**The Basic Principles Committee**

was formed on 12th March 1949 by the first Constituent Assembly of Pakistan. The Basic Principles Committee comprised of 24 members. These individuals were not required to be the members of the first Constituent Assembly. It was headed by Maulvi Tameezuddin Khan and Liaquat Ali Khan was its Vice President. The task assigned to the Basic Principles Committee was to determine the basic principles for framing the future constitution of Pakistan.There were three sub committees set-up under the Basic Principles Committee:

1. Sub-committee on federal and provincial constitution and distribution of powers
2. Sub-committee on franchise
3. Sub-committee for judiciary

The task of these committees was to make recommendation regarding the area of their expertise. On 28th September 1950 the BPC presented its interim report to the Constituent Assembly. The salient features of this report were as following:

Objectives Resolution should be made part of the constitution and should serve as the directive principle of state policy.

* The state of Pakistan was to be a federation.
* The Central Legislature was to be bicameral. It would consist of a House of Unit (Upper House) with 100 members and a House of People (Lower House) with 400 members.
* The Upper House was to be the representative institution of the provinces, elected by provincial legislature. While the Lower House was to be elected by the people on the basis of adult franchise.
* The tenure of both the Houses was to be five years and both were to enjoy equal power.
* The decisions regarding budget or monetary bills were to be decided in joint sessions of the two houses.
* The Head of state was to be elected by a joint session of the two houses for a term of five years and would work on the advice of the Prime Minister.
* Federal legislature had the authority to remove the head of state.
* Each province was to have its own legislature; elected on the basis of adult franchise for a term of five years.
* Head of the provincial legislature was to be elected by the head of state for a term of five years and he was to work on the advice of Chief Minister.

Legislative power was to be divided in three lists: 1) The Federal list comprising of 67 subjects on which the central legislature would legislate. 2) The Provincial list comprising of 35 items, the provincial legislature would legislate on these subjects. And 3) The Concurrent list of 37 items on which both the central and provincial legislatures had the authority to legislate. The residuary powers were vested in the center.

In case of a dispute, the Supreme Court had the authority to interpret the constitution. The procedure to amend the constitution was very rigid; it required a majority approval from the central and provincial legislatures.

Head of the state was given added powers like the authority to abrogate the constitution and issue ordinances.

Urdu was to be the state language.

The Supreme Court was the head of judiciary. It would consist of the Chief Justice and 2 to 6 judges. And High Courts for each province were to be established.

A Board of Ulama would be appointed by the head of state and provincial governors to examine the process of law making and to ensure that laws were in accordance with the Quran and Sunnah. The reaction to this report proved counterproductive and was not conducive to success. As a consequence popularity of the First Constituent Assembly was badly maligned. Resultantly Liaquat Ali Khan was forced to postpone his considerations on account of severe criticism on the part of East Pakistan. This delay led to many complications in the progress of the First Constituent Assembly.

This report was criticized strongly by S.C. Chattopadyaya and East Pakistan. The crux of criticism was related to underrepresentation in the central legislature and the proposal for a strong center with vast powers on financial matters. East Pakistan was given equal number of seats in Upper House, the same as West Pakistan. Thus it reduces the principle of majority and turned East Pakistan into a minority. Moreover, the interim report was preposterous for the East Pakistan since it Urdu as national language and Bengali was nowhere in the constitutional arena.

As a result of this reaction, Liaquat Ali Khan postponed the consideration of report and invited new suggestions. In order to include public opinion he called forth general comments and suggestions by public on the report. For this a committee was setup in the headed by Sardar Abdur Rab Nishter, who presented a report in the Constituent assembly on July 1952.

Resultantly, the struggle for making a constitution caused serious apprehension in the mind of East Pakistan. They felt that the Bengali interests were not safe in such a state of affairs. There could have been rational and mature negotiations with productive and pleasing results for the sake of nationalism, but that did not happen. Even though the constitutional deadlock was later vent off but it was too late, the interim report inevitably posed an ever impending threat in the minds of East Pakistan that their interests were not safe given the supremacy accorded to West Pakistan in a federation.