

## **From Loyalty to Dismissal: A Study of the Political Rift between Benazir Bhutto and Farooq Leghari (1993–1996)**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper endeavours to explain the relationship between Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and President Farooq Ahmad Khan Leghari from 1993 to 1996, when both were in office. Leghari, a close confidant of Benazir Bhutto and a senior member of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), was nominated by her for the presidency. With Benazir's political support, he was elected as the President of Pakistan in 1993, following the resignation of former President Ghulam Ishaq Khan. In the beginning, all went well, but during the final phase of Benazir's government, their relationship deteriorated, and Leghari began to obstruct the functioning of the government. Ultimately, Leghari, with the support of the opposition and some elements in the establishment, dismissed the government of Benazir in November 1996. This study examines the complex nature of the relationship between Benazir and Leghari. Furthermore, the paper critically evaluates the range of factors and key political events that contributed to the deterioration of relations between Benazir Bhutto and Leghari. The study also explores the underlying causes and circumstances that prompted Leghari to distance himself from Benazir Bhutto and ultimately dismiss her elected government. The paper also seeks to assess the impact of these strained relations on Benazir's politics.*

**Keywords:** Benazir, Farooq Leghari, 8<sup>th</sup> Amendment, Asif Ali Zardari, Sajjad Ali Shah

### **Introduction**

In the original constitution of 1973, the office of the president was just ceremonial, with no influence over the legislature or the selection of the prime minister while the real executive authority rested in the office of the prime Minister. (Waseem, 2021, p. 289) But after the insertion of the 8<sup>th</sup> Amendment on 30 December 1985, the office of the president suddenly became more powerful. General Zia-ul-Haq, who seized power through a coup d'état against Zulfikar Ali

Bhutto's government on 5 July 1977, reluctantly agreed to restore the political system in the country. However, he was determined to retain substantial authority for himself.(Ali, 2003, pp. 132–134) Fearing that the PPP could come into power, General Zia held general elections in 1985 on a non-party basis (B. Bhutto, 2008b, p. 192). Even after the elections, he reluctantly agreed to restore the constitution, provided that the parliament first passed his proposed constitutional amendment bill (Aziz, 2009, pp. 79–81). The National Assembly did so on 30 December 1985 and incorporated General Zia's constitutional reforms in the form of the 8<sup>th</sup> Amendment. In response, General Zia-ul-Haq lifted the martial law on the same day.(Arif, 1995, pp. 235–236) The insertion of the 8th amendment significantly altered the original nature of the 1973's Constitution. It transferred numerous administrative powers to the office of the President, powers that were previously the prerogative of the prime minister. Most notably, the inclusion of Article 58(2)(b) rendered the prime minister and the National Assembly subservient to the President.(Waseem, 2021, pp. 290–291) This Article empowered the President to dissolve the National Assembly and dismiss the prime minister at his discretion (Constitution Eighth Amendment) Act, 1985, n.d., p. 224). In this way, General Zia-ul-Haq sought to consolidate authority over the parliament. Obviously, the office of the president became more powerful than the prime minister. The prime minister could be driven out of power without any cogent reason. The inclusion of this controversial clause not only undermined parliamentary sovereignty but also triggered a prolonged phase of political instability in the country. The first government to fall victim to Article 58(2)(b) was that of Prime Minister Muhammad Khan Junejo, who, despite being a handpicked prime minister of General Zia-ul-Haq, was dismissed from office on 28 May 1988. Junejo annoyed General Zia when he stepped out of his shoes and began to think that he had real powers.(H. Khan, 2017, p. 385)

Following the death of General Zia ul-Haq on 17 August 1988 in an airplane crash, Ghulam Ishaq Khan, the Chairman Senate was elected as the new president. Ishaq Khan also used the weapon of 58 (2)(b) twice; first against Benazir's government in August 1990 and second time in April 1993 against the government of Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif.(R. Khan, 1998, p. 110) By and large the charges put forth against both governments were identical. However, in 1993, the Supreme Court declared the President's dissolution order illegal and restored the government of Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif.(*Muhammad Nawaz Sharif v. Federation of Pakistan*, 1993, p. 473) Yet, Ishaq Khan announced that he would again dismiss the government as Article 58 (2)(b) of the

amended constitution gave him discretionary power to do it.(Ziring, 2003, p. 227) This led to a political deadlock that eventually resolved through the intervention of the then Chief of Army Staff, General Abdul Waheed Kakar. A compromise was brokered under which both Nawaz Sharif and Ishaq Khan agreed to resign.(Aziz, 2009, p. 138; H. Khan, 2017, pp. 422–423). Nawaz Sharif advised the president to dissolve the national assembly, while Ghulam Ishaq Khan signed the dissolution order and also resigned from the office of the president (Aziz, 2009, p. 138). Following the dissolution of the National Assembly, general elections were held in 1993 in which the PPP emerged as the single largest party in the National Assembly. Subsequently, PPP was successful in establishing a coalition government at the centre while Benazir was elected as a Prime Minister for the second time.

### **Presidential Elections**

Following the appointment of the Prime Minister, the elections for the office of the President were also due because of the premature resignation of Ishaq Khan. Interestingly, Ishaq Khan anticipated being nominated as the presidential candidate of the PPP. His expectations were not unfounded. After the dismissal of Nawaz Sharif’s government in April 1993, Ghulam Ishaq Khan formed a caretaker set up in which Asif Ali Zardari, the spouse of Benazir was also included as federal minister (Talbot, 1998, p. 326). Even after resignation, Ishaq Khan demonstrated a degree of sympathy towards the PPP. This, he believed, would prompt Benazir to support his candidacy for the presidency (R. Khan, 1998, p. 118). It did not happen. The office of the president was still armed with the 8<sup>th</sup> Amendment; therefore, Benazir could not afford to take a risk by appointing a person who had already dismissed her government. Instead, she preferred to nominate her loyal man Farooq Ahmad Khan Leghari as the PPP’s candidate (Talbot, 2012, p. 144). An alumnus of prestigious Aitchison College, Forman Christian College, Lahore, and St. Catherine College of Oxford University, Leghari was a career bureaucrat who joined the Civil Service of Pakistan after getting through Civil services exam in 1964. However, he did not stay in the government service for long and resigned in 1970 to join the PPP (Haqqani, 2005, p. 198). In the 1970 election, he won a National Assembly seat from District Dera Ghazi Khan. He was considered a close associate of Benazir and served as a Minister of Water and Power during Benazir’s first government(R. Khan, 1998, p. 118). Although following the 1988 elections, the Islami Jamhoori Itehad (IJI) succeeded in establishing a government in Punjab province and Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif

was appointed as the Chief Minister, Benazir did not accept this government. She believed that the PPP's mandate in Punjab was manipulated and that the establishment rigged the elections to install her political opponents in the province. (Yousaf, 1999, p. 28) At that time, Punjab was the largest province of the country, home to more than 50% of Pakistan's population. Therefore, Benazir was keen to bring the PPP government in the province. In this regard, she gave responsibilities to Leghari for in-house change in the Punjab. Leghari met with many independent provincial legislators and convinced them to join the PPP (Jalal, 2014, p. 200). However, Leghari needed to get the support of twenty four legislators to bring in-house change but he was unsuccessful, as IJI had the support of the establishment as well as President Ishaq Khan (Ahmad, 1995, p. 210). Again, in 1993, Leghari was the leading member of the team that held secret negotiations with the president and his team and assured them of PPP's full support if President Ghulam Ishaq Khan dismissed the government. (R. Khan, 1998, p. 86). He remained steadfast in his commitment to the PPP during difficult times and was imprisoned multiple times during Zia's regime, and again after the dismissal of Benazir Bhutto's first government (Haqqani, 2005, p. 202; Schofield, 2020, p. 199).

In the presidential election, Farooq Leghari secured a decisive victory by winning 274 votes, defeating his rival Wasim Sajjad of Pakistan Muslim League (N) who garnered only 168 votes (Election Commission of Pakistan, 1994, pp. 328–329). Benazir heaved a sigh of relief after the appointment of her own party's President. Lacking a two-thirds parliamentary majority, she was not in a position to undo the 8<sup>th</sup> Amendment. So, Benazir Bhutto and other PPP leaders were reassured by the belief that their government was unlikely to be dismissed by a president from within their own party. With Leghari in office, the PPP leadership felt that the government stood a better chance of completing its constitutional tenure. (Ziring, *Pakistan in the Twentieth Century*, 1997, p. 550) Furthermore, unlike her previous tenure, the PPP successfully formed governments in both Punjab and Sindh provinces, enhancing Benazir's political authority. Consequently, her second term as Prime Minister began under more favourable political conditions, positioning her as a comparatively stronger leader than during her first term in office (Talbot, 1998, p. 333).

### **Cordial relations**

In his inaugural Presidential address, Farooq Leghari pledged his full support to the democratic process and expressed his commitment to repealing the 8th Amendment. (Daily Dawn', 1993)

Benazir also addressed the occasion, expressing her satisfaction over Leghari's election. She remarked that his appointment had effectively rendered the 8<sup>th</sup> Amendment and Article 58 (2)(b) irrelevant, at least for the next five years (Jalal, 2014, p. 189). Benazir further assured that her government would soon introduce legislation aimed at annulling the controversial amendment. She expected to gain support from Nawaz Sharif, as he too had been adversely affected by this provision (The News 1993). However, contrary to these commitments, the PPP government did not table any bill to repeal the amendment during its tenure.

The relations between Benazir and Leghari apparently remained cordial, and their differences did not surface until 1995. Leghari did not publicly question the widely alleged undemocratic actions of Benazir's government and instead supported her in curbing political opposition. Notably, he assisted in the dismissal of the opposition-led provincial government of Chief Minister Sabir Shah in the then North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Jaffrelot, 2015, p. 250). On 25 February 1994, Leghari issued order under Article-234 of 1973's Constitution, directing the Governor of NWFP to impose Governor's rule in the province (H. Khan, 2023, p. 210). Similarly, in 1995, when Benazir parted ways with her coalition partner, Mian Manzoor Ahmad Wattoo, the Punjab Chief Minister, Leghari did not hesitate to remove Manzoor Wattoo from his position. He suspended the Punjab Assembly on 5 September 1995 under Article 234 of the Constitution and imposed Governor rule in the province (*Manzoor Ahmad Wattoo v. Federation of Pakistan*, 1997, Daily Dawn 1995). Similarly, Leghari did not object to the appointment of Justice Sajjad Ali Shah as the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in 1994. Although Sajjad Shah ranked third in the seniority list, he was appointed reportedly due to his loyalty to Benazir (H. Khan, 2017, p. 434). This marked the first instance in the history of the Supreme Court where a junior judge was elevated to the position of Chief Justice (Niaz, 2011, p. 191). Likewise, the government was accused of filling the superior judiciary with judges considered politically aligned with the ruling party. Initially, several appointments to the superior judiciary were made without meaningful prior consultation with the president. Nevertheless, Leghari approved all such appointments and did not publicly object to them (Malik, 2001, p. 73). On the contrary, he maintained that the appointments were made purely on merit.

### **The Beginning of Conflict**

However, the happy marriage between President Leghari and Prime Minister Benazir did not last

very long and they indulged in differences over multiple issues. There were several causes of their conflict and differences but the root cause of the emergence of these differences was that Benazir considered Farooq Leghari merely a nominal head of state, as often happened in the parliamentary form of government. Following the swearing-in ceremony, when Leghari intended to address the nation via state television, Benazir forbade him, asserting that such an address was unnecessary, as she sought to diminish the political significance of the presidency (R. Khan, 1998, p. 120). Leghari was frequently excluded from key government decisions and relegated to a largely ceremonial role. Benazir expected that Farooq Leghari owed his election as President to her political support and would work like her subordinate. Empowered by the controversial Eighth Amendment, however, Farooq Leghari was unwilling to serve as a mere symbolic President indefinitely, making the emergence of tensions inevitable. He wanted the same role in the affairs of government as his predecessors (Zia-ul Haq and Ghulam Ishaq Khan) enjoyed. He wanted to share administrative powers along with the Prime Minister. Meanwhile, the opposition political parties, particularly PML (N) added fuel to the fire and made him feel his insignificant role in the affairs of the government. He was termed as puppet President by the opposition. The opposition leaders urged him to play the constitutional role of the President. Encouraged by the support of opposition political parties and determined to assert his constitutional authority, Farooq Leghari began to play a more active role in governmental affairs, which was unacceptable to Benazir.

### **Emergence of the Mehran Bank Scandal**

The Mehran Bank scandal marked the first significant incident that created friction between President Farooq Leghari and Benazir. This controversy came to light on 24 March 1994, following the arrest of Younus Habib, the bank's president. During the investigation, Younus Habib revealed the extent of financial corruption within the country's political and institutional system (Kiessling, 2016, p. 119). Media reports suggested that approximately five billion rupees were embezzled from both Habib Bank and Mehran Bank, with funds allegedly distributed among influential politicians belonging to different political parties and military personnel including former Army Chief General Aslam Baig and General Asad Durrani, the head of Military Intelligence. Among politicians, most of the beneficiaries were the leaders of Pakistan Muslim League (N) and the PPP. Despite the fact that several political figures, including leaders from the PPP, were allegedly associated with the scandal, Farooq Leghari's name remained at the forefront,

while the involvement of others received comparatively little media attention. The situation escalated when Mehran Bank failed to provide a transparent record of funds deposited by the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), exposing discrepancies within the bank's records. The scandal took on greater political significance after opposition leader Nawaz Sharif, during a National Assembly session on 31 May 1994, publicly accused President Farooq Leghari of direct involvement. Nawaz Sharif claimed that Leghari had used Younus Habib and Mehran Bank to sell a low-value plot of land located in District Dera Ghazi Khan for an inflated amount of 15 million rupees (Hussain, 1994, p. 26). Leghari admitted that Younus Habib had facilitated the land transaction; however, he categorically denied any allegations of corruption or illegality. In response, Nawaz Sharif led members of the media to Dera Ghazi Khan, the native district of Leghari, showing them a barren and non-agricultural piece of land, which he claimed was the property belonging to the president (Amin, 1995, p. 141).

The Mehran Bank episode significantly strained Leghari's relations with the government. This scandal questioned the integrity and honesty of Leghari. The scandal irreparably damaged Farooq Ahmad Leghari's public image as an honest and upright leader. Leghari complained that the government did not come to his rescue during a difficult time and did not properly defend him. He was also unhappy when the government publicly announced to form a judicial commission to investigate the charges put forth against him (Amin, 1995, p. 142).

### **Intensification of the Conflict**

In 1995, Benazir became involved in a serious conflict with Justice Sajjad Ali Shah, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and many other senior judges of the superior courts over the appointment of judges to the superior judiciary (H. Khan, 2017, p. 435). The judiciary viewed the government's recent judicial appointments as a threat to its independence and alleged that the government was packing the judiciary with the PPP like-minded judges. The Supreme Court declared the appointments unlawful as the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and the respective High Courts were not consulted (*Al-Jehad Trust v. Federation of Pakistan*, 1996). Benazir suspected Leghari was conspiring against her government along with Justice Sajjad Ali Shah. The timing of subsequent events lent some weight to these suspicions. On 21 September 1996, just a day after the assassination of Benazir's brother, Mir Murtaza Bhutto, Leghari filed a reference before the Supreme Court, seeking its opinion on whether the Constitution of 1973 empowered

him to appoint judges of the superior judiciary independently, or whether the Prime Minister's consultation was binding (Mian, 2004, p. 204). Moreover, the Supreme Court was made open on 21 September 1996, which was a public holiday, to enable the president to file a reference (Mian, 2004, p. 203).

The political rift between Leghari and Benazir came into the spotlight towards the end of 1995, as General Abdul Waheed Kakar's retirement, set for January 1996, drew near (LaPorte Jr, 1997, p. 120). Benazir's preferred candidate for the position of Army Chief was Lieutenant General Javed Ashraf Qazi, the former DG-ISI and, at the time, the Commander of XXX Corps in Gujranwala (Kiessling, 2016, p. 127). During his tenure as DG- ISI, Benazir maintained a cooperative working relationship with him (B. Bhutto, 2008b, p. 209). However, President Farooq Leghari did not endorse her choice and, instead, appointed General Jehangir Karamat as the new Army Chief without taking Benazir into confidence (Kiessling, 2016, p. 127). It is worth mentioning that under the 8th Amendment, the President exercised the authority to appoint the chiefs of the armed forces, a power that could be exercised without prior consultation with the prime minister. The President's decision further exacerbated the political rift between Benazir and Farooq Leghari.

In mid-1995, Benazir and her family members faced multiple allegations of corruption and embezzlement. The Independent magazine claimed that in 1995, Bhutto's family purchased a luxurious twenty-room mansion in Rockwood, England, spanning 350 acres, commonly referred to as the Surrey Palace, allegedly acquired through kickbacks (Bennett Jones, 2002, p. 232). Leghari, already disillusioned with the government, considered this an opportune moment to publicly criticise its conduct. Instead of defending the PPP members, he began publicly amplifying the corruption allegations against the PPP leaders, particularly targeting Asif Ali Zardari, towards whom he harboured strong personal animosity, alleging his involvement in corrupt practices. Moreover, he urged Benazir to take immediate and decisive action against the corrupt elements within the party. However, Benazir and other PPP leaders perceived the President's statements and actions as deliberate attempts to undermine the government at the behest of opposition parties. From the PPP's perspective, it appeared that the President's loyalty had shifted away from the ruling party and aligned with the opposition.

The relations between Benazir and Leghari reached their lowest ebb following the assassination of Mir Murtaza Bhutto on 20 September 1996, in front of his home at 70 Clifton, Karachi. Mir Murtaza Bhutto had been on bad terms with Benazir and Asif Ali Zardari since his return to

Pakistan in 1993, after fifteen years of exile (Daily Dawn 1993). Following dismissal of his father government in 1977, Murtaza never came to Pakistan. Nusrat Bhutto, Benazir's mother also supported Murtaza in his squabbling with Benazir and Asif Zardari. Following his assassination, Murtaza's family (his Lebanese origin wife Ghinwa Bhutto and daughter Fatima Bhutto) alleged that Asif Ali Zardari was behind this murder (F. Bhutto, 2010, pp. 180–183; Jalal, 2014, p. 218). The brutal killing of Murtaza Bhutto largely diminished the popularity and legitimacy of Benazir's government as many people had begun pointing fingers towards Asif Ali Zardari. Leghari also openly began to allege that Asif Ali Zardari had his hands behind the assassination of Murtaza. He pointed out that all the police officers who were appointed at 70 Clifton including the Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Shoaib Suddle, were the appointees of the PPP government (Nawaz, 2008, p. 485). On the other hand, Benazir accused Farooq Leghari of being behind the assassination of her brother because he wanted to weaken her government. Leghari took these allegations seriously and warned Benazir not to take political advantage of the assassination. Meanwhile, Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif also played a role while encouraging the president to keep a distance from Benazir. He met with Leghari on 26 September 1996 and contended that the government was not being run in accordance with the Constitution and demanded that the president should apply Article 58(2)(b) of the Constitution to get rid of the government (Mian, 2004, p. 204). Nawaz assured his full support of Leghari in his squabbling with Benazir. Reportedly, Farooq Leghari told Nawaz Sharif that he would act according to the constitution and invoke Article 58 (2)(b) if the national interest so demanded (Daily Dawn 1996). Other opposition parties also pledged their support to Leghari in the event if he chose to dismiss the government. (Nawaz, 2008, p. 485).

### **Role of Non-State Actors**

It is widely believed that Leghari could not take the extreme step of dismissing the government without the consent of the high brass of the army. However, it is doubtful whether Army Chief General Jehangir Karamat had any involvement in the dismissal (The Nation 2001). Most probably he remained neutral. As Benazir wrote in her posthumously published book, "... The Zia elements also worked on President Leghari. The army chief tried to help the government. However, he was constrained by the constitutional power of the president over the army." The president had the power to dismiss both the parliament and the army chief" (B. Bhutto,

2008b, p. 209).

However, the intelligence agencies were believed to have played a role in the dismissal of the government. Benazir also believed that things changed after General Mehmud Ahmad became the head of MI while General Bakhtiar Rana and Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain gained their influence within the ISI (B. Bhutto, 2008, p. 209). Benazir also accused General Mehmud Ahmad, the conservative minded Director General of Military Intelligence (DG-MI), of putting pressure on Leghari. Benazir claimed that Leghari's close relative informed her in August 1996 that General Mehmud asked him to convey a message to the president, to dismiss the government (B. Bhutto, 2007, p. 423). General Mehmud threatened that otherwise the military would remove both of them from their offices. Leghari felt emboldened to dismiss the government as he had the backing of Nawaz Sharif and Chief Justice Sajjad Ali Shah (B. Bhutto, 2008, p. 286).

### **Towards Dismissal**

Encouraged by all these factors, and by the growing unpopularity of the government in the wake of its poor performance, the President finally dissolved the elected government of Benazir on 5 November 1996 on charges of corruption, maladministration and extra-judicial killings in Karachi (Daily Dawn 1996). Anticipating that the Superior Courts might reinstate the dismissed administration, Farooq Leghari also cited the government's inability to comply with Supreme Court directives in the dissolution order (Yousaf, 1999, p. 247). Leghari did not reveal his plan to dismiss the government until the very end. When Benazir heard rumours about her possible dismissal, she instructed General (Ret) Naseer Ullah Babar, the Interior Minister and Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao, then Chief Minister of NWFP, to approach Leghari and seek clarification regarding the circulating rumours.

Farooq Leghari did not reveal his intention and told them, "If the army put a gun to his head, he would not dismiss the government. She is my sister and appointed me, President. I am a Baloch and cannot turn against my benefactress" (B. Bhutto, 2008a, pp. 180–181). Benazir's deputies were satisfied and told her that Leghari had no intention of dismissing the government.

Benazir decided to challenge the dissolution order and filed a petition before the Supreme Court on 13 November 1996, contesting the legality of the presidential action (S. A. Shah, 2001, p. 296). Justice Sajjad Shah adopted a rigid and confrontational stance during the proceedings (N. H. Shah, 2002, p. 118). It was largely perceived that his approach was intended to delay the proceedings,

thereby politically disadvantaging Benazir (H. Khan, 2017, p. 445). Twice he returned the petition on procedural grounds. After much delay, the Supreme Court was finally ready to accept the petition and began hearing it on 3 December 1996. As anticipated, the Supreme Court upheld the dissolution order of the President by a majority of six to one (*Benazir Bhutto v Farooq Ahmad Leghari*, 1998). The verdict was announced on 29 January 1997, merely four days before the commence of the general elections day, adversely affected the PPP's electoral performance (Talbot, 1998, p. 353).

The premature dismissal of the PPP's government, combined with the Supreme Court's verdict announced just four days before the 1997 elections, significantly undermined the PPP's electoral performance, which remained abysmal (Jones & Mariam, 2020, p. 51). The negative media campaign against Benazir and her husband, initiated under the caretaker government of Farooq Leghari, along with widespread corruption allegations, further contributed to the PPP's poor electoral performance. The PPP was virtually wiped out from the central government and failed to form government in any of the four provinces (Mahmood, 2000, p. 39). PPP never experienced such a shameful electoral defeat since it began to participate in electoral politics since 1970. Following the dismissal of Benazir's government, Asif Ali Zardari was arrested on multiple charges; however, he was not convicted in any of the cases put forth against him and was eventually released in 2004 (Bennett Jones, 2020, p. 208; Kiessling, 2016, p. 131). Fearing of arrest also compelled Benazir to go to self-exile in 1998, and she only returned to Pakistan in 2007; shortly after she was assassinated at Liaquat Bagh, Rawalpindi. Her absence from the country ultimately weakened the PPP.

## **Conclusion**

Farooq Leghari was elevated to the position of Presidency largely due to his loyalty to Benazir Bhutto and the PPP. He was a loyal member of the PPP and remained steadfast during the testing time. After facing the atrocities of Zia ul Haq's regime, most of the party stalwarts either left the party or lowered their tone against martial law, but Leghari did not succumb to the pressure. Benazir was confident that Leghari would remain loyal to her and would readily serve as a ceremonial head of the state. This confidence likely influenced her decision not to introduce any bill in the Assembly to repeal the controversial Article 58(2)(b) and strip the President of executive and legislative powers. However, she hardly bothered to consult him or took him into confidence

on important administrative matters or informed him about the government's decisions. Armed with the 8th Amendment, Leghari remained a ceremonial head of state for a short time, but later he was inclined to use the powers which the amended constitution of 1973 bestowed upon him. This assertion of power was unacceptable to Benazir and became the root cause of their political conflict.

There are some events and factors which deepened their conflict and finally, the situation reached the point of no return. Leghari began to assert his constitutional powers and interfering in the administrative affairs. He made some key appointments without prior approval of Benazir. Particularly, the appointment of General Jahangir Karamat as the head of the army largely annoyed Benazir. Leghari also sided with the judiciary when Benazir locked into conflict with it. Leghari had the support of Chief Justice Sajjad Ali Shah and Benazir began to believe that both were conspiring against her government. Meanwhile, Leghari began to meet with opposition leaders and started issuing controversial statements. When the international media allegedly exposed the corruption of Benazir and her spouse, Leghari, instead of supporting them, began to criticise the government. Similarly, Leghari did not support Benazir in her conflict with her brother Mir Murtaza Bhutto and her mother Nusrat Bhutto.

The establishment was also responsible for their estranged relations. It is widely believed that the establishment put pressure on Leghari to part ways with Benazir and the PPP. Leghari who was already displeased with government for not giving him importance and for not defending him in the Mehran Bank Scandal, went into the establishment's lap. According to Benazir, the intelligence agencies compelled him to dismiss her government which he did on 5 November 1996. The premature dismissal of the PPP's government had left a dark impact on Benazir and her party. The PPP remained out of power almost eleven years after the dismissal. The PPP took a long time to come out from this setback.

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