

Bhutto Widower elected Pakistan President

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I will be subservient to parliament: Zardari 6 Sep 2008, 2103 hrs IST,PTI

ISLAMABAD: Vowing to fix “imbalances” in Pakistan’s political system following his election as the new President, ruling PPP chief Asif Ali Zardari on Saturday said the presidency will be subservient to parliament. (Watch)

Zardari, who won the presidential poll by an overwhelming majority, described his victory as “another step towards the transition to democracy” that his slain wife, former premier Benazir Bhutto, was committed to.

“I reiterate parliament is sovereign. This President shall be subservient to the parliament,” Zardari told a gathering of leaders of the Pakistan People’s Party and its coalition partners at an iftar hosted in the Prime Minister’s House.

In a statement issued by the PPP, Zardari said he would “fix the imbalances in the system, bring peace into the country and unite all democratic forces to consolidate the political system”.

After a decade of non-democratic rule, the presidency had come to be seen as “the centre of conspiracies against the nation”, he added.

Addressing the gathering, Zardari, who was flanked by his daughters Bakhtawar and Asifa, said, “Today, the Pakistan People’s Party has gone over a great roadblock to complete the democratic process...It is the philosophy of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto in which we believe, which says democracy is the best revenge,” he said.

“We (took) revenge on the dictators in the form of democracy. She (Bhutto) taught us how to live, how to do politics...we all intend to follow the philosophies of PPP, the philosophy of (party founder) Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and the democracy that they gave their life for.”

Comparing his victory with a massive margin with that of “a dictator in uniform (who) could not perform”, he said: “Democracy talks and everybody hears.”

“To those who would say that the PPP or the presidency would be controversial under our guardianship and stewardship, I would say listen to democracy. Ninety-nine per cent of the people have spoken,” the President-elect said.

In the statement, Zardari vowed to carry forward his late wife’s mission “for a democratic and progressive Pakistan”.

He said his election as a President is the “triumph of the ideals, policies and principles” of Benazir Bhutto.

“She strongly believed that a system advocating people’s rule is the destiny of Pakistan and is worth every sacrifice. My election as the representative of the people of Pakistan is a demonstration that Mohtarma continues to live and rule from her grave,” he said.

Zardari, who became chief of the PPP after Bhutto was assassinated in a suicide attack in December last year, said that democratic process needs “total commitment from all political forces”.

“Pakistan’s democracy is being closely watched and there are arguments being made about its inability to hold. It’s a challenge, not only for me and for the democratic forces, but also for the people of Pakistan,” he said.

“We have to prove wrong the perception that Pakistan and democracy cannot go together. I want to tell all those doubting our nation’s commitment for a representative political order, that ours is the nation that has made the biggest sacrifices for the cause of democracy...”

He urged all democratic forces to support him in achieving the mission of bringing complete democracy to Pakistan. “My presence in the office represents the ideals that the nation wants its political leadership to implement. I need everybody’s support for this objective,” he said.

“It’s a historical opportunity for all political forces to change the future direction of the country. We must rise above party lines to shut the doors on non-democratic forces, once and for all.”

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