**LAND MARK EVENT OF NOVEMBER 1, 1988 ( Part I)**

[Wajid Shamsul Hasan](https://dailytimes.com.pk/writer/wajid-shamsul-hasan/)

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Movember 16 Elections in 1988 was a land mark event in the politics of Pakistan especially related to the future of Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto and democracy. Mohtarma had no doubt won the elections after long struggle, intrigues and conspiracies of President Ghulam Ishaq Khan, his coterie of generals, bureaucrats and ISI who were hell bent in keeping Benazir Bhutto out of power. Among the senior bureaucrats mastermind was Roedad Khan who hated Bhuttos and PPP.

President Ghulam Ishaq Khan and his civil and military coterie was not supportive of her becoming prime minister. He was backed by powerful Army Chief General Aslam Beg and some other players including the then  DG ISI Lt. General Hameed Gul.

For me and all those who had been witness to the turn of events it was more than interesting period.  Bibi had she been alive, she would have endorsed whatever I have put on record for posterity.

When I sat down to recast the events then, various narratives of intrigues, palace intrigues and bureaucratic machinations have been doing the rounds.

Tensions were rising high. Bibi was annoyed when she came to know that that GIK, Hameed Gul and their gangs were opposed to her being sworn in as Prime Minister. I asked her the reason for built in crisis. I was told by her that President Ishaq Khan was reluctant to give oath of office to her although she had emerged as the leader of the largest single party in 1988 elections. Indeed, GIK was delay dallying it. I was asked to privately brief Justice Muhammad Halim about the presidential intrigues.

Bibi’s new find Chief Executive of EMI’s Rashid Lateef Ansari working in close affinity with Chartered Accountant FerozQaiser and himself being a close friend of Army Chief General Aslam Beg—developed a way forward to exchange a dialogue between BIBI and Aslam Beg. They had agreed in principle to keep General Aslam Beg as Army Chief.

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PPP’s old stalwart Barrister YahyaBakhtiyar was opposed to Bibi becoming a truncated pm. When BIBI asked me I also supported Bakhtiyar Sahib’s views of not getting conditionally sworn in as pm. However, most of the senior leaders pushed her to be part of the government. Bibi confided to me that she too was under lot of pressure from senior party leaders such as Farooq Leghari, Barrister Ifthikhar, Barrister BarristerAtezaz Ahsan and Aftab Ahmed Khan Sherpao since they had been out of power much too long, they were exhausted of their patience and resources and as such wanted that Bibi should join the government even on conditions dictated by GIK.

Meanwhile, MQM had become a stumbling block and Altaf was not willing to support her and join her government. Negotiations between Altaf Hussain and PPP’s negotiating team led by PPP’s Professor Sayed Ghulam Mustafa Shah and PK Shahahni were continuing intermittently.

It was by chance at this juncture I ran into Altaf Hussain in an Islamabad Hotel where I and Bashir Riaz were having late dinner. A.H. saw me and walked to me. We sat on a separate table. I was told by AH his talks with PPP were stalemated and negotiating team-PPP’s were bogged down discussing over 60 points agenda without going anywhere. Altaf Bhai sought my advice as to what he should do in such a situation. I told him how generous BIBI is, he should not put any conditions and accept to support her unconditionally.

However, relations between Ishaq and Bibi never had any smooth sailing. They became worse when on the advice of Attorney General YahyaBakhtiyar Bibi’s government decided to remove judges of the Supreme Court who were appointed out of turn. I was summoned at a high level cabinet meeting at PM house. She knew about my family relationship with Chief Justice of Supreme Court Mr Justice Mohammad Haleem. She asked me to rush to Haleem Sahib to know his mind about the decision he was to make regarding the petition about the tenure of judges.

Haleem Bhai was at home. I joined him over dinner at his official residence. When I told the urgency of my visit, he told me in utmost confidence that GIK had decided to dismiss Bibi’s government if it were not willing to accept judges appointed by him. Haleem Bhai advised me to convey to PM that Justice Haleem would not bail her out in the situation though he would like to. This tug of war continued between GIK and Bibi while Gen Aslam Beg continued his own twists and turns against PPP government. The developments soon worsened. It became apparent that a vote of no confidence against Bibi was being moved .

Earler in the month of June Rashid Latif attending with me judges case at the Supreme Court, Rashid Latif  told me that we shall have to fly to Islamabad to convey to BIBI an important message.  We took the first flight in the morning and from Islamabad Airport straight away drove to PM House.

Month of June was over, PM decided to set things right, muster support from friendly Muslim Countries. She plan an emergency visit to least 16 Muslim countries to brief the friendly heads of state on Kashmir issue and other related unfolding intrigues in Pakistan.

Having received the message from Aslam Beg that Bibi’s time was over, it was much more like Bhutto sahib. Like him Bibi also took tour of many Muslim countries for their support especially for Kashmir cause and to lay bare the intrigues by the Praetorian forces to dislodge her.

On August 2, 1990 BIBI was in Karachi. I was with her to draft her August 14 speech for the parliament. We sat at her Clifton residence to discuss the draft and contents of her August 14 speech and the subjective environment. I was of the view that since It seemed her game was over it would be wise for her to have a heart to heart discussion with Gen Aslam Beg and his generals.