

Decade of Development (1958–1969)

Background

The “Decade of Development” was the title given to the period of Ayub Khan’s rule from **1958 to 1969**. After taking power through martial law in 1958, Ayub Khan wanted to strengthen his government and prove that Pakistan could progress under his leadership. He launched **economic, agricultural, and social reforms**, which he promoted as a model of success. To impress both Pakistanis and the international community, his government actively advertised this era as the “Decade of Development.” The main aim was not only to modernize the economy but also to gain political support for his rule.

Economic Policies

During this decade, Pakistan’s economy grew at a faster pace than before. The **average GDP growth rate was about 6%**, which was considered high at that time. Ayub Khan encouraged **industrialization** by providing incentives such as tax holidays, loans, and opportunities for foreign investment. Many new industries were set up, especially in **textiles, cement, sugar, and consumer goods**. Development Finance Institutions (DFIs) were created to give loans to businesses. With the help of foreign aid from the USA, World Bank, and other international organizations, Pakistan’s economy showed visible improvement. However, this growth mainly benefitted industrialists and the wealthy class.

Agricultural Development

One of the key reforms of this period was the **Green Revolution**. Modern farming technology was introduced, including **tractors, tube wells, fertilizers, pesticides, and high-yield variety seeds**. These changes increased agricultural production, especially of **wheat, rice, and cotton**. Large irrigation projects were also undertaken, and two big dams – **Mangla Dam** and **Tarbela Dam** – were constructed to store water and produce electricity. The government also established the **Agricultural Development Bank** to provide loans to farmers. However, the reforms mostly helped **big landlords**, while small farmers often could not afford modern equipment. This created a gap between rich and poor farmers.

Social and Infrastructure Development

The Decade of Development also saw improvements in **infrastructure and social services**. New **roads, highways, and bridges** were built to connect rural areas with cities. Communication systems improved, and electricity supply increased in urban centers. **Karachi and Lahore** emerged as major industrial and commercial cities. Education expanded, with a focus on **science and technology**, to prepare skilled workers for industry. Health services improved in urban areas, with more hospitals and clinics being built. The government also introduced **Five-Year Plans** to guide development. However, the benefits of these improvements were uneven: rural areas and **East Pakistan** received fewer resources compared to West Pakistan.

Criticism and Decline

Despite impressive growth figures, the Decade of Development faced serious criticism. The main problem was that the benefits of progress were not shared equally. Wealth was concentrated in the hands of a few **industrialists, landlords, and elites**, while ordinary people remained poor. Inequality between **rich and poor** increased sharply, and many rural communities felt left out. Moreover, **East Pakistan** felt neglected because most development projects were concentrated in West Pakistan. Rising prices and unemployment caused dissatisfaction among workers and the middle class. By the late 1960s, opposition movements from **students, laborers, and politicians** grew stronger. These protests eventually forced Ayub Khan to resign in **1969**, ending the so-called Decade of Development.