

Prime Minister of Pakistan
ZULFIKAR ALI BHUTTO
Inaugural Address
SERVICES WEEK
November 22, 1976



M. Yousaf Bhutto

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Fateh Point Archives

The Prime Minister, Mr. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, inaugurated the Services Week at a function in Rawalpindi on 22nd November, 1976.

Following is the full text of his address:

I am happy to inaugurate the Services Week which is the first ever observed in the country. In deciding on this observance, the uppermost thoughts in my mind centred on two things. The first is that we in Pakistan have suffered from a great deal of confusion about the role of the services in the nation's life. The second is the hardship and privation which — I know and feel more than I can be told — is the lot of most government employees at present.

Let me take the second of these points first. As you know, we are going through times of unique upheaval in the world's economy. The cost of living is rising fast. Not to speak of luxuries, even the necessities of daily life are becoming dearer. This has a devitalizing impact on the fixed-income groups rather than on other segments of society. Promises and words are no palliatives. Far less do they furnish a cure. But since you represent a good proportion of the educated part of our nation, you will understand that here we are dealing with a phenomenon which is related to the country's resources and their management and also to the plague of inflation. Ours is a poor country. There are poorer countries than ours but they are not geo-politically situated as we are and they do not have to bear the additional burden demanded by our security interests, in other words, the spiralling cost of national defence. Few things would make me happier than the ability to announce a dramatic increase in the salaries of government employees and the pensions of retired officials. But that would be a quack remedy. The Government does not possess a magic wand. We have been occupied with this problem and we did not flatter ourselves with the notion that we had solved it by granting the proportional increases which we did in 1973 and 1974. We established a Pay Commission for a thorough examination of the whole problem in all its financial aspects.

The Commission's report was received only last week and now it has to be considered by the Federal and the Provincial Governments. This consideration in depth will have to be influenced by the need to avoid deficit financing of a degree which can unhinge the national economy. An increase in salaries is meaningless if it is eaten away by still higher prices. Nevertheless, I have issued directions that all concerned in the Federal and Provincial Governments should address themselves to the Pay Commission's report with sympathy and a sense of urgency. I would rather wait and receive a viable scheme, which will lend itself to immediate implementation, than resort to ill-considered and hasty measures which may be attractive in appearance but will solve one problem by creating others.

I hope that the proposals of the Federal and the Provincial Governments, based on the Pay Commission's recommendations, will be formulated without undue delay. As soon as it is done, the Government will take decision speedily. The pensions of retired personnel will also be revised at the same time.

Since our approach to this question is based on principles rather than *ad hoc* measures, I am not in a position to say anything at present about benefits other than pay. But one marginal benefit which, I feel, should create no problem relates to the medical care of government employees and their families. Hitherto, this is restricted by the condition that medicines can be supplied only from government hospitals or dispensaries. Orders are being issued that this condition be now relaxed, subject to suitable safeguards against misuse.

The second issue which relates to the role of government services is a larger one and involves the vexed questions of status and security of tenure. Let me say it straight away that the confusion to which I referred earlier was bequeathed to us by our colonial past. It was a part of the apparatus of imperialism that a government official, by the very act of being recruited into the service of the colonial power, became separated from the rest of the society. Despite the racial prejudice which he had to bear, despite the gap which existed between him and his white superiors, despite his personal identification with his own people, despite his half-suppressed patriotism, he was, to all intents and purposes, integrated with the foreign ruling class and that class, in its own interest, had to give him a security of tenure. This explains why, in contrast to British India, constitutional safeguards do not exist in free and progressive countries; for the simple reason that such countries cannot possibly allow the entrenchment of a certain class or vested interest in government. To do so would be to create a caste system and to erect barriers between government and the governed.

We in Pakistan did not realize the social implications of the system that was bequeathed to us by our erstwhile masters. We regarded every element in it as sacrosanct and based on immutable principles. We did not even look at the systems and practices of other independent and democratic countries. This hardened the

status quo. Since, for more than two decades, Pakistan had no functioning democracy and since also the consideration of merit which weighed with the British ruler despite all their drawbacks, suffered a steady erosion, the result was the rule of bureaucracy. A certain group of bureaucrats thought that, while politicians may prate and few generals swagger, they were the real masters of the land, with no limit to their power and no curb on their manipulations. They recognised no merit in anyone outside their clique. They were the Brahmins; how could a low-caste gain an entry in to their priestly precincts? They over-rated their versatility. They cultivated the myth that they were the possessors of skills derived from a mysterious source and that they knew better than anyone how to run any establishment, whether it be a government department, a media organization, an industrial enterprise or a commercial corporation. They disdained the specialists. They relegated the professional people to lower echelons. I knew of a great many cases of individuals, not originally recruited into what was the hallowed civil or foreign service, who rendered service of great merit and showed a far higher level of accomplishment than the so-called officers with whom they had to deal, even tutored them and yet were denied the status that was their due. Their specialization did not earn them the right to hold a policy-making job. Talent was not criterion. Diligence counted for nothing. An entry into one of the superior services at a certain age and the resultant seniority were all that mattered.

My friends, such a system was inherently brittle. It was not only unjust and oppressive; it was also antediluvian. It took little account of the needs of a government which has to expand its role in the nation's social and economic enterprise in order to meet the targets of growth. It had to collapse, sooner or later. If no reforms were undertaken, the collapse could cause a social upheaval and damage the interests of the people who manned the services of Pakistan. The task of the People's Government has been to avert that upheaval and prevent the damage. This, and this alone, was the motivation of the programme of administrative reforms which were introduced three years ago. These reforms were meant to introduce a dynamism and mobility into what had become a static mass, a deadweight on a progressive society. We abolished the division into classes; it is incredible that, for more than two decades, a system had endured which literally branded government services into Class I, Class II, Class III, and Class IV. We narrowed the income disparity between the lowest and the highest paid in government service. We did not countenance the existence of hundreds of different pay scales. We liquidated the concept of plurality of services and classes within the government establishment. No progressive nation can permit its administrative structure to be a closed shop. We opened its doors. We took steps to enable the government to co-opt talent and experience from wherever it is available in our society. We overhauled and simplified the recruitment procedure. We instituted a system of job description and career plan-

ning in accordance with modern principles of personnel management as adapted to and workable in a poor country. We drew up a set of rules to enable government to take speedy action in cases of corruption or inefficiency or obsolescence.

No reform of such character can even be launched in a developing country without some difficulties in its working. I do not wish to quote the outworn proverb that you cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs, but it conveys a measure of truth. There are no fail-safe devices which will prevent dislocation or misdirection. It is not an indictment of the principle of lateral entry into government service if the principle was misapplied in certain cases. It is no challenge to the necessity of speedy recruitment and quick disciplinary action if some irregularities occurred in the process.

But your government has taken due and careful note of all cases which suggest modification of prevalent practice. To quote a notable example, we have already decided that, henceforth, no lateral entries should be granted into government service except through the Federal Public Service Commission. This, I hope, will eliminate any fear of nepotism and arbitrariness which had caused an understandable disquiet.

It is being said that the withdrawal of constitutional guarantees has robbed the government employees of their legal rights, as there no longer exists any protection of the terms and conditions of their service. This is manifestly untrue. The constitutional guarantees which were an obvious anachronism were duly replaced by the Civil Servants Act. While previously only a few specific matters relating to the age of superannuation, show cause notice for disciplinary action, etc., were governed by provisions in the Constitution, now the entire field of terms and conditions of service of government employees is regulated by law. In addition, the Government has taken steps to provide for a forum for speedy redress of the grievances of the civil servants in matters relating to these terms and conditions. For this purpose, Services Tribunals have been established as envisaged in the Constitution to which civil servants aggrieved by an order of a departmental authority can file an appeal. The decisions of such Tribunals are final. Compare this with the older dispensation under which such representations were finally disposed of by the Establishment Division.

The question why the constitutional safeguards were replaced by legislation and administrative measures is easy to answer. With the coming into being of a Sovereign Parliament, consisting of the elected representatives of the people, it would have been absurd if the terms and conditions of civil servants were to remain beyond their control. The Government is the largest employer in the country and expends a considerable proportion of public funds on the pay, allowances and other fringe benefits of its employees. It is responsible to the people for speedy and effective enforcement of its policies. Can it discharge that responsibility if it divests

itself of the requisite power to discipline and control the civil servants in order to ensure that they function effectively? To incorporate safeguards and privileges for civil servants in the Constitution itself amounts to elevating them to a position above and beyond the normal legislative control of the Parliament and the executive control of the government of the day. It is common knowledge how in the past the very large number of writ petitions in service matters had clogged the judicial work of Superior Courts and, at the same time, made governments incapable of exercising the necessary powers to take prompt and effective action against corruption or inefficiency. The excessive protection guaranteed to civil servants by constitutional provisions could not but breed complacency among them. Complacency brought torpor. This may have been acceptable to governments which were isolated from the people. It is unthinkable in a social order where the people's needs and demands and aspirations are paramount and call for continual responses.

This brings me to the question of what is called security of tenure. Let me make it clear that security is not, and cannot be a product of outmoded laws or institutions. Talent brings its own insurance. Diligence is its own safeguard. There is no organization in the world, be it private or public, which would like to dispense with the services of a dedicated and able functionary, whether he is placed high or low, unless the organization wishes to weaken or impoverish itself. The People's Government has no such wish. It does not want to deplete its resources of talent and experience. On the contrary, it has taken a number of steps to open new avenues of promotion for civil servants. The old system of reservation of senior posts in favour of the elite services has been dismantled. The chances of advancement of those who are qualified and hard-working have been considerably enlarged with the weeding out of the inefficient and parasitical elements. There is today greater scope for both vertical and horizontal movement of civil servants and for accelerated promotions. Finally, we have been concerned with the age of superannuation. We consider it unjust that an individual should be retired at the age of fifty-eight when his energy is still intact and his experience has reached a maturity which can be of great use to the Government. We have decided to end this injustice. The age of retirement will henceforth be sixty. A bill to this effect is being introduced in the House today.

The reforms are a process and not a final act. This is true as much in the field of services as in any other social or economic sphere. The process will continue to bring in more and more modern and scientific concepts and techniques. We keep under constant review the measures which we have already introduced. We are prepared to make revisions and modifications in the light of any constructive exposition. We welcome the comments of those who have experience of government and are capable of making realistic suggestions. We do so because, whatever may have been the impressions caused by a change brought in the political system after the

disaster of 1971, we consider the civil servants the sinews of government. You are the arms of the administration. What do you have to fear except fear itself? I ask you not to remain wedded to outworn concepts. I ask you to feel in your bones the great challenge of the development of your country. You are the instruments of that development. This should instil in you the consciousness of being engaged in a great movement which will make Pakistan the envy of other developing countries. This should give you a status and prestige beyond what money can buy or patronage confer. It is not only in Pakistan but even in the most affluent countries that civil servants earn less than people engaged in private commerce or industry. Why do they then choose to be civil servants? Because their's is a far greater mission of managing a nation's affairs. It is they who execute what policies the people's representatives evolve. The success or failure of a policy depends a great deal on its implementation. It is a chronic ailment of administrations in the Third World, that while they are as creative as any other in concepts and ideas, they lack in the efficiency of translating them into practice. You, the civil servants of Pakistan, are involved in the gigantic enterprise of curing that ailment. If you keep your minds open, if you do not remain rooted in the past, if you do not allow a nostalgia to cloud your vision of the future — your future and your society's — you will derive a far greater satisfaction than others can feel from your vocation. Let the glory of the nation's dream permeate the observance of the Services Week. Let the pledge be made anew that we will all work with the full energy of our hearts and minds in the service of the people of Pakistan.

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