

## **English rendering of the Prime Minister's Address to the Nation**

ISLAMABAD, July 19; Following is the text of the Prime Minister's address to the nation broadcast on Saturday night.

"My dear brothers and sisters,  
Aslam-o-Allaikum

It is most pleasant occasion for me that I am addressing the nation for the first time as an elected Prime Minister of a democratic government. This is an honour for me that I am a head of first coalition government in Pakistan's history. I am custodian of democratic legacy that refused to succumb before dictatorship and preferred to sacrifice life. I am part of political caravan that has brought the politics out of power corridor putting it at the door-steps of the people. I am member of that revolutionary path that always kept finding new avenues and taking the people to its destination. For whom public aspirations, welfare and a better life is a cornerstone of politics and those who were voted to power by the people and those who are to return to them always contemplate themselves accountable to the masses. I am of the view that it is the right of the people that they could question their government as what was it doing and under the same spirit of accountability I am here before you to make some submissions. If we trace out our 60 year-old history, we will find that the shadow of dictatorship dominated this country. The objective of the country which was brought into being by Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah was not that horrible shadows of dictatorship should eclipse its face. Every dictator appearing in a new dress, implemented similar agenda that how should he prolong his rule. No matter either its cost was that country was allowed to be halved, institutions got destructed, social fabric amounted to devastation and plight of the masses went worst. After the Quaid-e-Azam, Quaid-e-Awaam Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto lent new lease of life to the politics of Pakistan and inculcated awareness among the people. He organized the people, arouse downtrodden and suppressed segments of poor, labourers, farmers, youth, students, women and minorities and became their voice and fought historic war for their rights but dictator of the time silenced that voice. That voice is still alive in the hearts of the people even today. Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto again held aloft the banner of their rights and moved forward with new determination, enthusiasm and courage and scripted new history of struggle. Her charismatic personality injected new vigor in the life of helpless people of this country. She struck historic and democratic accord by national reconciliation with other political parties for putting the democracy on the rails. She was hope of poor segments of this country and farmers and dream of country's youth and passion of students and shining star on the horizon of politics. She refused to bow before the dictatorship and terrorists. And she was martyred and we were deprived of such great leader. I would ask you that is it possible to extinguish light and eliminate fragrance. No, absolutely never. The whole country is illuminated with light which she made possible with her blood. She was revolutionary personality and did not keep herself away from the people. She was alive for the people and laid down her life among them. Was this her crime that she waged struggle for the labourers, farmers, youth, students, poor, minorities and women. If this were a crime, we will commit it again and again. I would like to shower tributes on the political workers who sometimes sacrificed their lives, some underwent hardships of the prison and kept waging the war of freedom of the nation by sacrificing their own freedom. Sometimes remained behind the bars and kept hoping for bright future. They kept suffering agony of oppressions for their political rights and took the leaders to the

reign of power. It is now our duty that we should not only ensure them prosperity, development and security but also tell them a good news with regard to freedom from dictatorship and restoration of democracy. We pledge to the martyrs of democracy that they the nation would always remember their sacrifices. Peoples party is genuinely symbol of federation and your brother is in front of you to fulfill the promises made by Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto. I am highly grateful to Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Co-chairperson, Asif Ali Zardari and PPP for my present position. Whether call it suppression of history or misfortune that whenever PPP assumed the power, not only governments but also entire state was mired in deep crises. We inherited federation surrounded by devastated institutions, sinking economy, deteriorating fortunes, drought-stricken people and youths committing suicides.

### **My dear countrymen**

We did not receive all this was in charity. For this sometimes we had to go to the gallows, subjected to flogging, and sometimes waged struggle on the roads and sometimes faced martyrdom and ordeal of imprisonment. Sometimes we faced such trials which did not exist at all. Thousands of innocent leaders and workers alongwith Co-chairperson of PPP Asif Ali Zardari were imprisoned sans any justification and were subjected to torture. But we did not lose heart and always confronted this atrocity with courage and pulled the country out of crisis. Results of general elections held on February 18, created a ray of hope for the nation and various like-minded political forces got united collective agenda for the restoration of democracy and broad-based coalition government was formed. For this, I congratulate PML(N) and its leader Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, Awami Natuiona Party and its leader Asfandyar Wali, JUI and its leader Mualana Fazal Ur Rehman and and all companions from FATA and express my gratitude. I express my deep gratitude to MQM and all parties of opposition for giving me unanimous vote of confidence.

I pledge to the nation to render every sacrifice to meet the challenges facing Pakistan and urge people to support the government in steering the country out of the crises. We will take out this country from all the crises. We will give the people confidence, we will give the nation not just their dream but its fulfilment. The government had inherited and various steps that have been taken to stem the economic down slide and provide immediate relief to the common man. Pakistan is facing the crisis of flour shortage, load-shedding, terrorism and extremism, restoration of judges, economic down slide and, above all, the inflation and unemployment which had their roots in the past. This situation sapped people's confidence and kill their hope. In this situation the government had only two ways; either to surrender to these problems or face them upfront. Like my political predecessors, I have chosen the second path (to fight against these challenges).

I attribute these problems to external factors, like rising oil and food prices in the international market. Secondly, during the last eight years, neither the gravity of international challenges were realised nor any future planning was made that created multiple problems and plunged the country into crises. Inflation is the biggest challenge and part of a global crisis and Pakistan today is faced with an economic turmoil. Abundance of automobiles and mobile phones are not a yard-stick of progress. The previous government instead of setting up new industries, preferred imports and made Pakistan a consumer economy. Agriculture was totally ignored and inflation, the country faced today, was the result of running the country by printing money and heavy borrowing from the State Bank of Pakistan. The government is trying to overcome inflation while avoiding past mistakes. Instead of cosmetic

presentation of the economic situation, the priority of the government is to improve the situation in real terms. The industrial and agriculture production will be increased to counter inflation and reduce financial deficits. Hoarding and profiteering will be done away with.

I ask the traders, industrialists and investors to make maximum investment in Pakistan. I appeal to my business community to keep their capital in Pakistan. We assure them every protection. I also appeal to the nation to reduce consumption of those items which are costing the country hugely in terms of foreign exchange. Reduced consumption of fuel and edible oil can save billions of dollars in foreign exchange, which will not only reduce trade deficit but also gradually reduce the external debt. Being an agriculturist, I am fully aware of the problems of the farming community. I regret that an agrarian country like Pakistan is facing the problem of food shortage.

The Wheat Support Price has been increased to Rs. 625 per 40 kg from Rs. 475 and the government will significantly increase the minimum support price before the next harvest. The government is importing 2.5 million tonnes of wheat to ensure adequate supplies. Agriculture loans for farmers have been increased by Rs. 30 billion and an amount of over Rs. 20.50 billion has been allocated for the agriculture development programme.

The government has already announced a new policy for import of agriculture equipment and cheap tractors. Sizeable subsidy is being given on fertilizer and sales tax on it has been abolished. The insurance scheme for crop loans has been approved and I announce that the government will pay the premium for small growers. Water reservoirs will be constructed on priority basis as development of agriculture sector was impossible without adequate water supplies. The government is giving incentives to some 10,000 dairy farmers to increase milk production to bring about a White Revolution in the country. Pakistan is facing an acute power shortage which I attribute to neglect of the sector in the past eight years that created an imbalance in supply and demand. I recall that the country faced similar load shedding problem during the second government of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto. At that time, the private power producers were given incentives. Today a large portion of the total energy production is obtained from projects set up by these companies. Just think what would have been the situation if the government of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) had not started these projects 14 years back. The government has taken a series of measures in a short span of time which would help overcome load shedding significantly by next year. Reposing confidence in the government's policies, international companies have offered to make \$ 4 billion investment in power sector and work on the proposals is being undertaken at fast track. The government has taken practical steps to utilise the huge reserves of coal in Thar and for this purpose Thar Coal Authority has been set up.

I would chair a roundtable conference attended by international financial institutions on July 29 in Washington for investment in the sector. Moreover, special attention has been focused on alternative sources of energy including wind, solar and atomic energy. Under the programme to conserve energy, besides various other steps, supply of energy saver bulbs would be ensured and due to these steps the future needs of energy would be fulfilled. No country could attract investment, or make progress, if the lives of ordinary citizens are insecure. When we took over, hundreds of lives were lost in numerous suicide attacks in 2007, affecting lives of thousands of people. The chairperson of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Benazir Bhutto also became the target of dreadful wave of terrorism. The personnel of law enforcement institutions were also being targeted. An extraordinary meeting of the heads of allied parties would be held on July 23, in Islamabad to formulate a comprehensive

strategy to end terrorism and extremism. Pakistan is fighting the war against terrorism in its own interest. This role of Pakistan is being acknowledged all over the world. The good relations with neighbouring countries were the major planks of the country's foreign policy. It was with this spirit that Pakistan has agreed to fifth round of composite dialogue to improve ties with India and resolve all disputes. In my first speech in the National Assembly, I had clearly stated that resolution of Kashmir issue in line with the aspirations of Kashmiri people is essential for durable peace and prosperity of south Asian region. Pakistan wanted friendly ties with the entire world and sovereignty of Pakistan will never be compromised.

No foreign power will be allowed to take action on Pakistan soil and any decision or action within its boundary will be taken by the country itself. The government is preparing a comprehensive strategy to improve and reflect true image of Pakistani nation in the world, particularly in the west.

This can tell the world that we are the victim of terrorism and will leave no stone unturned to counter the menace. By the grace of Allah Almighty, Pakistan's defence is strong and we are responsible nuclear power and our nuclear assets are in safe hands. The whole nation fully trust its armed forces and the government will utilize all resources to fulfill country's defence needs. Under Benazir Income Support Programme, targeted support of Rs 1,000 each will be provided to the poor families to help them overcome poverty and inflation. Initially, 3.4 million families will benefit from the scheme which will be expanded later. For this scheme, special Benazir Cards will be issued and the scheme will be formally launched on August 14. Another scheme has already been launched for free issuance of national identity cards, which will benefit some 25 million people. Utility Stores will be established at every Union Council level to provide basic commodities of life including flour, ghee and pulses at cheaper rates. Mobile Utility Stores in remote areas have already been started, while 1600 new Utility Stores are being set up soon. A 20 percent increase in salaries and pension of government employees has been made, while minimum wages of labourers have been enhanced from Rs. 4600 to Rs. 6000 per month. A revolving fund of Rs. 2 billion has been created under the Prime Minister's Housing Scheme and I would soon inaugurate its pilot projects at the federal as well as provincial capitals. Government employees and rural areas would be given special importance in this scheme. Under the Green Transport Scheme the government has decided to run 8000 CNG buses in ten big cities. The scheme will cost around Rs. 40 billion and its investors were being given special incentives. The Lady Health Workers programme introduced by Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto in 1994 was appreciated and welcomed at the local and international levels. The government will add another 20,000 lady health workers this year in the existing number of 100,000, and the quota of lady health workers for Balochistan has been doubled. A mother child health-care programme has been initiated at a cost of Rs. 20 billion, under which 20,000 community midwives will be recruited this year. For the first time a new programme will be introduced for diagnosing diseases, which would specially help in preventing hepatitis and polio diseases. Besides, a special programme for treatment and control of Hepatitis has been initiated, which is being supervised by myself. I appeal for cooperation from the local and international institutions in this regard. A new Rs. 5 billion school feeding programme has been initiated in rural areas to provide food to boy and girl students in the primary schools. The quota for women in government jobs has been doubled, while the legislation is underway for the protection of women and their rights. The government is focusing to make operational the Chinese Economic Zone, especially created for Chinese investors in Lahore. The restrictions on trade and student unions have been lifted and in this respect legislation work has been initiated. The measures are afoot to restore the government servants forced out of jobs on political grounds. The government has

regularized the services of contract employees from Grade 1 to 15. The government believes in equal rights for minorities and would ensure protection of their religious sites as well as freedom of worship. A bill had been tabled in the National Assembly for amendment in the PEMRA Ordinance to ensure freedom of media. The legislation work on the Freedom of Information Bill 2008 has been initiated. A Journalist Victim Fund has been created to provide protection to journalists. Consultation process on Wage Board Award has started to support the working journalists.

The imprisonment of political leaders is nothing new across the world, but once they are out they do not bother to consider jail reforms. I am supervising work on jail reforms on fast-track and measures are underway to convert jails into reformatory centers. The concerned ministers will soon present the details of the reforms and improvement in various sectors. I assure the nation of the government's strong commitment and will to clear all the hurdles in the way of journey towards progress and prosperity, initiated by the present government. Pakistan is not only a gateway to Middle East but also a corridor which links Asia and Europe. The present government would make Pakistan corridor of trade and energy through the construction of highways of international standard. The provision of education, health and job opportunities to every Pakistan is the top priority of this government. We want to develop such a Pakistan, where there is no unemployment, the investors do not take their capital out of the country, the industries do not close and where every poor, labourer, farmer or skilled people are capable to give their children higher education. It was an honour and a moment of immense pleasure for me that I am addressing the nation as the first head of any coalition government in the country's history. I am the traveller of a political caravan which brought the politics to people from palaces. Those who are elected by the people consider themselves accountable to the people, and the people have the right to know, what the government is doing for their welfare. The dictators ruled the country for the most part. The Pakistan of the Quaid-e-Azam was not meant to be overshadowed by the horrible face of dictatorship. Every dictator in a new garb promoted the only agenda of how to prolong his rule, even if it is at the cost of breaking the country, destruction of institutions, destruction of society, or the impoverishment of masses. After Quaid-e-Azam, Quaid-e-Awam Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto gave a new lease of life to Pakistani politics, created awareness among the people and organised them. Quaid-e-Awam fought a historical battle for the rights of the people and became their voice. A dictator silenced that voice from the masses but he is still alive in the hearts of the people. Shaheed Benazir Bhutto, once again became the torch-bearer of peoples' rights and moved forward with a new vigour and determination. She wrote a new chapter of struggle and her charismatic personality gave the poor people of the country a new lease of life. The Shaheed leader set a new direction in politics and signed a historical Charter of Democracy with other political parties to put democracy on the right track. She was the hope of the country's poor, she was the hope of the country's farmers, and was the dream of the youth, she was strength of the labourers, she was the passion of country's students. The Shaheed leader refused to bow before dictators and terrorists and embraced martyrdom. But, she was a movement in herself who lived for the people and gave her life while amongst the people. I pay tributes to those political workers who laid down their lives and suffered the pangs of imprisonment. It is now the duty of the government to not only guarantee people their welfare and progress, but also give the political workers the good news of restoration of democracy and an end to dictatorship. We promise to our martyrs of democracy that the nation will always remember their great sacrifices. PPP is the true symbol of federation and I would fulfill all promises made by Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto. I thank PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari and the party for reposing confidence in me. It is

unfortunate that PPP always took the reins when not only the Government but the entire country was mired in crises. We always inherit destroyed institutions, sinking economies, disintegrating destinies, impoverished people, youth committing suicide and a federation in perils. The party leaders and workers had to render sacrifices and face unbearable hardship in their struggle for democracy. Thousands of innocent leaders and workers, including PPP Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari are imprisoned sans justification and subjected to torture. But we never gave up, we have always confronted oppression and took the country out of crises. The the results of February 18 elections gave a ray of hope to the whole nation and the political forces having divergent views became united for the common cause of the restoration of democracy and formed a broad-based coalition government. For this I felicitate and thank PML (N) and its chief Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, ANP and its chief Asfandyar Wali, JUI and its chief Maulana Fazal ur Rehman and my colleagues from FATA. I also thanked all the opposition parties including the MQM for giving me a unanimous vote of confidence. At present all the state institutions are functioning in accordance with the constitution. The present parliament is supreme in its true sense and we on the very first day in the National Assembly decided about the leader of the opposition. For the first time in Pakistan's history the defence budget was presented in the parliament. To keep the spirit of democracy alive, I ensure my presence in the National Assembly during the question hour and for the first time the National Assembly proceedings were aired live for the public. All the members of parliament are given development funds without any discrimination and the government in order to achieve consensus among the provinces decided to activate the Council of Common Interests and National Finance Award. It is for the first time that there is an atmosphere of complete harmony and cooperation between the center and the provinces. The government after its formation issued orders for the release of detained judges, lawyers and political workers. We will soon give a good news about the restoration of deposed judges as well. The government has made serious efforts to remove the bitterness created due to past mistakes in Balochistan. Appropriate measures are being taken to check political victimization. I congratulate the nation on the victory of democracy. I appeal that it is not the time to indulge in blame-game. It is the time to save the country. The dawn of democracy which has been attained after years of sacrifices and struggle should not be let go out of hands. Trust and give the political government a chance to tackle the crises brought upon the country by the long years of dictatorship. The vote you gave us to bring about a change is a debt we owe to Shaheed Benazir Bhutto that we have to re-pay. Support your government and the success is ours. I pledge before the nation today that I would not step back from rendering any sacrifice to fight the challenges confronting the country. Life is given for once and it is not a big deal to sacrifice it for a national cause. The nation should support us. We would steer the country out of all the crisis. We would live up to the confidence of the people. We would not give dreams to the nation rather we would give reality. We would rescue the country out of the crisis and lead it to the destination of progress and prosperity. Let us together pray may Allah Almighty forgive our mistakes, make Pakistan a land of peace, give us the courage to make right decisions, and protect Pakistan from all the internal and external dangers. (Ameen)