

**SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF PAKISTAN ON THE OCCASION OF GROUND
BREAKING CEREMONY OF THE BENAZIR MONUMENT**

**Federal Ministers,
Ministers of State,
Members of Parliament,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Assalam-o-Alakium

It is a matter of rare honour and immense privilege for me that today on the occasion of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto's birthday, I am performing the ground breaking of the Benazir Monument. The construction of the Benazir Monument marks our people's tribute to the inspiring and dynamic leadership of Shaheed Mohtrama Benazir Bhutto for her contributions as a leader of Pakistan. The very choice of Monument's location i.e. Islamabad, is symbolic as it represents our gratitude and homage to her leadership. It also conveys the message in no uncertain terms that Shaheed Benazir Bhutto continues to be the symbol of federation of Pakistan even in her martyrdom as she was in her life.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Shaheed Benazir Bhutto's life is a classic study of courage, commitment towards people's welfare, and steel-like determination to accomplish the goals she set before herself. She took over the mantle of leadership of Pakistan People's Party from her illustrious father Shaheed Zulifqar Ali Bhutto in the most trying circumstances. She then carried forward the mission of her father and braved the oppression of the most brutish dictatorial regime for eleven years with utmost courage. She continued to inspire millions of masses and kept their hopes alive during the protracted period of the worst dictatorship this country has suffered so far. It is the sole honor of Pakistan People's Party that it has its deep roots in ever section of society, be it workers, laborers, students, lawyers, teachers and women etc. Shaheed BB led a relentless struggle for the empowerment of these sections of society. Their welfare is the commitment of the PPP that has been part of its manifestoes.

The history of the Third World fails to offer any other example whereby a leader rose to such a prominence and carved a role due to qualities of the head and heart. Due to her political wisdom and leadership qualities, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto made her mark in the world politics. She was an embodiment of courage and endurance who did not allow her personal tragedies to the stand in the way of her larger commitment towards her people.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I deem it pertinent to refer to quotes of Shaheed Mohtrama Benazir Bhutto. In her address to a seminar on the legacy of Z.A. Bhutto in April 1989, she said: "Courage and grace in the face of adversity are the hallmarks of a great leader." In her speech at the Peshawar University in 1995, she said: "The character of men and women is shaped by their own ability to overcome adversity and not to be bent in a face of storm."

She proved through personal example that she was a leader who practiced what she preached. There is no adversity, big or small that Mohtrama Benazir Bhutto did not face starting from martyrdom of her father, her brothers, threats to her life that continued to be hurled at her every now and then, to the rigors of exile and imprisonment. After every tragedy, she bounced back with renewed commitment, more vigor and determination to serve her people. I recall that Shaheed Benazir Bhutto used to say: "Turn your personal pain into your strength. You can conquer world with this strength."

Ladies and Gentlemen:

There is a very select and rare breed of people who become immortal after their deaths. No doubt Shaheed Benazir Bhutto belongs to this category. She is a heartthrob of millions of people and continues to rule their hearts and minds even in her martyrdom. Her entire life is a unique role model not only for the people of Pakistan but also of the world. She was an incarnation of steadfastness, perseverance and determination. Her name would be chronicled in golden words in the annals of history. She writes in her book, "Daughter of the East", "I did not select this life for myself. Rather this life has selected me for itself."

Distinguished audience

History would remember Shaheed Benazir Bhutto for three things: firstly, the unwavering determination to reach out to her people; secondly, the courage to take on huge and seemingly insurmountable challenges and thirdly, the ability to forgive even her enemies.

She may not be physically with us today but her ideals and vision continue to lighten our path. The principles and values she fought and died for remain as relevant today as they were in the past. Those values form the mainstream narrative in our fight against multiple challenges that we face today. Shaheed BB represented an idea of human liberation, empowerment of common man and a welfare state. During her speech on the occasion of opening ceremony of new Supreme Court Building in May 1995, she said: "individuals can be killed but not ideas. Ideas live in the hearts and minds of men and women."

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Though there are many facets of her illustrious life, however, I would confine myself to only a few due to time constraint. The first and foremost is her declaration of Jihad against militancy, extremism and terrorism. She warned of this penetrating menace in our midst way back in 1994 in her keynote speech to the Seventh OIC Summit held in Casablanca. She said: "Extremism today is a challenge. A challenge we must collectively seek to understand and overcome, before it overcomes and consumes us and leaves destruction in its wake." She knew the dangers posed to her own life due to her stance against terrorism and extremism but the well-being and future of this nation was dearer to her heart and she was ready to pay any price to safeguard Pakistan. The perpetrators of doom and gloom may have martyred an individual but they have not silenced the idea she championed and stood for. The historic emergence of recent national consensus against terrorism and extremism among different streaks of national opinion owes itself to the sacrifice of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto. She led the fight against the forces of darkness from the front and awakened the nation to the reality of these lethal perils. Thus by choosing martyrdom at the hands of terrorists, she has safeguarded the future of this nation.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Our great country has suffered due to politics of vendetta and revenge. As a result of lack of consensus among different political parties on the minimum rules of the game, there has been periodic derailment of democracy and ushering in eras of the dictatorial rules with its attendant problems. Her signing of historic Charter of Democracy along with the PML-N Chief Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif represented a sincere effort at changing the political culture of the country. She knew that if the nation's well being was to be ensured, it was possible through continuation of the democratic order. In a speech she delivered at the Port Qasim, Karachi, in August 1989, Shaheed BB said: "The politics of violence is the dire enemy of the hopes, the dreams and the ambitions of our people." Thus she founded the tradition of politics of reconciliation and harmony. She believed that common man's well-being lay in the continuation of democracy and the establishment of good governance. She said in a speech at the then National Defence College: "The basic elements which define my vision of Pakistan are: a modern, enlightened, social democracy based on federalism and parliamentary form of government."

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Guided by the vision of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto, the present democratic government has undertaken critical reforms in different walks of our national life. In a short span of two and half years, we have traveled a distance of miles. The focus of reforms introduced by my government remains on reorienting the direction of state policy in favor of the common man—the man in the street who is the real stakeholder. Our historic successes such as Aagz-e-Haqooq-e-Balochistan Initiative, the adoption of 7th NFC Award, the passage of the 18th Constitutional Amendment, Gilgit-Baltistan Self-Governance and Empowerment Act, Benazir Income Support Programme, different initiatives for empowerment of women, and successful fight against terrorism and extremism to name only a few, are dedicated to the memory and vision of our martyred leader Shaheed Benazir Bhutto. In our struggle to accomplish these Herculean tasks, my government and I myself have been guided by the politics of reconciliation and harmony originally espoused by our Shaheed Leader. History is being made in this country under the coalition government as we have successfully taken on structural issues of governance, which remained unresolved in the past.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is merely the beginning of a journey. It is the first step which is difficult to take and thankfully we are well past the take-off stage. It is not yet time to rest on our laurels. We can not afford to be complacent, for we have the debt of huge tasks conferred on us by our Shaheed leaders. It is our national duty to strengthen the federation of Pakistan. Today on the auspicious occasion Shaheed Mohtrama Benazir Bhutto's birthday, I extend my hand of cooperation to every political force in the country. Let us join one another in the spirit of reconciliation, harmony and friendship to rid the country of the grave challenges. As we march on, there may be more strenuous challenges ahead but our resolve to take on them must be greater than before. I would like to end my speech with Shaheed BB's Dream of Pakistan wherein she said: "I dream of a Pakistan where we can commit our social resources to the development of human life and not to its destruction."

Thank you very much!

Pakistan Piandabad!