

Successive military governments have promoted democracies of their choice by planting the sapling of democracy in a clay-pot instead of the soil, because they know that they could move their clay-pot democracy as and when they wish

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Democracy
The News
18.5.03

democracy

Successive military governments in Pakistan used to fabricate overnight the would-be ruling parties comprising the turncoats and the "all time men of establishment" when they wished to hold "elections", irrespective of their fairness and credibility, to hoodwink the international community to ease their pressure and install these parties to serve their agendas. They promoted democracies of their choice by planting the sapling of democracy in a clay-pot instead of the soil. The reason for doing so is simple: they know that they could move their clay-pot democracy as and when they wish. They intentionally do not plant this sapling in the soil owing to the risk of the soil-democracy getting roots and limiting military's access to power.

Pakistan's transition to democracy over decades has been marred with external as well as internal factors. Over past three decades, six general elections and almost similar local bodies elections were held in which the people of Pakistan voted for their representatives. If one looks at the very practice of elections, s/he cannot complain of the number of elections so far held in this period. Duration of these elections vary in terms of the period between one and the other elections. Similarly successive governments did introduce economic revival plans, most of which have been donor-driven instead of national needs and rights-based approach driven.

In all the elections, the people did vote for their representatives and governments particularly during the last three decades, but they were not given even a single chance to vote out their governments/representatives. All the times either the military stepped in or the successive presidents dissolved the assemblies in disagreement with the successive prime ministers. One fact that needs to be acknowledged is that whenever the people of Pakistan were given

other revolutionary provisions—gave sweeping powers to the President. These presidential powers literally made the prime minister, government and the parliament subservient to the President. It is because of this imbalanced power formula in the shape of LFO that the Prime Minister Mir Zafarullah Jamali has been quoted on record saying that President Musharraf is his "boss".

The LFO controversy has marred the newly-elected national

opposition-government joint committee has identified seven controversial clauses so that the working relationship inside the parliaments could be restored before start of the 7th session of the National Assembly. The opposition, while elaborating the seven points, claims that the first among the seven is that the LFO is not part of the constitution as declared by the government.

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A trouble



assembly, which has met six times in short-lived sessions since its inception as a result of October 2002 general elections. In the sixth session that ended on 30 April 2003, the national assembly of Pakistan hardly sat less than an hour while it counted 15 working days during which it just transacted nominal business by introducing one bill that gives powers to the government to sack government employees even on flimsy grounds. Out of these 15 working days, the national assembly literally met for seven days. During these sessions, the opposition continued to launch a protest against LFO and a President in the uniform right in the assembly hall immediately after beginning of the sessions.

Amid continuous and repeated defence of the LFO by President Musharraf himself, Prime Minister Jamali showed some flexibility and started talks with the opposition. On the LFO, the

one person cannot hold these two positions. The third clause is that the idea of National Security Council should be dropped. Fourth is that the Presidential power under Article 58(2)-B of the Constitution to dissolve parliament is unacceptable in its present form. Similarly, fifth point is that all other powers of the President that give him supremacy over the parliament should also be scrapped. Sixth, as demanded by the lawyers' fraternity in the country, the three-year extension in the retirement age of the judges. The last point for the next meeting of the LFO committee is the "subordination" legislation incorporated in the Schedule-Six of the Constitution. Obviously, the opposition has raised these points, as the government has no objection on the LFO.

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the right to franchise, they had shown maturity and their liking for democracy.

Before restoring even the clay-pot democratic politics, General Musharraf introduced a Legal Framework Order (LFO), which according to his government's wizards has become part of the Constitution automatically, without even being presented in the parliament. The LFO—besides introducing election reforms, including lowering the age of voters from that of 21 years to 18 years; increase in the constituencies of the assemblies and the senate; reserve seat quota of 33% for women and some seats for minorities, and similar

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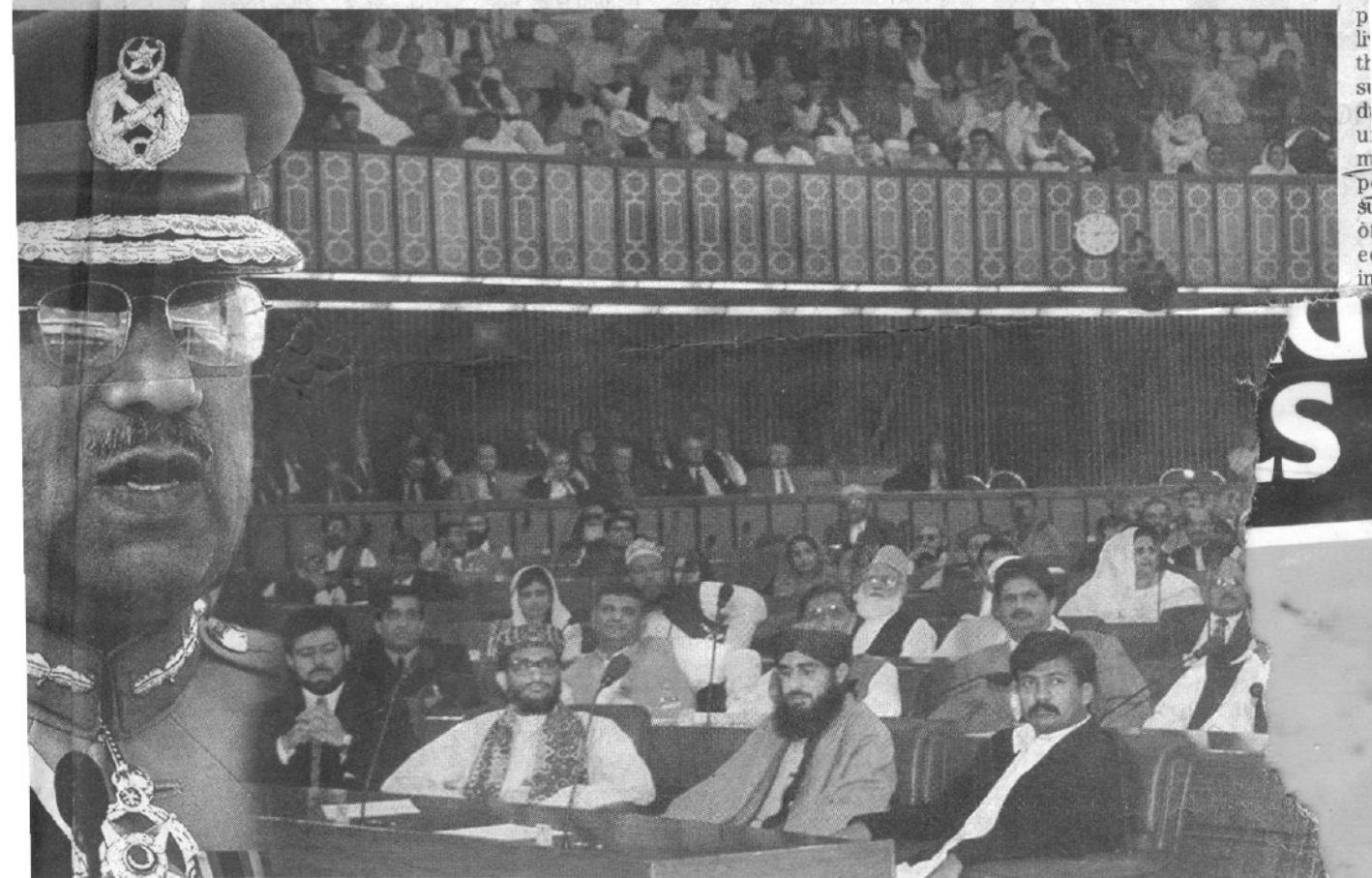
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could hardly imagine how the committee would resolve this conflict when General Musharraf has declared himself indispensable for the on-going reform process and policies on economic and diplomatic fronts. Moving a step forward, Jamali government has hinted at seeking opposition's support for further moving on diplomatic front with peace prospects expressed by both India and Pakistan to open a new chapter in their diplomatic and trade relations. This regional

resolves the LFO controversy, it could then focus its attention on political stability to reap the fruit of economic growth and favourable atmosphere at the regional and international diplomacy. Except for the LFO and political impasse, the government of Prime Minister Jamali has inherited a fairly comfortable economic situation and calculated foreign policy initiatives that have put Pakistan in the center of internationalism.

account has hit a record high surplus of \$4.37bn while foreign exchange reserves also stand at a record high of about \$10.5bn as a result of sweeping political and economic reforms during the three years of the military government. Though these positive indicators of economy predict a better outlook for Pakistan, rising poverty has massively been eating up all such measures, as social sector services, employment and livelihood options for the

troubled transition



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realignment, though under international scheme of things, would have far reaching effects on internal political fronts both in India and Pakistan.

It is likely that the LFO committee would accept some of the presidential powers. For instance, under Article 58(2)-B they could accept sacking of the prime minister and not dissolution of assemblies. Similarly, the government for the time being could scrap the idea of the controversial NSC or put it under the parliament; the extension in the retirement age of judges could also be settled down. On the issue of General Musharraf holding two offices together, there could be a sort of compromise if President Musharraf gives a date for doing so or if he agrees to be re-elected as a president in *shirwani* (the civil dress) instead of being in the uniform.

Impacts of economic reforms on the economy of Pakistan

Economic reforms agenda introduced by General Pervez Musharraf's government during the last three years though brought about improvement in certain economic sectors, it has drastically hit food security and livelihoods of the people in terms of increased downsizing, record high unemployment, and hike in utility and consumer prices. This somewhat-claimed economic improvement plunged more people into the poverty trap. The impacts of these reforms have diverse kinds of indicators as at one hand, total external loans and liabilities excluding official reserves have declined by \$10.4bn on the other hand, the poverty has increased 2-3.5% since General Musharraf took over in October 1999.

Pakistan's Finance Minister Shaukat Aziz claimed on May

people—particularly the marginalized—are not picking up.

The donors at Pakistan Development Forum that concluded in Islamabad on May 12th suggested that the reforms should be given legal cover, and good governance should be given preference while implementing stabilisation processes. The donors expressed concern over five major fault lines including rising poverty, power sector difficulties, law and order and security situation, poor access to justice, and high cost of doing business. They proposed approval of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) through the parliament to ensure full ownership of the agreements and broader political participation in the process.

Though the finance minister has promised the donors that through the parliament it seems difficult because