

The 1954–55 Constitutional Crisis

Background

In early Pakistan, the Constituent Assembly was preparing the country's first constitution. But the Governor-General, Malik Ghulam Muhammad, had wide powers under the 1935 Act. Tensions between the Assembly and Governor-General led to a crisis in 1954.

Dissolution of Assembly

On 24 October 1954, Governor-General dissolved the Constituent Assembly when it was about to finalize the constitution. He claimed it no longer represented the people. This shocked the nation and created a constitutional crisis.

Maulvi Tamizuddin Case

The Speaker, Maulvi Tamizuddin Khan, challenged the dissolution in the Sindh High Court, which ruled in his favor. But in 1955, the Federal Court overturned this decision and supported the Governor-General. This weakened democracy and strengthened unelected authority.

Political Consequences

The crisis delayed constitution-making, increased instability, and weakened parliamentary authority. Provinces, especially East Pakistan, felt ignored. Bureaucrats and military officials gained more influence, while democratic institutions lost strength.

Impact and Legacy

The 1954–55 crisis created the “Doctrine of Necessity,” later used to justify martial law. It set a dangerous precedent for dissolving assemblies and undermining democracy. This was a turning point that shaped Pakistan's unstable political history.