



From Nusrat Javeed

ISLAMABAD: Reconstructing this country's legislative institutions for establishing the "true and not the sham democracy", the philosopher-general (retired) Naqvi had decided that only those persons should contest for them, who at least have the graduation degree. Besides disqualifying the mass of our broadly illiterate society for sitting in the Parliament, this radical decision banished many solid politicians from the electoral system as well. Gauhar Ayub Khan was one of them.

He had been trained at the historic military school of Deradoun and ran a thriving company of truck builders. Since 1965, he also began returning to the National Assembly from a seat of Hazara. The parliamentary experience helped his selection as the speaker of the National Assembly in 1991. During the second government of Nawaz Sharif, he held the important portfolios of foreign affairs and water and power. After the removal of Nawaz, he joined the "king's party" and ended as its secretary general. Yet, he remained disqualified to participate in elections of October 2002. As if in revenge, he ensured the presence of his wife and the son in the assembly formed through these elections.

Within days of reaching there, Omar Ayub, his son, made his presence felt. Watching the National Assembly proceedings with total attention, he would take the copious notes of the points made. Probably, for the "Citibank grid," Shaukat Aziz recommended his selection as parliamentary secretary of finance. Handling ques-

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Dashing all hopes

tions in that capacity, Omar always sounded to have come to the House after a studious homework. That also facilitated his promotion as the minister of state in the cabinet of Shaukat Aziz. I had all the hopes of his solid growth, but Omar appeared to have dashed them.

Campaigning for a National Assembly seat from Malakand is turning intense these days. Salim Saifullah, a lead politician from the NWFP is contesting to get this seat, vacated with the death of a MMA legislator, for the ruling faction of Pakistan Muslim League. Married to Salim's niece, Omar is campaigning for his success with far more vigour and is reportedly saying things at public meetings, which recklessly demolish all the claims of "good governance." General Musharraf and his political supporters have been making since late 1999.

At least two MMA senators from the NWFP came with copies of a popular vernacular of their province Friday morning. Flaunting them in the House, they kept on referring to "threatening statements," Omar had presumably been making in Malakand. One report, for example, claimed his telling a rally: "I approve funding for development projects as the finance minister. And let me forewarn you that not a penny would be released to your area, if someone else and not Salim Khan is elected to the National Assembly."

The MMA senators also alleged that to provide some "visible substance" to Omar's forewarnings, "work on all the development schemes in Malakand, recommended by the opposition legislators had already been stopped. The government is even removing poles, put for the

provision of electricity to some villages."

Commander Khalil, the deputy chairman, could only let the MMA's grievances over the government's conduct in a bye-election expend through the points of order. Dr Sher Afgan, for a change, was right in claiming that Election Commission was the forum, the MMA should approach in this regard and deputy chairman was willing to "forward your complaints, if they came to me in writing."

Yet the opposition was not satisfied. Their yelling over the slow or no work on development schemes, recommended by them, rather inspired many senators from the ruling benches to express their ire in this context as well. Bibi Yasmin Shah took the lead. As usual, she was sedate and to-the-point in suggesting that bureaucrats do everything for delaying work on schemes, recommended by public representatives. Pari Gul was far louder and blunt. She rather earned a hearty desk thumping from both sides of the House while claiming that no real progress on any development scheme occurred during the two years of "an elected government. I do not know how to face my constituents with no work to show for their betterment."

It was the military government of General Zia-ul-Haq that promoted the feeling that elected civilians were not fit to deal with delicate affairs of the state. While he and the praetorian guards were busy in cultivating the strategic depths for Pakistan in Afghanistan, a peculiar set of crony politicians was groomed and pampered at the "grassroots." Massive funding was doled out to them in the name of road and

school building etc that cultivated a huge constituency for "patronage politics."

For "sharing (some) power with public representatives," Zia's government restored the legislative forums by holding elections on non-party basis in early 1985. Dr Mehmubul Haq, a brilliant darling of the donor countries and agencies, became the finance minister of the elected government. Presenting its first budget, he introduced allocations of the specific amounts to legislators for development schemes in their constituencies. The cynics like me kept forewarning that spending the government money on recommendations of public legislators would strengthen the cronyism amongst our politicians in the end. Many of them would also be tempted to pocket this money through various means. No one cared to listen. Islamabad-based representatives of various donor countries and agencies would rather own this idea. Only after General Musharraf's taking over, they showed the courage of admitting the massive squandering of public funding in the name of development schemes.

As if the belated admissions were not enough, the donor countries and agencies also financed a truckload of "consultants." With their laptops, most would end at the National Reconstruction Bureau of General (retired) Naqvi. After many sessions of brainstorming with lateral thinking, these consultants decided to make our people realise that their representatives in Parliament must concentrate on "legislation" only. It essentially was the job of "grassroots representatives" to decide for building roads and schools etc. Doing this, they