**1973 Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and Parliament**

**Background:**

The Parliament of Pakistan, literally "Pakistan advisory council" or "Pakistan consultative assembly") is the federal and supreme legislative body of Pakistan. It is a bicameral federal legislature that consists of the Senate as the upper house and the National Assembly as the lower house. According to the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the President of Pakistan is also a component of the Parliament. The National Assembly is elected for a five-year term on the basis of adult franchise and one-man one-vote. The tenure of a Member of the National Assembly is for the duration of the house, or sooner, in case the Member dies or resigns. The tenure of the National Assembly also comes to an end if dissolved on the advice of the Prime Minister or by the president in his discretion under the Constitution.

**Main points:**

The first session of the National Assembly, due to the delay caused by the separation of East Pakistan, was held on 14 April 1972 at the State Bank Building, Islamabad, in which all 144 Members from West Pakistan and two from former East Pakistan (Mr. Noor-ul-Amin and Raja Tridev Roy who had chosen to join Pakistan) participated. On 17 April 1972 an Interim Constitution was adopted by the National Assembly, which provided for a Presidential form of Government. Under this Constitution, the National Assembly was not to be dissolved earlier than 14 August 1973. The Interim Constitution dealt in detail with the distribution of powers between the Centre and the Provinces. The Assembly also formed a Constitution Committee on 17 April 1972 to prepare the first draft for framing a Constitution. The report of the Committee was presented with a draft Constitution on 31 December 1972. It was unanimously passed by the Assembly in its session on 10 April 1973 and was authenticated by the president on 12 April 1973. This Constitution, called the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan 1973, was promulgated on 14 August 1973. On the same day, **Mr. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto took oath as the Prime Minister,** while **Mr. Fazal Illahi Choudhary** took oath as the president of Pakistan. The 1973 Constitution provides for a parliamentary form of government where the executive authority of the state vests with the Prime Minister. The President, according to the Constitution, is at the apex, representing the unity of the Republic. From 1947 to 1973, the country had had a unicameral system, but under the 1973 Constitution, Pakistan adopted a [bicameral](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bicameral) federal legislature, called Parliament, composed of the President, the Senate and the National Assembly. Originally, the general seats of the National Assembly were 200 with additional 10 seats reserved for women, bringing the total strength to 210. The newly created Upper house i.e. the Senate had 63 members. Later in 1985 through a Presidential Order (P.O. No. 14 of 1985), seven seats were added to the general seats and ten to the reserved seats for women in the National Assembly. Ten seats were exclusively reserved for minorities to be filled through separate electorate system. Thus the total strength of the lower house reached to 237 members. Similarly the size of the **Senate was also increased from 63 to 87 members.**

Under the 1973 Constitution the National Assembly is elected for **five years term,** unless sooner dissolved. The seats in National Assembly, unlike the Senate, are allocated to each province and other units of the federation, on the basis of population. The Constitutional provision of 20 special seats for women lapsed in 1990, thus decreased the Assembly **strength from 237 to 217**. Under the Constitution, elections to the 10 seats reserved for minority were held on separate electorate basis. Despite the tenure of the Assembly being five years, as prescribed in the Constitution, Mr. Z.A. Bhutto, on 7 January 1977 announced the holding of elections before time. Consequently, on 10 January 1977, he advised the president to dissolve the National Assembly. Elections were held on 7 March 1977. The opposition charged the government with rigging the elections to the National Assembly and thereafter boycotted the Provincial Assemblies elections. Since the opposition had not accepted the National Assembly elections result, they did not take oath. This resulted in severe political crisis and Martial Law was imposed by the then Army Chief, General [Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhammad_Zia-ul-Haq), on 5 July 1977.