

TALKING POINT

ON PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS TO THE PARLIMENT

Press Release

28 October 2008

PROF. KHURSHID AHMAD



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Prof. khurshid Ahmad

Islamabad (October 28, 2008) : Senator Prof. Khurshid Ahmad, Naib Aamir Jamaat-e-' Islami and leader of the Independent Group of the Opposition in the Senate of Pakistan, while discussing the President's address to the Parliament has raised the following points in his speech in the Senate:

1. He welcomed that the President has addressed the joint session within two weeks of his election in contradistinction to General (Retd) Pervez Musharraf's behaviour who did not fulfill his constitutional obligation for four years.
2. He, however, expressed his disappointment that the address is full of platitudes and party propaganda and has fallen much short of what is expected of the President's address: i.e. outlining the Government's legislative and other programmes for the next year.
3. The Government has failed to fulfill, among others, the following promises that were made immediately after assumption of power:
 - a) Restoration of Judiciary and its Chief Justice Mr. Iftikhar Chaudhry.
 - b) Declaration as illegal the 3rd November declaration and all that was done under that to subvert the Judiciary and the Constitution.
 - c) Restoration of the 1973 Constitution as it was on 12 Oct. 1999 and the abrogation of changes brought about through 17th Constitutional Amendment. The proposed Parliamentary Committee to revisit the deformed Constitution has not been established until now. Instead, it seems Mr. Zardari is trying to use the authority arrogated by Retd. Gen. Musharraf through Constitutional deviations. The President is expected to act on the advice of the Prime Minister, yet he claims in this address "I can steer the country out of the darkness with the help of this Government".
 - d) Freedom of Information Act.
 - e) Restoration of students' unions, trade unions through due process of law.
 - f) Establishment of the proposed caucus on Kashmir.

- g) Fulfilling of other promises made in the Charter of Democracy which was also part of the manifesto of the PPP. There is no progress towards establishment of an independent Judicial Accountability mechanism for across the board, accountability of politicians, bureaucrats and others in positions of authority;
 - h) Similarly the reform of the Election Commission to make it truly independent remains un-fulfilled.
4. The address is extremely disappointing in respect of the continuation of the disastrous military operations in FATA, Bajaur, Swat and Balochistan. Simple apology to the people of Balochistan is of no use. Actions are more important than words and the fact is that these bloody operations continue unabated, as are violation of Pakistan's sovereignty by the US and ISAF forces. Nothing Worthwhile has been done to change the situation. It is sad that Mr. Asif Zardari and Mr. Gilani are following the policies of General (Retd) Pervez Musharraf and have failed to bring any change as was expected as a result of February elections.
 5. The law and order situation, the energy and food crisis, and now the serious financial crisis are an index of the failure of the Government. It has failed to come out with a cohesive policy and provide people with security of life and honor, ensure supply of essential commodities at reasonable price, national security and protection from foreign interventions and serious economic meltdown. The budgetary deficit as also Trade and Balance of Payments deficits have crossed all limits. The Government is living beyond its means and corruption is rife all around. Pakistan rupee is losing its value every day. We are once again knocking at the door of IMF. The President's address fails to give any guidelines in respect of these serious challenges.
 6. A major disappointment from this speech relates to total absence of any reform to the policy of the Government in respect of education, health, manpower development and science & technologies - perhaps the most important source for material regeneration and growth.
 7. The President's sermon that "ideas cannot be killed by repression" is being contradiction by what his own government is doing in the name of Military operations against what they describe as "extremism". If there is "extremism" it cannot be eradicated by repression. It is only through dialogue, education and mutual accommodation that such threats can be met.
 8. The issue of political corruption and financial embezzlement of those who served on positions of authority cannot be brushed aside. NRO has not washed away charges

against these. It is only by clearance through a trustworthy judicial process that those accused of corruption and abuse of power can prove their innocence; failing which, they must face the consequences of their misconduct. It is only through due process of justice that this issue can be resolved.

9. Finally, he said that Mr. Asif Ali Zardari has not de-linked himself from PPP leadership, and as such has failed to emerge as a neutral symbol of the Federation, as expected according to the Constitution. He is still working as head of a political party. This is a serious failure and it is high time to rectify this lapse.
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