

Heading Towards the Social Welfare State...

FARZANA RAJA ARTICLE (November 30, 2012) : Pakistan People's Party, representative of masses of Pakistan, was launched at its founding convention held in Lahore 45 years ago under the great leadership of Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto. The foundation of the newly formed party was laid down on the premise of an egalitarian participatory democracy and to ensure the practical realisation of economic and social justice for every Pakistani. It was due to this powerful message of the PPP that its popularity got spread in all segments and various walks of society including relatively voiceless ordinary people, labourers, peasants and students throughout Pakistan right after its formation. Thus, reflective of the fact that the Pakistani nation had finally chosen a clear road map for the future and of course it was based on equality of economic opportunities to all as well as advancement towards progression and prosperity. The visionary and able leadership of Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto was fully aware of the economic hardships and deprivations of the majority of the people. Therefore, social and economic emancipation of the people and uplifting of living standards of common man became the areas of prime focus of this party of the masses. The economic agenda of PPP was wonderfully and rightly elaborated by the key slogan of the party; "Roti, Kapra Aur Makan" (bread, clothing and shelter) besides the main philosophy that "people are all powerful". In the year 1971 Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto formed the people's democratic government of Pakistan with the help of massive public support. Shaheed Bhutto as per his promise gave the country a unanimously approved Constitution to democratically strengthen the federation of Pakistan. Moreover, the democratically elected PPP Government of Shaheed Bhutto launched numerous other steps aimed to improve economic conditions of the country and to bring the political stability back after numerous undemocratic regimes. PPP government ushered a new era of national reconstruction by launching projects like Pakistan's first-ever Steel Mill, Pakistan's first hydro electric dam, Electrical Mechanical Complex at Wah, The Aeronautic Complex at Kamra and the Kahuta Nuclear Project to make the defence of country invincible. Quaid-e-Awam, in line with the manifesto of PPP, introduced vital reforms in the education and agriculture sector besides much needed industrial reforms to improve the lives of ordinary working class. The oppressors considered Quaid-e-Awam as a threat to their vested interests and thus started hatching conspiracies against his truly democratic regime. However, Shaheed Bhutto refused to bow down before such anti-people elements and sacrificed his life in protecting the fundamental rights of the people of Pakistan. Despite ruthless oppression unleashed on the brave workers and leadership of PPP by the illegitimate regime of tyrant General Zia, PPP remained steadfast and thus not only survived but gained more strength. Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, after Shaheed Zulfiqar Bhutto, let an epic battle against the tyranny. With sheer courage and determination, she was able to raise the party from ashes. She made it clear that the constitution and the federation promised to revive the constitution of 1973 and today, history is evident that her party has fulfilled this promise. As a result of victory in general elections held in the year 1988, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto got elected as Prime Minister and become the first ever women head of the government of any Muslim country. The conspirators did not allow her to perform her constitutionally mandated tasks and her government was dismissed on flimsy and unsubstantiated reasons. The general elections held in the year 1990 were massively rigged to snatch the victory from PPP and to turn it into defeat. Today, in the form of verdict on infamous Asghar Khan Case, this fact has yet again proved that the stance of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto about this fraudulent election was exactly right. The democratically elected government of PPP

was dismissed again in the year 1996 in a similar undemocratic fashion and Shaheed Benazir Bhutto and her family had to face exile and ruthless vendetta by the same undemocratic mindset. However, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto, the great leader of the modern time kept on her struggle to revive genuine democracy in the country and to force the tyrants to hand over power back to the people of Pakistan. Today, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto is not physically present among us but it is a matter of great satisfaction that President Asif Ali Zardari is keeping her vision and mission intact. He is making efforts to make Pakistan a strong, prosperous and modern democracy. The leadership of PPP, from Shaheed Quaid-e-Awam to Shaheed Benazir Bhutto has rendered unprecedented sacrifices to protect the social, economic and political rights of the people of Pakistan. Their struggle was and is based on the commitment of giving the people equal opportunities and means to live a dignified life. The present democratic government, in the pursuit of founding principles of PPP and in line with the vision of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Shaheed Benazir Bhutto, has exhibited firm commitment towards the well-being of the people of Pakistan. Under the able leadership of President Asif Ali Zardari, the democratic government has taken various steps to bring positive change in the life of common men including the launch of internationally acclaimed Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) as a comprehensive strategy to fight poverty and to empower women, children and youth of the country. BISP, as a complete socio-economic rehabilitation of the poorest of the poor of the society, has yet again converted the hopes of the people of Pakistan into reality. The programme has also laid the foundation for a prosperous Pakistan by introducing future oriented initiatives including remarkable social intervention Waseela-e-Taleem, which is aiming to promote education among the children from poorest families in the country and thus ensuring education to all the segments of Pakistani society. BISP's other major programmes are already reaching out to the millions of families of Pakistan and providing them various benefits. Thank God, today Pakistan is finally heading towards a prosperous social welfare state. BISP has been able to contribute remarkably towards achieving the vision of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah by creating a moderate and caring Pakistan. Pakistan Zindabaad. ---- The Writer is a Federal Minister and Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP). ---- Especially written in connection with the Foundation Day of Pakistan People's Party. [Copyright Business Recorder, 2012](#)