



Parliament House Islamabad

History



“It is my belief that our salvation lies in following the golden rules of conduct set for us by our great law-giver--- the Prophet (peace be upon him) of Islam. Let us lay the foundation of our democracy on the basis of truly Islamic deals and principles. Our Almighty has taught us that “our decisions in the affairs of the state shall be guided by discussions and consultations (42:38)”

Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah
Speech at Shahi Darbar, Sibi, 14th February 1948.

Constitutional Background

The Objectives Resolution was moved in the House on March 7, 1949 and the Constituent Assembly adopted it on March 12, 1949 laying down the principles which later became substantive part of the Constitution of Pakistan. After the passage of the Objectives Resolution, the Assembly formed, on the same day, a Basic Principles Committee, comprising of 24 members, to prepare a draft Constitution on the basis of the Objectives Resolution.

The final draft of the Constitution was prepared in 1954. However, before the draft could be placed in the House for approval, the Assembly was dissolved on October 24, 1954. Thereafter, the Governor General convened the Second Constituent Assembly in May, 1955, which framed and passed the first Constitution of Pakistan on February 29, 1956. That Constitution came into force on March 23, 1956, which provided for a parliamentary form of Government with a unicameral legislature. Earlier, from August 14, 1947 to March 1, 1956, the country retained the Government of India Act, 1935 as its Constitution.

On October 7, 1958, Martial Law was promulgated and the Constitution abrogated. The Military Government appointed a Constitution Commission in February, 1960 which framed the 1962 Constitution. That Constitution provided for a Presidential form of Government with a unicameral legislature. The 1962 Constitution was abrogated on March 25, 1969. The Civil Government, which came to power in December, 1971 pursuant to 1970 elections, gave the nation an interim Constitution in the year 1972.

The 1970 Assembly framed the 1973 Constitution, which was passed on

April 12, 1973 and came into force on August 14, 1973. Article 50 of the 1973 Constitution provides for a parliamentary form of Government with a bicameral legislature Majlis-e-Shoora (Parliament), consisting of the President and two Houses to be known respectively as the National Assembly and the Senate. The main purpose of creating the Senate was to give equal representation to all provinces in this House because in the National Assembly the membership was determined on population basis. Equal provincial membership in the Senate was designed to balance unequal representation of the provinces in the National Assembly. In this way, under the 1973 Constitution, the Senate came into existence for the first time. The elections of the first Senate were held on July 10, 1973. Before this date, under all previous Constitutions only one House had operated in Pakistan.

Many changes occurred as a result of the Eighth Amendment in the Constitution in 1985 and the Legal Framework Order (LFO) enforced on August 21, 2002. Not only the tenure of Senators was raised from four to six years, their number was also increased from 63 to 87 in 1985 and later under the LFO to 100. The LFO also raised the membership of the National Assembly to 342, which was 237 since 1985. The Eighth Amendment also added paragraph (b) to clause (2) of Article 58, according to which the President's role acquired a new face, as he was given more powers than any President held in a parliamentary form of government. The new clause empowered the President to dissolve the National Assembly in his discretion with the result that since 1985 to 1999 none of the four Assemblies could manage to complete their full term of five years. In 1997, when the new Assembly came into power with an overwhelming majority, one of its first act was to strike off paragraph (b) of clause (2) of Article 58 from the Constitution *vide* Constitution Thirteenth Amendment Act. However, the power of the President to dissolve the National Assembly, at his discretion,

was again restored through LFO with the condition that in such an eventuality the President shall be bound to refer the matter to the Supreme Court, which shall decide the reference within 30 days.

BRIEF HISTORY OF PAST PARLIAMENT HOUSES

The Parliament of Pakistan *viz* the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan met on August 10, 1947 in the old Sindh Assembly Building at Karachi. Quaid-I-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, was elected as its first President. It was in this venue that the Objectives Resolution, which now serves as the ground norm of Pakistan, was passed. In 1956, the first Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan was adopted in Karachi at the same Sindh Assembly building, which also passed as the Parliament of Pakistan.

After adoption of the Second Constitution of 1962, Parliament sessions were arranged both at Dhaka and a newly constructed building (Ayub Hall) at Rawalpindi. The Parliament was unicameral. At the first session of the Parliament at the Ayub Hall, the Martial Law, imposed in 1958, was revoked.

From 1972 onwards, the State Bank auditorium in Islamabad functioned as the National Assembly of Pakistan. The Interim Constitution of Pakistan was adopted there in April, 1972. It was there that the first bicameral legislature of Pakistan was born after the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan was adopted in 1973. It was again there that the Martial Law, imposed in July 1977, was revoked on December 30, 1985.

The Parliament (the Senate and the National Assembly) acquired a permanent abode in the present Parliament House, which was inaugurated on

May 28, 1986.

The Assembly Hall was renovated on the orders of the Speaker and inaugurated by the Prime Minister of Pakistan on November 3, 1996.

Salient Features of Parliament Complex

The fabulous building of Parliament House is situated at Constitution Avenue, Islamabad having total area of 9,86,630 sq ft, out of which the covered area comprises of 6,00,000 sq ft. Foundation stone of Parliament House was laid by the former Prime Minister Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto on 14th August 1974, whereas the building was formally inaugurated by the late Prime Minister Mr. Muhammad Khan Junejo on 28th May 1986. On 9th November 1993 in an out break of fire due to electrical short-circuiting, the National Assembly Hall got severely burnt and damaged. The Assembly Hall after renovation was inaugurated and reopened on November 3, 1996 during the regime of former Prime Minister Muhtarma Benazir Bhutto.

Cabinet Block is situated in the North, Supreme Court of Pakistan in the South of the Parliament House, whereas President House is located on the Eastern side, while Pakistan Day Parade venue is situated in the West. The building of Parliament House consists of four floors. There are seven entry gates. Fifteen lifts have been installed in the building for approaching upper floors. The building has 193 rooms and seven committee rooms.

There are separate Chambers for the President, Prime Minister, Speaker, Chairman (Senate), Deputy Speaker, and Deputy Chairman (Senate). The following services/facilities exist in the Parliament House.

- (1) Mosque
- (2) Offices of allied agencies, *i.e.* Bank, Pakistan International Airlines, Railways and Post Office
- (3) Souvenir Shop
- (4) Cafeteria for Members of Parliament
- (5) Cafeteria for Staff
- (6) Medical Center
- (7) Media Centre

The National Assembly Hall

The National Assembly Hall and the Senate Hall are situated back-to-back on the second floor and separated by a common area housing the lifts. The National Assembly Hall is oblong in shape with a diameter of 130 feet. The main Chamber has seating capacity for 400 Parliamentarians. The Hall ascends gradually in tiers. Flanking the Hall on three sides of the circumference is the seating areas for visitors, which can accommodate 804 persons. Special areas have been designated for the guests of the President, the Prime Minister and the Speaker. A separate enclosure has been earmarked for the Press. The Hall is equipped with modern cameras for Close Circuit Television (CCTV) and a computerized communication system, which can be used by following the procedure as narrated below.

Electronic Microphones

Each member's desk is equipped with an electronic microphone. On the board, at the base of each microphone, are a red and a green light and an ON/OFF button. When the ON/OFF button is pressed, the green light just below the "REQUEST" caption, will glow. This indicates that the name of the member has been registered in the computer memory. Simultaneously, the member's name will be displayed in a "request list" on the Speaker's video monitor. A total of 24 names can be stored in the request list and displayed on the Speaker's monitor at a given time.

The names of the members are both entered into the request list and displayed on the Speaker's monitor in the sequential order in which they were electronically recorded by the computer. The Speaker may either follow the sequential order, as on the request list or use his discretion to allow any other member not on the said list to speak.

Simultaneous Interpretation System

The Simultaneous Interpretation System (SIS) is operated by means of the earphone system installed at every member's desk. It should then be opened slowly without overstretching the instrument.

The appropriate channel can be selected by gently moving the "Channel Selector" knob. The simultaneous interpretation is transmitted into English from Urdu on Channel 1 and into Urdu from English on Channel-11.

The Senate Hall

The Senate Hall has a seating capacity for 125 Parliamentarians, while the galleries can accommodate 353 persons. The Chamber is equipped with modern public address and simultaneous interpretation system based on micro-computer technology. A microphone, an earphone, loud-speaker and seven-position channel selector switch have been provided for each member. The microphones can be worked both automatically and manually. A micro-computer Automatic Vote Counting (AVC) System and a large electronic display board has been installed in the Senate Hall. Each member has been provided with a voting unit fixed with his table.

