

Q. President
HP-13

Narayanan greets Musharraf

27/6

By C. Raja Mohan

NEW DELHI, JUNE 21. In an ironic twist to India-Pakistan relations, India appears to be the only nation smiling at Gen. Pervez Musharraf after he chose to appoint himself President of Pakistan.

At a moment when Pakistan's traditional friends such as the U.S. and Great Britain are frowning upon Gen. Musharraf for making light of the nation's Constitution, India is greeting him at the highest level.

The President, Mr. K.R. Narayanan, tonight extended "best wishes" to Gen. Musharraf on his assumption of Pakistan's presidency.

In the changed protocol after

Gen. Musharraf put on the President's cap, Mr. Narayanan is now the official host for the Pakistani leader in India.

The President chose his words carefully to ensure that India was not seen as endorsing in any way the overthrow of the last vestiges of civilian rule in Pakistan. Mr. Narayanan reaffirmed India's "desire to establish a relationship of peace, friendship and cooperation with Pakistan".

"It is our hope," the President added, that Gen. Musharraf's visit to India next month "will move India-Pakistan relations in positive and constructive directions".

Earlier today, responding to criticism that India has gone soft on Gen. Musharraf, the Foreign

Office spokeswoman said "we have to deal with the government of the day".

Having decided to engage Gen. Musharraf a few weeks ago, the Government is now determined to be at its "gracious best" in receiving him and "lay out the traditional Indian hospitality in full measure".

Highly-placed sources here dismiss the suggestion that in declaring himself President, Gen. Musharraf has "taken advantage" of India. They argue that the Pakistani leader comes here from "a position of extreme weakness".

Although Gen. Musharraf has become a very strong leader within Pakistan, they suggest, he is representing Pakistan at one of its

weakest moments since 1971 when the country was divided into two.

An economy in doldrums, the political system a shambles, the international perception of a failed state allied with the jihadi forces, and the decline of the past special relationship with the U.S. have put Pakistan in "an unusually vulnerable position", the sources say.

The paradox, according to observers, is that "the strong General in a weak Pakistan" has to turn to India for political legitimacy. They add that "only India can help Gen. Musharraf get Pakistan out of the corner it finds itself in". No wonder, India is smiling at Gen. Musharraf.

THE HINDU
JUN 21 2001

Talks signal to militants, iron fist at Islamabad

FROM OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Feb. 19: Lashing out at Pakistan-sponsored terrorism, President K.R. Narayanan today warned of relentless action against militants in Jammu and Kashmir and made it clear that India would resume talks with its neighbour only if it created the right atmosphere.

"Its protestations about its eagerness to resume talks with India will not carry conviction so long as it allows the terrorists' guns and bombs to do the talking," Narayanan said addressing a joint sitting of both Houses to kick off the budget session.

The President, however, declared that the Centre was willing to talk with any group that "abjures violence".

"There has been no let up in... cross-border terrorism and vicious anti-India propaganda originating from Pakistani soil. Many innocent lives continue to be lost every day to acts of barbarism by those who cloak them in the garb

of jihad. Pakistan bears the responsibility for these acts against humanity, which are a travesty of religion," he said.

Narayanan lauded the "supreme determination and sacrifice" of the armed forces under such "trying circumstances". He praised the Kashmiris for participating "enthusiastically in the recent panchayat elections" and said this was mainly because militancy had been increasingly confined to foreign mercenary groups.

He emphasised that the ceasefire was "warmly welcomed" by Kashmiris, who longed for an end to militancy and violence. The world, too, he said, had given the ceasefire "overwhelming support" as it saw in the gesture "another demonstration of India's sincere commitment to a peaceful and permanent solution" to the dispute.

The President's stiff warning to Pakistan has been interpreted as a reflection of the Centre's stand on the ceasefire extension. Observers believe that the Cabinet Committee on Security — which was to have met yesterday

to decide on extending the ceasefire which expires on February 26 — deferred its sitting so that the Centre's message could get across to Pakistan.

But stung by his comments, Pakistan reacted swiftly. A spokesman for its Inter Services Public Relations said the remarks came at a time when "many positive developments" were taking place between the neighbours.

Maj. Gen. Rashid Qureshi said it was not fair to criticise Pakistan "when it has taken so many steps on the borders, including maximum restraint and partial withdrawal of troops" from the LoC. He said Narayanan's criticism gives the impression that India is trying to "avoid peace talks".

Morning budget

The budget will be presented at 11 am on February 28, the time generally reserved for Question Hour. The railway budget will be presented on February 26.

■ See Page 6 and Business Telegraph

THE TELEGRAM

20 FEB 20

President's speech short on substance

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Feb. 19. — The President's Cabinet-approved, one-hour opening address to Parliament today put size over substance, merely repeating the government's views on Kashmir and highlighting its achievements.

Mr KR Narayanan, on the opening day of the budget session, spoke of "India's commitment to peaceful and permanent solution to the Kashmir issue" without suggesting how this could be done.

There was hardly any policy statement on the violence in the state except for a brief mention of the ceasefire — the Centre's peace initiative — and Pakistan's failure to respond.

The MPs on the whole listened quietly. There was the occasional thumping of desks by NDA members whenever the President lauded the government's "achievements" — such as an incident-free Kumbh and India's place among the ten fastest-growing economies.

The Opposition made one interruption, some members protesting as Mr Narayanan praised the gains in agriculture. Earlier, Mr Raguvans Prasad Singh had defied decorum to shout anti-government slogans just before the President was to begin his speech.

Mr Narayanan merely touched on the day's biggest issues, such as Kashmir, agriculture, economy, external affairs and the population boom.

He spoke of the "multi-pronged strategy to bring peace and normalcy in Jammu & Kashmir" and said the ceasefire "was warmly welcomed by the people of J&K".

He hit out against Pakistan, saying: "Many innocent lives continue to be lost every day to acts of barbarism by those who cloak themselves in the garb of jihad. Pakistan bears the responsibility for these acts against humanity which are a travesty of religion."

"Pakistan's protestations about the eagerness to resume talks with India will not carry conviction so long as it allows terrorists' guns and bombs to do the talking. Should Pakistan create an atmosphere conducive for meaningful talks, India would be more than ready to resume the dialogue process."

Mentioning the worsening fiscal health of state governments, he said the reforms needed "consensus" in broad terms to decide whether or not "specific policy changes promote the interests of the country and the common man."

"The scope of the reforms process itself needs to be widened to fortify self-reliance, create employment opportunities and

remove poverty." Unless the reforms are fully "complemented by administrative, judicial, educational and labour reforms", desired results couldn't be achieved.

Mr Narayanan prefaced his speech by a mention of the Gujarat earthquake devastation.

Many BJP MPs informally agreed with Opposition leaders that a shorter speech with more substance would have been better. The speech was "voluminous rather than illuminous", said Congressman Mr S Jaipal Reddy.

Though their criticism was meant for the government, the MPs didn't want to be named, because technically it could amount to criticising the President.

"The government, to keep the allies and senior BJP ministers happy, chose to have at least one paragraph on their ministries' initiatives," an MP said.

"Some of us felt sleepy in the Central Hall," said another. "Some left the House during the speech." More came out when the Vice-President began reading out the Hindi version, which took another hour. Many MPs suggested that there was no need for a Hindi version when facilities for simultaneous interpretation of the speech were available in Parliament.

■ More reports on page 8

THE STATESMAN

20 FEB 2001

Statute focus cleared after
three-hour discussion

Govt toils on President speech

FROM OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Feb. 14: Smarting under the President's Republic Day-eve address, the Union Cabinet today took a record three hours to clear K.R. Narayanan's speech to Parliament but decided to leave the focus on the Constitution untouched.

Apart from pleasing the President, the government wanted to avoid another confrontation with the Opposition, which is likely to rake up the Constitution review issue in the budget session.

Cautious after the January 25 address in which Narayanan drew a parallel between those advocating the system of indirect elections and Ayub Khan, who founded military rule in Pakistan, the Cabinet went through every line of the speech before deciding not to alter it.

In his address to a joint sitting of Parliament to be delivered at the start of the session on February 19, Narayanan has reassured the nation that the review commission will not suggest any change in the basic structure of the Constitution. This assurance is the main thrust of his speech.

Yesterday, the government decided to extend the tenure of the review commission till October 31. The one-year term was to have ended on February 22.

The Republic Day-eve address — in which the President criticised the proposals to switch to a system of indirect elections and

to fix the tenure of Parliament — had sparked a controversy, with angry BJP leaders slamming Narayanan in public.

Taking a swipe at Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and RSS chief K.S. Sudarshan, the President had compared those who argued in favour of a fixed tenure of Parliament and indirect elections to Ayub Khan.

At the golden jubilee celebrations of the Election Commission last month, Vajpayee had stressed the need for a fixed tenure for Parliament to ensure stability of government. The President found this proposal untenable and against the vision of the founding fathers of the Constitution.

The founding fathers had the "wisdom and foresight" not to overemphasise the importance of stability and uniformity of political system and had consciously rejected the system of restricted franchise and indirect elections, Narayanan said.

"We may recall that in Pakistan Field Marshal Ayub Khan had introduced an indirect system of elections and experimented with what he called basic democracy or guided democracy. It would be an irony of history if we invoke today, in the name of Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation, the shades of the political ideas of Ayub Khan, the father of military rule in Pakistan," he said.

The President asserted that the nation should harp on responsibility, not stability.

THE TELEGRAPH

15 FEB 1997

Royalty to politics: Rajmata did it all with grace & poise

In Vijayaraje Scindia's death, the Sangh Parivar has lost one of its more abiding personalities, a mother-figure to the various offshoots of the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh. Her stature ensured that she was always accorded dignity and respect, even when she was identified with the Sangh Parivar hardliners.

In the early 1980s, she spearheaded the Vishwa Ekatmata Yagya, considered by many as the forerunner of the hard Hindutva line exemplified by the VHP and others.

Daughter of Thakur Mahender Singh of what is now the Sagar district in Madhya Pradesh, Vijayaraje was born on October 12, 1919. She was educated at home by private tutors. She went to become chancellor of Sagar University, among other notable titles and posts. She presided over the All India Women's Conference for 40 years.

Starting with the 1957 Lok Sabha elections, the Rajmata, unlike her husband Jiwaji Rao Scindia, pursued an active political career. After quitting the Congress in 1966 in favour of the then Jan Sangh, she became Madhya Pradesh president of the anti-Congress conglomerate called the Samyukta Vidhayak Dal (1967). She was elected to both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, but never aspired to a ministerial slot. The Scindia tradition in politics has always been interesting. Ironically, while the Rajmata and later her daughter Vasundhara Raje chose to side with the Jan Sangh-BJP brand of politics, her son Madhavrao is a staunch Congressman. The Rajmata had won her first election from Guna on a Congress ticket. The Scindia family may have given people the impression of a divided house, but their internal wars were by and large private affairs. Very seldom did the warfare come out into the open.

though the viciousness of wrangling over the royal family's many properties in Gwalior and elsewhere became apparent in 1980s.

The Rajmata might have, on occasions, disapproved of Madhavrao's politics, but her son never joined issue with her publicly. In fact, the Scindias seemed to live in two different worlds: the mother representing the old feudal touch while her children — Madhavrao and sister Vasundhara Raje — projecting post-modern lifestyles.

In Gwalior, at least till the political rift within the family took shape, it was believed that the Rajmata's patronage to anyone she wanted to win an election acted like the proverbial Midas touch. She herself cut a rather aloof figure from the hurly-burly of day-to-day politics. She occupied senior posts in her party's organisational structure, but that appeared to be more of a symbolic presence.

However, that doesn't mean the Rajmata sought to remain away from the limelight. Far from it, in fact. Her strong espousal of the VHP's many controversial "causes" pushed her to centre stage. She also nursed the early political ambitions of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and Union minister for sports Uma Bharati and aided their coming of age in politics. During the Advani years at the BJP's helm, which coincided with the rise of the VIIP, Vijayaraje was once again quite prominent. She was present at the disputed site when the Babri mosque came tumbling down on that fateful December 1992 afternoon. In a way, therefore, the Sangh Parivar made substantial use of the Rajmata's image and clout, and she of course had no problems with that.

In the end though, the Rajmata may have had one major regret she could not take the holy dip at the Mahakumbh in Allahabad because of ill-health.

■ PRADYOT LAL

THE ASIAN AGE

26 JAN 2001

President says ceasefire is a bold step

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, January 25

PRESIDENT K. R. Narayanan today strongly disfavoured major changes in the country's political system stating there was no need to over-emphasise the "importance of stability and uniformity" in the nation's system of governance.

In his address to the nation on the eve of Republic Day, the President joined the debate on electoral reforms and rejected recent suggestions for fixed terms for Lok Sabha and State Assemblies. He pointed out that the founding fathers of our Constitution had the "wisdom and foresight" not to over-value stability and had preferred "more responsibility to stability."

The Prime Minister had, at the Election Commission's golden jubilee function, advocated fixed tenures for Lok Sabha and State Assemblies. According to him, these systemic changes were needed to bring about stability and ensure better governance of the country.

The President, who is opposed to basic Constitutional changes, said the makers of the Indian Constitution wanted that the "governance of this vast country was not left in the

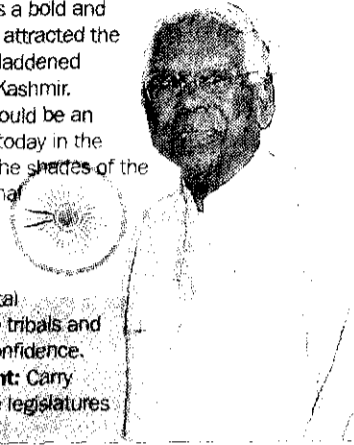
PRESIDENT'S CALL TO THE NATION

●**On Kashmir ceasefire:** It is a bold and imaginative measure. It has attracted the attention of the world and gladdened the hearts of the people of Kashmir.

●**On indirect elections:** It would be an irony of history if we invoke today in the name of Mahatma Gandhi the shades of the political ideas of Field Marshal Ayub Khan, the father of military rule in Pakistan.

●**On development policies:** For success of developmental projects in tribal areas, take tribals and their representatives into confidence.

●**On women's empowerment:** Carry forward the process to state legislatures and Parliament.



COURTESY: SAINI/AA

Marshal Ayub Khan, he said: "It would be an irony of history if we invoke today in the name of Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation, the shades of the political ideas of Field Marshal Ayub Khan, the father of Pakistan's military rule."

Referring to the Government's unilateral ceasefire in Kashmir, he said it was a bold and imaginative step and India must believe that "people at the other end will realise the futility of their hostility and respond to our gestures of peace and friendship."

The President said the ceasefire had attracted the attention of the world and "gladdened the hearts of the people of Kashmir." Supporting the peace initiative, he said: "I have no doubt that through the firmness of our determination and through the exercise of our traditional tolerance, India will triumph in the end."

The President said that women's empowerment must be extended to State legislatures and Parliament since it had produced good results at lower levels. He said 2001 had been declared the year of women's empowerment and already one million women were functioning at panchayat block and district levels.

hands of an elite class but the people as a whole." Consciously rejecting the system of restricted franchise and indirect elections embodied in the 1935 Government of India Act, the Constitution's fathers expressed "profound faith in the wisdom of the common man and woman in India."

Recalling that the indirect system of elections had been introduced in Pakistan by Field

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

26 JAN 2001