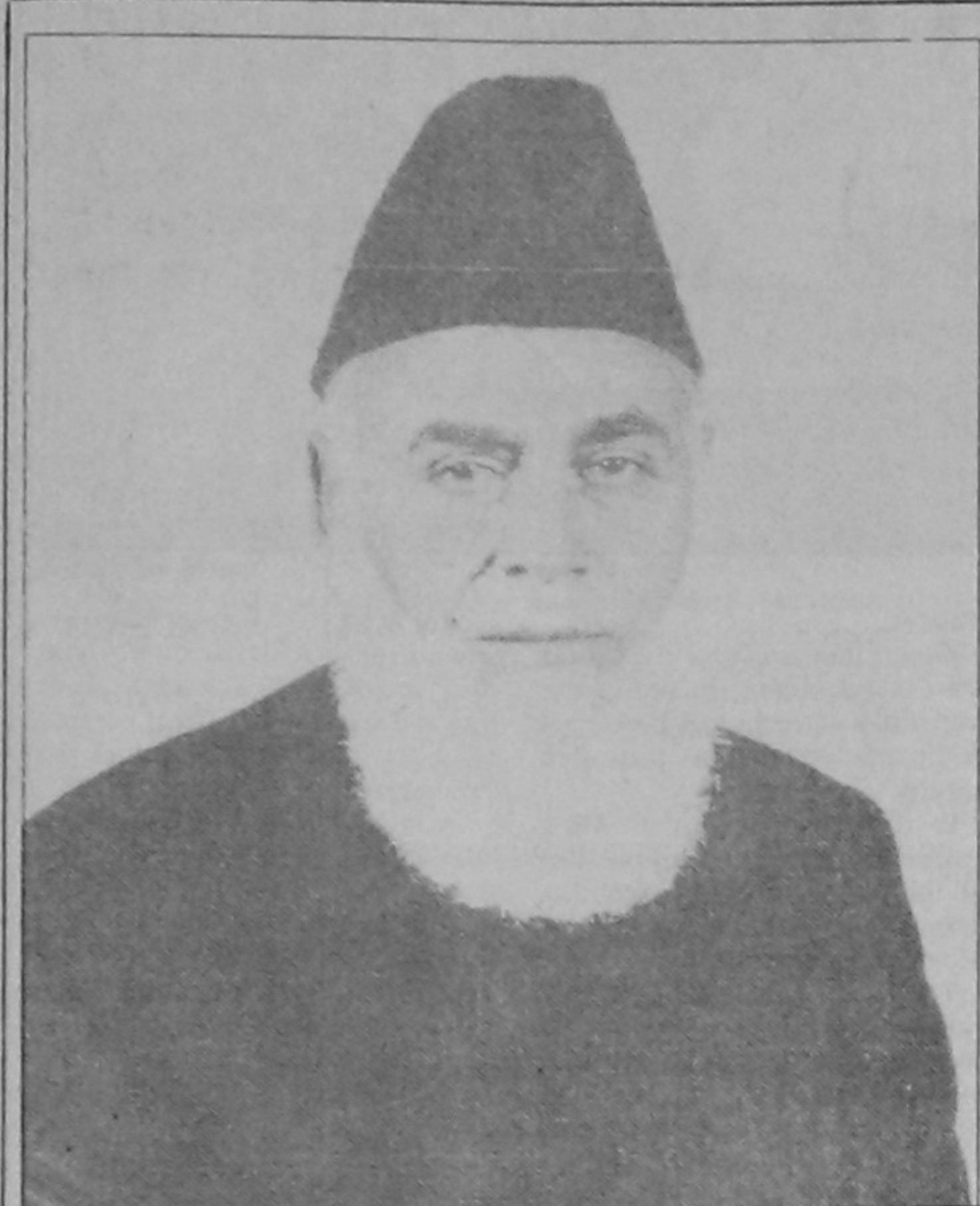


Pakistan Day

The Daily Star

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MESSAGE

I feel greatly privileged to greet the nation on this historic day of March 23, 2001 when 61 years ago Muslims of the sub-continent resolved to have an independent state of their own where they could live in accordance with their ethos and moral values. To realize this ideal Muslims of South Asia forged unparalleled unity in their ranks under the banner of All India Muslim League and waged valiant struggle against British colonialism and Hindu domination.

In a short span of seven years the British as well as the Hindus were compelled to recognize the separate identity of the Muslims. This landmark achievement is an ample tribute to the sacrifices of the millions of Muslims and the sterling qualities of leadership shown by the great leader, Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

However the dream of an Islamic welfare state has yet to be fulfilled. There is no doubt that we have come a long way during the last sixty-one years. We can take genuine pride in many of our achievements but much more is yet to be done if we want to take our rightful place in the comity of nations. This in turn requires greater sacrifices and sense of unity to overcome heavier odds.

While thanking Allah Almighty for blessing us with the priceless gift of freedom, let us pledge on this day that we would rise above the petty prejudices of language, race, caste and creed and move ahead shoulder to shoulder to make Pakistan a prosperous Islamic state. With unity, faith and discipline we are bound to succeed and make our voice be heard with attention in international forums for the right of self-determination of the oppressed people including the people of Kashmir and Palestine. We should not be daunted by our present difficulties. Such problems do come in the way of living nations and these can be overcome with hard work and honesty of purpose. We have weathered the storm of many a crisis in the past and will do so again, Insha Allah. We should never forget that Allah helps those who help themselves. Let us join hands to make Pakistan an Islamic welfare state as envisioned by the founding fathers of the country. May Allah Almighty bless our efforts. (Ameen).

Muhammad Rafiq Tarar

President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

Pakistan Plans to Empower People

SHAHID-UR-REHMAN

SUCCESSIVE governments in Pakistan have experimented with the concepts of quick justice, delivery of social services at the doorsteps, and planned to transfer power at the grassroots level for more than 50 years but it has come to the credit of present government to translate these concepts into action.

A new system of district governments would start functioning in 105 districts of Pakistan from August 14 this year, replacing nearly a century old administrative system that was designed by British rulers to rule colonial India. On this day divisional headquarters and their administrative heads known as Commissioners would cease to exist.

All powerful deputy commissioners would become district coordination officers subordinate to an elected Nazim, an administrator or a mayor. While the British Raj ended on August 14, 1947, the administrative system foisted over the people continued for 53 years. Mark Tully, the well known BBC correspondent for South Asia, remarked that "the British colonial system often wrongly described as the British system, was designed for a highly centralized undemocratic government with limited functions beyond law and order and little else."

Many people in Pakistan strongly believe that the administrative system that concentrated power in the hands of a group of elite bureaucrats was the root-cause of failure of democracy in Pakistan. Pakistan is an agricultural country of 48,000 villages, scores of cities and towns inhabited by nearly 130 million people.

A World Bank study on public sector expenditure has recently found that the number of people employed by the federal government, four provincial governments and state-owned corporations comes to nearly 2.9 million people. "Pakistan's civil service, though not particularly large or costly by international standards, has been taking up increasing portion of the shrinking fiscal space left for non-defense, non-interest expenditure, squeezing non-wage spending," it observed.

During the last 50 years many attempts were made to reform the

administrative system. In recent years, World Bank was asked to fund a project to reform the civil service preceded by Fakhr Imam Commission and Dr Hafeez Pasha Commission. Right sizing and downsizing plans were carried out. Although thousands of powerful bureaucrats were sacked by successive governments but the institutions persisted and continued to reign supreme.

When the present government took over on October 12, 1999, all the institutions worth their name were collapsing. The new government set up a National Reconstruction Bureau (NRB) headed by an army general to restructure the administrative edifice to make it 'service oriented, people-oriented and to envisage a bottom-up infrastructure of planning and development. In a summary of its first report released in March 2000 NRB observed: "The political and administrative systems have collapsed. Schools are called ghosts, senior police and judicial officers are shot in their homes, office and on the streets, and hospital infrastructure is crumbling, while decay of towns and villages are the norm. Instead of urbanization of rural areas we have the urbanization of the rural areas. Generally an attitude of reckless abandon is wielded on a hapless, harassed people."

NRB had the formidable task to arrest and reverse this dismal and bleak social and economic scenario. It was after careful planning and seeking suggestions and reactions from the people that NRB chalked out a plan for district governments and devolution of power. The most revolutionary aspect of devolution plan, though only a symbolic gesture, is the abolition of the post of Commissioner, the highest administrative job in Pakistan" 25 divisions and their deputies called the Deputy Commissioners.

It is about Commissioners and Deputy Commissioners that British journalist Christina Lamb observed in her book "Waiting for Allah" that: "These are the people with seats reserved on every plane from their districts, who decide whether or not a demonstration can be held, if a road can be built, which village will receive electricity, and the kind of reception a

visiting dignitary will receive. They are the local head of police, they collect taxes, issue permits for anything from guns to newspapers to collecting shoes at the mosque, and even decide court cases."

Under the devolution plan, the administrative units of the Division have been abolished, with them the office of Divisional Commissioner. Deputy Commissioner was the administrative head in 105 districts, another job covered by every civil or military official. While previously this job was reserved for an elite cadre of district management group, its nomenclature has been changed to District Coordination Officer (DCO). It has been decided that the district government or more precisely the major who would head the elected government would be free to choose the district coordination officer from any cadre of government service.

While previously Deputy Commissioner was the administrative head of the district, chief mayor of the district to be elected by the people would be the administrative head assisted by DCO. Under the devolution plan, elected District Governments are being planned in all 105 districts for which elections are being held in three phases to be completed before August 14, 2002 when they would start functioning. These district governments would be responsible for planning and development of the plans for their respective areas in all the fields ranging from agriculture, public works, education, health, magistracy and revenue collection. They have been given the power to levy and collect local taxes but would be provided a share in the national revenue collected by the federal government.

Shakespeare observed in one of his works that "what is, is not what it seems. And what seems, is not." In politics and exercise of power, proposals are more easily made than implemented. Pakistan's history is replete with plans that have been assigned to dustbin of history and the most formidable task under the devolution plan is the distribution of resources. At present the revenue collected by the federal government is distributed between Islamabad and four provinces on the basis of recom-

mendations of a National Finance Commission that is reconstituted every five years. However, under the proposed devolution plan, provincial finance commissions would be set up, which would apportion funds to the districts.

The question of provincial autonomy and distribution of resources has caused more resentment and heartburn in Pakistan's history than any political issue. It was only recently that a very exploitative system of octroi and local taxes has been abolished in Pakistan. The devolution plan aims to initiate positive changes in the political practices of the country by establishing new checks and balances upon the use of power and authority.

Musharraf government has launched an ambitious poverty alleviation programme envisaging an expenditure of Rs 15 billion per annum directed exclusively at the poorest sections of the rural and urban areas. A bank for the poor has been set up on the pattern of Bangladesh's Grameen Bank. A World Bank report on poverty assessment recently observed: "Poverty is much more than a lack of income. It means having no voice in influencing key decisions that affect their lives, or representation in state and national political institutions." The poverty alleviation programme and the devolution plan are designed to give voice to the poor.

Under the plan age limit has been reduced from 21 to 18 years. Seats have been reserved for women, peasants and labourers who have been the under privileged sections of the society. Devolution plan is key to the creation of a new order in Pakistan which caters to the requirements of the people rather than an elitist state. As the devolution plan beckons, the elite group of bureaucrats is bound to put up a last ditch fight to preserve their prestige, perks and privileges.

A letter to the editor addressed to those soon to disappear colonial relics, the once mighty commissioners, and Deputy Commissioners quoted Oliver Cromwell: "You have sat too long here for any good you have been doing. Depart, I say, and let us have done with you. In the name of God, Go."



MESSAGE

It was on this day in 1940 that the Muslims of South Asia under the leadership of Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah declared their collective resolve in Lahore for the establishment of an independent and sovereign State comprising the Muslim majority areas as their sole and common demand.

It was this demand, popularly called the Pakistan Resolution, which gave impetus to the Pakistan movement and resulted in the creation of our country on the map of the world on 14th August 1947.

While celebrating the sixty-first anniversary of the Pakistan Resolution, we should pause and reflect on how far have we managed to achieve what we had set out to do on that momentous day in 1940. We must also ask ourselves as to whether we have truly achieved our objectives. It is therefore imperative that all Pakistanis renew their resolve to inculcate in themselves unity, solidarity and harmony in every facet of national affairs, which is the true lesson of the Pakistan Resolution.

I would like to assure our countrymen both home and abroad that the Government is committed to achieve the objectives for which our beloved country came into being. However, a social order free from exploitation, discrimination and injustice cannot be established without the active support of the people. It is the duty of us Pakistanis to contribute individually and collectively to accomplish this sacred mission.

We owe it to ourselves and our future generations to realize the ideals for which our nation came into being. We cannot fail. May Almighty Allah be with us in our endeavours.

Pakistan Painsabad

Gen. Pervez Musharraf

Chief Executive of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

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MESSAGE

Today, we proudly celebrate Pakistan Day.

Even though Pakistan achieved independence on 14 August, it is on 23 March that we celebrate Pakistan Day.

It was on this day in 1940 that the representatives of the Muslims of South Asia adopted the Pakistan Resolution in Lahore. The Founding Fathers resolved to create an independent state of Pakistan, a homeland where free from foreign domination and subservience, they would create a society in conformity with the immutable Islamic principles of peace, justice and equality. It was the first step on a long and arduous journey. The achievement of independence in 1947 was not the end of the journey, but the beginning of the voyage.

On Pakistan Day we recall the achievements of our forefathers and their commitment to an idea, the fulfilment of which requires the dedication and determination of succeeding generations. Their sac-

rifices and indomitable will give us the hope that despite great odds, it is within us to overcome the perils and transform their vision into reality.

Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, enunciated a foreign policy for the new born state, guided by principles of honesty and fair play in national and international dealings and directed towards promoting global peace and prosperity. This has been a refrain in Pakistan's external relations, enabling it to significantly contribute towards furthering regional and international peace and stability.

Pakistan regards Bangladesh as a reliable partner in the region, which shares its vision of a close and cooperative bilateral relationship and a progressive and prosperous South Asia flourishing in peaceful and secure environment. This is natural, given the many commonalities that exist between the two brotherly 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.

On the auspicious occasion of Pakistan Day, it gives me great pleasure to extend greetings and best wishes of the Government and peoples of Pakistan to the Government and peoples of Bangladesh. May the friendship between our two nations endure and prosper.

Long live Pakistan,
Long live Bangladesh,
Long live Pakistan-Bangladesh Friendship.

Iqbal Ahmad Khan
High Commissioner of
Pakistan in Bangladesh



23rd March
Pakistan Day

The national spirit of resolution.

Twenty-third of March returns each year reverberating with glorious memories of that historic resolution which led to the creation of Pakistan. The dauntless spirit of that day lives on as our greatest inspiration to build a strong and prosperous Pakistan. NBP shares the nation's determination to achieve this goal.



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79 Motijheel C.A., G.P.O Box No 2226, Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh.
Tel: 9560248, 9560249, 9561171, Fax: 880-2-9560247.
Telex: 632393 NBP BJ, Cable: MILLATBANK.