, Independents and Members from FATA almost always supported the Government-of-the-day. The "almost" refers to non-PPP Members who sometimes expressed discomfort with an aspect of the Government's policy. The PPP-led coalition had a majority large enough to justify being in office but not overwhelmingly large as in the case of a party or a coalition with a two-third majority.

The Opposition IJI in the National Assembly was also the ruling party in the largest province of Punjab. The area of Punjab is immediately adjacent to the Federal Capital Territory of Islamabad. This proximity gave the Opposition's presence in the Assembly a profile and a potency disproportionate to actual numbers.

Some Members of the Opposition used language, innuendoes and a style of speech that was redolent of street and bazaar idioms — and this is said without disrespect to the street and the bazaar ! Such Members often used the more coarse and crude aspects of street-style speech to assail the Government by focusing on the PPP's perceived weaknesses. These comprised flaws and failures in the PPP Government of 1972-1977 of which there were certainly several; the excesses against the Opposition of that time; the alleged nexus of the PPP with the violence-prone Al-Zulfiqar network led from overseas locations by Murtaza Bhutto, younger brother of the Prime Minister; the alleged role of the

PPP-led Federal Government in the removal of the Balochistan Government legitimately elected in November 1988; well-founded as well as unsubstantiated allegations of corrupt practices by PPP Ministers; the quickly-evolving perception about the behind-the-scenes influence of Asif Ali Zardari becoming Mr Ten Per Cent (i.e. that he personally and/ or the PPP coerced all those handling Government-related contracts to give 10 per cent of the total contract value as a pre-condition for getting contracts); instances of mis-governance in Sindh, and elsewhere by PPP-led Provincial Governments; barely concealed male chauvinism, or mockingly implied fragilities in the leadership quality of women — rather than men — such as Nusrat Bhutto and Benazir Bhutto who were at the helm of PPP; the excessive zeal of PPP *jiyalas* (PPP Members fanatically devoted to the Party and its slain leader Z.A. Bhutto and his family); the alleged role of Z.A. Bhutto in promoting the break-up of Pakistan in December 1971; the alleged soft corner of the PPP for India and the USA, and thereby, the potential threats to national security.

Sittings of the National Assembly were often rancorous and lively. If there were brief phases of sobriety and substantive discussion, there were also far too many disruptions and diversions caused by the Opposition seeking to challenge the Government and obstruct the agenda. Such tactics included: frequently attempting Points of Order when no such points were warranted, insisting on speaking without being recognized by, or permitted by the Speaker, interrupting or heckling speakers from across the aisle, staging walk-outs, conducting theatrical acts like tearing up documents, et al.

Presiding over the Assembly was a gentleman rare to find in politics. Malik Meraj Khalid, elected from a Lahore constituency, was a veteran PPP leader who had served with Z.A. Bhutto as Chief Minister, Punjab and as Federal Minister in the 1972-1977 phase. He was widely respected for his integrity and character.

He lived modestly and simply. He had founded, and still led a major social service organization in Lahore named Anjuman-al-Ikhwān that provided education and health services for the poor and needy. He enjoyed international stature by virtue of being a co-leader of the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization, a Leftist and progressive alliance of political, intellectual, trade union and civil society leaders. He had remained steadfast in defying the martial law regime of General Ziaul Haq, by refusing to abandon the PPP. He had to go under-ground to evade arrest. Notably, despite his consistent loyalty to the founding spirit of the PPP, during the ascendancy of Benazir Bhutto and Nusrat Bhutto, specially when both women were overseas in the early 1980s, and then more recently on the triumphant return of Benazir Bhutto to Pakistan in 1986, Malik Meraj Khalid was branded by some who were close to the two women as being one of the "Gang of Four".

This term, derived from the "Gang" term as used in the Cultural Revolution in China between 1966 and 1976, referred in the Pakistan context to four senior leaders of the PPP. They were said to disagree with the pro-Western views of Benazir Bhutto and her abandonment of the original progressive orientation of the Party. The four were Malik Meraj Khalid himself, Rao Rashid, Mian Ehsan-ul-Haq and Afzal Sindhu.

Other senior colleagues of the PPP from whom Benazir Bhutto drew away before her return to Pakistan in 1986 and onwards were: Mumtaz Bhutto, Abdul Hafeez Pirzada, Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi, Ghulam Mustafa Khar and a few others. In contrast to the "Gang of Four", these veterans were known as her estranged "uncles".

The decision to nominate Malik Meraj Khalid as Speaker of the National Assembly, despite his being a Member of the alleged Gang of Four came as a pleasant surprise. Following the elections of March 1977 whose results led to

mass agitation by the Opposition alleging rigging by the PPP Government, Malik Meraj Khalid had been elected Speaker. However, the Assembly was only fitfully active up to 4th July 1977 i.e. for only about 100 days before General Ziaul Haq dissolved it after his coup. Thus, electing him Speaker in December 1988 was only to restore him to his rightful position, stolen away eleven years earlier.

Secondly, by nominating and electing the senior-most figure in the Gang of Four to the high position of Speaker, a clear sign of Party unity was being sent to members, and to the country at large. Internal ideological cohesion was also a supplementary message because four individuals generally associated with Leftist views were now part of a team led by a more Right-of-Centre-oriented leadership.

The Opposition also respected the credentials of Malik Meraj Khalid.

In his conduct of Assembly sittings, Malik Meraj Khalid exhibited admirable patience, intelligence and wisdom. Punctuated with gentle humour, he was often able to prevent deterioration of proceedings to the sheer mayhem sought to be created by the obstructive, disruptive words and actions of the Opposition.

Major Opposition leaders in the National Assembly included Khan Abdul Wali Khan, the Head of the Awami National Party; Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan, the veteran politician, Ghulam Hyder Wyne, later to become Chief Minister of Punjab, Ghulam Mustafa Khar, Maulana Fazlur Rahman, Maulana Abdul Sattar Khan Niazi, Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, Chaudhry Anwar Aziz, Hafiz Hussain Ahmad and Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali.

Both on behalf of Benazir Bhutto as Leader of the House, and in my individual capacity, I frequently interacted with each of the leaders named above, and with many other MNAs. Despite the heat and the thunder that marked many sessions, I was fortunate to experience courtesy and cordiality — fully reciprocated —

from the Opposition leaders.

*Tears — soon after the cheers*

(DECEMBER 1988)

There were some moments with Benazir Bhutto a few days after she had been elected Leader of the House in December 1988 which illustrated her emotional fragility. On one evening, we were in Parliament for an evening session of the National Assembly. I received a message while I was seated in the House in the Ministers' rows to meet her in the Prime Minister's chamber.

When I walked into the room, Naheed Khan, her Private Secretary was the only other person present. Benazir Bhutto was seated at the head of a small conference table. Naheed was seated to her left. The Prime Minister instructed me about a file pending at the Ministry.

But she was visibly distraught and her condition had no relation to the matter she spoke to me about. In fact, she was tearful. Naheed's eyes and expression sought my understanding — which was instantly given. I felt great empathy for Benazir Bhutto, suddenly becoming once again aware of how she was so vulnerable to hurt and pain.

Naheed spoke only briefly to me, by way of explanation, referring to the vitriol that the Opposition was hurling at her and the PPP, both outside and inside the National Assembly.

Some Members of the Opposition had been attacking the Government of the PPP and the Bhutto family without any distinctions between them. The personal attacks on the Bhutto family were particularly vicious.



Despite her birth into a political family, her proximity to a father who was political to the core of his being, her own incarceration in her house and in jails, the traumatizing weeks before, during and after her father's unjust trial and execution, the loss of her brother Shahnawaz, the familiarity with, and exposure to, the crass nature of hostile critical statements made by political adversaries — here was a young woman who had not yet developed a skin thick enough to deflect the doses of harsh words uttered by insensitive people.

Here was a person facing, for the first time in her life, derisive and mocking words from Opposition Members in Parliament who were exploiting the immunity they enjoyed for comments made inside the chamber — to indulge in excess. To hear hostility directly, live, in the presence of others, in the presence of media, in full public view was probably too much to continue to hear hurtful words with a straight face. Something must have snapped, momentarily, inside her person.

Notwithstanding her fully adult age, and her official stature of seniority — in those brief minutes, I felt she was like one's own younger sister suffering deep inner pain.

Cultural and social norms did not permit the instinctive urge to reach out with an arm to her shoulder to comfort her, to convey the warmth of shared feelings. I only mumbled words to the effect "I am very sorry Prime Minister. Please take heart. We are all with you". And then I took my leave of her. Naheed indicated by gesture that one should not disclose this brief episode to anyone. That was a request I respected till today, 33 years later, when I write these words for the first time about that brief encounter.

On occasions when Benazir would speak firmly and defiantly in Parliament to rebut the Opposition or stress our Government's policies, the memory of those fleeting moments of her other sensitive side would flash through my mind.

## *SAARC Heads come calling*

29<sup>TH</sup>-31<sup>ST</sup> DECEMBER 1988

The Fourth SAARC Summit in Islamabad 29th-31st December 1988 was an unusually apt and colourful event. Convened as per dates agreed by Member-States several months before the induction of a new Prime Minister in Pakistan, the Conference became a happy coincidence and confluence of 4 strands.

1. To begin with, this was the first international, regional moot to be hosted by Pakistan and Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto after the new Government came to office in the first week of December 1988.
2. Second: the representation of all States was at the highest political level, indicative of the importance attached by each Government to the meeting.
3. Third: the gathering became de facto, an expression of collective felicitations by all of SAARC's neighbours to Benazir Bhutto on her assumption of office.
4. Fourthly: the dates of the last 3 days of 1988 became a fitting climax to mark the end of a truly tumultuous and transformative year in Pakistan's history.

Of the 6 visiting Heads of State and/or Government, two were royal: King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev of Nepal and King Jigme Singye Wangchuck of

Bhutan. Three were Presidents: President Junius Richard Jayewardene of Sri Lanka, President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom of The Maldives, President Hussain Muhammad Ershad of Bangladesh. Two were Prime Ministers, both relatively young compared to the other Heads. Both were from famous political families, both the respective children of a parent who had been assassinated, revengefully in the case of Indira Gandhi by her two Sikh body guards and judicially-militarily in the case of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi of India and Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan each, in his and her own right, had a distinctive individual personality and stature, separate from heritage: well-educated, articulate, good-looking, modernist.

Yet the past was also markedly present on the occasion even as prospects for a new future — for SAARC, for Pakistan, for India — shimmered on the horizon. All three Presidents at this summit had had long and friendly relationships with the former, now late President Ziaul Haq of Pakistan — the nemesis of the woman who was now their host in Islamabad. The two Kings had also had cordial relations with Pakistan's former Head of State. The host country's new Head of State, President Ghulam Ishaq Khan had a long, close association with his predecessor. But inter-state relations transcend the niceties and nuances of personal relations. The ambience was amiable and friendly.

President Ghulam Ishaq Khan hosted a grand banquet at the Presidency where this remarkable assembly of contrasting personalities, titles, age groups while also being reflective of the wide range of political systems in South Asia had come together. Both in order to maintain the momentum of the still-youthful regional body known as SAARC as also to felicitate Benazir Bhutto on joining their fraternity.

I attended the inaugural Summit session in which all the Heads of State and Government spoke with their own personal variations of tone and inflexion. At

such formal, public events, the subtle as well as the explicit tensions that may or may not exist on a bilateral or sub-regional level are subsumed under the more immediate, pressing requirements of polite protocol. Benazir Bhutto rendered her address with appreciable aplomb.

The inaugural session was held in the hall of the State Bank building in Islamabad where the National Assembly elected in March 1985 continued to meet. The Senate chamber was also adjacent to this hall within the same structure. The new Parliament building on Constitution Avenue was at that time still under construction.

In the course of their respective speeches, four leaders made references of respect to the late President Ziaul Haq. They were: President Ershad of Bangladesh, President Gayoom of The Maldives, President Jayawardene of Sri Lanka and King Birendra of Nepal. While they were fulfilling what to them was an obligation demanded by protocol alone to acknowledge the demise less than 6 months earlier of the previous Head of State of the country in which they were now present, it was clear from the facial expressions of Benazir Bhutto that these complimentary remarks caused her considerable discomfort. She could not possibly respond to point out that the man they were fondly remembering had very unfondly ordered the death of her father. Later, in her speech in the concluding session, she made remarks that reflected adversely on Ziaul Haq — without naming him — as evident in certain harsh measures he had taken through military Courts.

Among several media representatives visiting Islamabad from their own South Asian countries as also from Europe and the USA, I exchanged warm greetings with Simi Garewal, the elegant, articulate film and TV star of India. We knew each other from previous years. I met her for the first time in January 1976 when I was invited to screen my first cinema film *Beyond the Last Mountain* which

was also Pakistan's first — and so far only — English language film at the First Bombay International Film Festival. Simi and her charming sister Amrita who owned several book shops — along with their gracious mother — were a very friendly family to meet in their city.

The Indian delegation included Mani Shankar Aiyar who was at that time serving as Joint Secretary for External Affairs in the Indian Prime Minister's Secretariat. When he became the first Consul General of India to be posted to Karachi in 1978 after the long rupture in bilateral diplomatic relations caused by the 1971 war, Mani and I had established a warm and friendly relationship — despite our strong individually different views on Pakistan-India ties! Mani liked to say that because his ancestry originates from Madras and Tamil Nadu which was also my own birth place, we had good reason to have a special relationship. Over the past 50 years, our amiable connection has endured despite our respective differences in views and analysis. In December 1988 at the SAARC Summit and even during Rajiv Gandhi's exclusively bilateral visit in July 1989, the pressures of the tightly-packed official schedule did not enable us to have substantive exchanges. In the successive decades, Mani resigned from the Foreign Service and began an illustrious career as a Parliamentarian, Cabinet Minister, incisive author and pungent commentator.

In response to numerous requests from visiting media representatives for exclusive interviews with Benazir Bhutto, I was not able to arrange positive responses to each. But in the next 19 months several interviewers returned to Pakistan for a prized dialogue with Benazir Bhutto. Before the grand banquet at the Presidency, along with other Members of the Cabinet, I was introduced by the Prime Minister to each of the visiting Heads of State and Government. In one of the images captured on that occasion (reproduced elsewhere in this book) it is amusing to note that as I shook hands with Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, Asif

Zardari surveyed the moment with a notably skeptical expression.

I also noticed with dis-comfort that, for some brief moments, before the gathering proceeded to be seated for dinner, there was awkward jostling when protocol persons inadvertently brushed past the two Kings in order to look after the Indian Prime Minister. In microcosm, this fleeting, innocuous moment symbolized how the Pakistan-India relationship holds hostage the totality of the South Asian regional framework.

The Islamabad Declaration and the joint press release issued at the conclusion of the Fourth SAARC Summit comprehensively covered almost all major subjects of immediate concern as well as of long-term significance on which there was consensus among the seven Member- States. By its founding charter, SAARC does not allow a discussion or mediation on bilateral issues. This is both a severe limitation and at the same time the only practical method by which the process of multi-lateral dialogue within the region can be sustained.

The exclusion of bilateral matters was initiated by India because, as the only state with geographical — land-based or marine-based — frontiers with each of the other six Member-States, the largest country in South Asia has various contentious issues with all other Member-States. (It was only when Afghanistan, more than a decade later was admitted to SAARC that the condition of India's commonality of borders with each other Member-State ceased to be). The most important bilateral issue is the unresolved dispute between Pakistan and India on the status of Jammu and Kashmir on which India has failed to honour the Resolutions of the UN Security Council which call for the right of self-determination to be freely exercised by the people of that former Princely state.

As Pakistan and India, at that time, and more so post-1989, continued to make efforts to hold sustained dialogue on this issue — most often without a productive outcome — it was understandable that the exclusion of bilateral

issues from the SAARC Charter was the only way to secure co-operation on a regional basis.

Yet this summit provided an opportunity outside the summit proceedings for the Prime Ministers of Pakistan and India to conclude an unprecedented agreement. To lower the risk of uncontrollable and lethal radioactive fallout due to actions from mis-calculation or mis-judgement, the two leaders approved an accord to annually exchange details of locations of nuclear installations. Alongside other agreements facilitating improved and regular exchange of content in the cultural fields and support for people-to-people exchanges, the bilateral dimension did receive an indirect boost through a major SAARC event.

The Islamabad Declaration recorded concerns on a wide range of subjects. These included production, trafficking and abuse of drugs; launch of SAARC Chairs, Fellowships, Scholarships and Youth Volunteers Programmes; Human Resource development priorities; South Asian Cultural Festivals; the enforcement of a SAARC regional convention on Suppression of Terrorism; creation of a Food Security Reserve; an Agricultural Information Centre at Dhaka; terming 1990 as the “SAARC Year of the Girl Child”; promotion of trade, manufactures and services; co-operation to study the Causes and Consequences of Natural Disasters and the Protection and Preservation of the environment; steady progress on the Audio Visual Exchange programme; advancing Women in Development ; facilitating enhanced people-to-people contact ; and strengthening of the SAARC Secretariat in Kathmandu.

*“Javed, go to Jeddah”*

(JANUARY 1989)

During a visit to Karachi by the Prime Minister in early January 1989 I was also present at a meeting at Governor’s House. She called me for a brief aside and said, “Javed, I want you to go to Jeddah ahead of my arrival there shortly. Check the exact details with my Military Secretary”.

The forthcoming visit to Saudi Arabia would be the first overseas visit by the new Prime Minister since her assumption of office on 2nd December 1988.

The principal reason for the visit was to perform Umrah, the second — after Hajj — most important pilgrimage by Muslims to the holy places of Islam in Makkah and Madinah — and thereby to seek Allah’s blessings for her own tenure in office.

A couple of weeks earlier, in another context, during an informal meeting at her office, the Prime Minister and I had referred to ways by which the Government could honour those poor women and men, not famous and well-known, but dedicated Party workers who had quietly suffered years of imprisonment during the martial law rule of General Ziaul Haq and some who had also borne whiplashes and torture.

In sittings of the Senate in 1985, 1986, 1987 and in early 1988, I had raised the issue of their continued incarceration and called for their release, and for the repeal of the jail terms given to them by martial law courts.

When the Government repeatedly failed to redress injustices done to these



prisoners of conscience, I moved a Privilege Motion in the Senate. A Privilege Motion of the nature that I moved concerned, in my view, a breach of privilege of the Senate, not of my personal privileges. I argued that even after multiple assurances given on the floor of the Senate by the then-Minister of Law and Justice, Iqbal Ahmed Khan, that redressal would be undertaken, no purposeful action had been taken. And that therefore, the Senate should take formal notice of the failure of the Government to act on its own promises which had been made to the Senate.

So Prime Minister Mohammad Khan Junejo and his Government were in an awkward position on this issue. The harsh sentences against the political prisoners, most of them from the PPP, were imposed by the martial law courts of General Ziaul Haq before the induction of the Junejo Government in March 1985. Only a few weeks into his tenure, Mohammad Khan Junejo had begun to demonstrate and manifest an independence of views. He began to assert that the civil-political elected Government should have primacy in decision-making. This tendency became more pronounced after 30th December 1985 when martial law was lifted. But even as Mohammad Khan Junejo's authority grew incrementally over the next 2 years, the issue of repealing in *toto* the sentences of all political prisoners remained unresolved. One argument in favour of their continued enforcement was that the punishments were for actions that were downright criminal in nature, or even terroristic, not those of peaceful political protest.

A reflection of how substantive the issue was became clear when Prime Minister Junejo personally — instead of the Law Minister, as was customary — rose to speak during the debate on my Privilege Motion.

Prime Minister Junejo initially sought more time. But when the Chairman of the Senate, Ghulam Ishaq Khan, to my pleasant surprise, indicated his agreement

with my arguments, the Prime Minister gracefully withdrew his reservations. He acknowledged the importance of the subject of the Motion and supported its approval. For the record, this was the third Privilege Motion moved by me that was held to be in order and was admitted by the Chair, and the House.

Normally, Privilege Motions on substantive institutional issues are not easily held to be in order, nor are they frequently admitted. As the Government-of-the-day has a majority of Members' support and the Chair is sensitive to the views of the majority, Privilege Motions of a serious, non-personal nature are either rejected or held inadmissible for technical reasons. The admission of a Motion critical of the Government, when the Government has a majority in the House, is seen as a set-back and a source of political awkwardness for the ruling party.

Privilege Motions that deal with alleged or real breaches of personal individual privilege of individual Members are more commonly moved, and sometimes admitted. Often, such Motions deal with episodes where the Member of Parliament was faced with inappropriate conduct by officials, or others who deprived the Member of access to facilities, such as VIP lounges at airports, or when an official misbehaved with the Member, and so on. The offender is then summoned to explain his conduct to the Privileges Committee of the House and face penalties as deemed fit, if found "guilty".

Fortunately, none of the three Privilege Motions that I moved which were held to be admissible had anything to do with personal interest. Each of them was about a matter of public interest. *Dawn* reported the news as a rare "hat-trick" of 3 Privilege Motions (moved by me) having succeeded in the tough test of admissibility.

Before PM Junejo could take corrective action, he was politically distracted or obstructed. And was soon dismissed on 29th May 1988 by General Ziaul Haq.

Perhaps Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto recalled my active association with the

plight of political prisoners and remembered my suggestion that some of those who suffered most could be invited to accompany her on her first Umrah as Prime Minister. More likely, she had already decided by herself earlier than my suggestion being made to her to invite those who had suffered the hardship of prisons for the PPP.

Earlier, soon after the Prime Minister and the Cabinet had taken their respective oaths, Aitzaz Ahsan, Federal Minister for Interior & Law and Justice, had announced that the sentences of political prisoners given under martial law would be commuted. This was one of the best early decisions taken by Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto.

For a Muslim like me who had previously never performed *Umrah*, the decision by the Prime Minister to include me in her entourage moved me deeply. Several other Ministers, Advisors and Assistants, alongwith officials and former political prisoners were also invited. But many others had not been included, most of whom were far more senior to me in the Party and may have justifiably felt slighted at being left out. But after all, every single Minister and supporter could not possibly be included.

As a stickler for propriety — or in other words, always given to trying to do things the right way, and thus probably being seen as a pretentious holier-than-thou individual — I was uncomfortable with the notion of performing a religious rite at State and public expense. I would willingly have paid for my own expenses. But did not do so. Because to do so would also upstage and embarrass the Prime Minister, even if this aspect was not disclosed to the media.

I soothed my conscience by telling it that, after all, I was simply fulfilling a formal duty as Minister of State, as a Cabinet member who was obeying the directive of the Prime Minister. With the further thought that even though this was a religious ritual, the visit by the Prime Minister of Pakistan also had a

political, official, work-related dimension to it. Inevitably, there would be meetings held by her with the King of Saudi Arabia and other members of the ruling royal family, as well as with the media. Pakistan-Saudi Arabian relations were an important part of our country's foreign policy and the visit would hopefully strengthen them.

So I was soon in Jeddah, about 24 hours prior to the Prime Minister's arrival. Arrangements for coverage by both State media and private media of such overseas visits by the Head of State, or the Head of Government of Pakistan were duly in place.

Decisions about the Producer/Reporter/Presenter/and the cameramen for PTV and the sound/audio radio team of PBC who would precede the official team or who would accompany the team would bemusingly, involve decisions by the Prime Minister's Office itself. Or sometimes, approved by the Minister-in-charge or the Secretary. In principle, such decisions should always be left to the discretion of the Heads of PBC and PTV. Often, they were not.

Soon after the airport arrival formalities were over, the Prime Minister and the entourage proceeded to the Holy Kaaba for the first part of the Umrah.

Wearing the prescribed garment of white cloth and moving through the different phases of the salutations, the rituals were conducted in awe and with solemnity.

The real impact of the pilgrimage began with the seven rounds walked around the structure of the Kaaba itself. Images and impressions are embedded — and still endure. The sound of the verses of the Holy Quran being recited; the cold, warm touch of naked feet on the floor; the galleries on the four sides; the rustles; the mumbled prayers of other persons moving in front of me; and on both sides, and walking behind us; the cool temperature of a January night; the Prime Minister at the head of the group being escorted and guided by the Saudi clerics

and security officials deputed for this task.

Accustomed as they obviously are to providing similar services to the spouses of visiting Heads of State and Government in previous years, this was a first time for the Saudi escorts. Benazir Bhutto had become the first Muslim woman to serve as Prime Minister and Head of Government. The protocol for *Umrah* for visiting Heads of State or Government had always previously been only for male Muslim Heads. Here was a Muslim woman, with her male spouse in tow! For the Saudis, accustomed to the dominant male ethos of Wahabi ways, this change must have caused some fair degree of adjustment, requiring quite some getting-used-to.

To the credit of the Saudi King Fahd Bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud: he did not discriminate in any way against this first-ever Muslim woman Head of Government. Indeed, he personally authorized the opening of the doors of the Holy Kaaba — a rare and most significant action — to enable Benazir Bhutto and her entourage to step inside this most sacred of all places in Islam.

### **Inside the Ka'aba:**

Excitement, anticipation, nervousness surged within me as I was nudged forward and up the small set of steps leading to the door. Soon enough, I stepped in and my bare feet touched the floor of the inner sanctum.

I was mesmerized. The fact was awesome. Here was my mere, utterly insignificant, mortal self at the physical epicentre of the Islamic faith. Every nerve in my being was electrified. I felt as if the kinetic energy of hundreds of millions of Muslim fellow beings was transmitted at that very moment into this particular part of planet Earth, streaking through me, and through all others with me. The sheer knowledge that here, precisely and specifically where I now stood, where had once stood the greatest man who ever lived, made me hold my breath. I tried to visualize how the Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him) must

have entered this place which, till his advent, was home to idols and statues. I remembered reading about how he is reported to have knocked down the figures and cast them aside. To initiate an entirely new realm of meaning for this historic site. To keep the form intact but profoundly change the content.

Initial moments of a mental and physical freeze were interrupted by gentle reminders to move ahead. From the inside, the Kaaba is surprisingly bland — plain and concrete. Bare walls. No windows. Dim blue lighting. In the centre, a large, open chest with vessels which were — and are — periodically used to wash the stone structure's interior and exterior. Several such vessels are sent by Muslim Heads of State and Government of overseas countries.

This is the only place on earth where a Muslim can bow down in prayer and face all four directions of East, West, North, South — unlike the normal, uni-directional positioning to bow towards the Kaaba from whichever part of the earth one is offering prayers.

I glimpsed the Prime Minister and her spouse rendering their prayers. I commenced my own. Two rakaats or phases of worship in each direction.

Each time I did so, I was struggling to concentrate on the meanings of the verses of the first Surah, Surah Al-Fateha which are so sublime and comprehensive that they are considered to be the essence of the entire Book itself. Yet my concentration was also distracted by the physical immediacy of where I was offering my prayers. My unusual garb of white, the relatively dim lighting, the hum of others reciting verses, mumbles from those next to one, the novelty of facing four directions.

My whispered gratitude to the Almighty for affording me this unique opportunity seemed to me so inadequate for the privilege given. I remembered my father and my mother, my wife, our children, my in-laws, our relations, close friends, their faces and names flashing across the screen of my mind. I also

silently thanked Benazir Bhutto for including me in her entourage and prayed for her well-being and success.

The next phase of the Umrah was the visit to Madinah to pay respects at the *Rawdah<sup>1</sup> Rasool* (وَاللَّيْلِ وَالْأَلْحَىٰ لِلَّهِ لَحَّاتُ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى وَسَلَّمَ بَأْسًا) site.

In Madinah, besides his final resting place, one remembered how modestly and simply he lived, how so powerful a figure left this life without leaving behind, as most individuals who exercise power do, large piles of money. The courage he demonstrated, the acts he lived by, became a legacy so enduring and pervasive that — without the use of a single image or icon — over one billion human beings across the world seek to imitate his actions and follow in his footsteps. Now, somewhere deeper down than the surface — his actual grave which is unseen by most, this ground was his final resting place. So close always to one's heart even when far away.

Offering prayers in the same line as the Prime Minister (as pictured) and her spouse evoked thoughts about the paradox of unequal access by Muslim females to mosques in Saudi Arabia, in Pakistan, and virtually all other Muslim countries, or even wherever most Muslims reside.

Whereas in the performance of the rituals of Hajj and Umrah in Makkah and in Madinah, both women and men participate side by side, elsewhere in the Muslim world, women are most often strictly segregated from men: by separate partitions or enclosures in mosques, and even in other public religious gatherings. Yet here at the Kaaba, and in the Madinah mosque, the message of true equality brought by the Prophet has been fortunately sustained, and continues to be practiced.

1 the word literally means “garden”, is the burial site of the Prophet

(PBUH).

A few other images linger from that visit to Saudi Arabia with Benazir Bhutto. A brief interaction with her when she and her spouse were seated in their large private quarters in the guest palace made available by the host Government. Asif Ali Zardari had placed one leg over the thigh of his other leg. In Saudi society, specially in the presence of the King and members of the royal family, or indeed in traditional Arab society in general, such a posture is deemed inappropriate and inconsiderate towards the host. I recall reports that, on another occasion, when this writer was not present, the same gentleman's posture in this manner, clearly adopted without prior awareness about the sensitivities of the host, caused offence to the Saudis.

The second and more memorable image is the expression on the faces of one of the former political prisoners who had been subjected to severe torture and long imprisonment in the martial law years of General Ziaul Haq — and the image of his accompanying wife. Their eyes brimmed with thanks and admiration for Benazir Bhutto for having enabled them to visit the holiest places of Islam.

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## *A riot about “Satanic Verses”*

(FEBRUARY 1989)

The publication of the book *Satanic Verses* by Salman Rushdie led to the next internal controversy within the Government about the radical new news policy for radio and TV.

Ayatullah Khomeini in Iran had already issued a fatwa calling for Rushdie’s execution for his sacrilegious writing. Though Shias are only about 15 to 20 per cent of Pakistan’s Muslim population, the *fatwa* expressed a cross-sectarian consensus. Leading Sunni *maulvis* and even non-religious party political leaders, specially of the right-wing and religion-based political parties called for capital punishment of Rushdie. They condemned the PPP Government for not being more voluble and active in pursuing his prosecution. They had no comprehension of the sheer impracticality of one State — Pakistan — demanding of another State — UK — to take retributive action on Pakistan’s behalf against one of its own citizens for having written a text that deeply offended Muslims. But such elements in Pakistan and elsewhere in Muslim countries did not want to accept that the British Government and media regarded Rushdie’s views as a legitimate use of freedom of expression.

Our Government promptly did what it could realistically do — which was to ban the book’s distribution in Pakistan and its reproduction. As did the Indian Government, and some other non-Muslim majority States.

However, such actions did not discourage the religion- based parties and other

extremists, joined by right-wing political leaders, from arranging a protest procession in Islamabad on 12th February 1989. Similar processions had either already been taken out in other cities or were also being organized on the same day while others were planned in the days ahead. In the capital city, one of the prime targets was the American Centre which included a library and an auditorium. A decade earlier, with the Iranian Revolution having already branded the USA as the “Great Satan”, the similarity of that label with the name of Rushdie’s book only proved to extremists that the book was further proof of a conspiracy against Islam by the USA, and an alleged apostate like Rushdie.

There was a predictable clash between the procession that had soon become a mob, wielding sticks and throwing stones and, on the other, the police force deployed to protect the American Centre. Tear-gas had to be used. Unfortunately, perhaps in over-reaction to the threat posed to the premises of an embassy, the police also fired lethal bullets. Sadly, they either did not have rubber bullets or other deterrent means. There were at least 5 fatal casualties and many non-fatal injuries. Some prominent political leaders like Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan, Maulana Abdus Sattar Khan Niazi and others were also at the front of the procession and their vehicles were hit by policed batons and force. To compound matters further, when distressed supporters and family members of casualties reached the hospital, there was violence between agitated citizens and the police. At both locations, there were cameras, including a PTV unit.

The same night in PTV’s *Khabanama*, the lead story reported the protest and the clash. However, unlike conventional PTV reportage of such law-and-order incidents in which only the law-breakers’ violent actions were shown to establish their guilt in having broken the law of Section 144 of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) which prohibits the gathering of more than four persons in a given situation, in this PTV report, a couple of shots also showed policemen

hurling stones at the demonstrators. This was in obvious retaliation for the objects being thrown at them by the mob. Deliberately, but perhaps wisely — as the eventual impact would have been highly incendiary, there were no shots of policemen shooting live bullets at the crowd.

But within a minute or so of this clip being shown on PTV, I received a call on the green phone from the Prime Minister. She was extremely upset. Her anger was as much about PTV as it was about her Minister of State. “What is the meaning of this Javed?” she almost shouted. “Are you trying to actually damage our Government, by showing what you just did? The policemen were shown as if they are the ones who provoked this clash. For God’s sake, Javed, stop this *tamasha* (spectacle/farce) at once. Stop it!” She hung off abruptly, barely willing to listen to my response, unlike previous instances where she at least heard me out.

This use of freedom by the State media once more provoked consideration of related issues. The visual coverage of the clash and the verbal narrative were accurate. It was so accurate that it was possibly the first time that the State-owned TV channel had shown — or implied — that policemen themselves could also take possibly volitional violent actions. The images on PTV suggested that they were not so much reacting to objects thrown at them by the mob as much as they were themselves hurling stones at — by implication — a procession that was only staging a peaceful protest.

Those two or three shots in the PTV news report were instantly seized upon by the Government’s critics to charge that the injuries and damage to property was caused by the police rather than by the peaceful protesters — though this accusation was received with a big pinch of salt.

There was also the view expressed by some persons in the ruling groups that PTV should not have reported the clash over Rushdie’s book at all. Such an

omission would have been in line with a well-known historic tendency by PTV to completely ignore even major events in the country if they happened to be anti-Government or did not have the blessings of the Government of the day.

The physical clash between the procession mob and the police led to Government-Opposition verbal clashes in Parliament and outside. It was also said that the attempt to contain the protest procession was solid proof of the Government covertly accepting the sacrilegious content of the book and of being an agent of Western governments with their Godless beliefs.

The recorded proceedings of the National Assembly session on 13th February 1989 eloquently express the vitriol hurled by the Opposition against the Government. Among those who spouted sound and fury were two figures who, in 1989 were on the same side to batter the PPP Government: Maulana Fazlur Rahman and Sheikh Rashid Ahmad. Reflecting the often-amusing topsy-turvy of politics, in 2020-2021, the same two individuals are at polar opposites of the political spectrum. Maulana Fazlur Rahman leads the Pakistan Democratic Movement to oust the PTI Government of Prime Minister Imran Khan while Sheikh Rashid Ahmad as Minister of the Interior oversees the security and police of the Federal Capital territory, apart from his other areas of responsibility.

There were angry speeches and remarks by several Opposition members. The Government was urged to ban all books produced in Pakistan by the publisher of the offensive book and punish those who were responsible for the blood-shed. Fortunately, Sheikh Rashid Ahmad conceded that attempts by some of the rioters to take down the American flag and to attack a foreign embassy's premises were unacceptable just as it would be unacceptable for the flag of Pakistan or any of our overseas embassies to be demeaned or damaged.

Defensive, balanced comments were made by Treasury members who included Hakim Ali Zardari, Dr Sher Afghan Niazi and Minister for Law and Justice

Iftikhar Hussain Gillani (Interior Minister Aitizaz Ahsan was unavoidably absent). I wound up the debate on behalf of the Treasury Benches. I reiterated grief and deep regrets felt at the loss of lives and the injuries as also condemnation of the provocative content of the book. With regard to the coverage given to the clash by PTV, I stressed that this was possibly the first time in the 24-year history of PTV that the coverage included images which did not favour all the actions of the police. There was firm assurance in the conclusion that the findings of the Judicial tribunal appointed to investigate the incident would be fully respected.

Internally however, the possibility of mischief-making elements loyal to Nawaz Sharif and the Zia legacy still working in PTV News was discussed within the small circle of persons who would review media matters on almost a daily basis.

I listened to all the comments with care. In what one thought was a manner appropriate to the contexts, I also rebutted, or simply disagreed. While admitting that the shots in question, specially in view of their unique status could be misperceived as being reflective of the Government's aggressive, intolerant attitude to even peaceful protestors, I defended the ostensible aim of the report which was to convey to the audience a balanced version of what had happened in that incident.

During the review next morning I once again advised the PTV team to exercise extraordinary care in choosing words and images to minimize the scope for the purely professional aims of State media's journalism under the new policy from being misunderstood.

Recalling this incident in 2021, about 19 years after the spread of private, independent electronic media in Pakistan — as a result of the law and policy enforced by General Pervez Musharraf in 2002 and whose basic draft was prepared by this writer as a Cabinet Member in 2000 — the hullabaloo over just

a couple of shots of policemen hurling stones at citizen-protestors may seem wildly over-blown.

But it needs to be re-stated that in 1989 — as up to 2002 — the sole TV news channel in Pakistan was PTV. The nightly Khabarnama remained the sole source of visual reports about local and national events. Even satellite TV and foreign news channels were still a few years away as alternative sources. As stated elsewhere, a partly Government-owned TV channel known as STN began re-telecasting CNN to Pakistani viewers in 1990.

For the past 19 years (2002-2021), private news channels telecast reports about police excesses against citizens, about police corruption and about alleged, or real anti-citizen actions by Government departments.

In early 1989, even as one persisted with the radical new news policy, the rumblings of discontent with it — and with the Minister of State — continued to be discerned in explicit comments, in implied meanings, and in facial expressions.

One was somewhat amused at how quickly a political party like the PPP which regarded itself — partly with some justification — as a forward-looking, modern, liberal party far more attuned to true democracy and the range of freedoms — of thoughts, expressions, worship, speech et al. compared to all the right-wing and religious parties — was so quick to becoming orthodox, blinkered and proprietorial about the State monopoly of radio and TV.

I then put it down to the frustration and anger built up over the 11 long years in which the positive features of the PPP were completely excluded from radio and TV during the Zia years.

As best one could, we continued to implement the radical new news policy.

*“The Prime Minister regrets her inability to  
inaugurate AdAsia 89”*

(FEBRUARY 1989)

The 16th Asian Advertising Congress, also known as AdAsia 89, set for the fourth week of February 1989 was to be the largest-ever international advertising and media conference to be held in Pakistan’s history.

All previous international conferences held in the country dealing with the two sectors of advertising or media, singly, or even with marketing — which has a direct nexus with the other two — had either been single sector-specific, or had been comparatively small in scale.

AdAsias are conferences held every 2 years in a different Asian country. They are the Asian continent-versions of the global-scale conferences held by the US-based International Advertising Association.

Immediately preceding AdAsias had been held in Manila 1978, Singapore 1980, New Delhi 1982, Bangkok 1984, Seoul 1986. When the Junejo Government was dismissed in May 1988, the Pakistan-based Organizing Committee decided to postpone the event from the original dates set for November 1988 to new dates in February 1989 because elections were likely to be held in November 1988 (as they eventually were). Advertising and media associations in overseas countries linked with the event agreed to the new dates.

I was elected Chairman of the AdAsia 89 Organizing Committee a couple of

years earlier — in 1987 — by the sectoral associations in Pakistan.

We already had a compact, 2-room secretariat operating from Hotel Metropole, Karachi in the office of the Pakistan Advertising Association. Two competent young women, Rashida Dohad and Rubina Niaz comprised a very able support team. Steady progress was being made in the preparatory stages in 1987 and 1988.

In addition to the normal logistical requirements for any large conference, such as decent hotel rooms, flights to and from the conference venue-city, facilities, food and refreshments, two other streams of the Congress required exceptional attention.

One was the programme featuring speakers, presentations, workshops and exhibitions to make the content informative, educative and valuable for professionals coming from contrasting countries. These included highly advanced countries like Japan, South Korea, Australia where advertising expenditure per capita was far higher than Pakistan. Then there were developing countries and low-income level countries in which advertising was still evolving through formative phases. We had been able to secure contributions to the programme part by both respected professionals from non-Asian countries such as the USA, UK as well as from major Asian nations. As also, highly regarded thought-leaders and speakers were attending. They included Edward de Bono who had accepted my invitation and would talk about lateral thinking — to help stimulate out-of-the-box creativity.

The other part of the programme comprised social events. These needed to provide colour, good food, cultural content, entertainment and sheer fun to balance the sober programme part.

Prior to joining the Federal Government of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto on 4th December 1988 — eleven weeks before the convening of AdAsia 89 — my



dual capacities as a Senator and as Chairman of AdAsia 89 were blended together, whenever required, to facilitate dealings with the Federal Government, the Punjab Government and the Lahore administration.

We had the advantage of a high-powered, multi-sectoral Organizing Committee. The composition of the Committee was unprecedented . It enabled all the related sectors to co-operate for a common cause. It took as many as 30 years for the next AdAsia to be held in Pakistan which was successfully and ably done in December 2019. Sarmad Ali, chief executive of the *Jang/Geo* media group served very effectively as Chairman, AdAsia 2019 with a broad-based Committee. He had also contributed youthful energy to AdAsia 89.

For the record, the AdAsia 89 Organizing Committee comprised about 50 prominent individuals, each of them a leader of a professional sector or recognized for professional distinction. Some of them were: Mir Khalil-ur-Rahman, founder and Chairman of the *Jang* Group; Majeed Nizami, founder and Chairman of the *Nawa-e-Waqt* Group; S.H. Hashmi, Chairman, Pakistan Advertising Association; Aslam Azhar, Chairman of PTV and PBC; Hameed Haroon, Deputy Chief Executive of the Dawn Group; and several other eminent personalities from all sectors of marketing, advertising, media and the arts such as C.A. Rauf, H.M. Effendi, S.M. Shahid, Syed Naseer Haider, Syed Imran Ahmed, Riaz Mansuri, Tahir Khan, Shoaib Hashmi, Salima Hashmi, Navid Shahzad, Syed Jawaid Iqbal, Sultan Mehmood, Shahnoor Ahmed, Zahid Niaz, Rashid Umar Thanvi and others (see picture).

The eleven weeks between my joining the Cabinet and the commencement of AdAsia 89 in Lahore were marked by the fall-out from the results of the November 1988 elections and from the frequent verbal conflicts between the leaderships of the PPP-led Federal Government and the IJI-PML-N-led Punjab Government.

As a Member of the PPP and of the Cabinet chairing an international event in a city whose governance was controlled by the Punjab Government, one was placed, to put it mildly, in a delicate situation. In spite of the new Information policy by which State-controlled media were, for the first time, giving daily coverage to the Opposition, including the Punjab Government, I was perceived as being from a camp — PPP — bitterly at odds with the IJI-PML-N Lahore-based authorities.

To the credit of Chief Minister Nawaz Sharif and his Government, and to the Lahore administration, all support requested, and the required co-operation were readily extended to facilitate arrangements. Perhaps there was due consideration given to the international, non-partisan aspects of AdAsia 89 and to the notion of this being a shared obligation to help make the Congress happen smoothly, and without hitches for the sake of Pakistan.

The Conference programme venue had much earlier been confirmed at the centrally-located, distinctly designed — by architect Nayyar Ali Dada — Al-Hamra complex of auditoria and galleries.

But with an aesthetic venue came an exceptional problem. We wanted overseas delegates in particular to see the elegance and artistry in classical dance and music in which certain Pakistanis excelled. Over the immediately preceding decade, due to the contrived Islamization campaign of General Ziaul Haq, stage performances of classical dance and music had been banned from the Al Hamra stages. On a larger scale, the cultural repressiveness of the Zia era had created a negative and misleading image of Pakistan in overseas countries.

One of South Asia's finest exponents of dance, Pakistan's own Naheed Siddiqui had accepted our invitation to present examples of Kathak and other beautiful genres. The only authority that could suspend the ban on dance presentations in Al Hamra was Chief Minister Nawaz Sharif. When I telephoned

him to request the suspension of this ban and stressed that we wanted overseas visitors to appreciate the artistic richness and talent that exists in our country, to my pleasant surprise he readily agreed to issue the required orders. Naheed Siddiqui's superb exposition a rapturous ovation from all the 800-plus overseas and Pakistani delegates.

Other social event venues also required approval by both the relevant Federal Government Ministries and concerned Departments, and by the Provincial Government. Two lunches were set in the scenic Lawrence Gardens, a few minutes' walk from Al-Hamra, under the jurisdiction of the Punjab Government. The other was hosted on the lawns of Governor's House, virtually next door to Al-Hamra. Blessed by gorgeous scenery and cool winter weather, all 3 lunches were efficiently served and relished.

Two major events required shared co-operation at the Federal and Provincial levels. The welcome evening reception was arranged at Shalimar Gardens before sunset and included colourful cultural presentations in the elegant setting. Chief Minister Nawaz Sharif as chief guest, arrived with reasonable punctuality and helped launch the social programme in a very pleasant and enjoyable manner. The spectacular folk dances presented that evening inspired some years later a major cigarette brand's award-winning TV commercial.

A gala concluding dinner was hosted at the historic Lahore Fort and featured non-repetitive, new cultural presentations climaxed by brilliant fireworks and the lighting of candle-bearing "balloons" which ascended the night-sky to celebrate what became, in the view of many veteran overseas delegates, the most enjoyable and memorable AdAsia ever held till that time.

As we bid farewell to the about-400 overseas delegates from over 30 countries in Asia, North America, Europe, North Africa, Australia, New Zealand and to the 400 Pakistani delegates, it was so good to realize that, even in a politically

polarized phase, Pakistanis were capable of working together to achieve high international standards in the globally demanding and competitive spheres of professional conferences, and in creating aesthetic cultural and social presentations.

Perhaps the one major regret about AdAsia 89 was the inexplicable decision by Benazir Bhutto to abstain from inaugurating the conference as Prime Minister.

A pre-August 1988 brochure on AdAsia 89 also featured the widely-circulated message from the then-President, General Ziaul Haq, urging overseas delegates to visit Lahore.

Though the formal reason conveyed to me was Benazir Bhutto's prior commitment to other official engagements, I was convinced that those stated reasons had nothing whatsoever to do with her absence. At that time, I did not share with anyone else in the Organizing Committee my conviction about the actual reasons why she did not attend but am doing so now, for the first time in print.

Someone in the PPP, and most probably someone associated with the small circle of confidants specializing in media and information is likely to have told her that the Chairman and the Organizing Committee of AdAsia 89 had originally intended to invite General Ziaul Haq to be the chief guest at the inaugural session. Which was correct. But that intention should not have had any bearing on Benazir Bhutto's presence at AdAsia 89.

More than about 4 years before the event, when we made the winning bid in Seoul, South Korea in 1984 for the right to host the Congress in Pakistan, our presentation — which I had the privilege of conducting on stage — had included a special message for all the delegates present in the AdAsia held in South Korea from the President of Pakistan, General Ziaul Haq. This was an expression of how solemnly the task was being addressed by the State of Pakistan. Our

competitor, the Australian delegation, had also screened a special video message from Bob Hawke, the then-Prime Minister of Australia.

In response to a formal letter of invitation signed by me, sent in about April 1988 to the President, his Press Secretary, Brigadier Siddiq Salik, an accomplished writer of books in Urdu and English, who had also been a POW in Indian camps end-1971-1974, had communicated with me in the first week of August 1988. He said that while he expected the President to soon formally confirm his acceptance, it would be appropriate if I were to call on the President in person, brief him about AdAsia 89 in some detail, and request confirmation of his acceptance of the invitation.

By a bizarre coincidence, Brigadier Salik said the time fixed in the President's schedule to meet me in his Islamabad office was 11 a.m. on 18th August 1988.

In the afternoon of 17th August, in preparation for my scheduled meeting with President General Ziaul Haq the next morning, I arrived at Karachi airport, checked in and was in the departure lounge when others in the lounge and I received news about the air crash near Bahawalpur. Ziaul Haq, Siddique Salik and several others perished. Notwithstanding one's views about Ziaul Haq's policies and actions, my feelings of sadness and horror about the terrible manner of death for over 30 human beings included similar feelings for the General as well. A whole era had ended and a new phase of history had commenced. I proceeded, as planned, to Islamabad and, with most other Senators and thousands of others attended the funeral of the General at Faisal Mosque.

As the record of Senate proceedings shows, I had vehemently opposed most of the policies and actions of General Ziaul Haq. He was aware of my critical views because, more than once, at formal events he had met me and, with a knowing quasi-mocking smile told me "Senator Jabbar, I have heard your speeches and I must compliment you on them" ! To which I could only say "Thank you, Mr

President” and move on, to let the next person in line shake hands with a man whose views and actions were almost diametrically opposite to my own.

The invitation to inaugurate AdAsia 89 was addressed, ex-officio, to the Head of State i.e. to whoever, at a given time, occupied that position. In similar recognition of the importance of the office of the Head of Government, a letter of invitation had also been addressed in April 1988 to Prime Minister Junejo requesting him to be the chief guest at the concluding session and formally declare the Congress closed. But with the dismissal of the Junejo Government on 29th May 1988, Ziaul Haq remained in office — at least up to 17th August 1988 — while Mohammad Khan Junejo had departed from office.

From my proximity to Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto at Cabinet meetings and at other meetings, from the inadvertent subtle clues one picked up from her secretariat, I was already apprehending that, in the final stage, she would not inaugurate or conclude AdAsia 89 principally because she had come to associate the event with the personality of her nemesis, General Ziaul Haq.

This was an obviously unreasonable, unjustified attitude to adopt. Yet it was not entirely surprising. So bitter was the PPP view of Ziaul Haq because of his order for the execution of Z.A. Bhutto that any association between the General, even when deceased, and other persons or events linked to him was considered unacceptable for the PPP and its leaders

At the same time, there was a hypocritical and self-serving aspect to how selectively this attitude about Zia and associated elements was applied. In the elections of November 1988, and thereafter, the PPP had welcomed persons who had been part of Cabinets sworn into office by Ziaul Haq. Not to mention that unavoidably, Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto was willing to be sworn into office by, and to accept as her own ‘boss’, President Ghulam Ishaq Khan, a man hand-picked by General Ziaul Haq for more than one of the highest of public offices

i.e. Secretary-General, Ministry of Finance, and then Chairman of the Senate, who is the immediate successor to a sudden vacancy of the President's office. She had also willingly supported Ghulam Ishaq Khan's election in December 1988 to be elected President in his own right.

So the decision by Benazir Bhutto to stay away from AdAsia 89 was in my view, distressingly petty-minded and disregarding of the larger goals and interests which would have been served had she interacted even briefly and formally with overseas delegates in particular.

During my own welcome address at the Congress as Chairman, I referred to her with sincerity in glowing terms, as she represented a new age of hope and development for Pakistan, though I did feel the disappointment about her "no-show". For self-evident reasons, I could not say so, nor share with others the reasons why she was absent.

General(r)Tikka Khan, Governor of Punjab inaugurated AdAsia 89. President Ghulam Ishaq Khan addressed the concluding session.

*“What are You Doing Here?”!*

(APRIL 1989)

Before a meeting of the National Economic Council (NEC) held in Islamabad in April 1989, there was a huddle in a room adjacent to the large meeting room.

The Prime Minister was consulting relevant Ministers and V.A. Jaffery, her Adviser on Finance, Planning and Development & Economic Affairs, on the NEC's agenda.

I was invited despite not being responsible for a Ministry directly related to the Finance or Economic Affairs spheres — though Information concerned all sectors. Apart from the Ministers, Secretaries or spokespersons articulating for the media the views of the specialist Ministries and Departments, the Information Ministry in theory, and often in practice, had to respond to, and explain to the media and to inquiries received from other sources, all policies of the Government.

So in a broad sense, the participation of the Ministry at an appropriate level in specific forums such as NEC or the Executive Committee of the NEC, i.e. ECNEC, was relevant.

The names of invitees to any such high-level meetings are formally approved by the Prime Minister. But because any Prime Minister is far too occupied with other priorities, standard or procedural decisions are authorized to be taken by the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister or the Cabinet Secretary or any of the officers verbally instructed or authorized to do so by the Head of



Government.

I was not aware of whether the Prime Minister had formally included my name in the list of participants or whether my name had been inadvertently included by one of the senior officials.

To report to the media about the official version of the outcome of such meetings, a senior official of the Information Ministry known as the Principal Information Officer (PIO) is either formally in attendance or is briefed by the Secretary of the Ministry about what to share with the media.

Given the circumstances in which we were functioning as a Government, with an unusual level of tension between the Punjab Government and the Federal Government, the reporting of the official version of the content of the meetings and about decisions taken was likely to be of particular importance. This meeting was not a predictably harmonious kind of meeting in view of the chances of the Punjab Government's Finance and Planning team raising contentious issues with the Federal Government. The Punjab Minister of Planning was Shah Mehmood Qureshi. Perhaps I had been invited to ensure that the official reporting of the meeting's proceedings and decisions was done in a manner that showed the Federal Government in a positive light.

Whatever may have been the reason for including me in the participants' list, at one point during the huddle with the Prime Minister before the NEC session commenced, she suddenly looked at me when I suggested a certain mode of response to an anticipated position to be expressed by the Punjab Government and said, abruptly, "Javed, what are you doing here?" ! So unusual was the spontaneous query that one's amusement — and that of the few others present — outweighed the somewhat rude query she had posed. The huddle resumed — with my continued participation!

I was specially pleased about the participation of another individual. Akbar

Noman, a very dear friend from my years in the Cantonment Public School, Karachi from 1958 to 1961 had now become part of the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council. Akbar and this writer had successfully represented our School in several interschool English debate competitions, bringing the first-ever trophy won by our School home to a jubilant welcome from fellow students and teachers. Our friendship had grown over the next several decades. He had completed with distinction the Politics, Philosophy and Economics course (PPE) from Balliol College, Oxford and then proceeded to serve with the IMF and the World Bank both in the USA and overseas.

Principally motivated by the wish to make his knowledge and experience in Economics available to our Government at a time when multiple challenges of development and negotiations with multi-lateral bodies had to be conducted, I had requested Benazir Bhutto to consider his impressive credentials on merit alone. She had readily accepted the reference made to her and Akbar commenced ably serving in the Economic team under the sagacious leadership of V.A. Jaffery. By fortuitous coincidence, Akbar's wife, Ann Duncan, a development specialist in her own right, was posted to the World Bank office in Islamabad around the same time. In reflection of Akbar's valuable work, he was retained as part of the Finance and Economic Affairs team by Senator Sartaj Aziz who became the Finance Minister in the Government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif which took office in October 1990. Akbar served for another 3 years in Islamabad before returning to the USA and the UK. He has become one of the most respected economists with specialized interest in Northern Africa, particularly Ethiopia and Eritrea. He eventually became Senior Fellow, Initiative for Policy Dialogue led by Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz at Columbia University, New York where he continues to work in 2021.

*Press conferences with — and without — the  
Prime Minister*

The Minister-in-charge of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, be it a Federal Minister or a Minister of State or the Secretary of the Ministry or the Press Information Officer or the DG, PID is required to be present at Press conferences addressed by the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister is also normally accompanied by the Press Secretary to the Prime Minister. But it is the Minister-level person who helps conduct the proceedings or stands at an adjacent podium to acknowledge reporters who want to put questions.

Unfortunately, reporters tend to be unduly impatient and competitive. Often, more than one begins to speak at the same time, and at a raised volume. It becomes the unpleasant duty of the conducting person to try to instill order and discipline in the clamour. A few reporters are normally given priority due to their seniority. A couple or more ensure they are seated in the front row and, regardless of their seniority or their place in the queue, will pose questions before they are acknowledged. A few represent newspapers with very limited circulation or with only a nominal weightage of quality and professionalism. But each one asserts equal rights to pose questions. Some reporters never pose questions and merely take notes of what they hear. Some reporters are reputed to be tasked with putting “planted” questions.

It is notable that most, if not all reporters prefer slips of papers and small pads

to make notes, a kind of throw-away material rather than more durable-looking notebooks. In recent years, cell phones have replaced paper pads.

In the 1988-90 phase, camera-units comprised a combination of PTV's video team, an official DFP film team, overseas media teams, if present, such as those of BBC, etc and several still photographers for print media.

During the ten months of my tenure at the Information Ministry, I must have helped conduct only about a dozen such press conferences. On other occasions I was not present either because I had not been asked to accompany the Prime Minister for an overseas visit or because she was at a location in Pakistan where I had not been advised to be present.

The format of a PM's press conference comprises brief welcome remarks by the person conducting the conference, followed by the initial statement made by the Prime Minister, followed by questions and answers.

***My lapse:***

On one occasion, I recall a minor but inexcusable lapse on my part. The Prime Minister returned to Islamabad from a Commonwealth Conference in Malaysia in 1989, a visit in which I had not been part of her delegation. I welcomed her at the official arrival lounge of the airport and escorted her to the small dias set-up with two chairs, one for her and one for me with microphones on the table in front of her. On being seated, after acknowledging her presence and that of the media representatives, I immediately invited questions.

Upon which she rightly instantly interrupted, and corrected me by saying, "Javed, I will first make my statement, and will then take questions".

Embarrassed at my lapse, I said, "My apologies, Prime Minister, of course". She then proceeded to make her initial statement, and then fluently fielded questions.

Benazir Bhutto was adept at handling the Press and the electronic media. With an inherently media-friendly personality, attractive and photogenic, intelligent and alert, educated and articulate, she could face all kinds of questions and comments with ease and equanimity.

These were occasions where the loaded nature of a question or its unstated motivation and bias betrayed the prior prejudice of the questioner or of the newspaper proprietor. This kind of question is meant to provoke and to challenge and to tempt the Prime Minister to give a response that can be sensationalized or misrepresented.

Most news media and reporters are, in any case, addicted to doses of “newsy news”. In Urdu, the favourite phrase for non-newsy news is *Khabar nahi bani* — i.e. “There is no real news in this”, regardless of whether that particular news is good for people to know about. Merely because there is no volatile or awkward or abnormal aspect about it, a positive statement or comment or answer at a press conference is given no priority, or low priority in reporting — only because it is deemed to be “non-newsy news”. This is a global professional, psychological malady of the news media’s world, and not particular to Pakistan.

This does not mean that prosaic or predictable statements made by the Prime Minister were not given appropriate coverage. In acknowledgement of the official stature of the Head of Government, a statement by the Prime Minister would almost always be given due prominence by all media, including newspapers considered hostile to the PPP, and to her person. It was another matter that, while reporting a statement, it could be presented to the reader in a manner that could be slanted so as to distort or misrepresent the actual intention of the statement. This could be done by deliberate exclusion of certain words or an explanatory phrase, or framing the headline in a misleading way. Sometimes, relatively trivial happenings or words could be unduly magnified to imply an

unintended meaning.

The Minister-in-charge of the Information Ministry was required to, in the normal course, brief the Press and electronic media about Cabinet decisions shortly after the end of meetings. In case decisions were taken on major policies of different Ministries, the concerned Minister would address a Press conference, supplemented with, if required, the Information Minister, or by the Information Secretary or the PIO.

One would often address Press conferences during the 10-months' tenure at the Information Ministry. Apart from fielding innocent and genuine questions from reporters, there were also questions based on certain leaks. These leaks of confidential proceedings would be made by either Ministers themselves who broke their oath of confidentiality to promote their individual views to cultivate relations with a favoured journalist, or to settle some scores with one or more colleagues or political rivals. Senior officials were also sources of leaks. And if, as was likely, a military intelligence agency had bugged the Cabinet meeting venue, then the agency would leak the part of the proceedings which suited its interests and advise a particular reporter with ties to the agency to ask a particular question.

Most of the time one knew the ties of certain — a few, not the majority — reporters and journalists with intelligence agencies. Neither then, nor now is one willing to disclose their names.

Even fewer than the preceding category of intelligence- agency-linked journalists were those who were recipients of regular, or one-off grants from the secret funds of the Information Ministry. The use of these secret funds was authorized by the Prime Minister, the Minister- in-charge — in my case, as Minister of State I too was authorized, subject to approval by the Prime Minister — for such funds to be used for a variety of purposes. To provide a subsidy to a

newspaper or news agency proprietor to help meet costs and make a modest profit not necessarily but preferably in return for publishing or circulating content favourable to the Government. None of the major, dominant media groups received any portion of secret funds; though, in a few cases, correspondents associated with a major Urdu daily received regular amounts e.g. Rs. 15,000/- to Rs. 25,000/-. Other sums were provided: to support an indigent or ailing former or current senior journalist. To meet costs for activities that were not covered by formally budgeted official and approved grants. To compensate persons who suffered injuries or normal life-affecting mishaps e.g. loss of limbs.

***A notable lapse by Benazir Bhutto:***

One major occasion when I thought that Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto did not articulate as well as she could have was during the joint Press Conference in Islamabad in July 1989, which she held with Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi of India.

While Rajiv Gandhi had already visited Islamabad six months earlier for the SAARC Summit, this exclusively bilateral visit was of special significance. Hopes still abided for a possible new chapter in Pakistan-India relations. The official talks between the two delegations had ended with prospects for progress on resolving even the Siachin conflict. Though, soon after the visit, the Indian approach made a U-turn clearly due to the Indian military's veto against any change in the Indian position. But that change was still a few days, or hours away.

In response to an inevitable question on India's policies and actions in Indian-occupied Kashmir, with particular reference to the conditions in the Valley and in Srinagar, Rajiv Gandhi blithely asserted the allegedly representative and participative nature of the elections for the State Assembly held earlier. He stated that those indicators proved the popular acceptance of the official Indian

position on the Kashmir issue.

Even allowing for the awkwardness of the situation in which Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto was host to the visiting Prime Minister of India and that therefore made it potentially difficult for her to question the guest's assertions, I thought her choice of silence about this statement was most disappointing.

An individual so proficient as she was in the use of the English language in a precise way, she could well have gently yet firmly contradicted outright the assertion by the Prime Minister of India. Already, there had been signs emanating from the Valley and from Srinagar in particular, that continued interference by New Delhi in the Kashmir political situation and the use of rigging, in past and successive elections, were being increasingly protested. Eventually these protests grew to become the full-scale insurgency of the 1990s. The Indian Government had to substantially enhance troops' deployment in Indian-occupied Kashmir which led to mass arrests, torture, rapes, enforced disappearances and killings to try to quell the movement against the illegal rule by New Delhi.

July 1989 may well have been somewhat before the major and sustained eruptions that came in the months and years to follow. One also had to defer to the protocol and niceties of diplomacy about how candid the Pakistani Prime Minister could be when the Indian Prime Minister was a guest on Pakistani soil. There was also the consideration that the prospects of sustained dialogue and peace had to be advanced rather than risk set-backs by an outright and explicit rebuttal of the Indian Prime Minister's remarks.

Yet she could have been more forthright and clear in questioning the assertions and in reiterating the official and valid positions of Pakistan about the need for implementation of the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions.

***Interactions with the media:***



Benazir Bhutto was a global media star before she assumed the office of Prime Minister. This was partly due to the sheer fact of being a girl who was also the eldest child of Z.A. Bhutto, the Prime Minister of Pakistan. She had studied at Oxford University in the UK and Harvard University in the USA. On election as President of the Oxford Union she had become the first Pakistani woman student to attain this honour. The ouster of her father on 5th July 1977 had given her an additional dimension of sympathy and interest.

She had begun to receive publicity when she accompanied her father to the pivotal talks with Prime Minister Indira Gandhi of India in June-July 1972. These talks resulted in the Simla Agreement signed about 6 months after the original Pakistan had disintegrated on 16th December 1971. That terrible outcome was actively facilitated by India's blatant intervention and invasion of East Pakistan in violation of international law.

Soon after the coup d'état that removed Z.A. Bhutto from office in July 1977 which led to his unjust trial and execution in April 1979, Benazir Bhutto, side-by-side with her mother Nusrat Bhutto began to receive sympathetic coverage across the world as two persecuted women fighting a battle against a brutal military dictator. The juxtaposition was ideal material for the media. The triumphant welcome she received in Lahore in April 1986 also produced international headlines. Before her November 1988 victory in the polls, her visits to the USA, UK and other countries were given prominent coverage in the news media of those countries.

Now, as the first Muslim woman Prime Minister, elected as much in her own right as because of her father's martyrdom, dozens of requests for TV, radio and Press interviews from Pakistani media, Indian media, Western media and media of other countries were always pending with the Press Secretary to the Prime Minister or with the Information Ministry.

Acceptance of requests from the media were, of course, subject to approval by the Prime Minister. Where requests were not promptly accepted by the Prime Minister's Office, I would receive phone calls or written messages from editors or producers or bureau chiefs or star correspondents urging me to intervene. I chose with care and more often than not, she accepted one's recommendations. Only on some occasions was my presence relevant or required. She was herself quite capable of fielding questions and articulating apt responses. Her charm and beauty helped make answers, or their evasions, acceptable to even hardened interviewers. On rare occasions one had to request a media representative to omit part of her response to a question or a comment as, on its own, it was quite likely to be misunderstood or exploited by the Opposition, or by other ill-wishers.

One quite memorable encounter took place between Majeed Nizami and herself in my presence one evening at the Prime Minister's House in Rawalpindi. Majeed Nizami was the Editor-in-Chief of the *Nawa-e-Waqt* group of Urdu journals which more recently had also launched the English daily known as *The Nation*, published from Lahore. An avowed Right-of-centre ideologue who was religious and orthodox but not as extreme as the average, semi-literate mullas, Majeed Nizami was a senior figure in the Pakistan Press. He was an active leader of bodies such as the All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS, representing publishers' and proprietors) and the Council of Pakistan Newspaper Editors (CPNE). He had been well-inclined toward General Ziaul Haq but wrote and spoke boldly about the need for ethics in public office and for a clean democracy free of corruption. He could be quite independent in his views while retaining his individual ideological perspective. He assumed charge of *Nawa-e-Waqt* on the demise of his brother, Hameed Nizami who had founded the newspaper in Lahore. The latter's son, Arif Nizami also became a journalist of

note, eventually being appointed Editor of *The Nation*. Arif Nizami's views were distinctly more modernist than his uncle's but they co-existed, sometimes uneasily, sometimes comfortably.

Majeed Nizami had no children. Shortly before his demise in 2014, he bypassed Arif Nizami and appointed his niece — daughter of his sister — as the Editor-in-Chief/publisher of *Nawa-e-Waqt* and *The Nation*. This unpleasant surprise for Arif Nizami who had served with his uncle for several years as a dutiful nephew led to Arif Nizami's separation from the group. Arif Nizami then launched a new daily in a tabloid format but with a serious approach to issues titled: *Pakistan Today*.

I go back to about April 1989. The tensions between the Punjab Government led by Nawaz Sharif — who regarded Majeed Nizami with high respect and periodically sought his advice — and the Federal Government had become an almost daily source of news and speculation by the independent Press. The NPT Government-oriented newspapers like *The Pakistan Times*, *Mashriq* and the PPP daily *Musawat*, all published from Lahore in Punjab, treated news about the tension with an empathy for PPP. *Nawa-e-Waqt* was second in circulation to the leading Urdu daily *Jang* in Karachi, Lahore and Rawalpindi — founded and still led at that time by Mir Khalilur Rahman. *Nawa-e-Waqt*, as a journal reflective of a sizable segment of public opinion — middle-class, mercantile, orthodox — and Majeed Nizami as a leader of the Press were more than the sum of their respective parts. They tended to be critical of the PPP and of the Prime Minister, her spouse and the Government.

Wajid Shamsul Hasan, Chairman, National Press Trust, Bashir Riaz, Press Secretary to the PM, Rashid Latif, Information Secretary and I, during one of our consultations agreed that it would be useful to arrange a meeting with the Prime Minister by inviting Majeed Nizami for a private dinner.

Discussion at that dinner inevitably ensued about whether it was the Punjab Government or the Federal Government, the PPP or the IJI/PML which were responsible for the persistent acrimony. While I am unable to reproduce the full discussion, one set of words echo. They were uttered cordially by Majeed Nizami to Benazir Bhutto and are recallable clearly even now, “So you mean, Prime Minister that the whole nation will have to pay the price for the fact that the two of you young people — Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto — are unable to demonstrate the maturity required in public office?”

Taken momentarily aback by the degree of candour unexpected of a guest and that too, in the presence of others, the Prime Minister quickly recovered her composure. She assured him that, on her part, and on her Party’s part, there was only a sincere attempt to work harmoniously with the Punjab Government. And that any contribution Majeed Nizami could make to reduce tensions would be appreciated. She affirmed her respect for his role in Pakistani journalism but did not express her dissent with the extremist statements he sometimes made.

Majeed Nizami’s mind-set, without detracting from the stature of his seniority in journalism, is reflected in the fact that, on later occasions in the next 15 years he went on record in all seriousness at public events like seminars to say that if India continued to cut the due flow of river waters across the border, Pakistan should use the atomic bomb to teach India a lesson.

*Information Policy Reforms: approved by the  
PM*

(DEC. 1988-SEPT. 1989)

While recognizing that the disbandment of the National Press Trust would take time, I believed it would be critical to restore the editorial independence of its major publications, the English daily Pakistan Times and the Urdu daily, Mashriq. This would have to begin with new appointments. It occurred to me that I.A. Rahman would be a most appropriate Editor-in-Chief of The Pakistan Times and Aziz Mirza would be equally appropriate as Editor. Both individuals had deeply-rooted democratic and progressive values, had been persecuted for their record of opposing martial law and dictatorships and retained their dignity and their convictions. The Prime Minister promptly approved my proposal for their appointments. In the months that followed, the two newspapers quickly recovered from their decline as mouth-pieces of the Government-of-the-day since 1960/62 to become respected as reliable sources for balanced news and analysis.

To a marked degree, these two editorships struck a much-needed balance in the over-all mix of perspectives that shaped the print media of that time: an Urdu Press whose dominant dailies such as *Jang* and *Nawa-e-Waqt* reflected an orthodox, relatively Right-of-Centre viewpoint, with the latter of the above two being far more so. In the English Press, while papers like *Dawn* and *The Muslim* reflected a modernist, liberal outlook they would also tend to occasionally be

hyper-critical of the PPP.

A third policy reform I initiated — after the radical new news policy for PTV and PBC, and the new appointments in the Pakistan Times and Mashriq — was the abolition of an unfair procedure. This was imposed during martial law but was retained even during Prime Minister Junejo’s civil Government. The requirement was that any Pakistani journalist invited to an overseas conference could only travel out of Pakistan after obtaining a “No Objection” Certificate from the Information Ministry. This was an absurd condition that demeaned the stature of journalists. The Prime Minister endorsed the note proposing the immediate cancellation of this procedure.

***Abolition of the black list:***

The fourth reform was to abolish a black list. Between 5th July 1977 and 17th August 1988 when General Ziaul Haq was killed in the air-crash, there had evolved unspoken, unwritten — yet informally enforced so that no proof could be traced to its original source — lists of names of individuals who were not to be invited to appear on PTV and PBC programmes. These individuals were, for the most part, outspoken critics of martial law, members or sympathizers of the MRD political parties, Leftist or progressive intellectuals, critics of religious parties, poets, writers of scripts, even some actors, and anyone who had offended the then-serving Information Minister or senior officials. All told, there were about a couple of hundred such names.

My instructions to the Heads of PTV and PBC and their news and current affairs programme chiefs was to use only the criteria of relevance and individual merit — and articulation abilities required for appearance in the two media — to decide who was to be invited to feature in media content, and to strictly ignore alleged past labels.

The Prime Minister endorsed the abolition of the black lists. Faces and voices

unseen on TV and unheard on radio for over 11 years began to re-appear. The most eminent restoration of a regular presence were the persona and poetry of the great Faiz Ahmed Faiz, winner of the Lenin Peace Prize, who had either been completely ignored by State media for the past decade, or referred to only in passing.

***Formation of the 6th Wage Board:***

A fifth measure had to be implemented jointly with the Ministry of Labour and Manpower. Under the Newspaper Employees (Conditions of Service) Act, 1973 (NECOSA, for short) a Wage Board has to be constituted periodically to specify minimum wages and salaries to be paid to both the journalists and non-journalist staff working in the newspapers of Pakistan. Whereas bodies such as the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) and the All Pakistan Newspaper Employees' Confederation (APNEC) remained fervently committed to the mechanism of Wage Boards over the previous 16 years, the All Pakistan Newspapers' Society (APNS) representing proprietors opposed this imposition of minimum wage levels through an entity constituted by the Government.

The two viewpoints were diametrically opposed to each other. Journalists and employees often rightly, and sometimes unfairly claimed that salaries and wages in newspapers were arbitrarily fixed and did not reward the hard work invested by employees. There were also complaints that in order to evade the obligations created by NECOSA, proprietors engaged the services of staff on a temporary contract basis, with contracts renewed periodically in order to avoid granting staff the status of permanent employees which would bestow them with rights that do not apply to personnel engaged on a contract basis. The viewpoint of proprietors was that NECOSA represented extreme negative discrimination against the Press because no similar mechanism existed in any other sector of enterprise. Their contention was that salaries and wages should be left to the

factors of merit, competence, demand and supply.

Referring to the discretionary power of the State and Government to place or to withhold official advertising in newspapers and magazines, APNS alleged that the Wage Board was also used to intimidate the independent Press and deter freedom of expression by threats to reduce or end placement of Government advertising in those journals that did not accept Wage Board awards.

With the support of Mukhtar Awan, the Federal Minister for Labour and Manpower and using my professional contacts with the leaders of the Press fraternity in both spheres — proprietors in APNS and leaders of PFUJ and APNEC — we were able to achieve a consensus and the 6th Wage Board was constituted to implement the provisions of NECOSA through a formula that would be acceptable to all.

***End of newsprint quotas:***

The sixth major reform caused substantial financial setback to owners of newspapers and magazines. This was a high-risk negative fall-out because it hurt the pockets of several Press proprietors.

The reform ended the long-established procedure by which duty-free import of newsprint from overseas countries by newspaper proprietors and firms required a prior certification, or a “No-Objection” Certificate from the Information Ministry. The initial stage of the process was marked by corrupt practices. Through the Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC) under the Ministry, the circulation of print media was authenticated on a periodic basis. The more the circulation, the higher the allocation for the journal receiving Government-controlled advertising through the Press Information Department (PID), another unit of the Information Ministry.

But there was also a second benefit. By bribing senior and junior officials in the ABC and the Ministry, the circulation figures could be — and were, in most



cases — boosted to levels far from their actual numbers. Most major newspaper groups were involved in this practice. So also were many small, minor groups or individual owners. The more the copies (allegedly) printed, the more the tons of newsprint from overseas which could be imported without paying Customs duties because the importer could produce a permit/NOC from the Information Ministry.

Printers and publishers of school text books and other publications also used newsprint for the inside pages of their books. The extra tons of newsprint imported under falsely-certified higher-circulation figures by newspapers and magazines were sold in the market either directly to the book publishers or to middlemen elements. Everyone was making money through these cosy arrangements.

There was a consensus between the Minister of State and the Secretary on the need to end this malpractice.

With valuable investigative and analytical work conducted by Rashid Latif Ansari as Secretary of the Information Ministry, who drafted the Summary for the Prime Minister and the Cabinet, I affixed my signature to this proposal for a major reform and moved for its approval in a Cabinet meeting. The Prime Minister approved the Summary for consideration by the Cabinet. The Ministry of Commerce headed by Makhdoom Faisal Saleh Hayat also supported the change.

In a couple of my prior public statements on the agenda of reforms, I had indicated the implementation of such a measure, subject to Cabinet approval. So Press proprietors had prepared themselves for the change and the announcement did not come as a shock and an unpleasant surprise.

The new policy stated that owners of newspapers and magazines were no longer required to obtain an NOC from the Information Ministry to enable

import of newsprint. Thus, they would pay the normal Customs duties applicable to such imports. Which meant that demand for the surplus tonnage imported in the past and sold at a discount to other users of newsprint would now go down, and level the playing field for all.

Though this change meant reduction of income and profits for newspaper proprietors — not exactly a change that could make them feel favourably about our Government — in formal terms, the Press reported the news and welcomed it. But it may well have played some part in making sections of the Press somewhat more critical of the Government than was fair.

This is the kind of attitudinal change that is difficult to measure. Made all the more so, because in Pakistan — with the laudable exception of *Dawn* — in virtually all other newspaper groups, the proprietor and the Editor-in-chief or Editor were — and still are in 2021! — one and the same person, or a member of the proprietor's family. This convergence of identity may be common and pervasive. But it does create and perpetuate issues of potential conflict-of-interest between the respective roles of newspaper proprietors and newspaper editors.

Newspaper proprietors also serve the public interest just as professional editors are supposed to do. But unlike editors who have no financial stakes as owners, professional newspaper proprietors do have commercial stakes. When they concurrently take decisions on the presentation of news, of editing, of analyses, concerns arise as to whether they are able to surgically separate and compartmentalize their other interests i.e. on the one hand, as owners of media, and on the other, as editors of content. Several print media owners, were also proprietors of commercial enterprises or assets in other sectors. This commonality of financial ownership also created conflict-of-interest.

More than in any other sectors of commercial enterprise, the proprietorial

dimension has a unique significance in news media. For the content and output from media, unlike the output of other commercial production units such as manufacturers of shirts or shoes, shape basic perceptions in the minds of citizens and consumers of media-content.

This issue remains unresolved on the global agenda of reforms that are needed in international and national news media.

We were able to implement other internal management- related improvements in procedure within the Ministry and within attached Corporations and Departments.

***News agencies:***

Simultaneous to the radical new news policy for the electronic media, I also advised the Director-General of the Associated Press of Pakistan, the 100 per cent State-owned news agency and the dominant news agency of the country, to ensure that it reported and circulated news and comments in a fair and balanced manner. While it would continue to be State-owned, pending a change in its ownership status, as in the case of PTV and PBC, it too was instructed to henceforth report major statements and activities of the Opposition in an appropriate manner.

The leading privately-owned news agency was the Pakistan Press International (PPI). Founded by Moazzam Ali, the agency had been discriminated against by Z.A. Bhutto because of his personal pique with the founder. He is even said to have gone to the extreme of making the threat “I will fix you” to Moazzam Ali in reaction to reports unfavourable about the PPP circulated by PPI.

During the martial law regime of General Ziaul Haq, PPI and Moazzam Ali had been somewhat compensated for the setbacks experienced in the 1972-77 phase. But Moazzam Ali had already established a working base in the UK. I had interacted with him in London. He was associated there with Altaf Gauhar,

former Information Secretary during Field Marshal Ayub Khan's tenure. Altaf Gauhar was an elder family friend, specially of my in-laws, Syed Rashid Ahmed, the veteran broadcaster, former DG, Radio Pakistan, and Zeenat Rashid Ahmed, the eminent women's educationist. Altaf Gauhar was also the father of Humayun Gauhar, a friend from the late 1960s who is also the husband of Muneeza, niece of Fazal Karim Fazli, the former CSP officer who, in retirement, entered the cinema film sector and presented films like *Chiragh Jalta Raha and Aisa Bhi Hota Hai*. The Fazli films, in turn, introduced actors like Zeba and Mohammad Ali who were to become the big stars of the Pakistani cinema for over twenty years thereafter.

Altaf Gauhar and Moazzam Ali were co-operating in London with Salim Azzam, a prominent personality of Egypt, re-located in the UK, under the aegis of the Islamic Council of Europe.

With a UK-based firm known as the Islamic Information Services, with Mizanur Rahman of Bangladesh as Director in London, Altaf and Humayun Gauhar, and Moazzam Ali and Salim Azzam invited me to contribute creative inputs for the global media-related observance of the advent of the 14th century of the Islamic calendar. This advent occurred in the year 1978-79 of the Gregorian calendar. On several occasions in London, some years before my joining Benazir Bhutto's Cabinet, I had interacted professionally with Moazzam Ali. I was made aware of the unjust discrimination imposed on PPI and on him by the founder of PPP — who was the late father of the Prime Minister I presently served, who in turn, was aware of the not-very-cordial past relations between the founders of PPP and PPI.

In the presence of a State-owned, Government-controlled news agency like APP, the scope for substantive growth of a private news agency was limited. Whereas State media and two or three dominant private newspaper groups could

be persuaded to subscribe to, and pay for, the PPI service, such payments were either relatively limited, or often delayed. Many other private newspaper groups simply did not pay their dues, either to APP or to PPI. While they could not afford to have their ties to the larger State-owned APP from being permanently cut — and therefore they made late, or partial payment of dues — subscription to the smaller-resourced PPI was a low priority.

In General Ziaul Haq's tenure, an annual subsidy from the Information Ministry to PPI was paid regularly to help revive and sustain the agency, weakened by the threats from Z.A. Bhutto.

Now, with another PPP Government in office, while keeping in mind all the relevant background elements, I wanted to support PPI in a manner that did not impose any conditions on the private news agency. APP continued to operate without major financial problems principally due to the annual grant from the Information Ministry and with subscription dues paid by the State-media, NPT newspapers and private news media contributing a relatively small percentage of its income.

Due to the strength of commitment to its own autonomy by the PPI founder and his senior staff and with modest moral and material support from our Ministry, PPI was able to sustain its valuable work.

Apart from attending to work in the Ministry, in the Senate and the National Assembly, all of them in Islamabad, I travelled fairly frequently to the four Provincial capitals and to other towns and locations across the country. Such travel involved attending conferences or seminars, administering oaths of office to elected office-bearers of Press Clubs, inspecting Provincial centres of the Departments under the Ministry, accompanying the Prime Minister when she wanted my presence at an event.

***NAM in Zimbabwe:***

During this hectic phase of 10 months, I was also able to represent Pakistan at the Conference of Information Ministers of the Non-Aligned Movement. This was held in Harare, capital of Zimbabwe in Africa. Despite the considerable variety of political systems and the nature of societies that existed in Member-States of NAM, deliberations highlighted the fact that the world was on the verge of fundamental changes in mass communication and connectivity. Ministers indicated awareness — along with uncertainty and apprehension — with regard to how coherently and effectively could conventional State policies and State-owned media remain in the emerging times of rapid technological change. Most societies of the NAM countries were also in a state of social and economic ferment.

In addition to participation in the Conference there were charming encounters with Pakistani families either temporarily or permanently settled in this land-locked country of Africa. One cannot forget the vivid red soil and the splendid trees in suburban Harare as also a brief formal introduction to the legendary personality of President Robert Mugabe who had led his nation to freedom from colonial occupation by the British.

## *No reforms possible in three spheres*

Most of the basic changes in Information Policy detailed earlier covered general public policy or specific sectoral policy. However, as the Information Ministry has a close association with the advertising sector through the media sector, I wanted to introduce major institutional reforms that would ensure a higher degree of public service by reducing the mainly commercial dimension of advertising. But before, for instance, initiating a proposal to create an Advertising Council, approximately on the regulatory lines of the Pakistan Engineering Council, there were aspects concerning the role of State and Government institutions in their capacity as themselves being advertisers.

As a self-employed advertising practitioner, commencing 1969, with prior experience of about 3 years, I had accumulated over 20 years of direct association with the advertising sector by 1989. Co-founded with two partners — Majeed Ahmed and Nafees Ghaznavi — MNJ Advertising — which became a private limited firm known as MNJ Communications (Pvt) Ltd. in 1974 — our company had fortunately become the top agency within the first decade of existence, overtaking other, older firms.

Except for a couple of instances, the firm's growth was mainly due to clients in the private sector. With only a few exceptions, we avoided pursuing Government-related advertising business because of three reasons: corrupt practices, requiring bribing of officials in the Press Information Department (PID) who would have a say in the selection of advertising agencies submitting

creative campaigns and budgetary estimates in response to public notices inviting bids; second, because of time-consuming bureaucratic procedures, mostly Islamabad-based where we did not have an office; third, because of chronic delays in obtaining due payments for advertisements placed in media by a firm like ours on behalf of a Government-related organization. Fortunately, in the small number of instances in which we handled Government advertising, the officers we dealt with were individuals of high integrity and capability such as Saeed Rashed, Director-General, National Development Volunteer Programme (NDVP) and others.

As in the case of abolishing the corruption-ridden process by which both Government officials and many newspaper proprietors used the newsprint import permits to gain illicit incomes, here too in the case of corrupt practices in Government-related advertising, I wanted to, ideally, abolish altogether the role of PID.

I wanted the entire process to be left to the Government department which needed to place advertising in media instead of this process being controlled centrally by PID. This proposed change would end or at least greatly reduce misuse of the process for partisan political purposes and erode Government's capacity to influence news and editorial policies of privately-owned newspapers and magazines which were partially dependent on advertising revenue from Government advertisers. The system of centralized control was originally concretized in the regime of Field Marshal Ayub Khan in the early 1960s. So accustomed had all Governments become — be they Federal, be they Provincial, military or civil — to this instrument of centralized control that even the elected political civil Government of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto did not want to end it.

The justification for the PID role sought to be, in theory, and in written policy,



reasonable and necessary. The claimed aims are: To ensure that all private newspapers and magazines eligible to receive Government advertising do receive their fair share without discrimination. To ensure that the content and quality of the print advertisements meet prescribed codes of accuracy and propriety. To also ensure that the bulk of advertising is not monopolized by a few dominant print media groups (whose tariffs are also comparatively high) but that smaller circulation newspapers published in small towns and in regions, and in regional languages, also receive fair shares of Government advertising.

In practice, however, while the above aims were partly or wholly met on some occasions, so too was the aim fulfilled to deliberately withhold Government advertising from those newspapers and journals whose policies did not extend unqualified support to the Government of the day. The PID role was also used to delay the processing of invoices and their settlement where the objective was to harass the private media groups. This was a recurrent practice.

Before moving a written Note for the Prime Minister on the subject, in March 1989 I sounded her out on the need to abolish this system of centralized control. I referred to how, during the martial law years of 1977-1985 and even afterwards up to 1988, the PPP-centric Urdu daily, *Musawaat* (Equality / Equity) and other journals sympathetic to the PPP/MRD had been deprived of due shares of Government-controlled advertising. She heard me out patiently, to her credit, but firmly told me it was too early in our Government's tenure to take such a major step. To which my response was that reforms implemented in the early phase would make an immediate difference and would be visible. In turn, she pointed out to me that the radical new news policy on PTV and PBC which I had insisted on bringing in within the first week of our tenure was already being welcomed and was showing the Government in a good light — and that therefore this was enough, for the time being. As politely as I could, I reiterated my dissent but

accepted the finality of her decision.

The second major issue on which I could not persuade the Prime Minister to approve a new initiative was to end the State monopoly in TV and radio channels. During another one-on-one conversation with her in Islamabad, I stressed that, in harmony with the start of a new era in the country's history with a multi-party-based electoral and democratic system, our Government should cautiously and carefully, with appropriate safeguards against misuse, allow qualified and responsible private enterprises to apply for licenses to establish and operate independent TV and radio channels. These would be subject to the discipline of a well-defined regulatory framework to be specified by new legislation.

I recalled, for the record, that in 1978, even during the martial law regime of General Ziaul Haq — possibly the worst possible time, because the unjust trial of Z.A. Bhutto was in progress — I had applied to the Information Ministry through a private firm known as Cinemathon for permission to operate private TV and radio channels. Aslam Azhar was associated with me at that time because I had invited him to work as a Special Consultant after his abrupt and unfair dismissal by the Zia regime as Chairman, State Film Authority. Altaf Gauhar and Humayun Gauhar were also partnering with me in Cinemathon. We received a brief one-sentence letter from the Information Ministry to curtly convey that the “competent authority” did not consider the proposal to be acceptable!

I submitted to her that, now in 1989, surely a democratic Government was self-confident enough to make a historic change which a morally insecure martial law regime did not countenance. But once again, the Prime Minister cited the liberal news policy we had introduced in State media to say that, for the present and future, the change in PTV and PBC was adequate and that the country was

not ready for so radical a change as to allow the unpredictability of privately-owned electronic media. She said that going by how irresponsible most of the independent Press could be in their often unfair treatment of our Government, private TV and radio channels would only magnify the problem of incorrect and defamatory reporting. On this latter reservation, I concluded that I agreed that there was a real danger of this happening. But I reiterated a view already previously stated to her: that freedom for media is like a bitter-tasting medicine for a Government but that its medium and long-term effects would be beneficial. Her skeptical smile closed further discussion.

It would take another 8 years after our conversation in February 1989 for the first law permitting private electronic media to be promulgated in the form of the Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (EMRA) Ordinance on 14th February 1997. I had the privilege of drafting the EMRA Ordinance for the Caretaker Government of President Farooq Leghari and Prime Minister Malik Meraj Khalid, in whose Cabinet I served as Minister for Petroleum and Natural Resources.

And it then took another 3 to 5 years for the second law to be drafted, approved and eventually promulgated — ironically by the unelected military-led Government of General Pervez Musharraf where, once again I had the privilege of drafting the law initially known as the RAMBO law (Regulatory Authority for Media Broadcast Organizations Ordinance), but eventually enforced as the PEMRA (Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority) Ordinance, March 2002.

For the record: after 1978, I have never applied for a license to own or operate a private TV or radio channel. This disclaimer is necessary because it may be construed that, because I had unsuccessfully applied for such a license during the martial law years of Ziaul Haq, I may have continued to harbour a similar desire

in the post-martial law years. The reason I had long campaigned in multiple arenas for private, independent electronic media was to enable authentic pluralism, and not to covertly advance a personal interest. In 2005, when Sultana Siddiqi and her son Duraid Qureishi invited Shabnam and me to become shareholders in the first publicly-listed private electronic media firm in Pakistan known as Eye TV Ltd., owners of the Hum TV network, we purchased shares and remained co-investors for about 3 years followed by dis-investment. There has been no other proprietary interest in any TV or radio channel.

Soon after I departed from the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in September 1989 for the Ministry of Science and Technology, a very limited version of partial private participation in the programming content of a public-sector TV channel was authorized by the Prime Minister. But the formula used was highly contentious. Details are listed in the chapter on “Enduring dissent” in Part III of this book.

A third proposal which was rejected by the Prime Minister was the suggestion that the name of the Information Ministry be changed to end the historic association of its name with one-sided propaganda of the Government of the day and to make the name reflect the new, open, progressive nature of a democratic, pluralist age. Alternative titles I proposed included: Ministry of Media or Ministry of Media Development.

Once again, it took another 7 years or so before a name change became possible.

In the Caretaker Government of November 1996-February 1997 in which I served as Minister for Petroleum & Natural Resources, Prime Minister Malik Meraj Khalid and Information Minister Irshad Haqqani, along with other Cabinet Members readily agreed to change the name of the Ministry to a new formulation from a list of options that I submitted. The Ministry was re-

designated as: Ministry for Information & Media Development. This new name remained in place up to about 2003 when it was unwisely reverted to the previous title.

*Cabinet: proceedings, protocols — chemistry,  
composition, committees, candour*

The 1988-90 Cabinet was a Cabinet that justifiably felt besieged, partly even at the Centre, and constantly from the Punjab. At the Centre, despite forming the Federal Government, the Prime Minister and the Cabinet were aware that President Ghulam Ishaq Khan viewed the PPP and herself with some serious reservations. These reservations on his part were accumulated over the years from Ghulam Ishaq Khan's views about Z.A. Bhutto's economic policies of State nationalization, of his populist rhetoric (which contrasted dramatically with his own staid, soft-spoken manner), of Ghulam Ishaq Khan's close association with General Ziaul Haq, and with unease about the perceived — by him — lack of maturity and stability which Benazir Bhutto brought to the office as Prime Minister.

The unfair judicial trial of Z.A. Bhutto and his execution on the orders of General Ziaul Haq had affected the way the PPP viewed the role of the Pakistan Armed Forces in general, and of the Pakistan Army in particular. General Aslam Beg, as the Chief of Army Staff who succeeded Zia, had supported the transition to party-based elections and accepted the induction of Benazir Bhutto as Prime Minister. But the PPP harboured deep misgivings about the alleged, or real role of the ISI in engineering the formation of the IJI and supporting Nawaz Sharif, specifically to oppose the PPP. This role of ISI through Lt. General Hameed Gul,

its previous DG up to 1987, and then, after retirement, as an adviser to IJI, was later publicly admitted and confirmed by Hameed Gul.

Thus this Cabinet was aware that the Presidency and the Army were uncomfortable about the PPP, a discomfort fully reciprocated. There was then the unprecedented situation by which the largest Province in the Federation was being governed by a hostile, and vociferous Opposition comprising the IJI led by Nawaz Sharif.

This was a kind of pincer movement. In Sindh, with the emergence of the MQM in urban areas, the PPP's dominance was diluted by a violence-prone new political threat.

The formal official agenda of Cabinet meetings, dealing largely with institutional, functional dimensions of governance, could not disregard the extraordinary pressures being faced from unfriendly factors. These were pressures that could not be listed on agendas, or discussed freely and fully in Cabinet meetings but which nevertheless were hot, were real, were alive and unpleasant.

There were also occasions when the Prime Minister would be abrupt and dismissive and impatient with any sustained attempts to express views that were not in line with how she saw a particular subject. Or even when a Minister or a Secretary with whose views she concurred saw the subject — when she too was unwilling to permit continued debate.

Unpredictability in such matters is possibly considered by some — or most — leaders at the very top as a self-protective barrier against any close colleagues or sub-ordinates taking the leader for granted, by voicing on a given subject views which, in their judgement, at a particular time were likely to be approved by the Prime Minister.

At the highest levels of leadership, I suppose no major leader wants anyone to

be too close for comfort.

Even with the inherent advantages she enjoyed of being a martyred father's daughter, of being a well-educated woman who carried herself with dignity, of being the world's first Muslim woman Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto sometimes seemed to find the task of conducting Cabinet meetings a challenge that tested her skills and her patience.

Meetings of the Federal Cabinet are formal, structured interactions. Their procedure, method of dealing with the agenda, persons eligible to participate, scope of discussion, mode of decision-making, confidentiality and related matters are rendered as per the Constitution, and as per written Rules of Business, and by unwritten norms.

Hours before a Cabinet meeting, on the evening prior to a meeting the next morning, a thick green folder marked "Secret" in a sealed envelope addressed to the Federal Minister or the Minister of State or Adviser is received at the office or residence of the addressee. The folder contains the agenda, the titles of all the others to whom the same notice is being circulated, Summaries of each agenda item, material annexed to the Summaries, and any other relevant documents.

Standard participants are the Prime Minister, Federal Ministers, Advisers to the Prime Minister, Ministers of State, Special Assistants to the Prime Minister, Secretaries of Ministries whose Summaries feature on the agenda (appearing only for their particular item), Cabinet Secretary, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister (optional), Deputy Cabinet Secretary, Information Secretary and / or the Principal Information Officer, Military Secretary to the Prime Minister, any other official authorized by the Prime Minister to attend.

The Prime Minister takes the seat at the head of the long table. During the first Benazir Bhutto Government, despite the Cabinet perhaps being larger than it should have been, members were almost always seated at one single long table,



or at tables placed together. Officials were seated in a second row.

Meetings took place in the Prime Minister's Office in Rawalpindi and later in Islamabad, and on a few occasions at Lahore, Karachi or Tarbela, and wherever the Head of Government determined it to be convenient.

The normal bulk of paper for weekly or fortnightly or monthly Cabinet meetings magnified multiple times when Budget documents had to be considered.

For a Government that was in office for only twenty months, the first Benazir Bhutto-led Government had the novel distinction of presenting three budgets instead of the customary two. Soon after taking office on 4th December 1988, half-way through the normal financial year of 1st July 1988 to 30th June 1989, our Government presented a half-yearly Budget. The second budget for the full 12 months of July 1989 – 30th June 1990 came a few months later in June 1989. The third Budget for 1st July 1990 – 30th June 1991 was presented and approved in June 1990 but the Government was dismissed a mere five weeks later on 6th August 1990.

In theory, all Ministers and Secretaries are expected to receive and read all the Summaries and documents provided prior to the Cabinet meetings. Under the principle of collective responsibility of a Cabinet, each Cabinet Member shares responsibility for all decisions taken, including decisions about subjects which are not part of her/his Ministry.

In practice, only a few, or generally only some Ministers read all the Summaries. Where a Summary concerns the Minister's own domain, the Minister is, of course, normally familiar with its content.

Responsibility for drafting each Summary rests with the Secretary of the Ministry. The text sets out, in concise form, the subject, the reasons and facts advanced in favour of a decision or a policy being recommended. Sometimes,

the submitting Ministry itself also records reasons given by a contrary viewpoint for not supporting the policy being recommended.

The draft-Summary is required to be circulated in advance to any other Ministry which has a responsibility in a shared, or proximate sphere. For instance: a Summary moved by the Information Ministry about screening of cinema films on PTV would be relevant for prior perusal by the Ministry of Culture which, until 2010, had administrative control of the cinema sector. And so on, in other cases as well. The comments of a second or third Ministry would either be included in the formal version of the text put up to Cabinet, or placed at Annexure.

The concluding para of each Summary normally states: “The Minister / Minister of State has seen and approved this Summary” — below which the Secretary affixes a signature.

In one’s own case, in some instances, I personally developed the initial version of the Summaries. Rashid Latif Ansari competently drafted some Summaries on the basis of our prior discussions in his own language and, if required, I contributed amendments.

Seated normally to the left of the Prime Minister would be Federal Ministers, placed in sequence as per the first letter of the title of the Ministry, followed by Advisers with the rank of Federal Minister and then Ministers of State, Governors, Chief Ministers, sometimes the invited Governor, State Bank as a non-Member, other Federal Ministers, followed by Special Assistants and Secretaries. More junior participants are seated in a second row behind the first, table-bound row.

After the construction of the grandiose, over-blown Prime Minister’s Secretariat on Constitution Avenue in Islamabad, Cabinet meetings take place in a large, hall-like room with lots of empty space enclosed between the four sides

of the rectangular tabled structure.

Small microphones and a speaker system are wired into the table. Meetings commence after all other participants are seated. The Military Secretary then escorts the Prime Minister to her/his chair.

Cabinet meetings are prim and proper. Precedents, propriety and protocol are enforced and rarely breached. Outside the meetings, how the Prime Minister and Cabinet Members, and individuals with influence on them, conduct themselves can be quite a contrast.

Proceedings of Cabinet meetings are confidential / secret. Only decisions are made public. On some occasions, the Prime Minister has the authority to classify even some decisions as “secret” in the public interest.

In principle, every Cabinet Member is entitled to express a view on any Summary or agenda item irrespective of direct relevance to the Minister’s portfolio, or otherwise. “Direct relevance” can be clarified by the following example. Views of the Ministry of Water & Power are directly relevant to a summary of the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Resources, because both are part of the Energy sector. As too is the Ministry of Communications/Ports & Shipping because a major energy- generating resource such as oil is imported by tankers that use our sea-ports. Whereas the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Zakat & Ushr is not directly relevant, for obvious reasons. In comparison, and in theory, the Information Ministry is relevant to virtually every Ministry because all Cabinet decisions — except for secret decisions — are to be reported to media and to the public. Yet, on some subjects, the Prime Minister may be in a hurry to conclude discussion. Or she may have preferred a particular line of reasoning, for, or against a certain decision.

In expressing my own viewpoints on, say, a Budget-related item, a Commerce Ministry-related Summary or a Foreign Affairs Ministry Summary, one’s

intention was to place on record a particular view. While I respected — or guessed (in advance) by looking at the Prime Minister's face — the viewpoint she was likely to favour, I believed that it was my duty to express my own viewpoint even if this was in direct conflict with the Prime Minister's views.

Benazir Bhutto would request one of the Ministers to recite verses from the Holy Quran to commence proceedings. In the unusual circumstance that the Minutes of the previous meeting required amendments to ensure accuracy, the same would be done. Minutes were then formally adopted and consideration would commence of the current agenda.

The Secretary of each Ministry normally either reads the text of the Summary or its principal paragraphs. On some occasions, the Prime Minister may invite the Minister, instead of the Secretary, to introduce the Summary. Where required, a Minister supplements the introduction by the Secretary, or vice versa.

Ideally, the Prime Minister should first invite comments, if any, by other Ministers or participants. But exercising the prerogative of being Head of the Cabinet, Benazir Bhutto would sometimes immediately express her views about a Summary.

If her views coincided with the course of action being recommended, the Minister and Secretary were greatly comforted and assured of its swift approval. Ministers and others would rarely dissent from the direction indicated by their boss.

But in some instances, the Prime Minister did not concur with the options for action listed in the Summaries. She would either hint at, or elaborate her views at the outset itself. Or wait until others had stated their views and then forcefully interject about her own position.

In general, Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto was inclusive, tolerant and reasonably patient in inviting views, and listening to them.

Except for matters that directly concerned their own Ministries, in which case they were vocally expressive, Ministers either remained silent or verbally supported the recommendations being made by their colleague-Minister and the actions being recommended in the Summary.

The assumption is that the Minister concerned knows the subject well enough, and the others should respect this fact.

However, there were several subjects on which virtually all Cabinet Members had strong views. These included the introduction of new programmes such as the People's Labour Bureau / People's Employment Bureau or the People's Works Programme, on aspects of Federation-Province relations, prices of essential commodities, law and order, aspects of foreign policy, particularly about Afghanistan, India, Kashmir, USA.

The Federal Government has the power to appoint Governors of Provinces. At that time in 1988-90, the President could appoint Governors entirely at his discretion rather than, as was later done, only on the advice and recommendations of the Prime Minister subsequent to the 13th Amendment to the Constitution adopted in 1997 which vastly reduced the discretionary powers of the Head of State.

The different modes of conducting Cabinet meetings may well have been reflections of Benazir Bhutto's varying moods. More than leaders in general who come to such high office after some years of experience at Ministerial level, of familiarity with Cabinet processes and meetings, she was a relatively young woman with absolutely no experience of participation in Cabinet meetings. The legacy of being the child of a father who had seven years of Cabinet experience in Field Marshal Ayub Khan's Cabinet, about 3 weeks in General Yahya Khan's Cabinet (November-21 December 1971) and as President / Chief Martial Law Administrator, 21st December 1971 and then Prime Minister up to 5th July

1977) was a valuable learning source. But there was no direct experience of participating in Cabinet, nor of how to conduct Cabinet meetings.

Such procedural know-how is not rocket science. Briefings by senior officials such as the Cabinet Secretary, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister and by other officers are adequate to prepare the intelligent individual that she was, in the basic craft of presiding effectively. The variations in patience were purely personal elements, subject to numerous factors unrelated to skill.

Some of the Federal Ministers and Ministers of State had far longer experience of Cabinet positions and proceedings than she did as Prime Minister.

The professional and personal background characteristics of Cabinet Ministers and Ministers of State were kaleidoscopic — in terms of education levels, academic records, ethnic and linguistic origins, economic and social features, Provincial domiciles, political pasts, professional achievements including the military domain, and individual temperaments.

Gender disparity was acute in the large, male-dominated Cabinet, which only reflected the low level of women's representation in all legislatures.

In the National Assembly elected in November 1988, there were 20 women elected on reserved seats, as nominees of their respective political parties. In the Senate elected in 1985, there was not a single woman.

On 14th November 1985, I had attempted to introduce a Constitution (Amendment) Private Member's Bill to create reserved seats for women in the Senate. But neither the Junejo-led PML ruling coalition nor the members from the religion-based political parties supported this attempt. The majority present in the House at that time did not permit me to introduce the Bill which was then ruled out by the Chairman.

In the 4 Provincial Assemblies, there were low ratios of women members. But

then, Benazir Bhutto as a single top woman political leader was, in the eyes of many, more than equal to a hundred women political leaders.

There were vivid contrasts that exist in perhaps any equivalent group in a developing country where feudalism and modernism, moral traditions and urban innovations occur. Yet in this case, more than perhaps in Pakistani Cabinets of the recent past, the contrasts also portrayed deep contradictions. In some ways, these contradictions, specially those of ideological orientation, were a continuation of the conflicting features which marked the personality of the PPP's founder, Z.A. Bhutto and which were also indicated in the Party's theme that referred to Islam, socialism and democracy. On the surface, there is no conflict between those three precepts. But in practice, and in substance, depending on the different interpretations of Islam, socialism and democracy, and depending on the specific institutions and policies by which these precepts are given concrete form, basic contradictions come into the open. Only through a continuing process of debate, experience and evolution will they probably be fully reconciled.

Contrasts in the composition of the Cabinet were vividly apparent in some cases. Sahabzada Yaqub Khan was a renowned diplomat, fluent linguist in several foreign languages, a former Lieutenant General, a Minister who had served in General Ziaul Haq's Cabinet. Mukhtar Awan was a loyalist, a virtual *jiyala* of the Bhutto family and the PPP from Multan in Southern Punjab. Syed Qasim Shah was a timber trade, forest-dealing entrepreneur from NWFP who was most unhappy with being appointed Minister of State for Environment. He told me once: "My constituents mock me by saying your Ministry can't do anything for us except to give us a broom to sweep the sky and the heavens above!" Amir Haider Kazmi, the Health Minister, was a former Leftist student leader from Karachi from a family of migrants from another part of South Asia.

Makhdoom Amin Fahim from Hala, Sindh was the spiritual Deputy Head (with his father Talibul Maula as the Head) of a large following of respectful followers. Farooq Leghari and Aitzaz Ahsan with educational qualifications obtained from prestigious British institutions came from two different categories: one a well-educated feudal who had also qualified in the Competitive Services Examination and the other a successful respected Barrister who had also succeeded on merit in CSS exams but had preferred to practice law instead of becoming a Government official.

***Cabinet size:***

The size of Cabinets in Pakistan is a subject of much criticism. Unfair comparisons are made with very different countries such as the USA where the Cabinet comprises only 8 to 10 Members or Secretaries, as they are designated. But the USA has a Presidential, not a Parliamentary system. The American President is free to choose individuals on merit and his individual preference alone, subject to Senate endorsement.

In the Parliamentary system, a Prime Minister has to accommodate multiple interests and pressures from Members of Parliament, particularly in the directly-elected National Assembly. Even though they are Members of her/ his own Party and therefore, in theory, subject to discipline and to accepting the leader's decisions and choices, senior and important legislators as well as the Prime Minister who offers them Cabinet positions know that each such figure has the backing of vitally-needed popular support, that each legislator, specially one elected with a notable plurality of votes, or with an established track record is expected by voters to provide the special clout that comes with being a Minister/Cabinet Member.

At the most theatrical level, this begins with the privilege of being able to adorn one's car with a national flag (and a special number plate). Fluttering on a



moving vehicle, the flag is meant to signal to citizens at large and to local officials in particular, that a Minister's power is now present on the streets and in the corners of a given constituency to, in turn, empower the supporters and members of the legislator who has become a Minister.

While patronage politics and constituency-oriented biases are also present in Presidential systems, they do not dominate Cabinet-making as much as they do in South Asian Parliamentary systems.

Apart from catering to the several pressures from those who give a political party its popular base, a Prime Minister also has to balance Provincial and regional representation, levels of relevant professional competence (not too often!), coalition partners' demands, perhaps even favourites recommended by the President (e.g. Sahabzada Yaqub Khan), the quota for the Senate i.e. as per Article 92 of the Constitution, only one-fourth of the Cabinet can comprise Members of the Senate.

In most respects, despite the extraordinary diversity and conflicting views and interests reflected in its composition, the Cabinet of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto 1988-1990 had a mixed record. In some spheres, the Cabinet took positive and progressive decisions. This was not how the public perceived its quality of performance. Due to a newly-asserted independence, the Press did apply close scrutiny but this was often imbalanced and unduly negative.

This Cabinet initiated progressive changes in several sectors. These ranged from the pioneering introduction of establishing the First Women's Bank and first-ever women's police stations to releasing hundreds of individuals unjustly convicted under martial law. Thousands of jobs were created through new public works projects. Provincial autonomy was given virtually unprecedented respect; incentives for agriculture, industry and the services sectors were announced. Re-negotiations were conducted in Finance and Economic Affairs with the IMF, the

World Bank and with friendly overseas countries to secure increased aid and grants and easier loan re-payment terms. The US was persuaded to re-consider the ban or slow-down of sale of Defence equipment and arms. Regional languages were given a new primacy on State media. Reforms in the management of education and health were also introduced. Significant changes in the information and media sector have been identified elsewhere.

***Cabinet committees:***

Apart from regular Cabinet meetings, there were meetings of Cabinet Committees which were periodically constituted by the Prime Minister to either deal with issues that needed to be brought back to the Cabinet for further or final consideration, or be reported directly to the Prime Minister for her own discretionary decision-making.

One of the Cabinet Committees on which the Prime Minister nominated me was one tasked with the responsibility to consider promotion of Government officials between Grades 18, 19 and 20 i.e. up to Joint Secretary and Additional Secretary.

Thick dossiers on each official, comprising his or her service record, annual confidential reports (ACRs) and related documents would be provided to each of the four or five Members of the Committee. Discussion on merits and demerits of each official was candid. One knew only a few of them. Documents can reveal and can also obscure or mislead. Giving preferences for a “yes” or a “no” or “maybe” was often done in order to allow for the unknown. Unless one looks a person directly in the eye — and eyes too can be deceptive — one cannot be sure about the gut feeling that one has, or should have, about a particular person. Thus, much of the deliberative part of such Committee meetings was well-calculated guess-work, with heavy reference to the ACRs. To one’s surprise, some of the ACRs were quite balanced and well-written.

Grade 18 officers complete eight years of service and Grade 19 officers have to complete about ten to twelve years of service and successfully participate in training courses before they become eligible for promotion to the higher grade.

***Speaking in Cabinet:***

On certain occasions, on subjects and ministries with which I was not directly concerned, I chose to express views about the summaries under consideration by the Cabinet.

As stated elsewhere, the Prime Minister was often patient in listening to dissenting viewpoints. But sometimes she would either be short with me, or simply shut me up, and cut me off.

I believed then, and continued to do so in the next two Cabinets in which I served, that it is an essential part of Cabinet meetings for full and frank discussion, with no punches pulled. Even if the powers of a civil, political Cabinet are circumscribed in conditions in which the military leadership has been allowed to occupy a major space and influence in decision-making — e.g. relations with India, Afghanistan, USA, nuclear weapons — it is obligatory for Cabinet Members to engage in robust debates on the pros and cons of all policies, regardless of the eventual final decision taken by the Prime Minister.

I do not subscribe to the option often advocated by many that, in case of strong disagreement, one should convey this confidentially, in a one-on-one meeting, with the Head of Government or the Head of State in case the latter is also the Head of Government. It is said that by using the private, personalized route of communication, one would avoid open and awkward confrontation with the Head of the Cabinet, avoid placing her or him in an uncomfortable position by being seen as one whose views are being openly disagreed with, in the presence of several others.

Whereas I believe that, far from being unfriendly or hostile to the Head of

Government, an expression of dissent within the confidential confines of Cabinet enables the leader to obtain two distinct benefits. One: it reinforces the concept and reality of collective responsibility, of sharing both assent and dissent, and yet be willing to work further for larger common goals. It is essential for all Cabinet members to hear diverse views. Two: it breaks, in a non-violent, and only verbal way, the cocoon of insulated power and authority which is quickly spun around any holder of high public office. This insulation encourages a public office-holder such as a Prime Minister or a President to expect that all chosen team-members are obedient to, and compliant with, the policy preferences of the Head, sycophants having already convinced the Head about this aspect. At an early stage, sycophants convince the Head that any dissent by Ministers, specially dissent expressed in the presence of other Cabinet Members is actually disrespectful of the Head, and a sign of disloyalty or evidence that the dissenting Minister quite likely harbours personal ambitions.

There may be a streak of contrariness in the above two amplifications, even one where the dissenter may merely be seen to be “showing off”. If so, the dissenter has to be very foolish — and self-destructive to boot. If it was only about pretence or posturing, one can do so plentifully at events outside Cabinet meetings, not by expressing dissent with the Head of Government in the presence of fellow Ministers while still remaining Minister. Which I did do, at one point in 1990 with regard to the Pucca Qila incident. But genuine dissent even on non-conflictual issues should be candidly, respectfully expressed.

I am aware of several Ministers in all the three Cabinets I have worked in, who chose virtually never to speak in dissent with the Head of Cabinet (President/ Chief Executive/ Prime Minister) during Cabinet meetings. Some of these same Ministers would, after the end of Cabinet meetings, meet me privately or confidentially and say to me “Well done” or “Well spoken”. A few even asked

me to “understand” why they could not speak as candidly as I did – an understanding I rarely gained. Because I also knew that the prime consideration was to secure, and to sustain goodwill with the Head of Cabinet.

Which is not a wholly despicable or unethical thing to do. If one’s ambition is more long-term than the shortsighted kind that I had — or have — then it is more practical, more sensible to ensure that the Big Leader looks upon one with complete, unqualified positivity, unsullied by the irritating memory of moments where the Big Leader was made to feel awkward by an expression of strong dissent.

One of the issues on which I tended to strongly disagree with the tone of discussion in Cabinet or in informal meetings with the Prime Minister, with or without others being present, was the cultivation of the psyche of victimhood, of always villainizing all aspects of the terrible Ziaul Haq years of 1977-1988 and even deriding all aspects of the Junejo Government of 1985-1988. This tendency to be wholly dismissive was obviously motivated by the rage felt by the PPP at the ruthless murder of Z.A. Bhutto, the rage at the persecution of the PPP during martial law, at the partly successful attempts by Junejo to assert civilian ascendancy, which became an unlikely but real threat to the assumed prerogative of the PPP to be fully restored to power.

Yet to be so sweeping in seeing all the previous 11 years — 1977 to 1988 — as being irredeemably lost, to be negative and useless, was to be unfair to the truth. Even with his arbitrary and damaging 8th Amendment to the Constitution in February 1985, General Ziaul Haq introduced some progressive measures. These included making the Senate — the custodian of the equality of four inequally-sized Provinces — a more representative and effective part of Parliament, the number of seats was increased from the original number to 87. This increase went beyond reflecting the growth in population since 1973 when the

Constitution was adopted. For the first time, five seats from each Province were reserved for the election of technocrats. This enabled individuals with a proven record of expertise in diverse fields to contribute their professional acumen to the deliberations of the Upper House and provide in-puts to legislation and policy. Such in-puts were not normally available from the categories of traditional politicians elected to the Senate or the National Assembly. Third: the Senate was enabled to initiate Bills to amend the Constitution, a right previously available only to the National Assembly. Fourth, the Senate was also enabled to discuss the Budget and to make Recommendations to the National Assembly which, as the directly elected body, retained the sole power to finally approve the Budget.

These may appear minor positives compared to the major damage done to the body politic of Pakistan and to the social fabric through the regressive resort to religion by General Ziaul Haq as a camouflage for his personal ambition.

But changes to the composition and scope for a House of Parliament are substantive. And they proved to be of an enduring nature, seen to be relevant enough to be retained by all civil, elected Governments that came to office after 1985, and to date in 2021.

Prime Minister Junejo's Government also demonstrated an unexpected political will. At several times, the civil Government originally installed by the choice of General Ziaul Haq and thus forever beholden to him in person, was actually bold enough to challenge him. In addition to actions referred to elsewhere, PM Junejo said that the destructive explosion of ammunition at an Army camp called Ojhri in April 1988 should be investigated by a non-military led committee.

Even though I had remained in opposition to General Ziaul Haq and to the Junejo Government, I acknowledged the few but distinctly positive aspects of their two Governments.

Regrettably, neither Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto nor most of her senior colleagues, including Ministers, were willing to acknowledge this reality. They may well have believed that to do so would be to unduly strengthen the legacy of both General Ziaul Haq and Prime Minister Junejo. If not also strengthen Nawaz Sharif, who had survived the demise of the one, and engineered the political decline of the other by hijacking the Muslim League, and was now in 1988-1990, in defiant power in Punjab.

In the view of most people, specially PPP supporters, perhaps Benazir Bhutto did not need prior experience either of Parliament or public office to be qualified for both, at one go, in November 1988. It was said her heritage and her own individual role as a political leader post-1979 were adequate credentials.

My own view was that while her inheritance, her close association with her father's politics, her brave struggle against General Ziaul Haq were all relevant, there was no substitute for hard, direct experience of competing in an election, of being elected, of being subject to the discipline of a legislature, of listening first-hand to the invective and other personal vitriol uttered by the Opposition inside legislatures and of actually holding Ministerial, leave alone Prime Ministerial office with the enormous responsibilities that come with the last of those listed above.

If Benazir Bhutto had first served in a legislature, ideally starting with a Provincial Assembly, then moving to the Federal level, she would have acquired valuable experience in the chemistry of legislatures. The unspoken, unwritten codes of how to contain and manage reactions to harsh words spoken in one's presence which often contrasted sharply with the adulatory, and often sycophantic words spoken in privacy or in PPP-specific gatherings.

If Benazir Bhutto had first served as a Provincial Minister and then a Federal Minister before becoming Prime Minister, she would have absorbed the

invaluable experience of leading a single Ministry on a given subject, of observing how the permanent administrative, bureaucratic aspects of a Ministry work in tandem with a transient, elected political individual as the policy Head of the Ministry.

To note this is at this stage, when her life is done and over with, certainly seems futile. Yet it is necessary to say this for the record. Because had time and circumstance permitted her to gradually grow into the top leadership position, the strong probability is that she would have demonstrated far more maturity and capability than she was able to do by virtually being pole-vaulted into the positions of top Party leader and Prime Minister — without a single day's experience as a legislator or a Minister.

Given this disadvantage of lack of prior experience, Benazir Bhutto performed well in several respects — and not so-well in others.



## *Fall-out from the radical new news policy*

Gradually, cumulatively, the radical new news policy for PTV and PBC began to generate an impact. But to alter convictions in the public mind, convictions built over decades about the one-sided propagandistic facets of both media organizations' news output, would take a few months of sustained implementation of the new policy.

Within the Government and the Party there was a corresponding but contrary increase in discontent with the new policy. A principal, commonly-held view among leaders and workers was: the PPP was harshly persecuted for 11 years in the Zia regime. All its sacrifices for democracy and its brave struggle had been either completely blacked out by PTV and Radio Pakistan, or were misrepresented and vilified. Now that elections had, at long last, placed PPP in power and in control of the two State media, why were these media being permitted to become sources for the character assassination or the defamation of the Prime Minister and her party? Had the two media ever carried any of the Party's actual views and activities, in the cause of democracy, during martial law?

This viewpoint was partly, if not largely justified. Through the history of these State media, citizens were accustomed to the spectacle and the sound of summersaults. Up to 4th July 1977, Z.A. Bhutto as Prime Minister was the saviour of democracy a la Radio Pakistan and PTV. 5th July 1977 onwards, without any explanation for the total turn-around, Z.A. Bhutto and the PPP were

synonymous for destroying democracy, the economy, and almost the country itself. The people at large simply accepted such an about-face by the State media as perfectly predictable.

But now, when the two media were projecting — albeit in a varying and limited way — but on every single day, the views of the Opposition that were critical of the ruling Party and the Government, was it not both unfair to the PPP, and to its millions of voters that the two media were further damaging them, instead of undoing the damage already done during the Zia years?

I also thought that my own particular political background enabled a few individuals in the Party to raise doubts about the totality of my commitment to the Party and the Government. Worst of all, I had been elected to the Senate in the non-party polls boycotted by the PPP. In a sense, just as Sahabzada Yaqub Khan, the Foreign Minister was a hold-over from the Zia regime, so too was I — even though I had never joined the Zia Government or the Junejo Government and in fact, had been in Opposition to them both — possibly another kind of unloyal hold-over thrust on to the PPP.

If she did not personally phone me about the explosive report on Nawaz Sharif's allegation about her "atheism", she did phone me on at least 3 more occasions on the green phone between 7th December 1988 and about 7th January 1989 to express her disquiet on how undisciplined and willfully negative were some parts of the main news bulletins on PTV.

As also the highly negative reporting about the Government in sections of the Press, both the Urdu Press, and the English Press. This latter complaint by her was fairly justified.

She summoned me one late afternoon in February to the Prime Minister's House in Rawalpindi. When we met, she said, "Let's talk as I take my walk". The early evening in winter was pleasant. There were stretches of green grass,

tall trees, shrubs. Her mood and words were a mixture of complaint and cordiality.

She referred to the hostility of the IJI, the attempts by the Government of Punjab to disrupt even day-to-day functional relations between the Federal and the Provincial Government, the imbalance and bias of part of the Press, the need to remain vigilant in the Ministry of Information about officers whose real loyalty lay with the remnants of the Zia years and with the Pakistan Muslim League. Then she referred to the new news policy on radio and TV, reminding me that she had personally approved it but that there were numerous complaints from Ministers and Party leaders about being deprived of fair time and coverage of their activities.

I responded by acknowledging the extraordinary challenges we were facing, her sagacity in authorizing the new policy, and said “Prime Minister, I greatly respect the negative fall-out of the new policy. The daily limited coverage being given to the Opposition is like taking a foul-tasting medicine, a bitter pill that we need to swallow. The short-term effect is unpleasant. But I assure you, if we persist with this policy, the medium and long-term impacts will only be positive. Your personal stature will be greatly enhanced as the first leader in the country’s history to authorize daily coverage of the Opposition on State media, and the benefits are already becoming apparent, and will only increase in the times ahead. For my part, we are taking all possible measures within the Ministry and in PBC and PTV to ensure that the policy is not misused”.

She heard me out patiently and appeared to be only partly re-assured. To answer her queries about some procedural aspects of the Ministry I provided her with the requisite data.

Almost as a piquant, timely reminder of the situation our Government faced in respect of relations with the Armed Forces, during our walk, at a distance of only

about 150 yards to our left, on a slightly lower level, as the grounds of the Prime Minister's House were adjacent to grounds used by the Chief of Army Staff, we saw General Aslam Beg, also on a walk with an officer in his company, both in civilian clothes. We exchanged cordial greetings across the open space.

Benazir Bhutto looked at me, her eyes conveying a knowing, fleeting look of amusement about the courtesy and friendliness of the greetings exchanged, and the underlying mutual suspicion about each organization that marked the composition of Army-PPP relations.

## *The corruption dimension*

A brief reflection on the corruption dimension in the principal context of this book's subject — Benazir Bhutto as Prime Minister — should not deflect attention from the corruption associated with the other individual — Nawaz Sharif — who helped remove both her two elected governments.

The steady, substantive increase of business enterprises and assets, in Pakistan and overseas, linked to the Sharif family coinciding with Nawaz Sharif's induction — in the Punjab Government through the martial law regime of General Ziaul Haq in April 1981 was only sporadically slowed when the PPP took office twice between 1988 and 1996. The expansion accelerated when Nawaz Sharif himself was in office. There is adequate material and documentation in the public record on this subject. This chapter broadly focusses on Benazir Bhutto.

It is not possible to be certain as to whether prior experience would have strengthened or weakened Benazir Bhutto's individual integrity or her willingness to tolerate — or not tolerate — corruption by those close to her on a personal or a political level.

One has no desire to defame the dead, or the living. Yet one has a duty to record the reality of one's views and sentiments.

There is the view that Benazir Bhutto in her personal capacity was an ethically upright individual. That the corrupt practices attributed to her spouse and to some, or many of the PPP Ministers and leaders were indulged in by them

without her prior knowledge and consent.

I only wish that I could believe this perception to be true. She possessed several admirable qualities — of intelligence, education, sophistication, humour, compassion, vision. Yet I was convinced, on the basis of observation as a Cabinet Member for twenty months, as a Party member up to August 1996, and as a citizen, that it was simply not possible for her to remain unaware of the increasing use of corrupt practices by many who were close to her. Indeed, such corrupt practices, particularly those on a major scale, simply could not have taken place without her tacit approval, or even her explicit assent.

One is unable to produce solid evidence to substantiate this perception on my part — and on the part of many others — with evidence that should meet defined legal standards. The nature of corrupt practices is wide-ranging. From the peddling of influence to get something done outof- turn at the expense of others, to favouring a crony with benefits, all the way to directly aggrandizing oneself with illicit income. The burden of proof cannot be successfully borne by the person such as myself who makes statements like those made in preceding paragraphs. Leave alone myself, as an individual without access to tape-recorded phone conversations, or to statements of amounts deposited in secret accounts in overseas banks — even the vast legal and judicial system of the country has frequently been unable to produce conclusive evidence.

Convictions for corruption have certainly taken place in Pakistani courts, of both leaders and officials, civil and military officers. But their numbers are a fraction of the total number of individuals with well-known reputations for acquiring wealth far in excess of their officially reported earnings.

One weak, and somewhat laughable justification reportedly advanced by her and her spouse, and by their inner circle, was to the effect that part, or all of the funds acquired through corrupt practices was to simply enrich the Party's

treasury, to empower the Party to counter the reportedly massive funds available to Nawaz Sharif, to the Pakistan Muslim League, to the IJI through their own corrupt practices during the Ziaul Haq years and in the Junejo Government-years and thereafter.

The evidence of corrupt practices which I observed — fortunately from an ethical distance! — were intangible, sometimes subtle, sometimes crude, occasionally only hinted at by a wink and a nod by a person with intimate knowledge of a transaction whose word one could trust, by the grapevine — but only after discounting the gross exaggeration that is added with each repetition of a rumour.

By way of evidence of another kind — as to how reluctant I was as a Cabinet Minister to believe rumours and gossip about the growing corruption in our Government — is the following fact.

One of my close relatives — not by blood, but by ties of family marriage — was close to the Bhutto family and a well-wisher. He would fairly regularly share with me reports of corrupt practices by certain Ministers. In a few cases, on the basis of the identity of the Minister named by him, my first reaction was almost always of disbelief, and outright dismissal. Perhaps so predictable would be my unwillingness to accept as true the instances narrated about bribery that this close relation started to regularly mock me for my naivety and for my reluctance to listen to bad news.

Only after I independently verified some of the stories he brought to me did I begin to acknowledge that corrupt practices were being used by certain prominent Ministers. I also began to realize that both Benazir Bhutto and her spouse were fully aware of such practices and that tragically, they themselves were taking certain actions which benefitted them personally.

To continue to serve in the Cabinet while becoming convinced of corrupt

practices at the very top became an intense internal conflict for me even as conflict over Information policy sharpened and deepened onward of April 1989 to July 1989.

As our tenure extended to weeks, then months, then one full year, and eventually up to 20 months, some of the very same persons who went by the book inside Cabinet meetings were known to be going against the book in the world outside.

Reports of nepotism and corruption began to spread, at first slowly then quickly. Like a dark sweeping, poisoned cloud which advanced relentlessly, both the reality and the perception about the reality gradually covered the sky above us.

The ugly over-hang was given the additional streak of incompetence. ‘Clueless’ was a word that began to be freely used.

There may well have been substance and justification to cause the reputation for bribery and mis-governance. I will revert to these shortly.

But there were two or three principal reasons for these perceptions to be fostered, to be assiduously spread, to be reinforced and perpetuated.

First: the systematic use of the word-of-mouth process by the Opposition and its covert allies to spread rumours, allegations and speculations in society at large through their own members and sympathizers — as supplements to the invectives hurled inside the legislatures. Speech inside the elected forums enjoys immunity from prosecution for libel, defamation and character assassination. Short of obscenities or improper words, a speaker can get away with all kinds of wild charges, some of which acquire a degree of credibility merely because they have been made by an elected representative of the people.

Second: the independent newspapers and magazines, including the limited



circulation English language journals and the far larger circulated Urdu and regional language print media tended to reproduce sensationalist and negative statements by the Opposition more prominently than deserved. Even with literacy levels at that time in 1989-90 projection than could be related to the actual sale of newspapers. In many parts, one literate person would read out main reports to groups of illiterate persons.

Despite the highest standards of probity and journalistic professionalism in the BBC South Asian Service, its daily coverage of political affairs in Pakistan often relied — or sometimes quoted — newspaper reports from within the country. The radio broadcasts reached many more millions than the print media did. All India Radio with its long tradition of celebrating any bad news about Pakistan would regularly supplement the BBC.

Third: military intelligence agencies with elements carried over from the Zia years and/or with affinities with the IJI were suspected to be also responsible for planting rumours and grossly exaggerated reports unfavourable to the Federal Government.

Our own Cabinet and Government, by omission and commission, facilitated these three reasons. To the extent that several positive, progressive policies and measures which were motivated neither by corruption nor nepotism, but were motivated only by the public interest were over-shadowed by the dark cloud of bribery and misgovernance that remained overhead.

Fairly early on, the presence of Asif Ali Zardari in the Prime Minister's House became the widely-cited basis for allegations about under-hand deals being made to benefit PPP leaders, Ministers, cronies and workers.

It was believed with conviction that, at the Federal level in Islamabad and at the Provincial level in Sindh in particular, regardless of whether the official decision-maker was upright and honest, the actual power to initiate corrupt

practices lay with the Prime Minister's spouse, or with the Prime Minister's Office, or with persons claiming to act on behalf of the Prime Minister.

For the record and to be fair — at not a single time during my tenure in the Cabinet for 20 months was I personally instructed by the Prime Minister or by her spouse or by anyone claiming to speak on their behalf to take a corruptive action of any kind.

The reasons for my experience could have been as follows. Notwithstanding some of the large sums involved in some sections of the Ministry's own Budget and in PTV and PBC in particular, nor even in the secret funds — not very large! — the funds and contracts under the control of the Information Ministry were far smaller than funds under the Ministries of Finance, Ports and Shipping, Communications, Water and Power, Petroleum and Natural Resources, Food and Agriculture, Defence, Commerce and some others.

Second: I was not a close friend or confidant of the Prime Minister or her spouse and so could not be trusted to be a party to possible malpractice.

Third: and this is not by way of trying to portray oneself in a holier light than others — one did not have a prior reputation for being familiar with, or a beneficiary of, corrupt practices. Not that novices do not become quick learners, if they want to. But perhaps the perception was that the effort and the risk were not worth it and would be a waste of time. I am so glad to report that I was never asked to do something shady thereby proving that our Cabinet and Government may have been partly or frequently prone to corruption, but was definitely not so in totality.

Corruption occurs in myriad ways. Tender notices published in media inviting bids can specify technical eligibility terms for bidders or frame project particulars in a subtle way so as to favour only one, or just a few bidders. Prior to bids being offered, a verbal understanding is reached with all or some, or one

bidder that, even if the bid is the lowest, a certain percentage will be paid in cash in advance of the winning bid being processed for further implementation. By prior agreement, an inflated base price for a given item is fixed, with the surplus being given to the key decision-maker. Over-invoicing or/and bogus under-invoicing for imports or exports are also involved. For construction contracts, bogus certification for different work phases, or, in general, a one-off percentage paid at one go at the outset, or in installments. Payments in advance for letters of appointment to positions of permanent or temporary employment even in Government departments: the theory is that once an individual secures an appointment to any level in any Government entity, the post becomes a life-long source of livelihood. And removal is subject to appeal, court hearings, petitions, etc. and unlikely to succeed. So there was lucre to be earned, all the way, from appointment of primary school teachers, to heads of corporations and organizations.

Another form of corrupt practice began in that period but flourished in fulsome terms in the second Government of Benazir Bhutto (1993-96) and even later in the tenure of Asif Ali Zardari as President (2008-2013) and in the consecutive tenures of Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gillani (2008-2012) and Raja Parvaiz Ashraf (2012-13). It reportedly continued even in the 2013-2018, 2018- 2021 periods in Sindh. This was the covertly conducted, coercive practice by which owners of properties such as sugar mills or cement plants or land or other assets are forced to sell at a price far lower than deserved. Numerous examples are given where front men are used to camouflage the identities of the actual beneficiaries of such transactions.

Unlike blue-collar crime in which the finger-prints of the offender are easily traceable, white-collar corruption is far more difficult to pin down. The layers, the phases, the curtains of concealment are so many and so intertwined that it

takes years or decades to part them and to glimpse the truth. This whole process is also subject to the lengthy legal and judicial process. Merely by asking for adjournments due to the actual or contrived ill-health of the lawyer or the accused, a trial process can be delayed by months or years. By which time, Governments change, and it may well suit the new Government only to make symbolic gestures of pursuing the old cases rather than to take substantive and sustained action on them.

The allegation in Urdu termed *mili bhagat* loosely translated as “a mutual interest tacit agreement to protect each other” appears to be fairly regularly used to enable corruption cases to wither on the vine, or to simply fade away. Relevant documents can perform a disappearing trick even as the individuals they relate to remain, by God’s infinite grace, very visible and present in the here and now.

One example of how independent print media magnified the scale of corruption in 1988-90 is the manner in which the label of “Mister Ten Per Cent” came to be fixed as the alternative name for Asif Ali Zardari. It is reliably learnt that the individual who used this term for the first time in print eventually went on to serve — and does so in 2021 as well — at one of the senior-most levels of the PPP leadership.

One factor that aided the projection of the image of corruption was the naming of new programmes launched by the Government with titles such as “People’s Works Programme” and “Placement Bureau”. The coincidental use of the word “People” as the second word in the complete name of the Pakistan People’s Party and as the first word in the name of a public works programme compounded a negative perception in two ways. First: that, even though the funds for the Programme were State funds and public money, the Programme was deliberately being linked to a single political party thereby becoming a

partisan project which would discriminate against non-PPP supporters and leaders. Re-assurances about neutrality by Government and PPP leaders were not accepted as being credible. In its actual implementation as well, the partisan dimension was prominent.

In Punjab in particular, the Federally-funded programme by-passed the Provincial Government which was an IJI government that was in Opposition to the Federal Government in Islamabad. Investments were made in constituencies from which PPP leaders had secured election victories. Or new projects were launched with fanfare on State media in constituencies in which IJI candidates had won but where the defeated PPP candidates wanted to recover lost ground by bringing overt benefits to their voters. This was a pettification of the development process with a new kind of partisanship.

In previous years, between 1985 and 1988, Prime Minister Mohammad Khan Junejo had launched a Prime Minister's Five-Point Programme which also focused resources on grass-roots infrastructure. But its title and implementation did not reflect the explicit partisanship associated with the People's Works Programme.

For its part, the PPP leadership, with Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto also articulating it forcefully, sought to convey the message that, after all, the term "people" applies to all the people, that the very title of the programme was non-discriminatory and that all constituencies and areas would be covered. There was the strongly-held view in the PPP that, after being unjustly removed from power in 1977 and after suffering eleven years of persecution, the PPP was only securing its due, legitimate rights to associate its name with projects of public benefit. Further, that the Punjab Government under Nawaz Sharif, a favourite of General Ziaul Haq, was enjoying the uninterrupted advantage of wielding power and using official resources for the past decade and more, while the PPP had

only just returned to power, and had to catch up with the PML, and with him.

During the Government of Prime Minister Mohammad Khan Junejo, Members of the Senate and the National Assembly were provided with the facility of sponsoring development projects in their Provinces or constituencies costing up to Rs 5 million per year. This amount was not paid out in cash or by cheque to the Members of Parliament. Using a prescribed form, legislators could submit details about the location, nature of the proposed scheme, number of estimated beneficiaries and estimated cost. Projects were generally required to be in the sectors of education, health care, infrastructure such as drinking water supply systems, low-cost roads, electricity or gas supply systems. The legislator had to co-ordinate with the Department of the Federal or Provincial Government concerned, or with the Government-owned corporation or organization to finalize details and to oversee its implementation.

Apart from its ostensibly public welfare aims, this measure was also obviously meant to strengthen popular support for legislators elected on a non-party basis in 1985 and enable them to counter their local opponents with a visible record of service. This was done to help the Pakistan Muslim League led by Mohammad Khan Junejo in the next elections, whenever held.

Critics, with some justification, assailed this as a corruptive practice. They opposed the programme because of the patently transactional feature i.e. “I build you a school — you give me your vote”. But also because they saw this as reducing the significance of electoral representation from being the framers of Constitutional legislation and macro-policy level issues to the relatively minor, localized and petty issues of fixing drains, water pipes and roads. This kind of basic infrastructural work was, in their opinion, the responsibility of Provincial legislators or of Local Government representatives, not of Federal-level Parliamentarians.

The contrary view was that why should being law-makers at a Federal level deprive elected persons from also taking actions beneficial to their respective constituencies and Provinces?

Due to careless reportage about this programme in many sections of the independent Press, the measure came to be incorrectly and misleadingly perceived as an entirely corruptive cash dole-out to legislators to buy and retain their loyalties to the Government and to the PML.

Such perceptions were partly correct. In several instances, I heard second-hand reports of how legislators entered into secret deals with contractors for public works projects. The sponsoring Senator or MNA was to be given a percentage of the cost of the project, either in advance, or whenever an installment was received by the contractor. Cost estimates were deliberately enhanced. The bidding process was rigged. The in-puts into the project itself were often sub-standard as the contractor, after paying off the legislator and other officials, could not afford quality in-puts. Fake certificates of completion of projects were issued.

However, my own personal experience as an independent Senator before I joined the PPP was positive and entirely free of malpractice. I conducted on-site inspections of sites in the suburbs of Karachi such as Malir (Saudabad) which direly needed a piped water supply system to benefit thousands of households. I also noted during my parallel work on a voluntary basis in the remote parts of the Tharparkar arid region that there was an acute need for girls' high schools in far-flung locations like Nagarparkar, Islamkot and Mithi as well as community centre structures in small villages like Dano Dhandal and Ramsar. During 1985, 1986 and 1987, I was able to sponsor and oversee the completion of all the above projects. No contractor or official ever offered me a bribe. If anyone had dared to do so, the response would have been appropriately retributive.

As a result of this controversial programme launched by PM Junejo's Government, the fact is that for the first time thousands of people in Karachi received regular water supply instead of being dependent on mobile tankers or distantly located water taps. In Tharparkar, girls education received unprecedented promotion — over the past 32 years, hundreds of girls who would otherwise have ended their education at primary level after class 5 or after secondary level after class 8, went on to complete Matric, school leaving-level education. Many of them went further on to college. Several of them are gainfully employed. Similar to my personal experience, several dozen other legislators elected in 1985 were able to sponsor schemes of direct, tangible benefit to tens of thousands of citizens.

If there had been no such programme, the Government may well have eventually, in later years, established similar facilities. But the construction of these long-needed projects accelerated the provision of basic infrastructure and fulfilled the fundamental rights to education and health care several years ahead of such action at a later time, which may – or may not — have occurred.

The decision of the Government of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto to discontinue this Programme was one of my several disagreements on policy. While I conceded the possibly purely ulterior motives which may have motivated the launch of the Programme by the Junejo Government and while I was aware that corruptive practices also marred it in some cases, I was also convinced that to end the Programme altogether was akin to throwing the baby out with the bathwater. It may have been an inconvenient truth for the PPP Government to acknowledge the beneficial aspects of the Programme, particularly in the 1988-90 phase, so soon after the Zia years and the Junejo Government. But the inconvenience should never have been allowed to discontinue the measure.



With supreme irony, years after the end of the 1985- 1988 legislators' sponsored development programme, the same system was fully restored in the party-based democratic system and endured for several years.

In India, the world's largest parliamentary democracy, and moreover one in which polls have always been party- based, a similar programme entitles each Member of the Lok Sabha to sponsor schemes and each Member of the indirectly elected Rajya Sabha can also do so.

## *Asif Ali Zardari's presence*

In one respect, the Cabinet functioned while being aware of the strong and increasing influence on Government affairs of an individual who was not a Cabinet Member. One is not referring to the President or the Chief of Army Staff or the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. The individual was Asif Ali Zardari, the Prime Minister's husband. In less than 2 years of being her spouse, he had become closely associated with the political aspect of her life. He was not a Member of any legislature nor did he occupy a Party office. His father's relationship with the PPP had been a mixed record of initial hostility, followed by membership of PPP.

My personal interaction with Asif Ali Zardari was very limited. Our first encounter had no connection with politics or the PPP. At some point in the late 1970s / early 1980s, a friend phoned to suggest that in my then-capacity as Chief Executive and co-owner of the firm, MNJ Communications, I meet with a certain businessman who was launching a new venture. He wished to appoint an advertising agency to conduct a large-scale advertising campaign in the mass media. We fixed the date and time for a meeting at my office.

At the given time, my friend walked into my room (at the MNJ office just off Shahrah-e-Faisal at Nursery, Karachi) with the individual who was introduced as Asif Ali Zardari. While I knew of his father's ownership of Bambino Cinema in which one had viewed several memorable films — *Lawrence of Arabia*, *South Pacific*, *El Cid* and many others — the two of us had never previously met. It

was conveyed that the gentleman planned to purchase, or lease a large tract of land on the premier road known as M.A. Jinnah Road — formerly Bunder Road — one of the city's main arteries. And then to construct an attractive new, multi-storeyed, multi-purpose complex of housing apartments, offices, shops and other units. MNJ would create the advertising campaign and place advertisements in print media and film commercials on PTV and radio spots on PBC to attract customers who would make down-payments and then pay installments, till the completion of the project.

At that time, such schemes for projects in other parts of the city had been marketed in previous years, and some were also being heavily advertised. As there was high demand for new housing, advance bookings were a familiar practice. Sponsors of such schemes invested their own capital to initiate these projects by, for instance, constructing a site office where a scale model of the proposed structure was displayed and sales executives welcomed visitors to answer queries and take bookings and advances.

The bulk of the capital required for construction came from advance payments made by citizens looking to purchase new homes or small-scale businessmen wanting to buy new shops. Publicity of such projects in newspapers and on PTV was loud and prominent. On the face of it, this was a winning formula for every one.

However, in practice, the advertising profession of which I was then a part, was often abuzz with reports and rumours of large amounts owed by sponsors of housing projects to advertising agencies remaining unpaid for months, even for years, beyond set dates.

Advertising agencies were the first and foremost victims of these delayed payments. In some instances, due payments had simply never been made. Newspapers, TV and radio accepted advertisements from advertising agencies

on behalf of advertisers. Media give advertising agencies credit facilities which in turn benefitted advertisers. If payments were not received by the media from the agencies on due dates, the media would suspend receiving business from the advertising agency which was in default. Later, the errant advertiser, for instance, defaulting housing projects, would also be black-listed by the media, and their future advertising refused placement.

At MNJ we had handled on a very limited scale the business of Maymar Housing Services, an unusual example of excellence and integrity led with passion by Syed Mazhar Ali who, in later years was also elected like myself, a Senator from Sindh on a seat reserved for technocrats. But in the case of Maymar the scale of business was a small percentage of MNJ's total volume and did not pose a threat to our company's stability in case receivables were delayed.

In this new business proposition, the proposed scale seemed to be much larger. I thanked both Asif Ali Zardari and our common friend for considering MNJ for appointment as the advertising agency for the new project and said I would revert shortly after consulting my partner and co-director, Majeed Ahmed.

The reputation of housing projects as advertisers and poor paymasters discouraged me from accepting the tempting and positive expression of interest in appointing MNJ Communications. Where advertising agencies normally had to hunt and look for new business, here was a promising large new potential customer willing to bring his business to our door-step. Other major advertisers had also done so in previous years, for which we were greatly appreciative. Advertisers such as the National Bank of Pakistan led by the dynamic Jamil Nishtar, Pakistan Tobacco Co. Ltd. whose respected chairman was Syed Nizam Shah and whose marketing team was led by the estimable Riaz Mahmood and Saquib Hameed ably supported by Taher Memon were among those major advertisers which had, of their own initiative, uncontacted by us, appointed us to

handle two of the largest and most prestigious advertising accounts in Pakistan. They had impeccable financial reputations.

But because the housing and construction sector had acquired an unfavourable record of unreliable, erratic settlement of dues, my colleague Director and I decided to decline the opportunity. We must have upset my friend and embarrassed him and we probably did the same with regard to the gentleman who had taken the trouble to visit our office to offer us his business. We hoped that our negative responses had not been taken as a personal slight.

Our decision was purely business-related. There was nothing personal. I did not know Asif Ali Zardari nor did he then have a personal reputation of a negative kind.

This unproductive encounter may or may not have been the reason for my frosty relationship with Asif Ali Zardari — a relationship which always remained distant, formal and fairly cool. In contrast to the comparatively closer relationship he had with some other Members of the Cabinet during my tenure in the Cabinet of his spouse.

At one point in my Ministerial tenure, his father, Hakim Ali Zardari telephoned me. He made a strong, emphatic recommendation regarding the appointment of a certain veteran radio broadcaster as the next Director-General of PBC. I listened to him with the respect due to an MNA and to the father-in-law of the Prime Minister. However, when he pressed me to obtain my assent to his recommendation I expressed my regretful inability to do so. I said that the appointment would be made on merit alone and, in nominating the standard three names as options for consideration by the Prime Minister, I would take note of his well-founded recommendation but could not assure him that I agreed with his choice. He conveyed, in no uncertain terms, his great displeasure at my refusal to say “Yes” to his recommendee, and put down his telephone, clearly

very upset at the impertinence of a mere Minister of State.

To the credit of the Prime Minister, she never spoke to me on the subject and in subsequent days, she and I concurred on the identity of the person appointed to that position, a person different from the one recommended by Hakim Ali Zardari.

In the 31 years between 1990 and 2021, I met Asif Ali Zardari not more than three times. The first two meetings were in the 1993-1996 period. One of these was a very casual, fleeting encounter in the company of Benazir Bhutto at the Karachi airport before she became Prime Minister a second time and we exchanged only formal pleasantries. Another meeting was during the second tenure of Benazir Bhutto at a public event and was equally brief and formal. The third meeting was perhaps the longest- ever. But it did not relate to the political context.

Dr R.K. Pachauri, an eminent environmentalist of India who chaired the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), a body that was awarded a Nobel Prize for its valuable work, was invited to visit Pakistan in 2009 to address a conference in Islamabad and to make a courtesy call on the President of Pakistan. During the second Government of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, President Asif Ali Zardari had chaired the Pakistan Environment Council.

Aban Marker Kabraji, the highly capable Asia region Director of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the world's largest and oldest environment organization, a member of the prominent Pakistani Zoroastrian family of the Markers had helped introduce IUCN to Pakistan and had overseen its steady evolution. On the occasion of this visit she wanted me to meet with the President of Pakistan in my voluntary work capacity as one of the four elected global Vice Presidents of IUCN. Over a small lunch at Aiwan-e-Sadr, President Zardari indicated awareness about my long association with

voluntary work in the Tharparkar arid region and said he hoped that IUCN would also contribute to the advancement of the environmental dimensions of the region. I updated him on the situation.

There was also an indirect interaction with his office during his Presidency. A few weeks after Asif Zardari's induction into office, Salman Farooqi, a veteran and well-known Civil Service officer who was the Principal Secretary to the President of Pakistan telephoned me. He wanted me to chair, or co-chair with the eminent development practitioner, Shoaib Sultan Khan, a Task Force being established to formulate new policy initiatives for the social sector including new concepts for advancing health and education. The Task Force would function under the aegis of the Planning Commission. Though I was reluctant to accept a new responsibility on an honorary basis in view of my prior commitments to voluntary work I agreed to do so on the insistence of Salman Farooqi. Subsequently, during two meetings of the Task Force it became evident that there was an absence of clarity on the respective institutional roles of the concerned Ministries at the Federal and Provincial levels. With a Task Force that did not have the executive weight and authority of a Ministry, it was not going to be feasible to invest significant time and effort when an inconclusive outcome was most likely. I therefore withdrew from this Task Force.

Notwithstanding the strongly-held perceptions about the association of Asif Ali Zardari with corruption and the absence of any personal rapport between the two of us, I believe it is appropriate and necessary to give him credit for authorizing the PPP to steer an all-party consensus that enabled the adoption of the 18th Constitutional Amendment in 2010. While this Amendment has rectified the intra-Federation structure heavily in favour of the Provinces, it requires further review in the light of experience gained while implementing the Amendment's provisions between 2010 and 2021.

*“The Prime Minister wants to see you”*

Even for a Cabinet Member a call from the Military Secretary of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto or her ADC to convey a message in the above words was a pleasant, pleasurable summons regardless of whether one had met her a short while earlier, at a public event, or in Parliament, or in a Cabinet meeting or in a small group or in a oneon- one conversation.

The telephonic message affirmed that she acknowledged the relative relevance or possible value of meeting with oneself on a given subject.

Most often it was expected that a Cabinet Member requesting a meeting also specified the subject that was sought to be discussed to enable the Prime Minister to be aware of what she was going to be informed about, or what the Minister was seeking.

No one, in general, likes to be caught by surprise, unexpectedly faced with a request which may be difficult to evade or handle.

In our political system, the Head of Government is approached in every sitting of the National Assembly or the Senate, particularly by Members of the ruling party (who are not Cabinet Members) with written requests for special favours and approvals for perusal of constituency- related matters. Or with verbal messages of various kinds seeking, for example, visits by the Head of Government to the person’s constituency.

Regardless of the importance of the subject being discussed at a given time in the legislature, the Head of Government is always being approached. Unless, on



some occasions, when the item is of such significance that the Prime Minister or someone on behalf of the Prime Minister is speaking, legislators of the ruling party are always wanting to come toward the Prime Minister's chair. The pressure on the Prime Minister's time is obvious. A PM is unable to regularly give appointments to each Party legislator for a one-on-one meeting. But the lack of respect for the proceedings of the House is a regrettable spectacle. On occasions when the Speaker or the Chairman admonishes those making a bee-line to the Prime Minister's chair, the tide ebbs. But it soon begins to rise again on most occasions. In my own experience, one had reasonable access to the Prime Minister — at encounters as listed in the first paragraph. But neither did I frequently request exclusive meetings or appointments with her nor did she frequently ask me to join her for a one-on-one discussion. My estimate is that I was present in group meetings of various levels — Cabinet, Parliament, conferences, press conferences, meetings with visiting overseas dignitaries at airports or in bilateral delegation talks, public party meetings, social events, conferences and private events for over about two hundred different times.

Our one-on-one meetings, with no one else present, short in duration or extended, were only on about twenty to twenty five occasions.

So a message received to the effect that the Prime Minister was willing to afford time for me was always welcome. I do not recall ever having been unable to obtain an appointment, sooner or later.

Being aware of the extraordinary interest of media worldwide and the media in Pakistan to obtain interviews with her, in addition to the normal/abnormal process that applies to any Head of Government, I often used a "Note for the Prime Minister" to convey information or opinion which I believed was important for her to learn about — and for her to take action on. Thus, I did not frequently pester her Military Secretary or her ADC for exclusive meetings.

On certain occasions, few but recallable, instead of the one-on-one meeting I was expecting to have, I would discover that a third person, or even fourth or fifth persons were already present with her for our meeting.

I would realize instantly that she did not want to herself alone handle the subject which she either already knew that I was going to raise with her. Or, in case one introduced an entirely new subject, she did not want to be alone but wanted company and support for whatever her position was on a given issue. This preference for one or more other persons to be present in a meeting with a Cabinet Member seeking a one-on-one meeting was not because of lack of self-confidence.

Benazir Bhutto had abundant ability to face a single individual or address a hundred thousand people at a public rally with candour, courage and clarity. One may have disagreed with her views but there could be no doubt about her courage and capacity to face a person or a situation, however unexpected the moments ahead would be. But when she deliberately included another person, or more than one other person, in an exclusive meeting sought by an individual, it was clear that she wanted to avoid being faced with the discomfort of a question or a request that she was unwilling, or unable to address.

This is why there were some occasions when she distinctly signaled her reluctance to candidly share with me in a one-on-one exchange on particular subjects by asking other persons to remain in the room when I entered, expecting to talk to her alone.

There were probably at least four subjects that she was not too keen to discuss threadbare or with total candour. These presumably were: aspects of the Information policy which she did not want to implement ; feedback on allegations of corruption by some Government and party leaders ; need for her to exercise restraint in the face of even grave provocations by Nawaz Sharif and his

cohorts in Punjab; and prospects of my resignation from the Cabinet.

*“You are in the delegation to the USA” (June 1989)*

As my dissent on her changed news policy for PTV and PBC had become evident to both of us, I was not expecting to be included in the Prime Minister’s delegation for Benazir Bhutto’s first-ever journey to the USA as Prime Minister on a State visit.

So it was nice to receive a Note from her office informing me that the Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting was to also be part of the entourage, repeat entourage, not the limited official delegation. Which meant that while only certain Federal Ministers/ Advisers would accompany her in the talks with President George H.W. Bush, members of her entourage would be with her in all other engagements. In some instances, specially the several encounters and interviews with leading media, I would be either the only other official present, or be there alongwith Bashir Riaz, her Press Secretary or the relevant Press official of the Embassy in DC or from the Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the UN in New York.

We departed in a large PIA jet on 3rd June. Soon after flying over Iran, we received news of two major events: the demise of Ayatullah Khomeini in Tehran and the crackdown on the demonstrations at Tiananmen Square in Beijing.

Both events were of significant interest to Pakistan. Khomeini had led a transformative revolution of an immediate Muslim neighbouring country. The

overthrow of the Shah of Iran's monarchy and the establishment of a theocratic democracy in Iran in 1979 had major external ramifications on a regional and global level. During the past decade of the 1980s, Iran's conflict with Iraq and the covert conflict with Saudi Arabia with the attendant aspect of the Sunni-Shia schism was already registering a growing fall-out in Pakistan. Iran had polarized, hostile relations with the very same country for which we were headed — though the US Embassy hostages had been released, tensions simmered — with the Israel factor compounding the bilateral US-Iran relationship.

Pakistan's extraordinary relationship with China required that, even where excessive force had been used to end the Tiananmen Square gathering of protesters, in which demonstrators suffered many fatal casualties, Pakistan would support all measures by the Chinese Government to enforce law and order in the name of stability. It was strongly suspected that there was a CIA hand in fomenting the ferment in Tiananmen Square as part of the larger global US strategy of weakening Communist-ruled States from within.

As brief discussions took place at 30,000 feet up in the air about these two major events, appropriate statements of condolences, and of concern — or of no statements in one case — were decided upon and necessary actions taken.

In view of the long journey, the travel plan for the entourage included a stop-over for the night at Geneva. Apart from Cabinet members, I recall the presence of two senior CSP officers who were accompanying the Prime Minister. Cabinet Secretary Hasan Zaheer who later published his excellent book *The Separation of East Pakistan* and Salim Abbas Jilani, Principal Secretary to the PM who would, in later years, hold other high offices, including Caretaker Federal Defence Minister in 2008. It was also Salim Abbas Jilani's remark about 20 years later that inspired the title of this book.

Refreshed and revived next morning, we departed for Washington DC. On

arrival at Andrews Air Force Base, Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto chose to descend the stairs from the aircraft with baby Bilawal in her arms. This was an image that memorably conveyed at least two significant messages to the world in general and to the peoples of the USA and Pakistan in particular.

First: that as the world's first Muslim woman Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto was capable of confidently conducting the role of Head of Government along with the roles of wife and mother. Second: that the authenticity of her struggle as a Muslim woman for democracy was being formally recognized by the world's most powerful democracy.

The 6-day visit was a whirlwind full of the finery and the frills of a State visit as well as several non-official yet important encounters in the non-official phase of the visit. It was packed with official meetings, public events, interactions with legislators, media interviews, re-unions and travels to multiple locations on the East Coast. In preparing the Washington DC part of the visit, two Zoroastrian Pakistanis: Ambassador-at-large Happy Minwalla and Jamsheed Marker, Pakistan's Ambassador to the USA, made valuable contributions.

In Washington DC, two events at The White House enabled President George H. W. Bush to welcome the Prime Minister of Pakistan with the entire entourage and other invitees present.

The day-time reception on the South Grounds was a colourful combination of elements. We assembled on the lawn in advance of the Prime Minister's arrival. The President and Mrs Bush waited to receive their visitors — who soon arrived: she looked serene and composed, her spouse looked dapper, clad in white shalwar kameez. The programme included the playing of the 2 national anthems, a gun salute, a guard of honour, a walk-past by a military music band costumed from the 18th century and brief addresses by the host and the chief guest. There were hundreds of other people, mostly members of the Pakistani-American

diaspora, images replete with smiles and cheers.

At the evening event which included musical entertainment, dinner was preceded by the formal introduction of each member of the visiting team to the US President. Just before my turn came up to shake hands with President Bush and be photographed with him and the Prime Minister, there was a brief amusing episode. Haji Sakhi Jan, MNA from South Waziristan in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) dressed in his traditional shalwar-kameez and vest with a big turban, a heavily-built gentleman, handed over his visiting card to the President — and asked for Bush's own card ! To which the President responded that he regretted not carrying a card at that time but would arrange for one to be provided to his guest.

During the dinner, I also met US Vice President Dan Quayle. We exchanged pleasantries but did not delve into the intricacies of the bilateral relationship. A former Congressman and Senator from Indiana, the Vice President had already acquired a reputation for possessing comparatively limited awareness of the world outside the USA. But he was courteous and attentive in brief exchanges.

The Prime Minister's address to Congress was elegant and eloquent, appropriate and comprehensive, yet concise and focussed. Though this writer resented not having been invited by her to contribute to the draft, one nevertheless appreciated the relevance and tone of the speech which drew frequent and warm applause, including a prolonged standing ovation at the end. Without detracting from its quality, one is nevertheless obliged to record a perception that I strongly felt as the speech unfolded. This perception was that the thoughts and words were a shade too customized and overly conscious of the audience to which they were being delivered.

Of course, one of the vital features of an effective public speech is the favourable response it evokes from those to whom it is presented. But there is a

fine line between saying something that is right and true and saying something that subtly aims to ingratiate the speaker with the audience.

Perhaps the reason for this facet to the text was that the content and language were principally crafted not only by the Prime Minister herself but also by Mark Siegel, the communications specialist based in the USA. He had been introduced to Benazir Bhutto by her former Oxford University colleague Peter Galbraith. Already by 1989 he had become a principal source of advice and professional skills direly needed to smoothly navigate the currents of opinion- making in the US Congress and in American media. Mark Siegel's valuable support to Benazir Bhutto remained consistent over the next 18 years, right up to — and even after — her tragic assassination on 27th December 2007. He helped complete the editing and production of her book *Reconciliation: Islam, Democracy and the West* published in 2008 shortly after her demise.

As this writer was privileged to be present at the White House reception and banquet, at her address to Congress and at virtually every single public and media engagement during the US visit, including a meeting with Secretary of State James Baker one can affirm that Benazir Bhutto was always articulate and assertive during every interaction. She also always touched the right buttons. Espousal of democracy, defiance of dictatorship, admiration for America's values of freedom and liberty, pride in being Muslim and Pakistani and a woman leader, demands gently but firmly voiced for far better understanding on the part of the USA and the West of Pakistan's contributions to causes held dear by them, Pakistan's legitimate needs for economic and military aid, her pledge that her country opposed nuclear proliferation, et al.

The last of these buttons was also pressed with a straight face as was the case with the others. Except that, on the nuclear issue, she was already aware that President Ghulam Ishaq Khan and the military were excluding access by her to



some of the crucial data about the country's advancing capacity in this hyper-sensitive area. But during this high profile visit, it was incumbent upon her to mention that Pakistan's pursuit of nuclear energy was for purely peaceful purposes.

She knew that this was not so. There were ample grounds for Pakistan to persist with its quest. The country's ace intelligence services — with exceptional ability to penetrate the inner recesses of India's own secret plans — were confirming India's nuclear weapons development plans which had been publicly revealed after the absurdly named "peaceful" explosive test in Pokhran, Rajasthan in 1974.

During her address to the joint session of Congress, Benazir Bhutto aptly recalled the fact that, soon after India's induction of nuclear weapons into the region, Pakistan took the initiative of introducing a Resolution in the UN General Assembly calling for a nuclear-free zone in South Asia. That Resolution had secured overwhelming support, with the exclusion of India and a few other countries. She also posed a challenge by suggesting that, if other countries in the region concurred, Pakistan would welcome multi-lateral inspection of its nuclear installations. Predictably, India was unwilling to ensure transparency about its programme. The Western nuclear weapon powers wanted to unfairly keep the onus on Pakistan.

For Benazir Bhutto, during her US visit, the nuclear issue became a challenge that had to be lived with long after the visit was over. During a secret, unannounced briefing by CIA Director William Webster, she was informed about solid evidence gathered regarding Pakistan's continuous pursuit of uranium-enrichment, contrary to public denials. Yet in all her interviews with the media, she needed to deny what one knew to be a fact. Despite the truth that Pakistan was obliged to conduct the uranium-enrichment route to counter a

hostile neighbour's introduction of nuclear weapons into South Asia, dichotomy between a stated public position diametrically opposite to the facts symbolized the conundrums faced by holders of State offices around the world, and not just in Pakistan.

During the Presidency of Ronald Reagan (1980-1988), the American Government had deliberately looked the other way when their intelligence system confirmed Pakistan's steady advances towards enriching uranium. From the USA's perspective of its own national interest, Pakistan's unstinted support in the conflict to remove Soviet troops from Afghanistan was the more important consideration. Even when US officials knew that General Ziaul Haq or his Foreign Minister Sahabzada Yaqub Khan were lying outright in their respective denials of Pakistan's secret nuclear weapons programme, the look-away option and the public acceptance of Pakistan's version were preferred.

Now, in 1989 with Reagan's Vice President George H.W. Bush as Head of State, and with the April 1988 Geneva accord in the process of being implemented, US policy was gradually shifting towards increased caution being signalled to Pakistan and the ground being prepared for tough action. Yet, back home, the Prime Minister was able to play a role in authorizing integrated testing and in later years visited North Korea to seek support for missile development.

Behind the respectful protocol and positive vibes radiating from a State visit, the nuclear weapons issue was like a slow-burning fuse, its hiss just barely audible but its potentially damaging implications becoming more and more obvious.

There was heavy irony in the fact that the civil and military establishment was reluctant to share all information about the nuclear weapons project with Benazir Bhutto. It was her own father, Z.A. Bhutto who had initiated the secret programme. Yet, just about a decade after his death, his popularly-elected

daughter was being deliberately excluded from the loop. Like all other Pakistanis, father and daughter had been and were equally committed to acquiring nuclear weapon capability as the only deterrent against India's unceasing efforts to achieve hegemony.

Apart from the warmth and pomp of the State-visit part of the visit to Washington DC there were also interviews with principal media figures. Most prominent of these was one with Katherine Graham, owner of the influential *Washington Post*. The meeting with this grand dame of American journalism was cordial yet candid, with the Prime Minister having to smoothly deflect and downplay references to potential threats of religious extremism from madrassas spawned during General Ziaul Haq's rule.

Benazir Bhutto's ability to handle tough questions without evading them was in full play during the next phase of the visit that took us to New York. I recall arriving at the airport on a day that was extraordinarily cold for June, with the wind and rain whipping the face with a drenching wet welcome.

Through a tightly-packed schedule we proceeded to encounters with the editorial teams of the *New York Times*, *Time magazine* and leading TV networks.

Though the arrangements were plush, one felt a pang of conscience at being put up at the expensive Waldorf-Astoria Hotel and to keep the conscience aside because the choice of residence was not in one's own purview. The Pakistani-American community, led by the PPP wing in the USA hosted a dinner brimming with joy and enthusiasm.

We then travelled to Boston and environs. Returning to her old campus at Harvard, Benazir Bhutto delivered the address of honour. She spoke with a fusion of sentiment and of dispassionate analysis of the global situation and Pakistan's critical needs and responsibilities. She proposed the formation of an Association of Democratic Nations — an interesting concept but one which did

not later gather steam.

She sometimes accepted, and used, talking points provided to her by this writer. Otherwise, she was always able to handle tough questions. Occasionally one felt she tended too often to use a victimhood perspective. But this was also understandable for a daughter whose father had been unjustly executed.

The two other major features of this visit were the receptions hosted by Senator Edward Kennedy and by Professor John Galbraith. At all such events, Benazir Bhutto exuded infectious charm and ineffable grace. At the Kennedy event, this writer recalls the discomfort I felt at having to don a borrowed tie and jacket for the reception because my own suitcase had been inadvertently stranded in New York.

The Prime Minister's US visit was a genuine success in terms of both official and public diplomacy. She had the able support of Foreign Minister Sahabzada Yaqub Khan and National Security Adviser Iqbal Akhund and Pakistan's Ambassador to the USA Jamsheed Marker. On the State level, there was validation of her position by a host Government that had in the previous decade so strongly befriended General Ziaul Haq, who had ordered the hanging of her father. During the formal talks, the US Government had agreed to review and enhance economic and military support to Pakistan. The long-pending issue of un-released sixty F-16 fighter jets for which Pakistan had already made payment made notable progress. But, about 14 months later, after our Government's ouster, the imposition of sanctions under the Pressler Amendment on 30th August 1990 stalled future progress on military aid.

However, there was visible bipartisan appreciation for Pakistan's resolute stand on Afghanistan through support to the Mujahideen's resistance of the Soviet invasion and close interest in how the next phases of the situation were likely to develop. The US, said President Bush, saw the bilateral relationship with

Pakistan as going beyond Afghanistan on one issue alone. It was hoped that extremist religious forces would not achieve political space.

## *Internal conflict deepens*

By July 1989, just 8 months into my tenure at the Information Ministry, the covert interference by the Prime Minister — and by persons she had appointed in her circle of media advisers — in some of the critical aspects of Information policy became unacceptable for me.

As she retained the portfolio of the Federal Minister of Information and Broadcasting she did have the right, as per the Constitution, and the Rules of Business, to be the Head of the Ministry and to be the chief decision-maker, subject in some cases, to the Prime Minister's approval — which in any case, was herself. As Minister of State I was bound to accept her decisions.

However, my understanding of the distribution of authority and responsibility between her as Federal Minister and myself as Minister of State was based on the following elements:

That we were both equally committed to reforming and improving the Information policy which had evolved during past decades of civil authoritarianism (1947-1958), (1972-1977) and of military dominance (1958-1971), (1977-1988).

In contrast to positive aspects in which the Prime Minister/Federal Minister and I as Minister of State had co-ordinated, in a few other aspects there was little or no co-ordination. Indeed, there was a direct conflict of views.

One such aspect concerned the content of news bulletins and current affairs programmes on the State media of PTV and PBC. As detailed elsewhere, the

balanced, liberal policy by which the Opposition was given fair coverage every day introduced at my initiative since about 7th December 1988 had been replaced by — in about end-April 1989 — a virtual return to the imbalanced Government propaganda of past decades.

Further, fairly often, polemical or biased news reports portraying the Opposition in a negative light — without providing the Opposition with the right of reply — had begun to feature with alarming frequency in news bulletins of the monopolist State electronic media.

Discussion in current affairs' programmes onward of end-April had become pre-dominantly Government-centric. The Prime Minister had authorized Irshad Rao to be placed in the News Room of PTV with the authority to determine the content of news bulletins and current affairs shows.

The other aspect concerned the placement of advertising of all the several Federal Government Ministries, attached Departments and Corporations, as also Provincial Government entities — as in Sindh in particular — in privately-owned newspapers and magazines.

Some of these journals regularly published news and comments highly critical of our PPP government — though they also, to be fair, duly published, in full or in part, the Government's perspectives as well. Or one journal, otherwise balanced, would regularly publish an editorial or one op.ed. article that was critical of the PPP Government. Or, in general, material would appear which would ridicule or make fun of official lapses and personalities. Sometimes, the Government itself would provide ample material for privately-owned print media to exploit.

Whereas I believed that the power to place Government- controlled advertising should only be used on the basis of the relevance of a newspaper being able to reach target audiences and on the basis of certified circulation and generally

acknowledged standards of professionalism, there was the long-set, well-entrenched conviction that it is entirely justified for advertising to be allocated on other grounds as well. These other grounds were primarily the extent to which a newspaper supported the Government's policies and leadership.

I had been able to ensure the non-discriminatory, merit-based advertising allocation policy up to about April 1989.

But onwards of that time, I began to receive telephone calls, or visits in person, by publishers and Editor-owners of certain leading newspapers and magazines, national as well as regional, complaining to me that they had been unfairly deprived of receiving their due shares in various advertising campaigns. The Press Information Department of the Information Ministry in Islamabad or their branches in the Provinces had reportedly excluded their journals' names from approved lists.

When I inquired of Rashid Latif, the Secretary of the Ministry or directly from the relevant Heads of the Federal and Provincial PIDs, I was informed that journals which normally received Government advertising as a matter of course had had their allocations reduced or cancelled after phone calls made from either the Prime Minister's Office, or from those known by the PIDs to be acting on her instructions.

I was deeply offended at both these violations of the spoken and unspoken agreement with Benazir Bhutto on the basis of which I had accepted the position of Minister of State.

Meanwhile, the parallel process of communication between the Prime Minister's Office and individuals in PTV and other departments continued unabated — obviously with the PM's approval, or most likely, at her initiative. I decided the time had come to leave.



## *Offer of resignation*

(JULY 1989)

Soon after our return from the US visit, in about the second half of July 1989, I decided to resign as I found it untenable to continue where the Prime Minister herself was helping others to undermine a progressive Information policy.

At the first opportunity afforded for a brief one-on-one meeting in about end-July 1989, I informed Benazir Bhutto that I had decided to resign and that there was no bitterness — a white lie! — on my part, and that I wished her well.

She was visibly surprised. But she quickly smiled and said, “Javed, you can’t do that. Some of our colleagues are not happy with the Information Ministry, but I won’t let you go. You are such an important member of my team”.

I said, “Prime Minister, thank you for your appreciation. Its good for my ego. But you well know the reasons why I cannot continue. Be rest assured, even from outside the Cabinet, I can continue to support you and your Government.”

She said, “No question of that, forget it, Javed. We will talk about this later”. And she brought our meeting to an abrupt end, pressing the buzzer for her ADC.

About a couple of weeks later, when she had not responded to me about my intentions, I once again requested, and was able to get a one-on-one meeting.

This time, she said, “Alright, Javed. But you have to stay in the Cabinet. We need you. Take some other Ministry.”

Not expecting this new move, for a moment I was caught off-guard. My mind raced through the options. Abandon the opportunity to continue working with a remarkable woman-leader, the first of her kind in the entire Muslim world,

facing very unfair and tough odds? Or stay, accept another portfolio and help her — and continue to enjoy the privilege and pleasure of being a Cabinet Member? I succumbed to the latter option.

“Prime Minister, you have already allocated all the portfolios. And you will not let me be Federal Minister. There seems to be nothing purposeful that I can do.”

She said, “You are already representing me for the World Summit for Children. We can surely identify another Ministry at the Minister of State level...”

Because international affairs was a subject I had always been deeply interested in, had studied at the University of Karachi, had written and presented PTV’s first weekly world affairs programme titled: *The World Tonight*, I said, “Prime Minister, how about Foreign Affairs? There is no Minister of State there?” She thought for a moment and said, “That’s a good idea. Sahabzada Yaqub Khan could certainly do with some support from you. But let me check with him first”.

I was glad that we agreed about Foreign Affairs as the alternative portfolio. Shortly thereafter, during a Senate session and during interactions with the Foreign Minister, I was tempted to share with him the conversation I had held with the Prime Minister. But decided not to — as I realized it would be inappropriate to try to pre-empt his exchange with the Prime Minister on this subject.

Sahabzada Yaqub Khan and I had known each other well onward of March 1985 as fellow Senators. During his tenure as Foreign Minister in the Junejo Government, I periodically engaged in discussion or debate with him in Senate proceedings when he would respond to my Private Member’s Questions or to Motions which I moved on subjects connected with foreign policy.

Despite occasional conflicting viewpoints or disagreements, our personal relations always remained cordial and pleasant.

Sahabzada Yaqub Khan was a one-of-a-kind gentleman. A military person with a reputation for a distinct individuality of viewpoint and character not normally associated with an institution synonymous with uniformity and unanimity, he was also a versatile linguist in several languages, and a highly cultivated and urbane personality.

Now, as colleagues in the same Cabinet, I sometimes handled matters on his behalf if he was overseas or unable to attend a sitting of the Senate or the Assembly.

In August 1989, the Prime Minister called me for a meeting. She was alone when we met. She said, “Javed, unfortunately, Sahabzada did not agree to the appointment of a Minister of State. He said he has high regard for you. But he also believes it may cause operational problems. So, please don’t insist on Foreign Affairs”.

Seeing my disappointment, I surprised myself by almost immediately thereafter naming Science and Technology as the alternative Ministry.

Her surprise matched the look she gave when, some weeks earlier, I had said I wanted to resign.

She said, “Science and Technology? What are you going to do there? No one wants that Ministry, Javed! Are you sure?”

I said, “Prime Minister, in my humble opinion, Science and Technology is, or should be, one of the most important Ministries. Its relevance for our future development is so obvious.”

She said, “Of course, of course, the subject is of extreme importance. But I meant...”

She trailed off without completing the sentence. I knew what she meant. Science and Technology was a low-key, low-profile Ministry which, in terms of

political influence or public impact, had negligible importance. Unlike Finance, Interior, Commerce, Railways, Defence, Communications, Petroleum and Natural Resources.

These Ministeries were also, somewhat brazenly and crudely referred to by the Press and by many in the political field to be “lucrative” Ministries. In other words, Ministries which could facilitate the illicit earnings of millions through the award of large contracts and permits, approvals, etc. By comparison, the Ministry of Science and Technology was a “poor” Ministry with a very limited budget and resources.

She then continued, “I assigned the Ministry on an Additional Charge basis to Jehangir Badar (Secretary-General of the PPP) who also, as you know, looks after Petroleum and Natural Resources. Due to our compulsions, you know, we cannot make you Federal Minister, so I will retain the portfolio personally. You can now run the Ministry with my complete authority as Minister of State”.

While I preferred to retain skepticism about whether she would actually allow me to lead the Ministry without overdue interference by her or persons acting on her behalf, I accepted her assurance. Due to her own unstated reasons, she wanted me to wait another 5 weeks or so before the change of Ministry was made. I did not mind the delay because I had plenty of work to do outside the Information Ministry, specially the preparatory work at the UN for the World Summit on Children. We later identified the date of my transfer to the new Ministry.

## *Unethical journalism — at my expense*

Shortly after the official announcement that I would be moving to another Ministry, there occurred a classic instance of unethical journalism based on a fabricated, un-authenticated document.

A leading Urdu weekly named *Takbeer* (Pinnacle) edited by Muhammad Salahuddin, an avowed former proponent of the Jamaat-e-Islami and one who retained a strong religion-based ideological approach to all issues, published a disinformative feature. In essence, the feature alleged that, in order to compel me to accept my transfer from the Information Ministry to the Science and Technology Ministry, Benazir Bhutto threatened to leak to the Press and other media a certain incriminating document. The *Takbeer* feature reproduced a document. This facsimile purported to convey that, on the instructions of Prime Minister Junejo, issued on the request of Senator Javed Jabbar in 1986-87, the concerned departments of the Government of Sindh were directed to allocate 50 acres of land to me in Tharparkar district, Sindh. The document contained the name and designation of a senior official of the Federal Government and the name and title of the relevant official/s in the Government of Sindh, with the date, other details etc. The document looked entirely real and valid.

The allegation was both hilarious and outrageous. I had never applied to Prime Minister Junejo for any allocation of land. In fact, I can never forget a brief encounter with Prime Minister Junejo at some point in the second half of 1987. As we accidentally met in a corridor of the National Assembly building, and as

he was about to enter his room, he drew me aside and very courteously said, “Senator sahib, can I do anything for you?” While I was touched by his gracious offer, made the more so because I was often quite candidly critical in the Senate of his Government’s policies and performance in some major subjects, I had no desire to benefit from a favour or patronage of any kind. I knew then, and in the years thereafter, have known about the names of many Members of Parliament, including Members of both then-ruling parties and of then-Opposition parties who were allotted prized plots of land in Islamabad at the discretion of the then-Prime Minister. I have never applied for a similar favour in Islamabad, or elsewhere.

Secondly, the attempt to link my name with Tharparkar was obviously based on the fact that, since February 1985 when I first visited that region to commence my voluntary work, it may have been assumed that a major reason for my interest in that area was to acquire an asset or some material gain. Whereas, the actual position was virtually the exact opposite. Along with other persons, I devoted my time and my own private resources on a voluntary basis to advance the cause of development for that remote and neglected region.

Thirdly, I had never previously seen the document reproduced in *Takbeer* nor had I ever heard of the official/s named.

Fourthly, this was obviously a malicious yet somewhat crude and pathetic attempt to malign me as well as besmirch the reputation of two Prime Ministers, former PM Junejo, and currently-serving PM Benazir Bhutto — who did not need to exert any pressure on me because it was I who wanted to leave the Cabinet !

Fifthly, someone somewhere must have invested substantial time and effort in conjuring up this fiction and manufacturing the fake content and details.

Sixthly, the Editor of the weekly had not cared to contact me about my own

views on the allegation before publishing the feature.

I immediately decided to file a case for defamation in the Sindh High Court and proceeded to do so. Soon after, I received a telephone call from Muhammad Salahuddin who I otherwise knew due to my long association with media and advertising. In response to my remonstrations to the effect that he had published a serious allegation based on a fabricated document, he expressed his deep regrets and requested me to withdraw the defamation case. I said I would reflect upon his request but reiterated my condemnation of the irresponsibility demonstrated by *Takbeer* and by its Editor. Thanks to the lassitude of our judicial system, the petition languished in the labyrinth of the courts and I decided not to pursue the matter. Two cheers for the freedom of the Press.

Muhammad Salahuddin had, in previous years, split with the Jamaat-e-Islami reportedly principally because whereas JI had opposed the continuation of General Ziaul Haq's regime — after having initially supported him — the former retained his sympathies for the General. The Editor, to his credit, was courageous and critical of the coercive conduct of the MQM. Sadly, just about 5 years after I filed the suit and perhaps a couple of years after my last meeting with him at a public event, Muhammad Salahuddin was assassinated by two gunmen on a motorcycle. The killers were never found but suspicions were quite well-rooted. At his funeral in Karachi, I paid my respects to this senior journalist who, regardless of my diametrically different viewpoints from his own on most issues, certainly did not deserve such a tragic and premature death.



4th December 1988: President Ghulam Ishaq Khan administers oath of office to Ministers of State. Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto seated extreme right. Author 4th from right, facing camera.



30th December 1988: Meeting Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi at the Presidency in Islamabad during the SAARC Summit. President Ghulam Ishaq Khan and President Hussain Ershad of Bangladesh and Mrs



Ershad at extreme left. Centre:  
Asif Ali Zardari, Benazir Bhutto at right



January 1989, Madina: Offering prayers at Roza-i-Rasool. Benazir Bhutto, third from right. Jehangir Bader, fifth from left. N. D. Khan, second from left. Author, third from left.



1989, Islamabad Airport: Meeting Chinese  
Prime Minister Li Peng.



1989, Islamabad Airport: Meeting Yasser Arafat,  
Chairman, Palestine Liberation Organization.



1989, Islamabad Airport: Meeting  
President François Mitterrand of France.



February 1989: Lahore. Author as Chairman, 16th Asian Advertising Congress Organising Committee with members comprising a galaxy of distinguished individuals from advertising, print and electronic media, film, corporate sector, arts, academia, tourism and government (many named in the relevant chapter).



June 1989: on the South Lawn of the White House,  
during the reception for the Prime Minister  
on her first State visit to the USA.



June 1989, Washington, D.C.: at the White House with  
President George H. W. Bush and the Prime Minister.



June 1989, Boston: at the reception hosted by Senator Edward Kennedy (to the right of Benazir Bhutto) for the Prime Minister and the delegation. At the back: Dr Abdullah Riar and Dr Naseer Sheikh



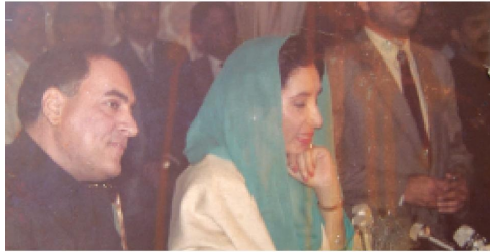
June 1989, Boston: reception at the residence of Professor John Galbraith (third from right) in honour of the Prime Minister of Pakistan.



June 1989, Massachusetts, USA: at Harvard University  
for address by the Prime Minister of Pakistan.  
Seated: Dr Maleeha Lodhi, Salim Abbas Jilani,  
Hassan Zaheer, N.D. Khan, Aftab Mirani.



June 1989, New York: at a reception for Prime Minister  
Benazir Bhutto. Dr Abdullah Riar and Wajid Shamsul Hassan,  
respectively, to the left of the author.



July 1989, Islamabad: Conducting the Press conference of Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto.



September 1989, London, UK. At reception for the author by the English Speaking Union. Extreme left: Shabnam Jabbar, author, (4th from left) Ahmed Jaffer, President ESU, (5th from left) Shahryar Khan, Pakistan High Commissioner in UK (6th from left).



25 December 1989, Pyongyang, North Korea:  
with Marshal Kim Il Sung (front row, 4th from left)  
as leader of the delegation from the Senate of Pakistan.



March 1990, United Nations, New York: as Personal Representative of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and Co-Chairman of the Planning Committee, addressing a Press conference on the World Summit for Children at the United



Nations, New York with James Grant,  
Executive Director, UNICEF at left, and at right  
Co-Chairman, Ambassador Yves Fortier of Canada.



January 1990, New York: Presiding at the  
United Nations over the meeting of the full Planning  
Committee of the World Summit for Children.



February 1990: Benazir Bhutto speaking in the National Assembly. Also seated: Nusrat Bhutto, Sahabzada Yaqub Khan (back to camera), Aitzaz Ahsan, Iftikhar Gillani, Farooq Leghari, Mukhtar Awan, Rehana Sarwar, Shahnaz Wazir Ali., and others. Author in fourth row

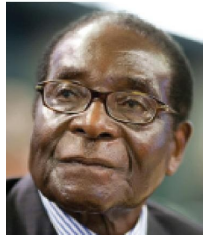
Met — but not pictured with.  
(or pictures lost !)



Queen Elizabeth.  
September 1989, London,  
IPU Centenary Confrence.



President Fidel Castro of  
Cuba, March 1990,  
in Brasilia, Brazil.



President Robert Mugabe  
of Zimbabwe. August 1989.  
In Harare, at NAM  
Information Ministers'  
Conference.



President Fernando de  
Collor of Brazil, March  
1990, in Brasilia, Brazil.

(And about six other former Heads of State and  
Government cited in different chapters).

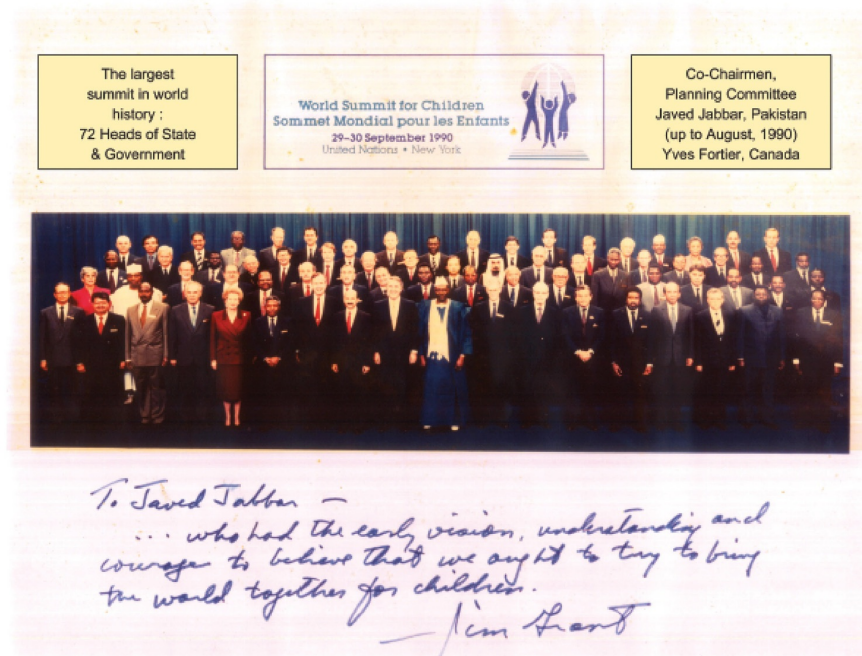


June 1990, Trieste, Italy: with Professor Abdus Salam and his colleague at the International Centre for Theoretical Physics.



October 1990, Punta del Este, Uruguay: Nguyen Thi Binh. Former Minister & former candidate in the IPU election — and future Vice President of Vietnam who made the author realise afresh that some victories can be sadder than some

defeats (see chapter on IPU).



October 1990: inscribed by James Grant, Executive Director, UNICEF: "To Javed Jabbar — who had the early vision, understanding and courage to believe that we ought to try to bring the world together for children — Jim Grant"

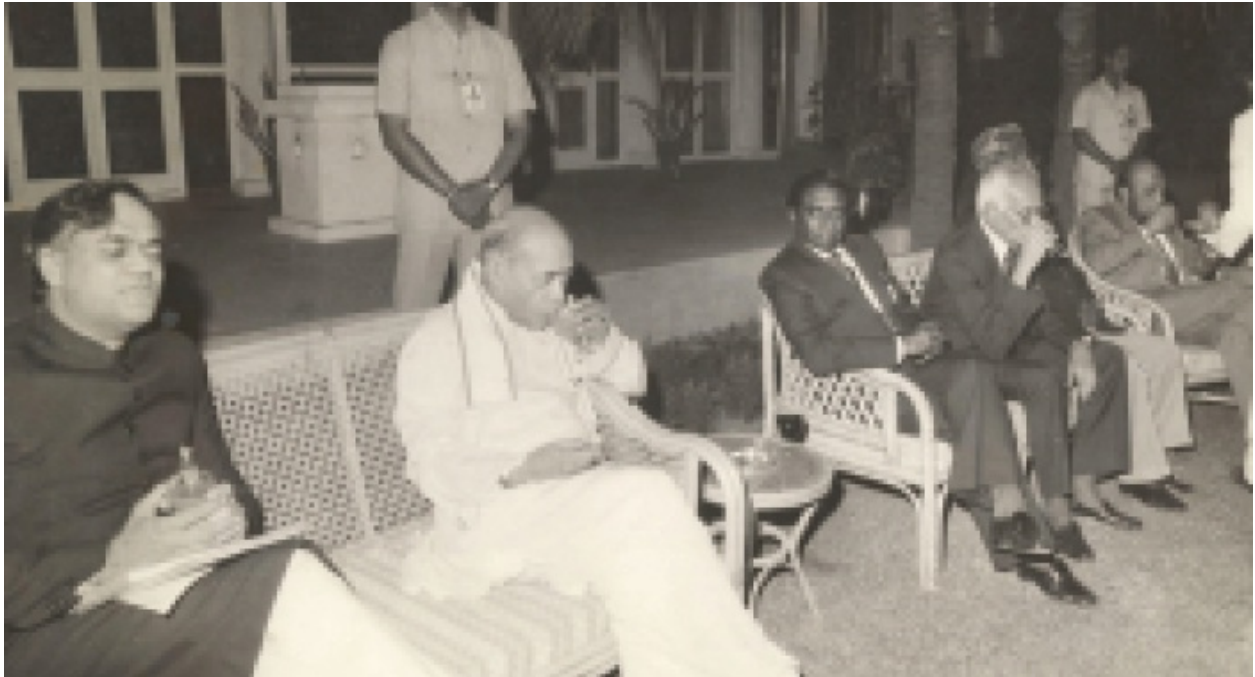


November 1990, Kuala Lumpur. As Chairman of the preceding Asian Advertising Congress in Lahore, author greeting the King of Malaysia Sultan Azimuddin Mohibuddin Shah at the inaugural of AdAsia 90 whose Chairman M. Jaffer is at extreme right.



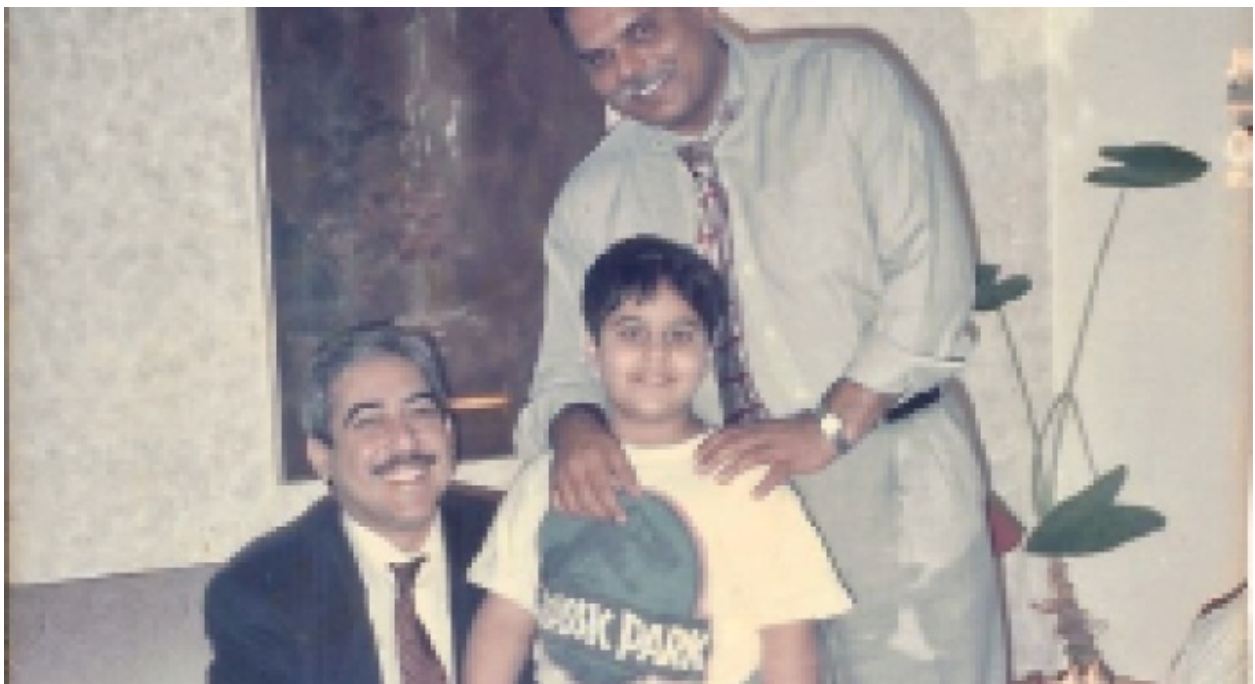
November 1990, Kuala Lumpur. At lunch with Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad of Malaysia (at right) and M. Jaffer, Chairman, AdAsia 1990 (at centre)

on the opening day of the Congress.



1995, New Delhi: with Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao at the Prime Minister's House during a South Asian conference.

(Seated together yet worlds apart !).



1995: Karachi. Murtaza Bhutto (seated) with Najib Zafar Khan

and Najib's son, Ziad Zafar Khan who, in 2021  
is an intrepid, investigative journalist.



1996, Islamabad: with members of the Pakistan and India groups of the Track II dialogue known as the Neemrana Initiative.(Named in the related chapter).



1990, home in Karachi: with the family — Kamal Kadeer,

Shabnam, author and Mehreen.





## PART II



*Learning and working on science and  
technology*

(SEPTEMBER 1989)

In about ten months at the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting from 4th December 1989 to 19th September 1989, and particularly in the first five months, several major changes and reforms in Information policy were introduced. All of them have been described in preceding chapters.

Partings and farewells at the first Ministry one had led were tinged with a mixture of humble pride and sadness. One had been able to demonstrate that, even within the unchanging, entrenched structures of the State, it was possible, however briefly, or however more enduringly, to change conventional policies and patterns and to illustrate the scope for new horizons.

Some of the senior officers appeared to be genuinely regretful about my departure. Others neatly disguised but could not conceal their relief at now being rid of a particular Minister of State.

On 20th September 1989, Jehangir Badar — whose main portfolio was the Federal Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Resources — with the additional charge for the Ministry of Science and Technology, graciously picked me up from my Islamabad residence to formally drive me to my new office in the Science and Technology Ministry.

Jehangir Badar was a senior PPP leader from a Lahore constituency, fervently

loyal to Benazir Bhutto and a true *jiyala*. Warm and friendly in disposition, his English accent was a charming blend of Punjabi, Urdu and English. He was forthright and relaxed, with no pretences. Even if he privately resented having to part with the additional Ministry he had been assigned, he certainly did not show it. He conducted me to the Minister's room along with the Secretary and senior officers, assured me that one could enjoy working as Minister of State with the whole team and, after a cup of tea, we saw him off.

One was fortunate to have Tariq Mustafa as Secretary of the Ministry. An intelligent, well-educated official with a technocratic bent of mind, he was under-stated, always well-informed and well-prepared on the subjects to be discussed or acted upon. We had a pleasant and productive relationship. Post-retirement, when one occasionally meets him about 31 years after we worked together, he retains a deep interest in global issues.

The Ministry of Science and Technology in Pakistan is a political backwater. At the risk of exaggeration, one can say that in 1989, despite so many advances emerging in new knowledge and applications in major overseas countries, the Ministry was given low priority in almost every respect: political importance, integration into higher education and economic policies, financial allocation, etc. An unspoken yet real perception at the highest levels was that as Pakistan, like most other developing countries was already exposed to, and benefitting from various new products and services created through the high level of Research and Development taking place in the advanced countries, there was no real need to invest scarce resources into our own somewhat primitive status. As it was not politically acceptable to shut down organizations and terminate employment of the thousands of staff which was largely unproductive, it was necessary to simply "Keep the system going".

It was laudable that Benazir Bhutto took practical action to change this

apathetic attitude. About 5 months prior to my transfer to the new Ministry, she became the first Head of Government to convene and preside over the first-ever meeting of the National Commission on Science & Technology. Notably, this dormant body had actually been created by General Ziaul Haq in 1984 but neither he nor Prime Minister Junejo or President Ghulam Ishaq Khan had called for its first meeting. The formal review conducted at that first meeting resulted in raising the profile of the subject and the Ministry.

In two vital spheres, and perhaps fortunately so, an unspoken lack of appreciation for the general sector of science and technology did not exist. But that did not in any way directly help the Federal Ministry of Science and Technology.

Commencing in the late 1950s, and throughout the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s there had been created the vast complex of the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission's scientific infrastructure to build the country's capacity for both peaceful uses of nuclear energy and, covertly later, for nuclear weapons — a task taken over by the Kahuta Research Laboratories in about the mid-1970s. PAEC had recruited and trained hundreds of individuals who became exceptional technical specialists and scientists. They were mostly unknown to the public at large. They constituted the backbone of capable human resources which helped take Pakistan to the forefront of 57 Muslim nations and ahead of many other developing countries.

Then there was the Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO) which covered the vast, inter-connected fields of high altitude surveys, satellites and missiles. Both these significant institutions came under the administrative control of the Cabinet Division and not the S&T Ministry because the President and the Prime Minister exercised direct oversight of the two bodies.

Despite the exclusion of PAEC and SUPARCO from the Ministry, this writer as Minister of State was periodically in contact with PAEC and SUPARCO, such contact including visits to both institutions for confidential briefings as also for publicly reported events.

Yet on its own, with low levels of importance and funding, in addition to the normal sections and wings within the Ministry itself which dealt with policy formulation and co-ordination with affiliated bodies, and with Finance, Administration, etc. the Ministry nevertheless had a surprisingly large and fairly diverse set of organizations under its purview. The following names illustrate the range and scale.

Pakistan Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (PCSIR). This was the largest affiliated body with offices, research centres and its own affiliated off-shoots in Karachi, Lahore and other locations.

Pakistan Council for Research into Silicon Technology (PCRST).

Hydro Carbon Research Institute (HCRI).

Council for Works and Housing Research (CWHR)

National Institute of Electronics (NIE)

National Institute of Oceanography (NIO)

Pakistan Council for Renewable Energy Technologies (PCRET)

Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources (PCRWR)

Pakistan Council for Science and Technology (PCST)

Pakistan Science Foundation (PSF)

Pakistan Museum of Natural History (PMNH)

Pakistan Scientific and Technological Information Centre (PASTIC)

Pakistan Standards and Quality Control Authority (PSQCA)

Scientific & Technology Commercialization Corporation of Pakistan Limited

(STEDEC)

In addition, the Ministry was the co-ordinating body to administer the S&T Overseas Scholarship Programme. Introduced by Dr Mahbubul Haq during the tenure of Prime Minister Junejo 1985-1988, this programme was set to select 100 Pakistani scholars in different disciplines for studies in leading overseas research centres and universities. Selectees would sign a bond to ensure their return to Pakistan on the conclusion of their studies so that the country could benefit from the acquisition of their enhanced abilities. As will be evident later in this chapter, the S&T scholarship programme was to become another subject of dissent with Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto.

Where the largest of the organizations—PCSIR—had offices and research centres in multiple locations in Punjab, Sindh, NWFP and a body like CWHR was based in Karachi, many of the other entities were based in Islamabad and the north.

On one of these entities which dealt with emerging new technologies, the famous Dr A.Q. Khan served on the Board of Directors of which I was ex-officio Chairman. He contributed valuable insights during Board meetings. Initially focused on silicon technology, that entity is now the Pakistan Council for Renewable Energy Technology (PCRET).

I had never been a good student of science and arithmetic in school. But one had always been curious and keen to learn about several facets of how objective observations of Nature, independent measurement of phenomena, experimental explorations in physics, chemistry and biology could produce startling and unexpected discoveries. Thus, serving as de facto the Minister-in-charge of Science and Technology became a highly stimulating, educative, enriching experience. Unlike Jehangir Badar who was preoccupied with his main Ministry and substantial, purely political Party work, I was able to devote comparatively

more attention.

It was a pleasure to see that the Secretary as also other senior officials and the Heads of various organizations under the Ministry welcomed a Ministerial activism they had not witnessed in recent times. I was alarmed to discover that in some notable instances, the Boards of Governors or Directors of certain R&D bodies had not met for some years — despite the formal requirement that regular, or at least annual meetings be held. To the optimal extent possible, such long overdue meetings were now convened, the status of pending matters determined and required decisions taken.

Liberated from the high pressure, daily, hourly tension related to news monitoring and representation of the Government as its official spokesman, I was able to work in the Science and Technology sector with far more calm and quiet.

To erode the conventional distance between laboratories and the grass-roots, between complex research and the heat and dust of the vast majority's reality, I formulated a theme which would describe the Government's new approach in this sector. The theme was: "Science for the people: Technology for progress".

***Our marine province:***

Among the numerous interactions across the country through projects and centres under the ambit of the Ministry, some remain vividly etched in memory. One of these concerned the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of Pakistan in the Arabian Sea. Covering an area of about 240,000 sq. kilometres (expanded by another 50,000 sq. kilometres in 2020 as per UN re-assessment) the EEZ enables its host country to explore the waters and depths for mineral resources and to identify elements of Nature, marine or otherwise, that can be exploited for developmental purposes.

In order to sensitize leaders of trade, industry and services, I hosted a cruise

along and off the coastline of Sindh in a vessel arranged by the Pakistan Navy and the National Institute of Oceanography. A group of about 30 prominent entrepreneurs participated in the briefing. Many of them had not previously been conscious of the business potential of this vast area which deserves exploration and beneficial exploitation. Investment to date from Pakistan in the EEZ was fractional and confined to fisheries and only nominal probes. There were prospects for finding gas, oil and other valuable minerals. The entrepreneurs gave an assurance that they would make efforts to mobilize investment.

In my brief remarks of introduction which were also noted by representatives of the news media invited for the cruise, I said that the EEZ was like a “5th Province of Pakistan”, a province like a new frontier which had not been properly discovered.

Responding to newspaper reports about my reference to a 5th Province, an illustrious senior colleague in Cabinet, to my unpleasant surprise took strong exception. He was Syed Ghulam Mustafa Shah, the Federal Minister of Education and former Vice Chancellor, University of Sindh, a highly-respected scholar and outspoken gentleman. Both my father and my in-laws knew him well, as did I, but as a junior. Shah sahib had mis-understood my reference to the term 5th Province to mean that I was proposing a division of Sindh to enable a new coastal province. He presumably thought that, as an Urdu-speaking migrant who had settled in Sindh, I was obliquely promoting ethnic separatism as was being done by MQM. Nothing could have been further from the truth. I abhorred the narrow ethnic-based approach of MQM as much as I also opposed the narrow, ethnic-based approach of Sindhi nationalist parties. In any case, the concept of a 5th Province that is marine did not at all suggest a division of Sindh.

With amusement and with respect, I reassured Shah sahib about my intentions



and requested him to, in future, ascertain the concept with me before going public with his critical remarks. This episode illustrated how apprehensive and hyper-sensitive was the milieu at that time when even a term used in good faith could be instantly mis-understood.

***Stars in daylight:***

My work in the Tharparkar arid region had made me conscious of the severe paucity of contact with elements of science and technology by the children of primary and secondary school ages in that vast, undeveloped area. Education was dominated by rote-learning. With its own non-formal primary schools, *Baanhn Beli*, the volunteer-led organization of which I am the founding president since 1985 was attempting to introduce the concept of creative and critical thinking and to inculcate in children the importance of asking questions rather than simply memorizing answers given by their teachers. But to do so in a respectful manner.

When the Pakistan Science Foundation briefed me about its capacity to take a mobile planetarium to different parts of the country, I suggested that the component parts of the planetarium be also taken to a central focal point like Islamkot in Tharparkar for assembly on the spot and to receive visitors. In subsequent weeks, on completion of arrangements between PSF and *Baanhn Beli* and the local administration, the first-ever Science Exhibition in Tharparkar was held in May 1990. Hundreds of excited school children, in groups of dozens streamed into the geodesic circular dome of the planetarium. In darkness, they stared up in awe at the images of star-filled galaxies and constellations. The host of the programme narrated basic facts about the extent to which humanity had discovered the secrets and splendours of the universe up to that time. As he spoke in Sindhi as well as in Dhatki, one of the local dialects, communication was clear and comprehensive. This particular interaction along with the

enormous energy and enthusiasm with which the children visited the different stalls at the Science exhibition which displayed products and processes developed by Pakistani scientists and technicians became like jewels in my treasure- chest of memories.

Also in Tharparkar in a separate context but once again in collaboration with *Baanhn Beli*, the Ministry helped the NGO and related departments of the Government of Sindh to organize the first-ever Conference and Exhibition on the Development of Arid Regions. Aftab Shabaan Mirani, the Chief Minister of Sindh agreed to fly out from Karachi to inaugurate this event on an afternoon in June 1990.

***A near-miss en route to a landmark event:***

Due to the multiple obligations of Ministerial duties, I was unable to travel by my customary mode in a car or a van from Karachi to the site of the event which was at a historic village called Vajuto located between Naukot and Mithi. I was obliged to travel by helicopter to be able to welcome the Chief Minister on his arrival later on in the day. As all my other colleagues in *Baanhn Beli* were either already residents of Tharparkar or had travelled from Karachi or Hyderabad to Vajuto, there were extra seats available in the helicopter. I succumbed to the temptation to indulge in a little misuse of privilege. I requested my beloved father Ahmed Abdul Jabbar, my dear brother Sami and my dear brother-in-law Najib Zafar, a private entrepreneur, husband of Beo Zafar, the talented humourist and actor, sister of my wife Shabnam, to accompany me as they were keen to visit Tharparkar for the first time.

En route, over a point near Badin, the helicopter suddenly jolted and shook us up. There was a heavy thud. Blood and flesh flew into the space behind the pilot in which we were all seated. The helicopter had suffered a bird hit: either a big eagle or a vulture had sadly run into its whirring blades. The pilot had to make

an emergency landing in a farm field. We were miraculously saved from a fatal crash. Even as we recovered our composure and thanked the Almighty for keeping us safe, we marveled at the speed and efficiency with which the two pilots and a technician cleaned up the rotor and the mess inside the copter. If we had to wait for a rescue helicopter to fly to where we were at that time, it would take more hours than we could afford because the machine would have to be diverted to us from another on-going mission. We would then miss out on being able to welcome the Chief Minister. With the incredible skill and confidence which our Armed Forces technical personnel possess, within about 45 to 60 minutes, the helicopter was ready to be airborne again. So, after thanking villagers from the adjacent area who had rushed to help us, we resumed our dramatic journey to Vajuto.

Chief Minister Mirani, exceptionally soft-spoken and amiable as ever, made for a distinguished chief guest. Walking through the Exhibition and viewing the assembled crowd of several hundreds of villagers as well as visitors — from Islamabad, from Karachi, Hyderabad, Mirpurkhas, from UN agencies, from Australia and other countries — Chief Minister Mirani used the famous phrase of Urdu to express his wonder and appreciation for the initiative and the spectacle of converging so many diverse individuals and institutions to promote the advancement of Tharparkar at a remote location with barely any infrastructure. He said, *Aap ne to Jungle me Mangal kar dia* (which means: “You have enacted a Miracle in the Desert/ Jungle”). I recall the presence of Raza Rabbani at this event as he had accompanied the Chief Minister along with other PPP leaders.

At that point in 1990 — in contrast to the major improvements of physical infrastructure in Tharparkar in the subsequent 3 decades — the successful convening of the Vajuto Conference Workshop and Exhibition by *Baanhn Beli*

with the full support of the Ministry of Science & Technology demonstrated how inadequacies of transport, accommodation, power supply, water supply etc. could be at least temporarily overcome if the purpose was to pool knowledge and capability for a great cause.

***Initiating new policy processes:***

Back in Islamabad, taking note of the fact that Information Technology was advancing rapidly, I convened the first set of meetings of specialists from both the public and private sectors to formulate national policies for software development and for electronics. In a similar context, we also convened initial consultations for the formulation of a technology policy as also to re-organize the entire research and development sector.

The need for this re-organization became particularly important for me in view of the fact that the Ministry of Science & Technology was responsible for only about 30 per cent of the total R&D work being conducted in the public sector. The remaining 70 per cent was being conducted by bodies under Ministries such as Food & Agriculture, Defence, Health, Railways, Education, Water and Power, Petroleum and Natural Resources and others. While being aware that it would not be practical or fair for a single Ministry to coordinate all research, I felt that a certain degree of rationalization could take place. For example, the Flood Control Laboratories were overseen by the Ministry of Water and Power while the Ministry of Science and Technology supervised the Irrigation, Drainage and Flood Control Research Council. Similarly, the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Resources oversaw the Renewable Energy Directorate whereas the Ministry of Science and Technology was responsible for the Solar Energy Research Centre. Re-organization of this dis-jointed arrangement could have been done by the executive authority of the Prime Minister. However, the turf-possession dimension and the premature cessation of our Government in August

1990 prevented major re-ordering and rationalization.

Despite such constraints, between September 1989 and August 1990, we were able to infuse vitality and new initiatives in multiple aspects.

**“No, Prime Minister”:**

In one respect, at the Ministry of Science and Technology, I had to simply but firmly say, “No, Prime Minister”. This decision had to be made in the context of the continued implementation of the Science and Technology Overseas Scholarship Programme originally introduced by Dr Mahbubul Haq in the tenure of the Government of Prime Minister Junejo, 1985-88, as referred to earlier.

Giving in to pressures from Party sources to favour persons sponsored by their friends and supporters, a Press release had been issued by the office of the Prime Minister to the effect that 50 out of 100 scholarships would be on merit while the other 50 would be chosen on the basis of recommendations by the Prime Minister taking into account relevant factors of levels of development in different parts of the country and the needs of the area to which an applicant belonged, etc.

While the intention may have been to genuinely help applicants who came from under-served parts of the country, I viewed this as a major threat to the principle of merit which alone should be the basis on which individuals become entitled to use very precious funding resources to attain a high level of sophisticated expertise in overseas universities. Further, knowing the strong tendency of elements in the PPP who wanted to compensate their favourites after having been out of power for over 11 years, I apprehended that undeserving individuals would benefit from the discretionary quota intended to be enforced by the Prime Minister.

I want to acknowledge with respect and with deep appreciation the fact that, after receiving my strong note of dissent and reasons given for how her proposed

quota would damage the credibility of PPP and the interests of the country, Benazir Bhutto decided to cancel the intention to use her discretionary power and permitted the allocation of all 100 scholarships exclusively on the basis of merit.

When an opportunity arose to honour Nusrat Bhutto, I was privileged to drive in a grand old limousine with her to a public event. Under the aegis of the Pakistan Science Foundation, we decided to launch the construction of the first Museum of Natural History with a foundation stone-laying ceremony at which Nusrat Bhutto was the Chief Guest. She spoke with an unusually refreshing blend of informality and formal acknowledgement of the importance of such institutions which preserve the priceless heritage of Nature.

***Public-private collaboration:***

The lack of authentic and sustained political commitment to science and technology had, over the years, resulted in outmoded, under-equipped research laboratories and infrastructure in lead organizations such as PCSIR. Morale among under-paid scientists was also low.

With the goal of making the Ministry's work more relevant to economic development, this writer authorized a basic change in the composition of the Board of Directors of STEDEC. Bobby Aziz Khan, the chief executive of STEDEC was, coincidentally, a good friend who was rendering his best in difficult conditions. The induction of prominent individuals from the corporate sector would help make the private sector more conscious about the already-identified innovations by PCSIR and the new initiatives that could be used by the industrial, service and agricultural sectors of Pakistan. Two individuals with vast experience in the corporate sector such as the respected Chartered Accountants Khurshid Hadi and Abdullah Sikandar Ghulam Ali were inducted into the Board of Directors of STEDEC.

Contrary to the general perception that bureaucrats are obstructionists and masters in stalling progress through red tape and procedures, one's own experience was that officials could be willing partners in productive and purposeful work. If they were made aware that time-lines and deadlines given by the Minister of State and the Secretary were in danger of being breached and that they would be held accountable, they ensured prompt and meaningful actions. If officials knew that files and notes were being read in detail and not just signed off to complete a formality, then officers became alert and active, able to move matters at satisfactory speed.

As described in other chapters, while one attempted to instil a new energy into the S&T Ministry, I was also able to travel overseas more often. These overseas visits included S&T Ministry-specific journeys to the USSR in January 1990 during which discussions were held with corresponding Ministries and bodies in Moscow to promote bilateral co-operation in specialized sectors. The meetings in Moscow were followed by an overnight train journey to St. Petersburg, culminating in several hours spent at the great Museum of that historic city. The host Government had thoughtfully arranged this excursion. Shabnam's company on this visit made it even more memorable.

*“What will it cost to send you to Antarctica?”*

One of the major pending projects in the National Institute of Oceanography under the Ministry of Science & Technology was the proposal to send a scientific expedition to Antarctica to make Pakistan the first among 57 Member-States of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to establish a research station in that ice-bound continent which is located at 60° S latitude.

Due to several factors, this was the one continent on planet Earth where territorial demarcations in favour of various nation-states did not apply. Unlike the Arctic region on the North Pole — where the geographic proximity of the Soviet Union, Canada, USA and Scandinavian countries meant that parts of that region were subject to claims by States. The Antarctic Treaty had come into force in 1961 but it remained open to other countries to join.

There was a looming deadline by which any State in the world could access any part of Antarctica to establish a research station or outpost and thereby become eligible to become a Party to the Antarctic Treaty.

The Ministry was working closely with the Ministry of Defence and the Pakistan Navy to organize the Expedition, mobilize the required resources of specialist manpower, human skills, funds, equipment and a sea vessel capable of navigating through the ice shelf.

The proposal was stalled because of the failure to date to have obtained approval by the Ministry of Finance for the cost of the Expedition.

Apart from the facet of national pride for Pakistan to possibly become the first



Muslim country to demonstrate its scientific capacity, there were also dimensions of knowledge, research, possible new discoveries and human resource capacity-building which made the Expedition worthy of consideration.

The Antarctic continent of ice also holds significant environmental relevance for our country as part of a single planet whose climate and ecology are closely intertwined. The Arabian Sea on Pakistan's coastline becomes part of the Indian Ocean whose waves blend with the waters and ice of the Antarctica. Global warming of the ozone layer, the impact on the myriad birds and species in the depths of the South Pole and other early signs of climate change were fast becoming apparent as the 1980s ended, and the last decade of the 20th century commenced. The Treaty designated the entire continent as a scientific preserve, recognized the right of all signatories to conduct scientific investigation and banned military activity.

On being briefed about the Expedition project, I was immediately motivated to support it.

A comprehensive summary for the Prime Minister, with supporting data, was prepared with the help of the highly capable Tariq Mustafa, Secretary of the Ministry, and the planning team.

We wanted to secure approval and financial allocation for the Expedition in the Budget for 1st July 1990 – 30th June 1991.

When Budget sums approached finalization in May, I was able to secure a meeting with the Prime Minister. The discussion was to take place at a venue just off the highway close to Islamabad where was located the office of an organization she was visiting on a particular day. V.A. Jaffery, Adviser to the Prime Minister on Finance and Economic Affairs would also be present.

As soon as I concluded my brief verbal presentation on the merits of the Expedition, she asked the question posed as the title of this chapter. The written

summary already provided to her was not available at that time and place.

Unfortunately, and most unusually for me — who otherwise took modest pride in being well-prepared for such a meeting — I too was not carrying with me a copy of the Summary.

I tried to cite the figure which was Rs 240 million but managed to drop a zero when I spoke.

V.A. Jaffery looked at me skeptically and said, “Are you certain? Surely it must cost more?”

The Prime Minister was notably patient with a Minister of State who was caught on the wrong foot.

But I pressed on regardless, referring to the written Summary already provided to the Prime Minister and the

Adviser and pointing out that the representative of the Finance Ministry in the Science & Technology Ministry was fully informed and had supported the estimated cost and the proposal.

Sending the Expedition to the Antarctica promised clear benefits in the realm of knowledge acquisition and capacity-building, giving Pakistan the advantages of being thereby eligible to become a formal party to the prospective global compact. But there would be no direct, measurable, material, visible gains for the people of Pakistan, particularly the poor, the large numbers of people who had no access to even basic services.

In political terms, there would be only marginal and transient benefits. In fact, there was the risk of the Opposition, forever searching for ways to embarrass the PPP Government, to cite this Expedition as a thoughtless waste of public funds insensitive to the critical needs of the poor and the hungry i.e. the same amount could be used to build new schools, clinics, etc.

To her credit, with the support of a skeptical yet knowledgeable and respected Adviser on Finance, the Prime Minister nodded her approval, in principle, and instructed me to ensure that the exact amount was identified and endorsed by the Adviser.

I was delighted at this breakthrough and thanked her profusely.

Yet irony was not to be left behind. The artificially, unfairly shortened tenure of our Government, dismissed on 6th August 1990 meant that we would not be in office when the Expedition actually sailed later on in 1990 or when it returned in 1991.

But that was a small loss. The larger aim was achieved for the country's benefit.

Approval of the Expedition's budget before our Government's dismissal enabled the Expedition to depart Karachi harbour for about a 3-week voyage in December 1990, then establish the Jinnah Research Station at a site near the Son Rondane Mountains in Queen Maud Land, East Antarctica on 15th January 1991, plant the Pakistan flag on the Antarctic continent and eventually become a Party to the global treaty.

After our Government's dismissal, and the completion of my Senate term in March 1991, I was in periodic contact with NIO officials to keep track of the implementation process.

Through the courtesy of the then-Federal Minister for Science and Technology and former Speaker of the National Assembly, Hamid Nasir Chhatta in the first Cabinet of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif (October 1990-April 1993), I was invited to be present at the Karachi harbour when the Expedition returned.

Minister Chhatta acknowledged the fact that the Expedition had been made possible by its approval during my tenure at the Ministry.

It felt good to stand there with the Minister of another Government recalling my strong support for this venture, to view the vessel berth, meet the Expedition leader and team, and know that at a remote location on this beautiful, complex, incredible planet, thousands of miles distant, the flag of Pakistan fluttered in the winds sweeping across the unique Antarctic ice scape.

Over the successive years post-1991, teams of Pakistani scientists and technicians from NIO, the Navy, SUPARCO and the Pakistan Air Force visited the Jinnah Research Station to enable incremental progress in our country's indigenous scientific research capacity.

*Representing Benazir Bhutto at the UN and  
elsewhere*

Between February 1989 and 6 August 1990 (when our Government was dismissed) a period of about 18 months, the name of Benazir Bhutto served as a magnetic force to secure the attention of Presidents, Prime Ministers, Queens and Kings around the world to the subject of changing the world for the better -- for the sake of our children.

This writer had the privilege of serving for those 18 months as Personal Representative of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto on the Planning Committee and as its Co-Chairman — for the first-ever World Summit on Children. The Summit was eventually held on 29-30 September 1990 at the United Nations in New York — without the participation of Benazir Bhutto, nor of her Personal Representative, both of whom were by then out of office, and therefore ineligible to attend. The ups and downs of public office are limitless.

The process commenced in February 1989 when I was looking after the Information Ministry. I received a telephone call in Islamabad from James Grant, Executive Director, UNICEF, who was based in New York. We knew each other from our shared membership of the global forum known as the Society for International Development (SID). This was an exceptional global network of development activists, public policy leaders and analysts, economists, former and current office-holders in leading official organizations

(e.g. UN) and non-official forums e.g. Third World Forum. Prominent Pakistanis who were senior members included Dr Mahbubul Haq, Dr Khadija Haq, Dr Nafees Sadik, Sartaj Aziz and others.

At the invitation of S.M. Huda, a retired Government official and economics specialist, I had served as honorary secretary of the SID Karachi chapter. One of the innovations we had implemented was the conduct of mobile development learning workshops. These took 20 to 30 urban Karachi-based participants to parts of rural and urban Sindh they did not normally visit and to remote parts of Sindh, including the Tharparkar arid region.

One member of the SID Karachi chapter was Dr Ghaffar Billoo, the eminent paediatrician of Pakistan. With his expertise in health care, and with the additional participation of the Devcom (short for “Development Communication”) Village Programme of the Asian Federation of Advertising Associations (of which I was a co-founder) we had established a partnership with village communities in Malir on the periphery of Karachi. The focus was on child health, nutrition and maternal health care. Using the design resources of MNJ Communications of which this writer was CEO, we had produced posters and educational material to sensitize low-income families on how to improve their care and nourishment of children as also to promote immunization against basic diseases.

Through a social service project managed by the Jaycees Pakistan chapter (Jaycees: Junior Chamber of Commerce for Young Entrepreneurs) supported by UNICEF, I had worked in the Baldia Colony, Karachi with the innovative development activist, Qurratul Ain Bakhtiar to promote home-schools and improved sanitation.

On learning of my work through UNICEF’s Pakistan office, and through our interaction at SID conferences in Colombo, Rome and in Washington DC, James

Grant visited Karachi in about 1983, partly in order to see at first-hand our child-related work in Pakistan.

From about that time, witnessing the sincerity and passion with which James Grant cared for the young, I regarded him as the Godfather of the world's children, so universal and all-embracing was his humane concern for children.

One expression of his commitment was that, at any opportune moment, to stress how important it is to prevent de-hydration and distress for children, he would whip out of his jacket's side pocket, a small pack of the instantly soluble salt (known as "ORS") which could be mixed into a glass of water to feed the child, and prevent aggravation.

Part of his zeal to serve this segment of humanity, the most innocent and vulnerable, must have been energized by his heritage. He was the son of Christian missionaries who had served in China in difficult times.

***Initiating a first-ever World Summit:***

During his first phone call from New York in February 1989, and in a visit thereafter to Islamabad, he briefed me about the concept he had developed at UNICEF. To secure the personal engagement of Heads of State and Government — rather than only their Ministers or Secretaries of Health and Education — to come together for a World Summit devoted exclusively to children's rights and needs. He wanted me to obtain the early endorsement of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto for the concept. He rightly believed that as the first Muslim woman Head of Government in contemporary history, and in general as well, as a woman political leader, her association with the Summit proposal and its goals would be of substantive influence in motivating other Heads of State and Government to follow suit.

In the conventional political domain, the Chief Executives of Government prefer to delegate the subject of children's development to the relevant

Ministries rather than become personally involved, except for fulfilling ceremonial formalities through speeches or statements on related occasions.

James Grant, and others in SID, in the UN, and this writer as well, were convinced that the subject of children's development to their full potential was so fundamental for all societies that it required substantive and sustained involvement of decision-makers and policy-makers at the highest executive levels.

James Grant further informed me that if the Pakistan Prime Minister agreed to be associated with the concept of a World Summit on Children, then it may be possible to obtain support from other countries to give her a very special and prominent role at the Summit. This was a tempting carrot.

I immediately agreed to take the concept to the Prime Minister. In advance of meeting her, I prepared a Summary for her on the subject. The Summary set out the rationale, goals and intended outcomes as well as identifying formal actions required to move the preparatory process forward.

To my pleasant — but also anticipated — surprise, the Summary was promptly approved. She also appointed me as Personal Representative of the Prime Minister of Pakistan for all work associated with the proposed Summit, tentatively set to be held in the second half of 1990.

Then commenced an exhilarating and immensely satisfying phase of work. On the one hand, I continued to serve as Minister of State for Information & Broadcasting up to 19th September 1989, and then for Science & Technology up to the end of our Government on 6th August 1990. In the first Ministry, as stated earlier, I experienced intense disappointments due to disagreement with the Prime Minister on Information and Media policy. When that crisis ended with my transfer to the other Ministry, the work in Science & Technology was not adversely affected by policy disagreements with the Prime Minister.



Yet, in other respects, the political scene was gradually and sometimes quickly deteriorating, given the civil-military alliance of President Ghulam Ishaq Khan and Nawaz Sharif with General Aslam Beg and company becoming unhappy with the PPP Government at the Centre and in Sindh. In Karachi, in particular, the conflict with MQM aggravated conditions to the extent that they came to a head with the Pucca Qila incident in May 1990.

At the same time, parallel to this regression, the preparatory process for the World Summit on Children placed me personally in a very pleasant, positive trajectory because one knew that Pakistan's name and the Prime Minister's name and aura were all being promoted and appreciated in capitals worldwide in a supremely human, non-partisan cause — the well-being of all the world's children.

In 18 months of the preparatory process of which I was a part, at meetings held in New York, Stockholm, Ottawa, Geneva, London and elsewhere, all the principal facets were debated threadbare and messages exchanged before formal letters were addressed, dates, agenda, venue, timings, and aimed-for outcomes identified.

One of the first decisions taken, with James Grant skillfully guiding the process, was to propose that there be Six Initiating countries, three from the North, three from the South. These were: Canada, Mexico, Sweden, Mali, Egypt, Pakistan. These Six Initiators would then formally propose that the World Summit be co-chaired by two Heads of Government, one representing the North, one the South. Prime Minister Brian Mulroney of Canada was proposed for the former, Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto for the latter. The other four initiating countries readily accepted this proposal.

### ***Co-Chairing the Planning Committee:***

In reflection of this equitably shared responsibility and in order to facilitate

orderly co-ordination, it was proposed that a Planning Committee be formed, with the Personal Representatives of the two Co-Chairs of the Summit serving as the two Co-Chairs of the Planning Committee. This was a heart-warming, humbling honour. I was gifted the opportunity to make a direct contribution at a formative, decisive level to the meticulous preparations for an event of global significance, the first of its kind.

The Canadian Prime Minister appointed Ambassador Yves Fortier, his country's Permanent Representative at the UN as his Personal Representative for the preparatory process. In turn, Fortier became my colleague as the other Co-Chairman of the Planning Committee. An urbane, sophisticated senior lawyer, Fortier was an amiable and capable individual to work with. We alternated as Chairs when meetings of the full Planning Committee were convened.

As the composition of the Planning Committee expanded, some notable personalities were appointed by their respective Governments to be Members of the Planning Committee. Thus, at one of the meetings of the Planning Committee at the UN, I noted that the senior Indian political leader, Atal Bihari Vajpayee was representing India at the meeting at which I was co-presiding. His representation of the Government of India at this forum, despite Vajpayee being the leader of a major Opposition party in the Lok Sabha was meant to reflect the non-partisan perspective that the Indian Government was applying to participation in the World Summit. The Indian Prime Minister at that time was Rajiv Gandhi of the Congress Party. A few years later, Atal Bihari Vajpayee became Prime Minister of India.

In terms of the outcome that the Summit aimed to achieve in addition to a Summit declaration: the most substantive aim was to obtain optimal ratification by Member-States of the UN General Assembly of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

Inspired by the UN Declaration on Human Rights adopted in 1948, the CRC comprehensively elaborated all the rights of the child in 41 Articles with further Articles specifying processes and mechanisms for implementation. They also sought to obtain global agreement on the basic issue of defining the age of a child. The CRC rightly asserted that the figure should be 18 years.

In other significant respects, the CRC articulated, for the first time, children's rights to health, education, food, dignity and security — in strong, explicit terms, not previously part of any globally agreed text.

In the event, the World Summit on Children, proved to be the catalytic factor which helped make the CRC the fastest-ever Convention to be ratified by two-thirds of the total membership of the UN. The ratification process for Conventions varies considerably from one country to another and is normally subject to long delays, sometimes due to purely procedural measures, sometimes due to internal policy conflicts within countries. Yet the CRC was fast-tracked by most states.

I kept the Prime Minister regularly informed on the preparatory process for the World Summit on Children most often through Notes, periodically through meetings specifically to brief her, or during asides at other meetings. She was always pleased to learn of the steady progress being made. I sometimes got the impression that she was privately glad that this work kept me away from making mischief as a Cabinet member who did not always remain silent at meetings, and ought to keep his mouth shut. Due to my work for the World Summit on her behalf, I also missed a few Cabinet meetings.

For my part, I felt humbly proud to be associated with a major international event, the first of its kind in world history which had enormous relevance for my own country, in which the indicators for children's health, literacy, education, security and well-being were far below par.

About 2 years later when Dr Mahbubul Haq and his pioneering work at UNDP on the Human Development Index was launched in 1991, Pakistan ranked well below 100 countries assessed in terms of access to basic services for the vast majority of the people, many of whom were children in severe distress.

***Pakistan and Benazir Bhutto deprived:***

The dismissal of our Government on 6th August 1990 unjustly deprived Pakistan of the singular honour of Co-Chairing a first-ever World Summit and deprived Benazir Bhutto of a well-deserved distinction.

In the six weeks between our Government's dismissal, and the convening of the World Summit on Children, some vital changes and phases unfolded.

During a detailed phone call with James Grant in New York in which he expressed deep concern at the dismissal of the Prime Minister and colleagues such as myself, he was relieved to learn that we were safe, free and unharmed. We agreed that the new Government was most likely to continue its support to the Summit.

However, it very soon became clear that the honoured position of Co-Chairman was not going to be automatically transferred to the Caretaker Prime Minister appointed by President Ghulam Ishaq Khan i.e. Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi, a veteran PPP leader who had parted company with the PPP on the return of Benazir Bhutto to Pakistan in 1986 and who had then established a new party called the National People's Party.

The global consensus by which the Prime Minister of Pakistan had been unanimously accepted as the Co-Chairman of the World Summit was with specific reference to the distinct personality of Benazir Bhutto and was not seen as an ex-officio position.

So a new Co-Chairman would have to be elected. Soon enough, an appropriate

replacement was identified. As one of the original Six Initiating countries for the World Summit, Mali in West Africa also, like Pakistan, represented the South and the comity of developing nations. The then-President of Mali, Moussa Traore assumed the position of Co-Chairman while Prime Minister Brian Mulroney of Canada continued as the other Co-Chair on behalf of Canada, representing the developed nations of the North.

A consequential change was obviously required to replace me as Co-Chairman of the Planning Committee with the Personal Representative of the President of Mali.

Most of the important preparatory work had already been completed. The one imponderable was the number of Heads of State or Government who would attend the Summit. The dates had already been fixed to exploit the fact that, in the last 10 days of September of every year those Heads of State or Government who want to address the UN General Assembly on their own volition set aside days in their calendar for this purpose. Periodically, there are special gatherings such as a subject-specific conference or for a regional subject or for bilateral meetings that facilitate contacts at the highest levels. Using the opportunities afforded by annual UNGA sessions, some Heads attend in order to be able to meet with counter-parts with whom their countries are either going through already-friendly relations, or are hitting bumps that could be overcome by one-on-one meetings.

But the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq in August 1990 and the panic responses of the Gulf Arab States and much of the rest of the world had injected yet another new uncertainty into Summit prospects. With such a major new development, would Heads be willing to extend their stay in New York just for the sake of “children’s” issues, when “adult issues” were threatening a new war?

Though now on an unofficial track, I was in intermittent contact with James

Grant and UNICEF. There was brief consideration of the possibility of my visiting New York to simply be a silent, non-official witness to an event I had worked on with deep attachment and interest. But I decided not to go, principally because my presence would be awkward, not just for me but for whoever eventually represented Pakistan at the Summit, both at the Head of Government level, and at a delegation level.

I knew Caretaker Prime Minister Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi as an elder politician but also as a warm and friendly social acquaintance, if not a kind of elder personal friend. Having got to know him in about the mid-1970s, when he also served as Chief Minister of Sindh and as Federal Minister, my wife Shabnam and I used to meet him frequently at small dinner parties in Karachi, either at his home or at mutual friends' homes or on some occasions, at our own home. Even though neither my wife nor I are card players, a small group of six or eight close friends including Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi, liked playing rummy or "flash", or whatever. Our periodic social interactions continued after the imposition of martial law on 5th July 1977 and actually increased in frequency. Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi, no longer Chief Minister of Sindh, had far more time to spare for relaxed evenings. With some unavoidable breaks, our personal friendship continued through the 1980s and for all the years later, up to his demise in 2009.

In 1990, after 15 years of having known him, he was Caretaker Prime Minister of a Government which — unlike other Caretaker Governments that have been in office since 1990 — was unabashedly partisan. Ministers of the Caretaker Cabinet with a strong anti-PPP bias were permitted to contest elections set for October 1990, using all the advantages and perks of high public office. Fortunately, this practice was banned in all subsequent Caretaker Cabinets, including the Caretaker Cabinet in which I served as Minister of Petroleum and Natural Resources from November 1996 to February 1997.

I made no attempt to contact Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi during his tenure as Caretaker Prime Minister in order to avoid any misperception which could have arisen about whether one was seeking any favour, personal or otherwise.

It soon transpired that Dr Attiya Inayatullah, the leader of the Family Planning Association of Pakistan (FPAP), an outstanding woman strongly devoted to development causes and recognized both at home and overseas for her contribution to development, would represent Pakistan at the Summit. Commencing in the 1970s, she had kindly invited me to contribute to the work of FPAP as an activist and as a media specialist. While being relevant and competent in contextual terms, the fact that Dr Attiya Inayatullah was not the Prime Minister immediately reduced the level at which our country would be represented at a major global event that our country had co-initiated and helped develop.

More than ever before, I did not wish to travel to New York even as a silent observer because it could be awkward for Dr Attiya Inayatullah to have present closeby a person previously intimately associated with the planning for the event.

***A historic World Summit:***

As it fortuitously turned out, the World Summit on Children held at the UN on 29-30 September 1990 became the largest-ever — until that time — gathering of Heads of State or Government. 72 Heads attended. It also became the first social sector summit meeting in history — because all previous Summits were explicitly political, rather than being focused on the social sector. Though I have always believed that the term ‘political’ has an all-embracing application which includes, among others, the social sector too — because political decisions and policies determine what happens in the social sector, what budgets are allocated to children’s development through education, health care and basic services.

One of the most inspiring and precious — and humbling — gifts I have ever received is the letter that James Grant addressed to me soon after the Summit ended. Tragically, the original and complete letter was misplaced when we shifted homes in Karachi in 2002, though I still hope that it will be found one day. I was so proud to have received it that I had it framed and displayed in my MNJ office soon after I read it. Fortunately, an excerpt from the letter was reproduced on the back cover of my book: *From Chaos to Catharsis*, an anthology of my writings published in 1995 by Royal Book Co., Karachi. The excerpt from the letter from James Grant said,

*“Before I thank any presidents or prime ministers or kings I want to thank Javed Jabbar for his strategic perception and work in planning the World Summit on Children at the United Nations in 1990 as the Personal Representative of the Prime Minister of Pakistan... the fact that the Summit was so tremendous a success owes so much to him...”*

James Grant was unduly generous in his remarks. He was also an exceptionally sincere human being. It often happens that when individuals who become acquainted, or work closely together in official capacities change official positions, the previously warm relationship they had, either abruptly breaks off, or withers away.

The most solid proof of James Grant’s sincere character was the fact that, after the Summit, knowing that I was no longer in Government (though my Senate term was to end in March 1991, i.e. about six months later), he continued to maintain frequent contact with me.

He invited me to participate in two substantive meetings and processes. One was a post-Summit evaluation meeting held in Geneva to obtain in-puts on how the successfully- held Summit could be used to optimize benefits from practical actions by Governments around the world.



The second process he invited me to be part of also had a historic aspect to it. With the collapse of the USSR in 1991, UNICEF in particular and the UN system in general became conscious of the limited data available about actual, on-the-ground conditions in the autonomous Republics which were previously part of the Soviet Union and were now newly-independent sovereign States.

James Grant organized a multi-disciplinary mission comprising development specialists from diverse countries to visit the Central Asian republics in two groups.

The aim was to observe first-hand the quality of children's needs and public health facilities, with special reference to maternal health. He invited me to be part of the group which visited Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan in January 1991. Another group covered Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan.

We were able to visit schools, hospitals, facilities in all 3 countries and meet with Heads of State or Government, Ministers, officials, citizens and eventually formulate a strategy and action plan on how the UNICEF/UN agencies could meet critical needs. This was an excellent personal education because it introduced me to a part of the world that was so close to Pakistan and yet so little known, not only unknown to me but to much of the rest of the world because Soviet policies had prevented easy access.

It was clear to the mission that, while the Soviet social sector system policies were not commercially profit-driven but public welfare-driven, the actual standard and quality of health care facilities were far below the desirable standard. In certain aspects, urgent relief was required to address malnutrition, vaccine and equipment shortages as also in training and capacity-building of personnel.

James Grant performed a hat-trick of kind favours for me reflective of his thoughtful and helpful nature. He offered me the position of Head of UNICEF in

Brazil, one of the world's largest countries with fascinating features of a heterogenous population, spectacular geography and formidable challenges in human and children's development. Though the offer was very tempting, I declined it with many thanks because my family and self wanted to remain in Pakistan.

## *Message for the powerman of Pyongyang*

(DECEMBER 1989)

In about mid-December 1989, this writer was tasked by Waseem Sajjad, Chairman of the Senate to lead a Senate delegation to Pyongyang, North Korea. As a Cabinet Minister, acceptance of this nomination was subject to the approval of the Prime Minister — which was promptly given.

The timing for the visit was intimidating — the height of winter, in the last week of December 1989 when the temperature in the capital of North Korea can approach freezing lows.

With seven other Senators including the largehearted, ever-amicable Syed Fasih Iqbal, editor-in-chief of Balochistan Times, Hussain Bukhsh Bungalzai, also from Balochistan, Kazi Abdul Majeed, a respected technocrat from Sindh and others, I arrived in Pyongyang in bone-chilling weather on 24th December 1989. Our official programme included visits to a couple of scientific research establishments in one of which the hosts proudly demonstrated their capacity to produce high quality materials. As also visits to the birthplace of Marshal Kim Il Sung, the Great Leader of North Korea and to the city's major structures. These included an enormous auditorium where hundreds would periodically listen in pin-drop silence to their leader's speeches.

Prior to the visit, and during brief meetings with the North Korean Ambassador to Pakistan in Islamabad, and later in Pyongyang soon after our arrival, one was struck by the inordinate interest taken by officials in the gifts we were going to

present to the North Korean Head of State. These gifts included a beautiful carpet. The officials wanted to know the price paid for the carpet — a detail that we politely declined to share.

On 25th December 1989, in snowy, very cold Pyongyang, this writer received what was possibly the warmest hug I have received from another man. When we were presented to the Great Leader at the Presidential palace, Marshal Kim Il Sung stepped toward me, embraced me and then, unexpectedly planted a loving kiss on my left cheek. I was deeply moved at this show of affection. Perhaps the gesture reflected the Marshal's special appreciation for Pakistan's interest in cultivating secret exchanges in the military field, particularly in uranium enrichment and in missile technology. This subject was not in the scope of the Senate delegation that I was leading. Even though this writer was also the Minister of State for Science and Technology and in that context, the hosts had conducted the delegation to a couple of related centres, the agenda for the talks with Marshal Kim Il Sung did not include any military or missile-related issues.

Startling for this writer — and colleagues — was the fact that the Marshal had a very large carbuncle protruding from one side of his neck. This unfortunate abnormality had never been seen in any photograph of him in the past. Obviously, any photographs taken from an angle that revealed this feature were air-brushed and the relevant part was deleted so that the people of North Korea and the world at large could not note the existence of this awkward feature of his physiognomy.

We soon proceeded to take our respective positions at a long conference table with the Marshal seated opposite to this writer, flanked by his Ministers and officials while my fellow Senators and Ambassador Zafar Habib of Pakistan were seated on either side of me.

After his welcome remarks, I thanked him for the hospitality and courtesy

extended to the delegation and I then conveyed greetings from both the President and Prime Minister of Pakistan.

I pointed out to the Marshal that, in addition to the fact that the day of 25th December was globally significant as Christmas Day and the day that we had the privilege of meeting him in person, the day was also the birthday of Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah. Just as the Marshal was the founding father of North Korea, the Quaid was the founding father of Pakistan and therefore our meeting on this auspicious day was of unique significance.

Marshal Kim Il Sung seemed very pleased at this fact. He proceeded to dwell on the extraordinary challenges that North Korea had faced from its very inception, of how the people had successfully overcome grave threats to its existence and of how the country was rapidly progressing towards economic and military security. Requiring interpreting from the Korean language into English, and vice versa, the exchanges continued in a candid manner for about 45 minutes. The meeting also included a group photograph and presentation of gifts.

As one of the most isolated nation-states in the world, North Korea represents a rare experience for visitors. An extremely regimented society with a rigid official system makes inter-personal communication between foreign visitors and North Koreans stilted, and formal, without ease and spontaneity. Both foreigners and locals are extremely cautious about spoken words and visual expressions.

In our case there was the vivid, yet unacknowledged contrast between the two political systems. In Pakistan, despite the two previous, prolonged military interventions of Ayub Khan and Ziaul Haq, (and the shorter one of Yahya Khan) now in 1989 there was a robust, noisy, multi-party democracy. Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto had just survived — in November 1989 — a No-confidence

motion moved by the Opposition, a process unheard of and unacceptable in the single-party Government system of North Korea.

Whereas Pakistan's print media were rife with critical and even harsh criticism of the Government, all media in North Korea were strictly conformist and parrot-like in support of the Marshal and the Government.

As one of the longest-serving Heads of State in the world — he had been in office for 45 years when the Marshal later passed away in 1994 — Kim Il Sung must have clearly recalled that, about 13 years earlier, Z.A. Bhutto, father of the current-Pakistan Prime Minister had visited North Korea to inaugurate a new phase of bilateral relations. This linkage commenced in the 1970s and grew in the 1980s, the 1990s, and the early 2000s — to become the subject of wide speculation. Allegations were made that Pakistan had helped North Korea to enrich uranium for nuclear weapons while receiving North Korean aid to convert the Nu Dong missile into the Ghauri missile.

But much of this lay ahead of us. On 25th December 1989, Marshal Kim Il Sung was simply being a gracious, friendly host to a species called Senators from diverse political parties, a reality unacceptable in his own country.

*“Javed, go to Brazil”*

(MARCH 1990)

In March 1990, the Prime Minister designated this writer to represent her at the oath-taking ceremony of Fernando Collor de Mello who, at the age of 40 had just been elected as the new President of Brazil. The two leaders shared the feature of being very youthful when elected to be the Heads of Government. There is no Prime Minister in the Brazilian system. While I had previously visited Central and South America, for this writer the visit to Rio de Janeiro and to Brasilia was a refreshing learning experience. And truly memorable.

On being introduced to President Collor, I conveyed warm felicitations from the Prime Minister of Pakistan along with the fact that she was regrettably unable to travel in person to Brasilia due to unavoidable prior commitments in her own country. He nodded his understanding and smiled, asking me to thank her for sending a Cabinet representative. I then took the opportunity to refer to the planned World Summit on Children set to be held in New York on 29-30 September 1990. I said that Benazir Bhutto was the Co-chair of this first-ever Summit and she looked forward to the valued participation of the President of Brazil. He said, “Certainly, I look forward to being there”. I moved on to make way for the person next in line.

Keeping to his pledge, President Collor did attend the Summit, along with 71 other Heads of State and Government — to make it the largest-ever Summit in world history up to that time. Later world summits on other subjects have had

higher turn-outs.

Alas, as previously stated, Benazir Bhutto herself who had been unanimously nominated to be the Co-chair of this historic event could not attend due to her Government's dismissal on 6th August 1990.

Back at the oath-taking ceremony in Brasilia; and related events. These included the opportunity to listen to the new President's address to Parliament and a lunch attended by the other Heads of State and Government and official representatives, such as this writer.

There were dozens of other dignitaries. President Allan Garcia of Peru looked much younger than he did in his photographs.

Of the world leaders that one met, be it on this visit to Brazil or during other official visits overseas or in formal meetings in Islamabad by dint of serving in Benazir Bhutto's first Cabinet, the most coveted and memorable encounter of all was with Fidel Castro.

There, suddenly, in the fairly-crowded pre-lunch phase in Brasilia, this writer found himself close to the great, the one and only Fidel Castro. The Brazilian official escorting me during my visit made the introduction. We shook hands. His grip was firm, his smile full and friendly, his stature tall and impressive, clad in a military-style jacket. At the mention of Pakistan and Benazir Bhutto, he exuded even more warmth and speaking in fluent English said, "You must visit Cuba soon."

When I thanked him and added that my admiration for his courage and leadership, particularly in the health sector exceeded my fondness for Cuban cigars, he accepted the compliment with a smile and said, "Come as my guest. We will present you with lots of cigars". As there were others wanting to meet him, one reluctantly moved on. And only then I realized that there had been no photographer present to preserve for me the fleeting encounter with a truly



extraordinary character of the 20th century.

Fidel Castro's political leadership is the source of both adulation and criticism — due to real as also alleged violations of human rights and harsh suppression of dissent. But there can only be unanimity in recognising the phenomenal achievements of Cuba in health and education.

Possibly the most accurate and the most appropriate salute to his leadership came from the great American humanist, James Grant, Executive Director of UNICEF about whose noble work I have written in the previous chapter. James Grant once said to this writer: "Javed, if there is one health super-power in the world today, it is Cuba!". The compliment became specially notable because it came from a thoroughly American individual like Grant who was able to transcend the strong animosity of his country's Governments towards Castro and record praise where it was justly due.

The Cuban leader's selfless humanism that transcended all distances of geography and ethnicity became vividly visible to the people of Pakistan. Soon after an earthquake that killed over 85,000 people and devastated a vast area in Azad Jammu & Kashmir in 2005, Fidel Castro sent about 800 doctors and paramedics to meet urgent and critical needs in mountainous, difficult terrain. With their tireless, competent care, Cubans created a unique bridge of compassion between the two very dis-similar nations thousands of miles away from each other.

## *MQM and PPP: allies and aliens*

The Mohajir Qaumi Movement (an English equivalent title could be: “Refugee National Movement” or “Migrant National Movement”) and Benazir Bhutto and PPP led a troubled, turbulent political relationship between 1988 and 1996. This was the 8-year span in which the PPP and the MQM formed, and then broke-up, then re-formed and adjusted yet again an alliance at the national level in the two Houses of the Federal Parliament and in the Sindh Provincial Assembly.

MQM’s origins go back to the All-Pakistan Mohajir Students Organization (APMSO) formed by Altaf Hussain at the University of Karachi on 11th June 1978. The principal founding rationale for APMSO was the real as well as exaggerated and so-perceived discrimination being suffered by the youth of the Urdu-speaking migrant community which had settled mainly in urban Sindh after 1947.

With the formation of MQM on 18th March 1984, the reality and the rhetoric fused into a new potency.

There were valid grounds for the grievances of the middle income, lower income and the poor classes of the migrant Urdu-speaking community based in urban Sindh. The quota for jobs in the Federal and Provincial Government bureaucracies and organizations was seen to be skewed unfairly against a growing, under-enumerated Urdu-speaking segment. Sindhi-speaking migrants from rural Sindh to urban Sindh were allegedly acquiring fake urban domicile

certificates to take away jobs from authentic eligibles in urban areas.

A decision in 1972 by the PPP Government in Sindh led by Chief Minister Mumtaz Bhutto to make the Sindhi language a compulsory subject in schools had been exploited to stoke paranoia about a conspiracy to deprive Urdu-speaking migrants of their own language and equal status. The bitterness created in that controversy abided even after Urdu's status was reinforced in Sindh along with Sindhi. Living conditions in urban Sindh localities where low-income Urdu-speakers resided were marked by congestion, lack of reliable water and power supply, poor sanitation, bad roads, inadequate health care.

Public transport was dominated by Pushto-speaking or Punjabi-speaking owners, drivers and conductors, many of whom behaved roughly with Urdu-speaking passengers. Bus and truck drivers drove recklessly on streets, often causing injuries and deaths. The fatal accident of an Urdu-speaking college girl named Bushra Zaidi in March 1985 sparked riots and burning of buses to aggravate the ethnic dimension.

Altaf Hussain's demagoguery and his hate-and-fear inciting speeches induced a kind of hypnosis among large parts of the Urdu-speaking community. It was deeply disturbing to see how easy it was to use hyperbole to stoke enduring grievance and bring it to menacing militancy.

The personality of MQM's founder, Altaf Hussain was a polar opposite of Benazir Bhutto. Born in Karachi into a middle-income family of migrants from Agra, north India, Altaf Hussain had drifted from an early association with the Islami Jamiat Tuleba (IJT) the student / youth wing of the Jamaat-e-Islami, to forming the APMSO.

The contrasts between Benazir Bhutto and Altaf Hussain were stark and pronounced. In one sense they were symbols of the contrasts between the rural dimensions of Sindh mostly set in the past and the evolving urban cosmopolitan

persona of urban Sindh. One was the daughter of a political martyr. The other was from a previously non-political family. One was indigenous to Sindh. The other was from a migrant settler family who had adopted Sindh as home. One was educated in two of the world's best universities in the UK and the USA. The other moved through only local government schools, colleges and the University of Karachi. The one was articulate in a global idiom and fluent in English with lower proficiency in Urdu and Sindhi. The other was rooted in a Karachi city-specific, community-specific milieu and capable of fluent, colloquial Urdu with little proficiency in English. The one was personally distant from, and repelled by violence. The other used words to subliminally and sometimes explicitly urge followers to use weapons for violence. The one was an elegant, youthful woman. The other was a visually un-prepossessing young man but one who had acquired a contrived charisma.

Yet in one critically important respect they held very similar viewpoints. Both were Muslims and were also secular-minded and both were uneasy with, and opposed to religion-based extremists, to the narrow-mindedness of the mullahs. Both were, in their own way, thoroughly part of the rapid changes of the late 20th century unlike the religious reactionaries still stuck in a medieval past.

It is also notable that about five days after the landmark elections of 16th November 1988 in which MQM swept Karachi and the PPP emerged as the single-largest party at the national level, Altaf Hussain called on Benazir Bhutto and presented her with a copy of the Holy Quran.

There is a widely-held view that if APMSO was originally, validly meant to secure justice for Urdu-speaking students seeking admissions to colleges and universities in the face of increased internal migration into Karachi and Hyderabad from other parts of Pakistan, its extension into MQM had a more insidious intent. This alleged aim was part of a covert strategy of General Ziaul

Haq to create new contestants for popular support in Sindh where, because of Z.A. Bhutto's killing, the PPP had achieved a dominant popular status. The PPP was not present in the hand-picked, non-elected Majlis-e-Shoora created under martial law in 1983 nor was the PPP present in the elected but non-party based legislatures elected in 1985.

So it was believed that the MQM was quietly sponsored and funded by military intelligence agencies as a bulwark against PPP, particularly in urban Sindh. In rural Sindh, this view also held that the agencies deliberately encouraged some of the nationalist elements to counter the PPP. As with such assumptions about this alleged secret role of intelligence agencies, there can be no conclusive evidence produced or cited. But the suspicious view of MQM's origins and early growth were common among those outside the MQM fold.

Though this writer was from a family that had migrated from Hyderabad Deccan (my father's home) and Madras (birthplace of my mother and myself) to Pakistan soon after India's armed invasion and annexation of Hyderabad Deccan in September 1948, one had never identified with the ethos and the modus operandi of the MQM. I felt that the act of permanent migration, the decision to adopt a new national identity ended one's status as a migrant. The land that one lives upon is an essential element of identity. I believed that one had become part of the evolving Pakistani nation and a resident of Karachi in Sindh Province. I was no longer a "refugee". The fact that my father, Ahmed Abdul Jabbar had been appointed a senior official of the Government of Pakistan after having served in the Government of Hyderabad Deccan epitomized the reality of permanent absorption into the new, evolving entity of Pakistan.

Both before entering the political process for the first time on election to the Senate in March 1985 and thereafter I had never wanted to be associated with MQM or any other similar organization based on a migrant identity.

A few months after my election to the Senate, I received a message from an individual who had intermittent contact with MQM to convey that Altaf Hussain was interested in meeting me. Despite my reservations about his ethnic-based politics, I decided that it would be relevant and informative for me to meet him face-to-face as part of my learning experience.

With my wife's brother-in-law, Najib Zafar accompanying me, I visited Altaf Hussain's residence and MQM's headquarters at 90 Azizabad, Karachi for an evening appointment. It was somewhat amusing to see how the process of arrival and escort into a passage, and eventually to a smallish room was deliberately staged to impress upon visitors that they were about to meet a new version of royalty. Altaf Hussain received us with courtesy and pleasantries. Our discussion covered national affairs in general and more specifically the situation in Sindh with the MQM leader doing most of the talking — which was precisely why I had wanted to meet him — to learn how his mind worked. While his Urdu-speaking perspective was a pronounced determinant of the discourse, it was apparent that he viewed Najib Zafar and myself — who were also Urdu-speaking but who had not succumbed so far to the MQM's approach — as persons who had let down their own community, or were beyond redemption.

At one stage of the exchange, from a sense of duty to speak one's mind frankly, without being inhibited by the aura of popular support, charisma et al, I said point blank to Altaf Hussain the equivalent words in Urdu to the effect that: "You are trying to take the Urdu-speaking community to what will be a dead-end. The only way to the future is through a broader, national perspective."

Without flinching in response to this perhaps unusually blunt face-to-face refusal by an Urdu-speaking person to be enthused by his creed, Altaf Hussain went on to make a shocking remark. He said, "Javed bhai, are you not being naïve when you say that the non-Urdu-speaking people of this country will

accept us fully? If today, the Indian Army invades Pakistan, not only the Urdu-speaking people but non-Urdu-speaking people will also welcome it.”

With a combination of firmness and politeness, I expressed my strong disagreement with this absurd and outrageous presumption. I said that, despite the excesses committed during the three phases of military rule, of which one was still on-going under General Ziaul Haq’s Presidency, the people of Pakistan as a whole, greatly treasured their independent identity as Pakistanis. Regardless of our respective pasts, and even continuing relationships with families and friends in post-1947 India, and despite the catastrophe of 1971 and the loss of the eastern wing, Pakistan would remain an enduring entity.

Though the next part of the discussion continued without disruption or rancour, I felt strongly vindicated at my first, instinctive response to the news that MQM had been launched. Altaf Hussain and his organization were not elements with whom and with which I could ever be associated. We parted with formal courtesies, perhaps each knowing that there was little scope for working together in the future.

In all the 34 years thereafter I met Altaf Hussain on only 3 more occasions. The immediate next occasion was at a meeting in 1987 hosted by Salma Ahmad, an MNA elected on a reserved seat for women by the PML faction headed by Pir Pagara. She had invited Altaf Hussain to her home in Clifton and the event was billed as a significant, first-ever foray into the upper-income, upscale localities of Karachi which were separated — and connected — by the famous Clifton Bridge from the middle and lower-income areas of Karachi such as Azizabad where Altaf Hussain resided. Seeing me among the guests, Altaf Hussain took a swipe by referring to me by name and mildly yet caustically remonstrating with me for not having boarded the MQM train. As he was the last speaker at the event I was unable to respond. But there was no acrimony in the air.

The next meeting was a brief encounter in the departure lounge of Islamabad airport in the evening of 24th November 1988. Earlier that day, seated next to Benazir Bhutto at the residence of Dr Zafar Niazi, I had announced my formal entry into the PPP and I was now taking a flight back to Karachi. By coincidence, Altaf Hussain had called on President Ghulam Ishaq Khan earlier that day and was also taking the same flight. The manner in which he greeted me clearly indicated his disappointment at my decision which had already become known by word-of-mouth and in the evening newspapers. I congratulated him for the sweeping victory in Karachi achieved by MQM securing 11 out of 13 seats for the National Assembly. I said one hoped that the PPP and MQM could work together for national stability.

The third and, so far last meeting with Altaf Hussain took place in London at some point in 1996 during my visit to the UK for a conference. That meeting took place at my initiative because I wanted to ascertain, first hand, how this self-exiled leader of MQM saw the political situation unfolding back home.

In that meeting some of his close, UK-based confidants were also present. Judging by the content and tone of his remarks, it was disconcerting to see that over the past several years, almost a decade since our first meeting, Altaf Hussain had sunk deeper and further into the insulating morass of ethnicity-driven grievance and embitterment. Virtually all non-MQM leaders and institutions, Provincial or Federal were, in his eyes, inimical to the interests of the Urdu-speaking migrants settled in urban Sindh. Even his belated change of the first word in the full name of MQM, replacing *Mohajir* with *Muttahida* (“United”) to give MQM a more holistic national image had not removed the inherently narrow perspective from which his words and actions arose. Now located thousands of miles from home and still able to retain the loyalty of his followers via telephone, the MQM leader had become one more abnormal



feature of the varied and volatile political framework of Pakistan.

I was intrigued by the ambivalence of my relationship with MQM and its leadership. To the best of my knowledge, apart from the swipe he took at me at the event held at the residence of Salma Ahmad in 1987, there was no other similar reference by him to me at any other public event. My periodic interactions with several MQM leaders as fellow residents of Karachi and as part of the political process, were always cordial and respectful. Dr Farooq Sattar, Azeem Ahmed Tariq, Aminul Haq, Faisal Subzwari, Syed Mustafa Kamal, Kanwar Khalid Yunus, Syed Haider Abbas Rizvi, Abdul Rauf Siddiqui, Nasreen Jalil, Dr Ishratul Ebad Khan, Kishwer Zehra, Fauzia Ejaz Khan — with all of them and others, one always enjoyed friendly social relations.

Even when I contested against an MQM candidate in the 2002 general elections for the National Assembly seat 244 from Karachi-6 as a candidate of the recently-formed Millat Party, with Syed Haider Abbas Rizvi representing the MQM and culminating in my spectacular defeat, I was never subjected to either verbal or physical threats from the MQM. This absence of animus from a party otherwise synonymous with violence was reassuring. Perhaps I did not represent a threat of any consequence to the MQM.

In 2011, I was pleasantly surprised to receive a telephonic request from one of their senior leaders inviting me to speak at the launch of the English language version of Altaf Hussain's autobiography. Published by the Oxford University Press, the book is titled: *My Life's Journey — (early years 1966-1988)* and is a translation from the original Urdu text titled: *Safar-e-Zindagi*. I was unable to accept the invitation due to a prior commitment outside Karachi on the date of the launch. But even if I had been present and able to accept, it would have been very difficult for me to speak. One would not have been able to deliberately withhold my strong dissent from the demagogic, divisive and violence-prone

reality of Altaf Hussain's concept of politics.

Though by end-1995, I had begun to give serious consideration to resigning altogether from the PPP, in comparison with the MQM, the party of which I was still a Member had a large, all-inclusive Federal and national ethos. But in the context of Sindh, the original Sindhi ethnic identity of Z.A. Bhutto and some of its prominent leaders — Mumtaz Bhutto, Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi, Makhdoom Talibul Maula, Rasul Bukhsh Talpur and others — had imbued the PPP with a distinct persona in the eyes of large numbers of Urdu-speaking migrants settled in urban Sindh.

Yet, there were also several Urdu-speaking members of the migrant community among PPP leaders. These included Mairaj Mohammad Khan (who had parted company with Z.A. Bhutto soon after 1972 when he declined to continue as a Minister of State in view of anti-labour actions by the Government), Amir Hyder Kazmi, N.D. Khan, Kamal Azfar, Iqbal Haider, Rashid Rabbani, Iqbal Yusuf, Taj Haider, Masroor Ahsan, Munawwar Suhrwardy and others. In the 1977 polls, even the eminent migrant poet Jamiluddin Aali contested (unsuccessfully) for a seat in the National Assembly from a Karachi constituency on a PPP ticket.

It was notable that perhaps for reasons of required mutual comfort, PPP interactions with MQM to make — or break! — alliances were almost always conducted by Sindhi-speaking leaders rather than by Urdu-speaking PPP leaders.

In the December 1988 - August 1990 first term of Benazir Bhutto as Prime Minister, this writer was never tasked by her to represent the PPP in any discussions held with MQM. In May 1990 when the Pucca Qila incident occurred in Hyderabad, as referred to in the next chapter, this writer felt obliged to publicly criticize the use of official force against an MQM-led agitation that included women and children. This comment had greatly — and from her viewpoint, rightly — upset Benazir Bhutto because it was unacceptable for a

member of her own Cabinet to be critical of action taken by a Provincial Government run by the Party she herself led.

This writer's condemnation of the Pucca Qila incident did not change one's basic views about MQM nor one's inability to identify with or support its conceptual approach, its violent tactics, its coercive methods and the demagoguery of its leaders.

Through one's close relationships with dozens of Urdu-speaking individuals who resided in MQM-dominated areas of Karachi and Hyderabad, this writer was constantly updated about events and trends in which MQM was involved. Almost all such events and trends featured the use of guns and violence to intimidate or to injure or to kill with impunity.

### ***MQM splits: Altaf departs:***

As happens notably in this, and other instances as well, initial covert alignments between Governments — openly, or through intelligence agencies — soon move to overt distancing and alienations. A cosseted pet becomes an eccentric, defiant creature. The way in which, with Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's consent, intelligence agencies used Sikh leader Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale to counter other political challenges to her Congress party in East Punjab in the early 1980s is a relevant example. Bhindranwale played a compliant role in the first phase but soon became his own man, perhaps imprisoned by his own rhetoric. There then came the siege of the Golden Temple in Amritsar, the blood-soaked end with the Indian Army's actions, the death of Bhindranwale — followed in 1984 by the assassination of Indira Gandhi by two of her own Sikh bodyguards as revenge for the desecration of the Golden Temple.

In 1992, Altaf Hussain was convinced that his life was in grave danger — both at the hands of MQM's own dissidents as also by other elements who could act on behalf of intelligence agencies that were convinced he had simply grown too

big for his civil boots. So he fled to London to commence the second phase of his grip over the MQM, but this time by remote control via the telephone, and later, through live telecasts by private TV channels in Pakistan. Altaf Hussain became increasingly megalomaniacal, flourishing in London through sums regularly remitted by legal and illegal means from Pakistan and from sections of the Urdu-speaking diaspora in the Middle East, USA and the UK.

In both her terms of office, Benazir Bhutto faced the problem of how to ensure co-ordinated actions by the civil forces such as Police and civil intelligence agencies including the Intelligence Bureau (IB) under the control of PPP Governments in Sindh and in Islamabad and, on the other, the military intelligence agencies such as ISI and MI and para-military forces such as the Rangers.

In the first term 1988-1990 there was a virtual parallel process at work with the Pucca Qila incident in Hyderabad in May 1990 as the best, or rather the worst manifestation of the lack of cohesion.

However, in the second term, 1993-1996, there was comparatively more co-ordination between civil and military policies and actions *vis a vis* the MQM as determined by the state of political relations between the two parties. Even when it was a member of an alliance, MQM was never satisfied with the degree of practical actions taken by the PPP Governments to meet its demands or conditions. In the 6th October 1993 polls, MQM inexplicably boycotted the National Assembly elections. The PPP and the PML-N gained seats in its absence. But, changing its stance, MQM contested the Provincial Assembly polls held 3 days later on 9th October 1993 and won 27 seats in the 100-member Assembly. This enabled another phase of alliance with PPP which eventually also again ended in a rupture with PPP.

Benazir Bhutto's approach to MQM in her second term was, in part, shaped by

the methods as used in the Pucca Qila incident, i.e. to deploy civil police force to confront armed militancy and criminality. But in the first term of Nawaz Sharif, 1990-1993, aided by a changed military approach under General Asif Nawaz as COAS — who had previously served as Corp Commander in Sindh and had little empathy for MQM — tough tactics were used to curb MQM's violent actions.

In that period, Afaq Ahmed, a close lieutenant of Altaf Hussain became so alienated from his demagogic leaders' aberrant, whimsical behaviour that he made a formal breach with his colleague in 1992.

Reliable sources say that, while civil and military intelligence agencies most likely provided Afaq Ahmed crucial support, what broke the camel's back from Afaq's viewpoint was the willingness of Altaf Hussain to throw his own lieutenant to the wolves when faced with a choice of acknowledging his own culpability for high crimes. He is said to have told the agencies that it was Afaq who was the planner and the executioner of violence whereas he was the peace-loving public leader. Afaq felt so deeply betrayed that, regardless of whether the agencies supported him or did not provide protection to him from Altaf's own militia, he decided to establish the MQM Haqiqi (the "Real", or "True" MQM).

For whatever reason, the dissident MQM faction known as MQM Haqiqi led by Afaq Ahmed was unable to develop into a powerful alternative. But so bizarre yet influential did Altaf Hussain remain as the supreme leader of MQM that every aspect of the party's policies and operations in Pakistan were subject to his approval from about 4900 miles away.

During General Asif Nawaz's term an operation was launched to confront dacoits in rural Sindh and criminality in urban Sindh. MQM was accused of operating torture cells as part of an organized network of extortion, intimidation and killings.

When Benazir Bhutto commenced her second term, Interior Minister Major General (r) Naseerullah Babar decided, in conjunction with the Sindh Provincial Government led by Chief Minister Abdullah Shah to build upon the Asif Nawaz approach. Extra-judicial killings increased significantly with suspects aligned with MQM being the principal casualties. Though sectarian incidents continued to recur, there was a comparative improvement in law and order conditions in both rural and urban Sindh.

In later years, several Police officers who had arrested and allegedly tortured or killed MQM members during the clean-up operation were killed by motor-bike borne assailants, none of whom were ever caught.

The lethal dimensions of MQM became apparent even in the UK. The British Government had afforded Altaf Hussain asylum, and then citizenship. Earlier, reliable sources confirmed that MQM was viewed by the British intelligence agencies and the Foreign Office as a useful source of information on political conditions in urban Sindh in particular and about Pakistan in general.

Imran Farooq, a former Secretary-General of MQM in Pakistan who had gone under-ground for several years to evade arrest, eventually surfaced in the UK. He sought permanent residency while maintaining a political distance from Altaf Hussain. He was mysteriously killed in London in September 2010. Despite Scotland Yard's reputation for investigative success, the suspected killers — though identified as persons specially sent from Pakistan to the UK under false pretences to conduct this murder and who reportedly departed London by air within hours of the killing — became subject to custodial issues between the UK and Pakistan.

In June 2020, three persons have been convicted by an Islamabad Court for the murder of Imran Farooq. Moves have been initiated to extradite Altaf Hussain from the UK. Such extradition is unlikely given the fact that he acquired British

citizenship well over a decade ago.

Several years earlier in May 1993, Azeem Ahmad Tariq, Chairman of MQM, who had developed differences with Altaf Hussain, was also mysteriously killed with a knife attack while asleep in his Karachi house. This writer recalls visiting his family to condole his tragic death soon after and also looking at the blood-stained mattress on the floor where Azeem had his last and fatal sleep. Tariq was far more balanced in his speeches than his leader.

Over the 23 years of remote-control leadership from London, Altaf Hussain became increasingly unhinged in his speech, partly due to ill-health, reportedly mainly due to overdoses of drugs or intoxicants.

The agonising hold of Altaf Hussain over MQM in Pakistan came to a belated but perhaps predictable end through his rabid rants against the State of Pakistan, against the Armed Forces and against sections of the mass media during a hysterical outburst in 2015. He questioned the very rationale for the existence of Pakistan, uttered praise for India and incited his followers to attack State institutions and TV news channels whose coverage he did not like.

The regulatory body for electronic media in Pakistan known as Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) banned the live or recorded telecast or broadcast of Altaf Hussain's speeches. This ban was later validated by the Supreme Court which heard an appeal from Altaf Hussain's loyalists. Law enforcement authorities sealed MQM offices and bank accounts and instituted cases of sedition and crime. MQM split into three groups.

Where Altaf Hussain and MQM gravely damaged the political process in Sindh by seeking to divide citizens on the basis of ethnicity and language, they enabled one solitary significant achievement.

For the first time in the country's history, men and women from lower-income and middle-income classes, many with education at college or university level,

some with only modest education, all without any ties to vast property or wealth were elected to Federal, Provincial and Local legislatures. Notwithstanding the domineering and distortive influence and control of Altaf Hussain's fascistic approach, these dozens of MPAs, MNAs and Senators introduced an entirely new complexion into political culture and discourse.



*“You must strongly condemn Makhdoom  
Khaliquzzaman and Javed Jabbar”*

The Pucca Qila episode occurred in Hyderabad, Sindh on 26th May 1990. In response to the armed activities of MQM cadres, in partial response to the tensions in the PPP-MQM political relationship, as part of the conspiracy or of unease in the Presidency and GHQ and in the Punjab Government about the ability of the Federal Government to survive the No-Confidence Motion of November 1989 — mischief was afoot.

The Police clashed with MQM cadres in a congested locality of Hyderabad where unplanned housing overflowed from the old crumbling fort known as Pucca Qila. MQM deployed women and children as part of protest processions. Inevitably, some were killed, injured or beaten by Police forces. Independent print media, and word-of-mouth, BBC’s South Asia service and All-India Radio spread the reports widely.

These incidents occurred in times when there were no private TV news channels hysterically fracturing people’s attention with Breaking News reports screaming about how unarmed, non-violent women and children had been made the target of official armed action by law-enforcers under the command of the PPP’s Sindh Government.

To sift the rumours and the exaggeration from the actual events, I spoke on the phone with, or personally met with Urdu-speaking residents of Hyderabad and

those in Karachi who had, in turn, reliable sources in Hyderabad. Several of these contacts and sources were not part of the MQM. In fact, most of them shared with me strong reservations on the basic political creed of MQM, of its founder, his imbalanced rhetoric and the very idea of ethnicity-based politics.

In the span between 1985 and May 1990 when the Pucca Qila incident happened, MQM, its leaders and I evolved our relationship into an unusual, mutually distant, cool, and yet non-violent one. For my part, there was no question of using weapons and arms as part of my political work.

Even as both licensed arms and illegal weapons proliferated rapidly during the 1980s, and even as my term in the Senate launched me into the political domain where most public figures were accompanied by armed guards, I never acquired a private armed escort. It was only during my tenure as a Cabinet Member that an officially-deputed Police escort accompanied me during outside visits, and armed guards at my residence were present. I was always uncomfortable with their presence but acknowledged the requirements of security procedures.

So a cool but fairly non-aggressive attitude on the part of MQM towards my person marked our relationship.

Notwithstanding my membership of the PPP and my strong disagreement with the MQM ethnicity-based approach, as a human being, but also as one who sympathized with the vulnerability of unarmed women and children to the use of force, I felt extremely upset with the law-enforcement actions of the PPP's Sindh Government — and the endorsement of such actions by the PPP-led Federal Government of which I was a part.

I was conscious of the fact that the MQM leadership was deliberately exploiting women and children to dramatize the alleged or real persecution of MQM. This was a crude yet effective way to capture the attention of news media, addicted to sensationalism. Even if Pakistani state electronic media did

not project the MQM perspective, it was certain that the Urdu, English and to some extent, even the Sindhi-language print media, and overseas media like the BBC's South Asia Service and All-India Radio gave the MQM angle prominent coverage.

Yet the reports I received about the insensitivity and harshness used by law-enforcers in Pucca Qila were quite reliable. When asked to comment on the incident — between the option of silence or evasion, the latter of which I abhor, and the option of expressing regrets at the loss of lives and injuries suffered — I chose the latter option in as carefully chosen words as possible.

But no degree of balance was adequate to prevent the news media from using my comments to project the comparatively exceptional note-worthy news that a Federal Cabinet Member was critical of actions taken by a Government led by the party of which he was a Member.

Urdu-speaking leaders of the PPP preferred silence, or the explanations that favoured the Government's perspective on the episode. But there was at least one other PPP Member and that too, a Sindhi-speaking leader whose publicly expressed views were at variance with the official PPP line. He was Makhdoom Khaliqzaman, younger brother of Federal Communications Minister Makhdoom Amin Fahim, elder brother of Sindh Home Minister Makhdoom Rafiqzaman, also a PPP Member, all sons of the late Makhdoom Talibul Maula, one of the first respected personalities of Sindh to become a Member of the PPP in 1967-1968.

Makhdoom Khaliqzaman's dissent with Benazir Bhutto also had something to do with his inability or unwillingness to forge a friendly relationship with Asif Ali Zardari and had little to do with any sympathy for MQM's cause.

So he and I were at least not alone — while representing different reasons for our dissent.

As the public sphere crackled with the Pucca Qila controversy, a session of the National Assembly was called in Islamabad. Prior to the session, all PPP Members of the Assembly and of the Senate were asked to meet with Benazir Bhutto so as to be briefed on how the attacks expected from the Opposition on the Pucca Qila incident should be handled by PPP Members in the House.

But even before the meeting with the Prime Minister, we were asked to assemble in a single room. Naheed Khan, the very close confidant of the Prime Minister and her Political Secretary entered the large room where we legislators, including Cabinet Members like myself were standing. By coincidence, both Makhdoom Khaliqzaman and myself were at the very rear of the small hall while in front of us, and mostly blocking our view, were other legislators.

Naheed Khan said she was here to only convey a message from the Prime Minister as she would be unable to meet all the legislators before the sitting of the Assembly commenced due to a new obligation which had just arisen. She proceeded to say: “You know how certain elements are spreading misinformation and lies about Pucca Qila to defame Benazir Bhutto and our Party. The Opposition will try to exploit this in all the wrong ways possible. Benazir Bhutto wants each of you to counter their attacks with force and conviction. You must criticize them. And you must also strongly condemn the statements by Makhdoom Khaliqzaman and Javed Jabbar. Even though they are from our Party...”.

A sudden hush had fallen as a couple of legislators in the line immediately facing Naheed Khan must have raised eye-brows or raised their fingers to their own lips to signal silence to her because she was obviously unaware that the two culprits she had named were very much present in the same hall, at the back. One legislator spoke: “Naheed sahiba, both JJ and Makhdoom Khaliq are here, back there “.

As Naheed and I exchanged looks, her face fell, colour rising up, but failing to conceal her embarrassment.

I smiled, and said clearly and loudly, “Certainly, Naheed sahiba.”

Though a bit stunned at the explicit directions she was giving and at being the target of this advice, I was also strangely amused. Both at the anger in Benazir Bhutto and in other PPP ranks that my Pucca Qila comment had caused and at the awkwardness of Naheed Khan saying what she did, unaware of our presence.

“Your advice should be followed. Do condemn me. I look forward to your speeches”.

As other legislators began to exit the hall, Naheed Khan tried to recover her composure and mumbled words to the effect: “Javed sahib, I did not mean it badly,.... You know, how your comments have been misunderstood by others. I was only trying to change the wrong impression”.

But I assured her that no offence was taken — even though it was! I wanted her to get over this embarrassment as soon as possible and left her in better company than mine.

In subsequent hours, during the sitting of the Assembly, Makhdoom Khaliqzaman and I waited to be strongly condemned. But found that, charmingly, Naheed Khan’s advice, doubtless at the behest of the even more charming Prime Minister, had the opposite effect. Not a single PPP legislator named us during their defence of the Government.

Perhaps I should not have made my views known to the Press and confined the expression of my concern to internal communication with the Prime Minister as I was after all, a Cabinet member and therefore bound by the discipline of supporting Government policy and actions as part of the principle of collective responsibility. At the same time I wanted to publicly express my sympathies

with those who had suffered maltreatment. Perhaps also, despite my aversion to ethnicity-based values and the parochial approach of MQM, there was an inner sense of affinity with the descendants of the original migrants, settled in Hyderabad. Perhaps also from a self-centred viewpoint, I wanted to benefit from favourable publicity — to the effect that: “Here is a Cabinet member openly stating criticism of the very same Government of which he is a part.”

There were other Urdu-speaking Ministers in the PPPled Governments at the Centre and in Sindh. For instance, Amir Haider Kazmi, Federal Minister for Health. Professor N.D. Khan, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister. Iqbal Haider, Adviser on Information to the Chief Minister of Sindh, and Rashid Rabbani and Iqbal Yusuf and Taj Haider in Sindh. They too must have felt that basic affinity which I felt, even as they and I also knew that MQM was exaggerating the harm done and exploiting it for partisan purposes alone.

For the record, and to her credit, Benazir Bhutto never referred to my dissenting public criticism of Government action at Pucca Qila during any of my future meetings with her. Perhaps Naheed Khan had briefed her on the amusing and awkward situation we had shared.

## *A meeting with Professor Abdus Salam*

(JUNE 1990)

An official overseas visit for the S&T Ministry took me to Washington DC for efforts to secure increased co-operation from R&D bodies — excluding, of course, in the field of nuclear energy.

Quite easily the most unforgettable overseas visit as the S&T Minister was the journey undertaken at one's own initiative and not in response to invitations as in the instances of my visits to the USSR and USA.

I had always felt grave concern — if not guilt — at how Pakistan had not extended to Professor Abdus Salam the sustained attention and willing acceptance of his ideas and proposals over the previous decade in particular. He had become the first Pakistani to receive a Nobel Prize. In 1979, he shared the Physics prize with Steven Weinberg and Sheldon Lee Glashow. General Ziaul Haq did decorate him with one of the highest civilian national awards in the form of Nishan-e-Imtiaz. But because Professor Salam was a Qadiani / Ahmedi — a sect that claims to be Muslim but one which was Constitutionally designated to be non-Muslim in 1974 — he was not acknowledged as a Muslim by orthodox religious figures and by most Pakistani Muslims.

This designation of Qadianis / Ahmedis as non-Muslims was given Constitutional status through the Second Constitutional Amendment in 1974 during the tenure of Prime Minister Z.A. Bhutto, father of the Prime Minister in whose Cabinet I was serving. So hyper-sensitive was the Qadiani / Ahmedi issue

in Pakistan that neither General Ziaul Haq nor Prime Minister Junejo nor Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto had invited Professor Abdus Salam back to Pakistan to develop and implement his proposed measures aimed at taking scientific development to new purposeful levels.

I thought that the least one could do is to symbolically express respect to this outstanding Pakistani. Therefore, this writer ascertained whether it would be convenient for Professor Salam to accept a visit by Pakistan's Minister of State for Science and Technology at the Institute for Theoretical Physics which he had founded, and continued to lead in Trieste, Italy. On receiving a positive response, a Summary was submitted to the Prime Minister requesting her approval for my visit to be made on the return journey home from an official visit to the UK. I was thankful to Benazir Bhutto for the prompt approval received.

Thus, on a breezy, coldish day in June 1990 this writer reached beautiful Trieste and arrived at Professor Salam's office. He welcomed me with a warm, gentle smile and a manner and grace that expressed a true nobility and decency. We posed for a photograph that is one of my proudest possessions. This was the gentle giant of a man who had made foundational, priceless contributions to PAEC and SUPARCO — and helped launch Pakistan to new horizons of achievement.

He presented me with a copy of his book of essays and lectures titled: *Ideas and Dreams*. The book is a panoramic survey of the themes and issues that the world at large and developing countries in particular urgently need to address so as to reduce glaring deficits and disparities in education, science and technology, advancement of specialist skills and equitable access of all classes to knowledge.

This writer conveyed greetings from the Prime Minister to the Nobel laureate and a brief on the work of the S&T Ministry. He listened with interest, asked for



a few clarifications, stressed the fundamental importance of improving the curriculum at the primary and secondary school levels because those were the stages in which analytical and critical thinking should be inculcated. He wistfully recalled his own early education in a small rural school in a Jhang village in Punjab. He said he would love to be able to live permanently in Pakistan. This writer silently remembered the inconvenient truth that one did not foresee in the near future any likelihood of the Government of Pakistan formally inviting him to take up long-term residence in Pakistan in a public role commensurate with his global stature. As a society and as a State we had permitted a small segment of religious extremists to hold hostage official policy and practices and to prevent open, non-violent public debate on the unjust treatment of the Qadiani /Ahmedi community.

Walking slowly but steadily, assisted by a gentleman visiting from London, Professor Salam guided me to lunch at a venue close to his office.

By the symbolic act of a serving Member of the Federal Cabinet travelling to Trieste solely for the purpose of paying respects to the brilliant scientist who had brought immense pride to Pakistan, one had placed on public record that the Government of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto acknowledged the great contribution of Professor Abdus Salam to humanity's treasure of learning.

*“These rumours are deliberately circulated to demoralize us. It won’t happen, Javed”.*

(JULY 1990)

In response to my somewhat frantic requests to her Military Secretary and ADC, the Prime Minister agreed to see me in about the third week of July 1990. I was told to be at her chambers in Parliament in Islamabad one afternoon and that she had agreed to meet me as she drove to an engagement in Rawalpindi.

The reason for my requests was that Najib Zafar, my wife’s brother-in-law, had been informed by a person he regarded as an impeccable source in the military, a serving officer, that President Ghulam Ishaq Khan was soon going to dismiss our Government and dissolve the National Assembly.

Such speculation had swirled and persisted for several weeks. Even earlier in 1989, within a few months into our tenure such a scenario was touted as a possibility. Within the first half of 1989, the initial unstinted support given in November 1988 by General Aslam Beg for the right of Benazir Bhutto to become Prime Minister had begun to weaken for multiple reasons referred to elsewhere in this book.

While I was not present at a particular meeting, perhaps one episode had convinced senior officers in general and the Chief of Army Staff in particular that they could not place complete confidence in Benazir Bhutto. The incident was an occasion when, without informing the COAS in advance of her intention to do so, she brought along with her for a special briefing at GHQ, US

Ambassador Robert Oakley. The briefing was meant to be for the Prime Minister's benefit — not to be shared with a foreign envoy.

On a periodic basis, and particularly under the path-breaking policy of glasnost (“openness” as introduced in the Soviet Union by Mikhael Gorbachev) through which news media held unprecedented interactions with the Army command in 1989-90, foreign envoys were also briefed on Pakistan's security concerns. But a briefing scheduled exclusively for the Head of the Government of Pakistan was not meant to be shared with the envoy of a country that was already held to be unduly intrusive into Pakistan's internal affairs.

That one single, most ill-considered decision by Benazir Bhutto to ask the US Ambassador to join her may well have been the last straw. Even though it took several months more for the actual coup d' grace to be delivered by the President with the full support of the Armed Forces.

So, given this context, there was nothing absolutely new about the message. However, what made me take this more seriously than the general buzz was the fact that the un-named source was said to be a serving military officer. That he had chosen to confide in Najib Zafar and had asked him to pass this message to me meant that I should not ignore it.

He obviously wanted the caution to be taken seriously. At the same time, there were two possibilities. One, that as part of a well-planned conspiracy to destabilize the PPP Government, feeding such a rumour attributed to a serving military source could have been meant to force a possible pre-emptive counter-measure by Benazir Bhutto i.e. reverse the momentum by herself formally, publicly, offering her resignation and requesting the President to dissolve the National Assembly. Thereby, acquiring a new credibility and respect for the courage shown and the risk taken to face a new general election, which would then mean that the President, in turn, could try his own unexpected manouvre i.e.

accept the resignation but not dissolve the Assembly. And, based on information to which he had access, ask her or other Parliamentary Party leaders to demonstrate a supportive majority.

A second possibility was that this report was being routed to her to encourage her to make a secret appeal to the President and/or the COAS assuring them that the PPP Government would mend its ways, would act entirely as per the advice and guidance of the Head of State and the COAS. No more assertions of independence on her part. Failing which — “Or else”!

Possibilities, yes, but one could not be certain.

What did appear to be solidly true was the fact that a serving military officer had made an effort to provide information so extraordinary in an apparently serious attempt to be helpful. This possibility had to be given weightage because Najib Zafar happened to be a friend of that official from times before the induction of our Government.

Seated with her on the back seat of her limousine as we sped down Constitution Avenue, I conveyed the report to her, naming the source and listing the two possibilities as above.

After listening to my briefing, she gently, firmly shook her head and spoke the words with which this chapter is titled. I thought, “Is this an example of extreme self-denial, a refusal to acknowledge a reality that is staring her in the face? Or does she think I too am merely yet another means being used to distract her, to force her to take the wrong route?”

She referred to her recent interactions with the President and the COAS and asserted that, neither through those encounters, nor from her other sources could she conclude that my report was reliable. We then discussed other aspects of Government till we reached Rawalpindi.

Less than two weeks later, the report I had conveyed to her turned out to be absolutely prescient and correct.

## *Rumbles — and the dismissal*

As August 1990 was about to begin with increased uncertainty about what President Ghulam Ishaq Khan would do about exercising — or not exercising — his powers to dissolve the National Assembly and dismiss our Government, I continued to maintain my association with my voluntary work in Tharparkar through the organization of which I was the founding president i.e. Baanhn Beli (a friend forever).

On about 2nd August 1990 I departed from Karachi for Nagarparkar which is about 600 kms distant from the port city. On completion of visits to villages near the Pakistan-India border where we were helping dig wells for water in the drought-prone areas and open non-formal girls' primary schools, I returned to Mithi, the principal town of the region. This is where I learnt about the invasion of Kuwait by Iraqi forces on the orders of President Saddam Hussain. That action further intensified the aura of uncertainty — but now within a larger regional, and even global framework of volatility.

I took the fastest route back to Islamabad and found the uncertainty unchanged.

Soon enough, just 3 days later, a new certainty dawned. As I reached the Secretariat for a pre-scheduled meeting of one of the R&D organizations attached to the Ministry of Science & Technology, I was informed that the President had taken the anticipated decision. Our Government was no longer in office. Benazir Bhutto was no longer Prime Minister. And, as a minor detail, I was no longer Minister of State for Science & Technology.

Despite the apprehensions felt in previous weeks and days about this new status, the first impact of the news produced a mixture of unpleasant surprise, disappointment, sadness. The last, that feeling of sadness, arose from a mixture of contrary perceptions and emotions.

I recalled that, even though I had been in the Opposition to Prime Minister Junejo's Government I condemned the dismissal of his Government by President General Ziaul Haq on 29th May 1988 — to the extent that I had moved a Privilege Motion in the Senate and recorded my strong criticism of that move.

I also felt saddened that our PPP Government, with all its limitations and flaws, nevertheless had at least two distinctions. One: it was a party-based democratically elected Government with a mandate to be in office for five years, now arbitrarily cut to less than two years. Two: there seemed to be a latent streak of misogyny in the action: the unwillingness of a patriarchal, masculine power elite to accept the continuation in public office of a woman as Prime Minister. I was also saddened by our own leader's failings and our own Party's and Government's failure, in being unable to combat the challenges we faced, the corruption that some members of the Government and Party succumbed to, and the negative image we had acquired.

On being informed by my private secretary that Benazir Bhutto was meeting with Cabinet Members and party leaders in Sindh House, I immediately rushed there. Seated with about twenty colleagues at that time, she greeted me with a smile, a resigned expression, and said words to the effect, "Javed, so after all, they did what some of us felt they would do!" I did not want to remind her at this time, of all times, of one of our recent meetings when I had conveyed the message to her about the rumours, as we drove in her limousine down Constitution Avenue and I had conveyed the cautionary message regarding the imminence of our dismissal.

***A farewell note:***

An unseemly aspect of the abrupt removal of a Government through the personal discretion of the President was that the daily, close, multiple-level interactions with the Secretary and dozens of officials of a Ministry were suddenly snipped and cut. Initiatives and processes at different stages of conceptualization and implementation were instantly frozen or suspended into a new uncertainty. As there were several new policy and programme initiatives unfolding in the Ministry of Science and Technology when I ceased to be the Minister-in-charge, I decided to address a letter to all officers and staff shortly after our ouster. The text is placed below.

8th August 1990

Dear colleagues,

Salaams.

As the dissolution of the National Assembly and the dismissal of the Federal Cabinet on August 6, 1990 brought an abrupt end to my association with the Ministry of Science and Technology, I was unable to meet you before departing from my office.

I am therefore addressing this letter to you in order to thank you for the support and co-operation that you extended to me during my tenure at the Ministry as Minister of State. It has been a privilege and an honour to be associated with the Ministry, its officials and staff. I have learnt a great deal in this brief period and realized again how much more there is to know, particularly in the Science and Technology sector.

During 10 months at the Ministry, it was a pleasure to discover the knowledge and skills possessed by officers and scientists in Pakistan. We can truly be proud of this pool of manpower to which you belong.



Each Government has its own priorities and policies. However, in the Science and Technology sector more perhaps than in other sectors, there is a need for continuity and consistency in some vital respects.

For example:

- a. In emphasizing an orientation of R&D to the grass-roots and to people's basic needs as expressed in the theme: "Science for the people: Technology for progress".
- a. In holding regular, frequent meetings of boards of governors, directors, trustees, etc. and internal reviews to ensure monitoring of performance and enforce self-accountability.
- a. In constantly updating individual knowledge, enhancing targets and standards of research and development, in striving for excellence.
- a. In making every rupee for R&D work twice as hard as a rupee in other sectors.
- a. In continuous dialogue and contact with the private, non-governmental sector.
- a. In maintaining, and increasing the pace of recent initiatives for a new technology policy, an electronics policy, a software policy, the enlargement of STEDEC, internal reorganization and revitalization of R&D bodies etc.

I am fully confident that the new Minister in-charge of the Ministry of Science and Technology in the Caretaker Government and his successors in future

Governments will provide fresh impetus and good leadership: I only hope that while introducing new elements, positive previous and existing policies such as those indicated above will be retained and improved.

With best wishes to you for your continued success and for the fulfillment of your endeavours.

Sincerely,

Senator Javed Jabbar

## *Post-mortem of a Government*

(AUGUST 1990)

In the last week of August 1990, about 3 weeks after the arbitrary dismissal of our government, Benazir Bhutto convened a meeting at Bilawal House, Karachi of the PPP's Central Committee. Additional invitees comprised nonmembers of the Committee such as this writer who had served in her Cabinet for 20 months.

There was optimal attendance. Seated at the head of a long conference table, the former Prime Minister's opening remarks were perhaps aimed to set the tone for the discussion to follow. Grievance against the President and named as well as unnamed officials in the Army shaped the basic message of accusation and victimhood. There certainly were justifications for the accusatory aspect because the Government and coalition which she led in the National Assembly, maintained a majority right up to the date of dismissal on 6th August 1990.

Identified by the Party leader herself and by others, there was a reasonably impressive list of initiatives launched in our 20-month tenure. This list was made the more notable because there was crude resistance from the Punjab Government of Chief Minister Nawaz Sharif to allow effective implementation in the country's largest Province. In Sindh, in the urban areas, the uneasy relationship with MQM had led to the open breach in October 1989. This prevented visible progress in the large cities of Sindh.

Nevertheless, the Federal Government in the 1988-1990 period — about 20 years before the 18th Constitutional Amendment emasculated the powers of the

Centre in favour of the Provinces — possessed direct authority over several sectors and organizations that had a country-wide mandate. These spheres included: a new priority given to women's rights and empowerment as reflected in the creation of the First Women Bank Ltd., women's police stations, and appointments of women to steer policy processes in and outside Parliament; upgradation of telecommunications; initiation of new highways; accelerated electrification into rural areas and small towns; improved incentives for oil and gas exploration; expansion of ports and shipping; advancing infrastructure for aviation; supporting enhanced freedom for electronic and print media; revising import and export policies; attempts to improve the standard of legal and judicial appointments; strengthening outreach of public health services in the social sector; reform of state-owned enterprises; refining interior, defence and foreign policies to more accurately reflect the restoration of party-based democracy. Constructive steps were taken in virtually all the above sectors while being aware that giving each reform a practical and tangible manifestation required time, sustained focus and follow-through. These last 3 requirements were not easily available partly due to our own failures and equally due to the unholy alliance of forces arrayed against us.

The absence of a PPP majority in the Senate in the 1988-1990 period limited prospects for bold new legislation — though the non-PPP Senators complained that had they been taken into confidence and their support sought, such support would have been readily given.

In retrospect, it was clear virtually from the word “go” in December 1988, that the Presidency, the Armed Forces, parts of the civil establishment and the Punjab Government led by Chief Minister Nawaz Sharif plus all those right-wing and religious elements who shared a distrust of the PPP — and unease about a woman Prime Minister — had combined their energies to harass and intimidate

the Federal Government at every turn. Notable sections of the print media also displayed this hostility despite providing reasonably prominent coverage to the speeches and engagements of the Prime Minister and of senior PPP leaders.

As former Ministers, Ministers of State, Advisors, Special Assistants and senior party leaders expressed their respective comments, there was a common feature in almost all the observations. This was the “blame-them” factor. It was almost as if the 11 years of General Ziaul Haq’s rule in which the PPP had been persecuted, did not actually end on 17th August 1988 with the General’s demise in the air crash at Bahawalpur. The meeting’s deliberations sounded as if an unjust, unholy alliance against the PPP and the Bhutto family was still alive and well, that it had in fact flourished and grown stronger even with the PPP in-office at the Centre. Indeed, that the animus against the PPP and the Bhutto family had increased precisely because they had managed to obtain and then remain in public office for over a year and a half.

***“There was no corruption!”:***

Benazir Bhutto invited me to speak after about 20 other participants had expressed their views. Not a single one of the preceding speakers had mentioned a certain basic feature of our government’s troubled tenure. After making an initial, qualified endorsement of the thesis — and the reality — of the unholy alliance we had faced, and which we continued to face after our removal from office, I said words to the effect: “...but Prime Minister we need to acknowledge that corruption in our Government was a major reason for our dismissal. Though the reality of corruption may be exaggerated, corruption by some did mar our performance and thus also shaped a negative perception about us.”

I had not anticipated the intensity of Benazir Bhutto’s abrupt, explosive reaction. In an intense, very annoyed tone, her face frowning and her eyes focused on me, she said, “Corruption? Corruption! Of course not, Javed, there

was no corruption. This charge is a fabrication, sheer propaganda to malign us. Corruption indeed ! Give me one example, show me some evidence. Don't just echo what our enemies claim. There was no corruption. Our dismissal was only due to a conspiracy.”

I responded by saying, “Prime Minister, it is not for me to produce hard proof of corruption. I am not able to do so. That is for the specialists, with access to details. I simply want to stress that there were strong grounds to....”

She abruptly cut me off and invited others present to comment. To my profound disappointment, not a single other participant endorsed my views. Instead, they reverted to the prior theme of bias against the PPP and its proletarian ethos, and that this attitude was ingrained in the so-called establishment. Thereby went the argument that this intrinsic anti-PPP prejudice led to a deliberate disregard for the several positive policies and actions introduced during our Government's tenure.

Neither did Benazir Bhutto invite me to respond to a categorical rejection by her and all others to the apparently absurd allegation nor did I request for a second opportunity to speak. I knew that the request to speak a second time would either be declined citing constraints of time or one would be ignored.

When the meeting was adjourned for lunch, at least two former Ministers approached me to quietly express compliments for my candour and to indicate their full agreement with my views. As this kind of post-event, quiet, unnoticed-by-the-Boss support had also been given to me on a couple of previous occasions, including Cabinet meetings, I accepted the moral support with appreciation mixed with skepticism. I did not urge them to speak up as well because that decision had to be their own volitional choice — they were not exactly little children who had to be guided about the need to speak frankly and without fear.

With regard to the reality of corruption or to the over-blown perception about it, there were multiple reliable sources who made these charges. They included persons long-known and well-known to me. At least a handful confirmed first-hand accounts of how certain Cabinet Members and party leaders were misusing their positions to gain personal financial benefits in return for arranging official actions that would benefit the bribe-givers. The “Mr Ten Percent” label published by a leading English magazine cover story ascribed such activity to the husband of the Prime Minister. Even if so explicit a label was entirely fictitious with no basis in truth, the sheer fact that the image of corruption had become prevalent deserved to be discussed in a dispassionate manner. But, to one’s deep regret, Benazir Bhutto was clearly unwilling to face the facts. Perhaps the pain of dismissal still lingered sharply for it was less than 3 weeks since our ouster. Or perhaps the harsh truth was too real to acknowledge, specially in the presence of those whom she led.

***Self-criticism a difficult task:***

In any case, self-criticism is one of the most difficult processes for any individual to conduct — this writer included. So Benazir Bhutto was not the first person in the world or in Pakistan to evade facing the truth in candid self-scrutiny. The reluctance was also understandable because responsibility for the Government acquiring the perception about being associated with corruption ultimately rested with her. The buck stopped with an even bigger thud than normal at her own desk because her own spouse was directly linked to the stigma.

More disturbing for me than to be sternly chastised by the Party leader in a large Committee meeting was the sad, inescapable reality that corruption had become an unspoken yet undeniable facet of the Party’s culture. As the burden of this truth grew heavier during and after the post-mortem meeting, so too did

my distance from Benazir Bhutto grow further. There was discomfort because with our Government having been undemocratically removed from office, all Party members needed to remain united, expressing uniformity of views in public and demonstrating solidarity with the leader — despite the grave disappointment felt at the leader's unwillingness to accept unpleasant facts.

With about only 6 months remaining for the end of my 6-year term of Senate Membership in March 1991, a new uncertainty also began in end-August 1990 about one's future relationship with the leader and the Party. There had already been some marked instances of divergence of views between Benazir Bhutto and myself on some issues.

So the next few months offered only mixed, or rather murky prospects for our relationship.





## PART III



## *Victory at IPU in Punta del Este, Uruguay*

(OCTOBER 1990)

A major setback for Benazir Bhutto, for the party — and for the country — in August 1990 was soon followed by a major success for a Pakistani and a PPP-Member in October 1990. This success had no bearing on the arbitrary removal of the Government of which I was a part. Nevertheless, the small – big triumph brought a little sweetness to relieve the sourness.

Since April 1988, I had become a regular participant of the 6-monthly conferences of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). Having originally been nominated by the Chairman of the Senate, Ghulam Ishaq Khan, along with three other Senators to attend the IPU Conference in Guatemala, Central America, I had also participated in subsequent meetings, at IPU conferences held in Bulgaria, Cyprus and the UK.

The IPU is like a non-legislative Parliament of the world. It enables dialogue and sharing of experience between elected or nominated members of legislatures from all continents. Though it has no executive authority, it serves as an unequalled forum to promote dialogue and increased awareness about political conditions across the globe.

In September 1989 at the Centenary Conference of IPU held in London, I had the pleasure of meeting Queen Elizabeth at the welcome reception in the historic Westminster Abbey. She spoke in a quiet, gentle tone as she inquired about Benazir Bhutto and Pakistan. She then introduced me to the person standing next to her who turned out to be the then-Chancellor of the Exchequer, John Major

who later went on to become Prime Minister.

At this IPU Centenary Conference, I was also bestowed with the honour of being nominated as one of the 3-member IPU Observer Mission to monitor the elections set to be held in Namibia in southern Africa in November 1989. Conducted under the aegis of the United Nations, these elections were to mark the transition of Namibia from a colonial territory previously under German/South African occupation into an independent nation-state. Sam Nujoma had led a heroic struggle to achieve freedom. During that 10-day mission to Namibia in November, it was a pleasure to discover the disciplined efficiency of the Pakistan contingent as part of the UN forces deployed in the country.

But even though Benazir Bhutto had approved my visit to that remote, distant country at a politically-turbulent time, I was deeply missing the action back home. The action surrounded the shenanigans of our beleaguered Government facing the No-Confidence motion moved against the Prime Minister in the National Assembly. Voters for and against the motion had been virtually kidnapped and transported to locations where the other side could not reach them with temptations to change loyalties.

I telephoned Benazir Bhutto from Windhoek, the Namibian capital, to convey my best wishes and to ask whether I should rush back home to lend any moral support needed at this critical time. She sounded quite pleased at receiving my call from thousands of miles away and seemed very confident of defeating the motion. Which is exactly what happened.

With abundant irony, the last IPU conference which I attended and which was held in the coastal resort town of Punta del Este, Uruguay in South America in October 1990 became the most memorable IPU experience for me. Perhaps this was largely because I was honoured by winning a closely-contested election

thousands of miles from my country.

***Human rights of Parliamentarians:***

During the preceding three years of participation, I had been nominated to, or invited to serve on IPU Committees on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians and on the Standing Committee on Education and Culture.

The first of the above Committees dealt with Parliamentarians who were imprisoned in their own countries for political reasons or for ostensibly criminal acts which were often falsely ascribed to them to provide a façade for political persecution. Or, in some cases, certain Parliamentarians had simply disappeared.

Discovering the details about several such cases, most, or all of which regrettably were related to countries in Latin America, Africa and Asia, was to look at photographs, read biographical details, read the heart-rending appeals by their family members who also gave details of torture or jail sentences of solitary confinement, or simply, cases of political prisoners who had perished due to murder or execution.

In the first phase, the Committee would address letters to the Speakers or the Chairpersons of each concerned country's legislatures. When and if responses were received, follow-up correspondence and actions took place, such as requests for meetings with prisoners, or their lawyers. Governments would obviously evade or avoid responses and the Committee would persist and present Reports to the full Conference.

Even with limited success achieved in the work of this Committee, and though only for about two and a half years, the experience was energizing and informative.

The work in the Committee on Education and Culture did not have the raw emotional power to move one as deeply as the work on the Human Rights Committee did. Nevertheless, both Education and Culture as also Science and

Technology (the latter, particularly so in view of my Ministerial association with the subject for about 10 months in the Cabinet) were substantive subjects of enormous relevance to all countries, regardless of their respective levels of development.

The position of Chairman of the IPU Committee on Education, Culture, Science & Technology was vacant with effect onward of the Punta del Este conference. A few Parliamentarians from Asia and Europe and my fellow delegates from Pakistan suggested that I become a candidate. This was flattering to learn but also sobering. Without extensive prior preparation, I wondered whether I had even a reasonable chance? Two Pakistani colleagues in particular, Senators Syed Faseih Iqbal (Balochistan) and Malik Faridullah Khan (FATA) were specially supportive. Both these dear fond well-wishers have passed away (the former from natural causes in 2014, the latter in a terrorist attack about a decade earlier). It was pleasantly surprising that a few Muslim, Turkish and Arab Parliamentarians also proposed my candidature.

The other two candidates were formidable. There was a prominent legislator, C.J. Pereyra from the host country of Uruguay. In general, candidates of host countries enjoyed the advantages that automatically come with simply being the hosts. Courtesy and etiquette expected from guests encourage support for hosts. The other rival had awesome credentials. She was Nguyen Thi Binh, a veteran member of the Communist Party of Vietnam, originally from North Vietnam. She had served as an eminent leader of that country's courageous and successful struggle to overthrow, first, the French colonialists, then the Americans forces, and to deter Chinese dominance. She had served as Foreign Minister of the Provisional Revolutionary Government and was a co-signatory of the historic Paris Peace Accords signed on 27th January 1973 between the Americans, led by Henry Kissinger and the North Vietnamese, led by Le Duc Tho : both of

whom later received the Nobel Peace Prize. As a protégé of the great Ho Chi Minh, her record was impressive and impeccable.

Comparatively, my credentials were negligible. Yet we persevered with the campaign for 4 hectic days. Just before polling began, the Vietnamese leader inexplicably withdrew her candidature.

The election result was a shock of pleasure. I had secured more votes from all Parliamentarians than the host country's candidates. I was deeply moved, by the trust reposed in me and by Allah's grace in giving me this victory. To the best of every Pakistani delegate's knowledge — and later confirmed by the National Assembly Secretariat in Islamabad — this was the first time in the history of Pakistan's Parliament (a chequered, fitful history!) that a Member of the country's Parliament was elected Chairman of an IPU Committee representing 112 Parliaments from around the world.

But even as I was absorbing the good news, I received another kind of jolt. As felicitations were being conveyed, the veteran Vietnamese freedom fighter warmly shook my hands, looked at me with a slight smile and piercing but not unfriendly eyes and asked, "So Senator Jabbar — are you happy now?"

That question chilled me to the bone. I genuinely suddenly regretted having won the election — by defeating so senior, so dignified a political leader who had rendered far greater services than my own limited self had done. Without even waiting to see me shake my head, she turned and left — and we have never met since. Yet Nguyen Thi Binh's question still echoes in my mind. Some victories bring far more sadness than some defeats do.

There were then less than six months before my term in the Senate was to conclude on 20th March 1991. Even as I commenced fulfilling responsibilities as Chairman of the IPU Committee, I was aware that prospects of my being given a Party ticket by Benazir Bhutto to be elected for a second term for 1991-1997

were remote, for reasons detailed elsewhere.

Perhaps the Vietnamese lady had a premonition that my happiness would be of very short duration.

## *Defending the PPP; facing a rigged election*

In its 90-day tenure, the Caretaker Government appointed by President Ghulam Ishaq Khan with the Cabinet headed by Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi had far more pressing business to attend to than to convene sessions of the only legislature — the Senate — that had survived the dissolution order of 6th August 1990.

During about 5 sittings of the Senate convened in August 1990, this writer spoke on Motions moved against the President's dissolution of the National Assembly on 6th August; on the placement of names of many political leaders including former PPP MNAs on the Exit Control List and on the arrest of journalists on dubious charges in Islamabad.

I also participated actively in sessions held later in January and March 1991.

One of the Caretaker Government's most critical tasks — never admitted, but real, and perhaps its most important task — was to create physical and psychological obstacles that would prevent a return of the PPP to power at the Centre through the elections set for 24th October 1990 for the National Assembly and 27th October 1990 for the Provincial Assemblies.

The physical aspect comprised a wide range of measures. These included: arrests of Party leaders or persons such as Asif Ali Zardari, on charges of corruption, charges serious as well as possibly supported by some proofs, and others possibly concocted. Installation of Caretaker Provincial Governments



which are responsible for, among other subjects, police and general administration at the grass-roots level, with verbal instructions to create hurdles for the PPP. These instructions become particularly relevant during the vote-canvassing and balloting phases.

A political cell was established in the Presidency. This comprised Lt. General (r) Razaqat Ali Khan and former Federal Secretaries Roedad Khan and Ijlal Haider Zaidi.

Working in tandem with the covert advantages offered by ISI, the Political Cell was perceived to have overseen the efficient implementation of a new scenario. In this new script, the PPP would be excluded from a return to power both at the Centre and in Sindh province, the home-base of the Bhutto family.

Another aspect of physical, indeed blatantly partisan political engineering was that Ministers in the Caretaker Government were permitted to be candidates in the forthcoming elections.

This eligibility gave a distinct advantage to the Minister- candidates against rival candidates, particularly against those from the PPP. Such advantages ranged from free publicity on the State-owned monopoly electronic media of PBC and PTV as also prominent coverage given by private print media to Ministerial speeches and activities, privileges unavailable to candidates who were not Ministers.

The inherent bias against the PPP evident in the dissolution order was most obvious in the appointment of the Caretaker Prime Minister and the Caretaker Chief Ministers. Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi had served as Leader of the Opposition in the 1988-90 National Assembly, in direct confrontation with Benazir Bhutto. Ghulam Haider Wyne in Punjab was a senior leader of the Pakistan Muslim League, Nawaz Group. He had been a vociferous critic of the PPP during his tenure as an MNA in 1988- 1990. Jam Sadiq Ali in Sindh, who, like Ghulam

Mustafa Jatoi had served with Z.A. Bhutto, had become alienated from Benazir Bhutto and had a colourful reputation for political amorality.

Some aspects of the rigging plan were visible and obvious as reflected in statements by Caretaker Ministers and in transfers and appointments of officials in the Centre and in the Provinces to replace those believed to be favourites of the ousted Government.

One aspect was suspected but not proven until several years later. The Political Cell reportedly advised the then DG, ISI Lt. General Asad Durrani — with the approval of Army Chief General Aslam Beg — to obtain a sum of Rs. 140 million from Younus Habib, an experienced banker based in Karachi, well-versed in the craft of handling unreported sums of money.

The sum of Rs. 140 million — which 31 years later in 2021 would be equal to a sum at least ten times larger i.e. Rs. 1400 million — was distributed to selected political leaders of IJI parties — the alliance led by Nawaz Sharif — to help meet their election campaign expenses and enable anti-PPP propaganda. That level of cash may well have helped some of the recipients to achieve electoral success but at least in one major instance, it did not help. That IJI candidate lost to a PDA-PPP backed candidate. Which also signals the irony of the Pakistani electoral system; it is capable of enabling anti-establishment candidates to win balloting victories by overcoming numerous visible and invisible impediments.

In 1994, Major General (r) Naseerullah Babar, a senior Member of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's Cabinet in her second term of office stated in the National Assembly that there was tangible evidence of illicit actions taken in 1990 to help rig the over-all outcome. Two years later, Air Marshal (r) Asghar Khan, the leader of the Tehrike- Istaqlal Party, widely respected for his integrity and outspokenness despite lack of electoral success, filed a public interest petition in the Supreme Court urging the Court to take notice of this

transgression of the law and of election rules. The petition remained on the pending list for 16 years.

In 2012, Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry paid personal attention to this petition. While this Chief Justice's judicial activism reflected an ill-advised excess with exorbitantly perilous, expensive consequences for the State, in this particular instance, the Court rendered an unprecedented verdict. For the first time, a former Chief of Army Staff and a former Director-General of the Inter Services Intelligence were held directly responsible for actions that violated the law and their own respective prescribed professional roles.

The Court directed the Federal Government to take the required punitive action against the two individuals who, in turn, filed review petitions requesting the Court to re-consider the verdict. These review petitions were eventually rejected in May 2018 by another Chief Justice who was Mr Saqib Nisar.

I was both pained and disappointed to learn of the association of the two generals with this operation. Lt. General Asad Durrani is a thoughtful analyst, a gifted writer and a very professionally-capable officer. Post-retirement, he ably served as Pakistan's Ambassador to Germany, a tenure during which I met him during a visit to Bonn and enjoyed his hospitality. Later, he also served with distinction as Ambassador to Saudi Arabia. In subsequent years, we have been co-participants in the PILDAT Civil-Military Dialogue Group for 16 years from 2004 to 2020. He made insightful contributions. I have had comparatively less frequent contacts with General Aslam Beg. But he too is an exceptional individual. Though one can disagree with some of his assumptions and convictions he deserves appreciation for his support to the restoration of a party-based democratic system in 1988 and his contributions to intellectual research and public discourse. The Foundation named FRIENDS which he established after retirement, held interesting seminars and published a journal on diverse

subjects for several years. Both Beg and Durrani are deeply devoted to the stability and well-being of Pakistan. So one's sadness was the greater when one learnt of their association with this shadowed initiative.

Details of how the sum of Rs. 140 million was used emerged in the course of hearings. A total of 30 political personalities were said to have received portions of the sum. 18 of these recorded statements denying they had received amounts from an ISI official. 12 individuals on the list maintained by a former Brigadier who was posted to the ISI at that time had either passed away or were not contactable on time. The original amount was processed through six *benami* bank accounts to avoid naming recipients. A *benami* account is one which is operated under a fictitious name by the actual but un-named beneficiary with the connivance of the related bank staff.

There was an asymmetry in the party alliances that were formed to contest the October 1990 polls.

Retaining the 1988 alignment of the Islami Jamhoori Ittehad (IJI) which had been welded together with the active involvement of the political wing of the ISI, now in 1990 this coalition comprised 9 parties. PML(N), Jamaate- Islami, National People's Party, Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islam, Nizam-e-Mustafa Group, Markazi Jamiat-e-Ahle Hadith (Lakhvi Group), Jamiat-e-Masaikh, Azad Group, Hizbullah Jihad.

The party with the largest popular base was the PML-N, with most of its support located in Punjab.

On the other side, there were only 4 parties in the People's Democratic Alliance pre-dominantly led by the PPP and supported by the Tehreek-e-Isteqlal, Tehreeke- Nifaz-e-Fiqah-e-Jafriah, PML (Malik Qasim).

On polling days, despite the fact that Judicial officers, as in 1988, were appointed Returning Officers for each constituency instead of the previous

practice of appointing support staff from Education departments, the election process was tilted against the PPP and its allies.

Despite the unfair pre-poll conditions that amounted to virtual pre-poll rigging reinforced by both successful and thwarted attempts to interfere with the balloting process, it is remarkable that the ousted, vilified PPP was able to both retain its share of the popular vote and, due to alliance partners and, perhaps the victimized “sympathy” factor, increase its vote-share.

In November 1988, the PPP secured 7.5 million votes across the country. In October 1990, PDA, of which the PPP was the major part, secured 7.79 million popular votes, an increase of about 300,000 votes.

In November 1988, the IJI bagged 5.9 million popular votes. In October 1990, the IJI share galloped up to 7.9 million votes, an increase of over 2 million votes. So large a jump clearly appeared to be the result of the prepoll measures taken to place PPP at a disadvantage and only partly due to the support contributed by non-PML member-parties.

Yet, due to the intrinsic limitations of the first-past-the-post electoral system that makes democracies which use it non-representative in many ways, the number of seats won by the two alliances reflected a sharp contrast.

Whereas the IJI share of seats in the National Assembly went from 54 in 1988 to 105 in 1990, the PPP share of seats virtually halved from 93 in 1988 to 44 in 1990 despite PDA-PPP increasing their popular vote-share.

The factors of seat adjustments, disillusion with the PPP, the anti-incumbent aspect critical of the PPP, the number of candidates dividing votes to inadvertently or deliberately enabling anti-PPP candidates to win were partly responsible for the anomalous result.

While attempting to defend in the Senate the PPP Government of which one

had been a part and while one condemned the partisan conduct of the Caretaker Governments, it was disappointing — though not surprising — to see that both the High Courts and the Supreme Court rejected petitions challenging the dissolutions.

There was one exception. When dismissed Chief Minister Aftab Sherpao urged the Peshawar High Court to overturn the dissolution of the NWFP Provincial Assembly, a full Bench with a majority of four to one, declared the dissolution to be violative of the Constitution. Going even further, the Court ordered the restoration of the Assembly. But, as in the other cases of appeals to the apex Court, the Supreme Court upheld all the dissolutions including that of NWFP.

The bitter icing on the rigged cake of the 1990 polls was the weird fact that an election observer team of the Democratic Party from the USA declared the election process to be generally free and fair. So quickly had support for Benazir Bhutto and the PPP faded even in America's Democratic Party which was otherwise seen to be more sympathetic to her than the Republican Party.

Though the immediate impact on me of the inability to confront harsh truths at the post-mortem meeting was to draw away from Benazir Bhutto there were also political conditions emerging rapidly that made one feel sympathetic and supportive to her. Even after allowing for the flaws and failures of our Government under her leadership, the malicious attitude of the Punjab Government led by Nawaz Sharif and the accompanying latent unease and grudging acceptance by President Ghulam Ishaq Khan and the leadership of the Armed Forces were factors that generated sympathy for her.

Now, even out of public office, deprived of all the fancy frills and actual tangible resources of a Government, Benazir Bhutto and the PPP were facing a continuation of the previous hostility — further intensified and made formidable by the fact that all the hostile elements held all the reins of official power. Yet

preparations for the polls in October 1990 had to proceed post-haste.

For me this was a time when one was torn between deep disappointment and alienation on the one hand, and on the other, a sentiment of solidarity with the unfair persecution of the PPP and its leader.

Due to various reasons, this writer did not actively participate in the party's 1990 election campaign. Such reasons included a gradually discernible gap in communication with Benazir Bhutto, particularly after the post-mortem meeting narrated in a previous chapter; overseas travel for the conference of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (in Punta del Este, Uruguay, South America —October 1990); a personal reluctance or inability to raise full-throated slogans such as “Jiye Bhutto” at rallies, and a discomfort at the polarity and partisanship that are unavoidable features of election campaigns.

I could certainly have been more active in helping PPP candidates. But, for reasons as above, or due to my inexcusable reluctance, one did less than what could have been done. Not that a more active role by myself in the election campaigns of PPP candidates would have necessarily made a notable difference. While my membership of the Senate since 1985 and my Cabinet term had added to my political profile and recognizability, I did not have a direct, popular-vote-based dimension to my work in the political field at that time.

My decision to contest for a directly elected seat in the National Assembly in 2002 was still several years away. I was intrinsically unable to identify with the whittled-down simplicity — and even banality — of slogans that are standard fare for populist, direct-vote-based election campaigns.

***Missing family and home:***

Another reason for my low level of participation in the 1990 election campaign was the long overdue re-allotment of time to my family life and to our family business under the rubric of MNJ Communications (Pvt.) Ltd. Generally since

March 1985 on election to the Senate and particularly since 4th December 1988 on induction into the Cabinet, I had to spend most of my time in Islamabad or on travel within and outside the country, away from home, wife, our children, and our office, all of whom were in Karachi. Regular brief visits to Karachi and irregular visits to Islamabad by my wife and our children, Mehreen and Kamal did not compensate for the enormous amount of time spent away from one's home base. Shabnam continued to work very hard as the Chairperson and Chief Executive of the firm specially after 3rd December 1988 when I resigned one day before joining the Cabinet in order to avoid possible conflict-of-interest.

But both Shabnam and our firm's major clients wanted me to give more time to professional work after our Government had ceased to be in office. I decided to use the title of 'Honorary Chairman' of MNJ, because it did not require the legal formal process of being re-registered as a Director of the firm and it enabled one to remain associated with public life without a full-time commercial linkage.



## *No PPP ticket for re-election to the Senate*

As the month of March 1991 approached, the prospects for PPP to increase its representation in the Senate improved. Having had to cope with a Senate Membership between December 1988 and August 1990 that was pre-dominantly anti-PPP or only lukewarm to it, the Party viewed the upcoming polls as an opportunity to redress the imbalance, despite a reduced number of seats in the Sindh Assembly after the October 1990 polls.

Though the Party invited applications for award of Party tickets for the election, I knew in advance from lack of regular contact with Benazir Bhutto, and from one's distance from her in more senses than one, that a Party ticket would not be given to me. I made no attempt to meet her to seek her support.

There was a bitter-sweet taste in the situation. In November 1988, as referred to earlier in this book, Benazir Bhutto had specially insisted that I surrender my independently-elected status to join the PPP: in order to give the Party a minimal symbolic — and functionally visible — representation in the Upper House in a phase in which the Party was leading a coalition majority in the National Assembly.

There was much ado at that time. I had served in the Cabinet at her invitation, and — not, as in the case of a few other Ministers/Advisers who were imposed on her — and it was on her refusal to accept my resignation in July-August 1989 that I had moved to the Ministry of Science and Technology in September that year. There had been occasions when this writer, perhaps unwisely, had chosen

to publicly disagree with his Party's leader. But on many more occasions, in Parliament and in numerous public engagements across the country and in overseas countries, I had spoken with sincerity and conviction for the Party, for her leadership and for the Government.

In October 1990, as referred to elsewhere in the chapter on IPU, this writer was privileged to become the first Parliamentarian of Pakistan to be elected Chairman of an IPU Committee — by securing winning votes from dozens of Members of Parliaments from across the world.

Yet one's own Party in Pakistan had no wish to re-elect the same individual to the very same legislature where, less than 3 years ago, the Party had only him to represent it. Such are the unpleasant surprises that are actually par for the course in Party politics.

Interested as I was in being re-elected, and unwilling to be deterred by the rebuff received, I expected at least the courtesy on the part of the leader to invite me for a meeting to convey the reasons why a ticket could not be given. No such invitation was forthcoming.

Instead of obediently accepting this rejection, however unfair, this writer impertinently, perhaps even disloyally attempted to explore the scope for election without a Party ticket in an individual capacity.

The Chief Minister of Sindh was Jam Sadiq Ali, the former staunch loyalist of Z.A. Bhutto who had not accepted Benazir Bhutto's personal likes or dislikes nor her positions on Party offices nor, perhaps most of all, her choice of spouse. He had been briefly associated with her first Government as an Adviser but had soon resigned because he was upset with aspects of how Zardari, father and son, had acquired considerable influence on Benazir Bhutto.

He had led the Caretaker Government in Sindh from 6th August 1990 with tenacity and intimate knowledge of Sindh's politics to persecute the PPP.

He was adept at skilfully managing the MQM. His trusted senior Government official, Ahmed Maqsood Hameedi continued to assist him during and after the polls in October 1990 as Jam Sadiq Ali went on to become an elected Chief Minister after winning a Provincial Assembly seat. He had created a coalition of Muslim League factions, MQM and Independents to obtain a ruling majority.

Ahmed Maqsood Hameedi, elder brother of Anwar Maqsood, my good friend from the 3 years at the University of Karachi in 1963-1966 had been instrumental in my election to the Senate in March 1985. He had found for me, at the last moment, two Members of the Sindh Provincial Assembly — Shaukat Ali Shah and Nawaz Ali Shah — who were willing to propose and second my nomination papers. Other MPAs we had approached at that time were already committed to nominate other candidates.

If it had not been for A.M. Hameedi's help, my election to the Senate would not have been possible.

But six years later in March 1991, neither he nor Jam Sadiq Ali were able to provide support. There was immense pressure from a range of sources for Jam Sadiq Ali to ensure the election of individuals endorsed by either anti- PPP political allies in Sindh or by the civil and military establishment in Islamabad.

It was cold comfort to note that, just before one went into the room in Jam Sadiq Ali's private residence in DHA, Karachi to ask for his support, a prominent, temporarily alienated PPP personality from urban Sindh had also called on the Chief Minister obviously to seek similar support — an eventually unsuccessful attempt like my own. In contrast to the others who possessed substantial resources and / or were able to give the Chief Minister whatever political influence he needed, and were pressing Jam Sadiq All to arrange for the success of their nominees, this writer had virtually nothing to offer to this veteran power-broker.

Benazir Bhutto did not give a Party ticket to me for election at any point thereafter when one or more vacancies occurred in the Senate.

## *Disruptions and distancing*

(1991-1993)

Containing and managing my deep disappointment as best one could, I soon prepared to resume pursuing several other interests that were already parts of one's life. These included advertising, film-making, voluntary work in Tharparkar and in other parts of Sindh and in Pakistan, public speaking, visiting lectureships and adjunct professorships et al, accepting fairly regular invitations from overseas countries to conferences on a variety of subjects. Most of all, I was able to devote far more time to spouse and children who had borne my frequent absences with exceptional patience and understanding.

There was almost as much — if not even more -- to do outside the Senate, than in it. From March 1991 onwards to about the second half of 1993, the far distance from Benazir Bhutto remained unchanged.

As Benazir Bhutto commenced steering the PPP for the first time as an Opposition party in Parliament onward of October 1990, a new regional crisis with global ramifications was quickly developing. Iraq's invasion and annexation of Kuwait was ostensibly based on contested historical claims by Iraq. Both were fellow Muslim countries and members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) besides Iraq and Kuwait also being fellow Arab states. Iraq had just concluded a prolonged and bloody war with Iran, Pakistan's immediate neighbour. The take-over of Kuwait was a direct threat to Saudi Arabia, one of Pakistan's most important allies, host to over a million Pakistani

temporary migrant-workers. The situation in Afghanistan, in spite of the withdrawal of Soviet troops remained unstable.

The fall-out from Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 had global and regional geo-political consequences. But in an unsublime way the fall-out also included an impact on my relationship with Benazir Bhutto restricted to a purely individual level.

At a point in December 1990, this writer made a public statement that differed from the indications given up to that date by Benazir Bhutto. This divergence deepened the divide between us. Perhaps I should have desisted. But the urge to speak up was also irresistible. The dissent may have been purely ill-considered on my own part. But just about 4 weeks later, in a speech in the Senate I analyzed the Nawaz Sharif Government's erratic and ambivalent approach to the crisis and did not repeat any reservations that I had about Benazir Bhutto's own lack of forthrightness on this issue.

Kuwait was the source for a sizeable part of Pakistan's oil imports. Most of all, outright invasion and annexation of a sovereign state violated basic principles of the international system established after the Second World War. Such a blatant action, if unresolved, would become an ominous precedent threatening the stability of all nation-states and smaller and medium-sized states in particular. The crisis represented a daunting challenge for Pakistan because all those directly and indirectly affected were fellow Muslim states as also geographically and geo-politically proximate.

Both the Caretaker Government of August-October 1990 and the new Government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif took a carefully crafted position that upheld the principles of respect for State sovereignty and the UN Charter. The US and its allies threatened military action against Iraq. Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff General Aslam Beg began to make public statements that expressed

an empathy for countries (such as Iran and Iraq) that wanted to resist US and Western hegemony in the Middle East and West Asia.

Just before, and during the American-led attack on Iraqi forces in Kuwait that began on 17th January 1991, the General articulated what he called the theory of “strategic defiance”. This formulation was meant to convey the desirability for — as also the ability of — countries named and un-named to resist military forces from outside the region aiming to enforce an imperialist agenda. The theory placed heavy reliance on the purely indigenous resources and capacity of West Asian and Muslim nations to be self-contained and to summon all the required resources to prevent domination, intervention and control by a state with a global reach such as the USA.

Where such a theory attempted to stoke sentiments of pride and mobilization of will and strength among nations as a counter-weight to the West’s superior military and technological power, the thesis was emotive and wishful rather than being realistic and pragmatic. As later events were to prove, the US succeeded in evicting Iraqi troops from Kuwait and inflicted heavy losses on Iraqi forces deep inside Iraqi territory. Though American forces did not advance sufficiently to remove President Saddam Hussain — which happened 13 years later in 2003 — they put paid to the notion that strategic defiance was a viable option.

Public opinion in Pakistan was divided. There were those who praised Saddam for his courage in challenging America’s dominance and its supine allies like Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. There was an unspoken but very real aspect of “Muslims defying the Christian US” dimension to this aspect which was not shared by this writer. There were those who condemned the annexation of Kuwait for both its illegality and because it created a dangerous precedent for others to emulate. There was a third segment that wanted to be extremely cautious in retaining the goodwill of all fellow Muslim nations with the proviso

that annexation could not be condoned and that the issue be resolved peacefully.

Soon after Nawaz Sharif assumed the office of Prime Minister on 6th November 1990, the pressures grew on several Muslim states, including Pakistan to join a military coalition that would end the annexation. Accepting Saudi and American pressure, and noting that Egypt, among others had agreed to support Kuwait and the USA, Nawaz Sharif too decided to send 5000 troops.

Like the Government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, Benazir Bhutto also shared the dilemma of walking a tightrope — opposing annexation but not wanting to support war against a fellow Muslim country like Iraq.

One recalls briefings provided to Senators by Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz and Foreign Secretary Shaharyar Khan on the crisis. While the difficulties for Pakistan were appreciable, one would have preferred the course chosen by neighbouring Iran. Despite its terrible experiences of an 8-year long inconclusive war with Iraq that had just ended, Iran chose to remain neutral on the outcome of the Kuwait issue.

When on 17th January 1991, US and Allied forces commenced aerial bombardment of Iraq including Baghdad to prepare for its advancing troops, and the spectacle was transmitted live via CNN, public opinion in Pakistan went into outrage against the potential and real loss of innocent civilian lives and the huge destruction of infrastructure.



## *Resumption of activism in the PPP 1993-1994*

The first half of 1993 witnessed a series of actions that precipitated a sea-change of political power in the second half of the same year.

Earlier, in the last quarter of 1992, Benazir Bhutto had launched a robust campaign to dislodge the Government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif who had been installed in office through the rigged polls of October 1990.

Her campaign comprised, to begin with, vociferous protests at Government policies — regardless of whether they were good or bad! — voiced in sessions of the National Assembly where she served as Leader of the Opposition. Other parts of the campaign were direct action — on the streets, in public rallies and in a train march that drew sizeable crowds.

Assertions of authority, respectively by President Ghulam Ishaq Khan and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, had led to outright breakdown of trust between them. This led to open confrontation by April 1993 when both used radio and TV to express frontal criticism of the other.

The President's second use in April 1993 of his Constitutional power to dissolve the National Assembly and dismiss the Prime Minister led to an appeal to the Supreme Court. Unlike previous instances in the country's history when the Judiciary had upheld such Executive actions by either using technicalities or by citing the Doctrine of Necessity, this time around the President's act was declared void and the ousted Prime Minister was restored to office. Yet the relief for Nawaz Sharif became short-lived.

Through collaboration between Chaudhry Altaf, a veteran political artisan as Governor of Punjab (uncle of Fawad Chaudhry, PTI member, Federal Minister for Information and then Science and Technology in Prime Minister Imran Khan's Cabinet 2018 onwards) and a rebuffed but determined President in Islamabad and Chief Minister Manzoor Wattoo in Lahore, the restored Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's writ was restricted to the Federal Capital Territory.

A new kind of institutional paralysis afflicted the body politic. Behind the scenes, all affected persons and elements sought the intervention of the Chief of Army Staff General Abdul Waheed Kakar. He was deeply apolitical and wholly committed to keeping the Army out of the political process — unlike his predecessors Ayub Khan, Yahya Khan and Ziaul Haq. With great reluctance, he merely agreed to facilitate a transition from an extremely polarized and paralyzed situation to fresh elections for yet another new beginning.

There had to be an “all-change”. Both the President and the Prime Minister would resign in an appropriate manner. The National Assembly and the 4 Provincial Assemblies would be dissolved. An authentically neutral 406 But, Prime Minister Caretaker Government would be appointed with a Pakistani-American technocrat Moeen Qureshi, formerly of the World Bank as Prime Minister. The winning party or alliance would form the next Government, and also elect a new President.

Exactly three months after the previous dissolution on 18th April 1993, the restored Assemblies were dissolved on 18th July 1993.

In the pre-poll phase, this writer was invited to join a Policy Planning Cell of the PPP that also included old friends Khurshid Hadi and Zia Ispahani. The latter went on to serve with distinction as Ambassador to Italy in the second Government of Benazir Bhutto.

We met frequently at an office opposite Sabzi Mandi (Vegetable Market,

Karachi's focal centre for bulk sales of fruits and vegetables). Some idealistic contributions were made to the election manifesto. In a separate sphere, in the context of my association with the advertising sector, our firm MNJ prepared print advertisements for the PPP election campaign. One recalls an occasion at the Karachi airport when, during a coincidental meeting, Naheed Khan requested Benazir Bhutto in my presence to authorize payment for the cost of PPP advertisements owed to leading newspapers and magazines. A pre-occupied Party leader promptly agreed and this writer was relieved that MNJ would be reimbursed soon for payments already made to print media.

***An initiative for South Asia:***

In June 1991, less than 3 months after leaving the Senate, this writer made a proposal for the creation of a non-legislative Parliament of South Asia. Several former and serving Prime Ministers and major leaders of 5 South Asian countries warmly welcomed the concept when I met them in their respective countries and invited them to attend the first planned conference wherever held, in end-1992 or 1993.

This writer travelled to Colombo, Dhaka, New Delhi and Kathmandu to canvas support. But few encouraging indicators emerged about securing philanthropic funding for my proposal.

While Benazir Bhutto's first response to my invitation to endorse the proposal was positive, one was disappointed to learn that in about mid-1992 she herself was planning to host a conference in Karachi for the leaders of only Opposition parties of all SAARC countries.

This writer disagreed with the notion of convening a partisan conference that would exclude the ruling parties and only further sharpen schisms within each country. While it was understandable that ruling parties at that time — or, in general — themselves tend to be exclusivist and hostile to their respective

Opposition parties, the idea which I had presented of bringing all major parties together was to promote dialogue and co-operation transcending political or partisan differences and not to accentuate them even more.

In one sense, this contrary invitation by Benazir Bhutto had a greater chance of materialization because of multiple factors.

The stature and appeal of the host herself. The relatively lower cost and complexity of bringing together not more than twelve or fourteen opposition leaders (say, 2 from each country, though Bhutan did not have an opposition party) instead of the forty to fifty leaders of both major ruling and opposition parties from six or seven countries as conceived in my proposal. As also the earlier timing set for September 1992 in Karachi whereas the event that I was promoting was aimed for December 1992.

Further, Senator Kamal Azfar was already tasked by Benazir Bhutto to organize the SAARC Opposition Leaders' conference. He rendered his responsibilities with competence and humility.

This writer attended the inaugural session at Avari Hotel, Karachi on 7th September 1992. Benazir Bhutto stressed the need for respect for the electoral process in order to make democratic institutions credible and capable of fulfilling the responsibilities entrusted to them by the people. The other leaders endorsed this basic theme and also provided perspectives from their own experiences.

At a dinner hosted by MNA Naveed Qamar the same evening one met with all the visiting leaders. Former Indian Prime Minister V.P. Singh recalled our own meeting a few months earlier in New Delhi when I had requested his endorsement. He said he wanted to support the idea of an all-parties conference and saw the Karachi initiative as a step forward.

Mohan Adhikari of Nepal also recalled our meeting in Kathmandu and said he

looked forward to participating in the larger event. Sheikh Hasina Wajid who one had not previously met had an unsmiling demeanour. She came across as someone who harboured a deep animus against

Pakistan in general, rooted in her association of Pakistan with the tragic events of 1971 and her own personal and profound loss of her father and siblings through assassination in August 1975.

A tragedy of quite another kind disrupted the process that this writer was pursuing for the all-inclusive non-legislative Parliament of South Asia. In October and November 1992 the Hindutva extremists in India had launched the campaign to construct a temple in place of the Babri Mosque in Ayodhya, UP. Tensions had begun to simmer within India and apprehensions grew in Pakistan about the outcome of the new virulence.

This writer recalls that, in the second half of 1991 and the first part of 1992 during visits to New Delhi to seek endorsement for the non-legislative Parliament for South Asia, meetings with BJP leaders transmitted distinct signs of how the Hindutva mind-set saw the whole of South Asia as a historical Mahabharat that needed to be restored in the near future. Though Atal Bihari Vajpayee and L.K. Advani in my meetings with them did not express such an absurd view, at least one other major ideologue — K.R. Malkani — specifically said so. This writer politely but firmly challenged this concept while concluding the conversation.

On 6th December 1992, extremist mobs were permitted to invade the premises of the Babri Mosque and then demolish it, virtually brick by brick while the spectacle was being seen live on TV as the world watched. And India's Congress Prime Minister Narasimha Rao chose silent paralysis as the most apt response. The desecration was truly a chilling sight. I remember the dread of the conviction that instantly formed — to the effect that both India and South Asia

had entered an entirely new era and that things would never be the same again. Over the subsequent 29 years, and specially with the induction of Narendra Modi as Prime Minister in 2014 that foreboding has been proven right.

At that time in December 1992, and in subsequent months and years, this writer decided not to continue the effort for a non-legislative Parliament. Perhaps one should have persisted with the mission. The fact that other lost-and-found causes engaged one's attention is not a justification. In 2021 as well, there remains a strong case for a non-legislative Parliament for South Asia.

## *A dacoit at the gate*

(FEBRUARY 1994)

In February 1994, about 4 months into her second term as Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto on her own initiative demonstrated a touching concern for the well-being of a former Minister of State and his family.

On a February night of that year, at about 9 pm, a young man with a gun accosted our daughter Mehreen and her friend and office colleague Azra Babar when Mehreen stopped her car at the gate of our house. When Azra made a move to open the car door, he hit her at the back of her head — a bump that has stayed on to this day. Backed by an accomplice keeping an eye from a distance, after some extremely tense moments in which I unsuccessfully attempted to persuade the dacoit to accept me as a substitute hostage — while my wife Shabnam gathered together the jewellery and cash in the house — this disturbing episode ended very shortly. Our daughter returned home safely — to become the climax to an invigorating, action-filled drama in one's life.

As we hovered at the gate, praying to Allah to keep Mehreen safe, I fretted about whether we could have done anything else to avert the incident. But in less than 15 minutes of her being held hostage and forced to drive away, we saw Mehreen driving back to our home on the very same street on which she had earlier disappeared.

Our sense of relief took us to cloud nine. We thanked Allah loudly and warmly, embraced Mehreen when she exited her car and tended to Azra's injury at the

back of her head which fortunately did not result in blood loss.

In contrast to her parents' distraught condition and her grandparents' frantic concern, Mehreen's disposition from the start to the end of this episode was remarkably calm, cool and self-possessed. I even recall her smiling gently at the time when my father-in-law Syed Rashid Ahmed — who lived next door and had rushed out — had to be forcibly parted from his pistol by me — a weapon which he wanted to fire at the marauder.

In response to our delighted relief at her early unharmed return, Mehreen said the dacoit had asked her to drive up to the road leading to the Central Prison of Karachi which was only about 5 minutes' driving time from our residence. On the way she asked him why he was committing the crime. He blandly said words to the effect that he had no choice but to do such things because he needed the money to buy more guns — and to meet his living expenses. To Mehreen's pleasant surprise, he asked her to stop the car, warned her not to attempt following him, got out of the vehicle and went back to the motorcycle that had followed. Even as she turned around to return home, he and his accomplice had sped off into the anonymity of the night.

This incident was a first-ever for our family and shook us deeply even as we were immensely relieved at its non-violent outcome and the almost-instant, safe return of Mehreen. But the incident was symptomatic of the state of law and order in Karachi in both urban and rural Sindh during most of the 1990s. Cases of dacoities, killings, extortions, abductions for ransom, injuries inflicted on victims — all were daily news fodder.

Through the Police media-reporting system, the news of the incident was promptly circulated later the same night and was published in leading newspapers next morning. Just the fact that a former member of a Federal Cabinet had come face-to-face with a dacoit at his doorstep was sufficient to



make the episode news-worthy. One recalls receiving phone calls late the same night from media offices to confirm details.

Unlike other former Ministers or Ministers of State, I had not requested or received special attention in the form of a Police guard being posted at one's residence. We did not want to draw undue attention to our house.

So one was surprised to receive a visit from the Station House Officer (SHO) of the area's Police station to convey that, with immediate effect, on orders received from the office of the Prime Minister in Islamabad, the Sindh Police office would ensure that a Police guard — in two shifts of 12 hours each for 24 hours — would always be present for our security.

Through the mail, thanks and appreciation were conveyed to Benazir Bhutto for this gesture of concern.

The 1990s , in retrospect, was an engrossing and productive decade for me in the diverse fields of my interests. The years up to 1996 were only partially affected by one's combustible relationship with Benazir Bhutto. Her spontaneous gesture of ordering a 24-hour Police guard at my residence immediately after the dacoit episode, was most endearing.

There was a phase in which, during the second term of her Prime Ministership, our family firm MNJ Communications benefitted — modestly, not substantially — from being tasked by the Privatization Commission headed by Naveed Qamar to devise and place the Commission's advertising campaigns in the print media. But there were no changes in the political dimension. Neither from her side nor from this writer's side was any attempt made to seek, or be given an appointment to any public office, or for work in any other capacity.

## *A secret message from India*

(1995)

One of the most absorbing new avenues which opened up for this writer soon after completing my 6-year Senate term in March 1991 was an invitation in 1992 to become part of an exclusive Track II diplomacy process between Pakistan and India.

This Track II process known as the Neemrana Initiative was novel in several ways. Unlike a Pakistan-India dialogue held in Islamabad in April 1992 — at which I received the invitation — which was media-reported, the Neemrana Track II channel to which one was invited was closed-door. It was to be quiet and confidential, just short of being secret. Participants from both sides solemnly agreed — without taking a formal oath — to never disclose discussions and their outcome to the media. Because regular reportage in the media about candid discussions on bilateral issues would inevitably become controversial. This would prevent a free exchange of ideas and views. While other publicly-reported Track II processes were endorsed by the two Governments through the issuance of visas to enable participants from one country to travel to the other, the Neemrana Initiative enjoyed a distinct advantage.

Both before and after each Round normally held every 6 months in the capital of each country, Members would meet with either the Foreign Minister and/or the Foreign Secretary of their own country to learn about Governmental views on specific issues at a given time. In turn, after the completion of each Round,

each Group's Convenor would provide a summary to the Foreign Office of discussions including views expressed by the other side. Yet, Members of the Pakistan group had the freedom to express their own individual views even on sensitive issues while bearing in mind how such individual views could be perceived by the Indian group. As it turned out, the exchanges on all subjects were thoroughly candid, uninhibited by the risk of being reported accurately or even worse, inaccurately by media.

In the initial phase, the cost of air travel of each group and the hotel accommodation with other related expenses were covered by the Ford Foundation as part of its support to peace-building. (Onward of about 1998, funding is provided by indigenous resources from each country).

Paul Kriesberg, a soft-spoken, urbane former American diplomat served as the Moderator during each Round. He was quite even-handed and impartial in his role, enabling Members from both sides to express views freely while at the same time gently ensuring respect for time and the need for all who wanted to speak to have their say.

This writer was privileged to be invited to this exclusive process and despite being quite clearly the "youngest" of all the 20 Members at that time in 1992 — give or take only a few years! — and of course excluding the women members who are always younger than the youngest man -- one quickly became comfortable in speaking on a forthright basis about various facets of bilateral relations.

The agenda for each meeting remained more or less un-changed — it covered almost all the principal issues that shaped bilateral relations. These comprised: Kashmir, Siachen, Sir Creek, nuclear weapons, trade, travel, visa procedures, economy. Though the two and a half to 3 days of day-long discussions divided into sessions proved inadequate to cover all subjects comprehensively in each

round, each side nominated one or two Members to be the principal spokespersons on particular subjects. This enabled respective views to be summarized at the start, setting up the framework for exchanges.

There were two basic goals of the Neemrana Initiative. The first was to enable each side to listen to the other side's views in depth and at some length, unrestricted by official protocols and limitations. Both groups were aware that, though Members participated in their individual capacity, they also informally represented their respective States as citizens of considerable note -- what each said was in some way a reflection of how the Government and/or of how society saw a specific bilateral issue. The second, perhaps equally important goal was to explore the scope for new or slightly different approaches to conflict management or conflict resolution which could be shared with respective Governments. Which then had the prerogative to make proposals submitted by the Neemrana Initiative part of their own official diplomatic parleys with the other side — with the additional option of keeping such new ideas restricted or sharing them with the media and the world at large.

Above all, the Neemrana Initiative provided an opportunity to broaden and deepen dialogue through persons of influence in their own countries. Without attributing content to any participant of Neemrana — as per Chatham House rules — these individuals used themes and concepts emerging from the Dialogue to be projected to the world at large and to their own countries through their writings, speeches and participation in other conferences and sessions, both in South Asia and elsewhere, specially in think-tanks and research centres based in the USA, UK and other countries.

The name “Neemrana” was adopted because the first round — in which this writer did not participate — was held in November 1991 at a place so named in Rajasthan, India, located close to New Delhi. The name is a fusion of the names

of two individuals, one a Muslim named “Naeem” (adapted into “Neem”), the other a Hindu named “Rana”. As symbols for pre-dominantly Muslim Pakistan and pre-dominantly Hindu India, the word Neemrana became an apt choice as the first venue and as the name for the Dialogue itself. All subsequent Rounds have been held mostly in the two capital cities of New Delhi and Islamabad with only a couple of exceptions. One Round was held in Lahore, one in Karachi.

The invitation was extended by Niaz Naik, the highly- respected former Foreign Secretary of Pakistan who was the Convener of the Pakistan Group, with General (r) K.M. Arif, former Vice Chief of Army Staff as the Co-Convenor. Other distinguished Members included Ashraf Tabani, former Governor of Sindh, Professor Parvez Iqbal Cheema, a renowned scholar with special insight into the Kashmir dispute, Major General Ghulam Umar, former National Security Adviser to General Yahya Khan, H.U. Baig, former Finance Secretary; Khalid Ahmed, a highly regarded author and commentator; Hamid Kizilbash, a prominent educationist; Lt. General Nishat Ahmad, former President of a major research institute. About three years later, Barrister Shahida Jamil, who later served as Federal Minister and Dr Khalida Ghaus, a notable social scientist, Dr Ishrat Hussain, former Governor, State Bank, Rahimullah Yusufzai, a leading journalist and analyst, M. Afzal, a nuclear issues specialist and others also became Members.

The Indian Neemrana group at that time was led by: Ambassador (r) Dr A.M. Khusro, former Vice Chancellor, Aligarh Muslim University and Chairman, Planning Commission; the Deputy Convener was Vice Admiral (r) K.K. Nayyar, former Vice Chief of the Indian Navy; Professor Bhabani Sengupta, a highly regarded scholar; K. Subrahmaniam, India’s top national security strategist; Lt. Gen. (r) A.M. Vohra, former Vice Chief of the Army; B.G. Verghese, former Editor, Indian Express and leading columnist; Professor Satish Kumar, a reputed

scholar and author; Dr C. Raja Mohan, a respected scholar and columnist of *The Hindu* newspaper; Air Cmdr (r) N.B. Singh, former editor of a Defence sector journal; Dr (Mrs) Meenakshi Gopinath, an eminent social scientist and Principal of Lady Sriram College, New Delhi.

In a Round held in New Delhi in early 1995, Vice Admiral (r) K.K. Nayyar took me aside during a dinner. He said he wanted me to treat what he was about to tell me in the strictest confidence and to convey the message directly in person, face-to-face, to Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. When this writer said to him that it would be obligatory for me to share his confidence with two of my colleagues in the Pakistan group who were the Convenor and Co-Convenor of the Group — Niaz Naik and General (r) K.M. Arif — he said that would be fine with him as he expected them to also respect the request for secrecy. He then said he was choosing to brief me rather than the other two gentlemen because this writer — unlike they — was a Member of the PPP, had served in Benazir Bhutto's first Cabinet and had access to her during her second Prime Ministership. I did not tell him that the last of these reasons was not necessarily valid because this writer was not in regular contact with the Prime Minister of Pakistan, though contact could be revived.

Vice Admiral Nayyar then proceeded to refer to the continuing tensions in Kashmir and to the generally troubled state of bilateral relations.

He soon came to the specific point: He said that Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao was interested in initiating a top secret Back-channel dialogue. One individual confidant would represent the Indian Prime Minister and a similar individual could represent the Prime Minister of Pakistan. He said Narasimha Rao was confident that a forthright, no-holds-barred top secret dialogue normally called a 'Back-Channel' process could help break the official logjam and move the relationship forward to a more positive phase.

Though one was flattered at being requested to serve as the conduit for the transmitting of a top secret message from the Prime Minister of India to the Prime Minister of Pakistan, I was also aware that the purpose could be the equivalent of a “feint” as in boxing i.e. to pretend to jab in order to draw out the opponent’s reaction. In this case, it could be that the Indian Government wanted only to assess how keen was the Pakistani Government in exploring a top-secret process, a keenness reflective of a softness or otherwise, *vis a vis* India. There was another cynical possibility: that the gentleman conveying this message to me was initiating the idea on his own, without having been asked to do so, in order to be able to report to the Indian Prime Minister that it was the Pakistanis who are interested in opening a new level of dialogue.

Vice Admiral Nayyar was always a forthright individual, courteous and civil in manner even when being blunt in expressing a strong Indian viewpoint on debated issues. In our brief private conversation he came across as a person delivering an authentic message and not a contrived one.

I said to him that the idea of a Back-Channel dialogue was certainly an option worth serious consideration, more so at that time in 1995. The indigenous struggle of the people in Indian-occupied Kashmir that had erupted in 1989 continued to simmer. There were recurrent clashes with India’s security forces. By early 1995 there were an estimated 400,000 troops deployed. Yet they were unable to quell protests and demands for both freedom and for justice in the face of atrocities being committed on youth, and women in particular. As part of its mind-set of denial of reality, India blamed Pakistan for infiltrating jihadi extremists across the Line of Control (LoC) and claimed that the All-Parties Hurriyet Conference represented only a minor fraction of the people. It was rarely asked by global media as also by India’s media that, to verify the truth of the charge of Pakistan-supported infiltrators being wholly responsible for the

violence, why did India refuse access to the LoC by neutral UN Military Observers? Whereas Pakistan had always permitted such independent monitors on its own side of the LoC.

At an opportune time before we departed New Delhi for Lahore by PIA, this writer shared the message given by Vice Admiral Nayyar. Both Niaz Naik and General K.M. Arif said they would respect the need to maintain secrecy and endorsed my intention to deliver the message to the Prime Minister when I was able to meet her in person.

Within ten days of our return to Pakistan, in response to my request, the Military Secretary to the Prime Minister confirmed an appointment for me and noted that the request was for a one-on-one meeting. This writer wanted to ensure that both the message and the initial response to the message be rendered without a third person's presence influencing, however obliquely, the two stages. As it turned out, this was not to be.

While making the request this writer had verbally conveyed to the Military Secretary that one had to informally brief the Prime Minister about a sensitive aspect of the most recent round of the Neemrana Initiative. So Benazir Bhutto knew in advance in broad terms the subject intended to be covered in the requested meeting.

As I entered the room where the Prime Minister was seated — not at her desk, but on a side sofa — and was shown to a single sofa close to her, it was notable that two senior officials, one civil, representing the Foreign Office, and the other possibly representing the ISI whom one had not previously met were also present. So this was going to be a three-on-one meeting, not an exclusive encounter.

This writer proceeded to summarize the principal elements about Neemrana, the names of some participants from both sides and the message as conveyed to



me by Vice Admiral Nayyar. I also added my personal opinion by stating that the Prime Minister of Pakistan should kindly give favourable consideration to the proposal.

Benazir Bhutto's first reaction was of mild but distinct surprise. She smiled and said, "That's interesting. So you think there is scope for real progress by Back-Channel?" My response was that one should view the top secret channel on at least a medium-term time-span, not a short-term model that could produce dramatic results within days or weeks. With patience and perseverance, and perhaps using some options already defined in Neemrana sessions and already known to the Foreign Office, the Back-Channel dialogue could build a deeper level of mutual trust that enabled flexibility in place of rigidity on both sides.

The Prime Minister heard me out non-committally and then asked the Foreign Office official and the senior military officer present for their views. In his demeanour, the officer was well qualified to be a diplomat: his face did not reveal any emotion or expression except that of blandness. He had taken notes and responded to the Prime Minister's query with a short polite answer to the effect that he would submit a note to her immediately. But his eyes indicated a sceptical look. The military officer's expression was even more impenetrable. He would have made a fine diplomat himself. The Prime Minister then thanked me for conveying the message and concluded the meeting that had taken only about 25 minutes.

When, in subsequent days and then weeks, one received no phone call from her or her office, the response was clear. There was no interest at that time in conducting a secret Back-Channel dialogue with India, assuming that the invitation was sincere and genuine, a matter that will remain unknown — as have many other, far more important truths.

Even before the next Neemrana Round was held, this time in Islamabad in the

second half of 1995 the Pakistani response was communicated by me via a polite, brief telephone call to Vice Admiral Nayyar in New Delhi.

The fact that Benazir Bhutto had decided not to meet me on a one-on-one basis indicated one or both of two possible reasons. First: as the purpose of the meeting was known in advance, i.e. to convey a sensitive message, she was fully entitled to have instant access to relevant, reliable advice and support from both the civil and military spheres.

As was the case in India, but never publicly or even privately acknowledged, the Indian military plays a decisive role in determining vital aspects of relations with Pakistan particularly on Kashmir and Siachen as well as on nuclear weapons and troop deployment. We had witnessed how in July 1989, soon after Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's visit to Islamabad and an almost-final agreement on a way forward on Siachin, the Indian military had stalled the move for a formal agreement. So too in Pakistan where, unlike the covert yet real influence of the Indian military, the Pakistan Armed Forces had openly intervened thrice in the Constitutional and political domain, the Prime Minister — for that matter, any Prime Minister — had to take into account the military's views on any major aspect of relations with India.

The views of the civil-led Foreign Office must have been conveyed by the Foreign Minister who was, like the Prime Minister, an elected political leader in the person of Sardar Aseff Ali. Benazir Bhutto as Prime Minister, and by dint of her own special abilities in the domain of international affairs was quite capable of dealing appropriately with a foreign policy issue.

But the second reason for avoiding an exclusive one-on-one meeting could also have been a reluctance to be faced by an individual with whom the working relationship in past years had declined from Cabinet level to only an occasional Party-related level or the other non-official levels, bringing with the decline, a

certain unspoken discomfort.

I felt that Benazir Bhutto wanted to avoid being placed in a position where, singly, on her own, she had to either handle an unexpected request or an awkward moment. Whatever may have been the actual reason, I was disappointed at the lack of consideration given to a specific request made by this writer for an exclusive meeting. I did not intend to seek any favour for personal benefit. Nor make a request which could have caused discomfort if the request could not be agreed to. I only wanted the Head of Government to demonstrate the self-confidence and capacity to take a firm decision shaped by vision and commitment rather than by the relatively pedestrian, conventional, overly cautious considerations of the civil and military bureaucracy.

Perhaps I should have shared the message in advance with the Foreign Minister. First of all, it was a subject directly under his purview. I knew Foreign Minister Sardar Aseff Ali quite well from our times together in the Independent Opposition Parliamentary Group in 1985-1988 and on a memorable visit we shared to Guatemala for an IPU Conference in April 1988. But interactions with him in recent years had become infrequent and we were no longer in regular contact.

The official diplomatic channel between the two countries, most of it publicly reported, was in a kind of freeze. In January 1995 only weeks before the Round in which the message was conveyed to this writer, Pakistan formally rejected pre-conditions set by India for the resumption of talks on Kashmir. These pre-conditions mainly called for a halt to real or alleged covert support by Pakistan to the militants in Indian-occupied Kashmir.

At critical times in foreign relations, decisions taken by Heads of State or Government — whoever is the chief executive — matter more than the views of the Foreign Minister. One cites only 2 characteristic examples. In 1972 during

tense relations between the USA and the USSR, President Nixon sent his National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger — without the prior knowledge of his own Secretary of State William Rogers or the US Ambassador to the USSR in Moscow on a top-secret mission to Moscow to hold talks with Leonid Brezhnev, Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party. In July 1999, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan decided to go to Washington DC to meet President Bill Clinton about the Kargil conflict with India — without prior consultation with either Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz or with Foreign Secretary Shamshad Ahmed who had just returned from a visit to China and was asked to join the Prime Minister only hours before departure.

So, on a far more mundane level, Benazir Bhutto could have accepted the request for an exclusive one-on-one meeting.

One reason for her unwillingness to accept the suggestion from India could have been the memory of how in her first term as Prime Minister, the IJI and possibly some of its supportive elements in the intelligence agencies, circulated a serious allegation. Without citing hard evidence, but using both selected Urdu print media and some English print media, it had been claimed that Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto had secretly authorized one of her Ministers — Aitzaz Ahsan — to reveal to the Indians information proving Pakistan's covert support in the past to Sikhs in East Punjab in India agitating against New Delhi and demanding independence from India. Despite categorical denials by both the Minister and Prime Minister, the allegation was periodically repeated. So perhaps in 1995, though half a decade had passed, and even though the invitation was for a new secret channel, Benazir Bhutto did not want to be seen to be 'soft' on India. This would explain the presence of a military intelligence officer at our meeting.

In-puts from intelligence agencies are an essential factor to be considered in the

process of making important public policy decisions, particularly those on relations with unfriendly or hostile foreign countries. But leaders in office sometimes — or too often? — allow intelligence agency opinions to shape their decisions. They do not allow for the fact that sometimes reports claimed to be “factual” by agencies may not actually be so. And that assessment by agencies can be ill-founded. If leaders would be more willing to make their own independent, articulated assessment of all factors, perhaps the imbalance in the civil-military relationship could be converted in favour of the civil and the political part of the State without causing the military to feel disregarded.

## *Getting to know Murtaza Bhutto*

(1995-1996)

In a most unlikely way, Murtaza Bhutto, the estranged brother of Benazir Bhutto turned out to be most tolerant of one's criticism of his own father Z.A. Bhutto. This attribute of acceptance of criticism of his revered, unjustly killed father was all the more remarkable because Murtaza was the son who, for 16 long years, from 1977 to 1993 had openly adopted the use of violence and weapons to overthrow the man who had ordered his father's execution. Whereas his sister Benazir had rejected violence and chosen a purely political form of protest through the thesis of "Democracy is the best revenge."

My wife's brother-in-law Najib Zafar was a school-age friend of Murtaza in Karachi Grammar School and knew all his siblings: Benazir, Shahnawaz and Sanam from their early formative years.

One of Najib's closest friends is Vaqar Pagganwalla, a warm, affectionate individual whose wife Malika help make the two an extraordinarily gracious couple in their hospitality and courtesy. On my first visit to Karachi in early December 1988 shortly after joining Benazir Bhutto's first Cabinet, I recall the touching exuberance with which Vaqar and Najib hoisted me to their shoulders, to join others in giving me a rousing welcome at the airport.

Soon after the announcement of fresh elections was made in July 1993, Murtaza Bhutto ended his 16 years of self-exile in Damascus and London to return to Pakistan. Even after his abandonment of violent means to seek revenge,

there were other strong differences with his sister on political and personal levels. Unlike the political differences — for instance, on aspects of economic policy, with Murtaza rejecting the free-market, capitalist-oriented approach of Benazir — could have been reconciled, the personal differences already existed and only worsened after his return.

Perhaps three reasons reflected this deterioration. As the eldest son of a political leader in a society in which male descendants rather than females were traditionally considered the true inheritors of parental legacy, the ascendance of Benazir was difficult for him to fully accept. Though his mother Nusrat Bhutto empathized with him, she was torn between her love for two of her own progeny. Further, she rightly or wrongly felt that Benazir did not exert all her power to ensure that cases registered against Murtaza for his violent acts during General Ziaul Haq's tenure were withdrawn. For her part Benazir rightly pointed out that the cases could not be withdrawn without serious repercussions as the Opposition and even the superior Judiciary would see both such possible steps as a violation of due process and an act of family favouritism. Perhaps most of all, Murtaza was unable and unwilling to accept Asif Ali Zardari as his sister's husband both because of lack of personal chemistry and because the spouse exerted enormous influence over his sister and his reputation for corrupt practices had sullied the name and legacy of Murtaza's martyred father.

Murtaza had expressed his political differences quite categorically by establishing his own faction of the PPP. It was called PPP Shaheed Bhutto and was able to obtain the sword — the PPP's original symbol — as its own election symbol for the October 1993 polls. Though Murtaza was the only candidate of his Party to succeed by being elected to the Sindh Provincial Assembly, he maintained his posture of distance from, and defiance of his sister and her spouse.

During 1994 and the first half of 1995 the differences sharpened. I recall an instance when this writer attended a sitting of the Sindh Provincial Assembly in the second half of 1994. Seated in the gallery for former Parliamentarians and others, I could see the intensity and the fervour with which Murtaza Bhutto criticized the ruling PPP's performance, both at the Centre and in Sindh.

We met at a couple of social events but conversation was limited to pleasantries. My membership of the PPP led by his sister to which he was so opposed perhaps prevented prolonged dialogue at social events. I was told that he was aware, through Najib Zafar and some of my public pronouncements of my not being a "jiyala" who unquestioningly accepted Benazir Bhutto and her spouse's dominance of the Party.

The last of only 3 or 4 encounters with Murtaza was the most memorable. It took place in the first half of 1996. Vaqar and Malika Pagganwalla hosted a dinner at their house in Islamabad where they also resided part of the year. Najib Zafar was also residing in Islamabad at that time. On hearing that I was in town during a visit from Karachi, a cordial invitation was extended for a dinner to meet Murtaza Bhutto and other friends. My wife Shabnam was in Karachi and could not attend.

In the couple of hours or so, before dinner, over cocktails and hors d'oeuvres there were brief exchanges with Murtaza on on-going political events, specially with reference to the campaign by Nawaz Sharif for the ouster of Benazir Bhutto and the holding of fresh polls. The charges were familiar: corruption, nepotism, rigging in the 1993 polls, et al.

When the call for dinner came, it was a sit-down affair. The hosts gave me the privilege of being seated right opposite Murtaza who was at the head of the table, with me at the other end. As the meal progressed, and the drinks and discussions proceeded to warm up, the historical role of the PPP became the



major theme. When the tendency of Party leaders to succumb quickly to sycophancy and/or to their own sense of infallibility became the subject, this writer said that the PPP had suffered this tendency not only in 1977 and 1988-90 but even soon after 1970, leading to the catastrophe of 1971. I said that, while respecting the invaluable price paid by Z.A. Bhutto for his political opposition to the martial law of General Ziaul Haq, the hard fact was that he too, the Great Leader, was capable of great error and that he had made several great errors, in 1971, and between 1972 and 1977.

Suddenly, there was pin-drop silence around the table. Hosts Vaqar and Malika, and Najib and his spouse Beo (my sister-in-law), and the few other guests, were obviously stunned at my candid, perhaps even rude or at least inappropriately blunt remarks about the father of the man seated with them, a son who had taken up arms to revenge his beloved father's assassination.

As one continued to look straight at Murtaza, he rose from his seat, walked across the length and side of the table toward me. I rose up from my chair. Instead of delivering a slap or a punch on the jaw — for which one was ready! — to the man who had spoken so critically of his hero: he put his arms around me in a warm, affectionate embrace and even kissed me on my right cheek.

All the others seated chuckled, even cheered. This writer thanked Murtaza for his gesture and said, "No offence was meant". He replied, "No offence taken. I respect your honesty."

While I was greatly relieved that one's candour had only led to an unexpectedly pleasant outcome, Murtaza's capacity to listen to a candid critique of some of his own father-hero's failings without being upset impressed me greatly. This facet of Murtaza was little known, or not known at all. He was perceived at large as an emotional, imbalanced person still seeking revenge against all those who had connived at his father's ouster and killing and those of his clique who had

survived even after Ziaul Haq's death in August 1988.

At dinner's end, we parted most amicably with the intention stated of: "We must meet again soon". Alas, that never happened. For one reason or another, a next meeting never came off. Late at night in London on 20th September 1996, during a visit for a conference, I heard the shocking news of Murtaza's weirdly-staged assassination about only a hundred yards from his house at 70 Clifton, Karachi.

Details of that tragedy are already well-documented and well-known. His killing, at the young age of 42 years, and that of his friend, Ashiq Jatoi while they were seated in the vehicle — and of six others — had taken place on his return from a visit to a police station. He had gone there to protest at the arrest of one of his Party leaders and to demand his release.

Neither his widow, Ghinwa Bhutto nor his Party leaders, workers and friends accepted the official version of the circumstances leading to his killing. Which stated that the deaths were due to Murtaza's refusal to disarm when stopped by the Police and instead, his own allegedly unprovoked firing upon Police stationed nearby. The official version never quite managed to cover the holes it contained. To compound suspicions, one of the operative Police officers directly involved mysteriously died shortly thereafter — by suicide / by being himself killed. Did he know too much?

One theory was based on the alleged covert role of Asif Ali Zardari to the effect that he had arranged for Police to provoke the incident leading to this outcome.

Murtaza's gruesome murder had a traumatic impact on Benazir Bhutto. Though I did not meet her in person in the days and weeks thereafter, all the media coverage and non-media sources confirmed that she was emotionally shattered and remained distraught for a long time, never quite able to explain how, when

her own Party's Government was in power, both in Sindh and in the Centre, her own brother could be gunned down by Police.

She herself and the PPP leadership voiced their firm conviction that secret forces — by implication, military intelligence agencies and later, even estranged President Farooq Leghari — had arranged for this horrible incident only in order to embarrass and implicate her, and to weaken public confidence in her legitimately elected Government.

*Enduring dissent on media issues: appeals for  
judicial review*

(1991-1996)

On two issues related to electronic media in the period between 1991 and 1996, my disappointment with actions taken by Benazir Bhutto when she was Prime Minister in 1988-1990 and in 1993-1996 obliged this writer to seek judicial intervention.

One of the innovative measures that this writer as Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting had attempted was to introduce privately-owned radio and TV channels to end the State monopoly. Benazir Bhutto had then said to me that the time was not ripe for such a major change.

A few weeks after I had moved to the Ministry of Science and Technology in September 1989, I learnt from Rashid Latif who had stayed on as Secretary, Information that a new initiative was in the works related to private participation in electronic media channels.

This new action was obviously being taken after ensuring that I was no longer in-charge of the Information Ministry because I would not have approved the plan as it had been formulated. On the face of it, the plan appeared to be a positive step toward diluting the monopoly of PTV. The plan called for allocating the programming responsibility of the STN TV channel (owned by Shalimar Recording Company Ltd. whose majority shares were vested in PTV,

PBC and other Government entities, with private share-holders owning the minority shares) to a private sector party.

Instead of adding to or appointing its own staff to create entertainment programmes in addition to the re-telecast by STN of the CNN signal, and simultaneous telecast of PTV's Khabarnama, the aim was to give the contract to a private-sector entity which would pay a certain sum to STN for the opportunity to supply content, sell advertising time, cover expenses and make a net profit.

As implemented, this project contained the inherent flaw of inviting advertising agencies to bid for the contract rights. In keeping with well-established global principles of preventing conflict-of-interest between advertising agencies and ownership of mass media, I would not have agreed to this arrangement. However, in my capacity as Minister of State for Science and Technology I did not wish to interfere in the work of my previous Ministry which was now headed by Ahmad Saeed Awan, a friendly, amiable gentleman who was not a specialist in media issues.

Subsequent to the dismissal of our Government in August 1990, along with the Chief Executives of ten advertising agencies, MNJ Communications, the firm of which I was now Honorary Chairman, filed a public interest petition in the Sindh High Court challenging the STN contract given to NTM. The principal grounds were the violation of the fundamental principle of conflict- of-interest and the unfair advantage created to favour one particular advertising agency that had equity links with NTM. We engaged the legal expertise of one of Pakistan's most respected lawyers, a former Federal Minister in the Z.A. Bhutto Cabinets, Abdul Hafeez Pirzada. Though there were a couple of initial hearings, the Sindh High Court had a huge backlog of pending cases and our petition languished. Other events rapidly unfolded and eventually brought Benazir Bhutto back to power in October 1993.

During her second tenure, she took a blatantly regressive action in the electronic media sector that obliged me to turn to the judicial process once again, but now with somewhat greater success.

Towards the end of 1995, I learnt that the Prime Minister had approved a Summary put up to her by the then-Secretary of the Information Ministry, Hussain Haqqani. The process and action approved by her were unprecedented. Without giving public notice to invite eligible private sector parties to submit bids for a new opportunity to avail of a facility being offered by the Federal Government, the Prime Minister had allocated — in perpetuity ! — the exclusive right of one particular private firm to establish and operate the first fully privately-owned FM radio channel and the first fully privately-owned TV network in the country. To cap it all, the firm that had been given this extraordinary privilege was owned by an individual well-known to be a good friend of the Prime Minister's husband.

So disregardful of transparency and equity was this misuse of executive power that it motivated me to draft a public interest petition under Article 184 of the Constitution to be directly submitted to the Supreme Court rather than to a High Court. My draft received helpful comment from Makhdoom Ali Khan, one of Pakistan's most eminent barristers. The country's leading champion of human rights initially agreed to become a co-petitioner with me. But curiously then went through a change of mind. I also requested Dr Mubashir Hasan, former Federal Minister with Z.A. Bhutto, a co-founder of the PPP, co-owner with his brothers of the residential venue in Gulberg, Lahore where the foundational meeting of the PPP had taken place in November 1967, to become a co-petitioner with me. While he was already estranged from Benazir Bhutto's leadership of the Party which he had helped to co-found, he agreed with me that this action was a gross violation of the public interest and of the principles of

policy.

I had stated in the petition that the air waves of a country, like mineral resources, are public property and therefore cannot be allocated on personal whim. Any use of the air waves must be subject to the basic principles of fairness and free competition rather than perpetual monopoly for one favoured firm.

As I could not afford to pay the high fees that any exceptionally capable lawyer would be accustomed to, I decided to risk making the presentation of arguments before the Court in person, even though I am not a professionally qualified lawyer. Fortunately, citizens are permitted to be their own advocates.

I would face an awesome opponent. The respondent- firm to the petition engaged the services of the very same legal star who, earlier in 1991, had momentarily appeared for advertising agencies in the Sindh High Court when the STN/NTM contract had been challenged. I also had a warm social relationship with Abdul Hafeez Pirzada.

A few minutes before the first hearing of the petition in Islamabad, the eminent lawyer smiled as we shook hands and said, "Javed, why have you done this? The Court will not give you more than 2 or 3 minutes." Though his confidence based on enormous experience and first-hand knowledge of how Courts proceed was disturbing for me as I was going to make my first-ever arguments and that too in the highest legal forum of the country, I said, "Let us see how things work out because I have a good case to make".

I found myself facing a full bench of the Supreme Court headed by Chief Justice Sajjad Ali Shah. On his instructions to me to present my arguments, I proceeded to do so a little tentatively, in view of the skeptical remark made by Abdul Hafeez Pirzada a few minutes earlier. As I proceeded to list the facts and amplify my arguments, the Chief Justice and the other Justices permitted me to

continue for about 45 minutes without interruption — instead of the two or three minutes that had been estimated.

On conclusion of my arguments, Abdul Hafeez Pirzada was invited to present his opinions which were primarily focussed on the legitimacy of the executive authority of the Prime Minister by which he said that the awarded contract was entirely valid. He asked for the petition to be disallowed at this very first stage.

When Abdul Hafeez Pirzada had used only about 15 minutes and appeared to be reiterating his earlier arguments rather than introducing new elements, Chief Justice Sajjad Ali Shah interrupted to say that he and his colleague Judges were unanimously of the opinion that this petition raised entirely new issues of fundamental importance to public interest and that the petition is being admitted for regular hearings on future dates.

I was delighted to hear this initially favourable opinion and while thanking the Chief Justice and the Bench, I requested early dates for subsequent hearings to prevent the continuation of an unjust use of air waves. The Court did not order immediate cancellation of the contract but stressed that in the near future it would take due notice of the adverse consequences arising from a new monopoly.

It was unfortunate that this decision by the Court greatly upset Abdul Hafeez Pirzada. Outside the courtroom, as we were walking our separate ways and as I said to him that I was deeply disappointed at his having accepted a brief for so outrageous a misuse of executive power, he lost his temper and shockingly made a verbal threat of physical violence. Bystanders intervened. Even though I restrained myself and we went our respective ways, I was truly saddened that our otherwise cordial, even friendly relationship had been marred by this episode.

Both of us had inherently positive attitudes about each other — because, in the months that followed, we resumed our original, warm personal relationship. In



fact, so much better did our relationship become that in 2003 when I challenged another outrageous example of misuse of executive power, Abdul Hafeez Pirzada graciously agreed to appear on my behalf on a *pro bono* basis without asking for his normal professional fee — which, in any case, I could not afford! Details are given in a separate book on my association with General Pervez Musharraf titled: *A General in Particular* also scheduled for publication in 2021.

Back to 1996 — in two subsequent hearings, between May 1996 and November 1996, the Court continued to examine the documents and details about the contract while giving clear indications that my petition was justifiable. Events soon overtook the legal process.

Shortly after the dismissal of the second Government of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto on 5th November 1996, I was able to draft the first-ever law to establish private, independent radio and TV channels in Pakistan. The Ordinance was promulgated on 14th February 1997.

However, the second, elected Government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was clearly not interested in ending the State and Government monopoly of electronic media and allowed the Ordinance to lapse without converting it into an Act of Parliament. It then took another three years for a similar law to be approved by the Cabinet. General Pervez Musharraf invited me to serve as Adviser on National Affairs and Information and Broadcasting in the Cabinet that he formed in stages after his take-over on 12th October 1999. I once again had the honour of drafting / re-drafting the earlier version of the new law and securing Cabinet approval twice in 2000 before my resignation from the Musharraf Cabinet in October-November 2000. Eventually re-designated as the PEMRA law, the statute was formally enforced on 1st March 2002 and went on to transform the landscape of electronic media in Pakistan.

But between mid-May 1996 and early-November 1996, Benazir Bhutto

revealed a disturbing dimension in her psyche: an element of retribution for my having filed the petition.

*Reaction to the petition—and resignation from  
the PPP*

(END-MAY 1996 – AUGUST 1996)

Both before filing the public interest petition in the Supreme Court and during the period of its hearings, this writer knew that this action would not be well-received in the Prime Minister's Office nor also by her spouse. Because, as stated earlier, the person and the firm to whom this unprecedented monopoly had been granted was wellknown to be a friend of the Prime Minister's spouse.

The reaction became swiftly apparent. There is no proof of who was the caller or who instituted the calls. But my son, Kamal Kadeer Jabbar, at that time about to transit into young adulthood at the age of 18 years, told Shabnam that he had picked up the phone at least twice and heard an unknown voice hurling a threat about likely ominous actions to come soon. Of course no detail was specified and no apology or promise demanded. Just the words, the tone, the anonymity were meant to eloquently express the threat of unknown retribution to come.

Though our parental reaction was apprehensive, it was also angry — because attempting to target one's children was hitting back far below the belt. We also allowed for the possibility that the calls may have been mere prank calls. Someone with other grounds against my person using this publicly-reported episode about the Court's decision to admit my petition to cause disquiet in my mind and in my family's sense of security. And Karachi's state of law and order

in 1996 continued to cause concern — both because of the incidence of crime, and the violence used by MQM, notwithstanding the crackdown of recent years.

Fortunately the Police guard posted at our gate in 1994 courtesy Benazir Bhutto's kind interest in our security, continued to remain in place. With one unsettling incident that truly shook us up. When on a certain day, earlier in 1996, it was time for a change of guard at the end of one shift and the start of another, the two Policemen involved had a personal tiff — which soon ballooned into lethal violence. One Policeman grabbed his rifle and shot his colleague point-blank in his chest — resulting in almost instant death. At our doorstep. Within seconds of his grisly act, the killer fled the scene — leaving behind the still-bleeding and almost-expired colleague. So this gruesome episode symbolized in a way the shambolic condition of law and order in Karachi in particular, and in the country in general.

Yet the threatening phone calls, genuine or fake, were only a short preliminary. The real reaction to the public interest petition came through my association with *Baanhn Beli*.

Ten years earlier in February 1985, weeks before thinking about entering the political process by seeking election to the Senate — which, as stated elsewhere in this book — happened in March 1985 — I had organized an exploratory visit to the Tharparkar arid region in Sindh with friends and development practitioners from diverse fields to come together in a new organization known as *Baanhn Beli* (in Seraiki and Sindhi, the term means: “a friend forever” or “a helping hand”). The majority of members of this unique urban-rural bridge of friendship comprised poor, disadvantaged men and women residents of remote far-flung villages and hamlets scattered across the vast, water-parched region.

Within a few years *Baanhn Beli* and our work in multiple sectors such as water resources, primary health care, girls' education, capacity building, advocacy and

smallscale infrastructure had grown to a notable extent. Global institutions such as UNICEF and several State institutions and private organizations in Pakistan extended their valuable funding support, in cash and in kind. To supplement voluntary leaders' efforts, we were able to engage full-time specialised staff from urban Sindh willing to take up residence in an area without basic services like grid electricity or piped water supply. We also inducted village-based individuals into full-time staff to benefit from their inherited wisdom and their first-hand knowledge and experience.

*Baanhn Beli* became quickly and widely known for being the pioneer public service, volunteer-led organization to render such work in Tharparkar. Bringing together Urdu, Punjabi, Balochi, Pushto-speaking people with Sindhi and Dhatki-speaking people and transcending ethnic, regional and religious factors, the work of *Baanhn Beli* was a source of humble pride for this writer as its founding president.

In 1994, at my invitation, President Farooq Leghari became the first Head of State to visit Nagarparkar in order to preside over an event hosted by *Baanhn Beli* to honour the deprived, disadvantaged but very hard-working women of Tharparkar. He also announced a generous donation of Rs. 10 million to help advance the work. One of the ways this amount was used was to create the first-ever Computer Education Centre in the vast region — it was located at Islamkot which, in the 21st century has become the entry point to the huge coal reserves and is growing rapidly. Whereas 25 years ago we saw the charming sight of young boys and girls alighting from camels that had brought them from their isolated villages to the doorsteps of the computer centre.

From the inception of *Baanhn Beli's* work, exceptional priority was given to ensuring financial transparency and accountability. In addition to prompt documentation of donations of funds, at least 2 or 3 volunteer Members of the

Managing Committee were jointly authorized to operate Bank accounts. This writer deliberately refrained from being a signatory on cheque books to enable a detached, objective overview of our financial status. While money was needed, the principal strength of *Baanhn Beli* became the devotion of time, effort and other resources, including funds, contributed by volunteers.

One notable testament to the credibility and reputation of *Baanhn Beli* was the fact that, on receiving a data-fact report on the organization's work from me in 1994, Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto had personally acknowledged receipt of the report and appreciated our mission, with the assurance that she would soon read it in order to gain further knowledge about our work.

***Attempt to intimidate:***

The *Baanhn Beli* office in Karachi received a visit one day in early June 1996 from a couple of mid-level officials of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) . They said their Head Office in Islamabad had instructed them to inspect the financial records of *Baanhn Beli* because reports had been received of malpractices including embezzlement of the donation given by President Farooq Leghari two years earlier.

There then began a phase in which virtually every day for about 4 to 5 weeks stretching into July 1996, two or at least one FIA inspector would visit the *Baanhn Beli* office in Karachi. Every single file of papers, including receipts, bank statements, vouchers, ledgers, cheque books were pored over.

I was in equal measure, shocked and at the same time profoundly disappointed at this form of retaliation to the filing of the public interest petition in the Supreme Court. Instead of dealing with the problem through the legal channel alone — as was already being done by the engagement of the services of one of the country's most eminent lawyers to defend the indefensible misuse of Prime Ministerial powers — here was a crude misuse of a State institution to intimidate

me as the filer of the petition.

I was also amused — and proudly pleased! — that a mere single individual, without the benefit of any public office or possession of wealth — could provoke a whole Government to deploy its vast resources using false pretexts so as to harass and obtain a possible withdrawal of the petition.

But the shock and the amusement were outweighed by the deep distress I felt about Benazir Bhutto. For this use of FIA to try to bully *Baanhn Beli* could not have been done without her express knowledge and approval — howsoever pre-occupied a Prime Minister already is with her more important affairs of State, Government and Party. First: my petition specifically challenged the propriety of the use of authority by the Prime Minister herself. Second: the beneficiary of the illegally awarded permission was well known to be a good friend of the Prime Minister's spouse. Third: any action by a State agency such as the FIA about a matter involving a former Member of the Prime Minister's first Cabinet — who was also a member of the PPP — could not have been initiated without her consent.

In about the first week of July 1996 during a visit to Islamabad this writer visited Parliament partly to revive nostalgia about the six years spent there in the Senate term and partly to meet some familiar legislators. Chancing to come face to face with Major General(r) Naseerullah Babar, who, as a Cabinet Minister, oversaw the FIA, this writer requested a brief couple of minutes of private conversation even as we stood at the top of a staircase. I gently remonstrated with him for sending FIA to harass me through *Baanhn Beli*. I said that I had not expected him to use such an unseemly method. He feigned complete ignorance and assured me that he would look into it. One knew that his disclaimer was deceptive. As the Minister to whom the Head of FIA reported he had to know of FIA's use against his own former Cabinet colleague. This writer did not expect

any let-up as a result of this casual request and the reference to it. No change occurred.

Through July and early August 1996 the FIA team kept returning to inspect the records of *Baanhn Beli*.

Two results emerged. Despite all attempts to find even a minor discrepancy in financial accounting at *Baanhn Beli* which could be seized upon to defame the organization, and more importantly discredit its founding president and thereby damage the credibility of the public interest petition that I had filed in the Supreme Court, FIA Inspectors were unable to achieve their undeclared objective. I was delighted that, even with the very limited, rudimentary managerial resources of an NGO, *Baanhn Beli* had been able to maintain its financial records with total integrity.

The second result was my decision taken in the first week of August 1996 to resign from the PPP. I felt stunned at the very thought and the hard fact that the leader of the Party whose stature and vision for progressive change I had accepted with enthusiasm and for whom one had devoted significant effort in and out of Cabinet could resort to primitive and unethical forms of retribution. With this kind of mind-set revealed, it would not be possible to continue as a Member of the Party because all the implications arising from this episode would always affect the relationship.

As I looked back at that day in November 1988 when, sitting beside Benazir Bhutto, this writer had made the announcement of joining the PPP, the intervening eight years appeared as a phase of contrasting, often conflictual streams. There was pride and a sense of fulfilment in being part of a major political organization which, despite flaws and failures had nevertheless represented liberal, secular and modernist ideals. Yet there had been undue compromises made with religious extremists and with other political elements



whose ideals were polar opposites. Even though this writer had never been able to summon up the passion that energizes PPP jiyalas nor raise standard Party slogans nor put the Party flag on my car, I had empathized with the grave losses and the injustices suffered by its founder, his family, its leaders and workers.

But now in early August 1996 one was convinced that the 8 years had brought other qualities to the fore, qualities with which I could not identify. I did not want to be holier-than-thou and pose as if one was in every respect morally or ethically superior. I remained absolutely conscious of my own many limitations and inadequacies. At the same time it was clear to me that arbitrary misuse of power, greed for wealth and willingness to benefit favourites were values and practices that were entirely unacceptable.

I had previously looked the other way but perhaps because those regressive tendencies had now surfaced so close to the bone, this was the time to part. More so, when Benazir Bhutto was still in power, not out of office. The timing in this context was crucial. I had joined the PPP on the eve of Benazir Bhutto assuming public office for the first time. I was resigning from the PPP when Benazir Bhutto was Prime Minister a second time and in full throttle: ruling over the Federation of about 170 million people and yet equally willing to harass a single individual.

When I made the announcement to the media simultaneous to the despatch of a letter to the Life Chairperson of the Party, there came a great sense of relief. The pain I had felt at suppressing within oneself the contradiction between formally accepting Party discipline and Party identity, and, on the other, one's own personal knowledge and disgust at the corrupt practices at the highest level was now suddenly gone, vanished into thin air. A fulsome feeling of freedom lifted the spirit. I could now write and speak and act without the inhibitions felt — but not always respected — these past 8 years. There was also a new uncertainty

ahead for a single individual in the political field, now without a Party.

Fortunately, there was plenty to do, similar to the situation that I had faced when the Senate term had ended in March 1991 and the Party — meaning Benazir Bhutto — had ensured I was not re-elected, neither in March 1991, nor thereafter.

Most welcomes and beginnings are sociable, festive and cheerful. Some departures are solitary, solemn and even sad.

## *Her second dismissal — my second Cabinet*

(NOVEMBER 1996)

Some of the mis-steps taken in the second Government of Benazir Bhutto (1993-1996) have been referred to in preceding pages. Tendencies evident in the first tenure re-appeared. Nepotism. Corruption. A large estate known as Rockwood purchased in the UK. A suspicious contract given to a Swiss firm to perform tasks normally rendered by Customs. Appointments of lawyers with blemished reputations to serve as High Court Judges. In response to rampant criminality linked to MQM in Sindh, a strong but harsh State operation that frequently conducted custodial killings. Mis-governance. New policy imbalances were introduced — as in the case of promoting new power projects on highly attractive terms for investors but which were exorbitant for the public exchequer. This particular lapse was fully exploited by the second Government of Nawaz Sharif in opening several court cases on allegations of kickbacks.

But in her second term, Benazir Bhutto also demonstrated direly-needed vision and practical action for long over-due social change. She became the only serving Muslim woman Head of Government to attend the UN Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo, Egypt in 1994. For the record: there was an additional reason for Pakistanis to be rightly proud of their country's special association with this major global event. The organization of this pivotal UN Conference was led by the first woman in the world to head a UN Agency: a respected Pakistani development visionary named Dr Nafees Sadik, Head of the

United Nations Population Fund – UNFPA. Dr Nafees Sadik is the daughter of Muhammad Shoaib who served as Minister of Finance in the Cabinet of Field Marshal Ayub Khan.

Tansu Ciller, Prime Minister of Turkey and Khaleda Zia, Prime Minister of Bangladesh, despite their own respective country's positive steps in the subjects of the Conference stayed away — possibly for unrelated, unavoidable reasons or because they perhaps did not want to endorse new initiatives in family planning which could cause domestic political problems.

In contrast, Benazir Bhutto took a forthright stand, spoke with conviction at the Conference and followed up with purposeful action. Building on innovative approaches already used in Pakistan by a few NGOs — including *Baanhn Beli* in Tharparkar — she authorized the recruitment of about 100,000 women as Lady Health Workers. They would take the message of family planning, counselling and contraceptives to the doorsteps of rural households and low-income urban areas across the country so that women without access to reproductive health care could be directly reached and motivated. She also gave unqualified support to the advancement of women's rights by recalling and reiterating her full support for the Convention known as CEDAW (The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women).

Yet in holistic terms, there was enough turbulence and trouble to embolden Nawaz Sharif to launch a movement calling for her ouster named: *Tehreek-e-Nijaat*, (“Movement for Deliverence”). Protest processions and rallies, abrasive invective in legislatures. Rumours about giant leaps in bribe-taking and bribe-giving — as well as new tensions with a colleague of long-standing: President Farooq Leghari.

One unconfirmed yet vicious rumour claimed that, in reaction to President Farooq Leghari accepting a personal visit to the Presidency by Nawaz Sharif in

his capacity as Leader of the Opposition, an envelope containing material incriminating one or more members of the President's immediate family was sent to him — while the sender remained anonymous. Only a civil intelligence agency under the exclusive control of the Prime Minister—unlike military intelligence agencies whose control is shared — could have gathered the information, or fabricated it.

Then came the grisly tragedy of Murtaza Bhutto's killing — virtually at the doorstep of the famous family home which had been shared by siblings Benazir and Murtaza in a city and province administered by a PPP Government.

The second dismissal she faced on 5th November 1996 was made the more remarkable because it was ordered by her own political comrade — unlike the first dismissal which was by a person she had never previously worked with.

On becoming Prime Minister the second time, Benazir Bhutto promised to present a Bill to repeal Article 58(2) B of the Constitution which empowered the President to dismiss an elected Prime Minister — but she never did so.

When I received telephone calls from the Presidency and from Prime Minister-designate Malik Meraj Khalid asking me to join the Caretaker Cabinet that would replace Benazir Bhutto's second Cabinet, there was a tinge of regret, even momentary reluctance to accept the invitation. Because I would be part of a team and a phase replacing a team of former colleagues led by an individual with whom one had previously served, both in Government and in the Party for the preceding eight years.

Notwithstanding my resignation from the PPP in August 1996, the old affinity abided. What greatly assuaged the tinge of regret was the fact that neither the President nor the Prime Minister of the Caretaker Government intended to misuse the dismissal for their own political agendas. A firm date for the next election promptly came with the order of dismissal.

As my work for four months in the capacity of the Caretaker Federal Minister for Petroleum and Natural Resources proceeded, the task involved unearthing multiple cases of corruption and irregularities in that Ministry in previous years. However, neither the President nor the Prime Minister nor myself indulged in any sharp attacks on Benazir Bhutto's person.

Although the implementation of the *Ehtesaab* (Accountability) Ordinance of November 1996 primarily focussed on the corrupt excesses of the 1993-1996 phase, our public statements, verbal or written, were modulated and restrained: they did not willfully denigrate the Head of the previous Government. The facts spoke for themselves.

## *The last meeting*

(JUNE 2000)

There was no contact with Benazir Bhutto for about the next four years — but in our own separate spheres, our respective political journeys continued.

On 11th June 2000 during my membership of the Cabinet of General Pervez Musharraf, I received a call from Lt. General Ghulam Ahmad, Chief of Staff to Pervez Musharraf. He conveyed that the Chief Executive of Pakistan wanted me to represent him at the State funeral of President Hafez al Assad of Syria who had passed away in the previous 24 hours. I was required to leave by the earliest flight available for connections to enable timely arrival in Damascus.

In the absence of direct flights between the two countries, I had to travel via Dubai. As this writer boarded the aircraft in Dubai, to one's pleasant surprise, there was Benazir Bhutto seated on an aisle seat in First Class / Business Class.

She smiled warmly and said, "Hello, Javed. How nice to see you". I reciprocated spontaneously. We briefly exchanged information and realized that the purpose of our respective journeys was the same: to honour a notable Head of State who had ruled his country for almost 30 years and as a fellow Muslim was held in special regard in Pakistan for reasons of religious affinity as well as for other important reasons.

In Benazir Bhutto's case, President Hafez al Assad had demonstrated his extraordinary respect for her father and his family, particularly after General Ziaul Haq ousted Z.A. Bhutto and then executed him, despite appeals from

President Assad who, like dozens of other Heads of State and Government called for mercy and non-implementation of a highly dubious judicial verdict.

He had also extended courtesy and hospitality to Benazir Bhutto during her period of exile, and during her visits to Damascus.

When Murtaza Bhutto's supporters hijacked a PIA plane to Kabul and subsequently needed a sanctuary to evade the Pakistani Government's attempt to bring him to trial, President Assad offered him safety and material support to enable Murtaza and his wife Ghinwa and their children to live in secure conditions in Damascus. Prior to 1977 as well, Prime Minister Z.A. Bhutto and President Hafez al Assad had met and shared a cordial, mutually respectful relationship.

Though General Pervez Musharraf did not have a special personal bond with the late Syrian President, as Head of the Government of Pakistan, the General was formally invited to attend the State funeral, an invitation with special relevance in view of the shared memberships by the two countries of the OIC and of periodic co-operation on major issues, particularly on Israel's aggression and Palestine's oppression.

During the Arab-Israeli war of 1973, Prime Minister Z.A. Bhutto had dispatched ace Pakistani Air Force pilots to Syria to lend expert aerial support. Pakistani skills had made a vital difference to Syria's crucial defence. There had also been at least a couple of fatal losses. This writer was aware that one young courageous Pakistani pilot, the husband of a school-mate, had tragically lost his life in the defence of Syria in 1973.

So there were more than the normal reasons why Pakistan needed to be officially represented at the Cabinet level.

Exchanging quick intentions with Benazir Bhutto of "We must meet", I proceeded to a seat in a row further back. On reaching Damascus, and before the



two of us left separately from the airport, we confirmed that we would meet over lunch — with the details of the exact time and venue to be handled by the Embassy of Pakistan. The Ambassador of Pakistan in Syria, was present at the airport to receive me and afforded due respect to the former Prime Minister and her assistant travelling with her.

The State funeral was largely attended by several Heads of State and Government, both from Arab and Muslim states as well as from countries from other parts of the world. Even the USA, with which Syria had always had a difficult relationship due to the excessive American nexus with Israel, was represented by Secretary of State Madeline Albright. I had been present with her in the closed-door, unexpectedly prolonged meeting of President Bill Clinton with General Pervez Musharraf in Islamabad on 25th March 2000.

I joined the long line of dignitaries who, turn by turn, were being introduced to Basher al Assad, the ophtamologist son of the late President who had been designated by his father as his political successor when his elder brother Bazil, the original political heir, was killed in a car accident some years earlier.

During the brief inte-action with Basher al Assad, this writer stressed that, in addition to conveying General Pervez Musharraf 's official and personal condolences along with his deep regrets at being unavoidably unable to be personally present, I was also expressing the sorrow of the people of Pakistan who held President Hafez al Assad in very high regard for his political courage and services to the Muslim fraternity. Basher al Assad received the salutations with a pleasant expression and told me to convey his thanks and his best wishes to General Pervez Musharraf.

On the conclusion of the State funeral ceremonies, the Embassy briefed me about the lunch meeting with Benazir Bhutto which was set to take place in a reputed restaurant.

We met alone and were seated opposite each other in a spacious restaurant that was only moderately busy. As the meal proceeded, the conversation unfolded with Benazir Bhutto rightly doing most of the talking. She was friendly in disposition, her eyes always alive with a sparkle, her language articulate and well-chosen, her views clearly shaped by both personal experience and by knowledge of objective reality, past and present.

Without specific reference, both of us avoided discussion of my resignation from the PPP four years earlier and of one's association with Farooq Leghari and the Millat Party.

She began by briefly recalling the late Syrian President's exceptional respect for her own late father and the consideration shown to her mother, to herself, to her brothers and to the family's saga of suffering.

She then came to the principal subject of immediate mutual concern, that of the political power scenario in Pakistan and of how the military and the political spheres could reconcile. She did refer to how the 1997 polls had been allegedly rigged to greatly reduce PPP's presence in Parliament. This contention I firmly, politely disagreed with because I had been part of the Caretaker Cabinet that was in office when those polls were held. But both of us agreed not to argue about these differently claimed facts and assertions, as respectively claimed. Instead, we decided to focus on the here and now.

Benazir Bhutto recounted how she had initially welcomed the removal of Nawaz Sharif as Prime Minister on 12th October 1999 because he was determined to use his two-thirds majority in the National Assembly to give himself sweeping additional powers. Fortunately, the Opposition in the Senate, led by the PPP had blocked the move but his intent to become an almost all-powerful, non-accountable *Ameerul Momineen* ("Supreme Leader of the Realm") was clear.

However, she said that it was now about eight months since General Musharraf had assumed power and she saw no sign of an early return to the political process through democratic means and free and fair elections.

I indicated that preparations were afoot to hold Local Government elections in December 2000, as the first tangible step towards revival of elected institutions.

In my capacity as Adviser on National Affairs to the General and as Federal Minister, this writer was obliged to respond to this concern. I emphasized that the General, his colleagues and self were wholly committed to the early restoration of the democratic process, that the General and his Government had the responsibility to ensure initiation and completion of accountability to prevent democratic restoration from becoming merely the return of the very same autocratic practices that she herself had identified as being those of Nawaz Sharif.

She responded by a somewhat lengthy enunciation of how certain elements in the military such as in the ISI, in cahoots with orthodox and fascist political parties, including religious parties had adopted the strategy of personal destruction. But this invidious design was named “accountability” to give the witch-hunt a respectable facade. She recounted how, starting with her return to Pakistan in 1986, and with the use of millions of rupees and dollars in the run-up to the November 1988 polls, and throughout her first term up to August 1990 as also thereafter, the politics of personal destruction had been enacted to unjustly defame her, her husband and her party with the express purpose being to prevent the PPP from success in elections and in governance.

I expressed broad agreement with the unfair hostility she had faced but did not concede that all she said was correct. I stressed that General Musharraf represented a different mind-set in the military and that he should not be seen as a continuation of General Ziaul Haq or of the thinking of Lt. General Hameed

Gul and the likes. For whatever it is worth, I said to her, on the basis of knowing Pervez Musharraf on a personal level, one could assure her that, notwithstanding his publicly stated disdain for corruption in politics, he was not implementing a strategy of personal destruction through character assassination of Benazir Bhutto and Asif Ali Zardari. The accountability process would continue but would be fully evidence-based and impartial.

What I did not remind her about were the several facts already widely known about episodes from her second term in office when credible data had been cited about corruption at the highest levels. I wanted to stay focussed on the present — and scope for future progress.

Benazir Bhutto was very critical of the Supreme Court's decision to go far beyond validating the military take-over on 12th October 1999 due to bizarre abnormal conditions created by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif 's action and to afford General Pervez Musharraf the power to amend the Constitution in order to ensure smooth governance and State stability. With reference to the past instances in the country's history when the superior Judiciary had condoned military intervention into the political sphere and its shameful collaboration with General Ziaul Haq in facilitating the assassination of her father, she apprehended that General Pervez Musharraf would also extend his rule to the detriment of democracy, notwithstanding his being of a liberal, modernist mind-set entirely different from that of General Ziaul Haq.

She was also concerned for the safety and liberty of her Party leaders and workers and said that even though the term "martial law" had not been used to describe the dispensation by which General Musharraf was exercising authority, to all real extents and purposes, Pakistan was presently subject to purely military rule.

She then referred to the regional situation with regard to Pakistan's relations

with Afghanistan and with India. She was most anxious about the potential dangers for Pakistan in the form of a possible spill-over of the Taliban's approach to Islam. She cited the way in which General Musharraf, despite the different outlook claimed for him by this writer, had allowed religious extremists to influence discourse and even official actions when some hijackers forcibly landed an Indian airliner at Kandahar in Afghanistan and secured the release of a Pakistani cleric like Maulana Masood Azhar and two others in return for freeing Indian hostages. On this issue, as with some of her other concerns, this writer fully agreed with her but was, alas, due to my official position, unable to convey the same to her.

Benazir Bhutto expressed strong criticism of the Kargil misadventure even while acknowledging that India had, several years earlier, violated the Simla Agreement while secretly moving troops to advantageous new heights in Siachin. That, while she understood the valid reasons why the Pakistan Army wanted to settle scores for India's aggression in Siachin, the Kargil strategy and its execution were severely flawed. She recalled that, as Director-General, Military Operations, then-Major General Pervez Musharraf had briefed her in 1994-5 about the potentiality for a Kargil operation to achieve a military advantage with major possible gains, and that she had vetoed the suggestion. She said she could understand why, with Nawaz Sharif's limited capacity to appreciate grave implications, her successor as Prime Minister had failed to categorically rule out the move when he had been briefed by General Musharraf — who was by then the Army Chief. She said that, given India's continual repression in occupied Kashmir, and the potential fall-out from Taliban rule in Afghanistan, General Musharraf needed to conduct foreign policy with exceptional care, a quality which, for the sake of Pakistan, she hoped he would demonstrate.

To avoid awkward and unproductive diversion, this writer refrained from reminding her that, during her second term of office, her Government had given informal support to elements of the Taliban.

This writer suggested to her that there was clearly a gulf of mutual incomprehension between her and General Musharraf. I proposed that, strictly confidentially, an attempt should be made to arrange a dialogue between the two. If, for any reason, such a dialogue was not possible in the near future then, through one or more intermediaries on behalf of the General, a process of communication should begin to ensure clarity and accuracy on both sides, of respective intent and sincerity. She readily agreed that, in principle, she would welcome a dialogue directly with the General, without pre-conditions. She said that the on-going accountability should not be used to coerce her or the PPP in order to achieve an arrangement that may suit the General.

I emphasized that one was exchanging views with her purely on an informal, confidential basis as the meeting with her was unplanned. Until one briefed General Musharraf soon after my return to Islamabad I was not authorized to speak on his behalf. The suggestion for a dialogue was an unofficial, personal thought. She acknowledged the qualification and said that this was quite clear.

We parted with affectionate good-byes and expressions of intent to remain in touch, and that I would follow up on possibilities arising from our informal talk.

On return to Islamabad the next day this writer immediately prepared a summary for General Musharraf recording the principal points of our talk. Soon thereafter I called on him in person to brief him. He listened with keen interest, a twinkle in his eyes, probably reflective of his realization that it was now he, rather than Benazir Bhutto who was Head of Government and required to make the next move. I had, some months earlier, already written a secret note to the General on the urgent need for an exit strategy and a policy for political

reconciliation without compromising on impartial accountability — a true conundrum.

He nodded his agreement to the suggestion for conducting a dialogue, indirect or direct, with Benazir Bhutto but said any such exchange should not be mistaken by her as a sign of weakness on his part or of his Government, and that the accountability process would continue without interruption. “Leave it with me” he told me on conclusion of our briefing. In my separate two books about my association with Farooq Leghari, Meraj Khalid and Pervez Musharraf, this writer shares further details about subsequent events.

One outcome became evident only about six years after my own last meeting with Benazir Bhutto in which the possibility of dialogue had been broached. The first of two direct face-to-face dialogues between herself and General Musharraf — both of them secret, and revealed only later — took place in January 2007 and in July 2007, both in Abu Dhabi.

About five months after the briefing I provided to General Musharraf, this writer resigned from his Cabinet in end October 2000 and formally left in November 2000. In all those five months, the General never once reverted to me about the scope or feasibility of a secret or open dialogue with Benazir Bhutto.

## *Four Presidents and Benazir Bhutto*

As a political leader, Benazir Bhutto dealt — indirectly or directly — with four Presidents of Pakistan: Ziaul Haq, Ghulam Ishaq Khan, Farooq Leghari, Pervez Musharraf. Her interactions with a fifth President, Rafiq Tarrar who served from 1st January 1998 to 20th June 2001 were not substantive or significant. Her interactions with Nawaz Sharif up to 12th October 1999 and with Pervez Musharraf up to 20th June 2001 (both of whom served as Heads of Government while Rafiq Tarrar was President) were more relevant to this book's scope.

Each of the other four Presidents was a distinct individual and each differed significantly from the other three. All four were men. As the only woman in this pentagon, there must surely have been an unspoken yet real gender-dimension — unspoken but real?! — that shaped respective mutual perceptions.

Two of the four Presidents were also Generals and Chiefs of Army Staff. Two of the four were civilians.

Benazir Bhutto's two terms as Prime Minister unfolded during the Presidencies of Ghulam Ishaq Khan (1988- 1993) and Farooq Leghari (1993-1997). Having had the opportunity to know these two individuals who served as President in their separate and other capacities as well, this writer took particular interest in observing their respective relationships with Benazir Bhutto.

The two Heads of State — Ghulam Ishaq Khan and Farooq Leghari — were diametric opposites of each other; in socio-economic backgrounds, education,



temperament, age, personality, professional experience and political relationships.

Yet each used a Constitutional power to dismiss the two Governments of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. Even as each cited corruption as one of the major reasons for the dismissal, each of the two Presidents was influenced — not in financial terms, but by the power of the public office which they held.

The lady in turn, was a distinctly different individual from the other two. In age, gender, ethnicity, education, temperament, personality, and particularly in her generational inheritance of martyrdom.

The first of the four — General Ziaul Haq — ousted the father of Benazir Bhutto and executed him. The fourth of the four — General Pervez Musharraf — conducted secret negotiations with Benazir Bhutto and was in office as President when she herself was assassinated. Coincidentally, this tragedy also occurred in Rawalpindi where her father was executed.

Unflinchingly, onward of 5th July 1977 and particularly so after 4th April 1979, Benazir Bhutto maintained a consistent opposition to Ziaul Haq, to martial law and a compliant Judiciary. Bearing the harshness of primitive jail conditions, as also the confinement of house arrest, she then travelled to the U.K. Using London as her base of operation, she assiduously mobilized press and public opinion and became a kind of ideal figure for media coverage — a single, young, well-educated, articulate Muslim woman challenging a military dictator who had executed her father. This was high political drama, real grist for the media mill. Though the General stayed in office for 11 years, it was Benazir Bhutto who won the match — and the office of Prime Minister — in November - December 1988.

The second President whom Benazir Bhutto interacted with was Ghulam Ishaq Khan who was thoroughly civilian, unlike General Ziaul Haq. Yet she saw him

— as did many others — as a principal ally of the General who had remained one of the most important members of the General’s Cabinet since 5th July 1977 and was obviously a specially trusted favourite. Rather than rely on an individual with considerable political experience as the General did in the case of the National Assembly where his nominee for Speaker was Khawaja Safdar, Ghulam Ishaq Khan, with no direct political or electoral experience had been chosen by Ziaul Haq as the Chairman of the Senate. Unlike Khawaja Safdar who suffered a shock defeat by Syed Fakhar Imam to become the first Speaker of the National Assembly elected in February 1985, Ghulam Ishaq Khan was comfortably elected Chairman of the Senate and remained so till 17th August 1988 when he became Acting President on the death of General Ziaul Haq. A few months later, with the support of Benazir Bhutto, PPP and allies, Ghulam Ishaq Khan was elected President for a full-term in his own right.

From 2nd December 1988 to 6th August 1990 — a period of about 531 days — the working relationship of Benazir Bhutto and Ghulam Ishaq Khan went through contrasting phases. Commencing with unease and reluctance, a second phase comprised attempts to work together in a larger interest. Yet irritants, distortions and then outright sharp disagreements marked the third phase before the final phase that was highlighted by an outright breach.

There were several principal factors in the second and third phases: the disagreement on top key appointments. First: the decision by Benazir Bhutto to replace Lt. General Hameed Gul as DG - ISI with a retired rather than a serving Army General, in the person of Lt. General (r) Shamsur Rahman Kallu. Second: Benazir Bhutto’s reluctance to endorse the appointment of Admiral Iktikhar Sirohey as Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee as preferred by Ghulam Ishaq Khan. There was also the issue of appointments of Judges to the High Courts and the Supreme Court which gradually worsened the relationship. These

included polar-opposite views about the roles and functions of the President and the Prime Minister.

The 1973 Constitution provided for a Parliamentary model. The 1977 coup and General Ziaul Haq's amendments had changed the status heavily in favour of a Presidency-driven Parliamentary system in which the legislatures, the Prime Minister and the Chief Ministers in office were entirely dependent on the will of a single individual — the President.

Benazir Bhutto viewed Ghulam Ishaq Khan as the principal carry-over from General Ziaul Haq's mutilation of the Constitution. But she also suspected that most parts of the bureaucracy were also covertly more loyal to the powerful Presidency than to the popularly elected Prime Minister.

Being new to the system, as a justification, she was neither intimately familiar with all the subtle under-currents that shape processes within the system nor did she have the benefit of a network of officials who she had led over the previous decade or so. In contrast, Nawaz Sharif as the Chief Minister of Punjab had the advantage of having served as Finance Minister of the country's largest Province for several years and had established personal and working relationships with a large number of civil and military officers both at the Centre in Islamabad and in Lahore.

She knew that, presiding over this stark discrepancy was the super-bureaucrat Ghulam Ishaq Khan now in a position to monitor her every move and, if he wished, to frequently call "check-mate".

The differences covered aspects of the Judiciary, the military, the bureaucracy, national security, nuclear weapons' management, relations with Afghanistan, India, USA.

After the outright rupture with the action of 6th August 1990, Benazir Bhutto held a meeting with Ghulam Ishaq Khan in the third week of August 1990. This

writer is not privy to the content of that discussion except what she briefly shared in the post-mortem meeting held in end-August 1990. She had urged him to ensure that the conduct of the pre-poll phase of elections in October 1990 as also the polling itself be free and fair. On being assured by him that such would be so— and while retaining strong doubts that this would actually be the case — she had proceeded to prepare for the campaign. As it turned out, Ghulam Ishaq Khan did exactly the opposite to any assurance of impartiality that he gave. Both the pre-poll phase and the election-day phase were blatantly rigged against Benazir Bhutto and the PPP, as referred to earlier in this book.

However, in one of those startling changes that occur in Pakistan's history, less than three years after the October 1990 polls, Benazir Bhutto and Ghulam Ishaq Khan became allies in their shared objective to remove Nawaz Sharif from the office of Prime Minister. They succeeded in their effort in April 1993 when President Ghulam Ishaq Khan dismissed Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. But when the Supreme Court voided his order, Benazir Bhutto and Ghulam Ishaq Khan entered into a bizarre new second alliance which has been referred to earlier.

The Benazir Bhutto-Farooq Leghari political relationship remains a remarkable case. Two individuals who had worked so closely and so well together, for long and tough years in opposition to martial law and to General Ziaul Haq, followed by their shared unease about President Ghulam Ishaq Khan in the 1988-1990 phase as well as the turn-around with the President in the 1992-1993 phase were eventually unable to sustain their solidarity in the last year of the 1993-1996 phase.

Curiously, simultaneously, a few months into President Farooq Leghari's term that began on 13th November 1993, in my own few meetings with him as a former Cabinet colleague, this writer began to note that here too was another

Head of State who was not pleased at the ballooning reports of nepotism and corruption.

Ironically, with the Mehrangate scandal that erupted in 1994 the President himself was unfairly accused of having received a disproportionately large sum from a Karachi banker named Yunus Habib in return for the sale of part of his large land holdings in District D.G. Khan, Punjab.

The radical change in Farooq Leghari's views about Benazir Bhutto was perhaps shaped by four factors. One: corrupt practices at high levels that could not have occurred without the knowledge and therefore, the consent of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. Two: the steady, growing role of Asif Ali Zardari in enabling such practices. Three: increasing concern at the senior-most levels of the civil and military establishment that, despite some positive aspects of the second Benazir Bhutto Government, the recurrent tensions in urban Sindh with MQM, the spread of terrorist networks and misgovernance should not be permitted to continue. Four: top-level information provided to the President by both civil and military intelligence agencies about confidential discussions held by Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto with Asif Ali Zardari and her inner circle of confidants on whether a two-thirds majority in Parliament could be mobilized — despite acrimonious conflicts with the Opposition led by Nawaz Sharif — to amend the Constitution and abolish the Presidential power to dismiss an elected Government and dissolve the legislatures.

Neither in his public utterances nor in his private conversations did Farooq Leghari ever use strong language critical of Benazir Bhutto. For her part, as evident in her book *Reconciliation* she refers to his use of Presidential power to dismiss her only sparingly and uses no strong terms about her former colleague. Though in her reaction to the launch of the Millat Party in August 1998 she did mock the initiation by referring to it as the *Zillat* Party — a pejorative Urdu term

which means “insult”. In her references in the same book to General Pervez Musharraf, Benazir Bhutto devotes comparatively more space, and goes into greater detail about the indirect and direct exchanges with the General.

Two civilian Presidents who separately dismissed Benazir Bhutto as Prime Minister possessed contrasting qualities and traits. They came from entirely different backgrounds and had sharply contrasting individual political relationships with her. Yet each came to believe that the continuation of Benazir Bhutto as Prime Minister would be crucially detrimental to the national interests of Pakistan. In each case, the two Presidents may also have harboured purely personal ambitions, a desire to use the power of their office to advance their own agendas. In any such process and in any use of substantial power, the unspoken dimension of personal impulses and characteristics are always present, yet most often remain unacknowledged.

A cynical view could also be that a somewhat conservative (his wife observed *purdah*) — though certainly not an obscurantist — relatively older Pakhtun man like Ghulam Ishaq Khan had never ever felt at ease with a Western-educated, modernist, articulate youthful Sindhi Muslim woman — accompanied by a husband who exerted strong influence on her. In Farooq Leghari’s case, (whose wife also observed *purdah*) who was also Western-educated like Benazir Bhutto and also from a large land-owning feudal family like her’s, yet at the same time temperamentally quite different, being quieter, less populist and, like his predecessor, was unable to accept the covert and overt role of Asif Ali Zardari.

Perhaps, after all, there was a subtle element of gender patriarchy at work in both cases. One will never know.

In the chapter “The Last Meeting”, I have referred to Benazir Bhutto’s views about Pervez Musharraf, the fourth President she dealt with on a substantive level. In the chapter “Epilogue” I have cited aspects of the contrasting actions

that he took — or did not take — connected to the events of 27th December 2007.

Their political relationship was dominated by another set of contrasts. At one point, Pervez Musharraf had said that Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto would be permitted to return to their corrupt political ways in Pakistan “only over my dead body”.

Some time after Pervez Musharraf had held a dubious referendum in 30th April 2002 to prolong his stay in power, he entered into an alliance with Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, Chaudhry Parvez Elahi and their faction of the Muslim League as part of his controlled restoration of the political process. To the unpleasant surprise of passionate loyalists of Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto, the Government led by Pervez Musharraf as President and Shaukat Aziz as Prime Minister performed with stability and some positive achievements in economic progress and governance. There was even a promising turn-around in relations with India — which were derailed later on in 2007 and 2008.

However, in the earlier phase, covert pressure was exerted on Pervez Musharraf from the UK, Europe, the USA and Saudi Arabia to enable Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto to return to Pakistan in order to enable truly representative elections to be held in 2008. Reluctantly, setting aside his previously declared abhorrence, President Pervez Musharraf promulgated the National Reconciliation Ordinance on 5th October 2007 which enabled political amnesty. This law has since then become infamously known by its three initials as “NRO”. This special law’s provisions exempted — without specifically naming them — Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif from prosecution and conviction on charges of corruption and nepotism. (The NRO was, years later, deemed to be violative of the Constitution by Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry but it was enforced in October 2007 to give practical effect to its provisions).

Separately, and with separate consequences faced by each of them, Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif eventually did return to Pakistan to resume their conventional political ways — while Pervez Musharraf remained alive and well. The chain of changes that followed Benazir Bhutto's death ultimately led to Pervez Musharraf's resignation from the Presidency in August 2009.

General awareness about the lives of the four Presidents and Benazir Bhutto will help mark the sharp contrasts and perhaps, repeat, only perhaps explain the specific relationships that each of these four Presidents had with Benazir Bhutto. I stress "perhaps" because the reasons why people behave in particular ways, are shaped by tangible, recorded facts and events but also by intangible, unrecorded yet real aspects of cerebral attitudes and psychological reactions which are rarely known by a third person or acknowledged candidly by the protagonists themselves.

One source is autobiographies or books or statements in interviews or speeches given by the individuals concerned. However, it is extremely rare for persons who have occupied high public office to be entirely candid about deeply personal aspects of their views on their relations with individuals who were responsible for adversely changing their position in power.

With, of course, major and obvious exceptions. Benazir Bhutto's views about General Ziaul Haq are abundantly expressed and are part of the public record. But, other than predictably harsh views expressed about Farooq Leghari's dismissal of her second Government in November 1996 she did not write in depth about her relationship with him when he so steadfastly stood by her against General Ziaul Haq, as Secretary General of the PPP from 1978 to 1988 and then served loyally with her as Minister for Water and Power in her first Cabinet, then as Deputy Leader of the Opposition 1990-1993, very briefly as Minister for Foreign Affairs in 1993 and the three years thereafter as President.



For his part, Farooq Leghari to his credit, abstained from making sharp personal verbal attacks on her but he did not write his autobiography nor did he share his candid views about their own political working relationship, other than occasionally recalling particular episodes and expressing formal acknowledgments.

Like General Ziaul Haq, his successor Ghulam Ishaq Khan also did not write his autobiography nor any other book in which he could have shared details of his perceptions about her.

Other than the Presidential order of 6th August 1990 by which he dismissed Benazir Bhutto's first Government and other references in speeches, Ghulam Ishaq Khan did not write frankly about how he and Benazir Bhutto conducted a 180-degree change in their relationship. The two antagonists of 1990 became close partners in April-July 1993 in jointly ousting Nawaz Sharif's first Government.

Benazir Bhutto wrote an eloquent book *Reconciliation: Islam, Democracy and the West* completed just before her assassination on 27th December 2007 and published posthumously in early 2008.

*Reconciliation* is written with a Western readership as the principal audience: to rightly or exaggeratedly depict herself as the sole advocate in Pakistan for a modernist, secular approach opposed to religious extremism.

She also wrote the book: *Daughter of Destiny* published in 1988. It is often a compelling narrative, particularly poignant and powerful in the passages that describe the last few months of her father's life and their final meeting. The East — an Autobiography was published in 2007. She wrote the Preface in London in April 2007. This version covers the period of about 19 years between 1988 and 2007 including her second term of office 1993-96. When she lists work rendered in her second term, projects that had only been initiated or proposed are listed in

a manner to suggest that they were completed. *Daughter of the East* is noticeably inadequate and very pronounced in its one-dimensional view of her role during those 19 years, and the roles of other actors and factors. While the Army, ISI, Nawaz Sharif and allies are predictably held responsible for virtually all the ills that beset her and the country during that phase, there is a marked absence of candid self-critical appraisal.

To the contrary, there is a revealing sense of almost feudalistic proprietorship about the Government and the civil and military officers that she led. There is also a fundamental factual omission. This is reflected in how she blames the ISI and the Army for covert actions against her even in the December 1988-August 1990 period when her own selected appointee, Lt. General (r) Shamsur Rahman Kallu headed the ISI after her removal of his predecessor Lt. General Hameed Gul. There is too little humility. Perhaps for most individuals who have held power or aspire to power, self-centredness is an occupational hazard. One finds this facet also in General Pervez Musharraf 's autobiography. The whole charge of corruption is dismissed by Benazir Bhutto as being part of a planned "politics-of-destruction" conducted against her and her husband by the ISI and by her political foes. For a woman and a leader of exceptional ability and courage, these facets of *Daughter of the East* are disappointing.

Earlier, in 1982, her book titled *The Gathering Storm* on the military rule of Ziaul Haq and its negative consequences was published in India. However, she denied having written that book which is likely to have been prepared in India to defame the military in Pakistan. But while she narrates her perceptions about General Pervez Musharraf in some detail in the 2007/8 book, including the substance of their secret meetings in January and in July 2007, she does not dwell on her working relationships with Ghulam Ishaq Khan and Farooq Leghari in similar detail.

For his part, General Pervez Musharraf in his book *In the Line of Fire* written in 2005-early 2006 and published in the second half of 2006 makes only brief references to Benazir Bhutto. All of these are negative. They refer to the dynastic control of the PPP, to corruption, to nepotism. Their two secret meetings took place in January 2007 and in July 2007, both times in Abu Dhabi only after the publication of his memoirs. So the text does not cover those parleys.

In contrast, in her own book *Reconciliation*, Benazir Bhutto dwells at some length on her views about General Pervez Musharraf. Perhaps to avoid facing any awkwardness she does not quote in whole or in part from her initial reaction to General Musharraf 's assumption of power on 12th October 1999 by the forced removal of an elected Prime Minister. So glad was she at Nawaz Sharif 's removal from office that she welcomed the change with the caveat by which she hoped for the earliest possible restoration of the democratic process through free and fair elections.

Her book records broad details of how she and the PPP viewed General Musharraf 's rule and the various phases through which indirect and direct dialogues took place leading to her decision to return to Pakistan in October 2007. Without naming him specifically, she implies that the unsuccessful assassination attempt on 18th October 2007 in Karachi was due to a plot hatched in Lahore by certain unnamed "officials". She stopped short of accusing General Musharraf of being personally involved in a plot to kill her.

The pentagon of the power-play between four Heads of State and one Head of Government over a period of 30 years from 1977 to 2007 features five remarkable personalities and represents a complex, absorbing phase in the history of Pakistan.

## *Epilogue*

I was being driven to my home in Karachi in the afternoon of 27th December 2007 when my son Kamal phoned me to convey the terrible news of Benazir Bhutto's death. I felt sudden, overwhelming grief — like millions across the country and in many parts of the world. The pain stabbed sharp and deep. I asked the driver to stop the car. The tears started within seconds.

As Shabnam and I mourned in the hours that followed, Zubeida Mustafa, the eminent journalist who was, at that time, the op.ed page editor of *Dawn* phoned to request me to contribute a remembrance of Benazir Bhutto. Unlike one's readiness to write on various other subjects, my acceptance of the thoughtful invitation was accompanied with a rare sense of uncertainty on how I could possibly quickly compress the range of emotions and varied experiences into a few hundred words within a few hours. The tribute as published in *Dawn* on 29th December 2007 is reproduced at Annexure.

In the seven years onward of June 2000 when I last met her in Damascus to her shocking death on 27th December 2007 in Rawalpindi, Benazir Bhutto divided her time between a home in Dubai and visits to London, the USA and other countries. She promoted the case for an end to the military rule of General Pervez Musharraf and the holding of free and fair elections. She was always a devoted mother giving great love and care to her 3 children: Bilawal, Bakhtawar and Aseefa.

Her relationship with her spouse, as shared by credible sources, was supposed

to have reached a new phase. She had reportedly decided that in her future political or official responsibilities, her spouse would not render a public role. But I have no direct knowledge of this reported decision.

The bravery and resilience with which she approached her return to Pakistan on 18th October 2007 and her miraculous, tenacious survival of the bomb attack in which over 180 persons perished testify to her innate courage and fortitude.

But did she possess an unspoken yet un-mistakable death wish? Her formidable foe General Pervez Musharraf, specially sent DG-ISI, Lt. General Nadeem Taj to meet her late on the night of 26th December / early hours of 27th December 2007 to urge her not to address the Rawalpindi rally next day. He said because reliable intelligence had been received from friendly agencies in the UAE and Saudi Arabia — endorsed by ISI — that an assassination attempt would be made by one or more young men without beards. Why did she choose to ignore so serious and credible a message of sound advice?

The charge levelled by some against General Pervez Musharraf of being directly responsible for her murder is untenable. For two reasons: Pervez Musharraf himself through the DG-ISI urgently requested her to change her plans to prevent any attempt on her life. No conspirator advises a target to do the opposite of what is intended to be the outcome of a plot hatched by the same conspirator — for the obvious reason that it would be a self-defeating step to take. If the “Musharraf-is-guilty” theory postulates that the message delivered by DG-ISI was itself a deceptive manouvre, meant to project sincerity while saving the actual coup de’ grace for a later occasion, I come to the second reason. Knowing Pervez Musharraf on a personal level, I am 100 per cent convinced that he is incapable of giving a cold-blooded order for the murder of another human being off a military battle-field. He did co-plan and approve implementation of the Kargil adventure in 1999 as a belated retaliation for India’s violation of the

Simla Agreement through its illegal occupation of new heights in Siachin about 15 years earlier. Hundreds of soldiers and officers were killed in combat or in harsh weather during the Kargil conflict. That was the fatal outcome of a gross misjudgement and a military mis-adventure. But Pervez Musharraf does not possess the mind-set or psyche of a person who clinically orders the killing of another human being.

Pervez Musharraf was mistaken when he failed to order an autopsy of Benazir Bhutto's body which would have conclusively established the exact cause of death i.e. a freak, fatal wounding by the latch on the roof-door of the vehicle in which she was standing to wave to the crowd. Or by a bullet or by a fragment of a bomb. Her spouse also declined to allow the autopsy option. Neither Pervez Musharraf nor Asif Ali Zardari had the legal right to prevent an autopsy which is mandatory when a death occurs from violence or in suspicious circumstances. Yet no autopsy was conducted. Further, Pervez Musharraf should have prevented the too-hasty washing up of the crime scene.

His responsibility to ensure the safety of Benazir Bhutto commenced about 10 weeks before her death. By omission rather than by commission, President Pervez Musharraf and Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz inexplicably failed to provide her the optimal official safety arrangements and protocol to which she was entitled as a former Prime Minister. Whether it was the absence of visibly assertive official security arrangements on her return to Pakistan on 18th October 2007, or on occasions thereafter right up to 27th December 2007, the Head of State and the Head of Government should have taken special interest to prevent the assassination attempt in Karachi and the attack in Rawalpindi.

To reiterate: it is my conviction that Benazir Bhutto's death was due to multiple factors: a disregard of intelligence warnings from two friendly overseas countries and her own country. Her disregard of prior advice not to expose

herself to possible targeting by standing up through the opening of the vehicle's roof. The still-unexplained deviations by her own Party colleagues from the pre-agreed security plans for her personal safety. A conspiracy by religious extremists to forever remove a modernist woman leader. The failure to date in 2021, over thirteen years later, to decisively expose the facts is like a ghastly repetition of the mystery surrounding the assassination of Pakistan's first Prime Minister, Quaid-e-Millat Liaquat Ali Khan on 16th October 1951. That loss was cruelly close to the very spot where she was targetted about 56 years later.

In order to renew realization of the gravity and enormity of the acts of omission and commission that mark the tragic death of Benazir Bhutto, it is recommended that readers peruse one of the Annexures herein. I have reproduced my review of *Getting Away With Murder: Benazir Bhutto's Assassination and the Politics of Pakistan* by Herald Munoz, published by W.W. Norton & Company, New York – London 2014. Herald Munoz, a distinguished diplomat from Chile, the Assistant UN Secretary-General for Latin America and the Caribbean was chosen by the UN Secretary-General to lead the UN Inquiry Commission formed on the request of the Government of Pakistan to investigate the violent death of Benazir Bhutto.

Unrestricted by the protocols of observing official limits to the expression of personal opinions that applied to the UN Commission's report, the book by Herald Munoz written in his individual capacity lists disturbing facts and raises vital questions that still await answers. While a reading of the whole book is ideal, the review at Annexure summarizes the extraordinary features surrounding her death which remain unexplained to date.

We owe it to Benazir Bhutto, and to the principles of truth and justice to determine the actual cause of her death and to expose all — and not just some — of the facts.

Over the past 13 years, the name of a vibrant woman has become a static name-plate. Far more so than the similar transition of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto from a man to a myth. Umpteen institutions and places are named after Benazir Bhutto. Her violent death has made her a martyr — an entirely understandable and justified recognition.

But her martyrdom has also diminished candid, balanced appraisal of her political life and the two tenures in Government. My own ruminations in this book only reinforce the need for new scholarly studies, independent without being clinical, candid without being callous, openminded without being anchored to presumptions. I hope that this book makes a modest contribution to stimulate further studies.



# *Annexure 1*

## **Benazir Bhutto: Memories and Hopes**

*by Javed Jabbar as published in Dawn,  
29th December 2007*

**H**aving been fairly sceptical and critical of Benazir Bhutto since my resignation from the PPP in (August) 1996, during her second tenure as Prime Minister (1993- 1996), I was shocked at my own self for two of my reactions on 27th December.

In the afternoon (of the same day, before I heard the sad news) in response to a friend's question as to who I would vote for on 8th January 2008, I spontaneously replied to the effect that if I did vote, it would be for the PPP. In view of my earlier condemnation of the decision by major parties (including PPP) to take part in the polls being held under a dispensation violative of the fundamental principles of justice and fairness, I was surprised at my own answer.

Despite all my reservations, developed over the past decade and more, about certain aspects of PPP's top leadership, I have now come to realize that if the electoral process is to be used to combat the demons of darkness in Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto was the most potent rallying point to combine the forces of modernism and secularism.

To recognize the primacy in the struggle against obscurantism was not to detract from the sincerity or the strength of other political personalities and parties that share the same broad approach. By being forthright on this issue, by refusing to equivocate with provisos and qualifiers, she was mobilizing a new politically credible resistance to primitivism.

My second reaction on 27th December came when I heard of her death on my way home. Fortunately, I was not on the steering wheel. The driver too was taken aback by my reaction. Leave alone he, I too was unprepared for the pain and grief that suddenly surged in me.

Between the tears and gasps of shock, there came up enormous affection and empathy for her, sentiments I had obviously pummelled deep inside my psyche over the past ten years, as one's cerebral views took over almost entirely from partly emotional responses.

Our first meeting was in 1986. As a member of the Independent Opposition Parliamentary Group (opposed to General Ziaul Haq) I joined other members in welcoming her to a meeting in Rawalpindi. Our last meeting turned into a three-hour, one-on-one lunch in , of all places, Damascus, Syria in 2000 where she had come to pay homage to a good old friend of the Bhutto family, the late President Hafez al Assad. I was representing Chief Executive General Pervez Musharraf at the state funeral.

We maintained a cordial, formal and sometimes warm relationship. In the past seven years, on random occasions, through common friends, we exchanged brief messages of goodwill. But now I regret I did not make an attempt to seek a meeting since our last chance encounter.

In the 14 years during which we did meet frequently, particularly in the 1988-1990 phase in which I served in her first Cabinet as Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting and later, for Science and Technology, I often became conscious of her vulnerability and her fragility, qualities that one does not normally associate with a person of exceptional verve, composure and determination.

Behind her public persona of a bold defiance of dictators, of her bland, imperturbable expression that would deflect and reject queries from interviewers

about corruption charges, there existed a sensitive private person thrust into public life through cruel twists and turns without a single day's direct experience of parliamentary membership or of executive responsibility.

To be the daughter of a famous leader long accustomed to public office is one thing. To become Prime Minister in her own right, in a sense overnight, at a critical period without any prior personal exposure to public office which caused severe stress and strain on her, is another. On rare private occasions, these became visible. This made her all the more endearing.

My working relationship with Benazir Bhutto was sometimes tense and troubled, marked by strong disagreements on some policy issues. Yet there were also amiability, affinity and humour. Whatever the mood or situation, it was always memorable. In spite of our divergent perceptions on certain issues, she sometimes entrusted me with extremely important tasks, a confidence on her part which I greatly respected.

She was a leader of global calibre, and not just a daughter of the east. She inherited a powerful political legacy and sustained it in many ways while also enhancing it in some respects and diminishing it in others. In the new era of globalization in the last two decades of the 20th century, in the face of dramatic geopolitical changes that swept the world, in the context of the traumatic turmoil that has marked Pakistan's history in the first seven years of the 21st century, she remained, at home and in self-exile, a unique and formidable leader.

Assassinated by a cabal of cowards and conspirators who should be urgently traced and punished, her tragic loss opens up new challenges for society and the state of Pakistan. Every citizen who felt the grief and the pain at her demise now has a duty to render an active role to curb mayhem and disorder, to unite all progressive forces and to achieve the ideals she fought for.

More than ever before, there is a need to secure and strengthen the Federation

of Pakistan for which she sacrificed her life.

## *Annexure 2*

### **“Getting Away With Murder: Benazir Bhutto’s Assassination and the Politics of Pakistan”**

BY HERALDO MUNOZ, W.W. NORTON & COMPANY,  
NEW YORK - LONDON 2014

*Review by Javed Jabbar  
as published in Newline magazine,  
Pakistan, April 2014.*

This is a book about a grim and tragic subject. Yet this is written with an elegance and grace that makes for smooth, engaging reading rather than at a heavy, burdensome pace that some may apprehend. The author headed the UN Commission of Inquiry formed on the request of the Government of Pakistan to investigate the assassination of Benazir Bhutto. He is the UN Assistant Secretary- General in-charge of Latin America and the Caribbean for the UN Development Programme, and the former Ambassador of Chile to the UN. He has previously written two other books, titled *A Solitary War and the award-winning The Dictator’s Shadow*.

Here is an individual narrative compiled by one who had the benefit of a special and exclusive responsibility. This gave him access to a range of sources and experiences to which other writers would not have convenient access. While there are references to findings of the UN Commission, the book is not a reproduction or even a summary of the official Report by the Commission. The author views the subject and its context from his own personal perspective rather than be restricted to a rigid, formal approach. At the same time, he draws upon

information gained by the Commission. On grounds referred to in this review, both the circumstances before and after the murder, and the book itself to an extent, are regrettably marked by muddled lapses.

Six broad areas are covered. Four comprise: a brief history of Pakistan by way of background, including the role of Benazir's father, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, from 1958 to 1979; the US role in the country's internal affairs and external relations ; the public life of Benazir Bhutto herself, in and out-of-office; Pakistan's politics and the relationship between civil and military institutions. Then there are findings and observations arising from the investigation by the Commission into the assassination. These lead to about 25 major factual revelations. Some of these may already be well-known. But they do startle, and sometimes shock the reader.

The author's observations about such bizarre facts are precise, sharply focused on hard evidence, or the lack of it; blunt and bold, single-minded and straightforward. The combined effect of these elements is to establish beyond any reasonable doubt that there were appalling failures by almost every relevant entity charged with the responsibility to provide effective security to one of the most important and vulnerable personalities of Pakistan. The responsible entities include the PPP's own leadership and internal arrangements for their leader's security; the Rawalpindi Police; the civil and military intelligence agencies; the Government of Punjab, and the Federal Government of the time and the succeeding PPP Government as well, and even one or more foreign Governments.

Specific instances prove this thesis.

Page 77: soon after arrival in Islamabad on 16th July 2009, the Commission met Interior Minister Rahman Malik for the first time. The author was presented with a document titled: "Summary of Investigation and Trial Conducted So Far

for UN Fact-finding Commission” which the Minister described as being “... very complete. This is your own report ready to be issued, of course, with the changes and additions that you may see fit.” ! The Commission was being told even before it had commenced its inquiry that there was really little or nothing more to do. “It was a sign of things to come” ruefully concluded the author. But the Commission was not deterred.

Page 129: Despite a promise made by the British Foreign Office to convey the exact measures taken (in advance of her homeward journey ) by the UK Government to ensure Benazir’s safe return to Pakistan, no answer was received by the Commission, despite repeated reminders.

Page 133: Less than 18 hours before her death, during a meeting held at 1:30 a.m. on 27th December 2007 at her residence in Islamabad, the ISI Chief personally conveyed to Benazir information from the intelligence agencies of Saudi Arabia and UAE, endorsed by ISI, that plans to target her included deploying one or more young men without beards to enable them to become anonymous parts of a crowd. She obviously ignored these dire warnings. President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan who happened to be on an official visit to Islamabad and on whom Benazir paid a visit just a few hours before her end, was later recorded as saying that she was “too courageous for her own good”.

Pages 136-7: close to, and at, the fateful public meeting in Liaquat Bagh, the author condemns the complete failure of the Police Elite Force to implement the “box” security plan. He points out that, starting at 3.16 pm ,even before entering the venue of the public meeting, Benazir decided to expose her head and shoulders through the open roof-hatch of the Landcruiser by remaining standing in the vehicle for as long as 20 minutes. So that her decision to stand-up through the open hatch after the public meeting on her way out was not a sudden, impulsive move but simply the repetition of a high-risk action that she took:

without being prevented from doing so by her own security team.

Page 139: The author stresses that: "...strangely for a back-up vehicle, the black bullet-proof Mercedes-Benz (bearing Rahman Malik, Babar Awan, Farhatullah Babar and Tauqir Zia) was the first to leave the parking area", instead of remaining behind Benazir's Landcruiser as it was particularly meant to do. The Commission was told that the "Mercedes Benz left Liaquat Bagh so quickly that it was nowhere to be seen when the blast occurred... the Commission did not see this vehicle in the video images of the exit area it reviewed... although this was the alternative vehicle in case of any emergency, the Mercedes travelled all the way to Zardari House, a drive of 20-30 minutes.."

Page 140: Inside Benazir's own vehicle, her security officer, Major (r) Imtiaz, sitting in the front seat, "...wanted to call City Police Officer Saud Aziz by cell-phone,(presumably about lack of crowd control) but he did not have the Police Chief 's direct number ! Instead he called Saud Aziz's operator and the operator at the Police Station in Multan, where Major (r) Imtiaz had recently served.... to get the phone number for a Police Officer based in Rawalpindi!

Page 141: Vehicles of senior Police officers were thoughtlessly parked in the left lane of the exit route from Liaquat Bagh thus preventing the use of the emergency route.

Page 140: There was no sign of effective police management of the crowd before Benazir's entry into Liaquat Bagh and during her exit from the venue. This became even less so after the bomb blast.

Pages 142-43: in the one and half seconds during which a gunman fired three shots at her, even after the second shot, and a visible movement of Benazir's dupatta ( never found later ) and head, no definite link was established between these gun-shots and her disappearance downwards into the vehicle and injury. Indeed, as stated on page 150: " ...The Commission also interviewed some PPP



supporters who had been injured in the blast. None had received bullet wounds..... the Commission was not provided with any credible, new information showing that Benazir had received bullet wounds..” . About this aspect, the author points out that Sherry Rehman retracted to the Commission her earlier public statement asserting Benazir’s gunshot injuries. She informed the Commission that she had not seen Benazir’s head wound and had been advised to tell the media that she had seen bullet wounds. While stressing that the gunshot story is misleading, the author does not share with the reader, details, if any were provided, as to who advised Sherry Rehman to say what to media. And why.

Page 144: as Benazir’s vehicle, after the blast, moved on flattened tires towards a hospital, only one Police vehicle was ahead of her own. No other Police vehicles were visible. No ambulance had been arranged in advance by either the Police or the PPP team for use in an emergency. After the Landcruiser stalled, Sherry Rehman’s vehicle came up, the slain leader’s body was transferred to it and it took 34 minutes between the blast and the arrival at the hospital. Meanwhile, almost in a tragi-comic way, the Mercedes-Benz speeding away to Islamabad, stopped en route to ask a policeman about further information. After hearing on the police radio that their leader had been injured and possibly taken to hospital, the car continued on to Zardari House. The author speculates that “...perhaps the .passengers were worried that a second bomb might go off, as had happened in other terrorist attacks.”

Pages 146-150: The unforgivable, inexplicable, illegal omission by the Police in failing to request or allow the hospital authorities to conduct an autopsy, as enjoined by the law, has deprived us from knowing the exact cause of death. If it was not the three bullets fired by the assassin, was it the blast that the suicide bomber unleashed immediately after firing? Or was it the lever on the open

hatch? Or was it a so-far-undetected far-placed sniper's special bullet? Despite the doctors' repeated requests, neither the City Police Chief nor the District Coordination Officer nor, eventually, Asif Ali Zardari permitted the legally-obligatory post-mortem examination.

Pages 153-185: in the chapter titled "Whodunit?," the author identifies several intriguing dimensions, exposes remarkable aspects to the post-incident actions of both the Provincial and Federal authorities, reflects briefly on possibilities and probabilities and inevitably is unable to offer a conclusive answer to the question posed in the chapter's title. But the text contains numerous puzzles and surprises.

Page 156: "The investigators were not able to conduct on-site investigations until two full days after the assassination." Due to delaying tactics, and only after the crime scene had been hosed down.

Page 157: "The crime scene was not immediately sealed..." as should have been done. Nevertheless, despite the CPO ordering the hosing within one hour and 40 minutes of the blast, police were able to collect 23 pieces of evidence, instead of the normal count in such cases which is hundreds or thousands. The reason given for the quick hosing down was "public order", even though there was no sign of such disorder at that time.

Page 158: "The CPO did not act independently about the hosing action..."

Page 159: The Committee constituted by the Government of Punjab to investigate reasons and responsibility for the hosing down completed its work in a single day and found no one culpable! The Landcruiser was moved first to the Police station, then to Police Lines. "People were cleaning the Landcruiser even though investigations were still on-going..."

Such weird actions compel the author to state on page 161: "...it is my belief that the Police deliberately blotched the investigation..."

Page 162: Scotland Yard and a Dutch Institute validated the Pakistani

pathologist's view that the fatality was the result of an injury from striking the lip of the escape hatch, and not a gun-shot injury. "It will be recalled that when this claim was first made by the spokesman of the Ministry of the Interior, the PPP, the media and many citizens derided the interpretation."

Page 164: the author notes that specialized observers told the Commission that, in their view, at that time the Pakistan Taliban had not demonstrated the capacity to conduct such a major operation outside the tribal areas. But he does not go on to reflect on who else could recruit and motivate a 16-year-old boy to become the suicide bomber, as happened in this case. Remains gathered from the scene indicated that the assassin was a teenager.

Page 166: The US Government did not allow the UN Commission to meet with US Intelligence officials.

Page 171: the report of the Pakistani Joint Investigation Team shared with the Commission clearly showed that some pages had been doctored/replaced.

Page 181: None of the officials named in Benzair's letter to General Musharraf in October 2007 (as being, in her view, part of a plot to kill her) were interviewed/ interrogated by the Police. Lt. General (r) Hameed Gul told a reporter he was surprised at not being interviewed.

Page 183: "...the Commission found it discriminatory and inexcusable that the October 22, 2007 directive (for special security measures) for ex-Prime Ministers (Shaukat) Aziz and (Shujaat) Hussain did not include a similar clear instruction for Benazir Bhutto, particularly considering that she had been attacked in Karachi just four days prior to the issuance of the letter in question."

Page 201: "The assassination plot was hatched in the formal residence of an army brigadier, according to the official investigation report." But the author cites only a secondary, not a primary source for so serious a claim about an official report and about so alarming an allegation.

Which brings one to the unfortunate blemishes of the book. In contrast to the fact-based, directly-observed findings, observations and reflections, in the first four broad aspects, there are several errors of facts and incorrect assumptions; some crucial absences of citations for sources on the basis of which statements and judgements are made by the author, despite the book including Notes spread over 22 pages which list books, news media and other sources. There are also echoes of the conventional, predictable Western narrative about Pakistan, particularly about the alleged role of the Army, ISI and the Establishment.

Page 41: Z.A. Bhutto is given exclusive credit for engineering/ re-engineering Pakistan-China relations, whereas President Ayub Khan took personal interest in overseeing the change.

Page 44: India is said to have begun (repeat “begun”) training and equipping the Mukti Bahini in only the second half of 1971. Whereas it is now proven that Indian preparations for covert operations inside East Pakistan and measures to cope with fall-out, had begun in 1970, if not even earlier.

Page 44: Z.A. Bhutto is credited with initiating the nuclear programme itself. Whereas Pakistan’s peaceful nuclear projects commenced in the late 1950s. Z.A. Bhutto initiated the nuclear weapons programme in 1972. Page 45: Ahmedis were declared non-Muslims in 1973-74, not in 1977. Page 46: the riots and clashes related to the 1977 polls occurred in the aftermath of the elections, not in the “runup” to them.

Page 59: “...The Army initially refused to allow Benazir to assume her duties as Prime Minister in 1988...” is claimed, without citing any primary source.

Page 70: “...After President Tarrar’s dismissal (sic) ( resignation ), General Musharraf added the role of COAS...” Whereas he was already COAS , and then became Supreme Commander, by virtue of also being the Head of State.

Page 70: though the context of the page called for it, there is no reference made

to the fact that in May 2000, a 12-member Bench of the Supreme Court validated the military intervention of October 1999, granted Musharraf the power to amend the Constitution and gave him three years to rule.

Page 102: wrong dates about Benazir's dismissal in 1990 followed by lack of a source for the claim that Nawaz Sharif as Prime Minister removed DG,ISI Javed Nasir to comply with US advice.

(The following two paragraphs do not appear in the published version)

Page 201: the "strategic depth" theory which is regularly paraded by Western, Indian and some Pakistani analysts, is offered up again without citing any primary written source to show that this was or is part of an official doctrine.

Page 214: the Supreme Court is alleged to have been "pressured by the Army" to set up the Memogate Commission without citing any source to make such a serious claim. Though there is speculation that the Memogate case was overblown by the Army, a book is required to provide credible evidence rather than rely on rumour or allegations alone.

To conclude: notwithstanding the above, and some other similar lapses, this book is a timely, valuable, readable contribution to discourse on a significant subject, one that causes anguish as well as anger at the tragedy and at the apathy which has followed it. Heraldo Munoz concludes the book with a moving paragraph: "Finally, I thank the people of Pakistan, whom I learned to appreciate and admire during the interactions I had with them in Pakistan and abroad. Their country deserves the best."

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JAVED JABBAR