

Independence Day of Pakistan

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SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

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Devolution: Pathway to Democracy

by Dr Maqbool Ahmad Bhatti

THE political history of Pakistan has been one of general frustration over the functioning of democracy. After many experiments, during which various forms of democratic representation were tried, it appeared that the Westminster model of parliamentary democracy, which had been embodied in the 1973 Constitution, had the broad support of the people. However, the record of elected governments over the past eleven years was one of failure to fulfil promises, accompanied by misuse of power and massive looting of national resources. The masses suffered from poor governance, and mounting corruption. Every elected government left in disgrace, without completing its tenure, as a small elite enriched itself while the overwhelming majority sank deeper into poverty.

Following the 1997 elections, when the Muslim League won with the largest mandate, it had been expected that the country's real problems, centring on poverty and poor governance, would be tackled, so that Pakistan could get launched towards prosperity and an honourable place in the comity of nations. However, the weaknesses of the political system based on political favours and cronyism not only persisted, but got worse, as a deliberate attempt was made to concentrate power in the hands of one person, by removing or undermining all institutional checks and balances essential to the functioning of a democratic system. The events of 12 October 1999, when a coup against the armed forces was foiled, resulted in the assumption of power by their leader, Gen Pervez Musharraf, who took over as the Chief Executive. The change was welcomed by the great majority of the people of Pakistan. Gen Pervez Musharraf committed himself to an agenda of reforms, designed to rebuild national confidence, strengthen the Federation, revive the economy, ensure law and order, as well as across the board accountability

and create the conditions for an early return to democracy.

Devolution of power to the grass roots level is a key item in the seven-point reform agenda announced by the Chief Executive on 17 October, 1999. It is the very foundation of plans to empower the citizens, to decentralise administrative authority, and to ensure an equitable distribution of resources to the provincial and local level. The process of holding elections on the basis of revised electoral rolls, and of making the democratic system truly responsive to the needs of the people will also start with devolution.

A certain amount of scepticism has been expressed about the importance being attached by the military government to the scheme for devolution as the king-pin in its reform agenda. This is understandable because there have been high-sounding promises after each change of government in the past, and the downward slide in governance, and in the management of the political and economic system has continued. An attitude of pessimism towards efforts at reform is not a solution, and tends to become a part of the problem. Many analysts described the challenge facing the military government as a "last chance", after fifty-two years of drift and disappointment. Well-wishers of the country need to approach Gen Musharraf's reform programme in a positive spirit, and to join in ensuring its success rather than continue the sad tradition of obstructing rather than facilitating positive change.

The starting point of the devolution concept is that we need to shift from the existing administrative system which is based on the colonial ethos of control rather than of service to the people. The principal goal of the new system is to establish a partnership between the government and the people, provide just access to national resources, and replace factionalism with cooperation. Over the recent past, centralist tendencies

were not only threatening provincial autonomy, but also made redress of grievances of the great mass of the people more difficult. The key feature of the reform programme is that it will start at the bottom, and move upwards from local communities rather than go down from the top, which is the current trend with all its failures. In the process, the female half of the population would be involved fully, and the rights of minorities safeguarded.

The six main features of the draft programme of devolution are as follows:

- i) Lowering of voting age to 18 to bring youth into the mainstream;
- ii) Devising a structure to provide financial resources to the districts;
- iii) Provide equal representation to men and women;
- iv) Make the district the basic unit for governance and development;
- v) Promote rural-urban integration, and
- vi) Prevent urban decay.

The basic unit of local government is the Union Council, to be elected from rural and urban communities numbering from 10,000 to 20,000, depending on geographical features and population density. Each Council will be elected on the basis of new electoral rolls, which will consist of 13 men and 13 women. Each Council will establish five committees from its members, to deal with Education, Health, Public Works, Public Safety and Justice.

The District will be the basic unit for devolution of power and responsibility. The District Government will consist of the District Assembly, a directly elected Chief Mayor and Deputy Chief Mayor, who will contest as joint candidates, a district administration, and district police. The District Assembly will have one member elected by each Union Council, and will additionally have 20 per cent female members, and 5 per cent workers/peasants elected by each Tehsil. The District As-

sembly will have legislative functions limited to levying new taxes, passing byelaws and rules and the district budget. It will also approve of district development plans presented by the Chief Mayor on behalf of the district administration. It will also monitor the district administration through a committee system.

The administration of the district will be headed by the Chief Mayor, and coordinated by a District Coordination Officer. A district officer will head each of 13 departments comprising the district administration which are:

1. Coordination, Finance, Planning and Budget.
2. Agriculture.
3. Public Works.
4. Health.
5. Education.
6. Literacy.
7. Commerce and Industries.
8. Law.
9. Environment.
10. Democratic Development
11. Information Technology
12. Revenue
13. Magistracy.

The Chief Executive announced the programme to restore democracy at the local and district level in his address to the nation on 23 March, 2000. The basic task of preparing new electoral rolls has been entrusted to the National Data and Registration Authority (NADRA). This is an ambitious task which will require more than a year, but in order not to hold up the elections, the exercise will be carried out in groups of districts for which data becomes available. It is expected that elections to all tiers of district government will be completed by the middle of 2001.

The National Reconstruction Bureau will engage in exhaustive consultations with interested citizens and groups all over the country, and invite suggestions to improve or elaborate the scheme. The integrated District Government Plan will be announced by 14 August, 2000. Elections will be held starting with the end of 2000, on a non-party basis.



General Pervez Musharraf
Chief Executive of Pakistan

MESSAGE

14th August 1947 dawned as a day when the epic struggle for a free and independent homeland by Muslims of the South Asia under the unmatched leadership of Quaid-e-Azam bore fruit with Pakistan emerging on the map of the world as a sovereign nation-state. Today, we should refresh our memory with the noble and selfless endeavours of the Pakistan movement and take an objective stock of what we did afterwards.

There is much to reflect upon in Pakistan's history during the last fifty-three years. It has even been termed as a period of missed opportunities. Is it not tragic that a realm blessed in abundance with Allah Almighty's rich bounties having flowing rivers, rich and varied topography, the highest mountains, fertile plains, a vast virgin coastline, natural resources of every description, complemented by hard working, industrious and highly intelligent people, is today beset by grave economic, social and political problems?

The government has carried out an honest and critical assessment of this state of affairs, combined with a dispassionate appraisal of the reasons leading to our present plight, identified our shortcomings and prepared a viable national strategy for our future. I am of the opinion that it is the elite of the country — be it the feudal elite, business elite, official elite and most of all the political elite that have failed to provide the much needed dynamism of leadership to the country. It is the elite that has exploited the people and abused the immense potential of our country for their petty personal gains in total disregard of greater national interests.

It is our firm resolve to end this exploitation. We will ensure that it does not happen again. Our government is determined to return unto the people of Pakistan all that is rightfully theirs. The mission is to fulfill the vision of Pakistan as seen by our great leader Quaid-e-Azam.

The plan for Devolution of Power and Responsibility is a major step for empowering the impoverished. Through the implementation of our policies government servants would be transformed into public servants. It will be ensured that all energies and resources at their disposal are utilised to serve the common man. Our plan is to lay the foundation of genuine democracy from the grass-roots upwards, in which the people can directly participate in administration, governance, identify and resolve their community's problems and contribute to building a strong, better and more prosperous Pakistan. Steps have been initiated to root out corruption from all walks of national life. The participation of every Pakistani at home and abroad is needed for the realisation of this objective.

I wish all overseas Pakistanis best wishes on the country's Independence Day. Each and every one of you is our worthy Ambassador. We need your support for the progress of our nation, but most of all the country needs you through your deeds to project the proper image of Pakistan and its people.

Pakistan is more than a country, it is an ideology of hope for the Muslims of the South Asia, which has by no means ended. The sacrifices rendered by our Kashmiri brethren for their right of self-determination, despite being subjugated to the worst form of atrocities and abuses by the Indians in Indian Occupied Kashmir is living proof of this. Pakistan stands united with their Kashmiri brothers and sisters in their just cause and will continue to extend all moral, diplomatic and political support to their indigenous struggle against state-sponsored terrorism.

I would like to assure the international community that Pakistan is a peace-loving and responsible country. We desire tranquil and harmonious co-existence with all countries of the world, particularly our neighbours and are aware that South Asia is an extremely volatile region due to the intractability of the Indian Government over Kashmir.

I congratulate the people of India on their independence day. I urge them and the Indian media to make their country's leadership shun obstinacy, stop the suppression in Indian held Kashmir show reciprocity to Pakistan's offer of meaningful dialogue. Let them come forward so that we can work together for peace in the region which is not possible without a resolution of the Kashmir dispute. This is essential for ensuring a bright and prosperous future for our peoples.

I pray to Allah Almighty to guide us in our endeavours on the correct and righteous path. Ameen!

Muslim Art Heritage: Architecture

by Dr Ahmad Nabi Khan

THE Islamic architecture of Pakistan takes its birth with the establishment of Muslim rule in Sindh. It has been asserted by the Arab chroniclers that Muhammad bin Qasim built a mosque at every place he conquered during his campaign. However, none of these exists now. The first city subdued by him was the seaport of Debul, now known as Banbhore, an insignificant small town located at about forty miles north-east of Karachi on the old high-way of

Hyderabad. The remains of religious and secular buildings revealed through archaeological excavations give an insight into the nature and characteristics of the early Arab architecture on the soil of Pakistan. The city of Debul consisted of two parts: the fortified citadel on a comparatively higher level, and the unwallled lower city. The citadel possessed impressive buildings, both secular as well as religious, erected from time to time. In the lower city were located bazaars and facto-

ries and other residential quarters for traders and industrial workers. The buildings were mostly constructed with semi-dressed or undressed blocks of sandstone. Sometimes, the interior was plastered with mud, mixed with lime, and then whitewashed. Some of the spectacular buildings, uncovered in the citadel area, were remains of a massive-built stone fortification wall, the great mosque, and

other residential buildings. The fortification wall had three gateways and several bastions. A flight of exceptionally broad steps went down to the lake. But the most impressive feature of the fortification were the semi-circular bastions, built at intervals.

The mosque was built as early as the first decade of the 2nd century Hijra (8th century C.E.). Within a stone boundary wall, the mosque was erected on a square plan right in the centre of the citadel. There were corridors and cloisters on the three sides of the courtyard, and, on the western side, was a spacious prayer-chamber. The mosque had two entrance gates. The facade of these gates was decorated with inscribed stones, several of which were discovered from the ruins of the mosque. One of these gives the date of the construction of the mosque, and some unidentifiable names responsible for its construction. The courtyard was paved with burnt bricks and the roof was supported by wooden pillars placed on stone bases.

Facing the northern gate of the mosque was the building of the Maktab, a necessary adjunct to the mosque. It has several corridors and rooms. Similarly, on the eastern side was the big building of a Sarai (caravan Sarai). These two buildings complete the complex of religious and social establishments of the city of the early Arab days. The houses were divided into blocks with well-laid streets and lanes. The surfaces of the houses were mostly plastered with lime and whitewashed.

Mansura, the first Arab city, was founded near Brahmanabad, an ancient city. The remains are now located in the district of Shahadadpur. It was founded by Amir bin Muhammad bin Qasim who came to Sindh with Hakim bin Awanah-al-Kalbi, and later succeeded him to governorship of Sindh, circumstantial between 110 and 120 A.H.

The remains of this ruined and forgotten city now cover an area of 9,000 feet by 4,500 feet, and rise to a maximum height of 35 feet above the surrounding level. Another mound, smaller in size, is situated to the south-east. Both the mounds are connected by an earth embankment. The main city represented by the bigger mound had a strong fortification of well-baked bricks strengthened by semicircular bastions placed at regular intervals. Within the fortification were market places, houses and other residential buildings, including a gateway with brick-paved floor.

The mosque discovered here is rectangular in plan, measuring 150 feet north-south and 250 feet east-west and surrounded

by a six-and-a-half feet wide boundary wall. The Mihrab of the mosque in the western wall is semi-circular in plan while the roof rested on posts of teak wood.

Early Islamic Architecture

The inception and development of Islamic architecture in Pakistan owes a great deal to the inspiration from Central Asian traditions. It was due to the constant social and political contacts of the local people with the centers of excellence located at, for instance, Bukhara, Samarkand, Merv, Baghdad etc. The local people, especially the affluent Muslims, often visited these centres. The impact deepened when immigrants from these places came and settled here as a result of Mongol invasion.

The specimens of early Islamic architecture in Pakistan have been found in Sindh and Balochistan and a tomb locally attributed to Muhammad bin Harun, an Arab governor, and located at Bela in Balochistan, may be regarded as its earliest known manifestation. Although no epigraphical or literary source is available to testify the attribution, stylistically it belongs to a date when ancient Pakistan was introduced to the

building traditions of Seljuq period. Square on plan, the brick structure is both interesting as well as instructive. The brick ornamentation with which its exterior is reverted is significant. The other specimen of this early phase, is the tomb of Shah Gardez at Adam Wahan in Baluchapur. The structure is constructed in mudbrick, both externally and internally, with burnt bricks. The zone of transition has been created with the help of corner squinches on which the high drum is placed and above it, the dome. For the first time, we notice here the concept of these 'storeys' utilized for planning such funerary memorials and in that sense this specimen may be taken as the forerunner of the famous Multan style of architecture.

It was most probably after this initial experimentation that the tomb of Bahau-Huq Zakariya at Multan was designed in 1262, and then the mausoleum of Rukn-i-Alam built over a period of 1320 and 1324. It has been said that the latter was originally built under the orders of Muhammad bin Tughluq as his own eternal abode, but was later on, given away to the descendants of the great saint for his burial.

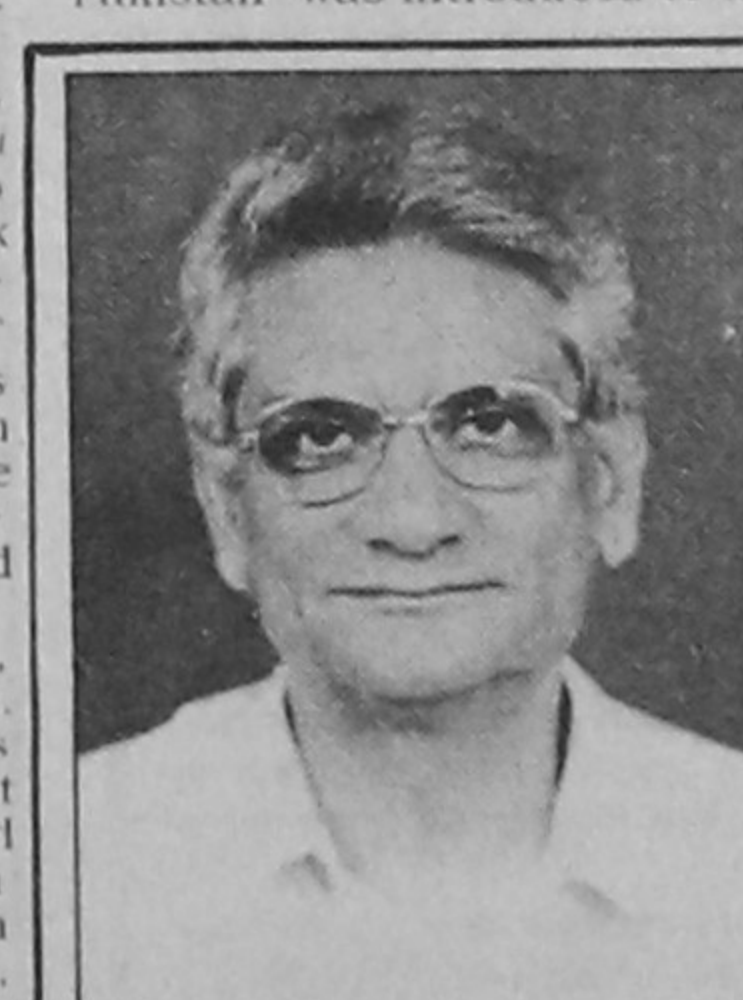
homage to its martyrs, who sacrificed their lives to see the light of freedom and to have a separate homeland for the establishment of a progressive, democratic and an Islamic welfare state.

The Government of General Pervez Musharraf has instituted measures to lay solid foundations for the growth of real democracy, introduced wide ranging reforms in the economic and financial sectors to place the country on the path of prosperity and self-reliance and undertaken initiatives designed to promote regional and international peace and stability.

Pakistan regards Bangladesh as a reliable partner in the region with which it shares the vision of a close and cooperative bilateral relationship and a progressive and prosperous South Asia flourishing in a peaceful and secure environment. This is natural, given the many commonalities that exist between the two countries. Over the years Pakistan and Bangladesh have successfully developed a multifaceted relationship based on the principles of equality, mutual respect and non-interference in internal affairs.

I pray to Almighty Allah to bless our two countries and strengthen the existing brotherly relations.

Long live Pakistan
Long live Bangladesh
Long live Pakistan-Bangladesh friendship



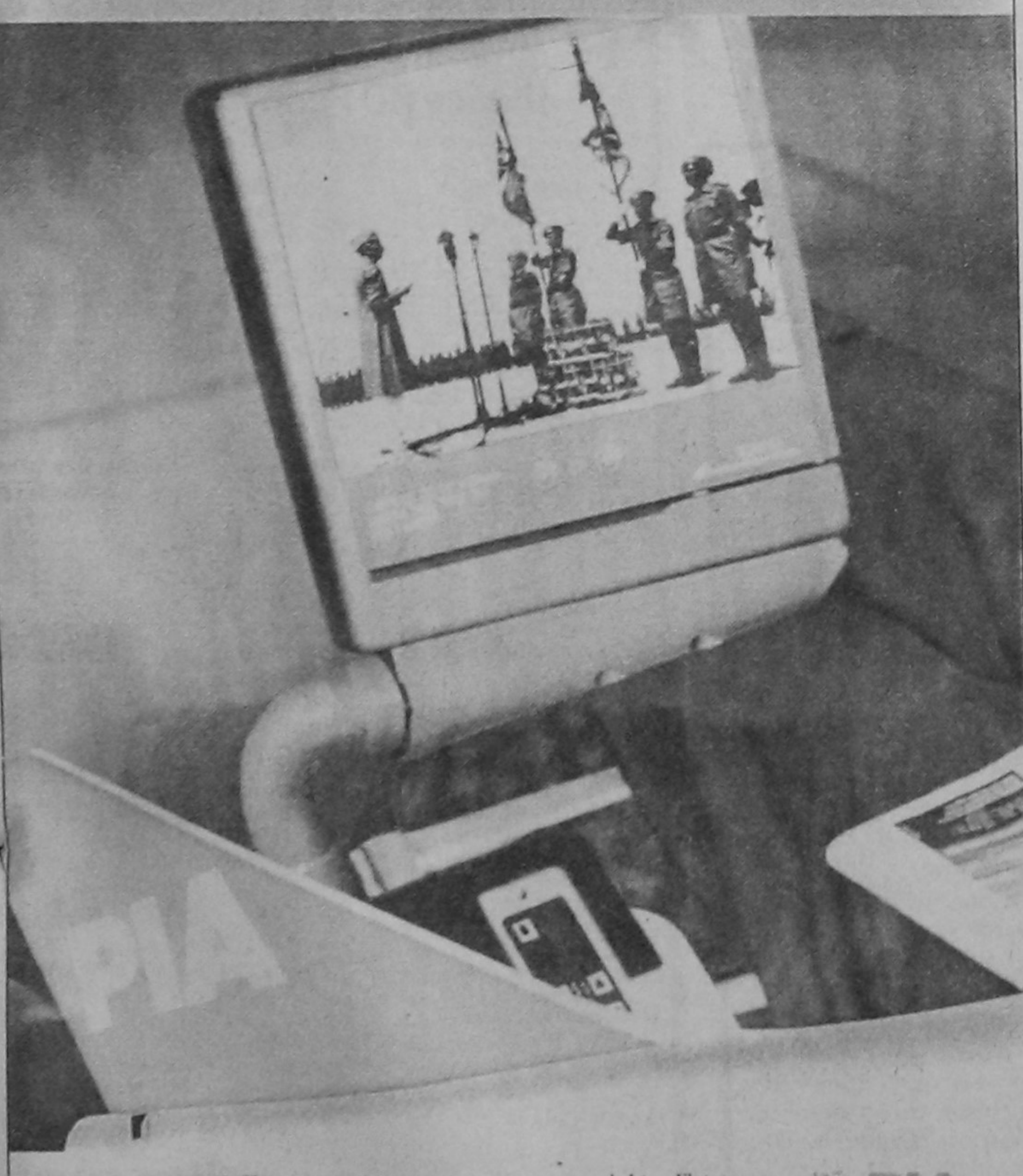
Iqbal Ahmad Khan
High Commissioner for Pakistan to Bangladesh

MESSAGE

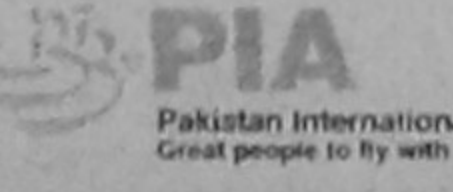
Pakistan emerged as an independent sovereign state on 14 August 1947. We are proud to celebrate today the 53rd anniversary of our national independence, achieved after a long and arduous struggle by Muslims of South Asia under the dynamic and able leadership of Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah.

On this auspicious occasion I extend my warmest felicitations to my compatriots and call upon them to work with renewed vigour and determination for the realization of Quaid-e-Azam's motto of "Unity, Faith and Discipline". Today the nation pays

HIS VISION GAVE US ... OUR WINGS!



Pakistan International! Flag carrier of the nation in international skies. Flying to 92 destinations across 4 continents. On the wings of the Quaid's vision as ambassador of a modern and progressive country. Celebrating Independence Day with the people of Pakistan at home and across the world!



Heartiest Felicitations to the Government & People of Pakistan on the occasion of the Independence Day of The Islamic Republic of Pakistan

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