

Speech of the Speaker at the Launch of the Programme of Parliamentary Studies



Mr. Jan Mohammad Jamali, Speaker Baluchistan Assembly!

Mr. Asad Qaiser, Speaker, Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa Assembly!

Honourable Parliamentarians!

Excellencies and members of the Civil Society!

Respected Vice Chancellors and Rectors of the Universities,

Guest, Ladies and Gentlemen!

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ and a very good morning to all of you!

With great pride and personal pleasure, I welcome you all at the launch of the Parliamentary Studies Programme.

It is indeed a day to rejoice and to remember.

It's a day when the neglect of many decades comes to an eventual end.

It's a day when a new beginning is being made by forging common alliance among the parliamentary and the academic leaderships to protect, preserve and promote democracy, freedoms and parliamentary institutions.

And to turn this dream into a formidable reality, our respective leaderships are planting these values in the young hearts and minds of our nation.

I therefore congratulate you all on the launch of the first-of-its kind academic programme of Parliamentary Studies.

I am most pleased to be joined on this occasion by the Hon'able Speakers of our provincial and legislative Assemblies.

Your presence, Hon'able Speakers! is a manifestation of our common resolve as Custodians of the House to strengthen the parliamentary traditions and institutions.

I am equally grateful to the illustrious leaderships of the Academia --- the distinguished Vice Chancellors and the Rectors --- who have gathered from all over the country to join us in this noble venture.

Distinguished Professors!

You are the intellectuals and thinkers of our nation. Today, we will be entrusting you with the flame of freedoms and democracy in shape of this course. From now onwards, it will be your sacred duty to keep the flame high and let every young mind and soul under your supervision be ignited with the passion of this flame.

Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen!

My colleague Meriyum Aurangzeb MNA has already elaborated in detail the need and necessity of an academic programme in Parliamentary Studies. She has also briefed you of our collective efforts during the last almost one and a half years in identifying, creating and then refining the contours and perimeters of this course and the wide-range of consultations carried out in this regard.

While I am indeed grateful to her and my other colleagues in the National Assembly Secretariat and PIPS for their untiring efforts, I also avail this opportunity to place my sincere appreciation to the British Houses of Parliament for their kind assistance. The services of our IP3 Consultants, especially Mr. Aziz Nishter are also praise-worthy.

My appreciation is also due to the Chairman and the team of the Higher Education Commission.

Indeed these are the collective efforts, which turned an idea into a workable reality.

This **collaboration**, ladies and gentlemen, is the very essence of democracy.

This very **idea of mutual consultation** and consensus building is the keystone of any functional parliamentary institution.

And this spirit of **“taking all along”** lies at the very heart of a pluralistic, participatory federation.

The Parliamentary Studies course intends to integrate these very ideals in the formal scheme of schooling.

It resolves to assure the young students that the days of arbitrary rule are over.

It aims to instil them with the **qualities** of accommodation and acceptance

It imbibes them with **values** of tolerance, peace and harmony.

What is more, it is focused to teach them the essentials **skills** of legal understanding and legislative drafting to become capable parliamentary workforce of tomorrow.

But more than anything, Ladies and Gentlemen!

This Parliamentary Course is designed to teach them every day that Pakistan was created as an expression of the free will of the people. It can be kept together, in unity and strength through **this free will**.

The founder of the nation, the Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah had cleared any possible mist of doubt about the future structure of the state when he said and I quote:

“Democracy is in the blood of Musalmans, who look upon complete equality of mankind and believe in fraternity, equality and liberty. These are the founding principles of Pakistan.”

Pakistan’s saga is the deviation from this chosen path. The successive usurpers of power did not only infringe upon the Quaid’s vision of a democratic Federal Parliamentary Pakistan, but they also filled the textbooks with fallacy and fiction. While K. K. Aziz’s famous treatise “Murder of History” provides a painful yet interesting account of this forgery of facts, I am haunted by the words of legendary journalist H. K. Burki, who once wrote:

“The younger people may have heard stories about the past, but they would not know that it was another country; A vastly different Pakistan.”

No textbook documents the unsung heroes of the democratic struggle ---- the ones Faiz Ahmad Faiz ardently referred as the “the unknown martyrs of the dark alleys”.

No classroom fulfils the moral obligation of preparing youths to be active participants in a social democracy and become leaders of tomorrow.

No institution trains them to become qualified parliamentary workforce to advance the ideals of good legislation, adequate oversight and genuine representation.

Is it not a national dilemma that the while enjoying the fruits of freedom, the youth has little knowledge about the enormous sacrifices rendered by the political workers to win and protect all such constitutional rights?

Is it not unfortunate that for the sake of petty gains, the youth of the country has been misled, kept miss-informed and used for mob-rule!

Is it not a criminal neglect that no law school in the country offers "Legislative Drafting" as an independent discipline and hence we lack able draftsmen to write good laws?

This neglect, Ladies and Gentlemen! provides the answer for a fragile democracy, of weak institutions and a troubled federation.

It is time to rectify the errors of the past. It is time to rediscover the very Pakistan that the founding fathers had dreamed of.

I therefore urge upon the academia to help Pakistan in building a strong democracy.

I remind you of what Goethe had once said:

"Freedoms must be reinvented in every generation"

So I call upon you to groom the young minds in the molds of democratic norms and values.

Teach them, in the words of Martin Luther King that **"in the process of gaining our rightful place, we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. Political struggles thus have to be on the high plane of dignity and discipline."**

Train them, in the words of Nelson Mandela that **"there is no easy walk to freedom anywhere, and many of us will have to pass through the valley of death again and again before we reach the mountain tops of our desires."**

Institute in them the qualities of free dialogue and debate within the framework of national integrity.

Tell them that democracy can only work within discipline where citizens raise all voices in defence of all viewpoints and still manage to avoid pandemonium.

And remind them every day that:

- Liberty is not license;
- Freedom does not mean insulting anyone; and
- One does not have the right to force one's way on others.

On the contrary, it is all about recognizing one's limits and respecting religious, social, political and cultural diversity.

For these are the defining lines between a functional democracy and a disastrous anarchy.

Let me assure you all on behalf of the Parliament and indeed on behalf of all provincial legislatures that on every step, we will be readily available for any help, advise and assistance for the successful implementation of this programme.

I am directing the Pakistan Institute of Parliamentary Services to keep close contact with all universities and regularly engage with them to monitor the progress.

On our part, it will be the greatest pleasure of all our respective legislatures to open our doors for the students of the new course as interns and researchers and employ the graduates of the new discipline as our competent workforce.

Dear Friends, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen!

As I conclude, I wish to remind that just as democracy is not a product but a process, the inauguration of this course is also not an end in itself.

It's only a beginning.

It's a beginning to build a new democratic polity of accommodation, respect and tolerance.

It's a beginning to create informed public opinion and enlighten young minds.

It's a beginning to lay the foundations of strengthened institutions to take up the challenges of time with able and apt workforce.

It's a beginning to honour history and connect it with the future.

I thank you all.

Pakistan Paindabad