# Nation pledges to uphold democratic norms

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ISLAMABAD, Feb 18 (APP): Nation celebrated Day of Democracy on Wednesday with commitment to uphold the democratic norms and supremacy of the Constitution and Parliament. The day marked the restoration of democracy after prolonged dictatorship in the country as the political leadership also pledged not to let the country fall again into clutches of dictatorship.

On this eve, Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani urged the nation and political parties to strengthen democracy in the country so as not to allow undemocratic powers any chance to bring in dictatorship again.

“The people of Pakistan will prove it to the world that they are the true flag bearers of democracy and a peace-loving nation and will stand by the world in fight against global terrorism,” the Prime Minister said.

He paid rich tributes to the political leadership of the country that strived for the restoration of civil liberties, democracy and supremacy of parliament.

“All the political parties are moving ahead with a resolve not to let anyone dare to impose an era of dictatorship in the country again,” the Prime Minister said.

He also assured supremacy of the Parliament, strengthening institutions, eliminating extremism and militancy, ensuring transparency and good governance and economic reforms were the priorities of his government.

He vowed that Pakistan will be turned into a true democratic, progressive, welfare state in light of the vision of late Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto.

The Prime Minister said PPP always rendered supreme sacrifices for restoration of democracy. “PPP is the name of an ideology and symbol of federation. It believes in people’s empowerment.”

Sindh Chief Minister Syed Qaim Ali Shah described the day as ‘milestone’ towards strong democracy and attributed this success to valuable sacrifices of political workers.

“Not only the workers but our great leader also laid down her life for democracy,” he said, “and now we are following her policy of national reconciliation for a strong democracy.”

He said under PPP’s 5-point “e”
manifesto, a number of programs have been launched including free distribution of land, health and education facilities, houses and plots to poor, employment, Benazir Income Support Program, distribution of Zakat among poor families and training with stipend to unemployed youth.

As the nation also recalled the
sacrifices of those who laid down their lives for the cause of democracy and suffered the atrocities of dictators, political leadership across the country widely hailed the restoration of democracy a year back when the masses turned tables on the dictator’s supported bunch of politicians.

“Let democracy flourish now and
masses problems are solved,” said Minister for Tourism, Maulana Atta-ur-Rehman and felicitated the nation on completion of one year of restoration of democracy.

Minister for Privatization,
Syed Naveed Qamar described the day as milestone in country’s democratic history.

“This was the day when
democratic forces were strengthened to lead the country towards progress and prosperity,” he said.

He stressed for collective
efforts by all political parties and mentioned to the government’s steps like accountability in the parliament, Benazir Income Support Program, lifting ban on labour unions and regularizing services of contractual employees.

Congratulating the masses,
Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Northern Areas (KANA) Qamar Zaman Kaira said Pakistan People’s Party is following the pattern of its Shaheed leader Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, and would overcome the challenges gripping the country at present.

“February 18 is a remarkable
day because on this day, a year ago, people had rejected dictatorship and supported democratic forces,” he said.

He paid homage to PPP’s
martyred leader, Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Shaheed, who sacrificed life for cause of democracy in the country.

Speaker Punjab Assembly Rana
Muhammad Iqbal Khan on the eve urged a vital role of the Parliament to strengthen democracy.

He said first time in the
political history of the country, credit goes to this assembly for taking lead in adopting a unanimous resolution against a dictator.

Punjab Minister for Finance and
Planning & Development Tanvir Ashraf Kaira said democratic institutions of the country are being strengthened and decisions are now taken in the Parliament, not in the drawing rooms.

He said the government is
committed to serve the people and strengthen democratic process and respect each other’s mandate.

“February 18, 2008 was the day,
when the people voted for democracy and we respect their will,” he said.

NWFP’s Education Minister
Sardar Hussain Babak said development and stability of the country depend on democracy and urged all the political parties and people to work for sustainable democracy in the country.

“Democracy has completed one
successful year on February 18 and the government was trying its best to live upto the people’s expectations,” he said.

Parliamentary Secretary for
Health Dr. Mehreen Bhutto recalled PPP’s sacrifices for democracy and reiterated her party’s commitment to strengthen democratic institutions in the country.

“The ultimate goal of democracy
is to ensure the dignity and fundamental rights of individuals to achieve social justice and development,” she said.

“February 18 is an important
day in the history of the country as democracy was restored on that day after long military rule due to sincere efforts and sacrifice of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto,” she added.

The day was also marked with
commitments and pledges to collectively forge ahead for strengthening democracy and block the way of dictatorship.